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Timeless Memories: The Enduring Charm of Culture and Heritage in the Historic City of Thiruvananthapuram

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Abstract

The memories of culture and heritage are an enduring testament to the rich tapestry of human history. These timeless reverberations resonate through the ages, carrying with them the traditions, values, and identities of diverse societies. In exploring timeless memories of culture and heritage, we will delve into the profound significance of preserving and celebrating them as they continue to shape our present and inspire our future. Thiruvananthapuram, often addressed as Trivandrum, is a place where culture and heritage are not mere echoes but vibrant and enduring collective memories that continue to shape the lives of its people. This paper uncovers the bond we share with the past and the pivotal role they play in shaping our collective identity as a community. The paper also explores the resplendent architecture that adorns the city's landscape and the captivating culture and traditions of it.

Introduction

In the majestic tapestry of human existence, specific threads are woven with such precision and care that they withstand the relentless march of time. These threads represent our culture and heritage, the quintessential markers of our identity as individuals and society. They are the echoes of our history, resonating across generations and creating our present and future. Culture and heritage are the silent guardians of our traditions, values, and shared experiences. They are the stories told through ancient manuscripts, the brush strokes on ageless canvases, the melodies that transcend eras, and the architectural marvels that defy centuries. They provide strings of links to our ancestors, offering glances into their way of life, beliefs, customs, and the artistry that defined their lives.

Culture and heritage are the soul of a city, shaping its identity, character and sense of belonging. They play a vital role in defining what a city is and what it aspires to be. "Identity is a basic feature of our experiences of places" (Relph 1976, p. 45). Culture is dynamic and evolving while retaining its core values. Hence, they preserve the architectural and artistic legacy, maintain cultural continuity, and promote tolerance and understanding among diverse cultures, ultimately providing an impression of identity and attachment to those living and visiting them. Culture is the collective expression of a society's beliefs, customs, language, art, and social norms. It acts as a template for how a group of people interacts and organises itself. Heritage

encompasses the tangible and intangible assets of our legacy. It includes historic landmarks, artefacts, documents, and traditions passed down through generations. These physical and symbolic connections to the past anchor us in our cultural and historical roots. “Heritage clearly fulfils a range of often competing functions which straddle the economic, cultural, and political domains” (Graham 2002, p.1004). Historic urban settlements have only recently come to be recognised as “heritage”, with a rising awareness and understanding of them emerging in the latter part of the 20th century. Urban heritage is a blend of physical elements, historical associations, and legendary narrative that connects it to the past. “Contemporary life, divorced from the roots of our history, can be an extremely superficial and meaningless experience” (Worksett 1978, p. 3). Heritage has been defined by Conzen as an “objectivation of the spirit of society”, as well as a combination of knowledge, experience, and ties to past generations (Whitehand 1990, p. 371). The interaction of people with the past and the present and with the surroundings around them produces a dynamism that evokes the spirit of a place (Orbasli 2002, 5). “We need connections with both place and time to locate our present lives geographically and historically; heritage helps in both the temporal and spatial sense. It also helps us locate ourselves socially, in the sense that it is one of the things that bind communities and nations, giving a sense of group identity to both insiders and outsiders” (Aplin, 2002, p. 72). Memory, both as an individual cognitive function and a collective societal construct, serves as the primary custodian of cultural knowledge. The capacity to remember and recall this information enables the transmission of cultural norms, values, and practices across generations.

Nestled within the heart of many countries worldwide, historic cities stand as living testaments to the enduring charm of heritage and culture. The identity of cities is not merely the art and architecture it displays but rather the manifestation of the memory, perceptions, and spirit of its people that transcend beyond the built fabric of the city and is “the trail left by the civilisation as it moves through history” (Correa 1983, p. 52). In the southwestern cradle of India, where time whispers the rustle of the echoes of ancient temples, Thiruvananthapuram stands as a verdant jewel on the coastline. This city, lovingly known as “Trivandrum”, unfolds its beauty through a lyrical journey that dances with nature, culture, and heritage. Every corner of the city holds stories etched in stone and sung by the winds. Here, diversity is not a cacophony but a harmonious symphony of cultures, traditions, customs, and faith. The city’s tranquil landscape and its unhurried pace invite travellers to join in the peaceful melody it plays.

Historic Cities: Guardians of Culture and Heritage

Historic cities are not just repositories of the past but are the embodiments of life and experiences of people living in them. Historic cities play a crucial role in preserving and nurturing the sense of identity. Historic

cities can be defined “as those active human settlements strongly conditioned by a physical structure originating in the past and recognisable as representing the evolution of its people” (Muthal 2012, p. 2). “Historic cities hold within them social systems, knowledge, memory, and traditions that enrich life, and they answer questions about culture, history, art and technology” (Whalen 2011, p. 4). They carry within them an intricate relationship between the past and present layers of landscape. The landscape of a city, which consists of its environment, architecture, aesthetics, engineering, planning, etc, reflects the character it has inherited from the past, its heritage! According to the World Heritage Centre¹, “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration”.

Thiruvananthapuram, a historic city with endless tradition, has always been a remarkable arena in all human endeavours. The city has a magnificent history of being the hub of art, literature, and architecture, tracing its beginnings from the Sangam Era. The city has been a spectator of the rise and fall of various dynasties. As an eclectic manifestation of old and new, the city displays the facets of tradition blended uniquely with modernity.

Historical Memoirs through the narrations of texts and inscriptions

Thiruvananthapuram initially emerged as a sub town of Vizhinjam, which was a prominent port in South India from the Sangam age. In the 9th century C.E., Thiruvananthapuram emerged as a prominent cultural and religious centre, with its nucleus centred on Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple. The city finds its earliest mentions in the Puranas and Sangam age literature. The writing of history is incomplete without the interactions of myths, mythology, and poetry. The “Brahma Purana” describes the sacredness of places, including Ananthasayanam. “Varaha Purana” contain some allusions to the consecration of an image of Varaha Moorthi at Ananthasayanam (Menon 1878, pp. 6-9). ‘Kuvayamala’, a Prakrit literary work written by a Jain priest, Udyotanasuri, in 779 C.E., describes Vizhinjam, the ancient capital of the Ay kingdom. Nammalvar, a 9th-century poet and one of the twelve Vaishnavite saints of the Alvar tradition, has composed ten hymns praising Lord Padmanabha (Nair 2013, p. 98). According to historians, the word “Thiruvananthapuram” was first used by him. ‘Syanandoora Puranasamuchayam, is a literary work praising the prosperity of Thiruvananthapuram. ‘Shukasandesham’, written in 1168 C.E., also mentions Padmanabha Swamy Temple, the heart and cultural nucleus of the Thiruvananthapuram city.

The ancient capital of the Kingdom of Ay, Vizhinjam, was a natural harbour and a famous port town dating back to the Sangam age. Jatila Paranthakan’s Madras Museum Plate of A.D 781 chronicles the prosperous port town of Vizhinjam and Vizhinjam Fort. Kanthalur Salai, which functioned as the mother institution of

all other art institutions of the Ays, was primarily located at Vizhinjam and later shifted to Aryasalai between the sacred temples of Sree Padmanabha Swamy and Valiyasalai of Thiruvananthapuram (Harikumar 2021, p. 241). The city of Thiruvananthapuram is vividly and exquisitely described in ‘Ananthapuravarnanam’, a 14th-century C.E Manipravalam literary work, though the work uses the word “Ananthapuram” instead of “Thiruvananthapuram” (Harikumar 2021, p. 23). It unfolds the scenic and exhilarating views while circumambulating the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple and the ancillary temples. Through these classical narrations, historical memoirs are not just records of events but nuanced reflections of human experience. The poetic language, metaphors, and allegories embedded in classical texts provide a depth of understanding that surpasses mere chronicles.

Fort Area and Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple: The Jewel of Heritage

In the city of Thiruvananthapuram, where history breathes and architecture tells tales of antiquity, the Fort area stands as a beacon of timeless grace. This enclave, nestled amidst the bustling city, is a heritage sanctuary. The fort’s granite walls speak of times when valour and wisdom were etched in stone, ensuring the city’s protection. The forts hum with cultural fervour as they celebrate the spirituality, colour, and music of the festivals of the temples guarded by them. Walking through this area is like leafing through the pages of history. The cobbled streets, the ancient buildings, and the temples whisper the tales of bygone eras. The fort area is not a geographical point but a place of reverence, governance, culture, and identity etched in the memories of the people. It is an embodiment of tradition and modernity, of devotion and artistry, history and progress. It is a place where every footstep is a connection to the past, where every corner holds secrets, and every new day is a promise of a new beginning in an enchanting tale.

At the heart of the Fort area, the sacred temple of Sree Padmanabha reigns as a cultural and architectural marvel. Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple, dedicated to Lord Padmanabha, holds a unique position in India’s heritage and is a source of awe and reverence for devotees and historians alike. The temple is a historical treasure that spans over a thousand years. Its roots can be traced back to ancient scriptures and classical texts, making it one of the oldest religious institutions in India. The temple’s history is interwoven with the rise and fall of various dynasties and empires, providing insights into the socio-cultural and religious foundation of the region. The temple, built inside a mud fort, has been growing for generations to become the present-day temple of Sree Padmanabha Swamy. Padmanabha Swamy was the principal deity of the Ays and the Venad rulers. The strict supervision of ‘Thiruvananthapuram Sabha’ and later ‘Ettarayogam’, the councils to look after the daily activities of the temple, the unobstructed ways of worship

from time immemorial, and protection from foreign invasions made the temple famous during medieval times (Nair 2013, p. 99).

The temple's architecture is a magnificent fusion of Dravidian and Kerala architectural styles, characterised by its intricate stone carvings, gopurams, and the use of indigenous materials. The towering gopuram is a sentinel that touches the skies and unveils the city's spiritual soul. The intricate craftsmanship and design speak volumes about the artistic prowess of the artisans of the time. The temple's structural and architectural marvels are a testament to the era in which it was built. The temple is not just a place of worship; it is a symbol of religious harmony and cultural syncretism. It has been a place of pilgrimage, attracting people from all walks of life, regardless of their religious beliefs. The temple has enjoyed the patronage of the kingdom of Travancore for centuries, and the contributions of the rulers to renovate the temple added to its architectural heritage. The temple got global attention in recent years owing to the discovery of hidden vaults of priceless treasures and artefacts, which were surrendered by the 'Padmanabhadasas' (Travancore rulers who pledged their devotion to Padmanabha Swamy) as a symbol of their deep religious affiliation and commitment to the worship and service of the deity (Sasibhooshan 2020, p. 41). The historic pond of Padmatheertham, lying close to the temple, is a serene oasis amidst the teeming city. The pond's significance extends beyond its aesthetic charm, as it is an integral part of the temple's rituals and traditions. As the sun's golden rays descend upon the theertham, centuries-old steps leading to the pond transform into a natural amphitheatre. The Pond is a liquid gem in the city's crown. It is a place where spiritual and cultural memories blend, and its tranquillity invites the residents and visitors to partake in its timeless creation of memories.

The temple is a living heritage site that weaves together history, culture, religion, and art. Its legacy goes beyond the confines of time and stands as a pillar of the enduring culture and history of Thiruvananthapuram. Through its various ceremonies and festivals, it ensures that ancient customs and rituals are handed down to generations, thereby safeguarding the cultural heritage.

Architectural Legacies

The architecture reflects a fascinating blend of historical influences, cultural diversity, artistic expressions of craftsmanship, and unique design styles. The myriad expressions of architectural features concentrated in a single region bear witness to the multitude of political, cultural, and traditional aspects that shaped the intricate architectural landscape. Historical layers of architectural styles often coexist, reflecting the memories of different eras it has seen. The vibrant blend of traditional existing architectural styles with

modern typologies creates a captivating and culturally rich environment that offers a glimpse into the complex interplay of history, culture, and heritage.

Thiruvananthapuram, a city with deep roots in historical and cultural layering, has witnessed a transition of architectural typologies. The city's architectural heritage is rooted in vernacular architectural style, with traditional Kerala-style homes with sloping roofs, courtyards and wooden structures. The city's temples have been central to its architectural heritage. Temples like Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple and Thrivikramangalam Temple reflect the region's indigenous style with intricately carved stone pillars, tower gateways, mandapams, and sanctum sanctorums (Vijayakumar 2015, pp. 47-50). The architectural legacy was deeply influenced by the transformation brought about by colonial rule. British influences are visible in heritage buildings such as Napier Museum, Connemara Market, and colonial-era bungalows are characterised by European architectural styles.

The private residences of the kings were called "Koyikkals". Palaces include "Koyikkals" as well as other buildings needed for the secure and luxuriant stay of the king. Even though all koyikkals are called palaces now, palaces were started to be built in the city only by the end of the 18th century C.E. Sreepada Theerthakkara Koyikkal is the ancient koyikkal in Thiruvananthapuram (Nair 2013, p. 54). In Kollam Era 1033, Vettakaruman Temple and Valiya Koyikkal were destroyed due to fire and were renovated in the same year. Karuvelapura Malika, Methan mani, Chellam vaka Kacheri, Lakshmivilasom Palace, Thekkae Theruvumalika, Navarathri Mandapam, Puthenmaalika, Rangavilasom Palace, Kizhakke Kottaram, Bhajanapura Malika, Krishnavilasom Palace, and Ananthavilasom Palace were some of the architectural marvels built during the reign of the Travancore rulers between the 16th and 18th century C.E (Vijayakumar 2015, pp. 37-78). The Fort area houses residential and administrative buildings dating back to the colonial era. The exquisite palace, adjacent to the temple, is a treasure of architectural opulence. The 122 wooden horses that adorn its southern roof give the name Kuthiramalika, "Mansion of Horses". The Secretariat and the Legislative Assembly are architectural gems that bridge time, reflecting Indo-Saracenic and neoclassical influences. Their ornate facades and colonnades are not mere structures but living echoes of the city's colonial past. The Grand Cathedral of St. Joseph at Palayam, with its neo-Gothic architecture expressed in soaring spires and intricate stained-glass windows, reflects the city's spiritual heritage.

The latter half of the 20th century saw the rise of modernist and contemporary architectural styles. Modern buildings are constructed with proper weight given to functional design, minimalism, energy efficiency, and green building practices. The transition of architectural typologies in Thiruvananthapuram is a journey marked by the city's ability to adapt and evolve while preserving the memories of its cultural and historical

identity. The architectural legacies reflect the changing dynamics of the city that cherishes its past while embracing the opportunities and challenges of the future.

Agraharams: A perfect blend of Culture, Tradition and Heritage

Agraharams are traditional South Indian Brahmin settlements or villages known for their unique cultural and architectural heritage. The Brahmins in Kerala are categorised into Namboothiri Brahmins and the Tamil and Tulu Brahmins. The Namboothiri Brahmins followed an architectural style of ‘tharavadu’ or ‘naalukettu’ for their homes. The Tamil and Tulu Brahmins who had migrated to Kerala from different parts of Tamil Nadu were designated as “Paradesi Brahmins”, by the native Brahmins of Kerala. The migrants introduced the new housing style of “agraharams” here (Rajeev 2012, p. 4). These houses are often constructed with traditional architectural features, including intricately carved wooden doors and pillars, reflecting the cultural heritage of the region. The agraharams followed a grid rectangular or concentric circle pattern, with the temple being the nucleus. The presence of waterbodies was an important geographical factor considered while planning the construction of agraharams, symbolising the need for spiritual and physical purity and to maintain cool air throughout the year. The houses share a common wall, representing the unity and security they felt among themselves. The settlement pattern followed by the Tamil Brahmins was a true depiction of the social position enjoyed by the community bestowed by the political patronage and religious association with the temples (Rajeev 2012, pp. 5-6).

They are the cultural hubs where religious and scholarly activities have thrived for generations. They foster a sense of community living, with residents sharing a common cultural and religious heritage. These settlements are known for their vibrant celebration of religious festivals, with the entire community participating in various rituals and ceremonies. These festivals, with coruscating processions and rhythmic music, form an integral part of the cultural legacy of agraharams. The close-knit nature of these settlements has often facilitated strong bonds among the local residents.

Collective Memory

Collective memory, also known as social memory, extends beyond the individual realm and represents the shared recollections and narrations of a group or society. It is encapsulated in myths, legends, historical accounts, and rituals, and it is an essential component of cultural and heritage preservation. It helps solidify a group's identity by providing a sense of continuity with the past and reinforcing a common narrative. The exploration of collective memory as in the “identity of places is bound up with the histories which are told by them, how these stories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant” (Massey, 1995, p. 182).

Halbwach's seminal work (1992) on collective memory explores the social and cultural aspects of memory, highlighting how the collective memory of their societies influences individuals. Pierre Nora's influential essay (1989) introduces the concept of "lieux de memoire" (sites of memory) and the region's collective memory and heritage. Andreas Huyssen's book (2003) delves into the role of urban spaces in constructing collective memory and how cities preserve and display their cultural and historical heritage. As one meanders through the labyrinthine streets of Thiruvananthapuram, it becomes apparent that this city is a living museum of the past, where every step is a stride through the corridors of collective memory.

Through the historical and cultural corridors

As we step onto the streets of Thiruvananthapuram, we embark on a journey that outlasts mere geography. Historical and cultural corridors are pathways through time and space, each with its own unique story to tell. These pathways are the living narratives of the history of humankind. They talk about the traditions, cultural diversities, and ways of life it has seen for centuries. They hold a huge influence on the regions they traverse and the people who walk along them. They are the open museums which preserve the tangible and intangible aspects of a region's heritage. They connect the past and present, offering a continuous thread of cultural and historical evolution. Being the living reminders of the societies that once flourished along these routes, they allow us to explore our routes, merge with our heritage, and see how the interactions of the past have shaped our contemporary culture. They allow avenues of interaction and exchange of different cultures, ideas, beliefs, artistic expressions and even cuisines.

The city of Thiruvananthapuram witnesses this interaction of cultural diversities along the routes of Maanaveeyam Veedhi (Humanism Street) and Charithraveethi (Historical Corridor). Maanaveeyam Veedhi serves as a public realm, which has a unique way of demonstrating the multitude of expressions from a gathering of the commons. It also welcomes artists and performers who unite to showcase their talents and exchange their creativity. Charithraveedhi, running along the street of East Fort, carries with it the reminiscences of the past glory of the ruling dynasties and their legacies, which have strong imprints on the mental image and attachment of the residents of Thiruvananthapuram. The route of Arattu Road in the West Fort area of Thiruvananthapuram presents itself as a spectator of the political legacy intertwined with the religious allegiance to the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple. The road, which is inextricably linked to the Arattu festival, a grand procession on which the deity is taken out from the temple to Shanghumugham Beach, is a fusion of religious and cultural elements that make up a cherished tradition of the city dwellers. The road lies as the pathway of a divine tradition that has been celebrated for centuries and continues to be a strong marker in the city's memory and identity. The busy streets of Chalai Bazaar, an ancient road leading

from East Fort gate to Killipalam on the banks of Killi River, has been a bustling trade and commercial centre since its foundation by Raja Kesava Das, the Dewan of Travancore. Vibrant marketplaces, shops, and culinary offerings adorn the streets. The bazaar is a vibrant space where one can witness the harmonious blending of economic, cultural, and social influences.

Conclusion

Heritage and historic cities are not relics of the past but vibrant entities that breathe life into our cultural legacy. They are vital repositories of history, identity, and art, serving as bridges connecting us with our ancestors and offering glimpses into the world of the past. Preserving these cities is not just a matter of historical significance; it is a testament to our commitment to honouring and celebrating the reminiscences of our shared human heritage. The timelessness of these cities reminds us that our past is not an isolated chapter but an integral part of the story that continues to be written. Collective memory influences how societies interpret their cultural and heritage elements. For societies, cultural memory fosters a sense of coherence and unity. Cultural memory establishes a framework for social cohesion and provides a reference point for understanding one's place within a cultural context. From retaining personal experiences to memorising cultural practices and oral traditions, individuals serve as the carriers of their cultural heritage.

The present paper attempted to explore the memories that define the enchanting beauty of culture and heritage that adorn the remarkable city of Thiruvananthapuram. The cultural charm of the city is like an eternal melody that captures the hearts of people who come across it. The collective memory of the city's heritage and culture is a multifaceted entity, encompassing historical, artistic, religious, and social dimensions. Thiruvananthapuram, a city where culture and heritage are not separate entities but are interwoven into the very fabric of existence, beckons the residents as well as the travellers to step into the worlds of timeless beauty. It invites you to become a part of the canvas, to explore the stories, to witness the artistry of a culture that has found its eternity in the timeless embrace of tradition. In the city's soul, the people find their muse, and in the whispers of heritage and culture, they discover a lifelong symphony of beauty.

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Bridging SAARC and ASEAN: Can Bangladesh act as a Gateway?

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Abstract

Bangladesh is one of the most important countries in South Asia after India and has always stood in an important and very strategic position to act as a bridge of connectivity and cooperation between the two major regions of the world, both from the relevance of trade and security. In this way, Bangladesh has always provided connectivity, a strong flow of goods and resources, and diplomatic contact between the two regions as a transit country. However, in such a way as to how the SAARC and ASEAN countries in recent years have come closer and evolved through with showing of the creation of new multilateral institutions and groupings in the recent past like the BIMSTEC. So, with this objective, we will examine how Bangladesh can be and has been a nation evolving as an efficient regional player bridging the gap between multilateral institutions through bilateral, country-to-country contacts.

Key Words- *BIMSTEC, SAARC, ASEAN, South Asia, Bangladesh, India.*

Introduction

Bangladesh shares a land boundary spanning 4,095 km including both India and Myanmar which helps it to play a very strong strategic role both as a neighbor and as a potential corridor to undertake trade between the two nations (Jain, 2021/2022). This comes at a time where it stands to be quite critical when this edge of the area is severely militarised and armed to a greater extent due to some of the ongoing conflicts and internal conflicts that are going on to a greater length with Myanmar to counter the movement of militants and rebel groups. So, if this matter at any point in time gets resolved and even if the issue is dealt with with a calm and a strategized and or calculated diplomatic approach, then to a greater extent this issue can be

solved and Bangladesh can be a better destination and a player in regional diplomacy for balancing relations with multilateral institutions and two neighboring regions.

So, to a greater length, we will try to investigate the point where the role of Bangladesh can be much better and more effective. Also, in a way, if these issues can be resolved, Bangladesh could create routes that go through Myanmar leading towards direct access to China in the East and the countries belonging to the ASEAN with countries to the South and the other SAARC member states (Shoaib, p. 2022) which can be well aligned and a strong network can evolve to a greater rate.

Understanding the Geographic Linkage Binding Bangladesh

As Cambodia holds closer proximity with Myanmar and Thailand as a neighbor of Cambodia, in this case, if the Rohingya issue can be resolved then Myanmar and all the other ASEAN countries (Tundang, 2023) can also get a better rate of access to South Asia, via Bangladesh. But at the same time if the tri-lateral highway project or the BCIM (Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar) Corridors get completed and integrated towards proposed accessibility by the ASEAN Member states to get access into the markets of Bangladesh and Northern India or even get connected to the other SAARC Countries of Nepal and Bhutan (Roy Chaudhury, 2018). Achieving improved ties between Myanmar and Bangladesh becomes quite necessary to develop a deeper strategic trade and investment cooperation looking at the future that will ultimately help build better relations between the two regions of the world.

Looking at the geography of the region it can also be assessed that Bangladesh and Myanmar can be used as a route of transnational transportation to connect the markets of the rest of South Asia and North Eastern India particularly. Both Bangladesh and Myanmar are also active members belonging to the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), which is another major multilateral organization of this region comprising the regional countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Hasan, 2021), seeking to foster stronger regional and economic cooperation, by keeping the doors of the benefits open for other major countries like Cambodia to join as well to utilize the benefits at a progressive rate. If both the blocks attain better access towards undertaking free-trade initiatives with other blocs it would be beneficial to the other ASEAN nations to further earn benefits to boost their regional trade ties with most of the SAARC Nations and may even take the roads of cooperation till Central Asia (Roy Chaudhury, 2018).

So, in a way, there are some signs that show either Myanmar or Bangladesh with the assistance and mediation of each other can help in resolving their disputes ultimately, and very recently, the maritime borders of India and Bangladesh have been re-defined through a verdict of the International Court of Justice, which officially grants Bangladesh the rights of access to its maritime boundaries where it can establish its assets within an area of 111,000 sq km with the waters of Myanmar being properly and very clearly identified. Therefore, in a way, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the entire Southeast Asia can get the true potential for developing a joint maritime project within the joint-navigating area in the Bay of Bengal.

Also, there lies an additional potential to undertake trade through the construction of better roadway connectivity. The Asian Highway Project being funded and supported by the Asian Development Bank, increases the growth of land and connectivity with the trade of products like agriculture, aquaculture, fertilizers, plastics, pharmaceuticals, and light manufactured products. To date, Bangladesh dominates the world market with its strong leather and garments industry and the food industry, giving it a vast opportunity to engage with any region and country of the world at a better scale.

The Ongoing Cooperation of Bangladesh with the ASEAN Member States

Already Bangladesh holds a potential bilateral cooperation with all ASEAN member states, especially Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. It was founded in 2010 when Bangladesh had agreed to set up a joint commission to carry out a bilateral review to ensure cooperation in the course of following the transition around 10 agreements signed in 2017 with the expectation to enhance bilateral ties for strengthening their economic cooperation for more than it can be seen to have had happened. Also, for Bangladesh has even proposed going into a long-term agreement for ensuring the cultivation of farms after signing a long-term agreement by which they can import rice from Cambodia, despite being a rice cultivator coming with the list of Top 10 Rice Cultivating Nation of the World, as per a report of the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2022). In this way, both these countries are looking towards conducting joint research for agricultural production and practice. In a way, Bangladesh has also been quite active and resiliently strong enough to support Myanmar to undertake counter-terrorism operations at various stages and ensure regulated distribution during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Rohingya refugee issue or the oppressive and unjust measures undertaken by the Military Junta in Myanmar has also and still does continue to create a wave of tension between the two countries. Thus, bringing a long-term solution to protect the interests of Bangladesh and Myanmar, can be in a way assisted by Cambodia in this regard to create and restore cordial relations between the two countries.

Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Cambodia also have an opportunity to work in the field of increasing joint investments in agriculture, particularly from products like rice and spices or other eateries like pulses, fish, and rice. In turn, this opportunity can work towards enhancing trilateral relations to encourage the growth of trade and investments between ASEAN and BIMSTEC countries as well (Hasan, 2022).

Bangladesh and its relations with SAARC

Following a gap of about three years all the leaders of the SAARC group, or the South Asian States had joined at the Kathmandu Summit held on 26th-27th November 2014, which was seen indeed as an occasion to assess the efforts of the SAARC to consolidate the regional cooperation and bonding within the South Asian region (De and Bhattacharyay, 2007, p.11). In that context, a more cohesive role was witnessed from the end of Bangladesh, which is a member of the premier regional organization accomplishing 29 years of its existence following the establishment of the organization since holding 18 Summits at a go along with adopting several declarations and programs which had a far-reaching significance upon 1.4 billion people who are part of the region (Chandrabali, 2014). It is quite a significant and well-established fact that Bangladesh was one of the most effective partners that were active in crafting the birth of SAARC and developing a 'functional approach' towards cooperation to deal with several non-controversial areas, though SAARC took a lot of time to evolve, slowly and continuously as an institution and program, the orientation has been quite strong and clear to create a South Asian identity.

Since concluding the 17th SAARC Summit which was held with the agenda of 'Building Bridges' (Chari, 2011 p. 3486), following the 18th Summit with the theme of 'Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity', (Batra, 2014: 4734) which gives a clear indication and a resolution with the vision of having an effective regional cooperation in South Asia (Hossain, 2014 p. 4776). There were some rays of hope that were imagined to be witnessed, which could lead towards a path for deeper cooperation with clarity on adopting several agreements in motion, like regional connectivity and cooperation in the field of sharing energy. Despite of not having any clarity regarding the first summit, which was held, it was found that there were no such agreements that were signed due to the reservation of SAARC member states which cited 'incomplete processes' (ibid p. 4776) where Bangladesh had held its hopes to sign several other agreements, as well (De and Bhattacharyay, 2007, p.16). Whereas, at the same time, Bangladesh also stood strong looking forwards to maintaining its diplomatic maneuvers to successfully conclude the Summits by signing only at least one deal. However, it was confirmed by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh to initiate a hectic effort during the summit by signing an agreement on energy cooperation at the least (Jha, 2007 p. 2376).

Finally at the time when the foreign ministers of the SAARC countries signed the Framework Agreements for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) in the presence of the heads of state and governments during the concluding ceremony of the Summit (Hossain, 2014 p. 4822).

A 36-point Declaration was adopted in the Kathmandu Declaration of 2014 which accommodated Bangladesh as a new nation formally with the vision of ensuring an all-round collective development in the region bound by the waters of the Bay of Bengal (Choudhary, Nair, Nagda, Maheswari, 2022 p. 212). According to the 15th point in the declaration (Sakhuja, 2016: 5089) that stated, “the manifold contributions of ocean-based blue in the SAARC region and the need for a collaborative partnership in the area” (Sakhuja, 2016: 5089), can be emphasized as the fact that the Government in Dhaka is strongly pushing the agenda of establishing a strong ecosystem of Blue Economy (Sakhuja, 2017 p. 5412) at the backdrop of adopting a peaceful resolution of all the existing bilateral maritime disputes flaring in between India and Myanmar (Sakhuja, 2020 p. 5744).

At the same time, it was also equally found that Bangladesh took full advantage of corridor diplomacy at the SAARC Summits which have shown themselves as a major feature of determining the SAARC’s role towards improving the bilateral relations between the countries of the region through the help of a multilateral forum. At the same time despite the activities getting constrained by their Charter from discussing several bilateral disputes and issues, where the forum has significantly contributed towards diffusing tensions to improve their bilateral relations with the help of several informal meetings between leaders (Choquier, 2010, p. 3135), where Bangladesh has scored strong diplomatic gains in various contexts that helped it to boost its image at a much stronger level. It is also quite true that there has been strong dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the performance of SAARC, based on the reality of the present times it is also quite important to note that South Asia has conducted multiple processes and dimensions of regionalism (Gupta, 2014 p. 4325). But the fact still remains to be questioned in a way as to how one can hardly just think of the future of regional cooperation in South Asia without SAARC (Jaiswal, 2014 p. 4725).

Thus, the new vision of SAARC must be looked towards and held in terms of promoting a strong base of regional cooperation and solidarity in South Asia (Arun, Srivastava, 2000, p. 309) to get started with introducing a concrete plan of action to restructure the organization and implement decisions of the SAARC.

BIMSTEC as a New Alternative

The connectivity between Bangladesh and its neighboring states which usually includes India in the nearest gambit has already received a strong boost in the last ten years due to the proactive stance of Bangladesh to enhance connectivity between South and South East Asian regions (P. Chand, 2020 p. 73). Also, at the same time, Bangladesh has been playing a leading role in the Bay of Bengal region through the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) (Gupta, 2021 p. 461). This group includes the countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan as a cobweb of engaging toward multilateral cooperation and since 2014 the Secretariat has been hosted in Dhaka (Roy Choudhury, 2018). The position of Bangladesh is unique in that it gets the real advantage of getting connected across the eastern and also the Western regions of Asia through the South. It is at the same time also considered to be a center point where Bangladesh lies open to taking different initiatives to connect other neighbouring nations like Sri Lanka, Bhutan, India, and Nepal with the other ASEAN and some East Asian nations, (Roy Choudhury, 2018) as well. It also ensures the conduct of a deep trade volume, investment, and connectivity linkages within the subregion where Bangladesh can easily earn the benefits being offered from the new markets to get hold of new import sources that are mostly of high quality, and better-priced products that create growth of opportunities for transportation and logistical services (Balachandran, 2023).

In a way, Bangladesh is trying to engage towards initiating various sub-regional connectivity projects through the help of new road, rail, and sea routes that connect with India (Roy Choudhury, 2021), where such kind of connectivity projects can in a way create an opportunity for more trade connectivity in an enhanced form with Bangladesh and North East India and therefore Nepal and Bhutan as well. In a way, India holds a strong interest in developing and maintaining road and railway transit projects as well through Bangladesh that would help to get to bear lesser costs and time to send and undertake inflow of more amount of goods and raw materials or resources to North East India. Though India has been successful in recent times to keep on establishing the lost connectivity between India and Bangladesh, through the reopening of the New Jalpaiguri- Dhaka rail route, the Radhikapur-Dinajpur Freight Connectivity and Agartala-Chittagong rail route which is currently under construction and will open soon (De and Bhattacharyay, 2007:20). Also, a new transboundary bus route connecting Kolkata-Khulna-Dhaka-Agartala has earned a huge success in a way in recent years (Singh, 2018).

Thus, transit facilities to the North East of India would help in providing in accelerating strong sub-regional connectivity between Bhutan, Nepal, and India will be quite advantageous in a way to ensure better connectivity between the two countries as well (Roy Chaudhury, 2018). Thus, in that aspect, a Protocol for Inland Water Transit and Trade between Bangladesh and India has been initiated as a result of the Bengal-Assam water route via Bangladesh for supporting the transportation of goods to provide adequate infrastructural facilities at greater rates (Roy Chaudhury, 2018).

How Bangladesh has created its area of significance between the two regions?

In the recent times, South Asia has also been received through a growing significant attention as a part of a region which is trying to get itself harder to be integrated into the global economy (Asian Development Bank, 2021: 84). Thus, in the context of establishing closer bilateral ties to integrate between major South Asian nations like India and Bangladesh will also help to strengthen the SAARC and help terms of ensuring a strong level of effectiveness and efficiency of their activities (De and Bhattacharyay, 2007 p. 5). though Bangladesh's exports to South Asian nations are rising much more than it is, as the RMG sector of Bangladesh in recent years has been working towards diversifying its export basket as well to a greater rate. India's adoption of a zero-duty benefit for most of the products and items from Bangladesh has aided growth, especially in the last fiscal year where the overall exports to the eight countries in the region grew by a rate of 53 per cent year-on-year to USD 2.28 billion, as per 2020-21 fiscal year (Mirdha, 2022).

Thus, the demand for textiles and garments made by the sagacious garment industry of Bangladesh has been going through growth in the markets of South, West, and South East Asia because of their expanding middle-income population (Hashim, 2015). Many Asian countries like India, Japan, and China have been targeting to ensure their presence in the markets of Bangladesh (Business Report, 2022). As Bangladesh has been set to lose its preferential access to its markets in 2026 following its graduation from the group of least developed countries to a developing country (Rahman, 2023). However, with this buoyancy in the growth of exports growth to the region, where the share of total exports of Bangladesh in the SAARC region was USD 52 billion grew by one percentage point to 4 per cent (Mirdha, 2022). Starting from the export of polo shirts or clothes for casual and formal dresses the major export or import of items from Bangladesh to the other SAARC countries. However, it is also believed by the exporters of Bangladesh that more jackets would be the major items for import and export to Nepal that would support them in the colder and lengthy winter season. The number of shipments to Nepal and Pakistan was also encouraging at a point (Mirdha,

2022), where it showed that the number of exported goods from Bangladesh worth more than USD 105 million each to Nepal and Pakistan in the Financial Year of 2022 (Zamir Uddin, 2022).

Though it is known that South Asia is one of the least-integrated regions in the world despite being the most populous (Rob, 2019), where intra-regional trade stands at a point of less than about 5% of its total trade, as a study by the World Bank (Siddiqi, 2015). Trade has always faced limits due to several factors like inadequate road, marine, and air transport connectivity with real protected and perceived non-tariff barriers, restrictions on investments, and a broad trust deficit throughout the entire region (Mirdha, 2022).

Myanmar is one of the close neighbors of Bangladesh after India in the East with historic connectivity going back centuries. The two countries share a border length of 271 km (Ashrat, 2023), though presently a major chunk of the area stands to be heavily militarized due to the several ongoing internal conflicts going on in that area. But if this issue has to be resolved then Bangladesh could very well develop the routes traversing through Myanmar which can lead it to be connected with China to the east and other Southeast Asian countries towards the South (Shinde, 2023). Bangladesh lies in a very strategic position between South and South East Asia, whereby it can be used as an important hub for connecting both the regions and the member countries of the two regions on grounds of free-trade areas and unrestricted connectivity.

Therefore, the requirement of major resources like food grains, such as rice, which are produced in large quantities in Myanmar can also be exported to Bangladesh, (Rasid, 2022) alongside the production and consumption of rice accounts for approximately 43 per cent of the total agricultural production (Hasan, 2021), making it the 7th largest producer of rice in the entire world (Akhter, 2022). Also at the same time, Myanmar is the largest producer of agricultural products, and in 2019 it was Myanmar that provided onions to Bangladesh, which raised the realization of having better and stronger bilateral trade with Myanmar at that time (Shira & Associates, 2021).

Conclusion

Bangladesh has a very strong future in this region, where it has worked in a varying number of fields like supplying COVID-vaccines to provide counter-terrorism training and undertaking various efforts in expanding the areas of cooperation. Though some issues have created certain fissures, like the Rohingya issue, there always lies a long-term solution for the interests of Bangladesh and other countries. Bangladesh at the same time has also connected with various countries in the Bay of Bengal region and this connectivity

also helps it to expand its footprint in terms of maritime ties, trade, investment, and regional communications. But at the same time if certain rifts with some countries, like Bangladesh decrease its rift with Myanmar, then it will help them to raise their levels of trade and cooperation with other countries of the region of South East Asia as well. Still, there lies a strong prospect in terms of obtaining gas and electricity resources where Bangladesh can determine a strong future in determining its cooperation in the field of energy and security by being able to explore the oil and gas fields in the Bay of Bengal region(Kumar, 2008), thereby contributing to the overall development and prosperity in the region. Thus, in such a way, we can see that there is a huge possibility for Bangladesh to evolve as a future regional player in this region and amongst these two regional organizations.

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**Analysing People's Art in The Indian Social Matrix:
Relevance of Folk Communication and Traditional Entertainment**

Ghazala Yasmin

Abstract

*"The belief in art for art's sake arises whenever the artist is out of harmony with his social environment." -
G V Plekhanov*

While the urge to express, to share, to communicate, forms the quintessential core of all classical art forms, what becomes increasingly significant is the need to link this process to a living progressive impulse towards social change and human development. In the Indian context, as opposed to Western classical art form traditions, the folk performing arts have changed structures continuously, modifying to the requirements of changing politics and cultural flux; still remaining functionally relevant to society. 'Tradition' suggests a process of the transmission of centuries-old value systems which include contextual manifestations that helps in the interpretation and understanding of the universal. Tradition is not just a repetitive behavioural pattern or motif or some persistent symbol in community culture, but the assertion of an identity, fostering the revival and regeneration of various life-forces in a community. The composite forms of traditional media rely on this very context and cultural support in order to convey meaningful messages and generate social awareness for development programmes in the rural areas.

Unlike Western theatre, folk communication is a composite art in India; it is a fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomimes, versification, spic and ballad recitation, graphic and plastic arts, and religious and festival pageantry. It encompasses ceremonial rituals, beliefs and social value systems. It has deep religious and ritualistic overtones and it can project social life, secular themes, and universal values.

The paper endeavours an exploration, of the very tradition of people's art in the Indian milieu and validates its significance in the growth and development of the Indian civilisation, by legitimising certain traditional beliefs and also garnering support to bring about a social reformation.

Keywords: People's Art, Tradition, folk communication, traditional entertainment

Introduction

Every time, a work of art is created, it brings in its wake a parallel set of questions- while one set deals with the logistical aspects of bringing it under the public purview, the other manifests more potent questions such as:

- a) Why and for whom the work of art is created?
- b) What is the message in that piece of art?
- c) What are the levels of simplicity and complexity, on which that message is pitched across?
- d) Does it correspond to the social reality?
- e) Does it relate to our historical, cultural and ideological stance?

And this questioning attitude forms the very basis of engagement of People's art, across civilisations, since time immemorial, in order to engage, negotiate and develop a radical art practice that enriches and revitalizes social structures. Each culture has its own tradition, which is passed on from generation to generation. Tradition plays an important role in the creative artistic process of a particular area. They have an effect on the thinking and living patterns of each individual of that particular community.

In the Indian scenario, with around 35 per cent of unlettered rural population, the mainstream forms of mass media serve as an exotic and glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable mechanism, untouched by their own lived in experiences. However, what is relatable to them are the relatable natural spontaneity, idioms, analogies and emotional overtones of folk media, rooted in their very own traditional system. The barriers to effective communication pose minimalistic challenges, as this media connects the linguistic and semantic usages of the very people, it is addressed to, hence becoming an important agent of social change. The traditional media can thus be an instrumental agent of developmental activities, along with being a carrier and transmitter of cultural norms and social mores to the coming generations and needs to be kept alive, vibrant and functional.

Raymond Williams defined the term folk as "... a general meaning of people" (307) while W J Thomas associated it as a kind of cultural tendency (13). The later definitions of folk include aspects of a 'communal production' reflecting the society of its origin. While there is little distinction between art and life in traditionalist societies, as folk art is a part and parcel of daily lives, deeply entrenched in and intertwined with usual customs and lifestyles. However, what is hugely relevant to folk art is its ability to transform and metamorphose itself along with the continuously changing and evolving social structures and patterns. It is through these folk-art performances that society expresses its happiness, aspirations, hope, dejection,

sorrow, celebrations and accomplishments, in distinctive ways. Folk arts are highly fluid in nature as they borrow distinctive elements from all sections, without any bias or prejudice, thus establishing the cultural symbols of a community. They also break every barrier and reach out to every corner, in the simplest of terms.

While there are few nations in the world which can boast of a treasure trove of the folk traditions and arts, India's early growth and evolution corresponds to the development of folk arts amidst its traditional ethos, so much so that it became a part of Indian culture. During the British colonial regime, the Indian people's art as the 'Alha' (popular folk ballad of Uttar Pradesh), 'Laavni' (Maharashtra), 'Gee-gee' (Karnataka), 'Burrakatha' (Andhra Pradesh), 'Villupattu' (Tamil Nadu) and 'Kabigaan' (Bengal) took a critical makeover, focussing on creating a collective nationalist conscience for an uprising against the British oppression. The great visionary poet Rabindranath Tagore and the famous playwright Mukunda Das illustrated the transformation of folk forms like 'Jatra' from recounting mythological stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata to a novel 'Swadeshi Jatra' embarking on nationalist fervour to fight against colonial oppression and injustice.

One such early deployment of the genre of folk theatre towards nationalist goals was undertaken in the year 1919, by a 'Swang' composer, Deepchand, who utilized his drama troupe artists of Haryana, to join the army in World War I. Gradually folk media gained momentum as an anti-government mouthpiece for social and political campaigns against the British, with the mythological narratives of good versus evil being replaced by the fight for nationalism and Independence from the foreign oppressors. The 'Jatra' play "Neel Darpana", staged in 1861, focussed on the Indigo cultivators of Bengal, portraying their social outrage awakening against the British. There developed a new interest in the regional cultural expressions which led to the rediscovery as well as re-evaluation of indigenous forms of folklore traditions, which were earlier largely forgotten and remained decadent pre-independence. The intellectual reappraisal that these art forms received were largely because of them being viewed as the surviving fragments of India's ancient Sanskrit drama traditions like some preliminary rituals of stylized acting, gestures, articulations and stock characters like the 'sutradhara' (narrator cum stage director), 'vidushaka' (clown/jester) and abundant sequences of song and dance.

Jawaharlal Nehru observations on the potential of folk media to create nationalistic and developmental awareness can be summed up in his remarks in the IPTA Bulletin of 1943:

I am greatly interested in the development of a people's theatre in India. I think there is a great room for it, provided it is based on the people and their traditions. Otherwise, it is likely to

function in the air. It is a people's approach. Nevertheless, I think an effort should be made in the direction (50).

In fact, the very first Five-Year Plan by the Indian Government saw a thrust for the incorporation of folk media to catalyse development and social change and also act as a carrier of modern messages. However, there was an evaluation to identify folk forms which were inclusive of flexible elements that would make them suitable to be fused and integrated with modern media and packaged and presented to the vast Indian populace. The following parameters were drawn to optimise the use of folk art:

1. Safeguard and preservation of folk traditions
2. Use of mass media vehicles to carry forward folk traditions
3. Utilization of folk media to present culturally rooted stories with an agenda for development.

While relegated to more than twenty definitions by various theorists, the term 'folklore' can be operationally defined by Jan Harold Brunvand as "... those materials in culture that circulate traditionally among members of any group in different versions, whether in oral form or by means of customary example, as well as the process of traditional performance or communication" (13). This broad definition becomes particularly significant as it incorporates the elements of written folk traditions, which form the basis of folk theatre, customary folk lore like folk customs, beliefs and superstitions as well as material folklore like folk architecture, crafts, costumes and food. The oral traditional entertainment folk forms, which are utilized largely because of an inherent element of a dominant narrative, conducive for programmes of development, can be broadly categorised as:

- a. Folk Theatre and other predominant oral narrative techniques like ballads, folk tales
- b. Folk Songs, Folk Dances and Folk Music
- c. Religious Discourses
- d. Puppetry

Folk Theatre is an ancient art form which formulates the symbiosis of education through entertainment, a tool used by modern communicators to address issues of communication for development and social change. In the "Natyashastra", the ancient text of dramaturgy, ascribed to Bharat Muni,

this (natya) teaches duty to those who go against duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment and chastises those who are ill-bred and unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned. It will (also) give relief to unlucky persons who are

afflicted with sorrow and grief or (over) worked, and will be conducive to observance of duty as well to fame, long life, intellect and general good and will educate people. There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft, no device, no action that is not found in drama (65).

This composite art form with elements of mime and drama, dance and music are an integral culmination of emotional, intellectual, philosophical and aesthetic needs of its spectators, thereby creating a scope of effective receptivity to strong, social messages, through live performances. According to J C Mathur, drawing upon the “Rasa- Siddhanta” of folk theatre, he observes that,

the essence of the ‘rasa siddhanta’ in dramaturgy is to use the ‘ladder’ of sense-based pleasures, colours, sentiments, thus carrying the spectator to the climax of such sheer enjoyment that he loses his individual identity, when in the auditorium. This temporary suspension of individual identity is the moment upon which the playwright as well as the actor seizes in order to induct the message which they seek to communicate. Quite often, therefore, in traditional theatre a sequence of uninhibited eroticism...is used as a springboard for conveying a message which to modern man sounds (like) sheer propaganda on good conduct and morals. To the urban intelligentsia...this sounds sometimes very naive and even laughable. But those who have seen traditional performance of (t) his kind in their original environment mingling with the audience whom they seek to reach are often wonderstruck by the effectiveness of the technique (Mathur, p. 348).

Unlike the West, folk theatre in India remained a composite art form inclusive of prose, verse, songs and dance, based on the tenets of ancient Sanskrit literature with the ‘sutradhaar’ (narrator) and the ‘vidushak’ (Buffoon) represented the two unifying agents. There was usage of half curtains, stylised masks and movements, prominent make-up and a familiar, congenial theatrical space with a great deal of intimacy between the performers and the spectators. Some examples of the different forms of regional folk theatre include:

1. Jatra- An ancient folk form dating back to the fifteenth century, practiced primarily in Bengal, Odisha and parts of Bihar, Jatra grew out of the ‘Bhakti Movement’ and incorporates religious and mythological themes. Jatra also includes elements of socio-political comments on contemporary themes under subtle humorous hues.
2. Bhavai- It is the folk theatre of Gujarat based on the ‘bhavai’ caste itself and has strong social moorings against the evils of caste system and social discrimination. A form of social protest, it has ‘Ranglo’, the clown character at the centre and the buffoon, braggarts and moneylenders add on to this social satire, which sometimes also talks about secular themes like love relationships between

a Hindu and a Muslim. The extreme flexibility of the 'bhavai' folk form contemporised the genre and also brought it to the present-day urban landscape.

3. Tamasha- In the sixteenth century Maharashtra, the art form of Tamasha gained momentum under the Peshava regime. The folk form became a cultural extension of the Kolhati community of Maharashtra and soon transformed as a bawdy, lascivious form of entertainment. It typically includes a 'Gan-gowlan'- an invocation of Krishna and the milkmaids, 'Laavni- a highly erotic dance form with poetical compositions, 'Sawaal-jawaab'- between a celestial pair like Shiva and Parvati, the 'Vag' and the 'Mujra'. During the nineteen forties, Tamasha was successfully used to spread the doctrines of communism amongst its rural audiences. While the themes of a tamasha are drawn from mythology, they may even graduate to social and political satires, farce and ribaldry as well as secular themes.
4. Nautankee- Performed in the Hindi-speaking villages of North India, the art form traces its origins in the fifteenth century, owing its loyalty to five schools, the Hathras and the Kanpur schools, being the prominent ones. Here the traditional invocation is followed by the 'Choubala' with a religious, historical or romantic theme. Nautankee offers a complete emotional experience along with a state of receptivity in its audiences, where even social messages can be most effectively transmitted. This form of rural drama has been a persuasive and dependable agent of social awareness and change, while frequently acting as a connecting bridge between the urban and the rural areas.
5. Ramilila- This folk form owes its allegiance to the Ramayana and is performed during the festival of Dusshetra. The play is mostly sung and chanted but prose dialogues are also not uncommon. The form may be inflexible as far as content is considered, but it is open to improvisations, It is one such theatrical genre which culminates in the coming together of the rich and poor, the young and old for a period of sixteen to twenty days to celebrate the victory of good over evil. Sections of city are transformed into theatrical platforms to witness the vast array and shades of human life.

The roots of ancient art of Puppetry can be traced back to thousands of centuries ago, where the performance varied from a 'one-man troupe' to a group performance of seven to eight members. The puppeteer would typically take efforts to acquaint himself with the local traditions, customs, life-style, activities, taboos and opinions of his audiences, in-order to make the performance suitable and relevant to that particular social set-up. The acts of puppetry are stylised with elements of prose and singing, at times accompanied with musical instruments. The themes range from mythology to social polity while humour forms a staple ingredient both to sustain interest and drive home a nuanced message, emphatically. The various styles of Puppetry include:

1. String Puppetry (Sutradharika)- In this form of Puppetry, native to Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh Tamil Nadu, differently shaped and costumed dolls are manipulated with the help of strings, to tell a story in a dramatised overtone.
2. Rod Puppets- Also called “Putli Naach” and native to Bengal, this form include large sizes puppets, made-up on the lines of Jatra players. While these puppets may be difficult to manoeuvre, their large size makes them suitable for large audience viewership.
3. Glove Puppets- It is traditionally prevalent in Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Kerela but their relative simplicity and ease of use and flexibility has made them popular with many modern communicators.
4. Shadow Puppets- ‘Chaaya- Putli’ is a specialised puppetry technique, popular in four regions with a unique style and specialisation in each zone of Amdhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Kerala. The puppets are two-dimensional shadows cast on a cloth screen and these silhouettes are manoeuvred in terms of size and movement to weave out an interesting story.
5. Handmade Puppets- These puppets found in Odisha, Kerela and Tamil Nadu look similar to Kathakhali dancers.

According to Meher Contractor, “Puppets have a subtle impact on simple audiences which no human actor can achieve”. (65) The stylised vocabulary of puppet theatre is a conducive expression for social awareness messages, traditional and historical identity and a rich cultural value system. It is holistically integrated in the social milieu and also lends itself to new innovations and experimentations. Glove puppets have been increasingly utilised in developmental and awareness regimens like child education, encouragement for scientific farming techniques, and for fighting social vices like dowry, gender discrimination child delinquency and so on and so forth, as part of various government, nongovernmental organisations, and private campaigns.

The famous visionary Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, advocated in his “Swadeshi Samaj” speech in July 1940, that

all traditional structure of art must have sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile, to grow with its growth, to the traditional performing art is an aesthetic object, the concept of belongingness and affinity in cultural context. The folk art forms satisfy our innate need for self-expression, for moral instruction combined with entertainment, and for the dramatic and the lyrical. The traditional forms preserving and disseminate in lively manners, the tradition and culture of our forefathers (1940).

While there has been an irrational thrust on the Western Model of Development, the “Dominant Paradigm”, trying to eschew and dissuade indigenous forms of traditional entertainment, the recent years have witnessed a resurgence of folk media based on people-centred development, self-help groups, grass root participation and two-way communication. The growing need for an inclusive and integrated model of communication for social change requires a peoples-inclusive approach that is cyclical, relational, personal and mutual rather than a one-sided individual change. This kind of Communication should facilitate community dialogue and collective action as in the case of folk media which includes familiarity, personal contact, common language and dialects, shared experiences, intelligibility, credibility and acceptance, unlike the highly impersonal, alienated and one-side television and radio messages.

While folk media has been mostly utilised as a supplement to mass media, rather than being a central communication strategy, in the Indian context, what needs to be remembered is the sheer number of the Indian populace living in the villages which identifies and draws strongly from its cultural rooting of folk and traditional media. Folk media remains an eclectic fusion of theatre, pantomime, music, songs, dance, versification, poetry, epic ballad recitations, religious storytelling as well as festive peasantry. The sheer flexibility of this media with an inter-personal, functional, contextual base located in ceremonials, festivals, rituals, beliefs and social systems lends itself towards significant social contribution for the promotion of cultural diversity, social integrity, nation building and generating mass awareness.

Folk literature holds a mirror to society, reflecting the cultural overtones and idioms, syncretic to a particular society and it can be instrumental in mobilising people for aspiring for education and awareness, peace and conflict resolution, social justice and harmony. While folk media does entail certain pitfalls like being rigid in format, its content being closed to any kind of change, trivialised so as to only outsource entertainment, and repetitive and redundant by being overloaded with instructions, the communication expert needs to critically evaluate these limitations and find innovative ways and means to optimise the inherent strengths of the folk media, while shunning away the vices, for effective communication. Familiarity is a major tool, which can be deployed to find the maximum emotional resonance and universal appeal with widely scattered, heterogeneous audiences. The performance should address issues, by living up to them, especially to avoid these from becoming mere propaganda, while the people are considered only as consumers of information. There are historical evidences to profile the downfall of people’s movements, (like IPTA) merely because the enactments remained isolated from the realms of practiced reality.

Modern mass communication system is dependent on complex formal organisation, niche skill sets and technology and it is also partially limited to being urban-centric. It involves heavy capital encumbrances and therefore this modern information system tends to restrict its outreach to the urban scenario, thereby stabilising a status-quo of structural dependency of the rural peripheries towards the urban centres. The focus of mainstream mass media on the individual rather than a member of the social network limits its potential and it is here that traditional and indigenous media methods, content and symbols can organically trigger a mass phenomenon. While an integrated approach of using modern mass media tools to disseminate folk art forms is pivotal to totalitarian development, a packaged time-bound approach can garner effective results in connecting the dots in society and bring about a new social awakening.

However, as Durgadas Mukhopadhyay has pointed out that all folk art forms are not unanimously suitable for communication for development and social change and therefore, they need to be carefully scrutinised on the basis of their content and characterizations so that their framework can be adapted for development purposes. (132) Folk media forms therefore need to have sociological consistency in relation to their social context, beliefs and customs in order to optimise their communication strategies to bring about awareness and social change.

While largely pertaining to religious realms, folk theatre has also functioned as an instrument of social protest and developmental agendas, often acting as a bridge between rural and urban areas. “They have also been the vehicles of protest, dissent and reform, the carriers of reform- movements and articulators of satire, social comment, and thus, the instruments of social change.”

The secular nature of Indian folk theatre has contemporised its significance and makes it vital for deployment on modern media tools to deliver reformist and developmental messages, far and wide. In the words of H. K. Ranganath,

Folk media have successfully played decisive roles in attuning the rural mind to the importance of a social or political theme like national unity, social welfare and even family planning. They have thus become the most persuasive communicators on any given theme. In the effort of making them lovable communicators, the original content is squeezed out and a new message is integrated to suit the needs of time and place. This process has given them a sense of contemporaneity and functional relevance (80).

It remains a fact that economic liberalisation, globalisation and other such modern forces have transformed folk media traditions but these art forms rooted in the cultural ethos of a country like India still continue to

contribute significantly to social integration, cohesive social structuring, cultural diversity and thus, nation building.

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Revisiting Partition through Ritwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy

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The Indian film industry is one of the largest film-producing industries in the world, and cinema is considered the most popular art form in the country. It consists of the popular Hindi film industry, Bollywood, and a diverse range of regional film industries with a rich legacy of talented artists. Films are considered to be a source of entertainment, and a diversion, an escape from the realities of life. But the same films can provide an insight into the socio-political, economic, and cultural transitions of the contemporary era. In the words of Robert Rosenstone, *'the desire to express our relationship to the past by using contemporary forms of expression'* (Rosenstone 2013, p. 2) is somewhat achieved through films. Moreover, the lived experiences of the filmmakers add an element of authenticity and reality to the fictional narratives, making them relatable to a larger section of the audiences, and helping the films to serve as a tool of understanding history. The aim of this paper will be to revisit the 1947 partition through its representation in Indian cinema, with reference to the 'Partition trilogy' of Ritwik Ghatak, the legendary Bengali filmmaker.

At the stroke of the midnight of 14th August, 1947, two independent nations were born out of a hastened partition by the British authorities. A territorial divide that forced innumerable evictions and migrations accompanied by devastating communal violence— partition was much more than a mere political phenomenon.

The decade of 1940s was a critical decade in which Bengal faced multiple challenges, both internal as well as external. The disastrous Famine of 1942-1943 claimed millions of lives, the Second World War triggered a constant sense of fear and uncertainty arising out of the exposure to the foreign enemy, and the partition unleashed the communally divisive forces that were responsible for a large-scale communal violence.

The communal riots that erupted on 16th August 1946, the 'Direct Action Day', continued for three days and claimed innumerable lives, majority of whom belonged to the migrants and the working class of the society of Calcutta (Sengupta 2016, 37). A city that was once British India's most prosperous metropolitan city had now become a town of death, displacement, and destruction. Calcutta witnessed a never-seen-before scale of violence, with people from all sections of society committing and being subject to violence, looting, arson,

thereby making the 'Direct Action Day' one of the most tragic events of the partition history. From the developed cities to the most inaccessible, remote villages, the riots had spread all over Bengal.

One of the most affected areas was Noakhali in Chittagong division, where the violence began on 10th October 1946 and escalated at an alarming rate. Mahatma Gandhi stayed in Noakhali for seven weeks to examine the situation himself. It was going to be a test of his principle of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) (Sengupta 2016, pp. 77-79), and he was determined to work on providing not a temporary relief but a permanent solution to the communal conflict that was damaging the social fabric of India.

Two of the worst-hit states, Punjab and Bengal experienced partition differently. In Punjab, it was marked by physical violence, while in Bengal, it was about the psychological trauma and identity crisis alongside the physical violence—resulting from large-scale migrations, displacements, and rehabilitation. The newly formed Pakistan was geographically divided as East and West Pakistan that were almost more than a thousand miles apart from each other. The divide wasn't just a geographical divide but also a cultural, linguistic, and demographic divide. Bengal (now the Indian West Bengal) had shrunk to one-third of its original size. It witnessed a mass exodus of Hindu minorities from East to West Bengal and Muslim minorities from West to East. The large influx of refugees from East Bengal in the urban areas (which is estimated to be around 10 million), especially in Calcutta caused a major strain on the resources and posed a challenge to the authorities in terms of absorbing and rehabilitating the refugees. The refugee crisis continued for many years, both within the city and the suburbs. The establishment of refugee colonies and the decisions taken by the authorities could not provide a permanent solution to it (Sengupta 2016, pp. 117-118).

The core idea or motivation behind this migration was their quest for stability amidst the growing communal tensions, as they were compelled to take shelter for their own safety. A significant aspect of this partition-induced migration was the nature of the departure and displacement. Most of the migrants were not aware of the fact that this departure would be permanent, and they wouldn't be able to return to their homeland. They had expected for the situation to calm down in the near future, so that they would be able to go back. When this illusion shattered, however, they could never reconcile to this permanent loss of their homeland (Raychaudhury 2004, p. 7).

In the aftermath of independence and partition, the changing urban space of Calcutta became a recurrent theme in Bengali literature, with many young novelists addressing the issues of migration, violence, displacement, homelessness, and their impact on human lives. Indian cinema always had a potential to interact with other art forms, for e.g., literature. Since its early beginnings, Bengali cinema has been greatly influenced by its rich literary and theatrical tradition, with one of the earliest Bengali films based on a play dating back to 1919—‘*Bilwamangal*’ produced by Madan Theatres, which was based on a play of the same name. With the rise of the studio system, many films based on popular novels came up, strengthening the novel-cinema relation and providing the Bengali cinema with a direction and a goal to pursue. The profound psychological impact of the realisation that Calcutta will never be the same was examined through the fictional stories entwined with the real-life experiences. These novels became a source of inspiration for many films, continuing the tradition that was existing right from the arrival of cinema in Bengal.

Born in Zindabazar, Bangladesh, [1] Ritwik Ghatak had first-hand experience of the disastrous Bengal famine as well as the tragic India-Pakistan partition. These two events went on to be a central theme in many of his creative works later. Ritwik Ghatak’s films operated from the margins and constructed a political discourse around ‘partition, exile, separation and post-colonial ideology’ (Ahmed 2015, 70). Before venturing into filmmaking, Ritwik Ghatak had written two novels and about a hundred short stories during the early 1940s. He switched from writing novels to dramatic literature and plays and then directing and acting in plays during his years of active involvement in IPTA (Indian People’s Theatre Association). He believed in establishing immediate and spontaneous communication with the audiences, which made him constantly look for better art forms to express his ideas - from literature to theatre and then films. It was his realisation of the limitations of all these art forms that inspired his endeavour into filmmaking. The influence of left politics, the inspiration from the cinema of the communist Soviet Union, and the cultural lessons learnt during his years with IPTA were reflected in his later creative works including his films. In his own words, ‘*Then I realised that to say your say to-day, the film is the only medium. It can reach millions of people at one time itself which no other medium is capable of reaching. Then I came into films. My coming to films has nothing to do with making money. Rather it is out of a volition for expressing my pangs and agonies about my suffering people.* (Ghatak 1987, pp. 19-20)’

Ghatak's first major involvement in films was as an actor, in Nimai Ghosh's '*Chinnamul*' (The Uprooted). Released in 1950, '*Chinnamul*' is considered as the first Bengali film that talked about the plight of the refugees following the partition of India. It was also one of the earliest Bengali films to introduce the element of realism, by using Calcutta's Sealdah railway station (which had witnessed the departure and arrival of thousands of refugees during the partition) for shooting some of its pivotal scenes and actual refugees as some of the characters and extras (O'Donnell, 2004).

Ritwik Ghatak was very outspoken regarding his trauma of partition and his concern for the homeless refugees struggling to find a new abode. His films were visual and aural representations of the fragmented nature of Bengal following the socio-political changes that took place in the 1940s (Mukherjee 2016, pp. 2-3). Through his critically acclaimed 'partition trilogy', Ghatak showed the effects of the partition of Bengal, the struggles of the refugee camp, the struggles of an uprooted generation to search for a new homeland, and a never-ending struggle to forge a new identity. The trilogy consisted of '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*' (The Cloud-Capped Star, 1960), '*Komal Gandhar*' (E Flat, 1961), and '*Subarnarekha*' (The Golden Line, 1965).

The psychological strength to withstand the socio-economic pressure, to provide for their families, and to look for permanent solutions to their problems was more in the East Bengali refugee women, as they had journeyed across the border facing numerous hardships. The displacement had hardened them to face all the challenges that lay ahead in their struggle to forge a new identity. These women became the inspiration of many novels and short stories, which in turn inspired filmmakers like Ritwik Ghatak to work on a cinematic representation of the binary struggles of women, encompassing the home and the world in their cities. The first film of his partition trilogy, '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*', is a great example of his portrayal of East Bengali refugee women. While the film uses the imagery of the ruptured family to capture the grief of partition, Ghatak is also constructing a narrative to discuss the larger prejudices that Bengali culture has about women and explores patriarchy through a '*humanist female representation*' (Ahmed 2015, pp. 73-76).

'*Meghe Dhaka Tara*' (The Cloud-Capped Star, 1960) tells the story of a lower-middle-class East Bengali refugee family in the aftermath of the partition. It was based on a short story of the same name by Shaktipada Rajguru, which focuses on the struggles of the people from refugee colonies. The plot revolves around their struggles and the sacrifices of the family's eldest daughter, Nita, who takes up the responsibility of looking after her family after they are uprooted from their homeland and are forced to live in a refugee camp in India

after partition. Nita's character symbolises the struggles and sacrifices of countless refugees who had to start a new life in a foreign land, tackling numerous challenges and coping with the trauma of displacement at the same time.

'*Komal Gandhar*' (E Flat, meaning a soft note on a sharp scale, 1961) was the second instalment in the Partition trilogy, whose story revolved around the lives of a group of theatre artists in post-partition West Bengal. The story follows the conflicts and ideological struggles within two theatre troupes during the 1950s, reflecting on the broader socio-political changes in the post-partition Calcutta. The film portrays the cultural and artistic differences between the troupe members, especially their leaders, Bhriгу and Anasuya. Bhriгу is shown to be a supporter of traditional theatre, whereas Anasuya advocates a modern approach to theatre. The only feeling that brings them together, however, is the feeling of uprootedness and displacement as refugees. '*Komal Gandhar*' delves into the clash between culture and politics, and explores the complexities of human relationships against the backdrop of the changing socio-political scenario in post-partition India.

'*Subarnarekha*' (The Golden Line, 1965) was the final instalment in Ghatak's Partition Trilogy. The story is set in a newly established refugee colony and focuses on the lives of two orphaned siblings and their struggle for survival in the immediate post-partition India. Ishwar, who belongs to a Brahmin community, is looking after his younger sister Sita and another boy from a lower-caste background Abhiram whom he takes under his shelter. The story follows the siblings' respective life journeys, their eventual separation as Sita grows up and decides to marry against her brother's will, her own struggles to support her family, and a tragic climax following their chance encounter. '*Subarnarekha*' explores the themes of identity, loss of a homeland, the search for a new home, and the impact of partition and displacement on the lives of common people.

'*Subarnarekha*' also talks about the stigmas associated with one's caste and social status. Sita, who is protected by the social system and caste network of which Ishwar is a part, experiences a different treatment later. As Sita and Abhiram decide to have an inter-caste marriage, they are not supported by Ishwar and are ousted from the same community which was looking after them.

The characters of Nita, Anasuya, and Sita are archetypal self-sacrificing mother figures who are crushed under the expectations and responsibilities forced upon them by the patriarchy. Nita is a self-sacrificing, dutiful daughter of the household, the sole earning member of the family, who puts her family before everything, and

is eventually taken for granted for her sacrifices. Anasuya is yearning for stability in her life and is in search of a place to call home. Sita is shown to be a submissive, caring sister and almost a mother figure to both her brother and her husband. All three women are shown to be stuck in the roles assigned to them by the patriarchy, without any individual agency.

Two of the three protagonists meet a tragic end. Nita gives up all her dreams and aspirations and supports her loved ones with the hope of seeing her siblings and her lover become successful in their respective lives. But all of them eventually take her for granted and become increasingly dependent on her at the same time. Her younger siblings turn out to be selfish. Only her elder brother Shankar fulfils her dream of becoming a successful singer and truly understands the extent of her sacrifices. Her selfless devotion to her family takes a toll on her health as she develops tuberculosis, and continues to work for her family despite her deteriorating health condition. She asserts her will to live only towards the end, and the audience is left with her echoing words and her violent cries, saying '*I want to live*', as she breathes her last.

Sita, in '*Subarnarekha*', loses her husband in an accident, and is forced to take up prostitution due to her deteriorating situation following the loss of the breadwinner of the family. In a cruel twist of destiny, she has to kill herself before facing her first 'customer', who tragically turns out to be her own brother.

Ghatak's films were often termed melodramatic, a style that he probably developed during his years as a playwright, actor, and director in IPTA. During the decades of 1950s and 1960s, melodrama was indeed a crucial element of Bengali cinema, and the primary dependence of melodramatic films was on songs and music. Ghatak effectively used music to convey expressions that were beyond the boundaries of visuals and dialogues. His use of music and silence was symbolic and complementary to his characters and their state of mind. To quote Ghatak, '*sound has that much importance in a film as it contributes to the aesthetic quality of the visual's*' (Ghatak 1987, p. 38).

The core theme of the second instalment in the partition trilogy, '*Komal Gandhar*' was an exploration of the socio-political lives of the two Bengals, the East and the West through theatre and music. Ghatak uses both

Bengali folk songs and Western music in his films. He also uses songs from the Rabindra Sangeet, written by the creative genius Rabindranath Tagore. As Partha Chatterjee rightly points out, '*The task of assessing Ghatak's contribution to cinema is at once simple and complex. He did, at his best, have the ability to express highly complex, even existential ideas with ease purely through cinematic means* (Chatterjee, 2007)'. It was only Ritwik Ghatak who could weave together the elements of melodrama and realism to create a visual spectacle with a lasting emotional impact.

In the opening sequence of '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*', Nita is shown walking towards her home when her sandal strap breaks. She takes a glance at it, removes her sandals, and continues to walk, without repairing the sandal. She is too busy fulfilling her numerous duties towards her family to look after her own needs. There's no one to witness her struggles as she walks barefoot except us, the audience. In the final sequence, the same story is repeated, albeit with a stranger. A young girl, of age and responsibilities as same as Nita's, is going somewhere when her sandal strap breaks, which is noticed by Nita's brother Shankar. The girl smiles at him and continues to walk without mending the broken sandal. The camera then focuses on the close-up of a teary-eyed Shankar, who remembers his sister and hides his face in his palms with a feeling of regret and remorse. He realises that this circle of suffering is never going to end, and there will always be someone like his sister in all families. It is interesting to note that Shankar was not present to witness Nita's struggles, it is in fact the audiences who have seen both Nita and the unknown girl in the end, but a stranger's sufferings remind Shankar of his own sister's struggles. Being the eldest son of the family, it was his responsibility to look after them, but as he chose to pursue his dreams, his duties were taken up by Nita. He is filled with remorse as he realises that he couldn't support Nita when she needed him the most, and she was left alone to face all the challenges, both external and personal. These two sequences symbolise the never-ending cycle of suffering that the refugees had to go through while trying to survive in the immediate period following their migration.

Socio-political transformations are best understood through their impact on locations and physical spaces, and how they impact the lives of individuals. Ghatak's partition trilogy focused on the spatial transformation in post-partition Bengal through exploring the human lives in refugee colonies, villages across the boundaries, and the city of Calcutta. We get to see the visuals from the refugee colonies, their daily lives and struggles, the constant presence of chaos and uncertainties, and the sheer human courage to withstand all these challenges.

The refugee colony in '*Subarnarekha*' is named '*Nabojiban*', meaning 'A New Life', something that the refugees were striving to build.

'*Komal Gandhar*' from Ghatak's partition trilogy highlights the role of a river as a dividing force. In '*Komal Gandhar*', Bhriku and Anasuya are brought together as a result of their mutual feeling of the loss of their homeland. They are standing on the banks of river Padma, which divides the two Bengals—the West Bengal and the East Bengal.² Anasuya shares the memories of her family and her ancestral house, which lies somewhere on the other side of the Padma River. For Bhriku, the pain and helplessness are more - his ancestral house is just across the river, and the only thing that prevents him from uniting with his homeland is the river Padma herself, as on the other side of the river lies a foreign land, a new country, where he cannot go. He reminisces about the arrival of his family from East to West Bengal during the partition via railway. He tells Anasuya how the railway tracks, which were once a unifying force, had then become a dividing force, leading to the separation of millions of people from their families. The scene ends with taking the audience through the now abandoned railway track, with the chaotic voices from the time of the migration being played in the background. Here, the river, a natural force, and the railway tracks, a man-made marvel act as the symbols of separation. This was one of the poignant scenes from the partition trilogy that shows the trauma of being uprooted, something that Ghatak himself could never recover from.

During one of the initial scenes in '*Subarnarekha*', a young and curious Sita is shown inquiring about their '*notun Badi*', their new home, to her elder brother. Ishwar has no satisfying answer to her question, and the scene cuts to the next visuals. This question about a new home comes just after a scene where a bunch of people are shown reading about Mahatma Gandhi's assassination through a newspaper column, feeling heartbroken and deceived in their new homeland. The same question is repeated twice in the next few scenes, and Ishwar is shown rebuking a person who gives false hopes of a new home on the banks of the beautiful river to an innocent Sita who is blissfully unaware of the harsh realities and uncertainties surrounding her.

Manas Ghosh, in his article 'Nation and Partition: Tagore Reinvented by Ghatak' comments that *'the film looks like a series of torn-apart pieces stitched together'*, highlighting the interrupted and irregular structure of the narrative of *'Subarnarekha'* (Ghosh 2017, p. 333). *'Subarnarekha'* juxtaposes despair with hope and pessimism with optimism. On one hand, it shows the grim picture of the refugee colonies in the early 1950s through their suffering, harsh conditions, escalated violence, chaos, and social rivalries. On the other hand, it also shows a ray of hope with the social welfare activities undertaken by people like Ishwar and others, such as establishing a school in the refugee colony that is shown in the very first scene of the film.

Towards the end of the film, Ishwar takes up the responsibility of raising Sita's son Binu, though his own future is uncertain. Ishwar and his family's constant quest for a new homeland come to a full circle in the end when he is asked the same question about *'notun Badi'*, this time by Sita's son. As they stand on the banks of the river Subarnarekha, Ishwar, who is feeling helpless, lost all his hopes, is comforted by Binu's world of innocence - the same Ishwar, who was once against the idea of giving false hopes of a new homeland to an innocent child, has now changed (Caesar 2017, p. 36). Even after losing everything, there's still some hope left, which encourages him to assure Binu of a new home on the banks of Subarnarekha, just like the one that Binu's mother always used to describe and talk about. The quest for a new home begins and ends on the banks of the river.

To conclude, it can be said that Bengali cinema has immensely contributed to capturing the socio-political transitions in the post-partition West Bengal. Through memorable adaptations of classic novels and engaging narratives, Bengali cinema has been instrumental in introducing realism on screen by narrating the stories of innumerable East Bengali refugees who were struggling to reconstruct their lives after a forced migration. The trauma of partition has been reflected in the art, literature, as well as cinema of West Bengal for many years, with one of the earliest films about partition refugees dating back to the 1950s. Amongst numerous artists and filmmakers who brought partition on screen, Ritwik Ghatak's lifelong commitment to chronicling the pain and sufferings of the partition refugees gave us the 'Partition trilogy'. Through *'Meghe Dhaka Tara'*, *'Komal Gandhar'*, and *'Subarnarekha'*, Ghatak presented a never-seen-before, unsettling, and impactful narrative of

the partition for Indian audiences. The partition trilogy was neither about the political history of the partition nor about any unrealistic, superhuman, courageous stories of heroism. It was about the sheer human willingness to survive even in the toughest of conditions, to honour the selfless sacrifices of innumerable known and unknown individuals to support their families, and to give a voice to the uprooted, homeless refugees and their struggle to survive and find a new home. These films are vital in reconstructing, analysing the past and humanising a landmark socio-political event that changed Indian history forever. It is a much-debated topic whether films can be considered a tool for understanding history, but no one can deny their strength in presenting a lively picture of the past, something that can only be achieved through an impactful audio-visual medium. Nonetheless, filmmakers like Ritwik Ghatak have added to the authenticity and credibility of films as an academic subject. As someone who had lived through the traumatising events following the partition, and had faced the pain of separation from his homeland, Ghatak's films had an authentic reflection of that trauma, making his films a visual document of the partition. Today, motion pictures have advanced and evolved through decades of development, and they will keep advancing. The value of films as a source of entertainment will always be indubitable, but through careful and constant analysis, they can develop as an indispensable source of history.

Notes:

¹ Erstwhile East Pakistan (until 1971 Partition) and East Bengal, until 1947 Partition)

² The same Padma River reappears as a protagonist in one of Ghatak's documentaries, 'Durbar Gati Padma' (The Turbulent Padma, 1971), produced and directed in support of the Bangladesh liberation movement.

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From Silent Voters to Ensuring Women Representation in Democratic Institutions as Equal Stake Holders

Anuranjita Wadhwa

Abstract

Political Equality is central to the success of dynamic and vibrant democracy. Comprising fifty per cent of the population women as citizens are entitled to fair share in the decision-making structures of a state. However, achieving gender parity in democratic life is far off as data shows low numbers of women are at the centre stage of decision making worldwide. Indian electoral politics has seen a gradual increase in female exercising suffrage. Yet their underrepresentation in legislatures is a denial of space in the democratic politics. Despite Indian constitutional guarantee of providing 'equality of opportunity' without any discrimination, substantive equality remains elusive. In forums of decision-making bodies, women's participation ensures accountability and strives towards representation. The paper explores the gradual increase in voter turnout of women is an indicator of asserting citizenship rights amongst them and the growing trust in the efficacy of translating votes to delivery of social welfare goods. The deepening of democracy depends on extending the right to vote exercised by women to making their presence in legislative bodies as decision makers.

Key Words: Women, representation, democracy, voters

Introduction

Mass democracies were made possible by modern democracy based on liberty and equality. From a classical conception, democracy broadened its horizons to include all rather than being confined to a small group of prerogatives. The key elements of the rule of people as envisaged in democracy brought citizens at the centre of decision making. The connotations of citizens have undergone change and does not limit to a status accorded to the privileged few. In modern times, democracy is a political system seeks to involve citizens in decision-making processes. As the concept of democracy expanded, citizens could influence existing political institutions. It is, however, impossible to conclude that the shift from sovereign to people-centered sovereignty would result in an improvement of the status quo without considering the social

environment in which politics takes place. Political freedom and equality underline the substantive assumption, as democracy is not about elections only. Confining democracy to electoral definition calls for its expansion to overcome participation of citizenry as voters. The idea of democracy professes to live under a law made with due consent thus freeing from unnecessary control, domination and denial of freedom at the core of making people supreme. Moreover, the claim to freedom is to be extended to all affected by the decisions of government, making the value of political equality as the forerunner to political freedom. Democracy embodies the value of political freedom wherein citizens decide issues effected through decision making process. Freedom is not limited to the chosen few made a cry for all citizens as Munck (2014) cites Rousseau understanding of freedom as ‘obedience to a self-prescribed law’ (p.11). The substantive assumption underlying the democratic form of political system subsumes electorate deciding who should constitute government and the power to affect the policy status quo. Democratic values of freedom and equality are approximated in an electoral system by transforming votes into seats in law making.

Democracy is not only about the content or outcomes of these decisions, that is, what is decided, but also about the methods, that is, who has the authority to make legally binding decisions and how such decisions are made (ibid., p. 18). Democratization has changed the conception of electoral democracy going back to representative government as an original form of government. The theory of representative democracy, in the words of Nadia Urbinati ‘amplifies the meaning of political presence itself because it makes voice its most active and consonant manifestation and judgment about just and unjust laws and policies its content’ (Urbinati 2006, 19). She further adds elections ‘create’ the institution of representation but do not ‘make’ the representatives; at the very least, they make accountable and limited governance, but not representative government (ibid., p. 19).

Objective of the Study

The paper explores the higher turnout amongst women in India is due to their increased belief in the political system to provide welfare social security net promised by political parties contesting state assembly polls. It correlates that with increased voter turnout amongst women,

increase in number of women representatives would endure accountability of the party in power.

To expand the procedural conception of democracy to the existing social, economic, and cultural reality in the context of the ideals of political liberty and equality.

To extend the rise of silent voters in electoral politics to fair political representation in legislatures and policy making institutions to address voices unheard

The objective of the paper is to advance understanding of factors like institutional mechanism to enhance women representation in legislatures

Revisioning the Idea of Political Representation

Emergence of representational democracies with citizens as loci of sovereign power led to a balance between elected elites and the dynamics of democratic society. Representation came to be understood as presenting citizens voices, opinions, ideas in the political field as to represent is to simply 'make present again,' according to Pitkin (1967), who stated this in *The Concept of Representation*. The definition implies that political actors as representatives in institutions of decision-making convert ideas to decisions and policies. However, with the presence of multitude claims conflicting and competing to make to decisions brings forth the paradoxical nature of the understanding of the concept. By providing a definition of political representation, Hanna Pitkin definition has extended the discussion on comprehending this concept in modern times (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2006). She identifies four views of representation-formalistic: the necessity of institutional arrangements to begin the process of authorization and accountability; descriptive: how far representatives identify with the represented, by way of common interest or experiences; symbolic: the extent to which representative is able to invoke response in represented; substantive: policy preferences advanced by representative serves the interest of constituents (Pitkin 1967, pp. 10-11). Pitkin's understanding has generated renewed interest in revisioning of the concept. Her view on descriptive representation not necessarily making representatives accountable has initiated discussions on representing the interest of the marginalised sections of the society.

Political Representation is increasingly important in sustenance of democratic fabric of the society. As societies have come to be recognized plural with diverse ideas demanding a change in the contours of political society to negotiation and deliberations in a complex political landscape. The traditional understanding of political of representation in terms of principal agent relationship has called for broadening its scope to exclude or include divergent perspectives in the social fabric. The redefining of minimalist democracy to give political voice to the social environment has set the tone of redefining the relationship between citizens and policy makers (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000, 2004). The popularisation of participatory democracy felicitated through deliberation and discussions, ignored the inclusion of the marginalised, minorities. Inclusion and exclusion in political representation in the writings of Phillips 1995, 1998; Williams, Mansbridge in 1998,1999 respectively carried forward by Young 2000; Dovi 2002 too made the topic a subject needing rethinking. David Plotke, wrote in *Representation is Democracy* (1997, p.19) that, ‘the opposite of representation is not participation, the opposite of representation is exclusion and the opposite of participation is abstention’. These developments needed a renewed interest in the conception beyond ballot to reflect changing political realities. The traditional liberal conception of understanding representation is achieved by conducting periodic elections and representation of pluralism as reflected in policies. However, there is an urgency to reflect on the activity of representation of women to widen the relation between legislator and constituents. It has been argued by Williams that disadvantaged groups are better represented by their own members, thus allowing mistrust to be ‘at least partially repaired’ (Williams 1998, p. 14). Going beyond institutional design in terms of authorisation and accountability, neglect of women voices in institutions of representation calls for guarantee of presence.

Fair Political Representation for Women: A Sustainable Objective

Gendered division of labour has discouraged women to perform role outside their home restricting them to undertake ‘care’ unpaid work. With the initiation of the process of societal modernization there has been loud voice for men to undertake the responsibility of rearing and caring children freeing women to enter public domain and paid labour market. The 1992 European Summit on Women in Decision-Making, held in Athens, emphasized the importance of giving women's voices a voice in institutions that make decisions (Smith 2013).

Pitkin in her work provided an integral structure of the concept, however neglect of women in representative institutions has ignored the interconnections between the four dimensions of representation. With elections as the mainstay of promoting democracy premised on liberty and equality, citizens express faith in the representatives with whom they can identify by adopting policies serving their interest. Worldwide women constitute fifty percent of the population, their presence in political structures of decision making is giving representation to women's interest distinct from men. Making their presence in political policy would be realizing the normative value of justice by providing an opportunity of right to participate in deciding their quality of life. The presence of women would initiate the process of gender mainstreaming of institutions of power and influence (Bayer and Mishler 2005, pp. 2-3). Anne Philip in *The Politics of Presence*, posits gender parity in institutions of policy making to address women needs and political views. The people who are voted to office 'must' be on an equal footing. Women experiences give rise to certain needs, interests, and concerns that will not be fully addressed in a politics controlled by men. The solution to this issue requires equality among individuals elected to office in addition to equal voting rights (Phillips 1995, p. 66).

To fulfil the aspirations of half of the constituents, women must be represented in representative institutions and address the problem arising from democratic governance deficit. United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development embarks to achieve sustainability by including 17 goals (SDGs), specifically addresses gender equality (SDG5) as fundamental to achieve SDGs by 2030. In briefings to the European Parliament in March 2019, Apap and others cite SDG 5, with an objective to guarantee women equal chances for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (Apap, Claros and Zamfir 2009). The UN looks at two metrics to gauge progress: (1) the percentage of women who hold seats in local and national legislatures; and (2) the percentage of women in managerial roles (ibid., 1).

Data reveals that women are underrepresented in political offices and at all levels of decision-making, indicating that political parity with men is still a long way off. The 2021 World Economic Forum saw the release of the Global Gender Gap Report, includes four dimensions: political empowerment, economic opportunity and participation, educational attainment, and health and survival. The data on political achievement reveal a 2.4 per cent increase in the gender gap from the report's 2020 edition. The survey noted that only 26.1 per cent of the

almost 35,500 parliamentary seats and just 22.6 per cent of the more than 3,400 ministers globally in the 156 nations covered by The Global Gender Gap Index are held by women (Global Gender Gap Report 2021,5). Furthermore, as of January 15, 2021, there had never been a female leader of state in 81 countries, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Achieving gender parity in politics at the current rate of advancement will take 145.5 years, according to the World Economic Forum. The Report further states that more women are participating in law-making institutions than ever before, and Togo and Belgium elected their first female prime ministers in 2020 and 2019, respectively. It will take another 130 years, or not until 2063, for women to be represented equally in politics, based on the current underrepresentation.

Women Leadership and Political Participation: India Experience

A vivid reminder of the political reality of men's resistance to granting women political power is the fact that India rated 140th out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Representation of women in democratic institutions recorded a significant drop as there were 9.1 per cent ministers in 2021 in comparison to 23.1 per cent in 2019. Inter Parliamentary Union has shown that only 14.44 per cent of Indian women are elected to the 17th Lok Sabha, a house representing people. Election Commission of India compilation of data has brought forth disheartening figures of a meagre 10.5 per cent women parliamentarians out of the total members with the state legislature putting up a dismal figure of pitiable 9 per cent women Members of Legislative Assemblies. Neerja Chowdhury in *The 40 Per cent Promise* comments that in every field, women have broken down barriers and made their mark. Their representation in politics is still disgraceful (Chowdhury 2021).

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution promote the spirit of the democratic principle of government for, of, and by the people by granting women a 33 per cent reservation. As the common concerns and challenges of women need to be included into policy, increasing the representation of women in decision-making institutions at all levels of government is essential for boosting governance legitimacy. As women are involved in domestic and household work their representation in governance structures proves beneficial to women in adopting policies helpful in meeting their demands and hence leads to sustainable development

of the society. With the adoption of legislation at the local level of governance, women representation has greatly increased to share the responsibility of governance.

The statistical data on political participation of women as voters, representation in political structures and as political leaders explains their political engagement in the country.

The electoral politics in India since 1990s has seen an upsurge in women casting their votes. As far back as the data goes, men have consistently voted in greater numbers than women in India. In the 1962 General elections, women turnout was pitifully 46.75 per cent, which increased marginally by 20 per cent points to 67.18 per cent by 2019. In comparison men's voter turnout percentage in the period 1962-2019 grew by 5 percentage points from 61.2 per cent to 67.08 per cent. The voter turnout for men in comparison with women was high by 8.4 per cent in 2004, but this gap reduced to 1.8 per cent in 2014 general elections. In state assembly polls in many states -Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh since 2016, women share of turnout is higher in comparison to male counterpart. According to Milan Vaishnav (2018), women really participated in greater numbers than men in two-thirds of the recent state elections in India. A 'remarkable development in a strongly patriarchal, traditional society' (Vaishnav 2018).

Women: A New Vote Bank

In southern India, women had long since asserted their status as a strong and independent voting bloc, influencing the election results in favour of movie stars who later became politicians MGR in Tamil Nadu and NTR in Andhra Pradesh. Women are credited in Nitish Kumar's win in Bihar legislative Assembly poll in 2010. Women's votes have now become crucial to a political party's success since more women are participating in electoral politics, according to Sanjay Kumar (Kumar 2022). Bharti Jain notes that in Uttar Pradesh ingrained patriarchy has pushed women to vote according to male wishes for decades, female voters may soon outnumber male voters (Jain 2022).

The significant rise of female voting bloc in the general elections since 2014 and in state assembly polls over the last couple of years is accounted to women appealing promise and policies adopted by the party in power. The rise of women voters means that their rights and issues are now concern for policy makers. Most political parties reflect women needs and make

promise of financial assistance in their manifestos to win women votes. Women turnout has become the decisive make or break factor for political parties to gain power. As women are more politically successive governments at the national and state level are attending to the needs and demands of women voters. The implementation of initiatives like Ujjwala, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jan Dhan, and Swachh Bharat toilets are among the major public safety or health care issues that women have sought to have addressed by political parties in recent years. For example in Bihar assembly polls Nitish Kumar pro women policies helped him to return to power with a narrow victory margin more than half of the seats won by the NDA were in constituencies where women turnout surpassed men voters. The landslide victory won by Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi polls was the trust women voters had in the schemes launched by the party in power favouring women like free bus ride for women announced by the AAP government before elections.

Increase in women turnout has led to recognition of women as an independent (from male bastion) vote bank. As literacy rate amongst women has shown positive trends, girls and women socialisation and independent decision maker without being influenced by other family members along with increase in media exposure are key factors in the political engagement of females. Women, have emerged silent voters having a powerful impact on the decisive mandate received by PM Narendra Modi, and the chief minister Naveen Patnaik, Mamta Banerjee, Yogi Adityanath. With successive assembly elections women are target groups of the political parties with big promises are made for women focused on their welfare.

Political Presence of Women in Representative Institutions

Representation is intrinsic to democracy as decisions taken for the people must be by the people which means that those who will be impacted by those decisions must have a chance to influence them. Most democratic theorists hold that individuals are morally and legally equal and individuals are equally capable of autonomy with respect to citizenship, that is, conscious self-determination all other things begin equal; it follows that collective decisions affecting self-determination should include those affected, writes Urbinati (Urbinati and Warren 2008, pp. 387-412).

Female presence in higher political office is pitiable low, particularly at state level, women are not in position of institutional power and decision making as shown in the data for successive elections.

- The 17th General Election included 716 female candidates. 78 of them were chosen to serve as MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha. 62 of the 543 MPs chosen in 2014 were female. Out of the 245 members of the upper house, 25 are women (PRS Legislative Research 2019)
- The percentage of female MPs in the Lok Sabha has risen steadily from 5 per cent in the first Lok Sabha to 14 per cent in the 17th (ibid.)
- Despite a rise in recent years, there are still fewer women in parliament than in several other nations. These include Bangladesh (21 per cent), South Africa (43 per cent), the United Kingdom (32 per cent), and Rwanda (61 per cent) (ibid.)
- In the World Gender Gap Report (2021), India is rated 28th from the bottom in terms of the representation of women (International Growth Centre 2022).

Despite constitutional guarantee of providing equality of opportunity and India a signatory of comprehensive framework like 1995 Beijing Declarations, CEDAW women face socio cultural barriers to participate in managing public affairs. The number of women in parliament, state legislative assemblies, cabinet ministers, and heads of government at the federal or state level since independence is stark evidence of how severely constrained women's access to the power structure is due to the idea that politics is a male-dominated field. Discrimination against women has deprived them to develop their capabilities to participate in managing decision for public. Added to this institutional mechanism dominated by male prevent women in occupying political positions in political institutions. Welfare schemes adopted by successive government has improved human development index however institutions have the prime responsibility recognising women presence in a critical mass to represent one half of the population.

Institutional Mechanism to Promote Representation

Political parties are important units central for advancing representation. They are identified as 'gatekeepers' to positions in decision making, their perception has a significant bearing on enhancing women representation. The institutionalization of gender equality objectives and

methods in politics and political parties is a critical first step towards establishing equality between men and women in public life and decision-making. This is accomplished through fostering the favourable conditions required for the meaningful and significant representation of women (Kandawasvika 2016). Political parties have acknowledged that women voters have the potential to become a constituency whose voting decisions are no longer controlled by men. Emergence of women voter as a constituency is a step to improvise on the resource so far not representing the vast section of population. Pragmatic steps have been taken by political parties to boost the representation of women in institutions of power, like many states provide 50% reservation for women in rural local bodies. Women vote ensured Nitish Kumar and Mamta Banerjee in Bihar and West Bengal state assembly polls in 2020 and 2021 respectively. The government in power since 2014 has implemented women-friendly social programs like women's restrooms, the Ujjwala system, and Beti Padhao Beti Bachao, which have increased support for the ruling party among female voters. Commitment made by a national party at the UP-state assembly election in 2022 to reserve 40 per cent seats for women candidates in the election is seen as putting pressure on other parties opposed to women Reservation Bill pending since 1996 to follow the suit in competitive politics.

Another important institutional intervention to equal representation is electoral gender quotas are necessary as gender imbalance in politics will not come by itself. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in 1994, established 33 per cent quotas for women at the local level of governance. However, it has been more than two decades since the 1996 Women's Reservation Bill, which reserves 33 per cent of seats in the lower house of parliament and state legislative bodies to be reserved for women made history with the passage of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam which became law in 2023. Indian politics has changed for the better. The above fast track strategy is complimentary to the process of gradualism of providing resources like education and health facilities enable women to bring knowledge and experience to run the affairs of governance. The incremental track' is viewed as removing prejudice against women in undertaking public responsibility along with domestic.

The perception generally held that politics as an arena of men stands diluted with the emergence of female voters voting in numbers and at times more in comparison to men. Democracy guarantees equality not only to exercise voting right but to represent the interest of citizens for whom policies are made.

Conclusion

Political processes have developed with the broadening of the political concept of democracy to encompassing the social environment. The procedural conception of democracy cannot function in isolation from the complex practical realities -social economic and cultural factors. Women representation in the structures of power and decision making has not kept pace with the democratic upsurge of women electorate. Fair representation demands fair distribution in legislative bodies as political representation is always what is represented by the representative. The concepts of liberty and equality are affected by social variables that have an impact on the functioning of politics, since unequal access to resources is a challenge in defining what makes a country democratic. The democratic deficit—here defined as the unequal distribution of power between men and women in public decision-making—is influenced by the practical reality of the resources available to women.

Electoral participation and representation are the mainstay of democracy. Democracy requires that citizens take an active role in the political process. This idea is supported by the notion that women should have an equal opportunity to participate in electoral politics as representatives and voters. Democracy also includes the right to be elected, in addition to the right to cast a ballot. The efficacy of the political system depends in giving representation to the voices of women as accountability of the state hinges on satisfaction of citizen needs. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023 strives to make a defining mark in the democratic journey of India. It is widely acknowledged in international treaties that women are more likely to address women's policy making from a women's perspective in order to make qualitative changes for women. The aim is not just equality of opportunity in decision making but equality in outcomes from the decisions and policies aimed to address gender biases in public actions.

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Identity Politics and Image-making through Twitter

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Introduction

India has a history of communal conflicts. Even 21st century is not bereft of communal riots. The society is plagued by riots between the largest majority group of India, that is the Hindus and the largest minority group that is the Muslims. A communal riot is the most germane time for politicians to play identity politics. In recent decades, identity politics in India has shifted from large movements and collective action to personalised form of politics (Bennett, 2012, 26). The end result of this personalised form of politics is political image making. Through social media sites like Twitter politicians, build up their image and consolidate their identity through politics based on religion.

In the wake of Delhi communal riots 2020 (to be discussed subsequently), it was observed that some of the political leaders from the ruling party at the centre were keen on building up their political image on Twitter. They were eager to make their Pro-Hindutva image on Twitter as well as were dandy to project their secular credentials. This study aims to explore as to how BJP politicians exploit Twitter to build up their pro-Hindutva image as well as their secular image. This will be done through analysis of the tweets through which politicians build up their pro-Hindutva and secular image during Delhi communal riots.

Delhi Communal Riots and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was enacted by the India's parliament in December 2019. The implementation of this act brought a social, religious and political storm throughout the country. There were huge Pro and anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) sit-ins and protests all over the country. Earlier the anti-CAA anger was confined to the North-east Region, but later on it engulfed the entire country with ordinary people and women also joining the protest. In Shaheen Bagh's locality of Delhi, many Muslim women along with the people of other sects went for an indefinite sit-in protest (BBC 2020). The most unfortunate result of

CAA was the Delhi communal riots which led to the deaths of 53 people (mostly Muslims) and hundreds got injured (The Hindu 2020).

The Act was communal in nature. The act granted Indian citizenship before December 1914 to illegal migrants of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian religious minorities, who had suffered religious persecution or fear of the same from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Muslims from these countries have not been given any opportunity under this provision. This was perhaps the first time when religion had been used as a benchmark for citizenship. The amendment also relaxed the residence requirement for naturalization of these migrants from twelve years to six (E-gazette). This Act will make otherwise illegal Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian immigrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan eligible for citizenship by naturalization, after six years of residence; while similarly placed, Muslim immigrants will not be eligible for citizenship by naturalization. And even if eligible otherwise, will need to wait for 11 years (Poddar 2018, 108). The sentiments flowing on the ground soon got translated on Twitter engaging the major politicians of the country especially from the ruling party at the centre justifying the implementation of CAA.

Theoretical Overview

There has been a considerable literature regarding visual image building on social media by politicians but very few content was found on political image making through text.

Communal Violence and the BJP

The BJP has always benefitted from communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims. It has led to mobilization and polarization of Hindu votes in favor of the party during elections (Saluja2016, 9). So naturally BJP leaders want themselves to be seen as representative of Hindus and hence are eager to project their pro-Hindutva image. The Hindutva ideology is aggressively practiced by Sangh Pariwar (the parent organization of the BJP). This ideology firmly believes in India is the land of Hindus, and the Muslims are foreigners. Ziya US Salam of the Frontline finds that the new bill (CAB) endorses the “othering” concept of Muslims propagated by the RSS ideologue M.S. Golwalkar (The Print 2019), and earlier by the Hindu Mahasabha’s icon V.D. Savarkar (Frontline 2019). Golwalkar was of the view that only those

were eligible to be Indians whose *pitrabhoomi* (fatherland) and *punyabhoomi* (Frontline 2019) (sacred land) was in India. Those whose *pitrabhoomi* was in India but *punyabhoomi* elsewhere could not be regarded as true Indians.

Venkitesh Ramakrishnan (Frontline 2020) sees implementation of CAA to be of more political measure rather than serving a social cause. Social fragmentation and withering of group loyalties has transformed identity politics more into that of personalised politics. Individual personal action has replaced collective action (Bennett 2012, 30). Now, it has shifted from “general politics based on universal progress to politics of identity based on gender, local, religious or ethnic identities (Kaya 2007, 708)”.

Identity politics has become more of an opportunity for politicians to establish their hegemony. BJP has been forerunner in establishing its hegemony especially after its ascension to power in 2014 further strengthening its identity politics based on religion. It is widely believed that after Hindu-Muslim riots, Hindu voters rally around those political parties that seem to protect the interests of the Hindus (Biggs & Dhattiwala 2012, 490). BJP calls itself the representative of the Hindus. BJP after winning the elections again in 2019 has been upfront in introducing populist political schemes like the abolition of article 370 in Kashmir or implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to impress Hindus and make them believe that BJP is serious about its people, that is Hindus.

The government also wants to implement the NRC-National register for citizens at a pan-India level. NRC is the National Register of Citizens. It identified illegal immigrants from Assam but ever since its implementation BJP is emphasizing to implement it at all India level. It suggests bringing in legislation that will empower the Indian government to identify infiltrators, detain them and finally deport them (Economic Times 2019). The problem with NRC is that it creates a kind of fear psychosis inside the minds of the people.

BJP always blamed for fanning communalism and Congress also lately accused of adopting a kind of “soft Hindutva” has made Secularism in India a dirty word. Seeing the state of affairs, famous political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot questions the secular credentials of Indian polity (Jaffrelot 2019, 5). But anti-CAA protests have united many secular parties against BJP and BJP also to save its face has mellowed down in its rhetoric against Muslims. BJP deleted the

controversial tweet from Amit Shah his Lok Sabha campaign remarks on pan-India NRC. To quote the tweet “We will ensure implementation of NRC in the entire country. We will remove every single infiltrator from the country, except Buddha, Hindus and Sikhs”. This must have been done to mellow down its anti-Muslim strategy. Once again secularism seems to find its importance in Indian polity.

Political Image

BJP leaders are quite conscious about their political image and are always in search of strengthening their image. Political image making is not only restricted to visual messages but both visual and verbal messages can contribute in making symbols which further can provide a “shorthand cue” to the audiences for the recognition and improvement of specific characteristic of an individual or an organization (Strachan & Kendall 2004, 141). Image making depends upon the ethos, that is the image of the politician, the pathos-mobilization of affect and the logos, the cognitive strategies (Flanagan 2014, 48). Scammell finds political image making to be quite pertinent in current situation as politics of twenty first century is a “non-stop battle of competing images”(Scammell 2015, 8) . The main aim of political image making is to influence public in such a way that their political attitudes are prone to changes and can eventually affect their decision making may be during election times in favor of the political candidate (Strachan & Kendall 2004).

Personalised forms of political participation have become the new culture especially with the help of digital technologies such as Twitter and Facebook. This personalised form of politics is manifested through political image making by BJP leaders and that they do easily and speedily through social media sites like Twitter.

Twitter and Politicians

In social media, communication is self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many (Castells 2007, 248). On social media, politicians can have one to one interaction with the users, can get instant feedback and also are able to form a litany of followers who eventually form an echo-chamber where only

the idea or perspective of politician gets resonated and users with different views are severely trolled. Large number of followers result in building up of a strong political image of politician who find Twitter the ultimate medium to project their image.

Twitter success story as a political tool can be attributed to its unique interaction pattern. A twitter user can follow another user without any reciprocity (Usherwood & Wright 2017, 373). Also, tweets made by prominent political leaders are reported upon and discussed in the next day's newspapers, published both in English and vernacular languages, which takes the tweet's message even to people outside the Internet's reach. Twitter also mobilizes support by promoting their party and requesting people to vote for their party (Miragliotta 2012, 7).

Results

Pro-Hindu Image. Majority population of India is Hindus. As stated earlier in background section, BJP and Sangh Pariwar always show itself as the true representative of Hindus. The same gets reflected in the tweets of BJP politicians.

Subramanian Swamy, a staunch Hindu nationalist is known for his fiery tweets. In one of his following tweet he gives the impression of Hindus for BJP and BJP for Hindus.

I do not hate the Anti CAA agitators since their violent agitation are expanding and solidifying BJP's Hindu voter base

Narendra Modi, always known for his pro-Hindu image here asks people to listen to, Jaggi Vasudev (Financial Express 2020), a spiritual Hindu guru on CAA. While, Jaggi Guru's main followers are Hindus, therefore Modi indirectly asks support of Hindus on CAA.

Do hear this lucid explanation of aspects relating to CAA and more by @SadhguruJV . He provides historical context, brilliantly highlights our culture of brotherhood. He also calls out the misinformation by vested interest groups. #IndiaSupportsCAA

Amit Malviya is known for his radical views on Twitter. He leaves no opportunity bashing Muslims to show that he is a staunch supporter for Hindu cause. In the following tweet Malviya, communicates Muslims as the rioters and Hindus as the aggrieved section of the society.

The information to rioters to get on roads of Delhi and avenge was disseminated through loud speakers from Mosques..... If this is the situation in the capital of the country, what's happening with the minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan can be easily. That's why #CAB so important.

This ABP report shows how Bangladeshis indulge in violence in Ahmedabad... Those opposing CAA and the idea of NRC are supporting these infiltrators.

*Here by infiltrators Malviya means 'Muslims'.

CAA proposes to give Hindus and other minorities, who fled religious persecution from neighbouring Islamic countries and came to India before 31Dec2014, citizenship. But what did we see? Muslims, woke activists and Bollywood type come out and riot against this humanitarian law...

In this tweet he again shows Hindus to be a vulnerable group while Muslims are shown as the rioters.

Swapan Das Gupta has been very vocal on the issue of CAA and has been supporting the Hindu refugees from the neighboring countries. Following tweets confirm this

The main beneficiaries of the new Citizenship provisions are Hindu Bengalis from East Bengal—those colloquially called 'Bangals'. Why do India's liberals hate Bangals so much? Just asking because I am a half-Bangal

On The eve of 2020, I'm sad there are fashionable people on dharna in the Delhi cold to prevent refugees from Bangladesh securing Indian citizenship. They hate these unfortunate people who fled their homes & came to India to remain Hindu. Their heart bleeds for Palestine though.

This tweet of Swapan has an emotional touch. He says that despite all the hardships the Bangladesh refugees have come to India and have not converted to other religion. They are and will remain Hindus. Swapan mocks at anti-CAA protestors saying that they have become so pro-Muslim that they bleed for the atrocities done on Muslims in Palestine but have no sympathy for Bangladeshi Hindus who have come to the land of Hindus.

Sambit Patra, a firebrand spokesperson of BJP rebukes anti-CAA protestors for defaming the Hindu symbol of Om and indirectly tells that Sambit's Hinduism is intact and no one can take his faith away from himself

So this is what's the actual agenda? What's Ohm the sacred symbol of the Hindus got to do with the #CAA ? And as expected @INCIndia President Sonia Gandhi supports this! Ohm is the eternal,ever present "Anhad Nad" ...try as hard ..you will never ever succeed in erasing my Ohm. Ohm Shanti

This tweet by **Amit Shah** in a way reflect the resolve of his party of removing article 370 and building Ram temple to please Hindus. Amit shah effectively put his pro Hindu image before his followers.

We are saying it from the beginning that we will abrogate article 370, build Ram temple, will not allow triple talaq, CAA and NRC must be implemented. We are here not only to run the government but are to resolve the miseries of the nation. Yes obstacles may come before us, but our leader and we both have courage and determination.

Yogi Adityanath known for his radical Hindutva views, through his tweet mentions the name of Lord Rama, one of the prime Hindu deities. In a way, confirming his pro-Hindu image.

CAA is an ointment on the wound caused on humanity by religious barbarism existing in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It's the path to provide shelter to refugees in the same way as Lord Ram did and it's also the path t.o provide dignified life to the prosecuted. We are grateful to respected Pradhanmantriji #IndiaSupportsCAA.

Secular Image

The beginning part of the preamble (mygov.in) of the Indian constitution states that "We the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to...." The Citizenship Amendment Act is said

to contentious (Economic Times 2019) by many scholars because it discriminates against Muslims and violates the right to equality enshrined in the constitution. Since the Muslims form the largest religious minority group in India (minorityrights.org), therefore the sentiments of Muslims cannot be ignored. Many politicians through their tweets have been communicating their secular image through CAA.

Subramanian Swamy, a pro-Hindutva campaigner also wants to convey a message that he is a secular man. The following tweet subtly reflects this.

I was wondering how so many people can be so stupid to believe that CAA is anti-Indian Muslims. Now I understand when I find so many Hindus believe that TTT has been Christianized and that TTD chairman is a Christian. When I ask for evidence they make allegation against me

In this tweet he tries to show that CAA is not anti-Muslims and he is an innocent man against whom people put false allegations.

Narendra Modi who has been severely criticized by the opposition for bringing the controversial and communal bill has been using social media deftly to communicate his secular image. The following tweet shows this

From Barhait in Jharkhand, which is the land of brave people who have been martyred for truth and justice, I once again assured the people of India- CAA will not affect any Indian, practising any faith. Congress should stop creating panic and dividing people.

In this tweet, Modi assures Muslims that their citizenship will not be snatched and congress should stop dividing people.

Amit Malviya who is considered to be quite radical in his tweets is also communicating him being secular through his following tweet

No Indian citizen, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Christian, Parsi, Buddhist or of any other denomination, will be affected by the Citizenship Amendment Act...

Sambit Patra again a fiery spokesperson of BJP communicates his secular image through this tweet

Addressing a Press Conference today at @BJP4India Headquarters on “how the opposition, particularly the @INCIndia is misleading & instigating minorities in the name of CAA

In this tweet Sambit blames congress for misleading minorities in the name of CAA.

Amit Shah, the man who is alleged to be the central figure behind CAA and NRC, through his tweet tries to mellow down his radical image

I want to clarify again that none of the citizens belonging to any religion should be afraid. No one can throw you out. And special facility will be provided to minorities from government because opposition has instilled fear among them. But infiltrators living in the country will have to leave.

Through this tweet, Shah wants to reassure Muslims that government is with them and they shouldn't worry of NRC.

Conclusion

We can see clearly that identity politics is practiced aggressively on Twitter by Indian politicians. The politicians seem desperate to consolidate their political image on Twitter. Despite playing religious card in times of communal conflict, they want to build up a 'secular image'. BJP leaders like Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Amit Malviya, and Sambit Patra known for their radical views on Hindutva normally exhibit their delight while practicing and propagating Hindutva but want to convey their secular persona on Twitter. It is surprising that they are tweeting in favor of minorities whom BJP didn't give a single seat in Lok Sabha election 2014 or 2019. Secularism for Indian politicians is like a cherry who everyone aspires to put on their cake of political image.

Naturally, 'Pro-Hindu image' has been close to the politicians from BJP. And this is reflected in their tweets considerably. Interestingly, all the tweets that show communication of being

pro-Hindu have been from the BJP politicians only. All the BJP politicians selected for this study show their inclination for being a staunch Hindu supporter. Subramanian Swamy, Narendra Modi, Amit Malviya, Swapan Dasgupta, Sambit Patra and Amit Shah-all from BJP don't miss any chance to communicate their image of a Hindu supporter. None of the politicians other than BJP were able to communicate their pro-Hindu image. Swapan Das Gupta from BJP targets Mamata Banerjee through his tweets showing sympathy towards Hindu migrants from Bangladesh. Amit Malviya seems very harsh in his tweets when he targets the minority that is Muslims directly. It seems that he wants to project himself as an ardent supporter of Hindu cause and for that he can use any kind of language against Muslims in his tweets. Big leaders like Narendra Modi and Amit Shah tweeted cautiously but were able to communicate their message of pro-Hindu subtly. We can see that the identity politics in India is now religion based and Indian politicians are busy building their political image either as Hindu sympathizer or as a secular politician. BJP leaders especially very deftly want to carry both the secular and Pro-Hindutva image.

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B. R. Ambedkar's Journalism: Caste, Nation And Nationalism

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Abstract

The myriad writings and speeches of B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution have received considerable attention in the academic community. However, the same cannot be said for his vernacular writings as a journalist. He was the founder and editor of several newspapers-Mooknayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, Janata, and Prabuddha Bharat but the non-translation of his Marathi writings in other languages for a long time kept his work away from the public gaze. This paper attempts to explore two newspapers started by him namely Mooknayak (1920) and Bahishkrit Bharat (1927-1929) amidst the rapid growth of several Indian-owned newspapers disseminating nationalist ideology among the Indians during the colonial period. This paper shows that Ambedkar's journalistic writings not only provide vivid accounts of the lower caste movement in Maharashtra but also throw light on his construction of a counter-narrative built from the bottom-up perspective of the Untouchables against the dominant imagination of nation and nationalism articulated by upper-caste owned vernacular and English language newspapers.

Keywords: Ambedkar, journalism, caste, nation

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, "print capitalism" played a pivotal role in the rise of national consciousness in the Indian subcontinent (Anderson 1983, 36). The intertwined forces of nationalism and anti-imperialism gained momentum after the Indian National Congress which spearheaded the national movement became adamant on the transfer of power to the Indians. This development propelled the growth of Indian-owned newspapers that began to invoke a common history, territory, and culture for large-scale mobilization of the Indian masses against colonial rule. In the Bombay Presidency, Bal Gangadhar Tilak emerged as a popular Congress leader from the extremist wing. He helped in laying the religious-cultural foundations of Indian nationalism through the medium of his Marathi newspaper, *Kesari*. This form of religious nationalism acquired a militant shape under the influence of Hindu Mahasabha which proposed an exclusive vision of the Hindu nation. The

imposition of repressive British laws contributed to growing unrest among the peasantry and industrial workers that paved the way for the emergence of Indian communist leaders to spread their ideological influence among the lower rungs of the society. During this period of great nationalist ferment which witnessed the emergence of several contending nationalist actors, the arrival of Ambedkar as the sole spokesman of the lower castes significantly challenged the legitimacy of the national movement, communist leaders, and the Hindu right-wing compelling them to address the concerns of the lower castes in their grand narratives of freedom.

Ambedkar's intellectual and historical engagement with the modern phenomenon of nation has often intrigued scholars. The question concerning the national identity of Ambedkar continues to be relevant particularly in the context of the Ambedkarite-driven Dalit movement in the post-independent period as it was during the colonial period of great national awakening. This is best illustrated in the controversial book on Ambedkar authored by Shourie, (1997, xii) a noted journalist and politician who claims that "the country adopts as its deities the very ones who had striven for decades and decades with its enemies to keep it in subjugation". Ambedkar often had to face stigma and shame for allegedly aiding the British rulers in circumventing the Indian nationalist struggle and deepening religious and caste divisions in the society as he unequivocally expressed his disillusionment with the Congress and Gandhi, carved an autonomous path for the Untouchables and demanded special political rights for their protection. However, several scholars defend Ambedkar by claiming that he propounded an alternative vision of nationalism that was inclusive of the rights of the Untouchables (Guru 1998, p.157; Gaikwad 1998, p. 515), heralded a "democratic revolution" (Omvedt 1994, 16) and even went beyond the confines of nationalism to articulate universal humanistic views such as human rights (Jaffrelot 2016; Keer 1954, p. 61). Although there exists a substantial amount of work on Ambedkar's thoughts on the nation and his historical contribution to the freedom struggle based on the analysis of his voluminous writings and speeches readily accessible in the English language, little effort has been made to study Ambedkar's thoughts on nation and nationalism in the context of his journalism.

Ambedkar was the founder and editor of several newspapers namely *Mooknayak* (1920), *Bahishkrit Bharat* (1927- 1929), *Janata* (1930-1956), and *Prabuddha Bharat* (1956). He started his first Marathi fortnightly *Mooknayak* (Leader of the Dumb) in the year 1920 with the aid of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur.¹ According to the inaugural issue of *Mooknayak* which came out on 31 January 1920, it was necessary for the Untouchables to have their own newspaper for the discussion of their caste problems that were either ignored in the mainstream newspapers or inadequately addressed in the non-Brahmin newspapers like *Deenmitra* and

Deccan (Ambedkar 2019, pp. 34-35). After starting his Mahad Satyagraha, Ambedkar's second newspaper *Bahishkrit Bharat* (Ostracised India) was launched on 3rd April 1927. This newspaper is noted for documenting the period of his active engagement in the Depressed Class Movement. Ambedkar, however, faced exigent problems in sustaining his journalistic venture that was committed to the welfare of the people through the promotion of rational dialogue and debate, education of the masses, democratic accountability, and transparency. Severe shortages of funds and debt aggravated by social and cultural impediments plagued his newspaper just like it affected those previously started by several members of the Depressed class. Ambedkar was particularly critical of the educated members of the Untouchable caste whose sheer ignorance and lack of duty played a large role in the closure of his journalistic venture (Ambedkar 2017, p. 147). However, this did not deter his steely resolve to reach out to the people. This paper attempts to explore two newspapers started by B.R. Ambedkar namely *Mooknayak* (1920) and *Bahishkrit Bharat* (1927-1929) to study Ambedkar's idea of nation and nationalism. This becomes significant given the intimate link between nationalism and journalism. As Ambedkar grounded his journalism in the local caste context of Marathi politics and society, he showed how modern processes interacted with caste which highlighted the inherent flaws and possibilities offered by modernity. His caste contextualization played a significant role in understanding the expansive and reducible components of the irreversible process and interrelated forces of modernity- namely the rise of nations, nationalism, and the role of journalism.

A Critique of the Brahmanical imagination of the nation

Around the time when Indian nationalist leaders were framing the grand notion of nation and disseminating nationalist ideology among the Indians, Ambedkar held the view that nation was not a given cultural entity but a culmination of several modern historical processes. Caste was not to be thought of as one of the many inequalities existing inside the territorially bounded cultural community called nation but one that was determining the entire edifice of the nation-state and permeating the ideology of nationalism. Ambedkar highlights three central points about caste which seek to disrupt the notion of a nation as imagined by the upper caste nationalist leaders.

Caste as prior to religion and nation

Reflecting on the nature of Hindu society by adopting a comparative approach, Ambedkar begins by showing that caste is prior to religion and nation. He observes that manifold inequalities, poverty, and discrimination including various forms of caste and untouchability exist in different non-Hindu cultural societies, but, what differentiates the phenomena of caste and untouchability prevalent in the Hindu society from the rest of the societies pertain to the intriguing and pernicious nature of caste in India. This system inflicts and sanctifies unimaginable inhuman suffering on the Untouchables who are treated far worse than other oppressed groups in the world. In the first issue of *Mooknayak* published on 31 January 1920, Ambedkar sketches a detailed picture of the Indian society where:

If a European is asked the question- who he is? the answer to the question will be either English, German, French, or Italian. However, the same cannot be said about the situation of Hindus. It is not enough for a Hindu to say I am a Hindu. Every Hindu must state his caste. This means that to show their human identity, Hindus have to practice caste discrimination. (Ambedkar 2019, p. 31)²

There is a clear indication that caste identity precedes religion. But instead of viewing it in terms of a historical chronology, Ambedkar hints at how caste carries the revelatory essence of religion as caste reveals religion and religion does not reveal caste. This placement of caste before religion does not imply that caste replaces numerous other group identities to become an overarching identity. The flexibility of the caste system allows it to easily permeate other collectivities like the nation which makes it possible for a person to hold strong nationalist sentiments without losing the dogmas of religion. After establishing caste as the foundation of Hindu society, Ambedkar vividly describes the vicious nature of the Indian social reality with the help of a metaphor:

Hindu society is like a tower and every caste is like a storey. But there are no stairs connecting the storeys of the tower. There is no way to climb up or down from one storey to another. The storey in which a person is born is also the one in which he dies. No matter how talented a person located on the lower storey is, he cannot enter the upper storeys. Similarly, a person lacking talents on the upper storey cannot be sent to the lower storeys. (Ambedkar 2019, p. 31)

The cosmically derived caste hierarchy prevents the process of socialisation between members of different caste groups and halts the creation and evolution of a society in the Indian subcontinent. There exists no society and hence no nation. Only innumerable castes and jatis (sub-castes), of which the three main caste groups namely Brahmins, non-Brahmins, and Bahishkrit (the Untouchables) are significant for understanding the

unequal power dynamics in the Indian social-cultural milieu. Ambedkar's view on the question of caste contradicts the imagination of the nation as propagated by the Congress and the Hindu right-wing which gives precedence to national and religious matters over caste in their narratives allowing the upper-caste nationalists to bypass caste as an internal matter of the Hindu religion. For instance, a close scrutiny of the Nehru Committee Report of 1928, produced by a committee headed by Motilal Nehru shows priority given to caste interests over those of religion and nation. This report rejects separate electorates for the Untouchables but grants several concessions like reserved seats to the Muslim minority and even shows a willingness to accept unreasonable demands of the Muslim community that compromise the rights of the Hindu minority thereby putting the unity and security of the nation at peril (Ambedkar 2017, 185). Hence, Ambedkar argues that safeguarding power derived from caste was prioritized by Congress leaders over questions of maintaining harmony between religious communities and nation-building.

Caste as a general problem

Ambedkar asserts that caste is a general issue that affects all aspects of life-religion, economy, politics, and society and thereby dismisses disparaging remarks made in the nationalist newspapers that his views promoted sectarian interests. He adopts defensive and offensive styles of argumentation to make his case about the generality of caste. He fiercely attacks the national movement by arguing that Swaraj masquerades the social and economic elitism of the upper castes. In an editorial titled "The Importance of Swaraj is not in Surajya" which came out on 14 February 1920, Swaraj (self-rule) is considered incomplete without the incorporation of Surajya (good governance) but the Congress which initially came into existence to press the British government for Surajya replaced it with the demand for Swaraj that automatically led to the neglect of social questions concerning the welfare of people (Ambedkar 2019, 42). He argues that if Tilak was born into an Untouchable caste, he would have said "The removal of Untouchability is my duty" instead of his famous phrase "Swaraj is my birthright" (Ambedkar 2017, 79). Hence, this truncated version of Swaraj was only meant to politically consolidate the rule of the upper castes over the untouchables (Ambedkar 2019, p. 53). Clearly, this established caste not merely as a religious matter but a political question concerned with power relations. He was convinced that only political representation of the Untouchables could prevent the socio-political tyranny of the ruling caste over the Depressed class. Ambedkar (2019, 43) hailed modern education as "lioness's milk" which would bring the Indians close to the modern values of liberty, equality, and fraternity but Swaraj deprived not only the Untouchables but women of citizenship rights. The editorial titled "Will the bull ever give milk?" published

on 28 February 1920, cautions readers against nationalist leaders like Tilak who speak about self-rule for the Indians but deprive women of the universal right to education because as educated and politically conscious citizens, women would pose a threat to the foundations of Hinduism (Ambedkar 2019, pp. 62-64). Apart from offering a critique of Brahmanical nationalism, he adopts defensive arguments about the centrality of caste in the ordinary lives of the people. He argues that caste is also linked to issues such as minority politics. The editorial titled “Muslims have become Brahmans” published on 14 February 1920, provides Ambedkar’s reaction to a report published in the *Chronicle* newspaper about an inter-community dinner held at LalaBudh Prakash’s house as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity after the release of Ali brothers from the prison. He highlights caste and not religion as the central point of the entire episode. This event is reinterpreted as one which possibly turned the Muslims into caste Brahmans because Brahmans lost their religion not by interacting with the members of different religions but only by interacting with the ritually impure untouchables as they did when Balu Bavaji Palwankar, a famous cricketer from Depressed class participated in an inter-caste dining event (Ambedkar 2019, p. 51). This again reveals the precedence of caste purity over religious purity and establishes inter-caste interaction and not inter-religious interaction as the real threat to Hinduism.

A critique of caste using modern and traditional sources

As a modern thinker and jurist by profession, Ambedkar grounded his arguments in modern laws in order to advance and justify the cause of the downtrodden caste. But he was aware that any exclusive reliance on the modern legal language of the British rulers would be neither comprehensible nor acceptable to most of his detractors and supporters. Therefore, he turns to traditional sources for building his arguments against caste and reaching out to the vast population. Upon being discouraged by the caste Hindus to launch Untouchable’s Satyagraha as it would put Hindu brethren in conflict with one another, Ambedkar justifies his actions by reinterpreting the theme and message of the Bhagwat Gita, the most revered religious scripture of the Hindus. He recounts the great dialogue between Pandava king Arjuna and Krishna on the battlefield after Arjuna finds himself questioning the righteousness of the war against his own kin. Ambedkar shows that just like Krishna advised Arjuna to fight for his kingdom, the Untouchables should adopt Satyagraha for their equal rights. In fact, he considers Untouchable’s Satyagraha as more important because “The Pandavas were fighting for the Kingdom while the Untouchables were fighting for humane treatment. When humanity is gone, a man loses everything but after the loss of a kingdom, humanity stays intact” (Ambedkar 2017, p. 133). Apart from citing Hindu religious texts, Ambedkar presents Buddha’s Dhamma as a major source for the critique of the caste

system. In this way, Ambedkar adopts modern and traditional language to reason with his critics and supporters about the necessity and righteousness of the Untouchable's struggle against the caste system.

Ambedkar's social movement for human rights: a synthesis of theory and praxis

On the first day of the Bahishkrit Parishad Conference organised in Mangaon village of the princely state of Kolhapur on 21-22 March 1920, Ambedkar gave a powerful speech as the chairperson of the Conference which was attended by around 5000 people. It was a testament to the radical transformations in the social and political outlook of the Untouchable community. To galvanise the Untouchable community into political action, the audience was reminded that "Satyamev Jayate is a hollow principle. We must continue our struggle to attain the victory of truth" (Ambedkar 2019, p. 91). In other words, truth alone does not guarantee emancipation from the physical and mental slavery of the caste system unless it is accompanied by collective action by the Untouchables themselves. Instead of relying on the goodwill of the social reformers and Indian nationalists, Ambedkar initiated the Untouchables' Satyagraha which unlike Gandhian Satyagraha considered the ethicality of the goal rather than the means as a fundamental principle (Ambedkar 2017, p. 126).

The Mahad Satyagraha of 1927 launched by Ambedkar for human rights was a watershed event in the history of the Dalit movement in India. In an editorial published on 22 April 1927, the Mahad Satyagraha is not viewed as a claim of the Untouchables to draw water from the Chawadar tank but as a claim for equal rights as humans (Ambedkar 2017, p. 23). The violence inflicted by the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins on the peacefully protesting untouchables after the latter drank water from the Mahad tank and the purification ritual carried out by the Brahmins completely shook Ambedkar's faith in the upper castes to bring about any radical change. This incident showed that the untouchables were not merely denied access to the water due to their caste. Their polluting identity was reestablished when Brahmins performed rituals to purify the water of the tank. Thus, there was both caste-derived negation and enactment. Instead of using the term 'riots' to describe the violence that broke out after the Mahad Satyagraha, the term 'religious war' is considered more apt to describe the conflict between two parties belonging to the same religion (Ambedkar 2017, p. 23). By using the term 'religious war', Ambedkar rejects the conventional framing of religious conflicts as those between 'us' and 'them' which forms the foundation of ethnic nationalism. Secondly, by describing this violence as war, he tries to convince everyone that the question of the Untouchables concerns not only the Hindu religion but the entire

nation. Just as war ravages politics, economy, and society, the caste system has weakened the entire edifice of the state and society. Thus, through his reworking of the meaning of 'religious war', he attempts to reduce the otherness of the 'other' which is the underlying premise of ethnic nationalism, and also presents caste as a national and humanistic issue.

Apart from the social exclusion of the Untouchable community from public places like temples and schools, Ambedkar raised several economic issues which he believed were tied up with the question of caste. During the mid-1920s, Mahar Watan was a subject of intense debate among the Mahar community. Mahar Watan was a hereditary office and land grant assigned to the Mahars in return for the services they rendered to the British government. Land grants were originally provided by the Emperors to Mahars. However, after the establishment of British rule, new legislation was introduced which allowed only selected Mahar Watandars to retain this hereditary position. This was the Maharashtra Hereditary Offices Act, 1874 also known as the Watan Act. Ambedkar observes that the unspecified nature, duration, and pay of work provided the colonial administration and the rural masses to legally exploit the Mahars who were overburdened with numerous official and private duties that often reinforced ritually polluting caste occupations and exacerbated class inequalities (Ambedkar 2017, p. 92). He also criticises the traditional Baluta system under which the Mahars were required to collect grains from the villagers as a main form of remuneration. Baluta was equivalent to beggary which destroyed a sense of self-respect and aspiration among the Mahars (Ambedkar 2017, pp. 99-100). Therefore, he introduced a bill in the Bombay legislative council to put an end to the unjust, inhuman treatment of the Mahar Watandars. Another issue that plagued the rural society of the Bombay Presidency was the prevalence of the Khoti system in the Konkan region. It was a land tenure system where the British government collected revenue from the peasants with the aid of Khots/landlords. However, this system gave the Khots plenty of leeway to abuse their power. They siphoned all the produce of the land for their private consumption leaving none for the peasants, extracted additional revenue from the peasants to fill their pockets, and reinforced caste hierarchy by means of keeping the tenants tied to their work on the land therefore blocking all alternative avenues of their progress. Under this system, all jatis like Mahars and Kunbis suffered great social and economic deprivation. But to his surprise, this deeply exploitative system was ignored by the so-called leaders of the peasants and workers.

Thus, Ambedkar's imagination of the nation was based on his re-imagination of a casteless Indian society. He offered a vehement critique of the Indian national movement by rupturing the dualism between 'us' and 'them'

which underpins the discourse of ethnic nationalism. He tried to reduce the otherness of the Muslim community by elevating caste as a national issue. Also, by highlighting caste as central to seemingly non-caste minority politics of the Congress, he was able to show the differential treatment meted out to the social issues of Untouchables and Muslims. Since the real threat to the Hindu religion came not from outsiders but from the Untouchables, the social issues of the untouchables never found a place in the national agendas of the upper caste nationalists who were more interested in gaining political power than improving the condition of their countrymen. Ambedkar's views on British rule also help to problematise the 'coloniser' vs. 'colonised' dichotomy that conceals the opportunistic politics of colonial rulers and nationalist leaders with respect to the question of the Untouchables. Although he offered his critique of both the British rule and Brahman dominance, he strongly believed that "the British power has exploited the wealth of India but Brahmanical power has taken away self-respect- the wealth of the mind" which brought more ruin to the Untouchables (Ambedkar 2017, p. 63). However, none of his criticisms made him sceptical of the modern force of nationalism. He worked tirelessly to argue that caste was not merely a religious problem but a national one that affected the economy, polity, and society. Ambedkar's social movements underlined the significance of dignity, respect, and human rights but he tried to indigenise the modern values of freedom, equality, and fraternity by using the Bhagwat Gita and Buddha's Dhamma to attack the atrocious institution of caste.

The Dalit movement in the post-independent period and the road ahead

In the post-independent period, the Dalit movement confronts the same dilemmas and predicaments as those faced by Ambedkar regarding the question of caste. The Dalit movement seeks to challenge the discourse of caste as constructed by the upper caste elites through multiple ways such as the cultural production of Dalit autobiographies, the symbolic assertion of Dalit identity and power in electoral politics, and the rise of alternate Dalit journalism. It has reiterated the necessity of elevating caste as the national problem of India through the enforcement of Constitutional rights and duties, reservation policy, and the autonomous identity of Dalit politics. However, the attempts to nationalise caste in electoral politics have suffered setbacks as caste has been denigrated as an anti-democratic element of Indian democracy. The provision of reservations for the historically marginalised section has also reinforced the language of particularity by labelling the Dalits as the 'reserved category' as opposed to the 'general category'. The attempts to globalise caste have intensified particularly in the post-1990s period marked by the adoption of the market economy and the glorification of

civil society. International lobbying by Dalit groups reached its peak in 2001 at the United Nations World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa which enabled the Dalit activists to successfully present caste in an international avatar as a form of racial discrimination under the United Nations Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2002. This move agitated the Indian government which claimed caste as a domestic matter already dealt with in the Constitution and showed that caste was fundamentally distinct from race, revealing the intellectual vacuity of the Dalit NGOs. However, the Dalit groups were applauded in many quarters not for their intellectual accuracy but for their grounding of caste in the universal language of humanity (Pinto 2001, 2818; Teltumbde 2009, p. 18). However, any attempt to initiate a global discourse on caste must not only offer similarities between two systems of discrimination but also provide differences to grasp the totality of the phenomenon of caste which cannot be adequately captured by descent and occupation. The varied manifestations of the caste system as a form of exclusion, humiliation, and hierarchy cannot be erased from the experience of caste, and nor can the intricate links of caste with other forms of discrimination like patriarchy and capitalism be ignored. Dependence on international organisations has also exposed the structural limits of the state system and its dominant language of national security, power politics, and hegemonic influence at play (Pinto 2001, 2820). In other words, despite going beyond the limits of the state, Dalit groups have become a victim of inter-state politics on the international platform. Today the Dalit movement faces a more formidable challenge than before because not only does it have to make a balancing act between nationalising caste and globalising caste but also think of new creative ways of presenting caste without relinquishing its control over the discourse of caste to the hegemonic forces of Brahmanism and neoliberalism.

Notes

1. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur greatly admired leaders like Jotiba Phule and Ambedkar and was known for initiating policies such as reservations for the emancipation of the lower castes.
2. All subsequent translations from Hindi to English done by the author.

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CSEZ Export Dynamics: A Sectoral Perspective on Competitiveness

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Abstract

Countries around the world are establishing Special Economic Zones as a measure to boost up their exports. In India, a liberalised SEZ policy intends to make the firms operating in the Zones export competitive. Not many studies have made an attempt to study export competitiveness of firms in CSEZ. The present study tries to examine export competitiveness of different sectors in Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ). Competitiveness of the sectors has been analysed using various competitiveness measures like Industrial Competitiveness Index (ICI) and Revealed Comparative Advantage Index (RCAI) etc. The study proves that the sectors that are highly competitive are Gem and Jewellery, IT and ITES, Electronics Hardware, Plastic and Rubber and Agro and Food sectors.

Keyword: Export, competitiveness, CSEZ, RCAI, ICI

Introduction

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are viewed as an important policy instrument to facilitate export manufacture, promote industrialisation, generate employment, improve balance of payments, absorb advanced technology and bring about regional development. Governments of developing countries find SEZs as means to absorb excess labour through employment creation, and large companies find it as means of investment by gaining preferential trade and input-price conditions, liberal profit repatriation, lenient labour standards, etc. (Milberg and Amengual 2008). The competitive environment in the Zone helps to produce quality output at lower cost (Kumar 2006, 47-50).

The liberalised SEZ policy in India intends to make the firms operating in the Zones export competitive. Competitive strategy intends to maximise the production for exports. The products

produced for exports have to be cost competitive and price competitive without a compromise on quality. Such a competitive strategy enables not only economic development, but also helps to generate linkage effects in the economy.

Review of Literature

The term competitiveness is different from the term competition. Kathuria (1999, 3175-77) distinguishes competitiveness from competition. Competition is based on free markets to ensure free and fair competition. Competitiveness is defined as the capabilities of a firm or a sector or a nation to compete successfully. It involves enhancing the strength, of a firm, an industry or a nation to compete relative to foreign competitors or other nations.

Competitiveness, regarded as the urge to compete in the export market is considered a pre-requisite for the firm's survival. Under this strategy, the exporters are at a disadvantage, because if consumers find the local brand to be of satisfactory quality, they may not try an imported product. "Quality has been the biggest competitive issue of the late 20th and early 21st centuries" (Das and Bandyopadhyay 2003, 4135-43).

Studies have also been made to understand the reason for the export competitiveness India experienced during the post-reform period. In the pre-reform period India's growth of export was much lesser than the potential due to negative competitiveness effect and negative commodity composition effect. But in the post-reform period actual growth rate of exports of India, both merchandise and services, has been much above the potential growth rate. This is due to the positive competitiveness effect which is more prominent in case of export in services (Veeramani 2007, 2419-2427).

As a means of enhancing export turn-over, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been set up around the world. India has emulated the export competitive strategy of China.. . In the export market, SEZs provide an option for corporations to earn large profits out of low wages paid to workers. This is so in countries with large populations of uneducated, poor or educated-unemployed people. India, being a country with large population provides a platform for large corporations to reap the benefits of a competitive wage rate. To extend India's competitiveness in

the global market, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government enacted the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act in 2005 (Sampat 2008, 25-29). In view of the declining competitiveness of the manufacturing sector of India, the focus of the SEZ Act is to make it a preferred destination for manufacturing. At the same time, the competitiveness of SEZ which offers the easy option of competing on the basis of cost minimisation, can be sustained only when there is an improvement in the investment climate of the entire country (Aggarwal 2006, 4533-4536).

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

Being in a state with organised set up, analysis is to be made about the competitiveness in the CSEZ. In line with the following objectives of the study, the methodology developed is explained below. The objectives are: 1) to study the export competitiveness of sectors in CSEZ over the years, 2) To compare export competitiveness across sectors. Cochin SEZ authority has classified the enterprises in the Zone into 10 sectors. They form; Agro and Food, Electronics Hardware, Engineering, Gem and Jewellery, IT and ITES, Miscellaneous, Plastic and Rubber, Services, Textiles and Garments and Trading. From this, all major sectors except the Miscellaneous sector and Trading sector are selected for the study

The sector-wise data about exports, employment, etc. made available by CSEZ Authority is made use of for calculating export competitiveness. The data pertaining to the years after the introduction of SEZ policy 2000 has been chosen for the analysis. To conform to the privacy policy of the enterprises, the Authority publishes only sector-wise details and never reveals the data related to individual firms. Sector-wise data is compiled by the CSEZ Authority on the basis of the APR (Annual Progress Report) submitted by the SEZ units to the authority.

In the present study, the framework used to analyse competitiveness are, Industrial Competitiveness Index (ICI) and Revealed Comparative Advantage Index (RCAI) of Balassa (1965). When ICI is used to compare the export performance of sectors in CSEZ, RCAI will assess the competitiveness performance of each sector's export compared to the particular product's export from the nation.

Industrial Competitiveness Index (ICI) is a composite measure of relative and multidimensional economic performance as measured by profitability, productivity as well as output growth. (Fischer and Schornberg, 2006).

Accordingly, competitiveness has been defined as a function of, profitability, productivity and output growth.

$$\text{COMPS} = f(\text{PROS}, \text{PRODS}, \text{GROS}).$$

In the present study, this model is used to analyse and compare the competitiveness level of each sector in the Zone. The Index has been calculated for each sector for a period of 12 years. However, unlike in the original study, only two indicators of productivity and output growth have been used. Output-employment ratio is used as the productivity measure as it is influenced by every efficiency aspect of the firm - technical, organisational and efficiency change, economies of scale, varying degrees of capacity utilisation and measurement errors. For the assessment of output growth, the annual change in production value is calculated. Profitability is considered to be an apt measure to assess whether the primary goal of generating income is achieved or not. But, as per SEZ rules, the CSEZ authority is not expected to compile the profitability details of the firms or sector. The firms also do not reveal details related to their profits. Hence the sector level competitiveness has to be assessed based on the other two measures. The original study mentions the possibility of measuring industry competitiveness using two measures – efficiency measured in terms of productivity and growth of output (Lall 2001).

$$\text{COMPS} = f(\text{EFFs}, \text{GROS}).$$

ICI is constructed based on the methodology used for the calculation of the United Nations' Human Development Index. Individual indices have been constructed for productivity and output growth. Maximum and minimum values for each sector over the years are selected from the data on labour productivity and output growth. Thereafter, the formula given below is used.

The general formula for calculating individual indices is,

$$\text{Indices, } I = \frac{\text{Actual Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}$$

ICI is then calculated as the simple average of the individual indices.

Revealed comparative advantage (RCAI), an Index devised by Balassa (1965) is commonly used to measure export competitiveness to identify the sectors in which an economy has a comparative advantage, by comparing the country of interests' trade profile with the world average (Nag 2009).

The RCA index of country *i* for product *j* is often measured by the product's share in the country's exports in relation to its share in world trade. If the Index exceeds unity ($RCAI > 1$), the country is said to have a revealed comparative advantage in the product and vice versa.

In the present study, the measure has been modified to compare CSEZ exports with the India's exports. The measure is adapted in to the form,

$$RCAI = \frac{\text{CSEZ Export of Product X}}{\text{CSEZ's Total Export}} \bigg/ \frac{\text{India Export of the Product X}}{\text{India's Total Export}}$$

The data regarding India's exports is obtained from the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India.

1. Results and Discussions

An attempt is made to study export competitiveness of the sectors in Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ). Various studies have proved that the export performance of CSEZ is on an upward trend. CSEZ has grown in stature among all the SEZs in India.

4.1 Sector-wise Exports and Growth of Exports in CSEZ

Every sector in the Zone has registered an improved performance in its exports in absolute terms. The increasing demand for the IT services and IT skilled professionals for the world is reflected in the total

exports for IT and ITES sector. The advantage of this sector is that, it can be set up anywhere without considering raw-material availability, as is evident from the fact that 60 per cent formal government approvals take place in this sector. Though the sector has had an overall increase in total exports, it is not devoid of fluctuations in the growth rate. But India has been recognised globally as a major IT hub for outsourcing. The increasing optimism associated with higher number of approvals in the IT sector might have made its effect on the CSEZ exports too.

Increase in the demand for consumer electronics, instruments, telecom equipments and cables abroad have all contributed to growth in exports in Electronics Hardware sector. Though in terms of total exports the Electronics Hardware sector is having a competitive position, it is not so in terms of growth of exports. The sector maintains an average growth rate of 25.50 per cent. According to SEZ authorities, the fluctuations in the percentage annual growth rate of this sector is because of the variations in the business volume of the less competitive electronic units in the Zone over the years

The Engineering sector of India is highly competitive in terms of total exports. But in CSEZ this sector is not competitive in terms of annual growth rate of exports. Average growth rate is just 18.98 per cent. This happens when Indian engineering industry exports is the largest contributor to India's exports (www.commerce.nic.in referred on May, 2012).

Gem and Jewellery sector is a highly labour-intensive sector which is a major source of foreign exchange earnings of the country. Increase in the demand for Indian jewellery abroad and important policy decisions of the government including de-licensing of jewellery imports, as part of economic reforms, has helped in the growth of this sector. this juncture it needs to be emphasised that the higher share of CSEZ can be attributed to the higher contribution from Gem and Jewellery sector, which has gained significantly in export turnover since 2007-08. From the year 2008-09, growth rate has been falling till 2010-11 for this sector in the Zone. (Eximbank India 2010).

Some new products in Plastic and Rubber sector have got into the export basket and led to increase in exports. Its performance has deteriorated in 2007-08. Unprofitable operations have caused some units to close down its business operations during this period. With an increase in the export demand for

gloves, rubber components, rubber auto parts and processed plastic, a recovery is observed in recent years. The average growth rate of this sector is 29.42 per cent.

In terms of annual growth too, the Agro and Food sector is observed to be performing better during early periods of the decade. The annual growth rate has been gradually deteriorating during the period 2007-08 to 2009-10. According to SEZ authority, the decrease in the investor confidence owing to recession has caused the decline in the growth rate. The average growth rate of this sector is also comparatively less at 19.70 per cent. However, there has been an improvement in competitiveness of this sector in terms of cost, quality and diversification of products in recent years.

The share of Service sector is rather small in the Zone, with respect to number of firms, employees, exports as well as years of operation. There is only one firm in full-fledged operation. Total exports have always been less than Rs.20 crores.. Even when being small in size, its average growth rate of 32.67 per cent is to be noted. Though the sector has had a very good performance in the initial year with annual growth rate of 391.9 per cent, the performance is not noteworthy in the following period. An improvement is witnessed only after 2010-11.

In 2005, the phasing out of quotas under Multi-Fibre Agreement has benefitted the Textiles and Garments sector exports. Strong appreciation of Indian rupee against dollar may have affected the rate of increase in the period that followed, though the total exports have registered a miniscule increase in absolute terms. Recessionary trends may have also affected the exports from this sector. Adding to it, the sector has never been able to recover from the European crisis which began in 2009, that the textile exports from CSEZ has recorded negative growth in 2011-12. But the remarkable average growth rate of this sector is recorded at 42.84 per cent, aided by better competitiveness ranking in the initial periods of the decade

4.2 Share in Total CSEZ Exports

Information on the share of each sector in total CSEZ exports will help to analyse the relative importance of each sector in the Zone.

During the period from 2001-02 to 2003-04, Electronics Hardware and Agro and Food sectors together accounted for major share (of around 50%) in the total Zone exports. In the year 2003-04, the share of Electronics Hardware alone is 50 per cent. Thereafter it has started declining. One reason for declining share of Agro and Food from 2002-03 is due to the increase in activities in other sectors. Moreover, higher number of approvals takes place in modern sectors like IT and ITES (60% at the national level) and very less in traditional labour-intensive sectors of food processing and textiles. The share of Textiles and Garments is 16 per cent in 2001-02. The sector witnessed an ever-declining share in the following years and presently has a share of just 0.46 per cent. Apart from the Service sector with very less quantity of operations, Plastic and Rubber Products sector (0.26%) has the least share followed by engineering (0.38%). It only reflects the growing share of Gem and Jewellery sector.

4.3 Output-Employment Ratio

Assessing labour productivity is one of the conventional methods of measuring the efficiency of a production unit. Productivity indicates economic growth, competitiveness, efficiency and living standards within an economy. Though there are various measures of calculating labour productivity, the measure used here is output per unit of employment i.e., ratio of output to the number of labourers (OECD, 2008).

$$\text{Output-Employment Ratio} = \text{Volume of output} / \text{Total Employment}$$

Gem and Jewellery sector has experienced the highest increase in efficiency level. This is the sector which has had the maximum quantity of exports. This sector, which is highly labour-intensive, employs unskilled labourers. Ninety per cent of its workers are women and their experience and diligence in their work makes them churn- out the maximum output. Together with this, an increase in the world demand for Indian jewellery makes this sector highly competitive in terms of exports. Agro and Food is another sector which has expanded its productivity from 14.65 in 2000-01 to 28.82 in 2011-12. This sector is also characterised by unskilled nature of work and employs women workers as labourers. Moreover, the

industry in the Zone in recent years has diversified its activities into frozen foods, including vegetables and sea foods, its storage and processing helping it to export more.

Electronics Hardware sector in the Zone has made advantage of the skilled workers qualified from ITI and Engineering Institutes. Low cost advantage, technical advancements and phasing out of trade barriers have helped the growth of this sector. The major players operating in this sector is Nest and its subsidiary units. Their managerial efficiency has also helped to generate a very high turnover for this sector. Similar is the case with IT and ITES sector in the Zone. High number of BPO jobs, high quality skilled labour with English proficiency and lower cost of production compared to other countries, have made many exporters choose the Zone as its area of operation. Another capital and skill-intensive sector is the Engineering sector whose productivity might have expanded owing to the lower cost of production and technical advancements. It can also be rated at the average level compared to other sectors' labour-productivity.

Plastic and Rubber sector in the Zone has industries mainly concentrating on the manufacture of rubber items like gloves, etc. The wages paid in this sector is comparatively low and it also employs labourers on daily basis. This way it enjoys a cost advantage. Adding to this, the easy availability of raw material and the increase in the export demand for this sector's products have contributed to its productivity. Textiles and Garments sector is equally productive, mainly due to the cost advantage it enjoys in the Zone. The industries in the sector employ unskilled and semi skilled workers who become well-proficient in their work while on job.

The Service sector, though composed of two firms, has only one firm engaged in productive activity. Though a late-comer, this multi-national firm operates according to the procedures employed by the parent company. This company makes use of technically qualified labourers and are usually paid well. Their increased efficiency has contributed to the increase in productivity of this sector, though lower compared to other sectors.

4.4 The Industrial Competitiveness Index (ICI)

Agro and Food sector, whose position is observed to be first at the start of the decade, is worst affected by decrease in investor confidence due to recession. But the product diversification measures have made the sector highly competitive by 2011-12, according to SEZ authority. Having introduced more dynamic activities, this sector can maintain its competitiveness for many years. The elimination of quota system under MFA has improved the performance of this sector along with India's textiles import. (www.texmin.nic.in referred on May, 2013).

Like the Agro and Food sector, Plastic and Rubber sector has improved its performance in recent years assisted by higher labour productivity and growth of exports. The sector shows high unsteadiness in terms of ICI over the ten year period caused by unprofitable business operations in certain years. The sector that has registered deterioration in ICI is Service sector. The Service sector has experienced a fall in total exports as well as growth of exports during these years.

Engineering sector is also competitive in terms of ICI contrary to the scores recorded by the total exports and growth of exports. The factor that could have helped the ICI ranking to reach high might be the productivity. The sector that has always been remaining competitive (except in a few years) in terms of ICI is IT and ITES sector. Ever growing exports from this sector have always helped it to remain competitive.

4.5 Revealed Comparative Advantage Index (RCAI)

RCA Index is above unity and is increasing over the years, showing its competitiveness in the export market. The sectors which are having RCAI above unity in the initial years of the decade are Electronics Hardware, Plastic and Rubber and Agro and Food. Competitive advantage of Plastic and Rubber is visible for many years but it is not able to maintain it. In terms of RCAI, the competitiveness position of these sectors deteriorated and that of Gem and Jewellery improved.

The traditional sectors of Agro and Food, Textiles and Garments, and Plastic and Rubber have turned uncompetitive in terms of RCAI after modern sectors gained prominence in SEZs. However, Plastic and Rubber sector has a comparatively better RCAI. Electronics Hardware sector in India is an upcoming

industry and has a number of technically skilled employees. Growing demand for electronic equipments make a positive impact on the exports from India. But the Electronics Hardware sector of CSEZ has not been able to keep up with the trends in exports of the country. This sector of the Zone has had a fall in the competitiveness as the index decreased from 22.34 in 2000-2001 to 0.69 in 2011-12. But it is high compared to other sectors in the Zone, after the Gem and Jewellery sector. The IT and ITES sector too has a better RCAI before 2005, even though it has never been above unity. Other than the deterioration of the index during recession, the sector's RCAI is remaining stable at 0.07. Though competitiveness for the sector in terms of other sectors in the Zone has improved, it is not upto the level of India's IT exports. The performance of Engineering in terms of the RCAI is seen greater than one in 2002-03. Afterwards RCAI has been falling and very low for many years.

Other than the Gem and Jewellery sector, the comparative advantage of the Zone has deteriorated as the RCA index for the sectors in recent years has never increased to one. Thus compared to the exports at the all-India level, the sectors' performance is not at all competitive.

A clear lopsidedness is found in the competitive position of sectors in CSEZ. The Zone's competitiveness is not equally captured by all players. There is high concentration of competitiveness experienced by the Zone in a few sectors particularly the Gem and Jewellery sector.

2. Summary

The findings related to competitiveness of sectors considered show that over the decade the competitiveness position of sectors has improved. But the sector which has made a commendable performance in the export competitiveness is the Gem and Jewellery sector, thanks to the low cost of the labour as well as the de-licensing policies. Similar noteworthy performance was recorded by IT and ITES sector aided by increase in the number of approvals, low cost skilled labour, etc. The factors that have made the Electronics Hardware sector competitive are increase in the demand for consumer electronics, telecom equipments, etc. abroad. Professionally skilled work force is also a factor which has favoured the export competitiveness of the sector. Engineering industry enjoys only a comparatively lower competitiveness level in the Zone. But sector maintains higher labour productivity with the help of technically qualified workers and lower cost of production. The traditional sectors of Agro and Food

and Textiles and Garments are trying to regain the competitiveness which they enjoyed earlier. Agro and Food has become successful due to government support, export diversification, etc. Lower exports to volatile European markets have affected the competitiveness of Textiles and Garments sector in recent years. Being a new entrant with only one firm in productive activity, the competitiveness of the Service sector has maintained a lower competitiveness level. Plastic and Rubber has been remaining competitive. But, unprofitable business operations have made the sector's competitive position fluctuating. The analysis of competitiveness of different sectors in the Zone shows a mixed result.

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Feminism in Indian Politics: a catalyst for gender equality

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Abstract

This study examines how feminist and gender equality movements have developed and influenced Indian political discourse. Following historical paths from early feminist initiatives to modern internet activism, the study explores the legal and legislative consequences sparked by feminist movements. It examines how gender intersects with caste, class, and religion, adding to our knowledge of the complex story of feminism in India. The research also looks at the emergence of digital feminism, analyzing the role that online forums have had in advancing feminist conversations and movements. While examining feminist developments, the study also addresses obstacles and opposition from the sociopolitical spheres. Expected future directions of feminist discourse and their possible impact on India's political terrain are discussed to offer a thorough understanding of the complex interactions among feminism, gender equality movements, and political discourse in India.

Introduction

The quest for gender equality and the feminist discourse in India is deeply rooted in the nation's historical, social, and political milieu, manifesting in a movement that is as diverse and complex as the nation itself. The journey of feminism in India traverses through various phases of the country's historical timeline, reflecting the shifting paradigms of gender dynamics amidst evolving political and social scenarios. The pre-independence era saw the emergence of feminist consciousness as an adjunct to the broader nationalistic movement against colonial rule. The voices of early feminist advocates like Sarojini Naidu and Kamini Roy melded the discourse of gender equality with the quest for national freedom. The post-independence period heralded a more structured feminist movement, endeavouring to redress deeply entrenched gender biases within the legal, social, and economic frameworks. The feminist narrative in India is unique due to its intersectional nature, intertwining gender with other social stratifications such as caste, religion, and economic status. The intersectionality of feminist discourse brings to the forefront the

multifaceted challenges faced by women, especially those hailing from marginalized communities. It provides a comprehensive lens through which the intricacies of gender-based discrimination are analyzed within the broader socio-political context. The dialogue on intersectionality has enriched the feminist narrative, enabling a nuanced understanding of the myriad forms of discrimination and the consequent advocacy for a more inclusive approach to gender equality.

In recent years, the digital sphere has emerged as a formidable avenue for feminist activism and discourse in India. The advent of social media platforms has democratized the feminist discourse, enabling a broader spectrum of voices to partake in the dialogue on gender equality. Online campaigns like #MeTooIndia and #AintNoCinderella have not only highlighted the pervasive issue of gender-based violence but also mobilized collective action towards legal and social reform. The digital realm has facilitated global connectivity among feminist advocates, fostering a transnational dialogue on gender equality. The interplay between digital feminism and political discourse signifies a modern iteration of feminist activism, reflecting the evolving dynamics of gender equality movements in India. Through an exploration of the historical trajectory, intersectionality, digital feminism, and the consequential impact on political discourse, this research endeavours to provide an in-depth understanding of the feminist movement in India. The subsequent sections will delve into each of these aspects in detail, aiming to elucidate the nuanced dynamics of feminism and its symbiotic relationship with the political discourse in India.

Feminism in India: A Historical Overview

The narrative of feminism in India has its genesis entrenched in the social reform movements of the 19th century, a period often alluded to as the Renaissance phase, particularly in regions like Bengal. During this epoch, a milieu of social reform movements burgeoned, aiming to challenge and alter the societal norms and customs that were oppressive towards women (Kumar 2002, 640-642). The underpinning of these movements was to ameliorate the status of women who were relegated to subordinate roles in a deeply patriarchal society. The ideological fabric of early feminist discourse was significantly influenced by the social and religious reform movements

prevalent during the 19th century. This period saw the emergence of pioneering social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who played pivotal roles in advocating for women's rights. Their advocacy primarily focused on issues like Sati (the practice of burning widows alive) and child marriage, which were prevalent societal norms during that time. These reformers not only voiced their opposition against such practices but also worked assiduously towards the enactment of laws that would ensure the protection of women's rights (Kumar 2002, 640-642).

The feminist movements during this period were not monolithic; instead, they manifested in various forms, each addressing a different facet of societal norms and gendered cultural mores. For instance, social reform feminism concentrated on challenging gendered cultural norms, while nationalist feminism, emerging in the late 1800s, strove against British imperial rule to secure women's rights in civic and legal aspects. The leftist feminism focused on caste system-induced issues and advocated for broader social reform (UW). The early part of the 20th century saw the emergence of women's groups and the increasing political participation of women. This period marked a significant stride towards articulating women's rights and gender equality, which were echoed in the political discourse of the time. Women began to organize themselves, learning how to confront societal and political barriers that impinge on their rights. The early feminist movements in India were not merely a reflection of the global feminist wave but were deeply rooted in the indigenous social and political milieu. These movements laid the foundation for the discourse on women's rights and gender equality in India, paving the way for subsequent waves of feminism that would further challenge patriarchal norms and work towards the establishment of a more equitable society (Chatterjee 1990, 296). The discourse on feminism during this period was also enriched by the writings and activism of women like Pandita Ramabai, a social reformer who championed women's education and their rights. The articulation of women's issues and the subsequent growth of women's writings during this period significantly contributed to the feminist discourse¹. The historical continuum of feminist movements in India from the 19th-century social reform movements to the early 20th-century political participation of women delineates a trajectory of evolving feminist discourse. These early movements were instrumental in shaping the

feminist narrative in India, foregrounding the issues that would be taken up by subsequent feminist waves post-independence.

The trajectory of feminism in India, marked by a rich tapestry of gender equality movements, has been significantly shaped by a myriad of key figures and organizations. This section aims to delve into the profiles of notable feminists, the structure and objectives of feminist organizations, and their substantial contributions to the broader discourse on gender equality in India.

Prominent Feminists

Since the feminist wave of the 1970s, numerous feminists have emerged as torchbearers of gender equality in India. One such feminist is Geetanjali Gangoli, whose analysis sheds light on the campaigns against gender-based violence and women's rights during this period (Tejashwini 2023, 8-10). The discourse is enriched by many other feminists whose works have been pivotal. For instance, Kamla Bhasin, known for her advocacy of gender equality, and her literary contributions have provided a lens through which gender dynamics are analyzed. Similarly, notable feminists like Phoolan Devi and Vandana Shiva have also significantly contributed to the feminist discourse in India.

Feminist Organizations

Feminist organizations in India have often operated under the aegis of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A study highlighted by ScienceDirect discusses how urban middle and upper-class women have been engaging as volunteers and activists within these NGOs, providing a unique perspective on feminist organizing through a Feminist Standpoint analysis (Mitra 2011, 66-75). The discourse on NGOization within feminist circles, as documented in Sage Journals, encapsulates the critiques of the perceived cooption and professionalization of the women's movement, showcasing a vibrant debate on the effectiveness and ethics of NGO-centric feminist organizing (Roy 2015, 96-117). The critique extends to the dominant feminist movements' appraisal of NGO-centric approaches, especially concerning Dalit women's mobilization, indicating a need for a pluralistic perspective in feminist organizing.

Contributions to Gender Equality Movements

The contemporary feminist movement in India has expanded its ambit to include a wide range of concerns such as sexual abuse, harassment, reproductive rights, and labour rights. The movement now encapsulates a varied and active feminist discourse, addressing multiple facets of gender inequality (Serrano Munoz 2022, 945). The contributions of feminist organizations and individuals have not only been pivotal in challenging and changing the status quo but also in shaping political discourse. The advocacy for gender-responsive policies, legal reforms, and social change is a testament to the profound impact of feminist movements on the socio-political landscape of India.

Through a concerted effort, feminists and feminist organizations have been instrumental in bringing gender issues to the forefront of political and social discourse, thereby fostering a conducive environment for gender equality. Their relentless advocacy, research, and grassroots activism have significantly contributed to the broader narrative of gender equality in India, making a substantial impact on policy formulation, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes towards gender.

Legislative Impact and Judicial Response to Feminism

The narrative of feminist advocacy in India is deeply intertwined with the country's legislative evolution, embodying a relentless quest for gender equality, women's rights, and social justice. This interplay has significantly shaped the Indian legislative framework, crafting laws and policies that aim to diminish gender disparities and foster a more egalitarian society. The feminist movements, fueled by a vision of social equity, have tirelessly worked to elevate gender issues to the forefront of legislative discourse, thereby facilitating a more gender-sensitive legislative agenda. This continuous engagement with the legislative apparatus has not only yielded laws that safeguard women's rights but has also set a precedent for integrating gender perspectives in broader policy and legal frameworks (Singh 2023, 10-46). The discourse on gender equality, propelled by feminist advocacy, has matured over the years, finding a more pronounced echo within the legislative corridors and policy formulations. legislative milestones achieved, mirror the aspirations of feminist movements, encapsulated in various laws and policies aimed at promoting

gender equality and safeguarding women's rights. Laws ensuring equal pay, protection against sexual harassment, maternity benefits, and women's representation in decision-making echelons are significant legislative manifestations of feminist advocacy (Nayak 2021, 1305). These legal frameworks provide a recourse for challenging gender-based discrimination, altering societal attitudes, and fostering a culture of gender equality. The ripple effect of these legislative measures extends beyond the immediate gender discourse, influencing broader social justice issues, and reflecting an intersectional approach to legislative advocacy (Nayak 2021, 1305). The feminist discourse has also permeated broader development frameworks, underlining the necessity of gender-sensitive legal and policy frameworks for achieving holistic societal development.

The feminist movements in India have navigated the complex socio-cultural landscape to advocate for broader social justice issues. The intersectionality of gender with other forms of social discrimination has often been the focal point of feminist advocacy, leading to a broader scope of legislative impact. This holistic approach towards legislative advocacy echoes the broader vision of feminist movements aiming for a just and egalitarian society (Singh 2023, 10-45). The journey towards achieving these legislative reforms is laden with challenges, emanating from societal norms, resistance from various quarters, and a lack of awareness. Despite these hurdles, the indomitable spirit of feminist advocacy continues to drive the legislative agenda towards a more gender-sensitive and socially just framework. The indelible imprint of feminist movements on the legislative landscape of India is a vivid illustration of the transformative potential of well-orchestrated feminist advocacy. Through a blend of activism, advocacy, and legislative engagements, feminist movements continue to shape a legal framework that resonates with the core tenets of gender equality, women's rights, and social justice, thereby contributing significantly to the broader narrative of social equity and human rights in India.

Judicial Responses

The dynamics between feminist ideologies, gender equality advocacy, and judicial responses in India present a rich tapestry of legal interpretations and judgments that have significantly impacted the gender discourse. This interplay is evident in various notable court cases that have either

stemmed from feminist advocacy or have been significantly influenced by feminist ideologies and gender equality advocacy.

Table:1

Case Name	Year	Summary	Impact
Vishaka and Others vs State of Rajasthan	1997	Addressed sexual harassment at the workplace, leading to the Vishaka Guidelines	Precursor to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) and Anr. Vs Union Of India	2017	Recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right	Resonates with feminist ideologies concerning individual autonomy and privacy
Joseph Shine vs Union of India	2018	Decriminalized adultery, overturning a 158-year-old law	Shift towards gender-sensitive legal interpretations
Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. Vs Union of India	2018	Decriminalized homosexuality	A significant step towards gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights
Vineeta Sharma vs Rakesh Sharma	2020	Ruled that daughters have equal rights as sons in ancestral property	Evolving interpretation towards gender equality, aligning with feminist ideologies

The aforementioned cases depict a judiciary that is increasingly responsive to feminist ideologies and gender equality advocacy. In the Vishaka case, the judiciary intervened to address workplace harassment, a significant issue affecting women's rights. The case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy, although not exclusively feminist, aligns with feminist ideologies concerning individual autonomy and privacy. The decriminalization of adultery in Joseph Shine vs Union of India showcases a move towards gender-sensitive legal interpretations. Similarly, the decriminalization of homosexuality in Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. vs Union of India reflects a significant step towards

gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights. Lastly, the ruling in Vineeta Sharma vs Rakesh Sharma aligns with feminist ideologies advocating for gender equality in inheritance rights.

The judicial responses to feminist ideologies and gender equality advocacy in India highlight a progressive trajectory towards a more gender-sensitive legal framework. The aforementioned cases reflect a judiciary that is not only responsive to evolving societal norms but also aligned with the broader objectives of feminist movements and gender equality advocacy. Through these cases, the judiciary has played a crucial role in advancing the cause of gender equality, often resonating with the broader objectives of feminist movements. This synthesis of feminist advocacy and judicial interpretation showcases the potential for fostering gender equality and social justice within the legal framework of India.

Intersectionality in Indian Feminism

Intersectionality in Indian feminism elucidates how gender interlinks with other social categories such as caste, religion, and economic status, contributing to a multifaceted understanding of systemic oppression and discrimination. This concept, originating from Kimberlé Crenshaw's work in 1989, has found significant resonance in the Indian feminist discourse, shedding light on the complex experiences of individuals who navigate through the intertwined realms of these social categories. The intersection of gender and caste in India presents a layered narrative of discrimination and privilege. Feminism in India, often critiqued for its Brahmin-Dvija (twice-born caste) dominance, tends to overlook the unique struggles faced by Dalits and other lower-caste women (Nair 2020). The experiences of marginalization and systemic violence are exacerbated for lower-caste women by the confluence of caste and gender biases. This intersection necessitates a nuanced approach in feminist advocacy to address the distinct challenges faced by these women, as their experiences significantly diverge from the mainstream feminist narrative that predominantly revolves around upper-caste women's issues (Backelin-Harrison 2018, 18-29). Similarly, the intersection of gender with religion in India unveils diverse patriarchal structures and gender norms entrenched within various religious communities. These religious doctrines and practices, intertwined with societal gender norms, significantly impact women's rights and feminist advocacy in different ways across religious lines. The dialogue between feminism and religion in

India unveils a multiplicity of feminist experiences and struggles, each nuanced by the religious and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. Economic status is another pivotal axis of intersectionality, that interacts with gender to often dictate the extent of agency and autonomy women can exercise. Economic independence is heralded as a significant milestone in feminist advocacy as it directly correlates with women's empowerment and their ability to challenge patriarchal norms. The dialogue between economic status and gender unveils the broader structural inequalities that significantly impact women, often determining their ability to access resources, opportunities, and redressal mechanisms.

The advent of digital spaces has also brought forth new dimensions of intersectionality within Indian feminism. The #MeToo movement in India exemplified how digital platforms could be harnessed to highlight and challenge gender-based harassment. It also sheds light on the exclusivity and lack of intersectionality within some feminist discourses, particularly in online spaces, where the voices of marginalized groups often remain unheard or overshadowed (Nanditha 2022, 1673-1694). The discourse on intersectionality within Indian feminism challenges the monolithic understanding of the category of 'woman'. It emphasizes the necessity for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to feminist advocacy and research, urging a departure from a singular narrative to a more encompassing understanding that reflects the diverse experiences of women across different social categories (Menon 2015, 37-44).

Intersectionality within Indian feminism provides a robust framework for examining the complex interplay of gender with other social categories like caste, religion, and economic status. It urges a reevaluation of mainstream feminist narratives to include the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals at the convergence of these social categories, thereby enriching the feminist discourse and advocacy in India.

Digital Feminism and Social Media

The proliferation of digital platforms and social media has marked a significant milestone in the feminist narratives and political discourse in India. The advent of the internet has not only made information more accessible but has also provided a platform for marginalized voices, leading to

a more inclusive feminist discourse. Digital feminism in India has been a manifestation of the broader global trend of fourth-wave feminism, where digital platforms are used as tools for mobilization, advocacy, and education. Feminist digital platforms, online educational media, instructional blogs and videos, and safety apps have particularly played a pivotal role in opening up a virtual space for self-assertion among women. The digital space offers the comfort of anonymity, which is critical for individuals with oppressed identities, providing a sense of safety that may not be available offline². Social media platforms have emerged as significant avenues for nurturing a sense of sisterhood among women, especially the younger generation. Through platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, women and gender minorities have found spaces where their voices seem familiar and safer. These platforms have enabled the sharing of experiences from callout posts to survival stories, fostering a community of shared understanding and support. In particular, the #MeToo movement in India showcased how digital platforms could be leveraged to highlight and challenge gender-based harassment. The movement also shed light on the exclusivity and lack of intersectionality within some feminist discourses, particularly in online spaces, indicating the necessity for a more inclusive approach to digital feminism³.

The transition from offline to online platforms for educational programs and workshops has markedly enhanced the accessibility and inclusivity of feminist discourse (Titus 2018, 17). Various online media for group calls and meetings have enabled the shift from offline spaces to online platforms, allowing women from different socioeconomic backgrounds to access information and education. The flexibility and convenience of online education have significantly benefited women, enabling them to participate in skill-building programs and feminist discussions without the constraints posed by physical attendance. This transition has been particularly beneficial for housewives, working women, mothers, and women from families that lack the privilege of attending programs likely to be held far from their homes.

Digital feminism and social media have significantly enriched the feminist narratives and political discourse in India. The digital platforms have not only amplified the voices of women but also facilitated intersectional discussions on gender, caste, religion, and economic status. The

collaborative nature of online communities, coupled with the anonymity and safety provided by the digital space, has fostered a more inclusive and robust feminist discourse. Through digital activism and online engagement, feminism in India is evolving into a more accessible, collaborative, and intersectional movement, underlining the transformative power of digital platforms in shaping political discourse around gender equality.

Challenges Faced by Feminism in India

The feminist movement in India has encountered substantial resistance and backlash stemming from various sociopolitical quarters. A primary challenge lies in the entrenched socio-economic disparities, patriarchal norms, and gender violence prevalent in Indian society. The fragmented nature of feminist mobilization, where women have not coalesced in a fundamental sense, hinders the unified progression of the feminist agenda. The implementation of policies promoting gender equality has been a persistent challenge. The success of the feminist movement in India hinges on its inclusivity, ensuring it encapsulates the diverse experiences and challenges faced by all women across different social strata (Sreemohyee 2020). The historical trajectory of the Women's Movement in India exhibits a blend of radical advances and pragmatic retreats. The Indian societal structure, rife with issues of gender construction and the baggage of backward class, caste, or ethnicity, imposes a double marginalization on women. The initial women's emancipation movements, largely spearheaded by men, carried a protectionist orientation, which, while aimed at safeguarding Indian socio-cultural ethos from colonial modernity, reduced women to passive recipients of reform. The movement's narrative shifted post-independence, especially during the 1970s, marking the resurgence of an autonomous women's movement. The movement has struggled with homogenizing tendencies, often sidelining the complex interplay between gender, class, caste, and religion, and how these factors distinctly impact a woman's social encounters (Sreemohyee 2020).

A discernible hierarchy within the movement has further exacerbated the challenges. For instance, the dominant narrative focusing on gender-based discrimination in wages and legal rights often overlooks the dire struggles of Dalit or impoverished women who face 'double marginalization'. The mainstream movement's conciliatory approach towards marginalized women, such as Dalit,

Adivasi, or disabled women, often relegates them to secondary roles, preventing an independent consolidation of these marginal voices. The movement has inadequately addressed the issues concerning sex workers, emphasizing their health while neglecting the derision surrounding their profession and the lack of financial security. This hierarchical and exclusive approach diminishes the movement's capacity to challenge and dismantle the entrenched patriarchal structures comprehensively.

Future Prospects of Feminist Movements in India

The trajectory of feminism and gender equality movements in India is evolving, with a plethora of concerns including sexual abuse, harassment, reproductive rights, and labour rights at the forefront. The feminist movement now is more active and varied than ever, reflecting a growing consciousness and a broadening spectrum of advocacy (Serrano Munoz 2022, 945). As we look towards the future, gender participation, particularly in political and social spheres, is anticipated to play a crucial role. The inclusion of women in the democratic process, especially in shaping public policy, is essential for ensuring fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between genders. Although India has seen women in significant political positions, the representation of women in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies is considerably low. However, with constitutional amendments like the 73rd and 74th, mandating a reservation of 33% seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and the 33 per cent reservation law in the Indian parliament, the scenario is gradually changing. Close to 50 per cent of elected representatives in PRIs are now women, a significant leap that is expected to resonate in other democratic structures over time (Sreemohyee 2020). The private domain is another sphere where significant shifts are expected. Women's roles in families have traditionally reinforced patriarchal norms, with their unpaid labour in childcare and domestic caregiving sustaining the economy yet remaining unrecognized. The future economic discourse is likely to acknowledge this unpaid labour as part of GDP, thereby shedding light on the economic role of women's household work. Alongside, with more women attaining higher education and joining the formal workforce, there's a foreseeing of workplaces evolving to become more accommodative. Policies ensuring equal pay, flexible work hours, and representation of women in senior management and board positions are expected to be

more pronounced. This transformation will not only contribute to gender equality but also impact the broader economic landscape, augmenting women's contributions to the formal economy (Sreemohyee 2020).

The role of men in achieving gender equality is increasingly becoming apparent. Initiatives like MenEngage Alliance, a global network of organizations working with men, aim at building awareness about inherent patriarchy and promoting gender-equitable socialization. The market too is playing a part in redefining masculinity, challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Advertising campaigns urging men to share household responsibilities and legal frameworks facilitating extended paternity leaves are steps towards creating a more gender-equitable society. As societal norms evolve, a shared responsibility in domestic spheres is likely to contribute to a more balanced gender equation. The anticipation is that such shifts in gender roles and societal expectations will foster a more inclusive environment, enabling the continued progression of feminist and gender equality movements in India, and thereby influencing the political discourse in a significant way.

Conclusion

The influence of the feminist and gender equality movements in India on political discourse has been thoroughly examined and captured in this research. The frameworks that support campaigns for gender equality have been identified via an analysis of influential feminists and groups. Principles of gender equality are institutionally recognised and upheld, as evidenced by legislative actions and court rulings. A comprehensive feminist narrative is vital, as the discourse around intersectionality has brought to light the complex obstacles that women encounter. The analysis of digital feminism demonstrated the critical role that internet platforms play in propagating feminist causes and encouraging grassroots activism. A systematic and cultural barrier to the advancement of feminist movements was exposed by the examination of the obstacles and reactions. Future possibilities conjecture highlights the trajectory that feminist movements may take in influencing political discourse and promoting policies that are inclusive of women. The complicated and hopeful panorama of legislative modifications, judicial interpretations, internet activism, public involvement, and feminist campaigning are interwoven and contribute to the achievement of

gender equality in India. This study sheds light on the changing narrative of gender equality and its significant effects on the socio-political fabric of India by explaining the dynamic interaction between feminism and political discourse in the country.

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Family settings of Kashmir and the dwindling status of older adults: Does age really matter?

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Abstract

Age plays a significant part in human existence, influencing our experiences, perspectives and social positions within a society. It serves as a significant mark of status and respect, reflecting the learning and understanding that individuals have gained over their life courses. As the population of the older adults continue to rise globally, there is a concerning trend of their dwindling status in family affairs. They are often overlooked and not considered significant decision-makers. Their position of authority in family settings has diluted, due to the increasing complexity of modern life. In this context, this paper explores the dwindling status of the older adults in family settings. It investigates their involvement in major and minor decisions taken at home. This is a qualitative study, based on 20 oral narratives conducted, over time, with older adults experiencing non-involvement in family affairs. The finding of the study revealed that the older adults are ignored in the decisions taken in family settings primarily because of their non-productive role.

Keywords: Older adults. Decision Making. Non-involvement. Narratives.

Introduction

Family is one of the most significant social institutions, occupying a central position in human societies (Kaushik, 2020, p. 99). As a significant social institution, the family regulates the behavior of its members by assigning a specified role to everyone such that the continued existence of the family is maintained. In our day-to-day life, the family works as a union, coordinating the role of every member as a contributing factor to its functioning and survival. In such an atmosphere, decision making, within a family has a greater role to play in its governance. Every member, from the older adult to the child occupies a particular position with respect to decisions taken at home. Although, factors like patriarchy and experience decide who takes the most important decisions, every member has a role to play in the affairs of the family.

In the past, the older adults played a significant role in day-to-day life affairs within family settings primarily due to their extensive life experiences. They, on account of their wisdom and knowledge commanded respect and authority in the family setup (Datta, 2018, p. 49). Their participation in decision making was highly regarded, as they were considered valuable assets to the family, providing guidance during challenging times. With their involvement in family affairs, they promoted a sense of intergenerational bonding, strengthening family relationships and creating a supportive and caring environment. Moreover, they also served as guardians of family traditions and values, handing down cultural roots to future generations. Their presence also facilitated socialization and offered guidance on important family decisions. (Ayoob, 2020, p. 36, Paltasingh, et al., 2017, p. 44).

However, the influence of modernization and industrialization has significantly transformed the lives of individuals within a family, leading to increased complexity in various aspects of social life. Such complexity has led to reduced involvement of the older adults in decision making within family setups. This situation is also compounded by their poor health conditions and chronic illness (Anand, 2016, p. 157).

As a result of these changes, the older adults are pushed to the margins and not taken into consideration in family affairs. Their voices and inputs are frequently disregarded leading to a sense of being excluded from active participation in decision making within family settings. Moreover, the emergence of scientific knowledge has reduced the value of their acquired knowledge and wisdom, as now every problem is predominantly approached through a scientific lens. Apart from that, serious and long-lasting changes are being witnessed in the family composition, and accordingly changes have occurred in the role relationships, power and status of the family members to a considerable extent (Kaushik, 2020, p. 98, Kumar et al., 2014, p. 1, Suryavanshi, 2020, p. 429). Such changes have in-turn marginalized the older adults and hence, loss of control over decision making within family settings.

In advanced and industrialized societies, the older adults experience degraded status, and less importance compared to traditional societies where they commanded respect and authority within a family (Paltasingh et al., 2017, p. 45-46, Bansod, 2011, p. 4, Ayoob, 2020, p. 34). Their role in decision-making process at home is changing over time, due to changes in the family composition and intergenerational relationships (Paltasingh et al., 2017, p. 48, Bansod, 2011, p. 4).

As strong evidence to this, old age homes are rapidly increasing throughout the world and the number of cases of elderly abuse are also on rise (Old age homes in India, 2022, p. 2). These facts testify the growing relevance of the issue of dwindling status of the older adults in family settings.

At the regional level in Kashmir, the abandonment and mistreatment of older adults by their families and the lack of proper and supportive care network has prompted the authorities to speed up the establishment and development of old age homes in almost all districts of the valley (Greater Kashmir, 2023, p.1). Moreover, the cases of older adult mistreatment in family settings have increased to a considerable extent (Kashmir life, 2023, p.1). This phenomenon emerges from the complex power dynamics among the family members, as younger members exert greater control in family decisions.

Although, changes have affected their status, yet joint families offer them greater opportunities in decision-making processes of the family. (Paltasingh et al., 2017, p. 53, Bansod, 2011, p. 4). The older adults, who are financially independent are reckoned as a valuable asset to the family. There seems to be a positive relationship between the financial independence of the older adults and better status and quality of life in old age (Paltasingh et al., 2017, p. 49-50, Bansod, 2011, p. 4). A difference in perception among people concerning the presence of older adults at home is also noticed. Some see it as an opportunity to have the older adult at home, while others simply term them as a socio-economic burden (Ayoob, 2020, p. 33, Paltasingh, et al., 2017, p. 45).

Aim of the Study

The present study aims to explore the status of the older adults in day-to-day affairs within family settings. It investigates their importance in both major and minor affairs within the household. In this context, this paper documents the role of the older adults in day-to-day family affairs through a qualitative lens as qualitative analysis will help us to understand effectively their role in familial affairs.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study conducted in district Pulwama of the union territory of J&K via convenience sampling technique. The study employed in-depth face-to-face interviews with 20 respondents. While collecting the data from first 12 respondents, the study encountered a data

saturation point, as same set of responses were witnessed. Meanwhile, 1 more respondent was included in the study to check the reliability of data and again same set of responses were witnessed. This prompted the investigator to stop from proceeding any further in the data collection process. Apart from it, two respondents, who were the sons of older persons who were inquired about the problem were also included in the study. The present study was conducted with respondents aged 60 years and above at the time and place of their convenience. After analyzing the information, the results were presented in the form of narratives.

Results and Discussion

Decision-making in day-to-day affairs has a significant role to play in the life course of a family. In most families, this principle of collective decision-making is used to settle the daily affairs of the family. From routine decisions to the most important ones, a person's positions determine the level of involvement in the decision-making. Usually, in families, the daily decision taken at home start with "the decision regarding what to cook for lunch. In such a case, the opinion of all family members is sought. Then, there are decisions concerning other matters like, the purchase of medicine and daily household items, money, and resource management decisions, etc. and some of the most significant decisions are also taken such as decisions regarding buying and selling of property, inheritance of property, and marriage related decisions etc. To better understand the discussion on the role of the older adults in family affairs, the topic has been divided into two broad categories viz. routine decisions and macro/significant decisions which are elaborated as follows:

Routine decisions: In family settings, the routine decisions taken are of various kinds. From the start of the day to its end, innumerable number of decisions are taken within families where the opinion of all family members is sought to avoid any conflicting situations. Earlier, utmost importance was given to the opinion of the older adults regarding any kind of decision taken in the family. However, such a situation doesn't exist anymore due to the changes witnessed in the institution of the family. This can be better understood by dividing the theme into the following sub-themes.

a. Food: In almost all families in Kashmir, three generations live under the same roof viz, children, young and the old. There is diversity in food taste and requirements with regard to these three generations. In Kashmir, the daily routine begins with the preparation of tea (Preferably salt tea) early in the morning and continues with lunch in the afternoon and dinner at night. In such situations, the role of the elderly has dwindled as they are often ignored in the process of food preparation. Importance is given to the requirements of the young leaving the old in a state of neglect and marginalization. They now come to know about the food at the serving time. Against this backdrop, Ali Mohammad narrated, *I remember, during my youthful days, my wife would prepare tea and cook food taking into account the requirements of all the members of the family. However, such facilities are no longer available to us. Our advice with respect to the preparation of food is hardly taken into account. Every day, I see the requirements of the young are given more preference than the old.*

A similar experience is shared by Jana, *being hypertensive, I am supposed to take a minimal quantity of salt in tea. I always tell my children, to prepare salt-free tea for me, but they hardly pay attention. Gone are the days when our advice was taken seriously. It now seems that seeking care is a crime.*

Food-related decisions have become a major issue in familial settings. The elderly, who were once influential in the food related decision now seem overlooked and insignificant. After inquiring the situation from the son of Ali Mohammad, Musadiq. He narrated, *“You know, in family settings, there is diversity with respect to food and other requirements of the family members. It is quite difficult to prepare separate food for all the members of the family, keeping in view the paucity of time and cost. Hence, we often compromise on the preferences and needs of senior members.*

b. Purchase of daily household items: In families, household management requires buying and selling different daily-use items. For such consumption, the opinion of the elderly has become quite insignificant. Their physical and economic dependence has reduced their significance in family settings. In this backdrop, Ghulam Rasool narrated, *I recall a time when my opinion in buying household item was taken seriously, my words were influential in what we bought, but now, my physical and economic dependence has sidelined my insights in these matters. I now miss the significance I once had.*

Another older adult, Naseema (Widow), narrates, *advising regarding the purchase of daily household items has become unacceptable. My children always taunt me whenever I suggest any strategy concerning the purchase of items from the market. They laugh at me and ask me to mind my own business. They would always use the word ‘cxe chay ne pata dunya kati chu’ (you do not know, where the world is these days). I try to figure out what is it that I do not know.*

For the older adults, the insignificance in routine decisions has posed an existential threat to their life and status in the family. They consider it disrespectful and a major factor in the loss of headship position in the family.

After inquiring about the situation from the son of Naseem, Gulzar. He narrated, *you know, there exists a generation gap between the young and the old and it is not just about age; it is about the different experiences and realities we have grown up with. The old are unaware about the trends in the market, their old methods of comparing prices and bargaining are no longer applicable. whereas, they young are capable of making best deals, and sometimes buy goods that we are totally unaware. Keeping in view these things we usually avoid the suggestions of the old in the purchase of daily household items.*

c. Health and Wellbeing: Staying healthy both physically and mentally is crucial for the overall well-being of an individual. For the elderly, who usually suffer from a multiplicity of ailments like infirmness, cardiovascular diseases, and other life-threatening illnesses such as kidney problems, cancer, and arthritis, adjusting to the situation has become a serious issue. Their diminishing health status, together with their inability to contribute to the household income has further worsened their status in the family.

With respect to their health care, the other members perceive them as dependents, often displaying a sense of otherness towards them. Sometimes, in most sensitive cases where serious and desired attention is required by them, the young perceive it as a challenging task to care for the older adults in such situations. Such challenges have emerged as a source of mental distress for the younger ones.

In this regard, Rafeeqa (widow) narrated, *“ I suffer from diabetes and the doctor has advised me to take a proper diet and attend the hospital regularly for check-ups. My son accompanied me twice but now it seems to me that he feels bored. It is been almost one month since I visited*

the doctor for check-up. I am now scared to ask him to accompany me. Had he been careful about my health he would have taken me to the doctor. I have been left to the mercy of God.

Similarly, another women Fatima narrated, *“I suffer from multiple ailments which require me to take 10 to 12 tablets on a daily basis. I always get confused and forget which tablet to take at what time and when I ask my children about the appropriate schedule, they don’t seem to be interested and ask me to take any one of the tablets. So, to avoid confusion, I now take all 12 tablets daily but without knowing their exact timing.*

The non-involvement of the elderly in the routine affairs of the family exhibits a story of deprivation and anxiety. It has reduced their status and value not merely within the household but in the general society as well. Such confrontations have intensified over the years posing a serious threat to their existence and reducing them to just mere physical objects.

d. Hygiene/sanitation: Sanitation and hygiene have a significant role to play in the life of a person. It prevents illness and maintains proper health. With regard to older adults, who are more susceptible to infectious diseases due to their weak immune system and infirmness, maintenance of physical and mental health requires proper sanitation and hygienic facilities such as the washing of clothes, cleaning of their rooms and other requirements which require the help of other family members. Against this backdrop, Saleema narrated, *“ My room is filled with dust and dirt, and it is been almost a month now since it was cleaned last time. I approached my children and asked them to clean my room, as it is becoming quite difficult for me to breathe due to the dust emanating from heavy and bulky mating, but it seems to me that my pleas for assistance dissolve into the air, they hardly pay attention to my health and well-being. Now, I don’t understand what to do.*

Another older adult Rasool Mir (Widower) narrated, *‘you know, no one is ready to assist us. I have been asking my children to assist me to the washroom so that I can take a bath and change, but it’s like no one is listening. Every day when I ask my son about it, he simply saves his face by saying tomorrow definitely, but that tomorrow has never come till now. I am scared of going to the washroom alone, as I fear slipping. This is a plight that no one can understand except us.*

Macro /Significant decisions: Along with routine decisions, some significant decisions are also taken in almost every family. With respect to the role of the older adults in such decisions,

a grim situation comes to the forefront. All of which can be understood under the following headings:

a. Marriage: Related to the choice of marriage, in most families in Kashmir, the opinion of every single member of the family is sought. This collective decision making has led to effective decisions regarding the marriage of family members. However, such a situation has arisen wherein, the role of the older adult has significantly reduced in marriage related decisions. They are hardly involved in such decisions; their role has become confined to rearing and maintaining children in the house barring from taking any significant decisions. In this backdrop, *Yasmeen narrated, ‘ Last year, in 2021, my younger son’s daughter got married and a few days before the marriage I was handed over new clothes and when I enquired about the reason for the clothes, I was told that Noori was getting married after few days, I was shocked to learn about the marriage proposal, they had decided all by themselves without consulting me.*

Another older woman, *Zooni, shared her experience. She said, I have only one son and last year her daughter’s marriage was fixed somewhere in Pulwama and when I tried to enquire about the place, residence and occupation of the person she was getting married to, I was not told anything about anything else and it was only on the wedding day that I came to know about these things.*

For the older adults, the non-involvement in significant affairs of the family has created a deplorable situation for them and to avoid abandonment and being deserted by their families, they are found to compromise and move on.

b. Buying and selling of property: In most of the family discords, the issue of property and assets have figured relentlessly. The majority of the older adults often complain about the misuse of their property possessions. Not only that, the older adults nowadays are considered insignificant in property dealing matters. They are perceived as people sans foresight. Their non-involvement in buying and selling of property is justified on grounds of lack of awareness, and traditional mindset. This attitude towards the older adults has hampered their reach in family matters; therefore, a feeling of disenchantment enters their existence and they began to perceive themselves as weak, and unworthy of taking any serious decision. In this backdrop, *Wali Mohammad narrates, the younger generation does not feel comfortable with elders, probably because of their other obligations. They never seek our opinion regarding buying and*

selling of property. They think we are too old to make any such decisions. My children treat me well but when it comes to involvement in family affairs, I have no say. They never bother to ask me my opinion in family matters and if sometimes I try to suggest something, they hardly pay attention.

A Similar situation is shared by *Gulshan, I have two sons and a daughter, and all are married. we are living in a joint family and all decisions whether big or small are taken by my sons. They never consult me if anytime any big decision is taken. Recently, my elder son bought a piece of land in a nearby village. I came to know about it after a month and that too from a neighbor. My sons never discuss anything with me and this is the worst experience of my life.*

c. Consultation in family matters: Conflicts and disagreements among members of a family are a common occurrence in almost all families. In such situations, the older family member can serve as an impartial arbitrator to resolve the dispute between the parties. Older relatives are frequently regarded as knowledgeable, which might make them a great choice for family discussions. When experiencing challenging circumstances, they can provide insightful counsel and encouragement. However, nowadays, older adults are often overlooked when it comes to consultation in family matters. In this backdrop, Nazir Ahmad narrates, “ *I live in a joint family with my wife and our two married sons. Last year, we had a dispute in the family regarding which son should shift to a newly built house that our family had unitedly constructed. After weeks of tension, I finally learned that my elder son had settled it with his younger brother and his wife, with the payment of around 15 lakh rupees. I was completely cut off from this crucial decision and had no idea how or when they came to a resolution, so I was taken aback by such an agreement.*

The knowledge of the older adults can provide valuable insights on this situation, and their advice can be very useful in guiding the family in the direction of the best course of action. They can also facilitate in disputes resolution, providing family members a third-party perspective.

Conclusion

The involvement of the elderly in family affairs is crucial to the family’s overall well-being. Older adults’ unique thoughts and insights are valuable in family affairs, they on account of their experience and wisdom impact the family’s course of action and help in strengthening and maintaining cohesive intergeneration network.

Since many cultures respect and value the older adults as sources of knowledge and wisdom, families can use them as important resources when making decisions. They can also play a significant part in relationships networks as well, acting as role models for younger generations, guiding them in making life decision. This includes moral support, counsel and guidance during tough times, and also advise on important family matters. The older adults possess years of experience as they had spent their entire lives in researching and assessing events, thus, providing information and knowledge that other might hardly possess.

However, evidence confirms that when it comes to the involvement of the older adults in family contexts, they are seen to be frequently overlooked. They are not considered significant decision makers in family affairs, whether those are minor or major affairs. The younger generation feels that the older adults lack market experience as they spend maximum time home. Moreover, the influence of modernization and industrialization has significantly transformed the lives of individuals within a family, leading to increased complexity in various aspects of society. Such complexity has sidelined the importance and role of the older adults in family affairs.

Thus, on account of the negligence of the older adults from the affairs of the family, the need of the hour is to recognize and understand their importance in family affairs which we have so far ignored. Facilitating their participation in the affairs of the family can be a working strategy that helps to maintain their sense of purpose and connection to the family.

To sum up, the older adult has much to offer when it comes to involvement in family affairs. By understanding the potential value of their involvement, families can ensure that the older adults are included in the affairs of the family and can benefit from the knowledge and experience they possess.

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Situating Fraser, Honneth and Ambedkar in the Uncanny Dilemma of Recognition and Redistribution

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Abstract

There are often debates in India and Western countries over claims of recognition and redistribution as to what should come first in the quest for establishing an equal society. The dilemma is centred upon the primary basis of exclusion and resolution. The question predominantly remains- whether recognition of the community and individual will bring their upliftment or the redistribution of material resources will pave the way for equality in the economic domain. A fierce debate exists between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser in this context. Where Honneth's writings reflect an emphasis on the importance of Recognition, Fraser has attempted to strike a balance between efforts that combine the resolution of issues related to redistribution and recognition. This dilemma has also existed in the Indian context, and has been primarily associated with material and social upliftment of the socio-economic marginalised groups. The paper aims to analyse and interrogate Ambedkar's standpoint by situating his views in the debate of Recognition and Redistribution concerning the question of Dalit's struggle for equality in the Indian society.

Introduction

The world is witnessing struggles over nationalities, religion, and gender; thus, the question of recognition is impossible to ignore. If recognition is a central aspect, its relation to redistribution is salient too. In a democratic welfarist State, the conflicts revolve majorly around resources. Economic inequalities today are growing as forces of globalisation and neoliberalism are at pace. There has also been a simultaneous rise and hyper-mobilisation of 'politics of identity' globally since the 1990s. Fraser and Honneth both agree that the idea and practice of justice must incorporate – claims of struggles over distribution and struggles over recognition. But Honneth sees recognition as the fundamental overarching moral category. He proposes a 'normative monism' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 77) of recognition and sees distribution as derivative. In contrast, Fraser rejects the idea of distribution being subsumed underneath recognition. She conceives redistribution and recognition as co-fundamental and co-primary. Both are independent of each other but interrelated; nevertheless,

one cannot be reduced to the other. Thus, she proposes a ‘perspective-dualism’(Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 3).

In the late 20th century within the liberal tradition, the notion of Redistribution gained prominence. During the 1970s, influential thinkers like Rawls and Ronald Dworkin formulated robust theories of distributive justice, contributing to the growing significance of the concept of socio-economic redistribution. The term ‘recognition’ comes from Hegelian philosophy, which aims at defining a reciprocal relation between and among individuals or communities. Hegelian philosophy proposes that individuals must see the other as equal and separate from them. The notion of recognition has also become one of the most prominent words of our times. This notion is often associated centrally to conceptualise any struggle related to identity or difference: whether the matter pertains to indigenous land claims, women's self-identity, the use of Muslim headscarves, same-sex marriages, or the endeavour of marginalised groups to assert their identity and seek distributive justice.

The paper thus, attempts to lay out the debate between the two authors Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, regarding the importance they associate to the claims of Recognition and Redistribution. It further attempts to read Ambedkar’s views on both kinds of claims. Ambedkar was a champion of social justice. His economic ideas reflected State Socialism and his social views reflected equal society. He strictly believed that the State plays a vital role in the economic and political development of a society. Therefore, he assimilated ideas relating to social and economic justice and provisions in the Indian Constitution. In his writings, one can trace significant reflection upon recognition, redistributive and representative aspects of the social and economic upliftment of the marginalised. The last part will delve into the claims of redistribution and recognition concerning the Dalit community in the Indian context.

The Contestation over Claims of Recognition and Redistribution

Recognition tends to be defined as a single interaction between two individuals. It is based on confirmation by others that individuals have their intrinsic value and dignity. The concept of recognition can be effectively applied to both institutions and society in terms of an expressive notion.

Institutions demonstrate recognition when they facilitate individuals in maintaining relationships based on recognition, and they withhold recognition when they impede such relationships.

Honneth argues that there is human dependence upon inter-subjective recognition. This recognition is mostly shaped by the way in which mutual granting of recognition is established in a society (Honneth, 1997, p. 43). He notes that at the heart of class lies the cultural realisation of self; now, this self has three dimensions: self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect. (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, 37). These three dimensions of recognition are imperative to meet any claims of recognition. The basic elements of recognition are reciprocity, mutuality and differentiation.

Honneth predominantly argues that economic inequality is created by cultural valuation. He differs from Fraser and denies that capitalism is an enclosed economic structure. He argues that the structure of cultural valuation provides a basis for capitalism (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 29). Capitalism across the globe feeds on existing social hierarchies, and the normative ideal of differentiated treatment feeds into creating economic inequality. Even to understand the mobility nature of redistributive strategies in capitalism, the imperatives of recognition must be analysed. He critiques the idea of abstract structuralism; culture is very much part of the structure itself. (Deranty, 2011, p. 65). The idea of class is itself constructed in cultural terms. In an attempt to conceptually clarify the normative objectives in a rather diffuse and mostly implicit way by various social movements, a moral standard is to be formulated that can demonstrate the goals of public justifiability while improving their political prospects. The aspect of recognition tends to create a difference-friendly society wherein assimilation into the dominant culture must not be required to gain equal respect. He differs from Fraser in her conviction that the theory of recognition leads to neglecting demands of redistribution; which was the centre of a certain theoretical tradition, that can be credited and traced to Marx. Fraser views Honneth's investigation of the 'struggle for recognition' as a recognition-centric theoretical turn. (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 11)

The claims of redistributive issues are generally found in the economic disparity that a community or group faces. However, there are groups and communities, which are lagging behind solely because they are culturally devalued and this cultural devaluation plays a vital role in material distribution and distribution of opportunities. (Smith & Deranty, 2012, p. 58). The contemporary structure of the

global economy is such that the marginalised and stigmatised communities are involved in the same kind of profession that they have been indulged in historically. This pattern of exclusion and discrimination is often reflected in the institutions as well. In fact, a new field called behavioural economics talks about social stratification, which takes place through economic and social discrimination. (Hoff & Walsh, 2018, p. 3). Once forced, the categories become the basis of normal prejudgement. As far as economic discrimination is concerned, there are several modalities through which it can take place- statistical, explicit, implicit, etc. (Hoff & Walsh, 2018, p. 6)

Now, some groups face injustices pertaining to recognition as well as redistribution. These communities suffer dual forms of injustice and need remedies for both. Fraser calls these groups 'bivalent collectivities' (Fraser, 2020, 9). The disadvantage they suffer can be located in both political economy and cultural roots; consequently, it creates maldistribution and misrecognition. (Bargu & Bottici, 2017, p. 76). Fraser and Honneth both note that gender and race are bivalent collectivities.

The contemporary issues around social justice are majorly divided into recognition and redistribution claims. The proponents of egalitarian redistribution conceive of recognition as a false consciousness. Conversely, advocates of recognition argue, that redistribution is blind to differences and cannot assure justice for stigmatised groups, minorities and women. Both these claims are currently contested in public spheres. Cultural valuation does not completely disappear even if we provide economic stability to the people. Cultural valuation enters the economy as an interrelated but independent structure. Most of the economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension. The economic weakness hinders equal participation in the making of culture in the public sphere which leads to cultural and additionally, economic subordination. Institutionalised systems of cultural devaluation block individuals from participating as equals in social life. Thus, it is important to recognise that caste dynamics significantly impact the economic aspects of individuals' lives, and at the same time, the economy influences and is influenced by caste values and beliefs. Consequently, certain behaviours give rise to enduring disparities and disadvantages for groups defined by factors such as caste, ethnicity, or religion. (Newman & Thorat, 2007, 4121). Fraser distinguishes the above-mentioned pattern of discrimination analytically and proposes that the remedy of economic injustice is in political-economic restructuring (redistributive income, reorganising labour, etc).

While discussing the claims of redistribution of resources for the Dalits, Gopal Guru makes an important point where he asserts that the Dalit efforts to move up the ladder of economic status and the turning of a few Dalits into millionaires might look spectacular from one standpoint. But ultimately, this whole spectacle is a false consciousness. Even if the Dalit millionaire has reached a certain economic status, he has yet to acquire the material social or cultural capital to be a part of the hegemonic spectacle. Additionally, once they become a social elite, they begin to disassociate from their community rather than extending a helping hand. (Guru, 2012, p. 49)

Situating Ambedkar in the Redistribution-Recognition Debate

‘In politics, said Ambedkar, we will be recognising the principle of one man, one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall continue to deny the principle of one man, one value due to our social and economic structure. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? (Chitkara, 2002, p. 59). The point that Ambedkar emphasised here was that separate philosophy is followed in the political, social and economic domains. Individuals from marginalised sections of society are not treated with the same human dignity as others. The lack of recognition essentially means keeping one devoid of human dignity. The conceptualisation of ‘Human Dignity’ is central to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's philosophy. It can be described as the inherent entitlement to respect based on one's human nature. To be humiliated is to remain devoid of this dignity and rendered inferior in some aspects by others in a deliberate way (Palshikar, 2005, 5428). Humiliation leads to reproduction of the power relations that persist in society and continue to devoid the stigmatised community of recognition and economic opportunities.

Ambedkar's discussion on addressing economic exploitation included a proposal that suggested that the State should take ownership and control of key industries and that agriculture should be managed as a State enterprise (Rodrigues, 2010). He contended that a modified form of State Socialism in the industrial sector was crucial for achieving rapid industrialisation. Additionally, he believed that collective farming was the only way to provide relief to landless labourers, particularly those from the 'untouchable' castes. He argued that an economy solely driven by the profit motive went against two fundamental principles of political democracy. Firstly, it allowed private employers, rather than the State, to have control over individuals' lives. Secondly, it could potentially compel individuals to relinquish their Constitutional Rights in order to earn a livelihood. In 1937, Ambedkar criticised the

Indian National Congress for lacking the courage to promote the ideal of social and economic equality, which would enable the common man to have the leisure and freedom to develop themselves (Audi 1989, p. 314). During the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar highlighted the complete absence of two crucial elements in Indian society: social equality and economic equality (Ibid 1989, p. 316). He further emphasised:

‘India would experience a paradox where political equality, as embodied by the principle of one person, one vote and one vote, one value, would coexist with social and economic inequality. In politics, we will recognise the principle of one man, one vote, and one vote, one value. In our social and economic life, we shall continue to deny the principle of one man, one value.’ (Audi, 1989, p.317).

Ambedkar argued that socialists cannot ignore the issues stemming out of social order; they are making a mistake by imposing the European interpretation of history on the factual realities of India. They propound that man is an economic creature, that economic facts bind his activities and aspirations, and that property is the only source of power. But for Ambedkar, Socialists miss the point that the social status of an individual often becomes a significant source of power and authority, as exemplified by the influence enjoyed by spiritual leaders, known as Mahatmas, over the common people. In this speech also he questions the socialists about how is it possible to usher in economic reform without reforming the social order. The above statement and this question signify that for Ambedkar, the aspect of recognition was of utmost importance. Education was one way to achieve that; therefore, Ambedkar rendered immense importance to education. Education was, to Ambedkar, an empowering device. As a double-edged sword, education allowed individuals to self-actualise and with dignity. It was, therefore, a stepping stone towards realising the goal of being recognised as socially equal despite being economically underprivileged. (Chakrabarty, 2019, p.4).

The movements aimed at voicing the concerns relating to issues of recognition are seen through the framework of ‘identity politics’. The Socialists, Marxists and neo-marxists have certain reservations about such movements. The critique of identity politics is grounded in the theoretical assumptions of Marxist and neo-Marxist theories. To begin with, the critique is based on a theory of power (which sometimes remains implicit) that identifies class inequality as the sole significant source of

exploitation and oppression. Furthermore, many of these writings see activists who aim to mitigate economic disparities and confront the class system as primary catalysts for driving social change. As a consequence of such theoretical foundations, identity politics is often not considered a political practice that challenges fundamental power dynamics; instead, it is interpreted within the realms of symbols, culture, or psychology. Marxists see culture as a separate domain not as a constitutive element of the structure (the economy). However, the proposition remains that issues of recognition must be seen as central to any movement or policy framework that aims to resolve the issues of social stigmatisation and economic equality.

For Ambedkar, the significance of recognition becomes abundantly clear from the definition of Democracy he gave in a speech in Poona on December 22, 1952. He defined Democracy as a system of government that facilitates revolutionary changes in the economic and social aspects of society without resorting to violence. (Sirswal, 2014, p. 23). He also opined that a society that is premised upon Liberty, Equality and Fraternity can be the only alternative to a caste-based society. It must provide channels for transporting a change. It should provide space for upward mobility of groups and individuals. There must be a 'social end-osmosis. (Ambedkar, 1935, p.2).

The Dalit Question

Many marginalised groups pushed to the periphery by the hierarchical social-economic structure make claims of redistribution and recognition. Some communities essentially suffer both kinds of injustices and need remedies for both. Fraser calls these groups 'bivalent collectivities' (Fraser, 1995, p. 23). The disadvantages they suffer can be located in both; political economy as well as cultural and social order. Both gender and caste (the Dalits in this context) are bivalent collectivities. In terms of gender, there is a division between paid male-dominated professions and female-dominated 'pink collar' less paid and unpaid domestic service occupations. This creates gender-specific exploitation and marginalization whereas, in terms of caste, the class and caste intersectionality render the Dalits vulnerable in terms of economic and social discrimination. Dalits are one consolidated social group in India that is economically most vulnerable and culturally most stigmatised and ghettoised. Therefore, it can be categorised as a bivalent collectivity. The very meagre representation that the Dalit entrepreneurs and politicians secure in the society, does not necessarily translate into equal

upliftment of the larger group of Dalits; thus, there is no trickle-down effect. This argument has been substantiated by scholars like Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukai.

The electoral party politics and the Dalit movement in post-independent India predominantly focused on the issues of identity, socio-political empowerment, self-respect and dignity. The discourse was manifested in the concern for 'recognition'. However, a significant development during the 1990s was the emergence of a young but educated and politically aware middle class. This influential middle class reached a critical mass with the economic transitions during the period of globalisation. The rising middle-class Dalit intellectuals are concerned with several issues. (Pankaj and Jha, 2023, p. 88). This middle class emphasizes the need for economic empowerment through new ways, indicating the emergence of Dalit middle-class activism. A marked shift can be traced from 'politics of recognition' to 'the politics of redistribution and representation', especially in the current scenario with the rising consciousness of a Dalit-educated middle class. The redistributive policies, however, have not addressed the questions of caste and associated inequalities sufficiently.

The trajectory of Dalit politics in India can be traced back to the 1950s. The nature of politics during that era was essentially anti-caste, and the ideology of Ambedkar and Phule propounded the language of the political discourses. In the 1960s, land reforms and primary education were predominant demands in the major Dalit movements. In the 1980s, many of the movements and Dalit politics largely raised questions of recognition in the public sphere against discrimination and stigmatisation. Post-1990s, the Dalit questions revolved mostly around the questions of recognition, representation and social justice. It is ironic that the 1990s was a period of globalisation where economic inequalities grew; nevertheless, the question of redistribution was put aside. All three forms of justice never co-existed together. Today, the anti-caste language is no longer used. The focus has shifted to asserting the identity of Dalithood. A limitation of this modality lies in the fear of the entrenchment of caste. Dalits are better off in Left-led States, but the economic question never resolves the stigmatisation. The Left took the class approach to resolve the caste issues, arguing that by class upliftment, caste would become weak. However, in the 1980s, the Left and Dalit movement parted ways. Since the Left did not address the caste issues, taking into account only the class issues would mean every economically weak section is to be incorporated into that. but the upper caste would continue to mark their cultural superiority in the social sphere.

It would be imperative to state an argument made by Gopal Guru regarding the Dalit millionaire in this context. Gopal Guru makes an important point when he asserts that the efforts of Dalits to move up in the ladder of economic status and the turning of a few Dalits into millionaires, might look spectacular from one point of view, but ultimately this whole spectacle is a false consciousness. Irrespective of the fact that Dalit millionaires have reached a certain economic status, it has not acquired the material social or cultural capital to be a part of the hegemonic spectacle dominated by the upper caste. (Guru, 2012, p. 48). He further argued that this mobility of Dalit millionaires does not guarantee them a social status at par with the dominant cultural groups. It does not change their identity but it acts as a role model for the others in the community. (Guru, 2012, p. 49). Nevertheless, the prosperity of a few Dalit millionaires does not translate into anything beneficial for their community. Therefore, justice in terms of recognition and redistribution is imperative to make an impact on the larger community. A concrete argument in favour of economic determinism can also be inferred from the work of Vivek Chibber (2022), 'The Class Matrix: Social Theory After the Cultural Turn', that society and culture mould themselves according to the economic scenario, the social order and one's location in the hierarchy would impact the economic life and activity, but the effect of the economic activity remains dominant. (Chibber, 2022, p. 14). He further argues political representation has not contributed to the economic upliftment of the marginalised. Nevertheless, the subaltern elite focuses more on the question of identity, representation and cultural inclusion in the public spaces. They give a very meagre amount of attention to the questions of economic exploitation, health and educational facilities of, for instance, the Dalit wage labourers. Ajay Gudavarthy on similar lines argues that the little social empowerment acquired by Dalits through caste-based parties did not translate into their economic well-being. Suhaildev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) Chief Om Prakash Rajbhar recently announced joining the BJP-led NDA, in a development that could potentially help the saffron outfit firm up its stronghold amongst the OBC, essentially in the politically crucial east Uttar Pradesh region. Such instances provide space for political parties to create a 'Politics of disillusionment' (Gudavarathy, 2014, p. 7). This is not to argue that the 'Politics of presence' (Phillips, 1995, p. 75) is not essential for the Dalit community, but the representation has to translate into the upliftment of the communities.

Moreover, caste does not become non-existent only through economic prosperity. Therefore, the recognition redistribution dilemma existed. Affirmative strategies that have been adopted in India for

the upliftment of subalterns do not change the structure of inequalities; they merely provide inclusion to some communities or individuals in the system. With this inclusion, there is an emergence of the subaltern elite, which is seen by some as empowerment, but Marxists see it as class under caste. Moreover, affirmative strategies for redistribution give a backlash of stigmatisation.

Conclusion

Fraser and Honneth, both are interested in navigating a way towards resolving the concerns related to discrimination and inequalities of the marginalised and excluded section of society. It is difficult to focus only on Honneth's perspective, which renders primacy to recognition concerns. However, only material redistribution proposed by Fraser will also fall short of giving a holistic resolution. Taking a more holistic approach to this issue, in her later writings, Fraser argues that we need two different approaches to address claims of recognition and redistribution. It is here that she refers to the need for transformative policies. The transformative policies have a two-fold agenda: to change the structures of discrimination and to rectify inequalities through equal opportunities. However, the claims of Honneth assert that 'recognition' is imperative while laying the foundations of any policy measure towards addressing the injustice based on identity. While attempting to situate Ambedkar in this framework, it can be argued that for Ambedkar, he remained concerned equally focused and vocal about social discrimination as well as economic inequalities. He continued to provide remedies against the exclusion of Dalits, their vulnerable economic status, and their better representation and presence in political scenarios. However, we can infer from his works that he laid more significance to recognition. He vocally argued for a society based on fraternity, and fraternity can only be achieved with equality. When each individual recognises the other as equal but different from the other, social equality can be achieved. He definitely argued for educational and economic upliftment of the Dalits, but he opined that redistribution of resources or material prosperity alone would never be a sufficient solution for achieving equality in the Hindu society ridden by caste and hierarchical inequalities. In contemporary times under neoliberalism, the resolution lies in economic prosperity accompanied by social change initiatives and reforms. The economic empowerment of the marginalised will intensify the resistance against discrimination and challenge the dominant economic and social power structures.

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Navigating the Digital Loan Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusive Finance

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Abstract

Digital lending is defined as "A remote and automated lending process, largely by the use of seamless digital technologies for customer acquisition, credit assessment, loan approval, disbursement, recovery, and associated customer service" by the Reserve Bank of India in its official guidelines on digital lending (RBI 2022). Since digital lending is largely unregulated and often bypasses the regulatory authority's supervision, it over-exploits the borrowers by charging exorbitant interest rates and breaching the privacy of users. Recently, app-based digital lending firms have often reported unethical and harmful recovery practices, because of which many borrowers across the country have attempted suicide. Despite these well-known facts, people, especially marginalised sections in rural areas, are becoming victims of these 'predatory digital loan apps'. One immediate possible explanation for this behaviour is the easy accessibility of digital loan apps. However, considering India's vast financial inclusion system and efforts to maximise inclusion through regional rural banks, small finance banks, micro-non-banking financial institutions, etc., public inclination to unregulated digital loan apps is a complex riddle to be deciphered. This paper tries to analyse the digital loan app's approach towards users through their app-based platforms and assess the borrowers' experience using secondary data. Overall, the research explores the challenges and issues raised by the recent trend of digital predatory lending and suggests measures to tackle the menace.

Keywords: Digital lending; App-based lending firms; Financial inclusion; Exploitation

Introduction

In recent decades, consumer finance has emerged as one of the significant areas of the economy in the world's major developing economies, which has paved the way for the rise of numerous

FinTech entities and digital lending. In the case of India, since 2014, the Indian government has made several initiatives, such as PM Jan Dhan Yojana, the Digital India programme etc., to push the Indian economy towards a digitalised economy. The government has started the Digital India Programme with the goal of making India a knowledge-based economy and a society that is enabled by technology by assuring digital access, inclusion, empowerment, and narrowing the digital divide (PIB, 2022). The digital economy not only eases the difficulty of ordinary people but also generates ample business opportunities for financial and platform-based companies. In recent times, digital lending has emerged as one of the fast-paced sectors of the digital economy. The Reserve Bank of India, in its new framework for digital lending, defines digital lending as "a remote and digital lending process, largely by the use of seamless digital technologies for customer acquisition, credit assessment, loan approval, disbursement, recovery, and associated customer service" (Naik, 2022).

Digital technology has significantly improved lending services by providing customers with convenience and easily accessible credit options. "Digital retail lending has grown at 43 per cent CAGR, from USD 9.0 bn in 2012 to USD 110.0 bn in 2019" (Kale, 2021). However, the rapid speed of FinTech advances and the slow implementation of regulatory regulations revealed the drawbacks of digital lending. In India, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the negative aspects of online lending, namely the presence of online loan sharks. These predatory lenders target weak potential borrowers using debt traps and severe loan recovery techniques, ruining lives in India (Kaur & Ilavarasan 2022, 544). For many Indian lending startups, the Indian consumer is quickly evolving into an easy target. While income growth has been subpar over the past year, significant consumer demand drives India's digital lending boom. The fact that 5.6 million credit cards are issued annually on average best illustrates the expanding role of credit (Singh, 2020). In recent years, India has seen the rise of various unregulated instant loan provider apps.

The Rise of Digital Lending Platforms and Reasons

The COVID pandemic is a significant contributor to the sudden mushrooming of instant digital loan app rise. However, it is not the sole reason behind digital lending flourishing in India. The demonetisation and subsequent rise in the use of digital payments made many sections of society aware of digital credit access. Needless to say, the fall of data tariffs (thanks to the introduction of Jio telecom services) and unprecedented percolation of data usage in deep rural areas have given the opportunity for tech firms to exploit the demand for loans. While on the infrastructure side, digitalisation paved the way for app-based lending, on the social aspect front, multiple reasons were given by users for choosing instant digital loan apps over traditional banking services.

Firstly, the easy accessibility across time and space allowed the users to access credit services at their fingertips using a mobile. When the users were further asked about similar services from scheduled commercial banks, they expressed their displeasure over the complicated user interface in platforms like *YONO* (SBI online service app). For formal loans, formal banking procedures typically include a thorough verification process that frequently demands a long list of identifying documents, including birth certificates, caste certificates, and asset certificates. Many people were first excluded from the formal financial system because they lacked these documents (Ramesh, et al. 2022, 1921).

Secondly, most of the respondents preferred unregulated digital apps over traditional bank loans as the digital loan apps are almost document-free, i.e., they do not ask for documentation work except for Aadhar and PAN cards. Moreover, these instant loan apps' most important feature is that they easily provide unsecured loans, while formal sector institutions generally require guarantors or collateral to fund the loan amount.

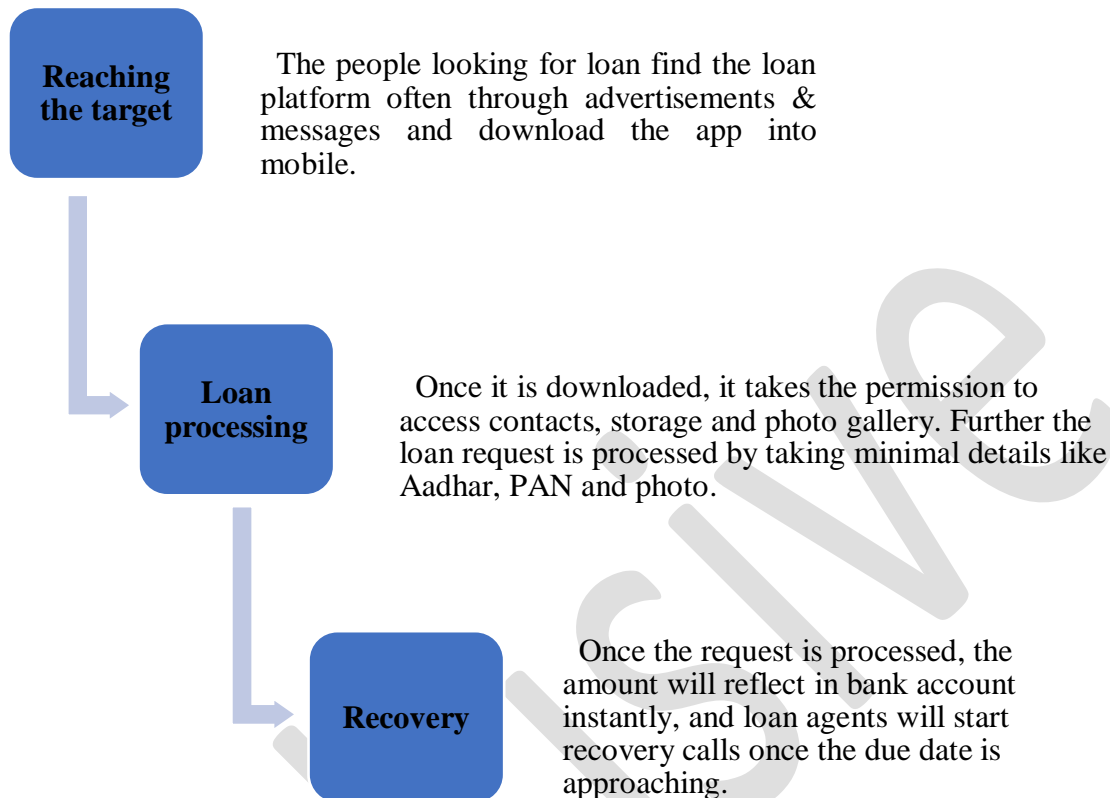
Thirdly, the behaviour of bank staff was cited as the reason for less preference for banking services over app-based platforms. The rural illiterate population, especially agricultural farmers and small enterprise owners, believe that bank staff responses are often disrespectful and down-looking. Research has highlighted that instant loan apps not only provide easily accessible loans to people in need but also ensure privacy and dignity, which appeal to the general masses towards app-based digital lending (ibid, 1921 p. 22).

Fourthly, despite the higher interest rates in instant digital lending apps, borrowers are often miscalculated or do not know about the overpayment difference between traditional banking loans and instant digital loans. Indeed, rural people rarely calculate the interest rate based on percentage; rather, they are more familiar with interest calculation based on rupee counting (per hundred). Fifthly, users of digital loan apps are unaware of the borrowing scheme. Most of the time, they bypass the terms and conditions and, more importantly, miss the penalty norms in the case of delayed repayment, which is the point of exploitation and harassment in most cases. Despite the considerable publicity of various credit schemes for marginalised sections such as farmers, scheduled castes, women, etc., from different types of banks such as Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), Urban Co-Operative Banks (UCBs), etc., governments are clearly failing to take to the merits of credit schemes to common man in the rural areas.

Moreover, Digital lending apps have effectively tapped into an unserved financial market by providing easily accessible and affordable services. According to the 2020 Consumer Lending Report, India's digital lending startups have reached around 120 million formally employed individuals who do not have credit cards but are credit-ready (Singh, 2020).

Modus Operandi of Digital Loan Apps

The working of digital loan apps follows a simple but distinct process. Reaching the likely borrower is the first step in this process, and this is often done through advertising the platform on popular social media and digital platforms. Messages and referrals from known people are more credible ways of promoting these platforms.



Once the individual downloads the app, it instantly seeks access to storage, photo gallery and contacts. The request for the loan can be raised by giving loan amount details and personal details like Aadhar, PAN, bank account details and a photograph. The approval of the loan amount generally takes a few hours, and the loan amount will be credited to the borrower's bank account. The recovery process often starts around the due date, and at this time, the borrower will get to know the evil side of digital loan apps. The recovery calls frequency will increase with the delay in payment of due. Once the due date is passed, recovery agents will not hesitate to harass the borrower by threatening to disclose their personal data (photos and videos that are taken from the borrower's phone) to the public. Also, this continuous harassment disturbs mental health, and it has caused suicides in multiple places across the country.

Dangerous Impacts of Instant Loan Apps

The dark side of digital lending apps has emerged in the form of digital loan sharks. "Digital loan sharks are new-age usurious lenders that offer short term loans at exorbitant interest rates through mobile apps or websites" (Kaur & Ilavarasan 2021, p.544). These loan sharks are notorious for their harsh recovery methods and for ruining the lives of poor people with debt traps. In addition, the Consumer Lending Report 2020 noted that there were between 300 and 400 unregistered digital lending apps in India, 88 of which were associated with digital lending abuses (Moharkan & Suvarna 2021). As per the CID officials, "Quick Cash', 'Loan Cloud', 'InstaRupee Loan', 'Get Rupee', 'ePay Loan', 'Panda', 'EasyLoan', 'Ocash', 'Cashmap', 'Cash Post', 'Rapid Rupee', 'Rupee Loan', 'CashTM', 'Credit Free', 'Readycash', 'Robocash', 'Udhaar Loan' are some of the problematic digital instant loan apps" (The Hindu, 2020).

These quick lending apps target prospective borrowers via deceptive advertising on social media and other digital channels, and they demand interest rates ranging from 60 to 80 per cent for loans of two to four weeks. There are several hidden charges disguised as processing fees or transaction charges that are not disclosed to the borrowers at the time of lending. These instant loan apps not only exploit users financially but also harm them mentally and socially. It is observed that these online lenders have access to personal data, like photos and contacts, through app permissions on borrowers' mobile phones, which are later misused to harass the borrowers who have failed to repay their loans. This harassment includes name-calling, threatening phone calls, and contacting the borrower's family and friends (ibid, 2021).

Furthermore, these lenders take it a step further by negatively affecting the credit scores of these defaulters, leading to potential financial repercussions. These concerning practices raise issues regarding privacy violations and unethical conduct within the digital lending industry. In the year 2022, the DGP of Andhra Pradesh Police said that there are 207 fake or unauthorised instant loan apps operating in the state. The organisers of loan applications make three times as much money by disbursing minor loans, said the DGP of the Andhra Pradesh Police. They threaten the borrowers with morphed obscene photos and videos. This is leading to depression and suicides in the state of Andhra Pradesh (The New Indian Express, 2022).

Major Issues and Challenges

The users' privacy breach is the most significant issue associated with unauthorised instant loan apps. The massive transformation in ICT technology has enabled these instant loan app firms to access the personal information stored in their mobile phones, such as images, Contact lists and other data. In most cases, users are not aware of the fact that these app-based FinTech companies access their personal data. The borrowers tempted by appealing loan offers often fail to check the lender's intention in terms of the conditions of the loan and give their consent for assessing the personal details that these loan app firms later utilise to harass the borrower in the event of default (Kaur & Ilavarasan, 2021, p. 545). For instance,

"Aravind died by suicide the following day. According to the police, he was distressed after text messages about him had been sent to his entire contact list. He sends his mother and sister to work as prostitutes and lives on the money earned by them, said one text. Another said, He sends his friends to have sex with his mother, wife and daughter. Aravind did not send these texts himself. Fifteen days before his death, he had taken a loan of Rs 3,000 using an app called SnapIt. When he failed to repay, the team behind the app purportedly texted all his contacts with messages to humiliate him".

(The Newslaundry 2022).

According to opposition party spokesperson Gourav Vallabh, 52 suicides were identified in linkage with digital loan app harassment. Also, he points out that most of these loan apps are of Chinese origin (The Hindu 2022). Several unauthentic sources raise these numbers, and unidentified incidents are significant as there was a twelve-time increase in loans on digital platforms between 2017 and 2020, as per the RBI announcement.

The second primary concern is related to poor trust in the digital ecosystem. Since 2014, the Indian government has made several efforts to transform the Indian economy into a digital economy. In this scenario, unregulated digital lending platforms and apps not only hamper the trust of the user but also create several risks for our digital ecosystem. The lack of regulations

and unawareness about the existing norms and regulations among the users/borrowers make our digital lending ecosystem vulnerable to exploitation by predatory and unauthorised lenders. There is an urgent need to make interventions in regard to the borrowers' financial awareness and report such abusive practices by digital lenders.

The third major issue associated with digital apps is the way they recover disbursed loans. Several cases have been reported until now when these digital lenders have used aggressive and harsh methods to recover their disbursed loans. For instance,

"Abhishek Iyengar (name changed), a 29-year-old marketing manager at a restaurant in Kochi, was rendered jobless as soon as the lockdown started. Like many others, his savings dried up by June, after which he started to seek easier credit through digital lenders. The application was relatively easy- just an Aadhar card, PAN card and contact details of two friends. They also asked for permission like other apps. Abhishek started a loan of Rs 3000, but only 2000 was credited. All charges included, he has to pay back almost Rs 1000 more than he borrowed. But the threats- downgrading of personal credit score, and shaming in front of friends and family was immediate. All of them were designed to pressure him to take out another loan to repay the previous loan."

(Moharkan, Suvarma & DHNS 2021).

In another instance, "Mumbai-based architect Jenis Makwana found something odd while poring over his late brother Abhishek's emails. The younger Makwana had accumulated around Rs 1.8 lakh (\$2,400) in loan debt. However, that was not the odd part. At the last count, says Makwana, his brother had 72 different instant loan apps on his smartphone, most of which had lent him bite-sized loans between Rs 3,000 (\$40.8) and Rs 10,000 (\$136.2). These included apps such as SuperRupee, CoolRupee, KreditBear, SweetCash, Cashtime, and Cashvibe."

(The Ken 2021)

The above-said stories are not limited to Abhishek and Jenis alone. Numerous cases are similar to the Abhishek story published in various national newspapers in different parts of the country. They apply the harsh recovery method and pressure the borrower to take another loan – to turn

the loan into an evergreening loan. Instead of going through legal means in the recovery process, exploitation of personal data and harassment is not only stressing them economically but also creating severe mental illness, which leads to suicidal tendencies in most harassment cases.

Fourthly, most of these digital loan apps follow exorbitant interest rates and hidden charges. Ramesh et al. (2022) case study identified that most digital loan platforms charge as high as 20-25 per cent of the loan amount as processing and disbursement fee at the time of loan disbursement itself. Taking advantage of the dire need of borrowers and exploiting the quick disbursement of credit, loan apps are hugely extracting the processing fee by cutting down the actual loan amount. The exploitation goes further by manipulating the interest rates using the payment schedule and different interest rates. For instance,

"Hillary Manjeshwar, in Pune, wanted to take a loan of Rs 30,000 in July to pay her child's school fees. A Google search led her to a Credit App, which she promptly installed. After finishing the few documentation procedures, she received a notification saying I had been approved for a loan of Rs 27,500. She thought she had 90 days to repay the loan, but the fine print on the agreement she had signed digitally stated that she had to repay it within 15-30 days. The interest rate was 0.3 per cent per day. When she could not repay on time, the interest rate spiked to 0.6 per cent a day. Upon missing the due date, she started getting 50 to 100 calls from different numbers. I asked them to give me a few days. But they started sending abusive messages to my phone contacts. "Manjeshwar claimed her relatives were even sent legal notices demanding repayment, followed by men demanding the money" (The News Laundry 2022).

Kaur & Ilavarasan (2021) have pointed out that interest rates are so high on these instant digital loan platforms that sometimes they charge as high as 60 to 80 per cent of the loan amount for a two-to-four-week loan. Sometimes, the interest paid is way larger than the principal amount taken due to these fraudulent interest rates. Other issues related to illegal digital loan apps include lack of grievance redressal, money laundering, gender abuse, etc. When the incident is taken to law and enforcement agencies, there is often prolonged negligence and further stress on the victim due to ineffective actions against the perpetrators. However, the solution to these

series of problems in digital loan apps requires a multi-pronged strategy with coordination from several actors in the play.

Tackling the Digital Loan App Problem

In its guidelines on digital lending, the Reserve Bank of India has given thorough direction regarding lending rates, data privacy, grievance redressal and recovery methods (RBI 2022). However, these are largely applicable only to digital entities under-regulated institutions, but the recent chaos is attributed mainly to unregulated and unregistered platforms. The vigilance and police departments together have identified multiple unregulated loan apps in popular app stores, and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has banned them. Kaur and Ilavarasan (2021) have made a deep insight into such unregulated platforms and suggested a necessary regulatory mechanism. Considering the task of protecting public interests and promoting credit access, RBI has recently proposed to release the list of banned and safe loan apps, which is a step to provide the public with the necessary information about safe and dangerous loan apps. Also, the state governments, which are in the front race to tackle digital loan harassment, are requesting the public to verify the legality of loan providers and check the terms and conditions of loans such as interest rate, loan period, recovery process and grievance mechanism before taking.

However, there are two dimensions in tackling the rise of digital loan apps. On one side, any action to regulate digital lending apps should not hamper the benefits of digital lending, such as

1. "Fintech firms reach borrowers that are under-served or not served by banks.
2. The loan-loss rate on Fintech loans is far lower than on loans made by traditional lending institutions, given that they rely on data and algorithms that constantly update borrower information, and their credit quality assessment is superior.
3. Fintech firms do not tie their loans to collateral values as banks do but to other measures of risk assessment such as repayment history, earnings and, in the case of businesses, transaction volumes. Therefore, they do not shrink their credit during business cycle

downturns as traditional banks do. Consequently, they are a useful counter-cyclical force, unlike banks whose behaviour is more pro-cyclical, amplifying both booms and downturns" (The Economist 2021).

On the other hand, unregulated and illegal digital lending should be kept under tight watch. This complex reconciling task between promoting digital financial inclusion and protecting digital borrowers from over-exploitation requires a multistakeholder approach.

Firstly, the central bank RBI should enforce guidelines to NBFCs regarding their partnership with digital lending app entities. The source of money and ownership of the entity must be verified before entering into any agreement. Also, the digital lending entity must disclose its terms of functioning to partners, which should be available to users on the platform. The RBI must also track the lending volume through app-based platforms and act to prevent the concentration of lending activity within a few entities.

Secondly, the digital app lenders in their platform must disclose all the guidelines with respect to documents required for the loan process, interest rate and charges, privacy policy and recovery method. Also, they must establish a separate grievance redressal mechanism and nodal office system. No information except the consent given by the borrower can be taken and stored. Explicit consent should be obtained before taking any information from the borrower's phone, and the need and possible usage must be conveyed to the user. Thirdly, the burden of identifying and controlling unregulated and illegal digital apps must be shared between cyber police and tech giants, i.e., Google and Apple. As these two Play stores control most of the app universe, identifying and restricting illegal digital loan apps will be eased. Actions have already been taken by Google on similar lines on various illegal loan apps, yet the government has released no formal guidelines (Shinde, 2023). Also, the rate of app usage and privacy policies followed by these apps can be tracked down with the collaboration between cyber police units and tech firms. Fourthly, law enforcement agencies must dedicate a special cell to address digital loan grievances. The technological training for forces and the deployment of new technology in tracing frauds are the need of the hour. Also, there is a dire need for the convergence of multi-state agencies' coordination and central data repository with respect to digital app frauds and harassment. Finally, the long-term solution to digital lending fraud lies in transforming finance and banking systems to be more inclusive on both physical

and digital fronts. Augmenting the digital lending capacities, especially with respect to rural and vulnerable sections of society, requires the inclusion of feedback from these sections with respect to the use of formal banking channels and their platforms. Thus, the growing digital economy in the Indian context cannot be left on its own in reconciling multiple opportunities and problems; rather, it must be fostered.

Conclusion

The deep penetration of digital services in India has led to an unprecedented rise in the usage of digital loan apps and platforms. Due to their ease in quick disbursal of loans, less documentation work and easy accessibility, people have a significant inclination towards digital loan apps. However, unregulated and illegal loan apps create multiple problems by breaching monetary and privacy norms. Among the challenges, harsh recovery of loan amounts by exploiting borrowers' personal information and exorbitant interest rates are the most concerning problems. On the remedies side, RBI has already issued multiple guidelines in regulating online loan disbursements, but the problem can be fully addressed when all the stakeholders act in congruence towards a safe and inclusive credit system.

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India's Permanent Membership in the United Nations Security Council: Principles and Power Realities

Dipannita Sanyal

Economic and military capacities are crucial to ensure effective candidates for the permanent membership category based on the functional concept of representation. The influence that various states have is always shifting. Power among the nations that made up the P-5 in the UN Security Council has been significantly diminished. Several militarily and economically powerful states have emerged around the world at the same time. Even though there are many questions about their ability to translate these powers into major power roles, some states, including India, Japan, and Germany, have outweighed some specific permanent members of the UN Security Council in terms of some power indicators. The demographic factor, which has started to play a significant role in constructing the economies of states in the 21st century in light of the rising demand for immigrants to work in some of the economically developed states to sustain their economies, is overlooked by the Security Council's current organizational structure. Given that many states now have access to nuclear weapons and the concern about preventing a nuclear holocaust, it can help increase army strength, which is crucial for any nation's military power. The United Nations Security Council then requires conventional military strength rather than nuclear power to accomplish its goals. The demographic power must be taken into account together with other power indicators while developing the objective criteria to invite new permanent members into the Security Council. Second, in the post-Cold War era, the economic side of power has surpassed the military aspect in importance. Economic factors were crucial in the sequence of events leading up to the attack and in the Security Council's response to it. The Persian Gulf Crisis served as a reminder of the continued significance of military force. India's elevation to the status of a permanent member of the Security Council and Asia's growing influence in the world. (Jacobson, 1993, pp. 85-87)

The direction of change is crucial because while some powers may grow quickly in the short term, after a set amount of time they either become static or start to diminish. In this regard, we might look at East Asian nations as an example, which had rapid economic growth but also a severe economic crisis. The possibility for positive transformation is crucial, for this reason. When creating any set of objective criteria, this aspect must be taken into consideration.

Russia's economic might has declined significantly, while France has been militarily and economically weak since the end of colonialism. (Raj, 2003, 35-36). Furthermore, while being major economic players today, Japan and Germany are also experiencing a double crisis that affects both their ability to exercise and maintain their dominance. First, both nations' military dependence on the US makes it unlikely that they will ever be able to operate independently of the US government. Additionally, both nations struggle with ageing populations and declining birth rates. Counterposing India against these nations allows for a comparison of India with all of these states. India rose to the fourth-largest economy in the world in PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) values in terms of economic standing in 2000. In PPP terms, India has a GNP that is \$2.14 trillion higher than those of France, Germany, and Russia combined. An effective measure of the severity of Russia's economic fall is the fact that India's GDP is more than twice as large as Russia's in PPP terms. As a counterargument, it is stated that middle-class Indians, for whom making India a superpower and having a permanent seat on the Security Council are manifestations of that, love to mention the IMF (International Monetary Fund) list of economies in terms of purchasing power, where India ranked fourth in 2000. They interpret this to suggest that India is a major power. But they overlook the fact that Russia sells India its weaponry for dollars. India's economy is nowhere near the top 10 in terms of dollars, and its percentage of world trade is around 1%. India is a militarily strong country with the second-largest army in the world and one of the top ten air forces and navies. Yet some claim that Japan has a larger military expenditure than India. Japan is currently the third greatest military spender in the world, behind the US and Russia, more than China, and unquestionably far more than India, despite only allocating 1% of its GDP to defence. Furthermore, it is asserted that India's chronic resource shortage has led it to cut its military spending to 2.5% of GDP, and to make matters worse, the majority of its defence spending is allocated to non-essential areas like pensions, salaries, and administrative costs. Simply put, due to a lack of funds, military training, and acquisitions have been scaled back to their absolute minimum. (Dewanjee, 2004). Any set of objective criteria can be tough to design because of all these problems.

After China and the US, India has the third-largest armed forces in the world, and in total numerical terms, its forces may be larger than those of France, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Germany. India has the sixth-largest standing army in the world. India's enormous population ensures its military might. Although it has never been feasible for a country without a huge population to be strong, it has been possible for one with a large population to be weak. The Korean conflict seems to have proved that although the development of atomic weapons may

have lessened the value of human beings in conflict, the foot soldier is still very much a part of the equation. (Dhar, 1982 p. 384)

The majority of today's great powers, except the US and China, are plagued by demography. Russia, the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and other countries with declining birth rates and ageing populations will have fewer workers unless they allow a significant influx of immigrants and develop technology and factories that don't require a lot of labour. A large power needs an ideal number of men and women to run its industries, serve its industry, and most crucially, its armed forces to maintain its position. Although numbers are not a great measure of a nation's military capability. Due to the anticipated population reduction in the majority of industrialised nations, India's relative standing in terms of population will shift significantly. These nations will require more and more immigrants from India who have a better level of technical knowledge. As a result, emigrants from India are likely to possess significant financial influence and possibly political power in important nations like the US, a tendency that has become apparent since the latter half of the 1990s. Indians now have a safe place to work in America thanks to George Bush Junior's electoral victory over Kerry. It is also obvious that the US will continue to outsource work to India because, despite Kerry's efforts to rally voters against the practice, he had to lose the election. The benefits of outsourcing for the economy of the host nation have also been endorsed by numerous economists. Not surprisingly, emigrants have started to make political statements in the US even if they have partnered with Indian firms back home, particularly in the IT sector.

India's demography is starting to change for the better. In 2001, 1.03 billion people were living in India, according to census data. The population growth rate between 1991 and 2001 fell to 1.95%, and from 1997 and 1999, it increased by 1.6%. This was the most striking aspect of the census results. Additionally, there was a decrease in the overall number of illiterates, and the gender disparity in literacy rates closed.

The argument for including China and India in the group, making it the G-10, has the support of the G-8 presidents. Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) will have a much greater impact on the global economy over the next fifty years than the other five members of the Group of Six (G-6) developed nations—the United States, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom. In the next thirty years, India may surpass the current economic heavyweights of France, Germany, and Japan to become the third-largest economy in the world, behind the United States and China. India has the potential to develop at the fastest rate among the major economies, including the US, Italy, France, Germany, and Japan, according to the research. The report's prediction is based on a modest growth rate of 5.5–6 per cent. (Sayed, 2004). According to former British

Prime Minister John Major, it would be insane if India did not join the G8 because, in about 30 years, its GDP may be larger than that of France, Germany, the UK, or Japan. The assertion made by Jaswant Singh supports how India's economy is growing. "India had repaid the loans of more than US \$ 4 billion early in September 2003 and lent a loan of US \$ 350 million to the International Monetary Fund," the former finance minister claimed.

India and the EU recently resolved to establish a strategic cooperation. Currently, the EU has five strategic allies: Canada, the US, Japan, China, and Russia. As one of the world's largest markets, India is one that the EU wants to spend more in. Notably, the EU views India as a multilateral ally to counterbalance the US's unrestrained unilateralism. Although India's nuclear capacity may not increase its strength and influence, it can serve to draw the attention of other big powers. Atomic bombs on missiles attract the West's attention, as Bracken claims. Western engagement is earned when a nation is large and strong, according to Raj (2003: 230). The position that India has taken on the NPT and CTBT problem amply demonstrates India's desire and capacity to pursue autonomous policies and combat discriminatory practices. Henry Kissinger, a former US secretary of state and a harsh critic of India during the Cold War, now views India as a major force. In 1962, he claimed, "I first saw India for the first time. Both physically and mentally, India is changing (The Hindu, 2004). In the current situation, he classified Pakistan as a "regional player" and India as a "world power".

Redefining Security Concepts

The latter quarter of the 20th century, particularly the last decade, saw a great deal of profound change in the world. The spread of democratic structures and principles has been accelerated by the fall of communism and political transformations in numerous emerging nations. Governments have actively pushed market reforms in the economic domain, ceding increasing amounts of control to supranational and non-state actors in the globalising political economy. At the same time, there are issues like the proliferation of WMDs (along with problems related to the proliferation of missile technologies), an overall rise in the frequency and severity of civil and regional conflicts, large-scale forced labour movements, an increase in the frequency and severity of domestic and international terrorism, and increased competition between major powers in the area of arms exports (typically to regions like the Middle East and South Asia). All of them, in some way, relate to the Third World countries. According to SIPRI, there were over 30 major armed conflicts in 25 different countries at the end of the 1990s. The Middle East, Europe, and South America reported the fewest such wars in 1999 (3, 2, and 2, respectively), with the majority occurring in Africa and Asia (11 and 9 respectively). The most violent

parts of the world are found in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The border disputes in the latter two regions also alarmingly now have a WMD component. Additionally, these regions, along with Latin America, are home to some of the most destitute and unstable populations on the planet, as well as some of the least democratic governments.

Regardless of the discussions that occur in think tanks and the narrowly focused foreign policy outputs of various governments, the majority of these issues are legitimate security quandaries, and there is an urgent need for a new discourse and coordinated global action to address them. Such an endeavour can be led by a reformed United Nations Security Council. Even while it might be argued that countries like the US, Russia, and Britain have participated in different UN peacekeeping missions, they have exhibited a power-centric attitude towards these missions. Although the world has altered significantly, they have not been able to separate themselves from their traditional framework for comprehending security. "The execution of NATO air strikes to enforce no-fly zones or to destroy the unauthorized Bosnian Serb military positions in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not free from hassles. To begin with, strikes were to be authorized by the United Nations Secretary General's special representative. Later, recognizing the operational problems, the device of the dual key held by both the UN and NATO was agreed upon in 1993. It only created further complications in the decision-making procedures. The problem was not just procedural, but conceptual too. The differences in institutional perspectives on the use of military power between the UN and NATO were serious. While NATO stressed the effective application of military power even when used in a limited fashion, the UN emphasized optimal restraint" (Murthy,2001, p.235)

With more frequent use of economic and military sanctions (such as against Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, and Libya), UN initiatives in the post-Cold War era have frequently been more punitive, which is counter to the interests of the Third World countries. This calls for the inclusion of some of the economic and military powers in the permanent membership category, who can contribute to the enormous cost and send military troops to remain outside for a long period. Since conflicts are particularly complex and volatile, UN efforts after the Cold War have frequently required some level of post-conflict governance. More importantly, the permanent members should be prepared to address the security issues in the Third World in a responsible manner. This necessitates that the permanent members share the same view on security as the majority of Third World nations. Because the Third World is underrepresented on the Security Council and because the UN must focus

largely on the security issues of the Third World in the twenty-first century, we must view the contributions of member nations from the Third World perspective.

Mudaliar provided a clear definition of the Third World security perspective when he said, "Let us not forget for a moment" that, at a time when security and armed strength are being placed a high priority to deter aggression, the greatest emphasis must be placed on the "causes" of war, specifically "economic and social injustices." Mudaliar was unanimously elected as the first President of the 18-member Economic and Social Council at the first session of the UN's General Assembly, possibly in recognition of the contribution made by the Indian delegation to the discussions on economic and social issues in San Francisco. India worked to preserve Third World security interests using this definitional framework (Saksena, 1995 p.18). For nations in the Third World, peace does not equate to the absence of war; rather, it involves a long-term project of socio-economic reconstruction, yet for many nations, achieving true peace is still just a desire. Socioeconomic aspects must be taken into account during peacekeeping missions. The Somalian example paints a picture of how India's position complemented this idea of peace and contrasted sharply with that of the US and West European nations. "While fully agreeing in the Security Council with the American and British contentions that international terrorism posed a grave threat to international peace and security, India abstained in March 1992 on the resolution, which imposed air, arms, and diplomatic sanctions against Libya. India correctly stated at that time, that punitive action was contemplated without exhausting the persuasive, diplomatic means" (Murthy, 1992 p. 18).

India's National Interests, Third World Security Interests, and the Values and Aims of the UN Charter

India desired the UN to be a broad-based organisation that reflected global realities, and it fought for the premise of universal membership. India's belief in the existence of an imbalance in the UN, as well as her desire to reduce Western dominance over the organisation, led her to campaign for full membership in the UN. The efforts to reduce the imbalance arose from the belief that India's contribution, and hence her influence, would be higher in a non-dominated organisation. India was striving to preserve and grow her influence in the Afro-Asian region through her anti-colonial stance at the UN, even though her goal of achieving freedom for subject peoples was beyond question. India's position on the UN Charter revision was demonstrated by its ambition for influence and its aspiration to be a member of the organisation. While dismissing attempts to amend the UN Charter, Indian delegates persisted in pushing for changes in the organisation to ensure that both India and the Afro-Asian community had more representation on its councils and committees. One example is

India's success in getting a resolution approved by the General Assembly to increase the number of Security Council members. Due to her view of the UN, India resisted the veto being removed and opposed the General Assembly being an info agency through the united peace resolution. India stated that the Security Council has the authority to take enforcement action and that agreement from all permanent members was necessary. India objected because of concern that the dominant bloc (the West) may use the Assembly to advance its own goals at the expense of others, especially tiny states (Reddy, 1968 p. 44). The Indian delegation's stance on the financing of the system was that a greater share of the costs should fall on the industrialised countries. They claimed that the capacity to pay standard should be used to determine how much should be contributed. The Indian delegation backed the UN's economic initiatives. Despite its worry over the ongoing rise in UN spending, it pushed for approval of the Secretariat's predictions for economic growth. Indian delegates argued that the organization's economic programs were just as significant and necessary as its peacekeeping missions. The delegation maintained that members were not legally required to pay for peacekeeping expenses. A state has every right to voice its concerns and objections about how an operation was run.

After criticising how a government was operating, a group of people believed that the state should take financial responsibility for its actions and make a contribution. Indian delegates supported the creation of a special assessment system because they wanted to put more responsibility on the less developed states. The General Assembly, according to India, should be the entity responsible for allocating funds for future peacekeeping missions. In the absence of any exceptional agreements reached by the Security Council by the Article (1968: 146), the General Assembly exercises the jurisdiction. Giving the countries the authority to choose who made up the majority in the General Assembly was the idea behind this. India's desire for influence in international affairs and her aspiration for active participation in India's attempt to lessen the dominance of the Secretariat by people from the North American and Western European countries can be seen in the demand for more Secretariat positions to be filled by Indians and Afro-Asians. The Indian delegation took up the role of an Afro-Asian spokesperson by highlighting the inadequate representation of the Afro-Asian Secretariat, particularly in the higher echelons of the administration. According to Satish Nambiar, India's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions significantly affects its national security policy. These missions showed India's commitment to fostering intercultural ties and physical contributions to the missions. This also underscores India's initiatives to forge stronger ties with ASEAN as a whole.

According to historical linkages, India has more important interests in West Asia than UN peacekeeping missions in the Gaza Strip. These are instances where India wished to promote the welfare of the local populace. In West Asia, it is heavily invested in UN peacekeeping. (Nambiar, 1995 p. 90) India has more than just participated in the UN peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Rwanda because of its geostrategic interests in the stability of both countries. As soon as the situation in Somalia became dangerous, Indian soldiers joined forces with West European nations and US military troops. However, it was realized that because circumstances vary, the same performance cannot be duplicated everywhere.

In the case of Sierra Leone, India contributed 3,000 soldiers, the most ever from the Indian side. Elections were held in Mozambique after years of strife, largely thanks to India's efforts. (Nambiar 1999 p. 13). All of these examples demonstrate that India has identified its national interests in maintaining peace and stability, growth, and close political and cultural ties with Afro-Asian republics. Second, and most importantly, a country can only have a Third World security viewpoint if its national interests are squarely aligned with those of Third World countries.

Given the changing concepts of security in the post-Cold War era, it is clear that the United Nations Security Council must be democratized to represent the interests of the Third World. Conflicts in the Third World necessitate a distinct approach to issue-solving. According to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, security after the Cold War entails focusing on human rights and humanitarian needs, such as providing people with food and employment, encouraging democratization and political empowerment at the local level, and combating crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism. For the UN, operations in the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR, KFOR), Cambodia (UNAMIC, UNTAC), and Haiti (UNMIH) posed enormous challenges because the security component frequently combined complex humanitarian, development, and border difficulties. The organization has regularly encountered unwinnable civil wars with serious geographical ramifications. A revamped UN Security Council can offer the space for discussions and adequate treatment of the particular issues that crop up in the Third World. Conflicts in the First World are less likely to arise because of the European Union's growing integration of Europe.

To meet the demands of the evolving security paradigms, objective criteria must be created to select certain states for the permanent membership category of the United Nations Security Council. Political and regional issues must be taken into account for this. If the Third World is only represented based on the principles of geographical representation, representation by population, or both, it will not improve the functions of the UN

Security Council; rather, it will make the UN Security Council cumbersome. Second, the most populous and physically massive governments will receive representation that might not accurately reflect the real security interests of the Third World if these concepts are put into practice.

For instance, China, which has the greatest landmass, the most people, and is the only permanent member of Asia, has voiced some hesitation to support the causes of Third World countries. In 1990, Deng Xiaoping declared in a speech to senior party officials, "Some developing countries would prefer China to become the leader of the Third World. But as one of our fundamental state policies, we are unable to do it at all. We are not powerful enough and we cannot afford to do it. We would simply lose the majority of our initiative by taking on that position, thus there is nothing to gain by doing so. (The Hindu, 2002)

In terms of China's participation in UN peacekeeping operations, his hesitancy has taken on a concrete form. For instance, China has so far provided 3,758 personnel, including 2,570 troops, 784 military observers, and 404 police, but India has provided 74,000 personnel total. In comparison to India's 6,009 troops, its current contribution of 1,042 is quite little. If the security concerns of the Third World are represented in the UN Security Council, its legitimacy will rise. An organization's apex body must "portray the values of the larger group, present the ideas or view of that group, be typical of that group's geographical make-up, population base, and political views, and act as an of that group" to be considered representative of the group's whole membership. (Knight, 200 p. 24) The Third World has to be geographically represented, not to balance the North's size, but rather to represent the security interests of that region. Recently, the United Nations Security Council has focused more on intra-state crises than on those involving other states. The major powers cannot be allowed to intervene to advance their interests in various regions under the guise of humanitarian intervention, even though it is necessary to act against flagrant violations of human rights by the domestic government or any other group falling under the domestic jurisdiction of states. Given the circumstances in Kashmir and the North-East, India cannot rule out being the target of an intervention.

To avoid taking an extreme approach such as defending sovereignty at all costs or interfering to advance national interests, a discussion is required to hammer out certain principles. The dominance of the US as the only superpower in the post-Cold War era has had a significant impact on how the UN functions in general and peacekeeping operations in particular. This is clear from the Gulf War situation and the subsequent extension of sanctions. As a result, it caused a substantial shift in peacekeeping as well. First, there is no longer

a clear line separating chapter VI and VII. Second, the idea that sanctions may be used to bring about peace goes against the spirit of the UN Charter. (Yadav, 1999 p. 23)

The major challenge right now is coming up with a comprehensive description of this idea of maintaining peace as well as outlining specific guidelines for its effective operation. The purposes for which this notion has been developed will be served by the clarification of the precise nature and goals of peacekeeping. Additionally, this will give these efforts legitimacy as part of routine United Nations work. Finally, it won't further the evil plans of powerful people; instead, it will advance the genuine goal of world peace and give armed protection to those engaged in war. How to implement the idea in practice objectively is another issue with peacekeeping operations. Without the right involvement of the Third World, it is impossible to generate a critical evaluation and debate.

The paradigm within which certain objective criteria can be chosen for the restructuring of the United Nations Security Council to make it more democratic, representative, and finally in tune with the altered circumstances of the new millennium is the larger context of current power realities along with the potential for positive change and the changing notions of security. India is in a stronger position than many other potential candidates for permanent membership in the UN Security Council under any set of objective criteria based on these changes, and more crucially, the thesis of this article is that India's bid is more legitimate.

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***Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* and the Power of Guidance: A Tale of Empowerment and Inclusivity**

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and

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Abstract

The dichotomous culture of postmodern society stereotypes and classifies one another based on limitations, disabilities, and social stature. Rick Riordan, in his children's fantasy novel Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief (2005), a retelling of Greek mythology, highlights the need for social transformation and the dismantling of constructive notions of neurodiversity like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. The paper probes the judgmental attitudes of society and its influence on such "disabled" children from a postmodern angle by analysing the different spheres of experience of the protagonist Percy Jackson, a dyslexic demigod, who embarks on a journey of self-discovery. It examines how Percy's experiences in the different spheres of his life – home, school, and Camp Half-Blood contribute to the development of his self-confidence. The paper also discusses the role of parents in shaping children's reading habits, and the inclusion of the series in curriculum to promote inclusive literature, where teachers and librarians can foster critical thinking and the values of awareness of disability and inclusivity among students. It underscores the transformative power of literature, particularly, mythological retellings to challenge stereotypes and inspire understanding among children, thereby, empowering individuals with disabilities by paving the way for an empathetic and equitable society.

Keywords: Disability, Reading, Dyslexia, Mythologies, Retelling, Identity.

Mythological retellings are a fascinating trend in the fantasy genre. They bridge the gap between the past and the present and serve as a vehicle for the transmission of social norms and values, ushering positive changes in today's society, where there is a growing awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusivity, which includes recognising and valuing the experiences and abilities of individuals with disabilities. The topic of disability is no longer relegated to the margins, but has moved to the forefront of social discourse, where the understanding and embracing of the experiences of disabled individuals is crucial for building a more equitable and empathetic society. Anna Krenz in her article, "Modern Myths:

Rewriting the Old into the New” (2017) notes how the society devises innovative methods of storytelling using old concepts to weave new tales with myths that ‘. . . have stayed around for decades, centuries even. These stories tend to get recycled often, but there’s always an interesting, new twist out there they can be given. The most well-known mythologies are those of Ancient Greece and Rome . . .’ (Krenz 2017, np). Furthermore, Ika Willis in the article, “Amateur Mythographies: Fan Fiction and the Myth of Myth” states that even though mythical retellings revolve around ‘the characterization of classical gods and heroes’, they fit into ‘contemporary fictional and psychological norms’ (Willis 2016, p. 9).

Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2005) is a postmodern retelling of Greek myths, which investigates the marginalisation of children with dyslexia and ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The postmodern society is judgemental in its utilisation of socially constructed dichotomies of “self” and “other”, “normal” and “abnormal”, and “usual” and “unusual” while referring to the neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals. Stereotypical words are unknowingly assimilated within the language utilised by the individuals and eventually the society as a whole, which as Jean Francois Lyotard in “Answering the question: what is the postmodern?” states, are ‘diachronies within organic totalities’ (Lyotard 1984, p. 3). It is essential to revise the stereotypical images, classifications, and judgmental attitudes toward individuals by revisiting myths in order to contribute to global inclusive living as it urges the public to become aware that certain sections of society are perpetually marginalised.

Anne Waldschmidt et al. in *Culture - Theory - Disability: Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies* (2017), emphasise that the inception of the ‘social model of disability’ in the late 1970s has altered society’s comprehension of disabilities. The model stresses that disabilities are social constructs:

Basically, it implies three assumptions. First, disability is a form of social inequality and disabled persons are a minority that is discriminated against and excluded from mainstream society. Second, impairment and disability need to be distinguished and do not have a causal relation; it is not impairments per se which disable, but societal practices of ‘disablement’ which result in disability. Third, it is a society’s responsibility to remove the obstacles that persons with disabilities are facing (Waldschmidt et al. 2017, pp. 20-21).

Studies have been conducted on various perspectives of disabilities and myths in the select work. Miles Beauchamp and Alijandra Mogilner’s research article, “Disabled Literature—Disabled Individuals in American Literature: Reflecting Culture(s)” (2010), claim that disabled characters in American literature are frequently featured as the “other” and are exploited to inspire pathos, dread, and hatred, which influence the society’s perspective of the differently-abled. It expresses optimism that if portrayed appropriately in

fiction, readers will look at the disabled as individuals and not as the “other”. Mugijatna Mugijatna et al. in the paper, “Rick Riordan’s Intention in Writing *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* and the Reception of the Readers” (2014) use Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutic analysis to investigate how readers respond to Riordan’s depiction of Greek mythology in the novel. Yunita Putri’s paper, “Perseus “Percy” Jackson: The Re-invention of Mythological Characters in Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*” (2013) explores cultural studies, intertextual perspectives and analyses the archetypal figures in the novel. A comprehensive study of the unique portrayal of Percy and the misinformed representation of other characters in Riordan’s fantasy-adventure novels are found in Sydney M. Chinowsky’s “*This ain’t Odysseus’ Odyssey*”: *The Radical Inclusion of Disability in Rick Riordan’s Fantasy Novels* (2019). It highlights that both readers and writers benefit from learning more about creating characters with disabilities without exceptionalising, pathologising, or objectifying them. Katelyn Colleen Balkum’s *Disabled Heroes: Disabilities in Rick Riordan’s Greek and Roman Retellings* (2022), delves into Riordan’s positive portrayal of people with neurodiversity like ADHD and dyslexia. Hence, a number of studies highlight the importance of Riordan’s work in bringing a positive perspective to the differently-abled, but the brief literature review indicates that text has not been explored using postmodern notion of disability, which is critical to challenge the society’s negative assumptions on disability, and the strategies that can be employed by adults in helping young readers become better at handling the stereotypical notions that surround neurodiversity.

The paper deals with a comprehensive analysis of the select novel to emphasise Riordan’s postmodern view on disabled individuals and deconstruct the term “disability”. Riordan avoids academicism in the novel to eliminate the grandeur and authoritarian nature of the ancient mythology, making it relatable to contemporary readers as the novel is set in modern-day America, where an ordinary hero deals with extraordinary mythical adventures. The intertextual references in the story grab the attention of readers, enabling them to identify the issue discussed within the fictional reality of the text. The novel illustrates that children with disabilities are differently-abled, but not different, who can succeed once they recognise their ability against the background of a social and family setting where they are welcomed and encouraged to be themselves. To help his son Haley Riordan improve his low self-confidence and come to terms with himself, the author constructs the universe of reimagined mythical characters with supernatural abilities. In the article, “The Learning-Disabled Hero” (2005) Riordan claims:

To date, *The Lightning Thief* is being published in seven languages, and the film version is underway. I’ve gotten a flood of appreciative emails from readers, many of them ADHD/dyslexic kids who usually dislike reading. It’s tremendously gratifying, and yet the book remains a very

personal story from a father to a son. Like the Greek stories of old, *The Lightning Thief* is an attempt to explain a natural phenomenon — a myth to help my son make sense of who he is. (*'The Learning-Disabled Hero | Rick Riordan' 2005, np*)

The sketching of the protagonist, Percy Jackson in the series as a neurodivergent demigod with distinctive abilities stemming from his dyslexia and ADHD is a unique twist on the classical archetypal hero, and it allows readers, both children and young adults, to connect with a hero who faces challenges that resonate with those who undergo similar disabilities. The significance of Percy's character lies in the ability to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about dyslexia and other disabilities as his journey of self-discovery and acceptance reflects the real experiences of children with disabilities. The portrayal of Percy challenges the societal norms of "normal" and "abnormal" by showcasing that individuals with disabilities possess their own set of strengths and redefines what it means to be "different".

The life of the protagonist Percy Jackson and the perspectives of others around him have been categorised into three spheres to provide insight into the different facets of his experience: home, school, and Camp Half-Blood. Percy is a twelve year-old dyslexic boy with ADHD born to his human mother, Sally Jackson and the Greek sea god, Poseidon, and lives unaware of the fact that he is a demigod. Soon after the birth of Percy, Poseidon abandons Sally and the new born child; and Sally marries Gabe Ugliano, the abusive stepfather. At home, Percy's mother is accepting and loving, in contrast to his obnoxious stepfather, who treats him as the "other" from a young age, causing Percy to battle with identity crisis and low self-esteem. He is influenced by others' negative impression that he is a troublesome child with a learning disability, which is evident from his thoughts about a conversation he has with his mother: 'What was so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D+ report card, kicked out of school for the sixth time in six years' (Riordan 2008, 21). Percy's mother sends him to Yancy Academy, which is a private boarding school "for troubled kids", with the hope that Percy will have a better future (Riordan 2008, p.1).

Percy consistently feels out of place in school and internalises the idea of being "different" as his classmates bully and taunt him, instilling a strong fear of alienation in him. The incident of Percy being bullied draws attention to the marginalisation of differently-abled kids by their own peers. His difficulty in accommodating anywhere instils a constant search for belonging in him.

Percy's Latin teacher, Mr. Brunner – the legendary Greek centaur Chiron, the wise teacher of heroes, healer, and prophet is the only person who comforts Percy by feeding him positive thoughts. Brunner masquerades as an ordinary teacher in a wheelchair to protect Percy from fatal monster attacks. He expresses his optimism about Percy, by saying that 'What you learn from me . . . is vitally important. I expect you to treat

it as such. I will accept only the best from you, Percy Jackson' (Riordan 2008, p. 7). It counters with the self-image that Percy gleans from the society, helping him to realise the need to develop self-confidence and not let others to diminish his worth.

Percy gets a taste of his supernatural "otherness" when his class is taken on a field trip led by Brunner to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City to see the exhibition of ancient Greek and Roman artefacts (Riordan 2008, 1). During the trip, a student makes fun of Percy's best friend Grover, who according to Percy is 'crippled...because he had some kind of muscular disease in his legs', but is a satyr disguised as a human using fake feet, ordained with the duty of protecting Percy (Riordan 2008, 3). While trying to defend Grover from the bully, Percy accidentally channels his power to control water, which he inherits from his father and hurts the bully. Subsequently, one of the teachers – Mrs. Dodds, a Fury (punisher from the Underworld) in disguise, attacks him, followed by other monsters and Percy is shifted to Camp Half-Blood, the refuge for demigods, for safety. It is the third sphere of his life where the quest for his identity comes to a close.

Percy learns of his demigod identity from his peer demigods and comes to know that all of them are diagnosed with ADHD, which grants them increased battlefield reflexes, and dyslexia, which enables them to read ancient Greek (Riordan 2008, 88). In Camp, Percy proves his mettle in a game, after which Poseidon claims Percy as his son. However, Percy feels even more alienated from his fellow campers as he is the first to be identified as the son of Poseidon in Camp. It is also revealed that his existence is a violation of an oath made seventy years ago by the "Big Three" – Poseidon; Zeus, the king of the gods and god of the sky; and Hades, the god of the Underworld, to not have any more mortal children as, according to an old prophecy, an Elder God's child who reaches sixteen years of age will either be the cause of doom or the preservation of Olympus, the heavenly abode of the Olympians.

Percy's troubles increase when a fellow camper, Luke Castellan, the son of Hermes, the messenger god, frames him for stealing Zeus' lightning bolt, the most powerful weapon. The blame on Poseidon's son results in the conclusion that Poseidon is after Zeus' throne, which causes a rift among the brothers and calls for a war among the gods. It is after Percy sets on an adventurous quest by defeating monsters and overcoming the treacherous schemes of gods to find the lightning bolt, restoring it to its rightful owner and preventing a disastrous war with the potential to end the world that he embraces his identity as a demigod, as opposed to that of a socially constructed weakling. Percy begins to perceive his impairment as vital to his identity.

The journey of Percy, the hero is also the postmodern notion of Joseph Campbell's narrative description of the journey of a classic hero that he terms as "Monomyth". In today's society, where the emphasis is increasingly placed on inclusivity and diversity, narratives that feature characters overcoming challenges like dyslexia provide a powerful message of empowerment. Percy's journey demonstrates that having a learning disability does not define one's potential or limit their ability to achieve greatness.

The significance of narratives like *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* becomes even more pronounced in a society that is striving to be more inclusive. The novel challenges stereotypes and encourages readers, both young and old, to look beyond the surface difference and perceive the unique strengths of individuals, for neurodiversity must neither be shunned nor stigmatised in an era where inclusivity is a key value and narratives of inclusivity have the potential to reshape societal attitudes towards disabilities and differences. Percy's journey is not solely about overcoming external obstacles, but also about self-acceptance and empowerment, where his character development underscores the importance of recognising one's unique abilities and embracing them as sources of strength, which is a message particularly relevant for children with disabilities, who may struggle with self-esteem and self-confidence issues. Percy's life is testimony that one must choose one's path to self-transformation by rising against their prejudices and overcome internal and external hindrances.

The journey through all three spheres of Percy's life helps him in developing the self-confidence that was absent in him until he finds the truth about his identity, which is an essential quality to be developed within children who are differently-abled. Percy's mother, teacher, and friends play a huge role in his life to help him realise his goals and achieve greatness in life. Similarly, adults – parents, teachers, and librarians, and peers prove to be crucial in the life of children and young adults as they aid them to achieve their goals and succeed in life by helping children using literature as a tool. They can select the right book for their children, which is centerpiece in reading, so that appropriate literature reaches readers in the right age group according to the subject and themes dealt with. As adults are former children who write for children, they have the power to determine how far boundaries might be set in reading; they are both champions or visionaries and even obstructionists with the capacity to manipulate a narrative. They also read children's fantasy literature as a revisitation of the simplicity of their childhood to satiate nostalgic memories and reading children's literature showcases their longing for a childhood, which makes their book choices for children genuine and not manipulative. One of the remarkable aspects of the series in featuring a character like Percy Jackson is the ability to bridge generational gaps. Such stories that portray realistic issues are enjoyed by children, teenagers, and adults alike, providing common ground for family discussions where

parents and children to engage in conversations about important themes like identity, acceptance, and the value of uniqueness.

Parents can set a positive example to children by reading the series themselves and when the children see their parents enjoying books, they are more likely to develop a love for reading. Reading the books aloud to children helps reluctant readers to get started on their journey of reading. The shared experience of reading and discussing the stories can strengthen family bonds and promote mutual understanding. Discussions about the story, characters, and themes post reading, and asking open-ended questions instils critical thinking in children at home. Parents can also read to children at home as part of the daily routine, which will help in reducing the screen time of children and free up more opportunities for them to read. They may take their children to visit local libraries on weekends or on other holidays and let children choose books they are interested in, and participate in library events and programs.

Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief is an educational tale that can ignite children's passion in reading, encouraging them to explore other literary works and broaden their horizons for which teachers and librarians, as they are the major stakeholders in encouraging reading at schools, can adopt practical measures and strategies. Strategies are undertaken by teachers at schools to make learning in classrooms more interesting. Pauline Skowron Schmidt in the article, "Carpe Librum: Seize the (YA) Book: Literary Slipstream: Using Contemporary YA Fiction to Connect Students with the Canon" (2014) writes that students who are academically inclined avoid reading canonical works with no room for marginalised voices during their free time, which indicates a disconnect between reading in a literature classroom and personal reading habit. The importance for the inclusion of children's/YA texts like *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* in academic curriculum becomes relevant to engage students in books that discuss universal themes that illustrate ' . . . the complex nature of stories, characters, and subjects to [children's or] YA literature' that are 'relevant . . . and therefore more likely to overcome resistance to "school books"' (Schmidt 2014 p.15; Crowe 1998, p. 122). Incorporating literature like *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* into curricula can provide teachers with a valuable tool for teaching empathy, diversity, and disability awareness. Teachers can give the students a background of the Greek mythology, help students analyse *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* and allow them to feel comfortable with the plot, setting, and conflict of the series and connect with the characters. They can help students form an impression about the character, in this case, the protagonist, Percy, that includes his name, the school he attends, and his emotional status, for ' . . . good teachers give students the opportunity to become invested in an assigned novel' (Sans-Henke 2012, 73). The opportunity to choose what they like and do not like will make them feel free to choose (Sans-Henke 2012, p. 73).

Teachers can conduct role-plays in classrooms and make use of digital literacies like creating blogs to record their experience of reading books, giving students the impression of creating something. Such practices and assignments provide opportunities for in-depth discussions and critical analysis that will encourage students to think critically about societal norms and challenge them to question stereotypes. Teachers may ensure student participation in classrooms by asking the ‘High achieving students in [their] class [to] dissect [texts] for the literary elements contained within the pages. Proficient students will be able to make text-to-self connections. Finally, struggling students will benefit because they will be able to read and understand the story line easily enough to truly enjoy the book, something that they often aren’t able to do with the classics’ (Roberts 2013, p. 90). The topic of disability, as explored in *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* has the potential to inspire inclusivity and understanding among readers. Children and young adults who engage with Percy’s story can develop empathy for those who experience learning differences, which can extend to their interactions with peers, fostering a more accepting and supportive environment. Similarly, creation of book clubs in schools will also allow students to read and discuss the series collectively, promote peer engagement, critical thinking, and a sense of community for ‘. . . Adolescence is a time of intense identity formation, and students need powerful books that speak directly to them’ (Letcher 2013, p. 92). Additionally, inviting authors like Rick Riordan to participate in virtual author visits where students may be allowed to engage in meaningful discussions with authors can spark enthusiasm for reading and writing among students.

Meaningful discussions can also be prompted by librarians in school libraries as they can ensure the reaching of right books into the right hands by collaborating with children’s publishing houses, and reading rooms. Just like authors, editors, and publishers are ‘. . . protectors—or spectators—of childhood’, librarians are the gatekeepers with their shrewd perspectives, who are ‘. . . not simply minding the aesthetic qualities of writers’ narratives; they believed they were guarding the realm of make-believe that could take root in a child’s eager mind’ (Encisco et al. 2010, p. 256). School libraries may make novels like *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* easily accessible to students and encourage students for multimodal learning where they can engage with the series through various mediums, such as audiobooks, graphic novels, and interactive online platforms. Teachers and school librarians can collectively organize Percy Jackson-themed reading events, where participants can engage in activities related to the series. Therefore, by implementing the measures and strategies, parents, teachers, and libraries can collectively create an environment that fosters a love for reading in children and young adults, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and a lifelong appreciation for literature, particularly through *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*.

In the modern education system, wherein ‘. . . reading has become synonymous with decoding, comprehension, and identification—not interaction’, Riordan lays the foundation through *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* to change the society’s totalising perception of disability and the differently-abled by not providing any cohesive, unified, or consistent method of viewing his identity, but through the portrayal of a postmodern hero who embarks on a journey of self-inquiry to accept his identity and uniqueness as a source of strength (Goldsmith 2016, p. 111). Percy Jackson’s enlightenment is the self-acceptance of his unique abilities despite the effects of his dyslexia and ADHD. The novel and the protagonist hold great significance, particularly in the context of disabled children and establish emotional connection with the readers with its realistic portrayal. It showcases how literature, through mythological retellings, can be a powerful medium for challenging stereotypes, promoting empathy, and fostering inclusivity. The character of Percy Jackson represents a unique opportunity to inspire understanding and acceptance among readers of all ages.

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Federalism in India: Subnational Governments and India's External Engagement

Guru K

Abstract

The Indian constitutional scheme provides absolute control over foreign policy to the national government which naturally excludes any significant role for the subnational governments, representing the diverse states of India. This arrangement has undergone significant evolution over the last three decades. Various factors such as, the growth of regional political parties, economic liberalisation and greater Centre-State interface in the social sphere, effects of the coalition and single-party governments at the national level are responsible. Existing literature has shifted between growth in the influence of subnational governments and the stable continuity of control exerted by national governments. This paper will set out to find key changes, that have emerged out of this historical phase of national and subnational interaction between governments and contribute to the delineation of domestic sources that impact India's external engagement.

Keywords: India, Centre, States, Federalism, Foreign Policy

Introduction

The term federal means 'covenant' in Latin and implies an arrangement that has been established as a partnership between different entities. Federalism was incorporated into the constitution of the United States for the first time in 1787 and has evolved to become a key feature of various other constitutions of the world in different forms with different characteristics. The history of federalism can be traced to Johannes Althusius when he proposed a cogent appeal to protect the rights of his city from the royalty in France (Carney 1995, p.105). The advocacy for federalism is generally multidimensional that could include political, economic and social aspects. This becomes pertinent in the context where the idea of sovereignty has expanded from referring to the state alone, to the wider society and its institutions (Hinsley 1968, p. 214). The 'external relations' of a state has been a domain that has largely been defined as a function of the 'sovereign', at least since the peace of Westphalia. The nature of the sovereign slowly started to become a singular and indivisible entity over time, and this notion strengthened through the era of modern states as well. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, the realm of foreign policy was marked by the emergence of subnational actors and it steadily rose through the twenty-first century as well. Among the post-colonial states, the political structure of the colonial period played the foundational role for the adoption of a federal

model, as did the negotiations between composite cultural elements within. The case of India stands out uniquely as it is widely held to have adopted a model of 'centralized federalism' in contrast to other constitutions that adopted federal characteristics (Singh and Verney 2003, p. 16). While the practice of federalism does not find an explicit place in the Indian Constitution, its presence has been unavoidable in the country's politics from the formation of the States Reorganisation Commission to the emergence of coalition politics. These experiments have made Indian federalism unique, in a way unlike most others, which have a federal constitution.

India, as a newly independent country in 1947, adopted a constitution that is widely characterised as 'quasi-federal' (Wheare 1951, p. 28). The Indian leaders, in the formative years of the country favoured a centralising union that in the words of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, functioned as a federal state in times of normalcy and becomes unitary during war (Rao 1968, p. 810). The constitution is explicit in making the foreign and defence policy of the state, within the exclusive domain of the union government. The federal features of the constitution flow primarily from the state list in the seventh schedule, in which the state governments solely have legislative powers. The constitutional design notwithstanding, the emergence of coalition politics since the National Front government in 1989 engendered a new form of politics at the union level. The inability of the then dominant Congress party in securing a simple majority in Parliament let loose an experimentation not just in the domestic political sphere but also in the foreign policy domain. The persistence of coalition governments for a period of twenty-five years between 1989 and 2014 had a qualitative impact on issue-areas such as the deeper participation of diverse political parties at the union level, evolving centre-state relations and lastly, the emergence of 'extra-constitutional bargaining' (Asthana and Jacob 2019, p. 329) between various coalition partners. The coming together of 'regional' parties had wide-ranging effects in how federal interventions were shaped around the exclusive domains of the Union government. Foreign policy being such an exclusive domain, has had its share of influence ranging from West Bengal playing a role in the negotiation of the Ganga waters treaty with Bangladesh to Tamil Nadu's role in acting as a pressure group in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka (Jaganathan 2019, p. 1526).

The Theoretical Framework

International Relations as a discipline, at least since the rise of the neo-realist school has emphasised on the systemic features of the international system and its predominantly anarchic character. This perspective along with other schools of mainstream international relations considers the state as a unitary actor that makes rational decisions in its external domain. With the emergence of game theory, it was formulated that

outcomes of international agreements can also be a result of what was famously called as the ‘two level game’ (Putnam 1988, p. 145). Here, international cooperation happens in a certain context where both domestic factors and a sufficient pull from international forces become a necessary condition. It is from this perspective that the sources of domestic policy can be expanded towards the inclusion of subnational governments.

Academic research on the study of states was not a major theme of research until the 1970s, by when the increasing complexity of foreign policy making was recognised (Michelmann and Soldatos 1990, p. 34). What was understood till this stage was that the role of constituent units is largely a function within the federal form of government alone. An increasing recognition of ‘constituent diplomacy’ took roots to further enhance foreign policy analysis at the micro level within states (Kincaid 1990, p. 64).

Since federalism is a phenomenon without a clear-cut definition, it was hard to pin down how and where exactly federalism operated in practice. At one level, a working definition would be the successful combination of unity and diversity within states (Duchacek 1990, p. 43). The essence of federalism can also be traced not from constitutional or institutional arrangements but from society itself (Livingston 1974, p.151). This can be a very useful framework for a multiethnic, caste-based society such as India, where societal level factors play a larger role than what is expected in other states. However, the idea of sovereignty becomes extremely important when one deals with power-sharing in federal states. Foreign policy was historically considered to work with the monopoly of the federal government for it to sustain (Kuznetsov 2015, p.60).

In such a complex environment that surrounds the discourse on federalism, what is more important is to delineate factors that are responsible for constituent activity in foreign policy. Increasing specialisation of constituent units in a world that becomes more and more interdependent is a reality today. Constituent units engage with the everyday realities of their citizens and have also acquired greater responsibilities owing to the decentralisation of state power. Constituent activities in spheres such as foreign policy also happen with the deepening of democratisation that enables accommodation from the federal government. The opening up of the market for economic liberalisation is a crucial force where international actors create radically different socio-economic outcomes through contact with the global economy. To a considerable extent, it is true that this has enhanced the bargaining power of constituent units from their federal government, on matters of economic development. It can hence be plausibly stated that constituent diplomacy is widespread in states that increasingly turn towards opening up their markets and thus, it is only natural for this sphere

to be one of intense competition between federal government and its constituent units and also among the constituent units themselves (Kincaid and Tarr 2005, p.148).

India and the federal experience

A federal structure would enable the government to cater to the diverse needs of a highly pluralistic society. The constituent assembly of India deliberated on the matter of foreign policy along the lines of the Government of India Act of 1935 (Eddy and Lawton 1935). The limited powers enshrined for provinces in the Government of India Act 1935 with regard to the subjects in the provincial list were also not adopted in the constitution of independent India (Asthana and Jacob 2019, p. 318). India is considered neither a purely federal nor a purely unitary system. There exists a certain amalgamation of both features and the constitution is made flexible to accommodate the federal and unitary needs of the state. Indian federalism is union oriented and the formal distribution of powers has strengthened its position further to the extent that it can be termed as ‘marginally federal’ or a ‘quasi-federation’ (Hicks 1978, p. 85). Dr Ambedkar explains and clarifies the reason as to why the term ‘federation’ is not explicitly mentioned in the whole of the constitution (IIPA 1968). It reads, ‘India, that is Bharat, is a Union of States’ Article 1 specifies that the Indian union is not the result of agreement between the units and therefore, they also do not have the right to secede from it, thus making the state into an indestructible union (IIPA 1968). The units however, can be subject to destruction, modification, merger etc as per the needs of integration. India is also the example of a ‘holding together’ federation and not a ‘coming together’ federation (Stepan 1999, p. 21). As a newly independent state, India needed a certain form of federalism in order to govern a vast territory inhabited by the most diverse of populations. James Bryce (1920) observes, “the true value of a political contrivance resides not in its ingenuity but in its adaptation to the temper and circumstances of the people for whom it is designed, in its power of using, fostering and giving legal form to those forces of sentiment and interest which it finds in being” (474). Dr Ambedkar also outlined clearly the supremacy of the constitution over not only the states but the centre as well. He emphasised that federalism in principle means the division of legislative and executive authority between the centre and the state which is endowed by the constitution itself and the states do not depend upon the centre for their legislative authority. Thus, ‘the centre and states are ‘co-equal’ in this matter’ (IIPA, 1968).

The Rajya Sabha or the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, as part of the constitutionally mandated Bicameral Legislature, was originally designed as a bulwark that protects the interests of states, but with much lesser powers than the Lok Sabha or the Lower House. The members of the Upper House are elected

through indirect election of the members of state legislatures and the Rajya Sabha is distinct from its counterpart in the United States, in one important aspect. The basis for the allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha is based on the demographic strength of each state and not on the basis of equal representation of all states. Its role in the strengthening of federalism has had a mixed result through history but still serves as an important check to the Lok Sabha in the making of several prominent legislations. Finally, the power to make and implement foreign policy is vested with the union government and the parliament through Articles 53 and 246(1), 253, respectively (Asthana and Jacob 2019, p. 317). Along with this, the absolute power of the Parliament to redraw boundaries of the states as well as suspend state governments through emergency provisions (popularly known as president's rule) has shown time and again, the immense power that the Centre wields.

Coalition governments became a reality in India for the first time in 1977 when the Indian National Congress (INC) under Indira Gandhi was defeated by a broad coalition of political forces and formed the Janata Party-led government under Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. While this did not last for long and single party rule was to return soon, it definitely marks the beginning of a historical trend that became dominant much later. A coalition government was formed again in 1989 under the banner of the National Front (NF), and the subsequent governments till 2014 were all to be coalitions in nature. This period was characterised by the rise of 'second and third electoral system' that was a manifestation of deepening democracy and its reflection in the electoral arena (Yadav 1999, p. 2394). It is also significant because of the far-reaching shift brought about by newer forms of social mobilisation in the political economy of India (Sridharan 2018, p. 86). The coalition governments can be divided into two categories that further illuminate their roles in the larger context *i.e.* 'atypical national party-led coalition' (National Front and the United Front governments) and 'typical national party-led coalitions' (National Democratic Alliance and United Progressive Alliance) (Jaganathan 2019, p. 1521). This distinction is essential in analysing the influence of the coalition partners who also happen to be 'regional' parties or state governments led by them. In the Indian context, constituent activity in foreign relations can be traced from three sources: asymmetrical federalism through special constitutional arrangements in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, political capital through the legacy of strong regional leaders and finally, the role that state governments led by 'regional' parties play in coalition governments (Mattoo and Jacob 2008, p. 185). It is also pertinent to note that states along the border have had higher levels of influence over foreign policy as they might directly affect them and this trend has interesting variations in different coalition governments (Dossani and Vijayakumar 2005, p. 192). Influence, hence becomes much more fluid that is not only

dependent on the willingness of a constituent actor to engage in diplomacy but depends crucially on constitutive elements within a coalition as well.

Federalism and the rise of BJP

Ever since the birth of the BJP in 1980 from the parent organization of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, it had been known for its ideological consistency towards a homogeneous narrative that tilted towards cultural Hindu conservatism. Despite this ideological inclination, the “concern for federal structure of Indian constitution” began to change due to their consistently rising electoral success since the 1980s (Jain 2020, p. 4). On the other hand, the rise of coalition politics began to get entrenched in the form of the National Front Government in 1989. The Rajiv Gandhi led Indian National Congress Party (INC) government in 1984, that secured the highest majority in the Parliament lived to see the transition to a coalition form of government. The weakness that the INC exhibited, left a vacuum that would be filled by the newly emerging social forces. Its inability in securing a simple majority in the Parliament hereafter happens to be the watershed for the emergence of BJP as the second largest political party at the national level in the 1991 General elections. The politics around the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report propelled the BJP on the centre-stage of Indian politics in the 1990s. It is from this point onwards, when the twin variables of religion and caste take root in the contours of BJP’s political narrative in subsequent decades. The coterminous rise of regional parties emanating out of social justice movements along with the prevalence of other regional parties in the country played a major role in the formation of national governments. The loosening of single party dominance at the national level, coupled with the advent of diverse political actors contributed to this paradigm shift.

After unsuccessfully attempting to form coalition governments in 1996 and 1998, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was formed in 1999 with the BJP as its principal component. This was a coalition government of over 20 political parties that functioned on the principles of furthering the wave of economic liberalization and social accommodation, with the exception of the 2002 Gujarat riots. This upsurge of coalition governments that included various federal fronts and the United Progressive Alliance governments were a turning point in the history of Indian politics. The UPA led by the INC reinvented itself in 2004 and became a much more “coalitionable” party which led to its success for two subsequent terms (Sridharan 2018, 88). It was during the period of the first NDA government and the UPA governments, when the concept of Goods and Services Tax that subsumed the complex tax regime of India was formulated in the context of furthering the opening of the market.

Charges of corruption and policy paralysis marred the UPA II government in its later years along with the gradual decline of regional parties. The fatigue of coalition governments was evidently visible at this point and was leading to protests in many parts of the country for an untainted and decisive leadership. BJP being the principal opposition party and its long stint out of power made it the obvious power. Despite its overt religious credentials, rhetoric on development trumped the other core positions of the BJP while also halting the Mandalisation of Indian politics. It has also aided newer caste configurations across the various states of India and thereby creating an alternative to multi-party coalitions.

Centralization- a new phase

One of the most salient features of the coalition phase between 1989 and 2014 is the total absence of an overtly centralizing national government. This period is also characterized by the liberalizing phase of the Indian economy which had significant effects on centre-state relations. The greater leeway that states were able to gain, were turned in their favour on delivery of public goods and developmental politics. The meteoric rise of Narendra Modi, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat was aided partly by the resonance of such a discourse. His further elevation to the national scene as the Prime Minister brought along with it the strong expectations of a leader who understands the perspective of states. Consequent to this was the 14th Finance Commission Report which devolved a significantly higher proportion of indirect taxes to the states. This was accompanied by the dismantling of the Planning Commission that signified the central planning legacy of the socialist era and was reestablished as NITI Aayog, as a research and advisory body. These expectations were to quickly fade as the “institutional vacuum” left by the dismantling of the Planning commission had far more detrimental effects on the practice of federalism (Tillin & Aiyar 2020, p. 121). In addition, this slowly started giving way to the implementation of the core ideological tenets of the BJP on federalism and unitary state. Beginning with the unsuccessful passage of an overarching land reform legislation, the policy domains in which centralizing tendencies returned, increased gradually.

The Finance Commission is a constitutional body setup under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution in order to determine the state of finances of the union and of the states. The 14th Finance Commission recommended that tax devolution should be the way forward in the sharing of resources to the states. It did away with much of the criteria defined by the erstwhile Planning Commission in the sharing of tax revenue. Consequently, the commission increased the share of states from 32% to 42% in the divisible pool of taxes. While these recommendations were hailed as a watershed moment in fiscal federalism, they started giving way to more central control over how states spend the devolved funds. Along with this, the monumental

increase of the indivisible pool of taxes which comprise cess and surcharges and the changing nature of centrally sponsored schemes marked the beginning of creeping centralization. This was followed by the constitution of the 15th Finance Commission which proved to be more controversial for its inclusion of a separate fund for 'defence and internal security'. These are entries that fall exclusively in the domain of the union government. While the commission retained the same proportion of devolution for the states, it had also included a number of conditional grants that the states were bound by. These grants would be provided on states fulfilling terms set towards maintaining fiscal responsibility and implementation of reforms in various sectors.

The Goods and Service Tax (GST) is an indirect tax created through the 101st Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution which will be levied on manufacture, sale and consumption of goods and services on the national level. Its most significant feature is the replacement of multiple indirect taxes levied by the centre and the states, considered to be a hindrance on the integration of the entire country into a single market. Apart from the merits of the GST it also served to fulfil an important ideological stance of the BJP, that is, the closer knitting of the Indian economy. GST, while it looked attractive from the perspective of creating a conducive investment climate was also taking away the right of states in independently collecting the tax. This landmark tax reform, while it passed through the Indian Parliament smoothly was opposed only by the state of Tamil Nadu under the then Chief Minister, J Jayalalithaa. The bigger challenge of implementing GST came with the constitution of the GST Council which is the governing body headed by the Union Finance Minister and consists of 33 members. The body is responsible for the implementation of new rules and the revision of rates from time to time. While the functioning of the GST Council was smooth in its initial years, it has come under greater challenges in years of slower economic growth before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. With delays in the payment of money owed to states, cracks started appearing in this much praised institutional reform. The issue of compensation for states that had to endure revenue deficits because of the new tax regime as well as that of the pandemic induced economic distress became prominent issues of the council. Further, the council's formula to tide over the revenue crisis by directing the states to borrow from the open market created an unparalleled crisis. The role of the union government in the council clearly had an upper hand in comparison to the states and this is only bound to further increase such issues.

Conclusion

The interaction between two layers of government, i.e., the Union and the states, can be described as a wavy picture with the role of states ebbing and flowing from time to time. The coalition era of Indian politics set

the stage for a decisive move away from single party rule that was enabled by the deepening of democracy and the rising representation of diverse socio-cultural groups at the Centre. The coalition phase of Indian politics is considered because of the multiplicity of political actors at the union level and also the greater leeway that influential coalition partners had at the constituent state level. It is still an era of Indian politics that is understudied and requires deeper scholarly attention to better understand the evolution of contemporary foreign policy of India. Despite the growing centralisation of Indian federalism since 2014, the compact of two different layers of government has continued to play an important role from political relations and the management of economy to social welfare policies. The need to understand this dilemma is greater than ever, not just in matters of traditional foreign and security policy, but also with regards to newer engagements in domestic areas such as economic interests of states, utilisation of cross-boundary natural resources, social welfare of citizens and even the management of COVID-19 pandemic.

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Ethnicity Based Identity: The Emergence of Assamese Diaspora in the Lands of United Kingdom

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Abstract

The idea of Indian diaspora is often limited by the ideas Bengali, Bihari, Punjabi, Odia diaspora etc. However, other small communities like the Assamese too operate their own diasporas in various parts of the world. Though lesser studied, the Assamese diaspora forms an interesting field of study. This paper thus, studies the Assamese diaspora settled in London and their attempts of identity assertion. The paper tries to understand how far has the Assamese ethnicity become the primary factor in the making of new diasporas. In doing so, the paper moves from understanding the idea of diaspora in general to the Assamese diaspora in particular. It later tries to understand the grounds which led to the creation as well as operation of such diasporas. And finally, it understands, how unique is the idea of the Assamese diaspora when compared to other diasporas from India settled abroad.

Key words: Diaspora, folk culture, Assamese, ethnicity, bihu

Introduction

Study on diaspora in the contemporary world specifically in the field of international relations emerged enormously. In simple words, diaspora implies amalgamation of people living outside their motherland or homeland. Now the question that arises here is that why diasporas are created and what is the rationale behind the migration of people to different countries. One of the simple answers of this, as highlighted by scholars, is that in the last few centuries people of a country settled in foreign countries as result of economic and social conditions of their own countries. As Salman Rushdie has rightly argued that ‘we are increasingly becoming a world of migrants, made up of bits and fragments from here and there’ (Manuel 1998, p. 17; Marzorati, 1989). People were looking for better lifestyle or amenities which were perceived as necessary for living an ideal life. However, with the advent of globalisation the whole basis of economic conditions loses its significance and is replaced by advancement in the area of communication and technology, which further plays a significant role in the migration of people. Research on Indian diaspora is not easy at times as pointed by scholars ‘the mosaic of Indian identities abroad presents a complex picture which makes it difficult for policymakers and researchers to approach the diaspora as a single entity’ (Pande 2013, p.59).

The diasporas across the world evolves as a space for the promotion, protection and representation of indigenous culture, such as- folk dance, folk music, tribal food habits and ethnic wear. It can be said that Indian diasporas are also created on the basis of ethnicity, language and region. In comparison to other Indian communities, a small number of people from Assam settle Aboard. Therefore, it is interesting to study about these Assamese communities. If we look at the activities of Assamese communities residing in United Kingdom (hereafter UK) it becomes evident that these communities are relentlessly promoting, practicing and showcasing folk dances, like- *Bihu*, songs- *goalporiya song* and so on and so forth. Moreover, these diasporic communities are also inviting native Indian folk artists, for instance Ranjit Gogoi visited UK in 2013, to spread the folk dance of Assam to the World. Therefore, the paper will attempt to address the questions like- how Assamese Diaspora in UK is representing folk culture at the global arena and why they are practicing or asserting and preserving their indigenous culture and life styles. In other words, the paper will examine the role of regional diaspora like Assamese diaspora in shaping or reshaping the discourse of Indian Society in the area of international relations.

The paper is divided into four major sections. The first section discusses the concept of diaspora and its evolution. The second section provides a historical overview of Indian diaspora and shift that took place in different times. The third section gives the brief introduction to the Assamese diaspora. The fourth section throws light on the folk culture and tribal practices of Assamese diaspora by giving certain examples of various organisation based in UK.

Understanding the Idea of Diaspora

History of diaspora offers us the discourse that earlier the idea of diaspora was linked with the Jewish people. Diaspora specifically implied ‘the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion’ (Safran 1991, p. 83). Safran also stated that ‘...today. Diaspora, and more specifically, diaspora community seem increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of peoples- expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities...’ (ibid). The term ‘Diaspora’ is derived from the Greek word called- ‘diasperien’, dia means across while sperien means ‘to sow seeds or scatter seeds’. Therefore, in this paper the attempt is to establish how people through folk dance, music and dress, plant seeds of an identity based on culture.

Globalisation played a significant role in the genesis as well as in the proliferation of diasporas especially in the end of twentieth century. In addition, with the end of this century the world also witnessed tremendous advancement in the transportation and in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

These too assisted in the expansion of diasporas. Diasporic communities that came to advent as a result of globalisation integrated the home state, host state and various ethnic communities all over the world (Sahoo and Surabhi 2020). Nicholas Van Hear in his book proposed three essential criteria which should be met by populations that constitute diaspora-

‘First, the population is dispersed from a homeland to two or more other territories. Second, the presence abroad is enduring, although exile is not necessarily permanent, but may include movement between homeland and new host. And third, there is some kind of exchange—social, economic, political or cultural—between or among the spatially separated populations comprising the diaspora’ (Hear 1998, 6).

Hear used another term ‘*transnational community*’ to denote the term ‘*diaspora*’ and highlighted that transnational community is a ‘more inclusive notion, which embraces diaspora, but also populations that are contiguous rather than scattered and may straddle just one border’ (ibid). As a community, the diaspora believes in shared identity and tries to establish certain commonalities, for instance- similar food-habits, shared traumas, cultural as well as social traits, lifestyles and common languages etc. (Sahoo and Surabhi, op.cit 2020). Populations that make up any diasporic societies are primarily outside of their country of origin. Therefore, the emergence of a sense of community among those who share the common cultures as well as traditions develop which furthermore helps in reducing the shield of alienation and gives them a sense of belonging. It is simpler to assimilate since they have a strong feeling of homeland identity and understanding and they wish to transmit this knowledge from one generation to the next. Hence, in the stage of identity development and preservation of culture and upholding traditions of one’s motherland, the ethnic groups/ forums/ institutions/ organisations/ societies in the diaspora play a crucial role. There are various ways to preserve cultures, including performance of indigenous festivals, ethnic rites, folk dance, and folk music.

Indian Diaspora: The Genesis and Shift

In the world, Indian diaspora according to United Nations is seen as the largest. Clare Menozzi, a United Nations official who looked at population Affairs at the UN department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) argued that Indian transnational population is incredibly dispersed throughout the world. All continents as well as regions have an Indian diaspora, including the Gulf, America, Australia, and Europe- such as the UK. Thus, this makes the Indian diaspora the most diverse and lively (“Indian Diaspora Largest in the World, 18 Million Living Outside India in 2020, Says UN” n.d).

Looking at the migration of Indian people to different countries scholars identified three time periods- (a) migration before colonial period (b) migration during colonial period and (c) migration as an aftermath of

colonialism (Sahoo 2006). During the pre-colonial era, whose genesis can be found from the first century, the main goal of migration was to spread religion and trade. It is important to note that only a particular section of people had the privilege to migrate in this period such as- royal families, priests, distinguished poets and artists. However, due to the advent of colonialism and imperialism in the 19th century mass migration of large number of cheap labour to the colonies of great powers to sustain their plantations was witnessed. In the name of industry and development imperial power with the method of indentured labour exploited the human resources of India. Most of the Indian labour during 19th and 20th century worked in the plantations like-cocoa, coffee, sugar, rubber, tea for colonisers. Thousands of Indians (nearly 1.5 million) had been sent by colonial powers to Africa, Burma, Caribbean, Fiji, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Nigeria, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda to serve their purposes. Other than this, trading communities from India also migrated to different countries in this period. 'This consequently led to permanent settlements and formation of a diaspora, also known as the "old diaspora". For several of these groups, "Indian" is still a generic term, which includes other south like Pakistani, Bangladeshis and even Sri Lankans' (Pande op.cit, p. 61).

In the third phase, which occurred with the end of World War II and with the initiation of the process of decolonisation, a major shift was observed in this field. Unlike the earlier period, in this period Indian populations (both professional as well as highly skilled labour) primarily moved to developed countries, like – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and US. In the 1950s such people from India migrated to UK, but in the later decades US become the prime country to settle. Scholars highlight that most of the Indian Diasporas have been created entirely on the grounds of two mains identities- common language and religious identity (Sahoo 2006).

The Assamese Diaspora

Diaspora as a concept, as well as identities that are built around diasporic communities, are unstable and extremely complex. Folk culture, folk music, folk dance, tribal food habits, and traditional attire provides insights to understand the complex identities. For instance, scholars argue 'music is a powerful medium for representing, contesting, and negotiating changing cultural identities within shifting global diasporas. Music indexes continuity and change, sustains and renegotiates connection across transnational space, and reshapes generational relations' (Siber 2005, p. 123) or 'Diasporic memories do contain the essence of indigenous culture which becomes the source of life in an alien land that gives oxygen for survival in an otherwise claustrophobic environment' (Debnath and Srijita 2017, p. 561).

Assam is a state under the Indian sub-continent that is located towards the eastern most borders of India. It is a picturesque space and is often referred to as the land of the blue hills and red rivers. It is the state through which mighty Brahmaputra (Luit) flows. Assam is a home to multiple, approximately two-hundred, ethnic communities. Each community has its unique language, culture, food habits, costumes, and a unique identity altogether. In this paper, the term Assamese would be used to refer to people hailing from Assam irrespective of their ethnic roots. It has to be stated that the number of Assamese people who have of late settled outside India are few in comparison to Non-Residential Indians (NRIs)/PIOs hailing from other parts of India (Saleh 2011). To put it in other words, unlike most other diasporas, the Assamese diaspora is not a majority community. Though small, the Assamese diaspora has emerged as a strong and significant community. Assamese people are now settled across the world and have shown harmonious co-existence irrespective of any social differences like caste, creed, ethnicity, religion etc. and bound by the greater Assamese identity abroad. This has led to the strengthening of the Assamese diaspora in various parts of the world. The Assamese expatriates are a handful but have not reached a position of becoming major investors or entrepreneurs in Assam but has been active in providing a helping hand to its people back in their homeland 'The Assamese diaspora, on an individual basis is active in supporting people back home, be it by paying the tuition fees of brothers and sisters, medical bills of parents, regular financial support of the family and support of an educational institution' (Saleh 2011, p. 2). Like most other diasporas, the Assamese diaspora too, have been inspired to settle outside for job prospects.

Today, Assamese diasporas are active in various countries a few of them are- Assam Foundation of North America, Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters, Assam Net, North East India Research Forum, Xobdo (Sound or word), Xomidhan, Xophura, Indian Cancer Care Network, etc. Apart from these collective groups, some individuals like Mr. Simanta Das (the Netherlands), Mrs. Rita Saikia (U.K), Mr. Amulya Bhuyan (UK), Dr. Tonmoy Sharma (USA), Dr. Pervez Ahmed (USA), Mr. Iftikar Ali Ahmed (USA), Dr. Musahid Ahmed (USA), etc. have been relentlessly working on strengthening the Assamese diaspora and contributing to the people back in Assam in socio-economic ways.

Just like any other part of the world, the Assamese diaspora has been actively working in the UK too. One of the important organisations formed by the Assamese diaspora in the UK is the London Bihu Committee (LBC). The LBC is largely a voluntary organisation that is majorly non-political, non-profit and non-religious in nature. It was formally established on the 11th of January, 1987. The primary aim behind the establishment of this organisation was to celebrate the Assamese New Year. Though the Assamese new year begins on the 15th of April and *Bihu* starts from 14th April (1st of *Bohag* 31st Chaitra/Sat as per Assamese calendar respectively), the LBC celebrates it on the 1st of May every year as it marks a bank

holiday in London. The organisation states that ‘The New Year is called “The Rongali Bihu” and is the heart of Assamese society and the festive symbol of the Assamese culture’ (“London Bihu Committee” n.d.). The LBC emerged from one of the subcommittees of another Diasporic organisation named the Assamese Cultural Association. In its initial days, the LBC too followed the rules of the aforesaid Association.

The Assamese diaspora have aimed at promoting and introducing its rich cultural heritage before people from various parts of the world. Another prime agenda of the Assamese diaspora has remained familiarising their future generations with their ethnic and cultural roots. Similar was the aim of the Assamese Cultural Association which originally attempted in providing training on Assamese language, culture and heritage to Assamese children born and brought up in the UK beside influencing other interested communities. The Association highlights that such initiatives have opened-up opportunities for these children to perform various cultural programs like music, dance, drama, song, spoken word etc. in the Bihu functions.

The Association has been carrying out this practice for a long period of time now. However, due to factors like lack of facilities, resources, decrease in number of members etc., the teaching of Assamese language to the British born Assamese children has gradually phased out (“London Bihu Committee” n.d.). Thus, the Association eventually got more engaged in activities like the celebration of Rongali Bihu under the banner of the LBC. The LBC meets five times in a year and its members are elected after every two years. The Committee is comprised of both general as well as executive members of which the latter are the office bearers and are elected. Formed in the year 1987, the organisation has come a long way and in 2008, the responsibilities of the organisation were handed over to the second generation of the Assamese diaspora who constituted the organisation. The LBC in the present-day, is trying to expand its reach to places where there are people, who are interested in contributing to the spreading of Assamese culture and celebrating the Rongali Bihu.

A Brief Description of Bihu

Bihu is the national festival of Assam which is celebrated thrice a year. Bihu is an agrarian festival and there are three types of it viz. *Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu*, *Bohag Bihu* or *Rongali Bihu* and *Kati Bihu* or *Kangali Bihu*. Each Bihu is celebrated at a specific time of the year and depending on the stage of production of paddy. The *Rongali Bihu*, also known as *Bohag Bihu*, is celebrated in the month of April starting from 14th of April lasting for the next seven days. This marks the beginning of new year according to the Assamese calendar and is the time of spring when the weather gets pleasant. It is after the celebration of this Bihu that the farmers begin sowing and ploughing their land for cultivation. This marks happiness

and is celebrated with music, dance, song and husoris (prayers). Different kinds of folk instruments like *Dhol*, *pepa* (buffalo horn trumpet), *gogona* (an instrument made of bamboo), *baahi* (flute), *toka* (a folk instrument made of bamboo), *taal* (instrument made of brass metal), etc. are played while the boys and girls sing of love, romance, nature, fun, merry-making, youthfulness etc. The dance moves are inspired by the various aspects of nature like the waving of banana leaves, movements of different parts of the traditional weaving machine of Assam etc. *Husori*, songs praying for the well-being and prosperity of the entire household, are performed by male members of the locality.

Kati bihu, as the name suggests, is celebrated in the *Kati/Kartik maah* (on 18th of October) and denotes the time when the farmer has no crops. This Bihu is celebrated to pray for good harvest at the end of the year. The last kind of Bihu is the Magh or Bhogali Bihu which is celebrated in the month of January starting from 31st of *Puh maah* (13th of January) to 3rd of *Magh maah* (16th of January). During this time of the year, the crops are harvested and the farmers have abundant crops, especially rice. To celebrate the harvest, the people prepare various kinds of savoury dishes and enjoy the end of the yearlong hard-work.

It is a fact that celebrating all these kinds of Bihu is not feasible when we talk about Assamese people settled outside India. The reasons vary from difficulty of resources, lack of environment, context, and time. But, despite such restraints, the Assamese diaspora in UK have tried to hold on to their roots by celebrating the biggest and most enthusiastic festival of Assam, the Rongali Bihu. This shows the interest of the Assamese diaspora in promoting its culture and their inclinations to their roots despite the constantly changing global scenario.

Representation of Folk/Ethnic Cultures of Assam

Apart from the LBC, other organisations formed by the Assamese diaspora are also attempting at upholding the culture and traditions of Assam by celebrating the *Rongali Bihu*. In 2010, the Assamese new year and Rongali Bihu was celebrated by the Assamese diaspora at Barham Park Lounge in London under the initiative of Rini Kakati, an NRI Co-ordinator for UK. The idea for this celebration came from Gordon Ramsey's enquiry about Assamese restaurant in London on his return from Assam after three years of stay (Tribune 2010). Various dignitaries like Jitendra Kumar (First Secretary, Indian High Commission), Rita Payne (President, Commonwealth Journalist Association, UK), Rolfkilius, (Curator for Horniman Museum), Mayorof Brant, Naveen Shah (London Assembly member), Helga Gladbaum, including councillors from different bureaus- Labour, Liberal Democrats, Conservative, Justin Wintle (author of the book 'The Perfect Hostage'), Geoff Payne (Consultant in Urban Development and Planning), Alain Durand Laserve and his wife Maylis from France etc. (Tribune 2010). Assamese cuisine was served in this event

which included khar (homemade soda), tenga (a kind of sour gravy), bamboo-shoot, mahor bora (fritters made of lentils), pitika (mashed potato), hanh aru maah (duck with lentils), dry fish, paatot diya maas (fish steamed in banana leaf), oou tenga (elephant apple), til pitha (sesame *pitha*, made with rice flour), payash (dessert), jalpan (flattened rice served with curd and jaggery), tamul-paan (areca nut and betel leaf). This challenged the stereotypes set around Indian food being concentrated to dishes like tandoori chicken, aloo-bhindi, etc.

Another important organisation of the Assamese diaspora in the UK includes the United Assam Association of the UK (UAAUK). This too is a voluntary non-profit, non-political, non-religious association which has a constitution and members. It has an Executive Committee that manages its membership and holds its annual meetings. It is an old organisation that was initiated in the early 1970s as a result of the migration of Assamese people to UK in the 1960s and 1970s. It was later joined by people as members even after the 1970s. the Association was formed with an aim of promoting Assamese identity and culture in the UK, to provide a helping hand to Assamese people newly migrating to the UK, familiarising the second generation of these Assamese in UK with their ethnic and cultural roots, collaborating with similar and like-minded people/organisations, and providing help to Assam and its people whenever sought for (“HOME” n.d.).

Other Assamese diaspora organisations in UK include United Assam Association of UK, Assam Sahitya Sabha of UK (ASSUK) etc. Another interesting incident includes the performance of Bihu husori in the courtyards of British households in the year 2015 with the aim of promoting the cultural performances of Assam in the UK. The program was initiated by the Bordoisila Bihu Gosthi (a team of UK-based Assamese families) and *back2music* (an online initiative by two Assamese youths). The initiative was joined by sixteen families based in UK who were trained by Satriya dancers like Jurie Jill Baruah and Jyoti Prasad Hazarika (“Bihu Sights & Sounds in a London Courtyard - Telegraph India” n.d.). The British neighbourhood were invited and attended the program which lasted for an hour and a half long and in the end, Assamese food was served.

The Assamese diaspora has worked actively in the field of introducing, promoting and upholding the identities and folk cultures of Assam in the UK and other parts of the globe. As a result of it, the people outside have today, begun to recognise the uniqueness of this land. For instance, in the 2016 Commonwealth Country Fair, aided by Commonwealth Girls Education Fund, held in Kensington Town Hall, London witnessed and grooved to the *Bordoisila Bihu Gosthi's Bihu* performance (NewsDesk 2016). Similarly, in the year 2022, music and dance of *Rabhas* of Assam were performed in London organised by the Sanskruti Centre based in London (Bureau 2022).

Conclusion

In the end, it can be seen that various scholars working on Indian diaspora have shown interest in studying Gujarati Diaspora, Odia Diaspora, or Malayali Diaspora or any other mainstream Indian society or their culture like Bhojpuri songs and mainstream dance practices like classical dances. On the contrary, the Assamese diaspora started to be active primarily in the late twentieth century. The initial aim of the Assamese diaspora was not only to hold on to their ethnic identity and roots but also to introduce the same to their upcoming generations. Though this had to undergo various phases and not all of the primary goals were fulfilled, the Assamese diaspora continued to assert their identities through the celebration of Bihu.

Further, it can be seen that the Assamese diaspora expanded in the twenty-first century and many new organisations became functional and active. This has further enhanced the scope of the Assamese diaspora. The Assamese diaspora today also aims at helping the needy Assamese both in the foreign land of UK as well as in Assam. Furthermore, the attempt of the Assamese people through celebration of Bihu and feasts have largely contributed to challenging the homogenous identification of the Indians abroad. This has created a sense of assertion of the identity of the Assamese along with the identity of an Indian. Thus, though small in number, the Assamese diaspora has been an active group that has consciously tried to create a space for themselves in a foreign land, based on their ethnic identity. It is unique from other Indian diasporas in the sense that it is based primarily on the idea of ethnicity which encompasses a larger variety of field like literature, language, culture, art, etc. as opposed to identification based on caste, religion, etc.

Thus, from the above analysis it can be argued that diaspora as a notion can also be seen as instrument that promote and practice multiculturalism. By examining the indigenous cultural practices of Assam we can observe the evolution of Indian diaspora. Although there are few research studies conducted to understand the issues, evolution and trajectories of Assamese diaspora across the world, yet Assamese diasporas are unique and different from other Indian diasporas. The prime difference is, existing studies on diaspora mainly emphasise on identity that are purely based on two elements- religious identity and language identity. While on the other hand, Assamese diaspora unites the people of Assam through their indigenous music, dance and ethnic cultural practices.

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Folk Performing Art in Kherai of the Bodos: A Case Study in Chirang District of Assam

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Abstract

The Bodos one of the largest tribes in North East India have been inhabiting since time immemorial. Bodo tribes follow the Bathou religion. The Kherai is a puja performed in the Bathou religion as a greatest festival. Kherai can be believed as living history and folk traditions of Bodos. Animal sacrifices are still practiced in Kherai festival and Bathou religious custom. The parts and performances in Kherai are the best examples of performing arts. This paper pertains to the insights of the Kherai festival and its analysis as the folk performing arts of the Bodos.

Key Words: *Performing Arts, Bodo Tribes, Kherai, Bathou, Animal Sacrifices, Folk tradition.*

Introduction

Assam is a state in North-East India that is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multilingual, and multi-religious. In the area, there are numerous coexisting tribes and non-tribes. The majority of the population is of mixed origin, and there are also numerous tribes that are almost pure Mongolians. There are four different language families in Assam viz: Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. The Bodos are the single largest community among the tribes in the entire North-East India (Basumatary 2005, p.1). The Bodos are the largest Mongoloid tribe that mostly inhabits Assam. Besides, they are also found in neighbouring countries and states like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, West Bengal, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. The Bodos are traditionally a rural community and depend on agriculture and natural resources. A large number of people continue to work agriculture as their primary source of income and means of livelihood. It is believed that the Bodos have been practicing their traditional religion, known as the Bathou, since immemorial time. Bathoubrai is the supreme god of the Bathou. Rev. Sidney Endle mentioned Bathoubrai as- He (Bathoubrai) is never represented in idol form but is well in evidence through his living symbol, the sijou tree (a variety of Euphorbia trigona plants), which is often seen in the Kachari (Bodo) homestead surrounded by a circular fence of split bamboo. (Endle 2012, p. 35) In the Bathou religion, they believe in nature, especially the five supernatural elements: land, water, air, fire, and sky. These

are the same as the five elements of Hinduism and other religions as well. In Hinduism, the five basic elements, i.e., Pancha maha bhutas are Pritvi (earth), Jala (water), Tejas (fire), Vayu (wind), and Akasha (space). These five elements are thought to possess the most profound philosophy and special abilities. The word 'Bathou', 'Ba' means 'five' and the word 'thou' denotes deep knowledge or unfathomable strength. The Bathoubrai means the owner or head of all five elements. The Bathoubrai is revered as the supreme god and creator by the Bodos in the Bathou.

The Bodos have their own traditional rites, rituals, customary laws, and they have continued to preserve them. They observe various fairs and festivals in Bwisagu, Magw (Domasi), Kati Gasa, Kherai, and Garja, which are mostly related to seasonal, agricultural, and religious occasions. Bwisagu is the biggest festival of the Bodos related to agriculture. It is observed in spring (April), like Bihu, for seven days. In the observation of the Bwisagu festival, they sing many songs and dances along with traditional instruments like Kham, Jotha, Serja, and Sifung, through which their society, culture, religion, rituals, and livelihood are reflected. Their traditional culture has been passed down from generation to generation since ancient times.

Performing Arts

Folklore includes various form of performing arts. Folk performing arts are genres of art (dance, drama, music, etc.) in which performers express their artistic expression through their own faces, voices, and body movements. These types of art forms are performed live for the audience and to worship God and Goddess as well. Performance means the creative and conscious demonstration of art forms, like dances, dramas, and music, by individuals and in groups. Performing arts play a very important role in human society, through which people can enjoy and get happiness. Every community has its own folk performing arts. The folk performing arts might be classified as a fourth area of folklore and folklife, which consists of traditional music, dance, and drama. These performing arts are intentional presentations of folk arts by people or groups using costumes, props for scenarios, folk instruments, and dance. The performing arts frequently coexist and interact with one another. (Dorson 1972, p. 4) Furthermore, the performing arts are the most significant and impactful forms of traditional media that anyone can use to communicate with the audience through a performance.

Kherai

The Bodo community celebrates Kherai as their greatest and most important religious festival. It is a means of enlightening people about 16 morals delivered by God through Doudini. The term “Kherai” means the entire process of worshipping the gods and goddesses in order to bring welfare to the family, village, and surrounding area. Apart from that, many believe that it protects the family from evil forces and can predict fortune. Generally, it is celebrated once a year or sometimes once every three years as per convenience (by taking account of economic conditions). It is difficult to trace the origin of the Kherai festival. It is thought to have persisted ever since the Bodos began worshipping Bathou bwrai. Many prominent academics and authors have discussed various theories regarding the origination of the Kherai. Guru Bhaben, an instructor of Bodo Jatra Gaan (interlude), gives an interesting interpretation of the word Kherai. He said, Bend on your knees and chant. To whom? To God, as he is the creator, the protector, and the destroyer. In Bodo, bending on knees is called ‘hanthu kherainai’, chanting is called ‘raisongnai’, and the God is known as ‘eswr’. So, from the word ‘hanthu kherainai’ taken the ‘khe’, from raisongnai it’s ‘ra’ and from ‘eswr’ it’s “e” together make the word “Kherai”. Dr. Kameswar Brahma argues that "Kharia-Borai," (latent old man) is another name for "Bathou-Bwrai," the head of the chief god of Bodos. The Bodos believe that Kharia-Borai is a latent entity endowed with all qualities. Thus, it is believed that the Kherai puja is conducted in his name; the terms Kharia-Borai might have been combined and transformed into Kherai - Kharia-Borai>Khubrai>Khurai>Kherai. (Brahma, 1992, pp. 174-175). The word ‘Kherai’ is connected to the Tripuran festival term “Ker Puja.” (Chatterjee, 1998) Literally, ‘Kherai’ means in Bodo to kneel down to feel and understand the presence of a supreme power, i.e., the Almighty God and 'rai' means to utter or pray loudly.

Kherai does not have a designated place for celebration. An open field is chosen to perform public kherai, and if it is individual, then a Bathou alter or courtyard is chosen. At first, the chosen area is cleaned and purified by sprinkles of water. It is then followed by establishing the Kherai altar, a long one moving towards the north. On the main altar, Sijou (a variety of Euphorbia trigona plant) is planted, and it is fenced around by 16 pairs of split bamboo. From the main altar to the northern section, 16 pairs of khangkhla, a sacred plant, are installed, along with 16 shares offered to 16 respective gods and goddesses. After that, rice powder is used to embellish it.

Kherai has been held by the Bodos for ages with a view to bringing welfare to people and the community. It has no set time limit to observe; rather, it can be done for different purposes whenever it is convenient. During Kherai, the main roles will be performed by 'Doudini' and 'Oja' throughout the entire process. There are 16 different dance forms in the Kherai festival, which are performed by Doudini during the Kherai celebration, accompanied by some villagers who know how to dance to the music played by traditional musical instruments.

Types of Kherai

Mentioned may be made here, many scholars and academicians have classified Kherai into different categories. Brahma (1992) discusses five kinds of Kherai: Darshan Kherai, Umrao Kherai, Falw Kherai, and Nokhorni Kherai. Basumatary (2009) divided Kherai into five categories: Asu Kherai, Maisali Kherai, Falw Kherai, Noni Kherai, and Daoha Kherai. Narzary (2012) identifies four types of Kherai: Dwrswn Kherai, Umrao Kherai, Falw Kherai, and Noauni Kherai. In the book 'Shamanistic Dances of the Tribal and the Non-Tribal People of Assam', Nabin Sarma classified -Sangsari Kherai, Garja Kherai, Amthi Kherai, Mainao Kherai, and Bathou Kherai. According to Hazowary (2021), Kherai are Songsari Kherai, Umrao Kherai or Asu Kherai, Mainao Kherai or Sali Kherai, Dorson Kherai or Falw Kherai, and Noni Kherai or Nohma Kherai. Brahma (2017) finds three types of Kherai: Noh Kherai, Umrao Kherai, and Dwrswn Kherai. In 'Bathou Thandwi', four kinds of Kherai have been mentioned - Songsari Kherai, Aosiya or Umbrao Kherai, Mainao Kherai, and Bathou or Danswring Kherai (Thandwi 2021, pp. 7- 8).

Kherai as folk performing art

The Kherai festival is a good example of the folk performing art form of the Bodos. Doudini perform different dances with various expressions, along with the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments like the Kham, Sifung (the flute), and Jotha. The Doudini play a vital role in the process of Kherai. Doudini mainly performs sixteen dances by imitating the nature of God and Goddesses: Gandwola bwnnai, thungri sibnai, khamao barkhwana mwsanai, gorai dabrainai, khwjwma fonai, and so on. Along with Bathou Bwrai, the 16 Gods and Goddesses

have worships. Apart from these, other dances such as jara fagla, thenthemali, daoang buthua, maoji membrang, etc. are performed. These other dances are also known as sari nisla or gwthwi gwthang dances. Through these dances, the culture, norms, history, and livelihood of Bodo society get reflected.

The dances of Doudini showcase the community's folk performing arts as well. Oja's enchanting spell carries a dramatic act, and Doudini's dance brings traditional dance into the light. While dancing, Doudini may be joined by the villagers or audience; however, everyone has to keep in mind that no one can approach or touch her, even by mistake. Nabin Sarma has mentioned that the Dao thwi lwngnai dance that Doudini performed at Kherai Puja is known as Deodani dance, and Assamese Dheodhai dance was inspired by it. The Deodhani nritya of the Boros is really known as da-thai-long-nai or Deodhani, and from the perspective of the dress, ornaments, and poses of the Boro Deodhani dancers, we may opine that the Assamese Deodhani dance is imitated from the Boro Deodhani (Sharma 2011, p. 214).

Performances in Kherai

Onsrnai: Before beginning the Kherai, there is a stage called Onsrnai where Doudini becomes an embodiment of the spirit of God. If the Kherai celebrate individually, it will take place at Bathousali (the main altar) or if there is no any special temple, it will take place at the Bathou alter of the 'Douri.' Doudini begins to tremble shortly after Oja enchants the charms, indicating that she has been taken over by the spirit and is now capable of wielding divine power. It is known as 'alwngikhangnai'. This magical embodiment makes Doudini able to predict the past and the future, through which she investigates the possibility of any kind of negativity, and if there are any mistakes or sins, she also suggests how to purge them.

Kham Phwtharnai: Among the Bodos, it is believed that each object, including subjects, has a guardian of its own. By keeping this belief in mind, things such as a pair of Kham (drum), a pair of Sifung (flute), a pair of Jotha (cymbals), garments of the Doudini (dokhona thaosi, blouse, usini), dahal-thungri (sword and shield), and khurwi (bowl) are purified by keeping all these on the laijwo (plantain leaflets) and placing them at the Bathou altar. However, it is called 'Kham Phwtharnai', a gesture used to ask for forgiveness in the event that something goes wrong throughout the process.

Before the start of the main parts of Kherai, Douri moves around the Bathou and explains the story about the creation of the earth, human beings, and the Bathou religion. He starts with *'bathou bandw bandwba, sijou siri siriba, thaigir khonga khongba, Sifungni gudung gudungba, apha nwngni bandwabw bandwba, monushyani akhaini asiabw thaiba'* (bathou has five rites, sijou has five lines of thorns, elephant apple has five shells, flute has five holes, O father, thy rites are also five, human's fingers are also five). Then the Githal (one who plays cymbals) follows: *'nongwolwi afa Nobo raja jana guru bungnai raoa swithwlwi afa Nobo raja nobo raja swithw'* (Yes, father, the sayings of Nobo King are very true, yes very true. It carries the religious, spiritual, and philosophical connotations of Bodos.

Dahal arw Raidwng Sibnai Mwsanai: Doudini performs this type of dance when she worships the "Aileng" deity. This particular kind of dance demonstrates that one has to have prompt sense for the purpose of continuing the journey of life. It also illustrates the tactics of fighting and defending in the war. After completing her dance, Doudini drinks the chicken blood served in the bowl. With pleasure, she moves around the Bathou, dancing Sarinisa. At last, she holds Jantha (made from the middle to the top of a whole part of small bamboo) tied to the round fence of Bathou and proceeds to the next dance form. It is believed that the Doudini illustrates strategies for rescuing a person from an enemy's grasp on the battlefield. This dance has a connection to the Bathou Maharaja's bodyguard, the Bura Ailong. She holds a sword and a shield in her hands while she dances. The purpose of this dance is to inspire individuals to face and overcome the numerous challenges and obstacles that life presents. Furthermore, being a war dance, it reminds people that it is necessary to protect themselves and defeat enemies. (Hazowary 1997, p. 114).

Satrali Mwsanai: To express respect to the god Agrang, Doudini performs this kind of dance form. She imitates Rwnswndri (angry), holding two swords in her hands, and circumambulates the altar three times. At the end, she dances above the sword. It demonstrates the tactics of fighting in the war. What it symbolises is that following truth and purity is the key to life. Then doudini dances "Sarinisa," consumes the chicken blood that is placed in the bowl in front of the Bathou, and then switches to a different kind of dancing.

Khwijwma Fonai Mwsanai: This dance style is offered as an offer of respect to the goddess Khwila. Doudini holds up a handkerchief while dancing, acting as attempting to remove the ants that are attacking her. At the end, she cut down the plant that was planted in front of the Bathou. It symbolises the necessity of letting go of the five 'Ripu' (evil thoughts) of the human

mind because such thoughts create havoc in life. Mangal Singh Hazowary mentioned that a man's mental foes might be equated to this dancing form known as fire ants. Throughout our existence on this planet, the ants that represent our mental adversaries constantly attempt to subjugate us. Fighting these foes is a man's first responsibility in order to keep them away from us. This meaning is reflected in the dance. (ibid., pp. 115–116).

Sa Gwlaio Mwsanai: Doudini performs this dance twice for the worship of the deities Khaji and Oblang Khungur. Two men hold a cloth at both ends and twist it. Doudini sits and dances happily in the centre of the cloth. It is believed that the cloth represents life, so it should not be black. The first dance illustrates that while living, people should lead life with positivity for the purpose of attaining peace.

The meaning of life after death is conveyed in the second dance. Furthermore, it is believed that this dance is connected to the Mahabharata scene, where building a bridge over the ocean. Again, after finishing her dance, she drinks the chicken blood and dances 'Sarinisla'. The significance of this particular dance is to raise awareness among people about their experiences, attachment to the outside world, views on religion, etc. The melodic music of the dance has the ability to move people to heart touching emotions. (ibid., p. 115).

Khamao Barkhwnai Mwsanai: This type of dance is presented twice to honour the gods Rajkhandra and Rajfuthru. In this dance, holding a chicken in hand and a raidwng (the cane of a rattan plant), Doudini climbs up on the Kham (drum) and dances joyfully. She kills the chicken in the end and drinks its blood. It stands for holding on to one's culture and spreading it to the whole world. Then Doudini moves to a different dancing style after performing the Aosar dance. The Doudini aims to convey through this dance that a person must kneel down to the deity in order to obtain the knowledge, wisdom, and skill necessary to put what they have learned into practice. Holding a cane staff symbolises the idea that no deity, not even Raj Khandra, can be freed from the Bathou Borai. (ibid., p. 119).

Badali Hwnai Mwsanai: This type of dance is done in honour of the god Ali Burali. Here, Doudini acts like a bat and suggests not being like a bat. It is believed that bats do not belong to either the animal or the bird species. Its character does not carry similarities with other species. This dance therefore suggests that good deeds should be performed with originality and that people shouldn't have two faces.

Gandwola Bwnnai Mwsanai: This dancing style is offered as a tribute to the goddess Sanja Burali. This dance conveys the idea that it is improper to exploit the flaws of others. Every bad

behaviour has its cons, so one should stay away from it. This dance is lovely and deserving of praise from everyone. The fundamental idea of this dance is as follows: a man's pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and libertinism are like a dragonfly that flits around his thoughts, and the conscience must apply constraint in the same way that a trapping can catch the dragonfly from the free advertisement. This dance illustrates how a human being should work to restrain his excessive ego and madness. (ibid., p. 118).

Nao Fasani: A specific altar a little distance from the main altar is used for this dance. Usually, it takes place at midnight. Things such as two boats made of banana stems, flowers, a black chick, a pigeon, banana flowers, and Ganja slim are put in the altar. Doudini dances, moving around that particular arena, and at the end, cuts the banana flower with a sword. Then, two men take things that are kept in the altar and throw them in a distant place. It symbolises throwing away any troubles or negativity from the surroundings.

Mainao Bwkhagnai/Thisonnai: In honour of the three deities, this style of dance is performed: Aaimwnasu, Sari Jwmwn, and Fathali Burwi. Here, Doudini takes a seat on the wooden flat tool called Gambhari (Gmelina arborea) in front of the offerings made to God. Three times, she gives Mainao (goddess of wealth) from each of the three deities to the people. At this moment, Doudini hesitates to hand over Mainao to them because they never properly take care of it. However, they promise to accept accountability and will not utilise it recklessly. Consequently, Doudini transfers water, strength, and Mainao to the people. It stands for equality; everybody should get their share equally.

Mwisw/Mufur Gelenai Mwsanai: In the name of the god Bwrai Raja, this type of dance is performed. Here, Doudini mimics mwisw (buffalo) and mufur (bear). This dance highlights the point that one should only utilise strength when absolutely necessary. Buffalo has a cunning temper, while bear is empathetic in nature. So, people should learn to be like bears. Here, Doudini regards herself as fire because fire has the ability to debunk stubbornness and the evil nature of beings.

Mwsa Daothwi Lwngnai Mwsanai: This type of dance is done in adoration of the Baag Raja (tiger king). Doudini plays with chickens and dances like a mwsa (tiger). In the meantime, she moves around the Bathou three times and, at the end, kills the chicken and sucks its blood. It presents an example of not being so cruel as to hurt other people. Here also, Doudini eats fire, which signifies controlling anger and stubbornness. The purpose of this dance is to demonstrate the tiger's strength, energy, toughness, and erect gait in contrast to that of a dog. But the dog

controls the tiger's roar and rage. In a same vein, all humankind needs to make an effort to defend itself against the might of its adversaries. This is the lesson that the dance conveys. (ibid., 124).

Nao Jaonai Mwsannai: Bwiswmuthi, the goddess, is honoured by this type of dancing. Doudini performs dances in the style of a sailor. The lesson of this dance is that life is like travelling across the seas. On the journey, many hindrances or obstacles will come, but one should face them by keeping faith in the Almighty. It will help lead to the road to heaven; otherwise, bad deeds will have a place in hell. This dance depicts the enormous universe we must navigate with sorrows, miseries, and perils along, much like a boat in a large sea. One must follow the road of truth and honesty in order to successfully navigate past these obstacles and hazards. (ibid., p. 126).

Gorai Dabrainai Mwsanai: In honour to the god Bwrai Swodri, this dancing style is done. Doudini is acting like a horse here, holding two swords in her hands. This dance is performed in order to demonstrate how a horse's pace can only be managed by its reins. Likewise, the evil thoughts of the human mind can be filtered through religious perspectives. The Bwiswmuthi God is the recipient of this dance. In this dance, four or five dancers each hold a rattan stick between their legs to simulate riding a horse. Then, as if they are riding horses, they each hold the stick with his hands at either end and moves around the Bathou. All of them hold oprie (fermented rice) in their mouths and then spirit out into the air. This is another pattern of revealing strength. Through this dance, one can perceive the ten sense organs, their activities, and also the wonderful knowledge. (ibid., p. 125).

Jarafagla Mwsanai: At dawn, Jarafagla comes to the kheraisali searching for his missing in-law daughter. During this dance, Doudini poses as Jarafagla while carrying a bag and a coat. Inside the bag, she carries a pair of betel nuts and coins bundled in plantain leaflets, which known as sarinisa or gwthang gwthwi mwsanai. Before leaving Jarafagla, she finds out whether this time Kherai worship has been successful or not, points out any faults in the process, and suggests future events.

Conclusion

Associated with the Bathou religion, the Kherai is a highly prominent folk performing art of the Bodos, which is reflected in the customs of the Kherai as well as the dances of Doudini. The Bodos have been performing Kherai along with Bathou Bwrai since time immemorial,

which has been passed down from generation to generation. Doudini dances to the music of Kham, Sifung, and Jotha while performing the sixteen principal Kherai dances. Ancestral characteristics, morals, and traditional habits are shown through the dances in Kherai, especially via non-verbal acts. Prominent authors including Dr. Lilladhar Brahma, Dr. Mangalsing Hazowary, and Dr. Khameswar Brahma claim to have divided Kherai dances into eighteen various categories. However, in Chirang district, where blood sacrifice is followed, stick to its 16 kinds, and the rest are regarded as other forms of dance. In this way, the morals associated with the Kherai dance also vary in terms of place and people. In the case of rites too, some practice blood sacrifice, while others use flowers and aromatic sticks while worshipping. Therefore, there should be documentation of the best suitable knowledge related to the Kherai so that future generations can have a clear understanding of these rather confused. No doubt, the dances of Kherai are nowadays performed on stage programmes, also modified by some choreographers, but those drastic changes are harming the traditional cultural heritage of Kherai festivals.

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Cultural Dislocation and Inner Strife in Jhumpa Lahiri's Select Works

A. Benazir and S. K. Ponmalar

Abstract

*Motherland always gives a sense of solace to everyone. But for searching a better life, man is voluntarily leaving the homeland. This migration, either permanent or temporary is a painful experience of immigrants in the host land. The immigrants try to settle down in the adopted country which is partially successful. They struggle to hold the Indian culture as well as to maintain their identities in the foreign land. The Indian immigrant writers whose writings always give voice to the traumatic experiences of the writers who face a clash of two cultures in the adopted land. They emphasize the cross-cultural conflicts such as alienation, rootlessness, displacement, nostalgia, quest for identity, in betweenness etc. Among the Indian diaspora writers, Jhumpa Lahiri is a dominant diaspora who has successfully depicted the complexities of immigrant experiences, pain and sufferings, aloofness in the minds of immigrants settled in different countries. This paper exposes the cultural conflicts of Indian migrants with reference to Lahiri's works *The Namesake*, *The Interpreter of Maladies*, *Unaccustomed Earth* and *The Lowland*.*

Keywords: Migration, homeland, host land, traumatic experiences, immigrants, solace, alienation, in betweenness, quest for identity.

Life and Literature are like flesh and blood as it reflects the emotions of every human being. In Diaspora Literature, the writers picturise the panic and anxiety of migrants who face problems in the strange land. They try to preserve their culture, their own identity without straining the culture and heritage in the host land. The early Indian immigrants try to hold their native culture without mixing with the other cultures. They are much aware of following the tradition and scare of adapt the new culture parallelly. The early immigrants attach with their ancient tradition and preserve it as their treasure. To them, their native culture is their treasure; they wish to keep it carefully throughout their life and they wish to pass on to their children. They like to preserve their customs, traditions, rituals, beliefs in the foreign land without missing at any occasion.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a celebrated Indian author by origin, daughter of Bengali parents, brought up in the United States. Her personal experiences as a daughter of immigrant parents induces her to record the emotional journey of the first, second and third generation immigrants through various characters in her works. Her early immigrants are longing for love in the unknown nations where they strictly follow their cultures, religions and try to pass on their next generations. Her short stories and novels visualize the past memories and experiences of the three generation Indian immigrants, whose struggle and quest for identity in the foreign land. Her stories mostly discuss Indian migrants and their flying visit to their native land. She well-portrays the first generation immigrants' sense of alienation and the second generation immigrants' in-betweenness both in her novels and short stories.

Lahiri as an Indian origin reflects her personal experiences as a growing child in America. The first generation immigrants from India struggle to live and they are wavering to adopt new culture, new custom, new food, and new way of life. They strongly preserve their Indian culture which is strengthened by its beliefs, ceremonies, rituals etc. They find difficult to get on easily with the American people and its culture, which lead them to be alienated. Jayaram and Atal the critics rightly say about human migration is not just a physical migration but they carry cultural attitudes, food habits and their language. Jhumpa Lahiri's novels and short stories are always connected with the immigrants' experiences particularly Bengali immigrants. Lahiri's fiction is autobiographical especially Gogol in *The Namesake* resembles her and other pen portraits of her characters are the reflections of her relations especially the father and mother, friends, kith and kin in the Bengali communities with which close to her. In Lahiri's essay *My Two Lives*, she writes of her parents who are Indians hyphenated with Indian-American identity. The inevitability of in-betweenness of her parents' culture as well as her own culture in American ways is well-portrayed in her works.

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri's debut novel, cultural conflicts play a significant role. Ashima Bhaduri moves from Calcutta to Cambridge after her marriage with Ashoke Ganguli as Ashima Ganguli. The first generation Indian immigrants of the United States follow their native culture in the new land. The conflicts arise from the clashes between their Indian heritage and the American culture they encounter. Ashima is trying to recreate the taste of Indian food to satisfy Ashoke and herself by cooking and adjusting with the new life in the new country. During her first pregnancy, no one monitors her except her husband in America where as in Calcutta she would have been surrounded by all the elderly women to assist her and console her (Dwivedi, 2012, p. 116). After delivering her son, Ashoke and Ashima are waiting for the letter to choose the respectable Bengali name unfortunately the letter does not arrive. Ashoke names his son Gogol based on his favourite Russian author Nikolai Gogol because the hospital demands them to give their son a legal name otherwise they did not allow them to leave the place. After the birth of Gogol and Sonia, they want to acquaint with other Bengali

immigrants, during the occasions like rice ceremonies, pujas, festivals and functions. They try to incorporate the Bengali culture at their home in the host land.

Ashima and Ashoke prepare traditional foods which remind them of Calcutta. But after the children grow up, they choose only the American dishes like Pizza and Burgers and they completely ignore the 'syrupy Bengali dishes'. Healthy traditional food is the choice of the parents in Indian culture where as food is the children's choice in American culture. The first generation immigrants taste their nation's food is not merely out of reminiscences but out of their respect and bonding with their nation. Ashima a dedicated wife, caring and loving mother who undergoes through the conflicts of assimilating the American culture for keeping the children happy. But she becomes a helpless mother with her children taking different paths in spite of her attempts in upbringing them. Ashima and Ashoke, the Bengali immigrants are always far away from the American lifestyle. According to Ashima, "Foreigner is also a sort of lifelong pregnancy-a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding" (Lahiri 2003, p. 49).

Ashima and Ashoke are forward looking and educated in Lahiri's characters. They are new to the Western culture (Mansing, 2012, pp. 128-129). Though they respect the new culture, they never come forward to forsake their native culture. Ashoke gives solace to Ashima who is always in deep thought of her parents, neighbours and relations. After her son Gogol's birth, her activities and thoughts entirely around her son. The child becomes centre of the life of Ashima like all Indian mothers. Both Ashima and Ashoke gradually want to acquaint with other Bengali Immigrant families and make friendship with them. They arrange different rituals like Gogol's rice ceremony 'annaprasanam' with rice with dal, vegetables, delicious dishes, cutlets, payash where as feed on 'mourner's diet' which is plainly prepared, their children's birthdays and other festivals and functions following their Bengali customs, wearing their garments in a traditional way (Islam, 2016, pp. 122-128). They try to preserve and cultivate their own culture in the new land without disturbing the host culture.

The second generation Gogol begins to search for his own identity when he grows up. He tries to ignore his parents' nation 'desi' identity. He completely identifies himself as American. He enjoys the independence of American lifestyle and he totally refuses to become a member of Bengali Community in US. Gogol resists his parents' tradition and culture because of lack of communication between the parents and the children. He behaves himself as an American; speak American language, dressing like other American teenagers, through this he wants to reveal his own individuality. His

aversion on his name increases when he grows older. He is confused about his name Nikhil Gogol, “He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian”(Lahiri 2003, p .76). Gogol faces the conflicts of respecting his family’s traditional customs and values and tries to fulfill his parents’ expectations while pursuing his own desires and individuality.

Lahiri’s first short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* contains nine stories about the lives of immigrants in the adopted land. The immigrants are caught between two worlds; the traditions of India and the values and customs of new world. Every day they encounter the problems in the host land. In this anthology, Lahiri gives a picture of the first and the second generation immigrants’ struggle to adjust with the native and new culture. Though they face such problems, the protagonists and other characters try to mingle with the new culture for the sake of their children without collapsing their heritage.

Mrs. Sen’s is one of the stories in the collection of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Mrs. Sen, a typical Bengali immigrant is a wife of Professor in America. This story depicts the condition of Mrs. Sen, a migrant from Kolkata to Boston, who always thinks about her relatives and neighborhoods. She feels homeless though she has home in Boston. She misses the close bonding of her kith and kin in the adopted land. Joint family or big family is the pride of Indian life, so she misses her family and feels alienated in the new land. Her reminiscences of her home and her proud denial of the new cultural milieu are clearly presented in the following lines;

At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone.
But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind,
whole neighborhood and half of another has come to share the news,
to help with arrangements, by then Eliot understood that when Mrs.
Sen said home, she meant India... (Lahiri 1999, p. 116)

Mrs. Sen expresses her difficulty to sleep in silence. ‘Here in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sleep in so much silence’. For Mrs. Sen ‘Everything is there’. ‘There’ refers to her Bengali Indian home and not the apartment she lives in (Kalaimathi, 2011, p. 191). The letters from her home in Bengali, fresh fish make her happy to feel at home (India). She explains one more thing that she is a baby-sitter to Eliot, an eleven year old boy. He becomes her confidant. She explains the applying vermilion on her forehead which gives a sense of security in the alien country. ‘I must wear the powder every day...for the rest of the days that I am married. Like a wedding ring...Exactly Eliot, exactly like a wedding ring.’(Lahiri 1999, p. 117)

The titular story *Interpreter of Maladies* is about a second-generation Indian couple with their three children for a tour to India from America (Sahu, 2008, p. 48). They hire a taxi and chose a guide Mr. Kapasi who takes them to Konark, the Sun temple. They look as Indians but their dress codes are as Americans. Mr. Kapasi is also an interpreter who is very curious about the Indian family with American accent. Mrs. Das, an Indo-American lady, has a secret which has been hiding herself for eight years. She reveals the secret to Mr. Kapasi, one of her sons who is not the son of Mr. Das. He is really the son of Mr. Das' Punjabi friend. Her guilt of extra marital relationship is happened due to the cultural clash. Sometimes the immigrant Indian women struggle between the two cultures. Some may carefully handle and adjust to the new culture; others may fall into prey in the unfamiliar culture.

In *The Blessed House*, Sanjeev and Twinkle is a newly wedded couple of Indian Hindu origin but Twinkle is an American brought up who is passionate on American culture. She is an ardent lover of Christian artifacts. Sanjeev hates her passion on Christian idols. He is very fond of only Indian culture though he is in America. Twinkle does not behave like a typical Indian wife what Sanjeev expects. Here religion and its values lead to cultural gap between them. Sometimes women fail to fulfill their husbands' expectations which lead to loneliness, dilemma and in-betweenness.

In another short story collection *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri throws light on the generational divide between the first generation Bengali immigrants and their American immigrant children. The early immigrants are more culture-bound than their following generations. In the story *Only Goodness*, Sudha and Rahul are a second-generation immigrant child (Dubey, 2002, p. 22). Sudha is a well balanced lady as she manages to balance between the Indian ways of life perfectly at home and enjoy the free American life outside. Her brother Rahul is not able to do so. He neither repents of his mistakes nor ashamed of his acts. He becomes a downfall young man because of his excessive intake of alcohol. His parents feel for his failure. He finds difficult to live in-between two cultures. Rahul wants to enjoy the offers like opportunities, education and the free life of America. He takes only the advantage of America but never contributes to the country as well his parents. He does not want to identify his parental way of life but want to identify himself only in the American way. Identity for teenagers is s complicated one in the foreign country. The Indian immigrant parents want their children to live cosy and comfy life selecting best schools, prestigious job but the children enjoy the free American life.

Unaccustomed Earth, another short story collection carries the same conflict of class and culture. It deals with the destiny of the second and the third generation immigrants. These two generations are brought up and bonding with American culture. Lahiri also presented the efforts of three generations of a Bengali family to take roots in America. The title story *Unaccustomed Earth* is about the first generation Indian immigrant settlers, who are in their past traditions. Though they

try to assimilate into the new culture, they keep on maintaining their bond with their ancestral land and its values and morals. In 2008, Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* Frank O' Connor award winning collection, being the best collection of eight stories examining different aspects of the experiences of Bengali immigrants. This collection of eight stories divided into two parts carry the same conflict of class and culture. The first section comprises of five different stories such as *Unaccustomed Earth, Hell-Heaven, A Choice of Accommodations, Only Goodness* and *Nobody's Business*. The second section comprise three stories under the title Hema and Kaushik: *Once in a Life Time, Years End* and *Going Ashore* tragic love story of two young Indian Americans. All the eight stories focus on rejuvenate the love of two young Indian Americans, complexities among the members of Bengali family in America.

Unaccustomed Earth is about three generations, and the relationships among them, the father, his daughter Ruma and her son Akash. In this story, the first generation Bengali migrants settled in America with their children Ruma and Romi. Their mother always gel with her Indian roots. Ruma's mother is a typical Bengali mother who follows the tradition without convincing. She raises her two children in America but in Indian way. She speaks to them exclusively in Bengali, she prepares customary Indian food and she wears only saris to follow the Indian tradition. In this way, she always connects herself with Indian way of life. She is much worried about Ruma's dress codes, she prefers only pants and skirts to saris. She fears that this is a sign of losing Indian values. She tries to make Ruma to follow Indian culture but she finds it very difficult to follow. Being an Indian woman, her head bows only to socio-cultural norms, ethics and her sincerity always lies on performing her duties as a wife and mother, and tries to pass on her culture and language to her children permanently. When Ruma's mother accompanies her husband in an alien shore for his carrier development, she is physically uprooted from her native, transplanted in a new land. But she does not accept herself to re-root in the host land.

Ruma reminds of her mother's opposition to marry an American lawyer named Adam. Her reaction to Ruma's decision to marry Adam is an expected one like others who react in India. Her mother opines that the interracial marriage finally leads to marital disharmony and cultural differences. She feels that her Indian values and identity is root out by her own daughter through the interracial marriage. Her anger reflects on the words 'you are ashamed of yourself, of being Indian that is the bottom line' (Lahiri 1999, p. 26). Hence, Ruma's mother is a witness of typical Indian cultural lover who cannot easily accept the morals, values being degenerated by the young generation in the name of modernity. Finally, Ruma is married to Adam and they have a young son, named Akash who was 'turning into the sort of American child' (Lahiri 1999, 23). After the demise of her mother, she calls her father whose scheduled visit gives a good company to her three years old son Akash. Her father's company changes Akash more cultured, civilized, starts to eat Bengali food and tries to

speak Bengali language. The second generation Ruma notices how the third generation Akash mingles with her first generation father.

In *Hell-Heaven*, Pranab, an Indian immigrant who has moved to America for his higher studies. He tolerates all the inconveniences in the host country for his prosperous future. Initially he prefers Bengali way of life in America. Later his marriage with an American girl Deborah against his parents' wishes which alienates him from the Indian culture. Even his twin daughters bring up in the American life style and they celebrate American festivals instead of Indian festivals. On the whole, Pranab has lost his identity and individuality. In *A Choice of Accommodation*, Amit, a Bengali who studied in America and after married American Megan five years older than him. A busy doctor Megan has a tight schedule and Amit has showered love and care for their daughters Maya and Monika. In his school days he felt homesick for 'he sought traces of his parents' faces and voices among the people who surrounded and cared for him, but there was absolutely nothing, no one at Langford to remind him of them'. It is one of the pitiable conditions of immigrant students and youngsters in America. Amit missed the company and care of his parents throughout his teenage life. His bitter experience makes him not to leave his daughters and always very close to them.

The independence of the American society spoils the lives of Rahul and Sudha in *Only Goodness*. Their parents are Bengali immigrants who settled in America. The first generation is always loyal to their native land whereas the second generation forcibly far off themselves from their parents and shun off their native culture. The parents want to get success not only in their life but they want their children also get good opportunities and success in their life. But they follow American lifestyles like the secret of drinking alcohol, dating, choosing their partners etc. Sudha leads a dual life while her brother Rahul becomes a drunkard and pushes the family in shame. The parents could not endure and very much disappointed because of their children's attitude. Lahiri's focus is mainly on the two generation immigrants such as the gap between Indian parents and American children. They want their kids and upcoming generation to imbibe Indian virtues, morals and traditions even when they are far from India. According to Uma Parameswaran, a literary critic says that the reason for the difference in responses between the generations is because of the contradictory ideas about the word 'home'. For the first generation immigrants 'home' can never be any other place but India, but for their second-generation children 'home' is the place of their birth and upbringing and not their parent's native land.

Cultural Alienation and dislocation skilled through the immigrants have constantly been a regular issue to encounter, of individuals who are always in-between the own country and the alien country, its cultures and its languages. Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to 'neo-elegance of immigrants' has reached as a trend setter of bicultural reviews. Thus, cross-cultural

reviews suggest the consciousness, identities and cultural assimilation. *The Lowland* is a comprehensive, enthusiastic story that examines the political and the personal scenario, almost of fifty years Indian and American immigrant families' records. The story is taken place at Tollygunge in Calcutta. The story begins with the introduction of two brothers-Subhash and Udayan. Subhash is fifteen months elder to Udayan. They are inseparable and always connected to one another. The ponds in the area characterize these two brothers. When they receive excess water in the wet season, they seem as an unmarried oblong pond, however while in the summer season, the water evaporates and it seems to be smaller and separate entities. Similarly, the two brothers are like the condition of the pond but their mindset is same. As they have grown up, they show their interests on subjects which may differ. While Udayan is interested in Physics, Subhash's interest is at Chemistry. Later, Subhash receives a scholarship for Physics in USA.

As an Indian college student, Udayan worried about the background of Naxalite movement. This movement is commenced in Sixties from Naxalbari, a village in which the labourers without lands took up their palms in opposition to the landlords. Udayan has become a staunch supporter of the notion of radical Marxism. He might participate in the party, distribute cloth and assist with some violent acts for the state. In the mean time, Udayan attracted towards Gauri whose residence is very near to his university. After that Manash, brother of Gauri has become the friend of Udayan. Thus, Gauri comes close with Udayan and Udayan closes to the Naxalite movement. Unfortunately, Udayan is shot by the police in an encounter. With hard heartedly Subhash arrives India to participate in the final ceremony of his brother.

Lahiri's latest novel *The Lowland* visualizes the cultural estrangement and inner battle confronted through the protagonist, Subhash. It delves into the immigrant experience; the characters encounter in adapting a new culture while trying to retain their cultural identity. Gauri, Udayan's wife becomes widow. After his death, Subhash decides to marry his widowed sister-in-law to avoid the ill treatment of his family and the society. He takes Gauri to the U.S and there she gives birth to Udayan's baby daughter, Bela. Cultural expectations come into conflict in the life of Gauri; Udayan's widow wife faces the challenge of balancing her Indian traditions and independence available to her as an immigrant in America. After Udayan's death, Subhash marries Gauri with his brother's daughter. He offers her American life but Gauri deviates from her responsibilities as a wedded spouse and caring mother to her daughter Bela. Gauri's passion and enchanting arise from American dress codes. The yards of silk sari have been certainly hard to maintain as Gauri turned into a sophisticated level of pregnancy. And also she appreciated the manner of American girls dressed themselves. As expected, she scissors her saris, undergarments and blouses changed like American clothes and hair dress, without discussing her interests with Subhash (Faiez, 2016, 83-88). Later she gave birth to a baby daughter, she wants a baby sitter to her daughter Bela, but

Subhash desires to bring up his daughter in Indian manner of life, should be under the parents' protection, But Gauri has imbibed American craze for individuality and never comes to compromise herself.

After analysis one can come to the conclusion that Lahiri's short stories and novels are based on Indian immigrants who suffer in the foreign soil. Her immigrants encounter various problems like the loss of identities, cultural dilemmas, insecurity, isolation etc. Her stories much focus on the importance of human relationship, home and homelessness, cultural strife rather political and racial issues. As Kadam Mansing says, "Lahiri deals with a multicultural society both from 'inside' and 'outside', seeking to find her native identity as well as a new identity in the adopted country. This brings a clash of culture and dislocation and displacement."

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The Mughal State, Merchants and the English Company: Unveiling a triangular relationship

Ishfaq Ahmad Baba

ABSTRACT

The early modern period (1350-1750) occupies an important place in the history of trade and commerce not only in India but throughout the world. In case of India, the early modern period witnessed the expansion of the India's foreign trade both the overland trade and the overseas trade. Indigenous merchants and the various European Companies were the main vehicle of this expansion in India's foreign trade. Besides these important developments, the commercial scenario of India during this period also saw an increase in the competition because of the growing number of merchants and traders. Of the several European Companies, the English East India Company was a prominent one. Once the Company started its commercial operations in India, it influenced the mercantile milieu of India in several ways. As a well organised joint-stock Company, it not only proved to be a competitor for the Indian merchants but also forced the Mughal state to intervene in the commercial affairs with an increased intensity. As the Company expanded its commercial operations, a complex relationship developed among the Indian merchants, the English Company and the Mughal state. This paper deals with this triangular relationship and its various aspects.

Key Words: Company, Commercial, English, Mughal, State, Merchants, Relationship, Triangular, Trade.

Introduction

There has been a tendency among the historians to analyse and explore the relationship between the Mughal state and the English Company and between the English Company and the Indian merchants as something uncompromising and hostile (Stewart, 1813; pp. 312, 326, 344). While

this may hold true for several events, this relationship had certainly yet another aspect which kept the three sides knit together closely with each other.

Discussion

The state certainly came to the rescue of the merchants to the extent it could and provided them protection, while at the same time it did not go too far in alienating the English Company. This was visible as early as 1618-19, when the English Company was about to start its commercial enterprise in Asia and tried to interfere in the trade between Surat and Red Sea ports (Foster (Letters, VI), 1902, p. 176). Since the Indian merchants were the main group involved in this branch of trade, they resisted this interference on the part of the Company (Foster (Factories, II), 1907, p. 54). Later when the issue was brought into the notice of the authorities, a *nishan* (an official order issued by royal prince) was issued by authorities (by Prince Khurram) giving a stern warning to the English Company asking it, not to interfere in this branch of the trade. The Company was also asked not to bring Coral to India since it was profitable trading commodity in which the Indian merchants were trading (ibid).

However this policy of warnings and prohibitions did not last long once it was realised that the new commercial group could be useful as a revenue generating means. Instead there were attempts to woo the merchants towards the ports and commercial centres (Foster (Letters, IV) 1900, pp. 142-3, 233). The same *nishan* issued in favour of indigenous merchants ensured that the English should be, allowed to sell the Coral which they had already unloaded at Surat. The *nishan* also directed the port authorities to provide a suitable place to the English for habitation and other purposes (Hasan, 1985, pp. 333-4). The port officials were also asked to make the customs assessment on the English merchandise as soon as they landed on the Indian soil. Finally the *nishan* allowed the English to export any commodity from India (ibid).

Soon after entering the Indian commercial world, the Company established factories at important places such as Surat, Ahmadabad, Baroda, Cambay, Agra etc. (Nadri, 2018, p. 129). It was from these factories that the Company could access the hinterlands and production centres where a variety of commodities which were procured by the Company, were produced. In order to operate successfully, the services and functions of the Indian brokers, merchants and bankers were indispensable (ibid). In fact there were some families which served the

Company for several decades and the services of these families performed a vital role in the evolution and strengthening of the European commercial enterprise in India (Foster V, 1911, 169; Foster VII, 1913, pp. 21, 61). Similarly the support of the imperial government and local Mughal officials was equally important. In return these officials were well aware of the fact of that English Company is an important source of gold and silver imports as well as the customs from import and export (Nadri, op. cit. p. 129), besides their personal fortunes in the form of gifts, bribes etc.

Although the amount of customs and other dues collected from the Company was not as much as compared to the Indian merchants but nevertheless the services it (the Company) offered to the merchants in the form of freight services and protection were well appreciated by the Mughal administration. Since the protection offered by the English on seas to the merchants had a direct effect on the commercial revenues of the Mughals, Emperor Jahangir issued a *farman* (official order issued by the Emperor) in which he thanked the English for such services as well as a subsequent enhancement in the customs (*hasil*) (Hasan, 1990, p. 277). In a similar instance the English were granted, a *parwana* (an official order issued by any noble or provincial governor) by Aga Mohammad Zaman, the governor of Orissa, which provided them certain concessions (Foster X, 1921, pp. 21, 61). In return the English were expected to provide all possible help and protection to the *nawab* and his vessels including the vessels of his subjects in case there was any kind of danger or threat artificial or natural (Wilson, 1895, 10-11) . So both the Mughal state and the English Company looked upon each other not as enemies but something that could be utilised for the respective benefits.

That the Mughal state viewed the English Company along with the other European Companies as an important commercial player is indicated by the large number of orders and *farman*'s which were issued from time to time in order to address the various issues and problems of the Company. From 1613-1712, a large number of *farman*'s, *nishan*'s and *parwana*'s were issued in favour of the English Company by the successive governors and officials of Bengal (Foster VIII, 1914, p. 320: Foster IX, 1915, xxvi: Foster X, op. cit. pp. 411-16). To what extent these orders possessed legal and imperial sanction is a matter of dispute (Stewart, op.cit. pp. 251-52: Chaudhury, 1975, pp. 28-32) but these orders certainly show that the provincial Mughal officials were ready to extend their helping hand to the Company, while at the same time, these officials made their own fortunes by granting such *parwana*'s and privileges to the Company.

Mughal governors like Shuja, one of the sons of Shahjahan is said to have shown special interest in the growth of the Company's trade in India (Foster IX op. cit., xxviii). In 1656, he issued a *nishan* directing the officials to refrain from committing any type of harassment against the English and not to unnecessarily hamper the English trade in the region (ibid).

There were several Mughal officials who carried trade with the Red Sea ports and other regions. These officials viewed the Companies as competitors and sometimes used their own political influence in order to control the activities of the Companies. As such actions were fraught with conflicting tendencies; these actions could not last long (Nadri, op. cit. p. 130). In 1622, when the English were not allowed to trade in Baroda, the Company's broker Tapidas offered to help the Company by securing the permission from the Mughal authorities. In case he failed he assured the Company that, he would supply them secretly the required merchandise (Foster II, op. cit. p. 20). Likewise the officials during the 20's and 30's of the 17th century tried to establish a complete monopoly on the indigo trade in north India. This monopolistic policy was resisted by the English Company and later a settlement was reached out between the two sides. However in the making of the settlement and allowing the Company to trade in indigo, the Indian brokers and merchants who were working for the Company played a central role (ibid).

In the relationship between the state and the Company, the Indigenous merchants enjoyed almost a central position. The merchants not only worked in partnership with the English Company for a long period of time but also played an important role in various negotiations and agreements which took place between the two sides. For example, Benidas who was one of the important merchants of Surat during the 17th century and also served as the broker of the English Company during 1640's and 70's played an important role in the negotiations between the English and Shivaji (Nadri, 2012, p. 226).

One of the merchants who dominated the commercial scene of Gujarat and was key player of the important negotiations between state and merchants was Virji Vohra/Vora. Besides being one of the principal buyers of the English products such as Coral and lead and providing loans to the English (Foster I, op. cit. p. 114; Foster IV, op. cit. pp. 301-02...) he was part of several agreements and negotiations which involved the Merchants, state and the English Company. In 1650, the English were worried and frustrated about, to whom Malabari merchants they should give passes, since they (English) sometimes gave passes to pirates presuming them to be merchants. In order to overcome this issue, the English asked the governor of Surat to

nominate to them (the English), only those Malabari merchants who were known to Virji Vora (Foster VIII op. cit. p. 331). In this case Virji was used as an intermediary as well as a guarantor by port authorities/state for the English in their dealings with the Malabari merchants. (ibid) In 1656, he along with another merchant Zahid Beg, advanced a loan of rupees 500,000 on behalf of the merchants of Surat to prince Murad, when the later was about to enter the war of succession which took place among the sons of Shahjahan (Pearson, 1976, pp. 126-7). Again in 1664, he was one of the three merchants of Surat to whom Shivaji presented his demands for ransom (ibid). Similarly Kasi Verenna, a Komati merchant played crucial role in the negotiations between the English Company and the ruler of Golconda which ultimately helped the English to secure a *farman* from the ruler of Golconda in 1676. There were several other occasions when Kasi Verenna, used his influence and even money to end the conflict between two groups and stabilising the relationship between the local ruler and the Company (Love, 1913, pp. 90-1, 364, 353, 391-2).

In 1623-4, Emperor Jahangir took a stern action against the English by imposing restrictions on the English persons, activities and properties across the dominion of the Empire. It was done in the backdrop of the use of the arms by the English against the merchants of Surat (Foster III, 1909, vi-viii). The English had used arms as a retaliatory action against the alleged harassment to which they were subjected by the port authorities (ibid. vi-vii). Peace was restored only after the conclusion of an agreement between the English and the Surat port authorities in September 1624. Among the signatories and those who negotiated the agreement between the two sides, Virji Vora was the most influential person besides, other prominent merchants (ibid, pp. 27-30).

During the 60's of the 17th century, there were several events and developments which again showed how much intricately the three sides i.e. the State, Company and the merchants were connected with each other. In 1661, there was a dispute between the English and the governor of Surat Mustafa Khan over some debt related issue. As a result of the dispute some of the Company's officials were put behind the bars. The dispute was finally solved after prolonged negotiations between the English and the *Shahbandar* (harbour master) and the chief merchants of the city acted as intermediary (Foster XI, 1923, pp. 12-13). In the very next year, the English again felt that they were being oppressed and exploited by the governor and threatened to leave the port forever. This raised the fears among the merchants as the English expulsion from the port would have meant a great loss to them. Hence they brought the issue into the notice of

governor (ibid. pp. 99-103). Later negotiations took place between the English officials and the Merchants, who represented the state. During the negotiations the English were given certain concessions and were assured of better behaviour in the future from the governor's side (ibid).

The Surman embassy of 1715 is one of the best examples which highlight the triangular nature of this relationship. The embassy, which was dispatched from Bengal in 1715 to Delhi in order to secure a royal *farman* from the imperial authorities, had Khoja Sarhaud Isreal (an Armenian merchant tycoon) as one of its members (Wilson, op.cit. xiii-xiv). As is well known the embassy secured a *farman* from imperial authorities giving certain concessions to the English. However what is important is the fact that Khoja Sarhaud was made a part of the mission on account of his political and commercial influence (ibid).

The series of conflicts which took place between the Mughal state and the English and the subsequent negotiations showed the limited extent to which either of the sides could go in alienating the other two sides. For example as early as 1619, the English captured a Sindhi ship, since it contained a Portuguese pass and at that time England was at war with Portugal. Besides this, the English also confiscated some of the cargo of the ship which belonged to the Indian merchants (Foster II, op. cit., xvii-vxiii). With the English refusal to pay the compensation, the matter was taken to the imperial court. Consequently the English were made to pay and the English officials at Agra were imprisoned (ibid). The events of 1623-4 have already been mentioned. During the events of 1623-4, the merchants of Gujarat negotiated with the English on the side of the Mughal authorities (ibid, xviii-xix: Foster III, op.cit v-viii, pp. 27-30). On both these occasions none of the sides went too far and both the sides thought it better to end the conflict as soon as possible.

Similarly during the hostilities of 1886-90 which was the result of some exploitative and retaliatory measures (English embargo on the Red Sea Trade, pillaging of the Indian ships, Aurangzeb's attempt at raising more revenue from the commerce) from both the sides and which effected the merchants, the English and the Mughals could not go far as it could have proved fatal for both. (Hasan, 1991, pp. 359-60). For English a complete displacement from the dominion of the Mughals would have meant a massive blow to their commercial enterprise in India. On the other hand for Aurangzeb, the complete withdrawal of English would have meant the loss of only checks which he was having against the English high-handedness on the high seas (ibid.).

This triangular nature of the relationship was visible even in the tactics which were used during the various conflicts which took place between the European powers and the Mughal state. Whenever the two sides i.e. the English and the Mughals resorted to use of force and naval blockade, the timing of the blockade was chosen very carefully in order to ensure that the Company's own ships as well as those of the Indian merchants did not miss the voyage (Chaudhury, 1978, p. 125). This was so because the mediation of the local merchants was essential in reaching out any settlement. Also the intensity of pressure exerted by the merchants on the port authorities was there, as long as the merchants believed that they could yet retrieve the trading season (ibid, p. 126).

On the basis of the large number of *nishan*'s, and *parwans*'s which were issued in favour of the Company by the provincial governors and princes and the concessions granted there in, we may presume that some sort of an undefined and nebulous alliance existed between the Company and the provincial officials, though the alliance was not free of contradictions and frictional elements (Hasan, op.cit. pp. 351-56). In order to encourage the Company to invest in their respective regions as well as to promote their own commercial interests (as a large number of nobles and princes invested in trade during the 17th century), the provincial officials were ever ready to go to the highest possible extent (ibid.). For this purpose they sometimes were ready to heave the imperial orders in favour of the English Company. This was precisely the point highlighted by Joseph Hall, the English chief at Balasore in 1669 and later in 1674 by a report of Court of Committee (Chaudhury, op.cit. pp. 32-33).

Historians have often argued that the English settlements in India were based on some sort of an agreement with the Mughal court, where in the Mughal authorities allowed the English to set up their factories in India, provided them concessions and exemptions, protection etc. It has also been argued that the port officials who were regularly transferred, treated these foreign merchants including the English as the '*milch cows*' demanding from them (merchants) illegal dues and cesses which were prohibited by the imperial court, fixing the prices of merchandise arbitrarily, purchasing their merchandise at low prices, establishing monopolies in several items etc. (Moreland, 1923; Bhattacharya, 1969, pp. 10-68) While this may hold true to a lot of situations and cases but there are numerous contradictory references and instances available in the contemporary English and Persian sources which tell us that it was not as simple and one

sided as we are made to believe (Hasan, op.cit. pp. 351-52). All the three sides were well aware of the benefits which could result from mutual cooperation and understanding.

Conclusion

This brief overview of this triangular relationship clearly indicates that in spite of the occasional conflicts and violence, the three sides worked and cooperated with each other to a great extent. Further this relationship was not dominated by any single group, be it the English Company, the Mughal state or even for that matter the Indian merchants. Instead all the three sides had their moments of triumph and retreat as far as the nature and functioning of this relationship is concerned. While the Mughal state tried to ensure that an equally common competing field is provided to all, the indigenous merchants provided invaluable service to the Company in various forms. The English Company on its side provided avenues to merchants for making fortunes and for the Mughal state the Company was a custom generating body, just like other merchants. Thus the mutual services and functions kept the three sides closely knit together despite the occasional conflicts and hostilities. It was relationship which was characterised by competition, cooperation, interdependence and sometimes conflict.

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Village Vistas and City Chronicles: Rural-Urban Lifestyle Perspectives

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Abstract

This research paper examines the theme of Provincial Life as depicted in the literary works of renowned authors Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. Drawing upon a comparative literature approach, the study aims to explore the distinctive qualities and nuances of small-town living as opposed to metropolitan existence. The research objectives of this paper include: 1) analysing the portrayal of rural life and its inhabitants in the selected works of Munro and Bond, 2) investigating the cultural and societal influences on individuals' lifestyles in small communities, 3) examining the representation of natural surroundings and their impact on the characters' experiences, and 4) exploring the similarities and differences between rural and urban lifestyles as depicted by the two authors. The research is supported by an extensive review of scholarly articles and critical analyses that delve into the subject of provincial life. Through a comprehensive analysis of Munros and Bond's works, this research paper aims to shed light on the captivating allure of small-town living, the challenges faced by individuals in rural settings, and the profound influence of local society and natural surroundings on shaping their lives. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities and richness of provincial life as portrayed in literature.

Key words: Provincial Life, Small-town dynamics, urban lifestyle, Alice Munro, Ruskin Bond

Introduction

Provincial life holds significant importance in the fabric of society, as it represents a distinct way of living that is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, community values, and a connection to nature. The charm of provincial life lies in its simplicity, slower pace, and strong sense of community, where individuals are closely knit and rely on one another for support and companionship. Small communities offer a unique setting where traditions, customs, and shared experiences shape the lives of their inhabitants. The portrayal of provincial life in literature allows readers to explore the intricacies of these communities, offering glimpses into their idiosyncrasies, struggles, and triumphs. Through literary works, such as those by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, the essence of provincial life is captured, inviting readers to delve into the nuances of small-town dynamics, the relationships that flourish within such settings, and the impact of the local society and natural surroundings on the lives of its inhabitants. Understanding and appreciating provincial life not only enriches our literary landscape but also provides valuable insights into the human experience and the diverse tapestry of cultures that exist within society.

This research aims to address several key questions regarding the portrayal of provincial life in literature, specifically focusing on the works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. The research questions include: 1) How do Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond depict the complexities and subtleties of small-town life in their respective works? 2) What similarities and differences can be observed in their portrayal of small-town dynamics? 3) How do these authors explore the unique qualities and challenges associated with living in small communities? 4) What insights can be gained from their examination of provincial life in terms of societal norms, relationships, and individual experiences? 5) To what extent do the local society and natural surroundings

shape the lives of characters in their works? By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of the representation of provincial life in literature and provide valuable insights into the nuances of small-town dynamics as depicted by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond.

Unraveling the Writing Styles of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond: A Comparative Perspective

The natural environment plays a significant role in shaping the settings of the short stories written by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. Both authors have gained renown for their exploration of the human condition through their respective collections of short stories. Alice Munro, a Canadian writer, is recognized for her narratives that delve into the intricacies of human relationships, particularly within small-town and rural contexts. Munro's writing has been credited with revolutionizing the structure of short stories, as she brings a modest and subtly witty approach to her work, which is often attributed to her upbringing in rural Canada (Bosman, 2013). On the other hand, Ruskin Bond, an Indian author, has established himself as a versatile writer across various genres, including short stories, novels, and poetry, all of which are set in the majestic Himalayan region of India. Bond's short stories specifically aim to convey his deep appreciation for the natural world and inspire readers to develop a love for nature's untamed beauty (Beniwal, 2021, p. 117). Both Munro and Bond are celebrated for their simple yet profound writing styles, as well as their ability to capture the intricacies and splendor of ordinary life.

The thematic interests of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond serve as distinctive features that set them apart. Munro's stories delve into complex subjects such as memory, identity, and gender roles. Her fiction offers readers insights into the intricate processes of life, portraying the trials

and occasional triumphs that individuals experience as they transition from childhood to maturity. Munro's particular focus lies in exploring the lives of women and the challenges they face in navigating relationships and societal expectations. In contrast, Bond's works often revolve around the simple pleasures of life, highlighting themes such as the joys of friendship, the beauty of nature, and the enchantment of childhood. His tales celebrate the resilience and resourcefulness of children who must confront the world on their own terms. Bond's extensive collection of charming short stories and introspective novels has garnered international acclaim, covering a wide range of topics including cross-cultural dimensions of Indian society, unrequited love, and the power and beauty of nature (Fatma, 2013, p. 1). Another similarity between Munro and Bond lies in their approach to character development. Both authors place emphasis on the inner lives of their characters as they navigate challenging circumstances, creating believable and relatable individuals. Renowned for their captivating narrative styles, Munro and Bond bring their characters to life, captivating readers with their storytelling prowess. Their narrative styles are similar in the following ways:

Realism: Both Munro and Bond share a strong commitment to depicting life honestly, without embellishment or sensationalism. Their writings revolve around ordinary individuals, their struggles, and experiences that resonate with readers. Munro's realism is grounded in her philosophical insights, moral sensibility, dialectical thinking, and versatile narrative style. Through her works, she offers a nuanced portrayal of life's complexities (Geng, 2022, p. 1). Similarly, Bond captures the essence of the Himalayan foothills, including locations like Dehradun, Mussoorie, and Shimla, with such authenticity that readers can readily identify with the sorrows, joys, simple lifestyles, and hardships depicted. His writings provide a gateway to the enchanting and mysterious world of hills, forests, and the diverse array of animals that

inhabit them (Dhibar, 2017, p. 774). Both authors prioritize realism as a means of connecting with readers, offering genuine glimpses into the human experience and the natural world.

Regionalism: Munro and Bond place a significant emphasis on highlighting the unique culture, traditions, and customs of specific regions in their writings. Through vivid descriptions of the environment, local inhabitants, and social structures, they enable readers to visualize and engage with the stories on a deeper level. Munro's fiction thrives on the fertile soil of regionalism, drawing vitality from the regional landscape, particularly in her stories set in Huron County. The narrator in her works serves as the conduit through which the world is articulated, capturing the essence of the regional experience (Sinha & Kumar, 2022, p. 135). Similarly, Bond's writings have been lauded for their portrayal of the life in the hills he calls home. Considered by some as a "regional writer," Bond realistically represents rural life in Garhwal, shedding light on various social issues prevalent in the hills (Saklani, 2016, p. 23). Both authors skilfully incorporate regional elements into their narratives, offering readers a glimpse into the distinctiveness of these settings and the people who inhabit them.

Characterization: Munro and Bond demonstrate exceptional skill in crafting captivating characters. They intricately design individuals who possess a combination of flaws, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Through profound exploration of their characters' inner lives, they delve into their motivations, aspirations, and inner conflicts. Munro's talent lies in creating characters characterized by eccentric individualism, capturing their complexities and authenticity. Her writing evokes a sense of completeness and verisimilitude, particularly in her vivid portrayals of the past. As an intuitive writer, Munro prioritizes clarity and truthfulness over formal considerations (Mambrol, 2023). Similarly, Bond's literary world centres around the lives of the poor and middle-class individuals. His genius is evident in the originality and naturalness

with which he brings his characters to life. In his stories, readers encounter not mere words on paper, but vibrant worlds inhabited by genuinely breathing and living people (Geetu Saini & Dr. Yashpal, 2013, p. 44). Both authors excel in the art of characterization, presenting readers with richly developed individuals who resonate with authenticity and captivate the imagination.

Subtlety: Munro and Bond employ a subtle approach in their writing, refraining from providing all the information to readers upfront. Instead, they utilize symbols, metaphors, and subtle hints to convey their intended messages. Their narratives often remain open-ended, allowing for individual interpretation and the exercise of creative license. **Language:** Both authors employ a style of writing characterized by its simplicity and evocativeness. Through their use of straightforward language, they create a clear and vivid mental image for readers. They skilfully employ imagery, metaphors, and similes to enhance the reader's understanding and immersion in the narrative.

In conclusion, Ruskin Bond and Alice Munro are both accomplished authors who possess a remarkable ability to capture the nuances of the human experience. However, their writing styles and thematic interests diverge. Bond's writing exhibits a gentle and evocative quality, celebrating the joys found in the Himalayan region and the simple pleasures of life. On the other hand, Munro's prose is characterized by its precision and understatement, delving into emotionally challenging landscapes. Despite these differences, both authors excel in their craft, offering unique perspectives on the complexities of human existence.

Contrasting Rural Charm with Urban Hustle in the Short Stories of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond

Munro's concise yet rich narratives highlight the virtues of rural life. However, these descriptions are not one-sided, as they also present the merits of different environments. It is

argued that Munro's rhetorical technique, which provides a multifaceted view of the countryside by acknowledging its advantages and disadvantages, strengthens the overall positive perception of rural living. By contrasting the images of country and city life, Munro reveals that there exists a divide between the two lifestyles that can be challenging to bridge (Naddi, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, Ruskin Bond also favours the portrayal of rural life in his short stories. He frequently presents a preference for the countryside and depicts city life as mechanical and monotonous. Bond skilfully incorporates elements of dreams and social observations to uncover the true essence of reality in his narratives. The settings of his stories and dreams often involve hilltops, mountains, riverbanks, valleys, or villages. The characters in his stories are often superstitious villagers or individuals connected to nature. These narratives carry profound messages that remain relevant in our contemporary times (Bawane, 2018, p. 655).

In Alice Munro's short stories, the theme of small-town life versus city life is explored, with the story "The Progress of Love" particularly highlighting the contrasting experiences of the sisters, Marietta and Beryl. Marietta embraces the simplicity and charm of small-town life, while Beryl is drawn to the allure of sophisticated city living. The narrative emphasizes their divergent perspectives, as Beryl is portrayed as unique and unconventional in her outlook: "Beryl was strange in every way— everything about her was slanted, seen from a new angle" (Munro, 1996, PL 22). The differences between the sisters extend to their attitudes towards their father's second marriage. While Marietta disapproves of the idea, Beryl approaches it with practicality and indifference. Their respective lifestyles have been shaped by their surroundings, with Marietta residing in Netterfield county, a small-town setting, and Beryl residing in California, renowned for its urban elegance. When Beryl suggests dining out at a hotel, a common practice in city life for family gatherings, Marietta expresses disapproval and

prefers homemade meals. Furthermore, Marietta values simplicity and love, reflecting the mindset of small-town residents, whereas Beryl prioritizes social status and wealth, embodying the influence of city life.

The theme of small-town life versus city life, particularly focusing on the qualities associated with small-town living, is explored in the short story “Haven” through the characters of Jasper and Dawn. Dawn embodies the archetypal small-town woman, as her life revolves around her husband: “Dawn’s life is devoted to her husband” (Munro, 2013, DL 112). She has willingly surrendered her life to Jasper’s control. Jasper, in turn, embodies the typical traits of a small-town individual. He restricts his wife from befriending neighbours, insists on her taking care of all household chores, and maintains strict standards of cleanliness within the house. While outside the house, Jasper assumes a different persona, as he is a renowned doctor and a sociable figure within the community. Dawn obediently follows her husband’s instructions, performing all the tasks assigned to her and even refraining from eating until her husband has left the house. When their neighbours extend an invitation to attend a concert together, Jasper dismisses the idea, considering concerts and parties as extravagant displays of wealth and social status. Dawn, never voicing her own opinions, complies with her husband’s wishes, providing Jasper with full control over her life. This narrative highlights the reality that men continue to exploit women in various societies, irrespective of cultural or historical differences. Alice Munro captures this aspect of reality in her short stories. (Anitha S, 2020, p. 62)

The short story “The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink” explores the theme of contrasts between small-town life and city life, specifically focusing on job opportunities and discipline. The characters Sam and Edgar engage in acrobatics, inspired by the performances they have witnessed in circuses and on the streets. Motivated by their passion, they leave their home and settle in a boarding house, where the head of the house, Miss Kernaghan, has established a set

of rules that must be followed for residents to live there. These rules include abstaining from alcohol and cigarettes, refraining from using disrespectful language or displaying bad attitudes, and not eating in their rooms. Miss Kernaghan asserts, “No drinking, no smoking, no bad language or bad morals” (Munro, 1996, PL 135). Her character exemplifies the disciplined nature often associated with small-town life. Despite the limited job opportunities available in small towns compared to cities, Sam and Edgar perform acrobatics on the streets of Gallagher town, their small-town residence, in order to earn a living. Although the income from their performances may be modest, they find satisfaction in the money they earn. It is evident that economic exploitation persists in societies influenced by patriarchal oppression. Alice Munro is aware of this fact and she continuously presents such exploitations in her works as part of her mission to portray the intricacies of small-town life. (Boynton, 1979, p. 33)

Similarly, the short story “Miles City, Montana” explores the theme of small-town versus city life, specifically addressing the impact of technology and the affection for small-town living. The narrator in this story yearns to return to her small-town roots after living in the bustling city of Vancouver, which signifies her deep attachment to her hometown. As a result, the narrator plans a trip back to her small-town with her husband and children when her husband is granted a twenty-day holiday. The itinerary involves five days of travel to reach their destination, ten days spent in the small-town, and five days for the return journey (Munro, 1996, PL 87). The fact that the narrator's husband rarely receives time off from work underscores the common reality in cities where work takes precedence over other aspects of life, such as family and leisure time. During their travels, the narrator's daughter relies on a paper map for navigation, a contrast to the prevalent use of digital mapping tools like Google Maps in contemporary times. As they journey, the narrator and her family experience the

discomfort of the heat, prompting the narrator to yearn for the cool and serene environment of her small-town, characterized by its lush trees, blooming flowers, mountains, and lakes.

The short story “Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd” explores the dichotomy between small-town life and city life through the themes of marriage and the gifts received by the two protagonists. Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd, long-time friends who married at a young age and had multiple children, exemplify the typical characteristics of small-town life. In small towns, early marriages and large families are common societal norms. Despite having several children to care for them, both women find themselves residing in an old age home. Interestingly, their children’s gifts reflect the differences between small-town and city life. Mrs. Cross receives ornaments, images, and pillows, reflecting the sentimental value placed on material possessions in small-town culture. In contrast, Mrs. Kidd, an avid reader, is given books, symbolizing the intellectual pursuits often associated with city life. The themes of marriage and gift-giving serve as vivid illustrations of the contrasting aspects of small-town and city living.

The short story “Passion” skilfully explores the dichotomy between small-town and city life, vividly exemplified through the character of Grace. In her interactions with Maury, Grace frequently attends movies, but she finds herself dissatisfied with the portrayal of the protagonist. Through this comparison, Alice Munro highlights the contrasting experiences of the affluent city woman and the financially constrained small-town girl. Despite having all her material needs met, the wealthy character, played by Elizabeth Taylor, yearns for more. In contrast, Grace, limited by her lack of resources, works as a waitress to afford her college tuition. It is not wrath that Grace feels towards the character, but rather envy. Grace recognizes that she cannot emulate Elizabeth’s appearance, as society and men have certain expectations of women—to be beautiful, cherished, pampered, selfless, and devoid of intelligence. As a small-town girl, Grace aspires to a life of affluence and happiness in the city, but she faces

financial constraints, as small-town jobs typically offer lower pay. Small-town communities often expect women to prioritize marriage and child-rearing over pursuing their dreams and desires.

The comparison between small-town and urban lifestyles is a recurring theme in Ruskin Bond's short stories, exemplified by the narrative "Summer Season," where Visni shares his observations about women in both settings. By contrasting their attitudes and physical attributes, Bond sheds light on the differences between metropolitan and small-town girls. Visni, working as a cleaner in a theatre, is taken aback by the brightly painted faces of the city women, as the girls in his small-town possess a natural beauty and radiance. Although the rural girls may lack the perfumed scent associated with their urban counterparts, Visni finds them charming in their own distinct way. While most women at the theatre give him a disinterested look, Visni is fortunate to receive kindness and generosity from middle-aged women, who exhibit a more maternal nature and often reward him for his diligent work. Ruskin Bond is fond of portraying small-town life and its simplicity as well as it is tuned with nature. (Bhyrava, 2015, p. 55)

The theme of small-town versus city life is evident in the short story "Growing Up with Trees," where the narrator is raised by his grandfather amidst a rich collection of trees planted by him. The narrator's affinity for trees stems from the abundance of diverse species, such as peepul, neem, mango, jackfruit, and papaya, which adorn his grandfather's home. This starkly contrasts with city dwellings, typically crowded with theatres and stores. In small towns, people find solace and a sense of belonging amidst the warmth of trees and the natural ecosystem that surrounds them, often encompassed by forests.

Similarly, the short story “Coming Home to Dehra” portrays the distinct features of small-town life, juxtaposed against city life. Ruskin Bond diligently highlights the unique characteristics of small communities in his short stories, underscoring their way of life. One aspect he focuses on is the items utilized in small communities, which serve to accentuate their distinctive nature. For instance, in small towns, people employed Khus reed curtains that required regular watering during the summer months when electric fans were not yet widely available. The scene is vividly described, depicting a bhisti (water-carrier) making rounds with his goat-skin water bag, splashing water on the thick Khus reed curtains. Lanterns provided illumination, and Khus acted as a natural cooling agent, in contrast to electric fans and lights, which were yet to be invented. Small-town residents adeptly adapted to their environment while cherishing the advantages of living in a close-knit community.

The short story “The Night Train at Deoli” by Bond explores the distinct characteristics of small-town life, particularly focusing on the setting of a small-town railway station. Within the station, both electric bulbs and oil lamps are present, but the preference of the townspeople leans towards oil lamps due to their inherent brightness, surpassing other lighting options commonly used in small towns. The author paints a picture of the station, describing how it is dimly lit with a combination of electric bulbs and oil lamps, with the faint light of dawn offering a glimpse of the jungle across the railway tracks. The solitary nature of the stop is highlighted as the narrator never witnesses anyone boarding or disembarking from the train. Bond delves into the history of the small-town train station, featuring a reception area, a room for the station master, and a desolate platform. On this isolated platform, one can find a produce stand, a tea shop, and a few stray canines. In stark contrast, city railway stations are often bustling with crowds as they serve as a major mode of transportation for city dwellers commuting to work.

Trains and the vibrant tapestry of Indian railway life hold a prominent place in Ruskin Bond's stories, depicting the unique charm and dynamics of small-town existence (Fernandes, 2004, p. 121).

The theme of small-town life versus city life is effectively conveyed in the short story "As Time Goes By," where the narrator holds a deep affection for the small-town environment. The narrator's admiration for small-town living stems from the abundance of natural elements such as rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains that are emblematic of these communities. The adventurous spirit ingrained in most small-town residents is also highlighted. As the narrative unfolds, the narrator, accompanied by companions Somi and Dal, explores the jungle and discovers a pool. In this idyllic setting, they engage in activities like swimming, fishing, and even attempting to expand the pool with an explosion. The trio relishes the experience, enjoying the waterfall, and engaging in playful pursuits. These immersive interactions with nature are not feasible in urban areas, which are often plagued by pollution and overcrowding.

Conclusion

The theme of Provincial Life, along with its multitude of sub-themes, serves as a focal point that highlights the distinctive qualities of life in small communities. By employing a comparative literature approach, one can examine the similarities and differences between rural and urban lifestyles. Notable authors, such as Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, have extensively explored and documented the intricacies of rural existence. Literature has long embraced the subject of provincial life, attracting numerous writers who seek to unravel its complexities. Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, in particular, have emerged as significant contributors to this genre. Alice Munro's works primarily revolve around the depiction of country life and the experiences of individuals residing in small towns (Naddi 1; William 5; Zhang). Similarly,

Ruskin Bond focuses on portraying rural life and the harmonious coexistence of its inhabitants with nature (Chawla 40; Fatma; Giriya). Both authors skilfully capture the simplicity and charm of small-town living, where the local society plays a profound role in shaping individuals' lifestyles.

In conclusion, the examination of provincial life in literature, as evidenced by the literary works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, illuminates the unique characteristics and significance attributed to small communities. Through their narrative endeavours, these authors offer a prism through which to perceive the intricacies and nuances of small-town existence, underscoring the profound sense of community, intrinsic connection to the natural world, and enduring customs that define provincial living. The comparative analysis of rural and urban lifestyles facilitates the identification of parallels and divergences between these contrasting milieus, engendering a deeper comprehension of the human condition. By delving into the complexities inherent in provincial life, valuable insights emerge pertaining to the dynamics of close-knit communities, the influence of local societies on individual lives, and the role of nature as a backdrop for personal growth and fulfilment. This research has thus yielded valuable contributions towards an enhanced understanding of the significance of provincial life, illuminating its cultural import and encompassing themes. By recognizing and appreciating the distinct qualities emblematic of provincial life, one not only enriches their literary discernment but also fosters an amplified understanding of the myriad ways in which individuals navigate their existence within diverse social and natural landscapes.

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Gender and Health in India: The SDGs, Pandemic and beyond

Joanna Mahjebeen and Bhargav Das

Abstract

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) incorporates issues of 'gender and health' spread over several goals. The imperative to establish gender equity in health is crucial given the dire health situation in numerous countries worldwide, especially in the developing nations. The paper examines the significant obstacles faced in women's health in India across three crucial domains and evaluates the progress made in relation to the targets outlined in the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An endeavour is also undertaken to analyse significant health issues of women that have emerged or worsened during the Covid-19 Pandemic, while also presenting new areas to be tackled in the altered circumstances.

Keywords: gender, health, pandemic, violence against women, sustainable development

Introduction

Gender equality is not only recognised as a human rights issue, but it is also universally regarded as a crucial objective for global peace and sustainable development. Health has become the primary measure of gender equality, as seen by the shift in focus of feminist research, the women's movement, and state policies at both the international and national levels. The well recognised 'health paradox' according to which women live longer than males but have greater rates of morbidity, underscores the importance of achieving gender equality in healthcare (Bird & Ricker, 2008, p.10). Contrary to past beliefs that only men experienced life-threatening illnesses, it has now been discovered that women are just as susceptible to illnesses with fatal outcomes. The situation has changed with gender-related social changes in the contemporary world which is posing a challenge to the commonsensical ideas about how men and women behave in relation to their health and this marks the emergence of patterns of similarity and differences, equality and inequality(Annandale, 2009, 2).

This necessitates a synthesis of biological and social research to remove the knowledge gap that exists in understanding complex questions regarding gender differences in health (Bird & Ricker, 2008, ix).

As with other developing countries, the health indicators in India are far from satisfactory and there are areas where a gender gap is often too wide. With a skewed sex ratio, the country has a high maternal mortality ratio(The Hindu, 2020), a declining child sex ratio(India Census, 2001) and even the highest number of non-school going girls; 25% of total number of girls born in India don't even live to see their 15th birthday. Eight years into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), the country still faces serious challenges on the path to achieve parity in the gender and health scenario. The paper evaluates progress towards the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for women's health and examines three major challenges related to the same. The paper concludes by highlighting major health concerns of women that surfaced or aggravated during the COVID-19 pandemic and foregrounds new areas to engage.

Gender, Health and Sustainable Development

Considerable debates have revolved around the causation of gender disparities in health, specifically whether they stem from biological or cultural influences. Gender, understood as the process of allocating specific and distinctive attributes and roles to men and women and the social imposition of different sets of expectations from them(Geetha, 2002, 10) has been the defining category in shaping social realities. The gendered division of labour within and outside the family, sexuality, violence, state practises, policies, and culture are just a few of the phenomena that have been examined by feminists since the 18th century. As a "vehicle for the development of feminist theory," health also arose in these circumstances, opening "major challenges to normative conceptions about health and the body."(Annandale, 2009, p. 2). While it is true that early feminists under the influence of liberal individualism had a greater focus on women's rights and participation issues (Tong, 2009, 34) rather than women's health and illness issues, there were feminists like Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft who saw women's oppression as primarily attached to social factors with a focus on health and body politics (ibid, p. 3). Even then, for a long time ideas and practices relating to women's health were influenced by stereotypical views of women as weak, nervous, frustrated or irritable(Goudsmitt, 1994, 8). Health became an issue for feminists as part of the women's movement only in the 1960's and since then women's health was incorporated into the agenda of International Conventions and law. The new interest shown in men's health in the mid-1990's too created the grounds for comparative research on males and females (ibid, p. 1). The International Conference on Population and Development held at Cairo in 1994 was

a significant move in foregrounding and broadening the issues concerning women's health with its focus on women's advancement, individual and health rights and debates on sexuality, reproductive health and abortions (UNFPA, 1994, p. 3). Over this period, it was found that issues of women's health have been dealt with a primary focus on reproductive health. The susceptibility of women to other significant health conditions has been overlooked by researchers, feminist analysts, and policy makers. Furthermore, categorising women as a homogeneous group has resulted in the application of significant risk factors for men to the study of women's health. As a consequence, risk factors that are particularly relevant to women are often disregarded or ignored (Ruiz & Verbrugge, 1997, p.107).

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995) defined health as 'complete physical, mental, and social well-being' rather than just the absence of disease or infirmity. Social, political, and economic factors, as well as biology, affect women's emotional, social, and physical health (UN, 1995). The Beijing Conference made significant promises regarding women's human rights, decision-making on childbearing and sexuality, and the prevention of violence against women. The Millennium Development Goals(MDG's) failed to recognise 'intersectionalities' around the issue of health and had limited success. The SDG's, however, have successfully incorporated 'gender and health' across several goals, urging countries to end violence against women, discrimination, harmful practises, and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and enact policies that benefit women. (The 17 Goals, 2015). Goal 3 titled 'Good Health and Well Being', has multiple objectives which include reducing global maternal mortality, eradicating AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases, managing hepatitis, water-borne diseases, and other communicable diseases, reducing non-communicable disease deaths, providing sexual and reproductive health care to all, and achieving universal health coverage. 'Gender Equality' (Goal 5) includes targets to end violence against women, increase women's economic and political participation, female workforce participation, reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, etc. The SDGs aim to end poverty, protect the environment, and promote peace and prosperity. These goals address complex gender equity in health issues with major implications. A life course approach and broader perspective on sexual and reproductive health are needed to achieve gender parity in health for sustainable development, according to the Lancet Report on 'Women and Health' (Langer, 2015, p. 170).

Gender Inequity and Health in India

India continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival showing least improvement leading to a widening of the gender gap in this sub index (The Times of India, 2018). The same report also revealed that female mortality due to non-communicable diseases is very high in India. In 2022 India's performance on the 'health and survival' index notched down to make her the worst performer. Gender equity in health is hindered by how 'women's health' is defined in policy documents, government initiatives, and popular consciousness. The Bhore Committee (1946) recommendations shaped Indian health policies and programmes in the colonial period. However, a growing economic crisis and liberalisation, combined with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), forced the government to withdraw support from several key sectors, including health, causing a health crisis post-independence.

The Indian government officially endorsed and implemented the United Nations' Development Agenda for the years 2016-2030, known as 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. This agenda consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated Targets. India has signed several UN conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. India has collaborated with other nations throughout history to promote sustainability by tackling gender-based inequities in the economic, ecological, and social domains. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an improvement over the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) because they include civil society inputs, including women's rights and feminist movements, but achieving them in India, which is plagued by patriarchal ideology, economic and political marginalisation of women, and environmental crises, will be difficult. Unsurprisingly, Niti Aayog's 2018 research of six national-level indicators found gender disparities in most targets relating to sex ratio, female labour participation, physical abuse of women, and equitable pay (Niti Aayog, 2018).

Gender equality is fundamentally assessed through the examination of the sex ratio. In the 2011 census, India had 943 females per thousand males, lower than the WHO's estimated 952 national sexratio. The national sex ratio has fluctuated, with certain tribal-dominated states falling since the last census. Interestingly, several northern states with strict patriarchal norms improved (Nagarajan, 2021). However, the drop in maternal mortality from 122 in 2015 to 113 in 2016-18 offers promises (Hindu, 2020). The life expectancy figures for India reflect the 'health paradox' mentioned earlier in the paper. According to the World Health Statistics report,

2021(WHO 2021) while females in India have a life expectancy more than men, very little differences is seen in healthy life expectancy of both the sexes (Nagarajan, 2021). Although this is a global phenomenon, a combination of social, economic and health related factors at the regional level can be ascribed to the situation.

In the year 2023, India received a ranking of 112 out of 162 nations on the SDG Index with a score of 63.45 out of 100, as per the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (Pavithra, 2023). A Lancet analysis found that over 75% of Indian districts fall short of targets for important SDG indicators such as poverty, anemia, child marriage, domestic violence, modern contraceptive use and tobacco use (Subramanian, et al, 2023, 11). In the latest Global Gender Gap Report published by World Economic Forum, India ranked 127 out of 146 countries (Global Gender Gap Report, 2023). This implies potential impediments in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5 pertaining to public health and particularly the dismal status of women's health in the nation.

While the paper aims to analyse the comprehensive state of women's health in India, it focuses on three crucial areas that significantly impact women's well-being- violence against women, cultural beliefs and gendered prejudices and women's economic empowerment.

Violence against Women

Violence against women is a major issue in India. After polling global experts, the Thomson Reuters Foundation named India the world's most dangerous country for women due to sexual violence and forced labour. It outranked Syria and Afghanistan in disrespect for women, and the Indian state has done little to protect them, according to the report (Goldsmith & Beresford, 2018). Shocking revelations on the prevalence of crimes like female genital mutilation in the country and the reason behind the practice which is to moderate female sexual experiences and desires are very critical questions on larger issues of oppressed female sexuality. Another gender-based crime which the country is still grappling is sexual violence and rape. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 expands the definition of rape, introduces 'consent,' and imposes severe penalties for causing the victim's death. These new provisions have increased reporting but not conviction rates or investigation speed, so they do not fully guarantee gender security (Bandopadhyaya, 2018). Moreover, the failure to criminalise marital rape shows how the rigidity of the traditions and male dominance in marriage are sought to be maintained. Although domestic violence cases fell from 24% in 2005-06 to 14% in 2015-16, NFHS-4 data showed that 76% of women in the country were physically or sexually abused. Financial

dependence, lack of education, and social isolation are reasons women suffer in silence. A 2017 Global Peace Index report ranked India the fourth most dangerous country for women travellers. According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development's Gender Vulnerability Index 2017, Bihar, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand were the least safe states. (Financial Express, 2018).

Cultural Beliefs and Gendered Prejudices

Research has revealed a correlation between crimes against women and their susceptibility in patriarchal societies characterised by rigid enforcement of gender norms, coerced marriages, prejudiced conduct, sexist work conditions, and caste-based discriminations. Cultural perspectives such as son preference, menstruation, pregnancy and birthing taboos, and beliefs around contraceptive use significantly impact women's health. 'Honour Crimes' which should have been better known as 'patriarchal crimes against autonomy' are repeatedly committed in the country over inter caste and inter faith relationships between consenting adults (Krishnan, 2018). Where autonomy is exercised by women, it is seen as a threat to the established order. India still has to battle the prevalence of regressive practices like female genital mutilation widespread among the Bohra Muslims of the western region. Having the potential to cause severe psychological trauma, physical and sexual damages, the practice has been held to cause irreparable harm to the girl child by the Supreme Court of India. Similarly, isolation during menstruation is also rampant especially among the Gonds and Madiya ethnic groups. Menstrual taboos and isolation have a bearing on girl's education too as dropout rates increase among menstruating girls. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) instructed the state government to take steps to eradicate the practice of 'gaokor' (isolation huts) on the grounds that they violate the human rights of women.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Gender is the primary societal factor that influences health in India and has an impact on women's health outcomes from the earliest stages of life. As women progress into adulthood, the absence of education and empowerment exacerbates health disparities, impeding their ability to access healthcare and make informed medical decisions (Storm, Xi & Khan, 2018, p. 44). In India lack of economic empowerment results in negative consequences, such as poor health, disparities in allocation of household resources, medical care and education, and increased burden of strenuous physical tasks (Velkoff & Adlakha, 1998). Studies have concluded that Tenshun (derived from the English word "tension") is a culturally defined health problem associated with high

levels of poverty, low education, excessive household chores, husband's alcoholism, low empowerment, domestic violence and marital difficulties (Ramasubban & Rishyasinga, 2001, p. 23). Though India has made progress in providing girls with education, the nature of economic growth and job creation do not allow women to enter the workforce in large numbers, especially in rural areas (Verick, 2014). Women constitute only 25 percent of the total workforce in the country. It is possible that non-economic, social and cultural factors prevent women from entering the workforce (Ranade, 2018). A major barrier to women entering the workforce and employers hiring women is maternity. The 2016 landmark Maternity Benefit Legislation, which grants women 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, again places primary care-giving on women and is only available to working women. According to the International Labour Organisation, the wage gap in India is highest and women are paid 34 per cent less than men. Transformative changes in legal mechanisms have somewhat failed to give women access to family property. For example, changes in the Hindu Succession Act 1956 sought to empower women by strengthening their financial and social position, reducing dowry and son preference. According to a study the reforms however led to unintended effects as families became more averse to the birth of a daughter fearing that family property would go to her in-laws after marriage and exacerbated son preference in India by increasing female foeticide. The reforms thus could not lead to an increase in income which comes from ownership of property.

Covid-19 Pandemic and beyond

The World Health Statistics Report 2021 states that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown significant inequities, highlighting the need for global cooperation and coordinated efforts to enhance preparedness for this and future global health crises (World Health Statistics, 2021). The pandemic has revealed significant economic and social disparities and has further exacerbated the pre-existing divide with the most marginalised individuals in society, including the unequal consequences experienced by women and girls due to their gender. (Ghouiabi, 2021). It has aggravated and intensified the existing disparities in gender inequality within the country, disproportionately impacting women in both professional and domestic spheres (Thibaut & Cremers, 2020, 2). The pandemic has led to the exit of many women out of the labour force for factors ranging from personal health to economic downfall and the related downsizing in many establishments. Since a majority of Indian women are employed in the informal sector, they have been put to untold miseries. Economic impacts of the pandemic have a trickle-down effect on all aspects of a woman's health including mental health. The challenge therefore lies before the state in securing the livelihoods of these women who had been providers to

their households. Forced marginalisation of women in the economic sector suffering due to loss of jobs had a bearing on other aspects of women's life and overall health. A huge majority of domestic workers are women in India. Travel restrictions, social distancing norms, loss of jobs for fear of infection have put them at a reduced income and made them more vulnerable to domestic violence and stress in marital relationships while also increasing their workload (Krishnakumar, 2021). Loss of income has made them unable to seek medical help in some cases. The Pandemic has also provided new contexts for exploring forms of gender-based violence with an evident surge seen in cases of domestic violence. The National Commission for Women (NCW) data reveals that the number of cases filed during the lockdown was more than that filed in the last 10 years (Radhakrishnan, Sen, & Singaravelu, 2020).

The pandemic has also magnified the challenge posed to women's mental health concerns and this is especially true in the developing world where increased levels of stress were found to be associated with food insecurity (Rahman, MD, & Islam, 202, p.11). Globally, high levels of mental stress during the pandemic are found to develop in women who are pregnant, postpartum, miscarrying, or experiencing intimate partner violence (Almeida, Shrestha, Stojanac, & Miller, 2020, p. 745). Studies in India too have found higher levels of psychological stress among females owing to increased burden at home and domestic violence (Anand, Verma, Nanjundappa, & Rai, 2021, p.10). The gendered representations of mental health are especially obvious given Indian women have a Suicide Death Rate(SDR) three times higher than Indian men. According to a study published in *The Lancet*, India had 17.8% of the global population in 2016 but accounted for 36.6% of the global suicide deaths among women and 24.3% among men (Lancet Public Health, 2018, e478). Gender disparities in SDR are caused by differences in socially acceptable stress and conflict management strategies, suicide rates and methods, alcohol consumption, domestic violence, poverty, and mental health care rates. The pandemic strained healthcare systems, leading to disruptions in maternal health services and increased maternal mortality rates in some regions. Access to reproductive healthcare services was disrupted during the pandemic. Several nations have inadequately maintained the accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services, leading to negligence and a rise in health risks for women.

Conclusion

The achievement of gender equity in health would require a multi-pronged multi sectoral approach. There is a need to incorporate the gender perspective in every policy or programme of the state. Often laws and policies result in reinstate patriarchal practices and traditional beliefs. Adequate budgetary allocation should be made for the implementation of the laws which are already in place. Despite the women's movement's advocacy for an adequate allocation for the implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005 there has been zero allocation in the 2016-17 Central budget. Justice to women cannot be provided in a society which seeks to protect patriarchal, sectarian and communal forces. Apart from strengthening procedural measures, societal factors which devalue the status of a woman and overlook her health needs to be changed. State action in the form of reformed laws will achieve true meaning under these changed circumstances because laws do not operate or originate in a vacuum, and it is about time that communities come to terms with the demands for gender equality in its truest sense.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified pre-existing inequalities in women's health. As we transition to a post-pandemic world, there is an opportunity to address these issues comprehensively. By prioritizing maternal health, mental health, gender-based violence prevention, economic empowerment, vaccine access, and reproductive healthcare, we can promote women's well-being. Additionally, investing in telemedicine, global preparedness, and recognizing intersectionality in women's health are essential steps towards a healthier and more equitable future for all women. It is imperative that policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities come together to ensure that the lessons learned during the pandemic are used to build a stronger and more resilient healthcare system that works for all women.

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Denationalisation, Islamophobia, and Rohingya Crisis in *First, They Erased Our Name: A Rohingya Speaks* (2018)

Jyotirmoy Sil

Abstract

The Rohingya, a Muslim community predominantly living in the Rakhine state (erstwhile, Arakan) of Myanmar, have been subjected to exclusion, communal attacks, and a number of human rights abuses with active support of the state since the independence of Myanmar (previously, Burma). First, They Erased Our Name: A Rohingya Speaks (2018), a memoir of a Burmese Rohingya refugee Habiburahaman, alias, Habib, (written along with a French journalist Sophie Ansel), opens with the reference to ‘The Citizenship Law’ of 1982 that left Rohingyas de facto stateless in their own nation, and goes on to narrate the predicaments of being a member of a hated stateless Muslim community through personal experiences. The narrative provides realistic accounts of the extent of endless Rohingya persecution caused by the state-sponsored military campaigns, ethnocidal operations, forced displacements, and Islamophobic hate-mongering amongst people by the state’s agencies (like militaries) and influential Buddhist monks. This paper, through an intense socio-political reading of the text, First, They Erased Our Name, seeks to explore the discourses of denationalisation and Islamophobia, articulating against the Burmese Rohingya community, and the prospect of Habiburahaman’s narrative to serve as a polyphonic voice of persecuted Rohingyas demanding sustainable repatriation.

Keywords: Burmese, denationalisation, intersectionality, Islamophobia, Myanmar, refugee, Rohingya.

Introduction

Hunting down the ‘Bengali invaders’— the Rohingya, us— is a ritual that has been happening for decades in Myanmar. The lives of the ‘parasites of the nation’ are made more unbearable and miserable with each passing year, as the effort to eliminate ‘vermin’,

the ‘black infidels’, continues apace. Burials of our people are frequent. (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 68)

Myanmar, since its independence in 1948, has been torn by the ethnic-religious tensions wherein the state’s participation always remained that of a brutal majoritarian force. Amidst the inter and intra tensions between the Buddhist Burmese, and minority communities, the Rohingya, a Muslim community, is the most persecuted one. Despite Rohingya’s longstanding history in West Myanmar, particularly Rakhine State (erstwhile, Arakan), this community was rendered as Bangladeshi immigrants (settled after 1823) and stripped of their citizenship rights by the Citizenship Law of 1982. In fact, since 1962 (when the military junta swayed to power), Rohingya people have been subjected to a series of communal attacks, hostile state policies, and military operations (Uddin 2022, p. 54). However, as it seems, the world came to reckon with the seriousness of the Rohingya crisis in 2017 after severe waves of state-sponsored violence in Myanmar followed by their mass immigration to Bangladesh. In September 2017, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described the strategic Rohingya displacement and killings by the Myanmar government over the years as ‘a textbook case of ethnic cleansing’ and called for accountability for the perpetrators of violence (“UN human rights chief” 2017). *First They Erased Our Name: A Rohingya Speaks* (2018), a memoir of a Burmese Rohingya refugee, Habiburahaman (alias, Habib), upholds realistic accounts etching the curse of belonging to a hated stateless community. This book, written by Habiburahaman in association with a French journalist Sophie Ansel (and translated into English from French by Andrea Reece), opens with Ne Win’s announcement of Citizenship Law of 1982 whereby Habib, his family, like every other Rohingya were ‘effectively erased from existence’ (1) ‘with a stroke of pen’ (1), and exposed to endless misery. Habib’s individual ventures as a Rohingya refugee intersect with other Rohingyas’ stories; the memoir betrays the consistent violence inflicted upon the Rohingya including physical torture, arbitrary detentions, forced displacements, extrajudicial killings. The said text, in the course of its personal narrative, exposes how the state agencies and influential extremists incite Islamophobic fear among the Burmese to create a severe mass hostility against the Rohingya community. This paper, through a study of *First, They Erased Our Name*, seeks to disclose the politics of denationalisation, strategic dissemination of Islamophobia against the Burmese

Rohingya community, and explore the way Habiburrahman's memoir serves as a writ of the Burmese Rohingyas crisis. In the said research scope, Habiburrahman's narrative is to be studied through discourse analysis method where focus will be on the content and its socio-political contexts; and ethno-racism is to be imbibed for the theoretical perception.

Mapping Rohingya Ethnicity in Myanmar and (Con)Text

The word Rohingya came from 'Rakhanga' or 'Roshanga', which is an alternative name of the Arakan region commonly used by native Muslims; and 'Rohingya' stands for 'residents of Arakan' (Leider 2013, p. 219). Even though Arakan Muslims' roots can be traced back to the pre-Christian era (Ibrahim 2016, 17), Rohingya is a relatively new name attributed to this community; in fact, 'the term [Rohingya] was absent in historical sources before 1950s' (Minahan 2012, p. 274). Arakanese got into the touch of Islam through the India-Arabia trade links in the Seventh century, and majority of them accepted Islam (Min 2012, p. 8). Their cohabitation with the Buddhists moving from the Irrawaddy delta formed the cultural contact zone in Arakan region and, over time, Islamic Rohingya culture was influenced by the Buddhist traditions to some extent. During the precolonial reign of Mrauk U kings (1429 to 1784), a number of Muslims settled in the Arakan region migrating from the Bengal Delta (Ibrahim 2016, p. 24). After the British invasion of Burma in 1886, Arakan state lost its independent status and was included in the map of Burma (pp. 26-27). However, the major conflict ensued in the time of partition when a large number of Muslims from the Bengal delta areas migrated to Rakhine state and, the Burmese politicians (and mass as well), reluctant to allocate citizenship to the Rakhine Muslims anyhow, diplomatically tagged all the Muslims of that area as illegitimate settlers by pinpointing their homogenous Bangladeshi cultural attributes including language (pp. 25-26). Rohingyas speak a dialect of Bengali distinct from standard Bengali and influenced by Rakhine dialect. Their dialect, known as 'Rohingya' or 'Ruaingga', was denied any official status, and this denial of language rights, as per Ibrahim, is part of a broader effort to erase Rohingya cultural identity and assimilate them into the dominant Burmese Buddhist culture (Ibrahim 2016, p. 25).

In *First, They Erased Our Name*, Habib tells what his neighbours (Burmese, in general) think of them: 'I become a foreigner to my neighbours: they believe that we are Bengali invaders who have

entered their country illegally and now threaten to overrun it' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p.1-2). Rohingyas are disrespectfully called as '*kalas*' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 5), meaning black, in relating to their dark brown skin colour. Jokes on the dark skinned *kalas* have remained a stock source of amusement in Burmese *Anyeint* (Burmese traditional dance accompanied by instrumental music) performances (Seekins 2006, p.77). Interpellation of racism into the very crux of Burmese society was evident in Habib's schoolmates' frequent hurling of stones and racist abuses at him (16). In his early childhood, Habib lost his citizenship and survived military assaults along with his family for being a Rohingya. Habib relates, after 'The Citizenship Law' (1982), 'Rohingya' became a forbidden word, and their family struggled to keep their identity hidden. Habib's Dad insisted on introducing themselves as 'Muslims' and not Rohingya for the latter might incur harassment; as he used to say, '[i]f we say that we are Rohingya, we would be signing the family's death warrant' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 13). Habib's grandmother's painful memories of losing her close ones mirror the extent of violence that Rohingyas were going through for decades; as she says, 'Kaladan River runs red with our blood' (6). In his youth, Habib had to make fake identity papers only to get admission to a technical institution outside Rakhine state (at Irrawaddy) for there was strict restriction upon the Rohingya's mobility outside Rakhine region. Subsequently, Habib's secret was compromised and he was jailed. Somehow, Habib escaped from jail and fled to Thailand, and then Malaysia, and reached Australia in a boat. During his stay in a detention camp in Australia, Habib became a Rohingya activist vowing to unite the Rohingyas against the consistent persecution.

Rohingya and Politics of Denationalisation

The state of Myanmar has been handling the Rohingya community with strategic animosity since its establishment and, always segregating them as outsiders, never issued any documents acknowledging their Burmese citizenship. In 1954, the Prime Minister, U Nu, announced that 'the Rohingyas have the equal status of nationality with Kachin, Kayah, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Shan and Rakhine' (Ibrahim 2016, 48), but, in reality, that did not ever happen or allowed to happen. Dictator U Ne Win's exclusion of Rohingya from 'the 135 recognised ethnic groups, which form part of eight "national races"' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, 1) in 'The Citizenship Law' was only the

cruellest attempt to denationalize the Rohingyas. However, in the past, a few political facts went against the Rohingya that functioned in marking them as anti-national to the general public of Burma/Myanmar. While, during the Second World War, the majority of the Burmese people expressed their support for Japan, a Buddhist country, Rohingya supported Britain being provided with the promise of an independent (relatively) Muslim state. But, following Britain's win in the Second World War, the Burmese map remained untouched, and furthermore, the Burmese-Rohingya ethnic discrimination became intense (Christie 1997, p. 166). In 1948, when Burma was on the verge of independence, a number of Rohingyas, sensing ethnic insecurity, raised the demand of including the northern part of Arakan state into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), an Islamic state. However, in the Partition, the entire Arakan region remained with Burma; and the former issue germinated a deep resentment for the Rohingya within the mind of Burmese (Yegar 1972, p. 62). In fact, changing the name of the Arakan state to Rakhine state in 1989, was a carefully crafted political plan from the military junta's end to obliterate the history of the Rohingya community's bond with the Arakan region (Smith 2019, p. 25). In 1990s, Myanmar government's diplomatic decision to replace the Rohingyas' state identity cards with the Temporary Registration Card (Ibrahim 2016, p. 48) was, in fact, a blatant attempt to mark their nationlessness. As Habib's grandmother relates, in 1978, when Habib was in her mother's belly, a military operation named '*Nagamin*' (Dragon King) was initiated to drive out the Rohingya from Burma in the cruelest manner:

They arrested hundreds of Rohingya and forced them onto makeshift boats. The boats were escorted to the middle of Sittwe Bay and sunk. Men, women, children, all engulfed by the water. Then came the rapes, massacres, and imprisonments in Buthiduang and Maungdaw. (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 8)

Again, in 1991-92, 'Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation' forced two hundred fifty thousand Rohingyas' to migrate to Bangladesh. Ironically, the names of the ethnic cleansing missions reflect the poetic sensations and patriotic war-like grace; as Habib points out,

Pure Gold, Dragon King, Purify and Whiten like the Jasmine Flower, and Clean and Beautiful Nation have all been manhunts, massacres with poetic, fanciful, warlike names that bestow glory on those who perpetrate them. (69)

The state, in post-1982 times, continued to impose restrictions upon the Rohingyas' movements outside the Rakhine state, and limit their access to healthcare and education (72-3).

Strategic Hate-Mongering: Islamophobic Discourses against Rohingyas

Theravada Buddhism was introduced in Burma during the Pagan rule (849-1300), and by the end of the eighteenth century, emancipated to be the common religion in Burma (Gutman 2001, p. 18). Its preachers, since the beginning, have been more concerned with ethnic purity in Buddhism denouncing any sort of inter-cultural assimilations ("Theravada Buddhism"). In 1784, the Arakan region was conquered by the Burmese King Bodawpaya and incorporated into the Konbaung kingdom. Konbaung Kings, who were ardently Theravada Buddhists, considered the Rakhine Buddhists' increasing cultural ties with the Muslims of Arakan region as precarious to the Buddhist ethnic purity (Aung Thwin 1982-83, p. 15). In the post-independence period of Burma, the ruling authorities of Burma/Myanmar always functioned to marginalize the Rohingya, and advocate the Rohingya-Buddhists intersectionality to retain the majoritarian mass support. A number of the ethno-nationalist Buddhist monks holding great influence over the Burmese mass either exert their influence to create mass anti-Rohingya resentments or remained silent upon the consistent persecution of Rohingyas. In the post 9/11 (attack on September 11, 2001) regime, Islamophobia pervaded globally, and turned into extreme form in Myanmar. One impossible yet prevalent fear among a section of Burmese masses is that these Rohingya Muslims intend to take over the nation and make it an Islamic state with constant high birth rate (Dapice 2015, p. 5). In a sermon delivered in 2013, Ashin Wirathu, one influential Buddhist monk in Myanmar, sought to ignite anti-Rohingya sentiment amongst Burmese by claiming, 'If we are weak, our land will become Muslim' (Fuller 2013). Earlier, in 2001, Wirathu led a nationalist campaign to boycott Rohingya and other minority communities; this campaign named '969' encouraged to 'Buy Buddha, Shop Buddha' (Hodal 2013). In 2012, a large number of monks attended a rally in support of the President Thein Sein's proposition to send Rohingyas to another country (Hodal, 2013). In *First They Erased Our Names*, Habib remembers how, in his childhood, he occasionally used to hear the news of militaries spreading Islamophobic rumours in their neighborhoods and terrified them (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 41). Once David, the Christian leader of the Khumi area, in a

conversation with Habib's father, divulged his rage against the militaries for explicitly spreading communal friction amongst the Buddhist people:

Why is the army meddling with religious matters in the village? Why are the Buddhist authorities allowing such abuses to be committed in their name?...That they want to make the country Buddhist and trample all other religions underfoot? Doesn't making Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and animists pay for their religion go against their principles? (41)

The Burmese Rohingya poet, Mayyu Ali's poem "Torture" (2019) expresses how the common people in Myanmar are inclined to believe in such falsified rumours as if they are quite eager to see Rohingyas as enemies,

A confession of their version,
A truth for their ears,
A depiction that pleases their eyes (24)

On 28 May 2012, as Habib remembers with horror, the rape and murder of a Rakhine woman named Ma Thida Htwe triggered a massive communal violence. Following the incident, three Rohingyas were quickly sentenced to death with questionable minimal investigation, a bus full of Muslims was blocked and all the passengers were beaten to death, government officials and some of the extremist Buddhist monks shared anti-Muslim hate speech with the picture of the murdered woman (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 231). However, Habib unfolds the extremist anti-Muslim events preceding the 2012 massacre in Rakhine state:

In April 2012, groups of Rakhines go from village to village [...] Some celebrate the coming of a new era washing the statue of Buddha with blood. They no longer bother hiding their hatred and desire to get rid of us once and for all. (231)

The fire of hatred needed a pretext, and the unfortunate death of the young Rakhine woman provided the same. The prologue section of Francis Wade's book *The Enemy Within* (2017) recounts the author's interaction with a Buddhist Rakhine man who participated in the 2012 riot. As per him, Buddhist culture is to be secured or else this 'Yangon will become like Saudi and Mecca', region without 'peace and truth', 'more discrimination and violence', 'it can be the fall of Yangon. It can also be the fall of Buddhism. And [their] race will be eliminated' (Wade 2017, pp.

5-6). The Myanmar government's blatant support in such communal violence is evident by the fact that even after numerous attempts of Rohingya genocide over the decades, 'not a single person is known to have been punished by the Myanmar Judicial System' (Hasan 2017, p. 60).

Anti-Rohingya Campaigns: State-Sponsored Persecution, Ethnocide, and Refugee Crisis

Militaries were the prime operatives running campaigns against the Muslim Rohingyas in the Arakan regions, and their frequent patrols, as per Habib, were parts of routined harassment of Rohingyas (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, pp. 39-40). Habib cites one such incident that happened to his father; the military had vandalized his medicine shop, beaten him for having a common medicine (aspirin) (61), and spitefully molested Habib's mother (64). Severe punishment, even death, was carried out on Rohingyas disobeying the restrictions upon mobility outside Rakhine state. In 1994, the news of the soldiers arresting and executing 3000 young Rohingyas including Habib's distant cousin in Maungdaw came (73). Forced labour in the military campaigns was another mean to torture the Rohingyas, Christians, and other hated minority communities. In his childhood, Habib was deployed in the SLORC¹ premises to carry the heavy willow baskets in the heat. Christians were ordered to work on the site where a church was demolished a few months ago by the order of the military captain (49). Even some of the Rohingyas, forcefully employed as the porters in the military camps at Chin State border zones, were actually used by the military as the human shields against the rebels' attacks (54). Terrifying news of mass attacks upon Rohingya (72) and sudden disappearances of young Rohingyas (83) used to come regularly without respite. One such news, as per Habib, came in August 1993, when 18 Rohingyas were arrested by the military and handed over to the Rakhines, and were subsequently 'killed by blows from pickaxes after being forced to dig their own graves' (72). Habib exposes how *The New Light of Myanmar*, a paper ran by the Burmese junta, had been shamefully displaying the Military's atrocious activities as their pursuit of some pious vow to hunt down the anti-national rebels (55). Such propaganda papers functioned in spreading contempt for the minority communities, specially the Rohingya, and glorifying Buddhism (36). Prem Sharma's novel *Escape from Burma: A Novel* (2007), set in 1962 Myanmar, reflects on the extent of military torture upon another minority community, the Stan people, through the true story of Sandra and Mya Swe.

Exiled to Nowhere: Rohingya, Displacements, and Refugee Crisis

Since 1982, the Rohingya has become a *de facto* stateless community searching for refuge from time to time in vast swaths of South-East Asia including Bangladesh and India. Habib's memoir reveals how, after the initiation of the Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation in 1991, the extremity of the ethnic persecution intensified; Arakan Rohingyas were forced to leave their abodes by the military, robbed of their possessions, there were arbitrary arrests, killings, rapes (69). Sakkipara, Aung Daine, Nuyng Pin Zay, and numerous other Rohingya villages were razed to ground, and instead the model villages (NaTaLa) were built on the confiscated lands from the Rohingyas (69-71). Local Mosques including the historic Shwe Dah Qazi Mosque and Sandhi Kan's mosque were demolished (71-73). Innumerable Rohingyas sought refuge in Bangladesh in fear of being sent to detention camps (northern region of Arakan), the hubs of consistent torture (69). Mayyu Ali's poem, "That's Me, a Rohingya" (2019) reveals pangs of being a refugee within one's own motherland,

Even when I live in a country where I was born,
I can't name it as mine like you do
Without identity. (3)

As per the Human Rights Watched (HRW) reports (issued in 2017), around 40k children living in the Cox Bazar refugee camp, Bangladesh, denied admission to primary schools ("Are Not We Human?" 2019). Kazi Fahmida Farzana's *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees: Contested Identity and Belonging* (2017) contains case studies of twenty-four Burmese Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh between June 2009 to December 2010. The recorded interactions with the refugees reveal their painful memory of being evicted from village (case studies of Khairun Begum, age 38, Nur Hossain, 49), forceful relocation (Md Ismail Hossain, 37, Hamida Begum, 48) (Farzana 2017, 98-102), confiscation of lands and property by the Burmese government and natives (96-97) (Tonima, 32), and the extent of victimisation and exploitation they go through including forced labour for staying in the refugee camps (92-94), humiliation of religious sentiments (97-98), heavy marriage tax and other arbitrary taxes (94-96), threats of rape and murder (Nur Begum, 60) (107), and so on. These Rohingya refugees' traumatic experiences recorded in Farzana's case study align

with Habiburahaman's accounts of the systematic persecution of Burmese Rohingyas, proving the memoir's authenticity. National League for Democracy (NLD) led by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1991) Aung San Suu Kyi swept to power in 2015 Myanmar election eradicating the erstwhile military rule with the promise of a democratic government, but the situation only worsened further. The military began crackdown in the northern Rakhine state in October 2016 targeting Rohingyas, and by August 2017, this crackdown turned into a genocide. As per the UN report, only in the month of August, 2017², at least 25,000 Rohingyas were killed, 18,000 Rohingya women were raped, 43,000 faced bullets, 116,000 were beaten severely, and approximately, 800,000 fled Myanmar seeking refuge in Bangladesh ("Myanmar Authorities Must Ensure").

Conclusion: Myth of Repatriation

The severity of Burmese Rohingya community's crisis is to be accountable to, as per Ware and Laotides (2018), 'double minority complex'--a condition when the majoritarian mass experience 'ethnic security dilemma' presuming that a specific minority community holds the potential to put them at risk by gaining powerful allies, and believe that the inter-clash is indisputable (171). In *First, They Erased Our Name*, Habib's grandmother's haunting memory of mad mob desperate to 'Muslim kalas' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2017, p. 5) in 1962 betrays the deep-rooted bigotry in this part of Asia. As reflected in Habiburahaman's memoir, the fear of Rohingyas were strategically produced by the state and the extremists to increase the sense of insecurity amongst Buddhist Burmese regarding their ethnicity and religion. Following the Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh in 1991–1992, the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral agreement to initiate the process of repatriations in September 1992. But, as per the records, only a portion of Rohingyas were repatriated by the Myanmar state over the years (from 1992 to 2005, the number is 2,36,599 out of millions), and yearly voluntary repatriation count had been strategically decreased by Myanmar citing the varied bureaucratic issues (Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 30). Habiburahaman like other Rohingyas wholeheartedly supported Su Kyi, the long hailed figure of human rights activism, with the sole hope of being repatriated, and after her party's rise to power in 2015, earnestly expected her to put to an end to their misery, for '[s]he had the power

to choose justice and tolerance, and show people what a democracy was. But Aung San Suu Kyi chose power' (Habiburahman and Ansel, 2017, p. 241). In fact, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD received the majoritarian support by placating the influential Buddhist monks who feared the potential rise of Islam in Myanmar; and, that is why, the NLD government had to act conservatively in mitigating the Rohingya crisis (Ibrahim 2016, p. 15). Shockingly, after the massive military attacks upon Rohingyas in 2017, the NLD diplomats bluntly denied the blame of ethnocide naming this military operation as an attempt to root out the terrorists ("Myanmar Rohingya" 2019). However, despite facing decades of persecution and discrimination, Rohingyas have largely eschewed violence and instead have focused on building their community bond and preserving their cultural heritage. This resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity is a testament to the strength of Rohingya identity and the importance of recognizing their legitimate claims to citizenship and human rights. As Habib's Dad said, an utterance of 'the password Rohingya' (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 13) would bring in aid for the hapless Rohingyas from other Rohingyas anywhere. In *First, They Erased Our Name*, the voice of Habib is felt to be a polyphonic one that mingled with innumerable unheard voices of hapless Rohingyas, and enunciates to be a collective narrative that unravels the history of the state's atrocities before the world and raise the demand for sustainable repatriation.

Notes and References

¹State Law and Order Restoration Council, another name given for the governing body of Burma after 18th September 1988 (Habiburahaman and Ansel 2018, p. 54).

² In August 2017, this brutal Burmese military clearance operation was initiated in response to Rohingyas militants' attack on police posts. ("Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis", 2017).

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Rural Non-Farm Employment in Assam: A Post Reform Scenario

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Abstract

The agricultural sector has long been the foundation of India's rural economy, providing a vital source of livelihood for its rural population. However, this sector has numerous challenges. The economic reforms in 1991 brought significant changes to Assam's and India's rural economies. In more recent years, there has been growing interest in the Rural Non-Farm Sector as an effective way to create new employment opportunities and increase income within rural areas, thereby promoting further development in these economies. This study primarily focuses on the evolution and structure of non-farm employment in rural Assam during the post-reform period. The study mainly relies on secondary data obtained from the National Sample Survey (NSS) data on Employment and Unemployment to gain insights into the dynamics of the rural labor market in Assam. The analysis indicates that there was an increase in Work Participation Rates (WPR) for males between 1993-94 to 2009-10, while for females, remained relatively low at around 15 to 20 percent. As a result, unemployment rates among female were higher compared to males. In terms of the distribution of workers across sectors, a significant number of rural laborers were primarily employed in agriculture. However, despite their high participation in the agricultural sector, its contribution to Gross State Domestic Product remained disproportionately low. As a result, there was a noticeable shift of workers from agriculture to the Non-Farm Sector. Unfortunately, this transition was less favorable for women who continued to be concentrated mainly in the agricultural sector and faced challenges such as lower work force participation rates and higher unemployment rates compared to men. Additionally, they had limited opportunities for diversifying into the Non-Farm Sector. The analysis suggests that by harnessing its potential for employment generation, the Rural Non-Farm Sector can play an important role not only in addressing unemployment but also improving women's access to resources and job prospects.

Key words: Non-Farm Sector, Work Participation Rate, State Gross Domestic Product, Usual Principal Status, Current Weekly Status, Current Daily Status.

Introduction

The rural non-farm employment in Assam post-reform is an important aspect to consider in understanding the patterns and trends of employment in the region. Various studies and data suggest that the rural non-farm sector in Assam has been growing steadily, indicating a shift in the economy from agriculture to non-farm activities (Bhuyan and Mitra, 2018, p.103). The considerable reliance of India's population on agriculture persists, despite a slowdown in agricultural growth. The share of rural workers involved in agriculture, compared to the entire workforce remained steady at roughly 78 percent until 1993-94, and thereafter declined to 68 percent in 2009-10. This transition away from agriculture in favor of the secondary and tertiary sectors highlights the relevance of the Rural Non-Farm Sector (Chadha, 2003, p.3). In recent years, policymakers and researchers have dedicated significant emphasis toward creating and implementing rural development policies, acknowledging the RNFS's importance (Lanjouw and Shariff, 2004, p. 4439). The RNFS stands out due to its propensity to absorb employment, its burgeoning possibilities, its role in preventing rural-urban migration, and its power to reduce inequality and poverty (Islam, 1997, p.4).

In the context of Assam, the RNFS is regarded a feasible source of employment for a developing labor force, struggling with challenges such as strong demographic pressure on land, tiny and fragmented land holdings, and an unequal land distribution pattern (Goswami and Bhattacharya, 2014, p.16). However, the RNFS's significance requires rigorous consideration in light of the socioeconomic developments brought about by economic reforms across all sectors over the past two decades. The state's yearly average growth rate of Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) from 1993-2007 stood at a meager 2.84 percent, falling behind the national average of 6.16 percent (Roy and Debnath, 2010, p.126). During the period from 1994-2004, the agriculture sector's growth rate barely exceeded one percent (Roy and Debnath, 2010, p.127). Given such poor growth, the agriculture industry is unlikely to generate large employment possibilities for the rural labor population. Simultaneously, employment growth in the organized sector has been diminishing, posing a formidable problem in the rural labor market, with a considerable number of unemployed adolescents entering the workforce (Sahu, 2012, p.98). This dualism in the labor market has intensified with a few educated and skilled job seekers capable of adapting to evolving technology and market standards securing positions in highly productive, well-paying sectors, while a considerable proportion of less educated, unskilled, or semi-skilled youths find employment in low-productivity farm or non-farm activities (Chadha, 2003, p.7). At this key

juncture in Assam's rural labor market, it is imperative to critically analyze the employment and unemployment situation and its evolving dynamics.

Since women make up around half of India's population, it is crucial to guarantee that they have access to jobs and educational opportunities since gender equality promotes economic growth. Studies (Kabeer, 2003, p.107; Klasen, 1999, p.21) have showed that work and educational possibilities not only lessen the possibility of household poverty but also empower women with resources, resulting in numerous favorable results for human capital and capacities within homes. Cliche (2011), p.4, investigated rural women's empowerment by emphasizing the non-agricultural, non-farm parts of the rural economy are rising significance in Latin America. It underscored the significance of governments extending social protection to rural women actively engaged in the informal economy, where the bulk of them labor. Governments should not wait recognizing women's rights until they become part of the official economic sector. Additionally, new rural development frameworks should address gender gaps and geographical inequalities within countries (Unni, 1989, p.WS24). Therefore, it becomes vital to examine women's involvement in the rural non-farm economy in Assam and investigate measures to promote their participation. It is imperative to investigate if women's access to resources and work prospects may be facilitated by the non-farm sector, given its potential to generate employment. Such an analysis can assist discover the underlying factors that could inform policy-oriented studies on women's economic empowerment.

In the context of Assam, the RNFS acts as a substantial source of employment. Its relevance rests in its generally small-scale organization, usage of local labor and resources, and labor-demanding procedures. Consequently, as worries about employment expansion and poverty reduction in rural regions mount, and urban-based industrialization prove insufficient, attention has switched toward the rural non-farm sector, which links the urban and rural agricultural economies (Islam, 1997, p.15). The types and patterns of non-farm employment varied between wealthy farming households and poorer ones, offering opportunity for all to engage in non-farm activity. The economically disadvantaged generally find low-paying employment as wage laborers or are self-employed at home. The affluent, on the other hand, often engage in industry, commerce, and trade as entrepreneurs and employers (Anand, Tulin and Kumar, 2014, p.9). The RNFS allows women the option to mix family responsibilities with work, including childcare, while also generating additional income, especially if these activities may be undertaken at or near home. This is particularly crucial for disadvantaged

households. Therefore, inclusive growth allows everyone to participate in economic advancement, potentially contributing to women's empowerment through paid job (Kabeer, 2013, p. 78). The analysis of non-farm employment options and incomes underlines the role of education in determining access to non-farm occupations. The level of education to a great extent raises productivity in the agricultural sector by enabling farmers to use new technology and modern inputs. It also increases productivity in the non-farm sector by developing managers' skills and helping them recognize market opportunities and potential profits from connections to the agricultural sector (Lanjouw and Shariff, 2004, p. 4436). Further, the investment in health carries equivalent value. Expanding health and sanitary facilities minimizes disease, improves the advantages of nutrition, elevates nutritional status, and enhances labor productivity. Increased female education reduces reproduction rates and enhances their involvement in income-generating activities, enhancing their decision-making authority within homes and improving children's nutrition and schooling. This encourages a reciprocal link between agricultural expansion, non-farm sector growth, and the development of human capital (Islam, 1997, p.34).

Objectives

To assess the employment status of rural workers in Assam.

To investigate work participation rates (WPR) and unemployment rates among both the genders (male+female) in Assam after 1991.

Data Source and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data mainly collected from various Reports of NSSO and Census of India. Simple statistical tools like table has been used to explain the scenario.

Result and Discussion

Sector-wise Composition of Rural Non-Farm Employment

In order to examine the expansion of rural non-farm employment, it is necessary to examine the sectoral breakdown and the respective contributions to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for Assam and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for India. The present study tries to capture the changes in the expansion of rural non-farm employment following economic reforms. Typically, there exists a discrepancy between the sectoral employment and its impact on economic growth (Unni, 1991, p. WS29). In this part, we will conduct a comparative analysis between state-level data and national-level data to assess if the composition of rural non-farm employment and its influence on growth coincide with the national trends. Simultaneously, we will also compare the contribution of the agricultural and allied activities sector with that of the non-farm sector to throw light on the factors driving the growth of the non-farm industry as a key source of employment. These comparisons are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that agriculture and allied activities consistently dominate rural employment shares at both the state and national levels throughout the examined periods. While the employment share in the agriculture industry has been on a decline, nonetheless occupies the largest portion. Interestingly, in comparison to its composition, the agricultural sector's contribution to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is substantially smaller, indicating that those engaged in agriculture tend to earn less compared to those in the non-farm sector. Consequently, there is a trend of agricultural workers migrating to various non-farm sectors in search of higher wage possibilities, resulting in a falling employment share in agriculture. Within the non-farm sub-sectors of Assam, two sectors stand out: the community, social, and personal service sector and the trade, hotels, and restaurant sector, which represented the highest shares of rural employment in 1993-94. The employment share in the communal, social, and personal service industry climbed from 7.69 percent in 1993-94 to 8.10 percent in 2004-05, eventually reaching 9.14 percent in 2011-12. Likewise, the share of employment in the trade, hotels, and restaurant industry was 6.9 percent in 1993-94, rapidly rising to capture the top position by 2011-12 at 12.83 percent. In terms of their contributions to the GSDP of Assam, these two non-farm sectors, namely the community, social, and personal service sector and the trade, hotels, and restaurants sector, have the overwhelming share. The sectoral shares of mining, quarrying, and electricity, water, and gas remained generally stable without witnessing considerable changes. At the national level, among the non-farm industries,

the manufacturing sector held the biggest share of overall employment in 1993-94, followed by community, social, and personal services. However, by 2011-12, the construction sector had claimed the biggest percentage of jobs. When it comes to contributions to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) among the non-farm sectors, trade, hotels, and restaurants, along with the manufacturing sector, form the biggest share.

Sector-Wise Growth of Rural Non-Farm Employment

Considering the sectoral structure of rural non-farm employment, it becomes necessary to analyze the changes in the relative capacity of various sectors to absorb employment over the post-reform era. This analysis will offer insight on whether employment prospects are declining or expanding for the rural workforce across different sectors. The table 2, gives a breakdown of sector-wise rural employment growth at both the state and national levels.

Table 2 highlights numerous significant tendencies. Firstly, throughout the period from 1993-94 to 2004-05, there was a positive yearly growth rate of rural workers in the agricultural sector, both in Assam and at the national level. This was attributable to the government's heightened emphasis on agricultural initiatives, which lured many rural laborers towards the farming industry to take advantage of incentives. However, from 2004-05 to 2011-12, contradicting statistics showed up as employment in the agriculture industry suffered negative growth at both the state and national levels. On the other hand, the non-farm sector demonstrated outstanding growth rates in both Assam and across India during both decades. This expansion was particularly prominent in several sub-sectors of the non-farm sector, except for mining and quarrying, electricity, water, and gas sub-sectors, where employment created by the public economy stalled since 1990, resulting in a negative growth rate. The manufacturing sector in Assam showed rapid job growth from 2004-05 to 2011-12 due to the implementation of major developmental initiatives. However, at the national level, the manufacturing sector witnessed a sharp decline during the same period, primarily due to the global economic downturn since 2008-09, which significantly impacted India's manufacturing units, especially those catering to export markets such as textiles, garments, and diamond cutting. The construction sector showed an increasing employment trend in both Assam and at the all-India level. This boost in employment prospects was a direct effect of several rural development projects that spurred increasing building activities. The job growth in trade, hotels, and restaurants

exhibited a mixed picture. In Assam, there was an increase tendency, whereas at the national level, a diminishing trend was observed. This sector became a key source of employment for rural youth in Assam, spurred by rural road construction, the rise of the tourism sector, and increased tourist inflow. Many educated rural youths increasingly opt for employment in this sector to earn a living, as they often prefer not to engage in physically difficult and financially unrewarding farm tasks. Transport, storage, and communication experienced a downward trend in both the state and at the national level. In finance, insurance, real estate, and business services, employment displayed an increasing tendency in Assam but a dropping trend at the all-India level. There has been a considerable transformation in the kind of employment within the community, social, and personal services sector during the 1990s. Remarkably, since 1993–1994 there has been an overall decline in employment in defense services and public administration. Although employment in community, social, and personal services expanded throughout the early 2000s, a large amount of the jobs gained in this sector can be linked to the implementation of rural development projects.

Work Participation Rates (WPRs) and Unemployment Rates

The percentage of a population that is actively involved in the production of goods and services within a country is indicated by the Work Participation Rate (WPR). This ratio provides useful insights into a country's job landscape (Kumar, 2010, p. 97). Table 3 displays the essential WPR data for both India and Assam.

As shown from Table 3, a large discrepancy exists between the Work Participation Rates (WPR) of males and females in rural areas. The lesser involvement of rural female workers reflects the prevalent societal norms, where the labor performed by female workers often goes unnoticed as an economic activity (Reddy, 2009, p.570). The changes in the WPR of females over the investigated period may be related to income impacts, wherein females join the labor force when household reservation income drops (Unni, 1989, p. WS30; Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010, p.55). The sharp rise in female WPR in Assam in 2004–05 can be linked to the agriculture sector's negative growth rate in the year previously, whereas the subsequent recovery of the agricultural sector can account for the WPR fall in 2009–10. WPR provides a comprehensive overview of work conditions in an area, but understanding the nature of rural labor in Assam requires information on the unemployment situation. With a little industrial basis, Assam's economy is largely agrarian, with most rural

households engaged in agriculture. Given the seasonal nature of agriculture, a considerable fraction of persons employed in this sector experiences unemployment during the off season. For financial stability, a portion of them might resort to wage labor, self-employment, or household chores (Bhuyan & Mitra, 2018, p.112). To reflect this complicated unemployment scenario, Table 4. offers data on all three unemployment measures: Usual Principal Status (UPS), Current Weekly Status (CWS), and Current Daily Status (CDS).

While CWS and CDS primarily evaluate seasonal unemployment, the UPS measurement takes into consideration both persistent and persistent unemployment. The data in Table 4 demonstrates that in rural Assam, unemployment rates for both males and females went up throughout the initial period of economic reforms, from 1993-94 to 1999-2000, across all three unemployment indicators. Following that, there was a decline in the 61st round, but in the 66th round, rates increased further. In general the period of economic reforms witnessed a deterioration in the unemployment situation in Assam. For females, jobless percentages outpaced those of males in all three categories, underscoring their low engagement in the labor force. Additionally, changes in female unemployment rates reveal that a considerable percentage of rural women seek employment during times of difficulty but withdraw from the labor sector when normalcy returns. Compared to other rural areas in India, chronic unemployment is more prevalent among both males and females in Assam. This can be due mostly to the absence of industrial development and the growing population pressure resulting from substantial influx from nearby regions (Bhattacharyya, 2009; Roy & Debnath, 2010).

Conclusion

The study shows an overview of the growing environment of rural non- agricultural employment in Assam and India. Despite agriculture's low contribution to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in comparison to labor force participation, the sectoral composition analysis shows that the majority of workers in rural areas are employed in the agricultural sector. In Assam, the communal, social, and personal service sector along with the trade, hotels, and restaurant sector form the highest share of rural employment, whereas at the national level, construction and manufacturing sectors dominate. Work Participation Rates (WPR) indicated a rise for males from 51.6 percent in 1993-94 to 55.3 percent in 2009-10.

However, there was a shifting tendency in WPR for rural females, staying around 15 to 20 percent. This mismatch reveals a major gender divide in rural Assam's labor force participation, mostly determined by social practices and traditions. The volatility in female WPR shows that many rural women seek employment only during home crisis situations and withdraw from the labor when normal conditions prevail. The unemployment situation worsened in rural Assam during the post-reforms era in comparison to rural India, mostly due to the lack of industrial development and the increased population pressure resulting from substantial influx from nearby regions. Therefore, to encourage equitable and progressive growth in the rural economy, greater focus must be placed on the non-farm sector, which has emerged as a substantial source of employment generation. However, a more extensive analysis at a granular level, concentrating on the nature of employment generated within different sub-sectors of the non-farm sector, would further expand our knowledge of the impact of reforms on rural employment and the expansion of the non-farm sector.

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Sustenance of Nongpok Sekmai Pottery of Manipur in the Globalized Era

Keisham Ingocha Singh & Arundhati Devi Maibam

Abstract

Pot-making is a traditional occupation of women in Nongpok Sekmai, Manipur (India). Currently, potters are finding it difficult to survive due to a decline in consumption and a shrinking market as a result of the introduction of modern technological products, such as ceramics, plastic, and metallic utensils that are more durable, attractive, and cost-effective. The present paper seeks the issue of sustainability of Nongpok Sekmai pottery by developing the indicators within the sustainable development matrix. The most promising link between pottery tradition and sustainable development is the extent to which this tradition provides social-cultural and environmental connectivity which are found predominantly as positive indicators. Introduction of new technology, imparting of technical know-how knowledge, alignment of new production items, dissemination of information to the masses regarding the benefit of using earthenware, etc. could be taken up to minimize the negative hindrances in the sustainable development of Nongpok Sekmai pottery.

Keywords: Indicators, pot-making, shrinking market, sustainable development, and traditional occupation.

Introduction

Modern technological products like ceramics, plastic, and metallic utensils which are more durable, attractive, and cost-effective replace the traditional earthen pots which are culturally valued items in every culture. Mass production of goods with the help of new technology supported by sophisticated marketing and advertising is destroying the livelihood of many traditional handicrafts in developing countries, resulting inability to absorb them into modern industries. As a consequence of this, many ethnic groups are compelled to leave their ancestral occupation to cope with the changed economic structure (Medhi et al. 2012, p. 27) and even migrate to towns and cities (Bica and Florescu 2017, p.134). Due to fewer financial opportunities (ibid), Indian artisans and craftsmen including the craft of pottery are disappearing.

Observing the severity of the situation, the sustainability of such craft may be looked at from the sustainable development model.

Review of Literature

The concept of sustainable development has been widely accepted in the late 1980s, after its appearance in *Our Common Future*, also known as *The Brundtland Report* (Dernbach 1998, p. 18-19; Strange and Bayley 2008, p. 24) and introducing it into international policy discourse (Basiago 1999, p. 148; Pope, David, and Angus 2004, p. 597; Redclift 2005, p. 66; Johnston et al. 2007, p. 60) which has defined as "Development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations 1987, p. 28). With the agreement made by the different world bodies, it is agreed that there are three core aspects of sustainable development which are also called three pillars such as economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability (Ciegis et al. 2009, p. 32; Ghosh 2015, p. 10). Environmental, social, and economic sustainability cannot be achieved separately without at least achieving a basic level in these areas simultaneously (Elkington 1999, p. 43). Therefore, sustainable development is an approach encompassing the environmental, economic, and social goals of the community as a multidimensional approach, allowing for the well-being of the present and future generations (Ciegis et al. 2009, p. 32; Duran et al. 2015, pp. 809-810). Based on these three core components, political commitment, stakeholder engagement and support, enhanced capacity and a shared vision will be needed to deliver on the promise of sustainable development (UNESSAP 2015, p.45).

For analyzing the sustainable development of a craft like pottery in the local scenario, one needs to develop indicators within the borderline of the craft itself. Indicators are the models, that simplify a complex issue or situation and make them understood and grasped by people (UNCHS 1997). The Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) also suggest an outline of development in the economy, society, and environment for sustainability and look to combine physical and social science knowledge while taking decision-making, measuring the change, and standardizing progress toward sustainable development goals (DESAUN 2007, p. 4). Developing indicators is an evolving process which means that there is no question of final or definitive (Nathan and Reddy 2012, p.188) but they (indicators) may be adjusted over time to fit the specific conditions, priorities, and capabilities (UNCSD 1996, p.3).

Looking into the changing trend of the occupational shift from pottery to other economic traits which is heading towards total extinction as a result of the negative impacts of forces of modernity and urbanization, an attempt is made in this paper to save guard the entire cultural legacy of pot making of Nongpok Sekmai by analyzing feasibility for continuing the tradition through the lens of sustainable development model.

Aim and Objectives

The objectives of the study are to develop sustainable development indicators and to assess the feasible sustenance of pottery production in Nongpok Sekmai.

Methodology

The study is based on primary and secondary data. The study's main target population is the potters of Nongpok Sekmai. Primary data were collected from the women potters of Nongpok Sekmai. The tools for collecting information were in-depth interviews, household surveys, and observation. The study was conducted from July 2018 to June 2019 to have information on potting activities for a complete calendar year.

The People and the Village

Nongpok Sekmai is situated at a distance of about 35 km. east from Imphal in Thoubal district of Manipur (India) with a total population of 1194 souls (582 males, 621 females). On the western side of the village near the Gwarok hill, the occurrence of clay deposits happens to be the important geological feature that cultured the tradition of pottery to the people. The clay site is about one kilometer away from the heart of the village. This quarrying place is called '*Kamphang*'.

The patri-oriented Nongpok Sekmai society is characterized by the seven exogamous social units (locally known as *yek*). Men play important roles in various social activities and engage in major economic pursuits (Singh 2016, p. 99). Women of Nongpok Sekmai excel in the craft of pottery making apart from other economic pursuits. Inter and intra-village marriages are a common feature of the society which indicates that the society is no longer isolated as a pottery village from the rest of the surrounding villages.

Result

Generally, developing and defining indicators to suit sustainable development needs a huge data bank and facts/events. However, in the case of Nongpok Sekmai pottery, indicators are developed based on local context encompassing the generalized common prospects and problems of the economy, society, and environment of the potters as there is no documented evidence as such to infer data for developing indicators. Therefore, the present development of indicators is a specific and local situation, however, they are framed within the United Nations Guidelines and Methodologies (United Nations 2001). Based on it, fifteen indicators are hereby developed (five each for the economy, society, and environment) for

sustainable development of pottery craft in Nongpok Sekmai and the consequent findings are highlighted as follows.

Economic Indicators and Findings

Potters Population (Workforce): The workforce is a very important indicator that is directly linked with the economy of the society. The greater the workforce, the greater the productivity is within the framework of economic sustainability.

Only 4.94 percent engages in the craft of pottery in Nongpok Sekmai, when calculated with the total population of the village and it makes up 9 percent of the total female population, which is very less workforce that may impact on pottery production.

Type of Production: This indicator measures the types of pottery production of Nongpok Sekmai and then looks for the sustenance of the occupation.

Many new earthenware items such as platters, decorative items, piggy banks, and flower pots are produced to survive the trade after decreasing demand for traditional products.

Consumption of production: Consumption of production is a major aspect of the survival of cottage industries.

Today, earthenware products are used only for ritual and ceremonial purposes. The large scale used in culinary purposes in the early days is no longer seen, marking negative feedback to sustenance.

Production Technology: This indicator will monitor the technology applied in the process of production. It is important to note that economic sustainability is linked to technology.

While assessing the technology for pottery production in Nongpok Sekmai, it was found that they still employ traditional technology.

Transportation facilities and road conditions: This indicator provides information about the transport facilities and road conditions taking into consideration the fragile nature of vessels.

Good transport facilities are seen and therefore, connectivity networked with different distributional ends is witnessed at present. As narrated by the potters, the road condition is improved than the earlier days.

Environmental Indicators and Findings

Quarrying site: This indicator states quarrying site information and clay quality.

Kamphang, situated at a distance about one km from the heart of the village is the quarrying site of which a good geological feature of clay deposit for potting is abundantly found.

Land/area for quarrying raw materials: This indicator offers information about the protection and perseverance of the land for pottery production.

The site is a community-reserved land for quarrying the clay for the entire village. Potters may collect whatever they require for potting. The community protects and reserves this area for carrying out the culturally manipulated craft.

Cottage industry: Pottery production is a cottage industry in which zero environmental impact is calculated while carrying out the production activities. The Nongpok Sekmai pottery production is carried on within the premises of their respective houses.

Source of energy for firing earthen wares: This indicator describes the source of energy and their availability in the local context.

The potters of Nongpok Sekmai usually employ open-air kilns for firing earthen wares. Local resources like paddy husks and straws which are abundantly available in and around the village are used as the source of energy for firing.

Clay depletion: This indicator measures the depletion of clay which leads to a shortage of raw materials (clay).

The people of Nongpok Sekmai believe that the clay that has been taken out for making vessels would be filled up automatically and maintained at the same level with the untouched surface in due course of time. They call this natural occurrence as '*leibak souba*'. This phenomenon is called 'isostasy' in geology in which equilibrium in the earth's crust – an elevated part in one area is counterbalanced by a depressed part in another due to the forces that elevate landmasses balance the forces that depress them (Sjöberg and Mohammad 2015, pp. 1-9).

Social Indicators and Findings

Social-cultural connectivity: This indicator measures the social connectivity with the pottery.

The importance of pottery in the Nongpok Sekmai society has been marked since time immemorial. Even if the impact of modernization changes the attitude of people using the earthen vessels, they continue the use of earthen vessels in rituals and ceremonies.

Distributional equity: This indicator tells the distributional equity of the earthenware.

The vessels which are necessary for the ritual and ceremonies are produced and distributed as and when demanded.

Demand for production: This indicator measures the demand for pottery production.

Today, even in the houses of potters, they do not use earthenware for culinary items. These are replaced by metallic utensils which are durable and fashionable.

Political accountability: This indicator measures the political accountability for the upliftment of pottery production.

Though there are numbers of programmes for the upliftment and improvement of the pottery in terms of imparting technical know-how, supporting machinery, and financial aid, none of the programs reach the potters of Nongpok Sekmai.

Community participation: This indicator pronounces community participation in the occupation.

Today, the younger generation does not want to join this occupation because they think, it is a tedious job, less profitable and dirty. Moreover, when one of the members of a potter's family gets a government job, the potter quits the occupation as the family income becomes stable and improved. There is no question of safeguarding the occupation from the community.

Discussion

Positive Aspects of Sustainable Development

By analyzing the sustainable development matrix (SD matrix), it is found that there are nine positive indicators out of fifteen for the sustenance of Nongpok Sekmai pottery (Table no. 1). Traditionally, Nongpok Sekmai potters specialized in the making of *uyan*, a globular curry pot, out-turned rim, and ochre color (Lisham 2011, p. 29) having fishbone pattern and paint of *kuhi* (*Pasaniapachyphyla*) (Laishram et al. 1999, p. 30). Today, new products like flower bases, piggy banks, *diya* (offering lamp), *bhuja* (small pot), and various decorative items are seen as newly innovated pottery items and this is a good indicator of the sustenance of the occupation. Society accommodates the new products which are a sign of acceptance from the community.

In Nongpok Sekmai, carrying out the steps of pottery production can be done within the premises of every house as pottery production is a cottage industry. So, pottery production is treated as having zero environmental impact in terms of space, time, and labour which is a positive feature for sustainable development. The potters of Nongpok Sekmai practice open-air kilns for firing the products by using local resources like paddy husks and straws which are available abundantly in and around the village to minimize the problem of energy-producing materials for the open kiln and a meant for sustenance.

Regarding the sources of primary raw materials like clay and courser, they are found abundantly in the vicinity of the village. It is also learned that the community has reserved land for clay procurement which is culturally sanctioned and a mark of environmental sustenance.

In Nongpok Sekmai society, earthenware has been associated with performing rites and rituals from the time immemorial which clearly shows that there is a demand for these products from the society. So, from a sustainable point of view, this may be treated as a good indicator of sustenance.

Negative Aspects of Sustainable Development

It is seen from the SD matrix (Table no. 1) that only a small percentage of female (4.94 percent) engages in the occupation which is a negative indicator for economic sustenance. Workforce and production and thereafter the economy of the people have sheer connectivity and relationship.

The potters of Nongpok Sekmai still use traditional technology that requires and experiences time-consuming and tedious work. Economic sustainability is linked with technology. Advanced technology produces quality maintenance and scaling up of quantity in production which is a vital tool for a sustainable economy.

Large numbers of traditional culinary products like *chaphu*, *ngangkok*, *uyal*, *ishing pun*, *ngangkha*, *kharung*, *tumloi*, *kegam*, *kamlong*, *irang pun*, and *thumphu* are replaced by modern ceramics, plastic, metals, and other alloy products resulting gradually neglect of these products in the society. This is called 'social blocking' a big hindrance in the social sustenance process. It is also found in the study that there is less concern about the sustainable approach for pottery as far as political accountability is concerned. As the level of literacy increases and the accessibility of a wider range of other occupational traits, the younger generations become more inclined to salaried jobs leaving behind the traditional occupations. Among the older potters, they leave the occupation when the family improves their economy due to getting a job among the family members or other kinds of aid. It is also observed from the study that individuals who are poor,

illiterate, or poorly educated and cannot enter into the arena of the modern world, are glued into the traditional occupation.

Concluding Remarks

Addressing the issue of pottery sustenance in Nongpok Sekmai, it is observed that positive indicators are dominated over the negative that too can be addressed with proper planning, political intervention, and social participation.

The availability of raw materials in the vicinity of the village provides positive physical sustainability to the craftsperson. Being a pottery craft - a cottage industry, the whole operational steps of pottery production are within zero environmental impact which is encouraging from the sustainable point of view.

Pottery is traditionally associated with the socio-cultural life of the community which is a good indicator of sustainable development. However, social blocking in the form of a fast decline in the demand for the products from the community is the biggest stumbling block. New non-traditional products are lined up to survive the occupation and if it is scaled up by providing new technology, machines, and knowledge of technical know-how to improve the present products and challenge the present market may have a positive approach to sustenance. As a resultant factor, decreased demand for utilitarian products may be addressed by giving awareness to the masses about the health benefits of using earthen wares which will invite and promote the community to increase the demand.

The art of making pot being the culturally valued craft in society must be harnessed through partnerships involving institutions in society, such as Non-Government Organizations, Community Based Organizations, corporate (including private) bodies, academic and research institutions, trade unions, etc., which must be made an integral part of planning and implementation for sustainable development. It should be addressed by way of giving awareness to the masses with the consultation of experts and policy planners that too should be patronized through political commitment. Giving financial assistance in the form of a loan, grant, or other relevant aid may be a good catalyst in sustaining the occupation.

Table: 1. Sustainable Development (SD) Matrix of Nongpok Sekmai Pottery

SD Domains	Indicators	Indicator Descriptions	Findings	Impact
Economy	Potters Population (Workforce)	The workforce is a very important indicator that is directly linked with the economy of the society. The greater the workforce, the greater the productivity is within the framework of economic sustainability.	4.94% when calculated with the total population of the village (9% with the total women population).	Negative
	Type of Production	This indicator measures the types of pottery production of Nongpok Sekmai and then looks for the sustenance of the occupation.	New types of products like platters, decorative items, piggy banks, and flower pots.	Positive
	Consumption of production	Consumption of production is a major aspect to discuss for the survival of cottage industries.	Pottery products are used only for ritual and ceremonial purposes nowadays.	Negative
	Production Technology	This indicator will monitor the technology applied in the process of production. It is important to note that economic sustainability is linked with technology.	Traditional Technology Employed.	Negative
	Transportation facilities	This indicator provides information about the transport facilities and road conditions taking into consideration the fragile nature of vessels.	Good connectivity networked with different distributional ends	Positive
Environment	Quarrying site	This indicator states quarrying site information and clay quality.	Good geological feature of clay deposit and 1 km distance	Positive

	Nature of quarrying site	This indicator offers information about the protection and perseverance of the land for pottery production.	The community's reserved land, clay can be collected whatever they require.	Positive
	Cottage industry	Pottery production is termed as a cottage industry in which zero environmental impact is calculated while carrying out the production activities.	Zero environmental impact on space	Positive
	Source of energy for production	This indicator describes the source of energy and its availability in the local context.	Local resources like paddy husks and straws which are abundantly available in the village are used as the source of energy for firing.	Positive
	Clay depletion	This indicator measures the depletion of clay. It is an important indicator because the production is directly proportionate to the availability of raw materials.	No question of clay depletion as the quarrying site lies in the isostasy ¹ position.	Positive
Social	Social-cultural connectivity	This indicator measures the social connectivity with the pottery. The importance of pottery in the society has been marked since time immemorial.	Pottery is associated with the socio-cultural life of the community.	Positive
	Distributional equity	This indicator tells the distributional equity of the earthenware. This indicator measures the distributional equity of the earthenware.	Distributed as and when demanded	Positive
	Production Demand	This indicator measures the demand for pottery production.	Decreased in demand as social blocking ²	Negative
	Political accountability	This indicator measures the political accountability for the upliftment of pottery production.	Less participated	Negative
	Community participation	This indicator pronounces the community participation in the occupation. It is learned from	Less concerned	Negative

		the literature that no programme is sustainable without community participation.		
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Emergence of the Subaltern Resistance against the Colonialism in Goa – Reconstructing from the writings of the Unusual Historians

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Abstract

History of Goan Liberation Movement has been the topic of prime interest among the historians of both Goan and non-Goan origin alike. While looking at the important narratives and counter-narratives of historiography in Goa, one would come to an understanding that, history here wasn't unilinear, neither its' making nor its' writing. There have been many contending histories that tend to collaborate sometimes and confront yet other times.

The present paper deals with the few unusual historians who had mastered the art of both, the making and writing history of Goa. Many of those who attempted writing these histories were not trained, seasoned historians, but were fortunate enough to observe closely and even experience and participate in the historical events of the liberation movement and were courageous enough to change the course of history. As such they have provided 'participant's point of view' of the Goan freedom struggle.

In short, this paper explores the writings of the freedom fighters of Goa who have experimented with a wide range of forms of writing history, such as, autobiographical accounts, biographies, articles to print media, letters and pamphlets directly addressing the public about the past and of contemporary challenges, etc. Thus, 'Writing history' had become an essential tool for integrating and organizing collective resistance. Through their words and deeds, they could create and augment the idea of nation and nationalism among the masses that evolved the subaltern nationalistic discourse and facilitated the subaltern resistance against the colonial regime of Portugal.

Key Words: Colonial Hegemony, Subaltern resistance, elite collaboration, Inclusive struggle for freedom, liberation from exclusion, Writing with purpose.

Introduction

‘Segundo salazar, Goa é "*uma criação original de uma civilização ocidental e a sua população "uma população homogénea", uma "raça especial", o caso de Goa "um caso moral" ...*’ⁱ

According to Salazar, Goa is ‘an original creation of a Western civilization and its population "a homogenous population", a "special race", the case of Goa "a moral case” ...’

So, the three things that catch our observation here are,

1. ‘Goa’ the way it was then was an ‘original creation’ of the West. There is nothing ‘oriental’ left in that.
2. Goans are a ‘special race’, a ‘homogenous lot’.
3. The Goan case is that of ‘moral’, not Political or territorial, but purely ‘a moral case’.

Thus, according to Salazar, ‘Goa’ is an original creation by the Western civilization and has no connection or contribution of India with that, or for that matter there is no ‘Goan’ contribution in ‘Goa’. It has a population which is ‘homogenous’, without any fractions or fault lines, and totally loyal to its Civilizers. It is a ‘special race’, specially created through the policy of miscegenation, he meant to say, might be. And hence, the case of Goa is one of the ‘moral’, perhaps the moral of the West, or to be more specific, Portuguese Moral.

This sums up the nature of Portuguese colonial discourse in Goa and other territories of ‘Estado da India’. Not surprisingly, resembles much with the British strategy with the Indian natives in several British Indian pockets. For example, Coorg. As Surendra Rao puts it accurately about the European narratives on Coorg,

‘...They unfolded the idioms of power which the colonial masters expressed in defence of their conquering instincts, and their many complex and subtle variants. They in fact, have invented Coorg in the sense that the European writings have created the images and stereotypes which have gone into the making of the Coorg Persona. The Coorg, as it is known, is the creation of its history and those who wrote it.’ (Rao 1997, p. 632)

T. B. Cunha, the stalwart ideologue, author, editor, and freedom fighter from Goa, was one of those first Goans to realize the impact of European colonial discourse in legitimizing the imperialistic ambitions of the colonizers and in creating a ‘special, homogenous Goa’ whose

morals are purely western. The colonial discourse had emptied the 'native soul' from the Gomantak and replaced it with the 'goa' that is as imagined by the western psyche and as required for stabilizing colonialism. What Salazar called as 'original creation of Goa' was termed by of T. B. Cunha as 'Denationalization of Goans' (Cunha 1955). His writings exposed the hypocrisy of the Salazar's policies that divided the Goans into two broad classes of 'assimilado' and 'indigenous' based on their knowledge of Portuguese language. The fact that the indigenous who can't speak Portuguese language were not fit to join the ordinary ranks too in the army. And even the 'assimilados' cannot manage to reach the higher ranks that were open for the privileged with pure Portuguese blood. He refutes the colonial propaganda of 'assimilation', 'homogenous population', etc. and reveals the reality that Goans were only discriminated ever.

But what is Goa for the Goan Freedom Fighters

Among the Portuguese possessions in India, Goa acted as the capital of the Estado da India (Portuguese 'State of India'). Though it is a fact that Goa was under the Portuguese colonial rule for 450 years, only the territory called as *Velhas Conquistas* (Old Conquests) were obtained first, and the areas of *Novas Conquistas* (New Conquests) could be included in Goa only during the eighteenth-century A.D. This fact reflects in the religious demography between these two areas. While most of the villages in the old conquests are Christianized, most of the villages of new conquests were able to retain their Hindu majority though Christianity spread there too. But for Goan freedom fighters, either Hindus or Christians, Goa was always a part of India and integration with their mother land, Bharat was supposed to be the logical outcome of the liberation from Colonialism.

A look into the writings of the ideologues of Goa reveal they have always seen Goa or Gomantak as part of Bharat or India. Whether it is newspapers or political organizations, their names suggest their affiliation. For example, '*A Voz da India*' (Voice of India) was a newspaper paper founded by Vicente Joao Figueiredo. It was co-sponsored by Jose Inacio de Loyola who was also a prominent leader of '*O Partido Indiano*' (Indian Party) ⁱⁱ. They dared to project their Indianness in front of the colonial regime that prohibited anything that is not subservient to the Portuguese Imperialism. Ravindra Kelekar's magazine '*Gomant Bharati*' goes a step further in openly adhering to the fact that Gomant itself is Bharati (Shirodkar 1986, 175). That is Goa

is India. They didn't endorse Salazar's idea of Goans being a 'special race'. They preferred to be one with India and wanted freedom from dictatorship.

Freedom, Freedom Movement and Subaltern Resistance

Freedom movements were mostly driven by the twin aims of freedom from the oppressive rule and the desire for self-rule. The concept of Self-rule or Swarajya is centred around the idea that the people who wish to have self-rule are connected. Emotionally, culturally, geographically, politically with the land that they inhabit, and also share certain amount of common ancestry and history. And that, this affiliation and belongingness to their land and its people makes them rightful contenders to the governing power. When the distant 'other' captures this power to govern them and their land, resistance becomes a natural response, almost inevitable.

While the distant 'other' is a colonizer who subjugated the natives, the subaltern sections were the fellow natives and yet had to experience 'otherness'. As such, their struggle for freedom was not just from colonialism but also from the socio, economic discriminations prevalent in the Goan society. The subalterns during the colonial rule had to face the apathy and utter negligence of the colonial administrators. Their grievances unheard by the rulers and the discontented masses were looking for the alternatives hopelessly.

Conditions of the Subalterns during the freedom struggle

To understand the nature and forms of subaltern resistance it is important to understand the reasons of their resistance, their grievances.

T. B. Cunha has addressed the problems of Goan migrants in search of livelihood to British India in several articles. His '*Camouflaged Slavery (and Catholicism – An instrument of Portuguese Domination)*' penned as early as 1929 deals with the issue of overt and covert slavery existed those times and the issue of Kunbis who were lured into the British tea-plantations in Assam by a British agent, only to confine them there for years and imposing them on forced labour (Cunha 1961, pp. 261-266). The fact that the Portuguese were hands-in-glove with those agents and the Portuguese government chose to ignore their case for really long made him question that 'aren't these Portuguese Citizens'? Unfortunately, for the Portuguese, the illiterate Kunbi labourers weren't part of either the 'special race' or 'original creation'. They were destined to be dumped in far off places as slaves under the colonial rule.

Mohan Ranade's memoirs titled '*Struggle Unfinished*', describes his stay at Navshi, a village 10 km away from Panaji, where he came across the bhatkars who were oppressive against the poor Gaudes mundkars (Ranade 1988, p. 19). Mundkars were allowed to make huts in the landed property of bhatkars and in return, they have to manage the farms and plantations of the bhatkars without being paid. So, to sustain themselves, some of the members of the mundkar family must find work elsewhere. Most of them used to work as construction labourer in Panaji and used walk their way to Panaji every day.

The harsh conditions they were living in and the brutal treatment they were facing from the bhatkars made Ranade think about organizing them, educating them. In his opinion, freedom is more important for the Gaudes and other such marginalized and they can be achieved it only with the liberation from the Portuguese and by establishing democratic governance in Goa. This was one of many such experiences that made him work towards organizing the subaltern and include them in the Goan liberation movement. But the presence of him in the village and his literacy classes for the Gaudes, both were an eyesore for the Bhatkars. And they told Ranade that he was wasting his time and knowledge on those 'savage Gaudes', and the Portuguese administration didn't shy away from giving out glaring evidence of colonial Government's attitude towards the subalterns.

Portuguese authorities in their enquiry proceedings of the freedom fighter Upendra V. Sinai Talaulikar, recorded a startling statement about the people who attended the meeting of the freedom fighters saying that,

"...there were no persons who merited any consideration by their social position or standard of life having taken part in the meeting, since he saw (the declarant, Parish Administrator of Priol, Antonio Manuel Marques) at this place only gaudes and begarins..." (Mhamai 2002, p. 17).

Thus, for the Portuguese Government, the subaltern natives weren't worth considering. They don't merit to be considered to have an opinion of their own, their presence was equal to their absence. It is not counted. But the important question that rises is, "If the colonial rule really nurtured the welfare of its citizens, why these communities remained in the margins of the society even after four centuries of 'civilizational drive' by the Portuguese Government?"

Another work that talks about the conditions of the marginalized is 'Sorrowing lies my land'⁸. Lambert Mascarenhas, a freedom fighter, author, and renowned journalist had authored this work (Mascarenhas 1955). The characters of this novel discuss the difference between Portugal's monarchy and the republic and laugh to their heart's content. They discuss *Acto Colonial* and curse Salazar, feel pitied for themselves and helpless about the general lethargy and inertia that gripped the Goan masses and intellectuals alike. His novel also depicted the miserable situation of the converts from lower castes. Through this work, Mascarenhas described how the Christian society in Goa had managed to invent a parallel system of castes among the converted. Thus, leaving no hope of escape from the caste and class distinctions and discriminations even after conversions.

Reconversion as a form of resistance

Now the question arises that whether there was any resistance at all from the subalterns to change their situation, to negotiate for the better? Yes, there was resistance, but it needed some support. This resistance came from the tribal community of Gaudes in the year of 1928.

In that year while T. B. Cunha was busy in establishing Goa Congress Committee and securing its affiliation with All India Congress Committee, connecting the Goans directly with the ongoing Indian national movement for independence. And few prominent leaders from Goa and Masurkar Maharaj from Satara were active in bringing the Catholic Gaudes back to their native religion, Hinduism. They were converted to Christianity during the previous centuries due to the conversion drive sponsored by the colonial regime and facilitated by the religious orders. With this act of reconverting, the Gaudes openly defied the alien religion imposed upon them by the colonizers. Thousands of the Christian Gaudes reverted to their native religion and came to be called Nav-Hindu Gaudes since then.

Reconversion can be seen as ‘assertion’ of their right to be re-rooted in their own religion. And also, as a strong ‘resistance’ they had put-up against any further imposition of alien culture and religion or rule upon them. In short, reconversion was the resistance against the religious intolerance practiced by the colonizers. Venkatesh Vishnu Vaidya was a freedom fighter from Cuncolim. He extended his support for the cause of reconversion of the Gaudes through his writings and by actively participating in the activities of Shuddhi movement in chimbel and carambolim areas of Goa. Among his writings, plays like ‘Gomantak Vijay’ (1930), and biography ‘Swatantryavir Savarkar’ (Marathi, 1932) were intended to inspire the Goans and connect them with the ongoing Indian national movement (Shirodkar 1986, pp. 359-360).

One of those Catholic Gaudes who opted for reconversion was Jagannath Hadkonkar. He used to be Joaquim Andrade before the Shuddhi movement. He was a prominent leader of the Gaudes around the region of Kalapur, St. Cruz. He was instrumental in the reconversion of the Gaudes of these places in 1928 (Kshirsagar 1930, Prakaran-4, 12). While he was successful in asserting his right to native religion and culture, his son Laxman Jagannath Hadkonkar, went further and participated in the resistance against colonial rule (Shirodkar 1990, p. 127). He was one of the many freedom fighters from Gaude community whose resistance led them to the rigorous imprisonment and brutal treatment, but they were undeterred by any difficulties. Their goal was to free their Goa, their motherland from alien rule. Narayan Nilkanth Verenkar or Narayan Fernandes was another freedom fighter from the Gaude community who returned to his ancestral surname to re-route to Hinduism. His family chose to become Verenkars again. Thus, from defying the religious persecution of colonizers to defying colonialism itself, the subalterns have gone greater lengths.

Efforts to eradicate social discrimination

Coming to the question that were there any conscious efforts from the freedom fighters to remove social distinctions? The answer is yes.

The efforts to eradicate social discrimination were taken by many mainstream freedom fighters in collaboration with the subaltern freedom fighters and masses. Mohan Ranade’s *‘Struggle Unfinished’* takes us through several villages of colonial Goa and describes the conditions of the subaltern citizens in those days. He was one of those freedom fighters who focused on

educating the masses, started literacy classes wherever he went, prepared cadres of loyal nationalists among those villagers.

His work mentions of Sonu Apte, a priest from a local temple at Dhargal. Apte, along with likeminded people has established Harijan Sevak Sangh and started free schools for harijans children in several villages nearby (Ranade 1988, p. 13). Mohan Ranade focussed on adult literacy too along with educating children and he allowed every community to avail his teachings. At Sawai, he along with several of his students, built a school where classes used to be run during the day and at nights, used to serve the purpose of a night stay for the underprivileged who used to frequent to Sawai for livelihood and had no place to go.

Bala Kakodkar was a freedom fighter and the head of Sevadal for Salcete and Quepem taluqs during 1947-48. As he noticed that the harijans were not allowed to avail the services at the hair-cutting saloons, he strived to get the entry for the Harijans into the hair-cutting saloons and other spaces of public utility that were otherwise restricted for them (Dicholkar 2006, p. 14).

'Fellow Participants' in the Struggle for Freedom

Due to the inherent national consciousness and these collaborated efforts, subalterns started taking part in the movement for the liberation. They were not the distant audience anymore. They were the 'fellow participants' in the freedom struggle now. But these subaltern freedom fighters were found mentioned mostly by their fellow freedom fighters. Tata Mahar and Dula Mahar from Sanvordem were among those who offered Satyagraha on 9th August 1946 and got arrested along with Bala Kakodkar, Gopal Naik and others (Menezes 2011, p. 87). The only source of reference to their participation comes from Juliao Menezes's work, 'Goa's Freedom Struggle'.

A sizeable number of freedom fighters belonging to the Velip community took part in the Goa's freedom struggle since 1950's. Canacona in South Goa had been the hub of Velip resistance against Colonialism. Quepem and Sanguem taluqs were not far behind and had number of subaltern freedom fighters representing Mahar, Gaude, Dhangar communities. Vasudev Venkatesh Phaldesai is a freedom fighter from Poinguinim in Canacona taluq and his work, 'Goa-Daman-Diu Muktilada Aani Mee' gives details of several subaltern freedom fighters

from Canacona region (Phaladesai 2014). About the contribution of Dhangars we get their references scattered in the books and interviews of various freedom fighters like Vishwanath Lawande, Fulgencio A. Moraes, etc.

Chandrakant Laxman Velip was the youngest of the Velip freedom fighters from Poinguinim village and an active member of NC(G). He Used to distribute material of nationalist propaganda among the villagers and helped organizing the Velip community in solidarity with the freedom struggle. He was arrested, tried by the Military Court and sentenced for rigorous imprisonment of Six years for participating in Satyagraha at Canacona police station. More than his individual identity, he believed and preferred in his national identity through-out his life.

Mukund Kid Pawar and Dulba Vishnu Pawar were freedom fighters from Bandoli village of Sanguem taluq. They were of the Mahar community and were active members of the organization called Azad Gomantak Dal (AGD). Prabhakar Vaidya was the prominent leader of AGD. He penned his memoirs titled '*Agneecha Jwala*' (Vaidya 1992, p.120). His work vividly describes all the armed campaigns where the Pawars participated. He mentions how Mukund Kid Pawar and Ramakrishna Bhat Sahakari, (a priest and a nationalist, sympathizer of AGD) used to have meetings and casual talks sitting in temple. Surely, Goan liberation movement created a belongingness among various communities and liberated many subalterns from the shackles of societal discriminations much before they were liberated from colonialism.

Negotiation for their right to lead

But did these freedom fighters remain just as 'fellow participants' or 'associates'? Or negotiated for their right to lead?

There were few freedom fighters among the subalterns in Goa who made their own destiny and led the liberation movement from the front. Narayan Bhikoji Rao (N. B. Rao), a freedom fighter and the crusader of equality, worked tirelessly post-Liberation for making Goan socio-political scene a more inclusive one. He belonged to Chambhar community and born in Ashwe Wada, Mandrem in North Goa (Rao 2009, p. 24). His father was a Mantrikar or Mantarkar, basically meant a Vaidya (folk-healer) who had good knowledge of local medicinal herbs and used the

same along with recital of some mantras or prayer to cure people. He started participating in Goan freedom struggle while he was still in his teens. Offered Satyagraha at Madgaon on the day of 15th August 1955. The Portuguese police had detained him several times and shifted base to Mumbai (Shirodkar 1990, p. 94). There he continued his nationalist activities, rose to the position of the Secretary of the Bombay branch of the NC(G) during 1959-60. He came into contact with the close aides of Dr. Ambedkar too as his struggle for freedom was against social exclusion too.

He started working towards strengthening the marginalized but while doing so, he never discriminated the others. Post-liberation, he went on becoming the member of the ad-hoc Pradesh Congress committee, was the nominated member of the Consultative Council to the Lt. Governor of Goa, Daman, and Diu. Was the representative of Goa, Daman and Diu on the Commission of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India in 1968-69, was the General Secretary of the Bharatiya Depressed Classes, Bharat Anu Suchit Jati Parishad, Goa. His work 'Mee Aasa Aahe', written in Marathi, contains along with his memoirs, his correspondence with several national leaders who worked towards creating inclusive society. He definitely negotiated his right to lead and earned it with his dedication.

Tukaram Raghoba Kankonkar is another freedom fighter who braved the harsh currents to make his own path to glory. He was born at Pale or Paliem near Siridao in present day North Goa (Shirodkar 1986, p.161). He belonged to the Gauda tribal community. Unlike N.B Rao who chose the path of non-violence, Tukaram had to choose revolutionary activism to achieve freedom. Prabhakar Sinari, one of the leading activists of Azad Gomantak Dal (A.G.D) mentions in his book 'From Darkness to Dawn' that Tukaram Kankonkar was the founder member of A.G.D., a revolutionary organization which had drawn inspiration from Azad Hind Fauj of Subhash Chandra Bose (Sinari 2017, pp.22-23). Tukaram's father was Godaji Gowdo and to the dismay of many, he was a staunch supporter of the Portuguese. But Tukaram was against the colonial rule since his school days and later he formed A.G.D. along with Prabhakar Sinari, Narayan Naik, Dattatraya Deshpande, Vishwanath Lawande, Jaiwant Kunde, Betu Naik and others on June 18th, 1947, exactly one year after the historical moment of the call for the civil disobedience movement in Goa by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (Sinari 2017, pp. 34-35).

His involvement in the liberation movement was not like a subordinate but as the founding member of an organization and an equal member of the native's collective. He was no more a representative of a particular tribal community but was a freedom fighter of Goa leading them towards armed struggle as the last and only resort against the dictatorial colonial regime. He participated in the attacks on Portuguese government establishments such as Fazenda at Mapusa, targeting the employees of Banco Nacional Ultramarino at Panaji, etc. Later due to incessant arrests of the A.G.D. activists by the Portuguese police he shifted his base to neighbouring Indian territories (Sinari, 2017, pp. 43-45). Portuguese government filed a case against him and carried on a trial against him in absentia and sentenced him with 28 years of rigorous imprisonment (Shirodkar 1986, p. 162). But he evaded his arrest and continued his nationalist activities from the Indian territories till the liberation of Goa. Tukaram Kankonkar in order to fight for the freedom of Goa didn't hesitate to go against the wishes of his father, braved the attacks and arrests of the Portuguese police, even stayed away from his beloved Goa to gather support from India. N. B. Rao and Tukaram Kankonkar both chose different paths towards the same goal and changed the narrative that subalterns can only be the subordinates. They have proved that spirit of freedom and love for motherland are the guiding forces among the subalterns too and their contribution in the Goan liberation movement was remarkable.

Conclusion

Thus, the writings of Goan freedom fighters were aimed at dismantling the colonial propaganda. Their purpose was to awaken the national consciousness and to organize the fellow Goans to achieve freedom from Portuguese colonialism. Their writings reflected their worldview as well as about the contemporary social situation. They describe their efforts to educate and organize the subaltern sections to create an inclusive society. Their writings are the only source of reference to know about many unsung subaltern freedom fighters who rose from the position of helpless victims to that of assertive fellow nationals.

The emergence of subaltern resistance was best illustrated through the writings of the Goan freedom fighters than any academic or official chronicler could record. Some of the freedom fighters have written their memoirs post-liberation, have consciously recorded the details of each subaltern freedom fighter they have come across during the course of liberation movement.

And the fact that few of the subaltern freedom fighters have penned their autobiographical accounts, is a much appreciable fact. These works served as first person accounts of their contribution towards Goa's liberation. It is due to their conscious efforts and spontaneous responses that Goan liberation movement had seen larger participation from the subaltern sections, making it an inclusive movement that strived for an Inclusive and Free Goa in Independent India.

Notes:

- i. See p. 6, *Os últimos passos de longa caminhada, Goa Libertada: Liquidado o colonialismo na India*, Portugal: Político.
- ii. See p. 2, *Goa Revolutionary Day 1991*, booklet published by Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Goa.
- iii. Personal interaction with the freedom fighter's family. See *Goa Liberation Day 18th June 2003*, booklet published by Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Goa.
- iv. See p. 3, *Navhind Times*, Sunday, November 5th, 1995. Filgencio Moraes mentions Navlo Gaulei. He along with his three other family members used to hide the radical freedom fighters and carry forward their messages. (Personal Interaction of the author with the family of Navlo Varak Gauli at Karyamol Kalay, Sanguem taluq)

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Teak and Forest on the High Range: Forest Policy on the Hills

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Abstract

The British depended heavily on the forest resources in the Princely state of Travancore from the beginning itself. By understanding the strategic use of wood, especially teak, they used it for both military and administrative purposes. India had a noteworthy shipbuilding industry due to the inevitability to shield oneself during the time of battles. For this, they relied highly on the Travancore forests, which served as a vital resource for ship building industry. Apart from using for military needs, timber resources were utilised for various other purposes like construction of railroads, to satisfy the needs of the internal industries, and other stately objectives. This exhibits the diverse uses of timber during the British era. The British administration in Travancore supported a group of state-sponsored traders and eventually they came to control the economy of the state.

Key words: Forest Department, Timber, Timber Contractor, Scientific forestry

Introduction

The sylvan resources of Travancore proved to be an exigent administrative cum military requirement from the beginning of the company rule itself. As the base and superstructure of the British Empire building was science and economy, they very well used the scientific knowledge for finding out the qualities of teak and their itinerant gaze helped in finding out its quantity. This was confined not only to teak but almost all hitherto unexplored species of timbers and plants and their uses were identified by them. They drained the forest of Travancore out of its timber resources mainly for military purposes. As war was a constant phenomenon, the British had to build strong ships to protect themselves which led to a large-scale shipbuilding industry in India in the 18th c. Later the timber resources were exploited for railway expansion, domestic industrial needs and other imperial requirements. Though the *desiccationists* were highly fascinated by the forest resources of the country and advocated its conservation through scientific forestry, we can find scientific forestry rapidly giving way to

commercial forestry. A deep analysis of the documents shows that a team of state sponsored traders began to emerge. They steadily and gradually began to dominate the economy of the state. They emerged as a powerful lobbying community in the aura of native politics.

In Travancore, a group of vendors with the help of the government rose to eminence and took control of the economy of the state. They obsessed a great deal of power, especially in regional politics. The change in policy matters like deciding the terms of the trade and methods of timber extraction depended on the relationships of these timber barons with the Government. This research, which is entirely based on primary materials, aims to clarify the relationships between government and wood contractors and how the policies initiated by the Forest Department was changing frequently on demand of the contractors

King Makers on the Hills

The Rawthers belonged to a family of merchants who later grew into prominence as timber barons of Travancore. They were a well-known family in the hills who belonged to Rajapalayam in Tamil Nadu. According to primary sources, Meeravoo Rawther was the earliest ancestor of the family. The descendants of the Rawthers proclaimed that they were the first to establish cardamom farming in the Hills and obtained from the Maharaja of Travancore acres of land for cardamom product. (Sebastian Joseph & Lekha Pillai, 2017 p. 33). Travancore's sovereignty over the High Ranges was defended by the Rawther family when the colonial administration in Madras wanted to inflate its hold over the High Ranges by trying to exploit the gorgeous woodlands. The colonial administration's goal to acquire resources free of costs basically drove this territorial skirmish, and the Rawthers' who were paying the 'kudivila' of cardamom from the beginning to the government of Travancore helped Travancore to secure its control over the high ranges (Lekha Pillai 2017, p. 177).

Angur Rawther the first son of Meeravoo Rawther started his timber business in the Hills by middle of the 19th century. Within no time he grew as a powerful timber trader in the highlands. It was Angur who gave the government the idea that wooded hills can be transformed into valuable resources. The conservator of forests, Mr. C.R. Vernede, consequently gave Angur permission to cut trees on the hills at his own expense with the understanding that he would sell the wood to the government at a fixed profit. On the conservator's advice, the government approved this contract, which resulted in the creation of two depots for this use. (Sebastian

Joseph & Lekha Pilla12017 p. 34) Through this method, the State was able to obtain a substantial annual revenue without incurring any costs (C.A. Meera Rawther, 1915). Thus, Angur beyond his role as a mere contractor began to serve the Department and the State in many positions.

As part of his business, he travelled throughout the Hills concentrating his business in Kumili particularly in the Ayyappancoil forest. He was a reliable contractor for the department, from the very beginning carrying out the conditions of his contracts to the complete satisfaction of the department. (Petition of Angur Rawther in 1915) and according to an official correspondence he was held as a timber contract at Kumili for about two decades, since the establishment of the Forest Department. His itinerary helped him to explore the forest on the hills and performed his business fairly and to the full satisfaction of the government. (Letter from the Supdt. of the Cardamom Hills,1908)

The robust bond generated by Rawther with the government was clear from the acknowledgements given to him by multifaceted personalities, particularly by government guests like governors of various presidencies, important state officials, and several other officials both European and native from various parts who visited the high ranges. He regularly betrothed these personalities and made arrangements for them to visit the High-Range including the shooting ranges in Travancore. The Governors of various presidencies sent gifts as gratitude to Rawther for the noteworthy services he had rendered during their trips to the hills. (Letter from Benseley, 1907). Benseley's letter stating that he was sending by registered post a Gold and Enamelled Charm which has been send to him by His Excellency the Governor of Madras, to be given to Angur Rawther as a souvenir of his visit to the Periyar makes clear the rapport of Angur Rawther with high officers. (Sebastian Joseph & Lekha Pilla12017 p. 37).

Resultant to Angur's generous dealings with the high officials of the state the Travancore administration had always treated him and his family with the utmost respect. His brother C.A. Meera Rawther assisted him in all of the business, and they sustained to operate the business together. The State and the Forest department always engaged them actively by allowing all facilities necessary for the exploitation of the forest in the high range division. As a powerful contractor he realised the importance of increasing the transportation facilities in Kumili which in turn led to the establishment of a number of cart roads in the forest connecting to the Kumili depot, allowing carts access to the high range forest. (Lekha Pillai 2017 p. 38) He also opened

new cart roads from Kumili to various forest areas during his contract years. Due to this, the Kumili depot became a desirable auction centre. (Petition from Angur Rawther ,1915)

When the former timber contracts (Government Letters, 1907 and 1910) with Mr Angur Rawther on Mel-labhom basis ended in 1087ME (1912) he had forwarded a petition to the Government through the then conservator M Rama Rao Garu for the renewal of the contract for another 5 years instead of the usual 3 years period. He also demanded the inclusion and omission of certain clauses in the former agreements which were as follows (Letter from the conservator M. Rama Rao Garu, 1912)

- 1) He would be paid the charges for constructing new roads and the maintenance of the old ones in charge of the forest department.
- 2) He stressed on the total omission of the clause regarding the removal of jungle wood as he find no markets for it in the neighbouring British districts where alone the contractor was able to dispose of the timber.
- 3) He should be exempted from the payment of export duty on the timber.

On the basis of the petition the proposed contract agreements were decided by the conservator as follows: (Letter from the conservator M. Rama Rao Garu 1912)

- 1) The contract should run only for 3 years
- 2) The contractor should collect from the Nagarampara and Cardamom Hill Reserves in the High Range Division 40,000 -50,000cft of teak in axed and sawn materials per annum and remove it through the Kumili depot.
- 3) He should pay Mel-labhom for the above quantity at Seven annas and three pies per cubic foot for teak big and small axed logs alike. Eight annas per cft for sawn scantlings. Rs one and six annas per dozen of teak felloes each measuring $2\frac{1}{2}' \times 4\frac{1}{2}'' \times 2\frac{1}{2}''$, and Rs one and 6 annas per set of two dozens of spokes each measuring $2\frac{3}{4}' \times 4'' \times 3''$.
- 4) He would be paid at an average of Rs.200 per mile for the new roads that he might construct hereafter for working down timber.
- 5) He would further be paid Rs.50 per mile per annum on account of maintenance charges of the road from Chengara to Ayappenkoil and further into the coupe.

Thus, the agreements were mostly decided in favour of the contractor except the increase in the year of contract.

In 1910, an agreement was concluded with Rawther for the procurement and distribution of about 10,00,00 cubic feet of lumber annually, out of which he had to deliver and buy twenty-five per cent of jungle wood and seventy-five per cent of teak and blackwood. But when he found that procurement of jungle wood would bring an enormous loss to him owing to the absence of transportation amenities and low price, he demanded the conservator to let him supply and buy Teak and Blackwood instead of twenty-five percent jungle wood. (Sebastian Joseph and Lekha Pillai 2017, p. 38) The conservator in turn requested the government in favour of the contractor on the ground that he was one of the most trusted contractors of the department who had never eluded a single work taken up. On the endorsement of the conservator of forests His Highness the Maharaja had authorised Mr Angur Rawther to work down teak and Blackwood in instead of jungle wood taking deviations from the original agreement and approved the action of the conservator permitting the contractor to cut Teakwood and Blackwood instead if Jungle wood in anticipation of government sanction. (Letter from the palace, 1911).

With Rawther, a contract was made for the collecting and disposal of teak wood on mel-labhom in 1088 (ME). (Letter from Conservators, 1914). Even after the contract was signed, it was clear that both the forestry department and the State were prepared to amend the terms at the the vendor's request. In the aforementioned agreement, Rowther made a request regarding the alteration of the dimensions of various timber parts, which is dependent upon the market locally. This is because local demand decides the profit of the contractors. His petition was to change the dimensions of the felloes and spokes from $2\frac{1}{2}' \times 4\frac{1}{2}'' \times 2\frac{1}{2}''$ and $2\frac{3}{4}' \times 4'' \times 3''$ respectively which was earlier accepted to $3' \times 6'' \times 2\frac{1}{2}''$ and $3' \times 3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 2''$ respectively. (Conservators letter, 1914). In the words of the conservator Mr. V. Subramania Iyer "This modification was permitted in as much as the contractor's business and profits were regulated by the market demands which depend again on the sizes of the materials to suit local requirements. Dimensions of felloes and spokes used in making cart wheels being different in different places, uniformity in point of sizes cannot always be possibly adhered to. The sizes of the materials have to be adjusted according to the nature of demand in the different markets

where these find a place. This deviation was therefore allowed subject to the approval of government". (Conservators letter,1914).

Another example of the breach of agreement was that one document spoke of the contractor cutting more quantities than those prescribed in the agreement. As per the agreement the contractor could remove a minimum of 40,000 cft. of timber and a maximum of 50,000 cft. In contrary to the agreement the contractor and his agents had removed 56,108.396 cft. of timber for which no action was seen to have taken in the records against the late contractor's brother, who had later taken over the contract of Angur Rawther. (Sebastian Joseph & Lekha Pillai 2017, p. 40).

Several complaints were raised by the contractors regarding the toll gates at Kumili. One complaint was about the suffering and the enormous amount of tolls at the Kumili frontier. They requested for the concessions in the rate of tolls to be paid which was considered in favour by the conservator. In another letter the conservator requested the government for the giving up of one of the toll gates at Kumili on the request of the contractors. But on an enquiry made by the government to the chief engineer through their letter No.1194P.W./561 of 11 dtd 23-2-15 regarding the giving up one of the toll gates at Kumili of which he replied that it was not advisable to give up one of the toll gates due to the following reasons: (Letter from the chief engineer to the Chief Secretary to the government 1915).

- 1) "The western gate A collects tolls from carts coming up the Kottayam-Kumili Road from Peerumedu and Periyar side. Such of these as pass through the British frontier in the same day exempted at the second gate.
- 2) The eastern gate takes the outward traffic that comes from the Cardamom Hill Road from the Periyar lake which has not passed the western gate and collects tolls also on all traffic passing onwards from the British side.

If we were to abolish the western gate as urged by the conservator of Forests we should have to forge tolls on all carts from the Periyar side using the Kottayam Kumili road but not passing the village and also on all timber carts passing to and fro between Aiyappan Covil forest and the timber depot" From all these it is understood that in most cases the conservator was requesting the government to do things in favour of the contractors which was granted except in certain cases.

Methods of Lumber Working: On Demand

Methods of lumber working were changed by the government on demand from the vendors'. Once, a complaint was raised by the brother of Angur Rawther regarding the huge loss incurred by him through the coup sale system. Meera Rawther and his partner had given several petitions to the government to change the system of extraction from coup sale to Mel-labhom which was readily accepted by the government. (Conservators letter, 1923).

But it was during the outbreak of the I world war that the government itself was so eager to increase the revenue from timber. As part of the agenda of maximising the profit of the forest department the conservator frequently wrote to the government to change the method of timber extraction from Mel-labhom which was profitable only to the contractor to coup sale which proved profitable to the government. The system of Mel-labhom means that the contractor had to pay only a meagre amount to the government for collecting the timber. Because of this though the system looks simple, there was increased scope for mal practices. which was addressed by the conservators. (Letter from the DFO, High Range Division, 1915). The contractor enjoys the monopoly of collection and purchase of timber under this system. The financial aspect of this was not advantageous to the government. But under the coupe sale system, also called the Lump sum sale system, the contractors had to pay for the whole of the marked trees in a coupe. As the purchaser pay for the whole of the marked timber it was his interest and look out to attempt the maximum utility of the purchased timber. (Sebastian Joseph & Lekha Pillai 2017, 40). The conservator also raised objection for giving contract for 2-3 years continuously. He advised the government to limit it to one year. Due to the hefty demand for lumber from world market the department was so excited to invite contractors from outside in the wake. According to the conservator it will be a great loss to the Government to enter into contract for a fixed rate and also for several years continuously as the timber value is snowballing day by day due to the world demand for timber. (Letter from the Conservator, 1920).

After the introduction of the coupe sale system Meera Rowther had made a request to the government to provide him the forest contract on coup system on high range for 5 years instead of the contracts for a single year. In his petition to government he wrote, "That the petitioner regrets to submit that the taking up of contracts for a single year entails enormous loss to the

petitioner in the recovery of the big advances that have to be made for the proper execution of the contract every year. That it is found by experience that the recovery of the large advances made in a particular year cannot be realised by the petitioner in that year and this greatly upsets the arrangements that have to be made for the proper execution of the contract in the succeeding year. That the petitioner has yet to realise nearly a sum of Rs 25,000 made by way of advance to various cart men, workmen, and elephant men etc engaged by the petitioner, in connection with the various contracts given to them by the government". The petitioner was trying to woo the government by presenting himself as the sole responsible contractor of the Muhammadan community in Travancore under the government services. He further states that he and his late brother were serving the government as responsible contractors for nearly 43 years. During this period they had spent enormous sums of money in cutting roads, constructing culverts and bridges etc, for a satisfactory execution of the various contracts given to them by the government. (Letter from the conservator, 1920). Thus it is evident that the contractor was pressing hard the government through various means to increase his profit to the maximum. In another instance when Pakir Meera Rawther complained that the coupe sale system in the high ranges incurred great loss to him, the government readily sanctioned to work on the Mel-labhom system. (Letter from the conservator, 1923).

How the forest officers were becoming the spokesmen of the contractors is evident from the following letter from Mr. Dhanukoti Pillai, DFO High Range Division to the conservator of forest. "Last year, under circumstances of which you are well aware, the timber was sold to contractor Mr. Hanumantankudi Meera Rawther at 15 as. 9 pies per cft. My careful enquiry shows that the contractor was not able to get much profit out of the transaction, at any rate, as he was making in former years and as one would expect to realise after sinking nearly Rs.80,000 in the business.----- to me it suggests therefore that it is our duty to pull him slightly and this course is in a way rendered necessary by the disappearance from the stage of Vellappa Nadar who was competing with him last year"----- (Letter from the, DFO High range Division, 1918).

Thus, it is clear that forest policies and agreements initiated in the Hills were changed at the will of the vendors on demand for timber especially teak. Forest department, conservators and forest officials who were supposed to be the protectors of forest acted as a coherent unit for the maximum extraction of timber. In many instances the Forest Department in the state was found

yielding to the demands of timber contractors who wanted to have a speedier extraction of good quality timber from the forests of their choice. Why the state was entertaining such requests from these merchant capitalists when the declared objective of the state was scientific forest management, is a crucial question that becomes an answer in itself, pointing to the commercialisation of forest resources and its impact on the forestry practices under the pretext of conservation.

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Expansion of the BRICS - What does it mean for India?

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Abstract

The issue of inclusion of new members at the BRICS Summit (2023) has sparked much debate over the institution's power and operational dynamics. The article examines the underlying factors driving expansion of the BRICS and evaluates its implications for India's foreign policy. This article examines the reasons behind New Delhi's prioritisation of its connections with the Global South as it seeks to exercise its 'strategic autonomy' and maintain a balance of interests among its important strategic partners. While some BRICS nations have advocated for resisting US hegemony and "de-dollarization" of global trade, New Delhi has emphasised the importance of "reformed multilateralism." The essay posits that the enlargement of the BRICS group would significantly bolster Beijing's influence among the nations of the Global South but it would also have substantial implications for India's position within the global organization.

Keywords: de-dollarization, G7, Line of Control, multilateralism, yuan.

Introduction

According to international relations theory, it is posited that in instances where the rules of multilateral organisations cease to align with the fundamental power distribution within the system or the specific issue area of the regime, various outcomes can be anticipated which include conflict, noncompliance, endeavours to reform the rules, or an escalation in the practise of underrepresented states seeking alternative forums (Mansfield, 2014, p.454). Therefore, the emergence of BRICS should not be seen as a surprise. The acronym BRIC was coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, an economist employed at Goldman Sachs, with the purpose of denoting the nations of Brazil, China, India, and Russia. In July 2006, the leaders of the BRIC countries met for the first time on the fringes of the G8 Outreach Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia. Shortly later, in September 2006, the organisation was renamed BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which took place on the fringes of the UN Assembly's General Debate in New York City. On June 16, 2009, the first BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, following a series of high-level

discussions. During the latter part of 2010, South Africa was officially admitted as a member of the BRICS alliance. Prior to its expansion, the accounts for 31.5 per cent of global GDP (GDP). In comparison, the G7 countries' proportion of global GDP has fallen to 30%; by 2030, it is expected that the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) will have contributed more than 50 per cent of world GDP (Devonshire-Ellis, 2023).

Nevertheless, the progress achieved by this global institution has been significantly constrained, characterized by a dearth of a cohesive objective. The sole discernible domain of collaboration has been the establishment of the New Development Bank in 2014. Importantly, the G7, who are associated with finance capital and wield disproportionate power in the existing global system. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have a counterbalance. The 'special military operation' conducted by Russia in Ukraine and its accompanying effects on world trade as well as stability in the supply chains have reignited discussions regarding the role of the Global South in promoting financial stability and peace within the dynamic global order. It must be recalled that not a single member of the BRICS has expressed support for imposing sanctions on Russia. Indeed, certain member countries such as India and China have strategically leveraged Western-led boycotts on Russian energy resources to procure oil, gas, and other commodities at more favourable prices.

The expansion of the BRICS group, from five to eleven members, serves as evidence that rather than collapsing or losing relevance, the BRICS nations are committed to strengthening this alliance of emerging non-western developing countries, which was initially conceived in 2001. In addition to the recent additions, the BRICS alliance currently encompasses six out of the global top ten energy providers, thereby conferring substantial influence on the grouping in a novel trajectory (Baskaran and Cahill, 2023). The inclusion of a new member from Africa and South America respectively enhances the representativeness of BRICS as a coalition representing the countries of the Global South. Hence, in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the matter pertaining to the expansion of the BRICS has assumed heightened importance.

According to Armijo, in light of the inherent uncertainty surrounding the future distribution of power between democratic and authoritarian great powers, it is imperative for scholars in the fields of international business and world politics to prioritise the examination of the relative ascent of the BRICS countries (Armijo, 2007, p.39). Divided in two key sections, the article first analyses the reasons for expansion of the BRICS. The subsequent section analyses how the expansion of the BRICS would impact India's foreign policy. Against the backdrop of the current tense ties between the United States and Russia, as well as the ongoing trade conflict between the United States and China, the act of expansion takes on a notable strategic geopolitical significance. This phenomenon is notably apparent in the endeavour to establish alliances with nations that possess important strategic resources or attractive geographic locations. Furthermore, the process of expansion functions as a mechanism to further the goal of diminishing dependence on the United States dollar in the context of the worldwide economy. The article provides an assessment of the stakes for New Delhi in this setting.

The need for expansion

During the era of the Cold War, it was possible to categorise the global landscape into three distinct factions: the Western bloc, the Soviet bloc, and the nations affiliated with the non-aligned movement. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, a significant number of the established principles and standards within the Western bloc coalesced to create what is commonly known as the liberal rules-based international order. The new order was institutionalised in various agencies such as the World Trade Organisation and longstanding institutions like the United Nations, during a period commonly referred to as a "unipolar moment" (Krauthammer, 1990, p.23). This era was characterised by the perception that democratic capitalism and trade liberalisation had triumphed over all adversaries (Fukuyama, 1989, p.3). However, the goals and values of US and the West are being countered by "revisionist powers" as well as "non-western" multilateral frameworks (Wright, 2015, p.1).

According to the Clingendael Report (2015), China views the BRICS project as an optimal method to propagate its sovereign ideology and expand its global influence within the framework of BRICS' multilateral structure. Russia, on the other hand, relies on the BRICS as a means to conceal and postpone its own economic and strategic deterioration. Meanwhile, India aims to attain a position of status and influence that aligns with its increasing economic significance (van Ham, 2015, p.7). Perhaps, this hold largely true now. At a time when Russia's economy is struggling to cope with sanctions imposed by the West in response to the conflict in Ukraine and when Russia is attempting to create new diplomatic and trade links with Asia, Africa, and Latin America, BRICS is becoming an increasingly significant forum for Russia. Likewise, Chinese President Xi said, "The world... has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation," and the countries of the Global South are becoming more dissatisfied with the current world order (Singh, 2023). South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, stated that BRICS has begun a new chapter in its effort to build a world that is fair, just, inclusive, and prosperous (du Plesis et.al, 2023). Prime Minister Modi said that the fact that BRICS is growing and getting more modern is a sign that institutions around the world need to get used to changing times (All India Radio, 2023). President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva says, "Now the BRICS is going up to 37% of the world's GDP in terms of its purchasing power, and 46% in terms of the world's population. BRICS will keep being open to new members" (Iordache, 2023). Therefore, existing member too realize that expansion of the BRICS is imperative and will be rewarding in the long run.

The growing enthusiasm for BRICS in the West Asian region indicates a shift in perspective, as it no longer just perceives its global interactions from the vantage point of the United States. The diminishing power of the United States in the area became evident through the Saudi-Iran peace agreement facilitated by China earlier this year. With the exception of Iran, all of these countries have been considered as significant allies of the United States until recent times. The rise of a new generation of leaders, including Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia and Mohammed bin Zayed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), signifies a significant milestone referred to by Ahmed as a "coming of age" for these nations, representing a resurgence of their national self-assurance (Subramanian, 2023). According to Ahmed, both prominent nations involved in oil production

have made the decision to establish their respective positions in the global arena, driven by their individual interests. Riyadh has greater strategic aspirations compared to the UAE, aiming to exert enhanced influence independently on the global arena, whereas the UAE primarily prioritises advancing its commercial interests. Iran has established strong diplomatic relations with China, as evidenced by the reported signing of a "25-year cooperation programme," as well as with Russia (Valchev, 2021). Under the auspices of Chinese mediation, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have successfully concluded a peace deal. The agreement has effectively halted the hostilities in Yemen, yet the ongoing crisis in the nation remains unresolved. Iran has provided Russia with a significant number of assault and surveillance drones to support its military operations in Ukraine.

It must be emphasized that Beijing lacks the requisite military capabilities to effectively extend its influence across vast regions of the globe and provide security assurances to distant allies. Furthermore, it possesses a sombre historical background characterised by intricate alliance politics, exemplified by its strained relationship with the Soviet Union. It diverges from the type of alliances that characterise the United States' association with its crucial allies in Europe and East Asia. Beijing maintains numerous partnerships, including those categorised as "comprehensive strategic partnerships," however refrains from establishing formal alliances (The Jakarta Post, 2022). Beijing's relationship with the international system established by Washington is also characterised by instability. The order is formulated and executed with a primary focus on the interests and preferences of the United States, and to a lesser degree, those of its closely aligned nations. As China experiences a growing influence on the global stage, Western nations, with the United States as a prominent example, diligently protect the regulations they have established and the hierarchical structure inside these institutions. In light of escalating economic tensions and the emergence of geo-economics as a contested arena, nations from the Global South exhibit a growing inclination towards the BRICS consortium, an association that encompasses China as a prominent member and partial leader. As a whole, the economic performance of the BRICS nations has exhibited a varied trajectory. However, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had significant implications. On one hand, it has fostered unity among Western nations, while on the other hand,

it has bolstered the partnership between China and Russia. Consequently, this development has transformed the BRICS into an aspiring bloc that possesses the potential to contest the prevailing Western geopolitical perspective. Moreover, it has positioned the BRICS as a viable alternative to Western-dominated forums such as the Group of 7 and the World Bank. As Kakonen points out, the BRICS fundamentally seek reform of various international institutions in order to give emerging nations with a proper role and voice in determining the norms and standards of international interaction (Käkönen, 2014, p.89). Therefore, the expanded BRICS is expected to represent views and aspirations of the Global South.

New Delhi has adopted a rather cautious approach towards the expansion of BRICS, and stressed on the need for “consensus” (Chakraborty, 2023). India has exhibited hesitancy in expediting the growth of the BRICS, since doing so may exacerbate the complexities associated with its strategic equilibrium between its longstanding strategic alliance with Russia and its burgeoning relationships with the United States and its primary allies. New Delhi realizes that an expanded BRICS will only further increase the diplomatic weight of Beijing in the long run. But given India’s larger goals of being the “voice” of the Global South, through the expanded BRICS, New Delhi is seeking to expand its diplomatic outreach (Singh, 2022). Importantly, New Delhi’s freedom to engage with any multilateral framework also represents the exercise of its “strategic autonomy”.

Implications for New Delhi

The decision-making process within BRICS is characterized by unanimity, whereby all member states must reach a consensus in order to proceed with any proposed action. In the current geopolitical landscape, Russia is confronted with a cohesive Western bloc as its enemy, while the diplomatic relations between China and the United States have reached an unprecedented nadir. Conversely, Brazil, South Africa, and India have established significant partnerships with both the United States and European nations. The expansion of the group is being propelled by China. Following a meeting of BRICS officials in February of the current year, the foreign office of China

expressed that the inclusion of new members has now become an integral component of the central objective of the BRICS organization. The invitation extended to Iran, a country experiencing strained relations with the Western nations, appears to have a notable influence from China and Russia. The inclusion of both Saudi Arabia and Iran inside the same cluster is inherently noteworthy. China is currently the largest purchaser of Saudi Arabia's oil and has recently facilitated a diplomatic resolution between Tehran and Riyadh (Reuters, 2023). Saudi Arabia's historical alignment with the United States as an ally has witnessed a notable shift in recent times, as it has begun to pursue a more independent foreign policy trajectory. The country's decision to seek membership in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) aligns with this evolving approach. The inclusion of Iran and Russia in this membership serves as an indication to the Western countries that they continue to maintain global alliances. Both Egypt and Ethiopia have established enduring relationships with the United States as well. In light of Argentina's ongoing economic problems, the country is expected to seek financial assistance from the BRICS nations (Burin, 2023).

For Beijing, as well as Moscow, the expansion is part of its drive to forge the loose economic grouping into a geopolitical counterweight to the West – and Western institutions such as the G7. That mission has become all the more urgent over the past year given China's escalating rivalry with the United States, as well as the ramifications of the Ukraine war – which saw Beijing further estranged from the West over its support for Moscow. As shown by the BRICS expansion and the long waiting list to join, Xi's offer of an alternative world order is finding receptive ears in the Global South, where many countries feel themselves marginalized in an international system they see as dominated by the US and its wealthy allies.

However, the inclusion of additional members also gives rise to inquiries over the unity and consistency of BRICS, as the current members already exhibit significant disparities in terms of political systems, economic strength, and diplomatic objectives (Ismail, 2023). The newly recruited individuals exhibit a certain degree of heterogeneity. Two economies are currently facing significant challenges. Argentina, a nation with a history of recurrent defaults and persistent

challenges related to inflation and currency crises, stands as the primary recipient of financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Egypt, currently grappling with its own economic turmoil, stands as the International Monetary Fund's second most significant debtor. Ethiopia, the second most populous nation in Africa and formerly one of the continent's rapidly developing economies, is currently grappling with the aftermath of a two-year internal conflict in the Tigray area (The Guardian, 2023). The conflict, which concluded in December, has left the nation in a state of distress, accompanied by substantial indications of extensive violations of human rights. The expanded union will encompass three prominent oil-exporting nations, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran. Historically, the United States has maintained a strong alliance with the aforementioned countries. However, in recent times, these nations have increasingly cultivated stronger relationships with China. This shift in allegiance can be attributed to China's heightened engagement in the region, which is regarded as a consequence of the perceived withdrawal of the United States from its previous dominant position. Iran and Saudi Arabia are considered to be longstanding adversaries, however they recently reestablished diplomatic relations earlier this year through a diplomatic agreement facilitated by the People's Republic of China (Jash, 2023). This stands in stark contrast to a more cohesive coalition such as the G7, which consists of democracies sharing similar values and possessing significant industrialized economies.

India's inclusion in the BRICS group is perceived as an anomaly among Western countries, given its strong and publicly lauded alliance with the United States. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's desire to be recognized as the leader of the "Global South" and Delhi's pursuit of a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council are more effectively advanced through the multilateral approach shown by BRICS, notwithstanding China's predominant role. Delhi's strong diplomatic relations with all BRICS members, including the recently added ones, coupled with the technological advancements showcased by Chandrayaan-3's successful moon landing at the summit, India's demographic advantage, and its burgeoning economy all confer it with significant influence inside the group. This influence holds the potential to prevent the BRICS alliance from becoming into an adversarial bloc against Western nations. However, China has significant

influence inside the BRICS grouping due to its status as the most powerful country among its members. Due to the prevailing power asymmetry, India is compelled to be engaged with nations that share close proximity with China (The Statesman, 2023).

The summit declaration includes a paragraph that explicitly expresses support for the aspirations of India, South Africa, and Brazil to assume a more prominent position in global affairs, particularly inside the United Nations, including its Security Council. But the problem for New Delhi is that the defining characteristic of the BRICS is the prevalence of economic and investment linkages between China and the rest of the group. Each of the new members has significant trade ties with China and is actively participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, with the exception of Brazil and India. While India has utilized both BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to maintain communication channels with Beijing in order to seek a diplomatic resolution to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) dispute, the prospects of reverting back to the status quo of April 2020 are bleak. The meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi on the sidelines of the conference did not yield any significant advancement for India. The decision of Russia and China to skip the G20 Summit in New Delhi (2023), only exposes the gap between China and India as well as the precarious position of Russia in global politics.

Conclusion

The recent addition of four states from West Asia, one from Africa, and one from South America to the BRICS alliance has attracted considerable interest in light of the current geopolitical order. The absence of a common ideology and a distinct overall objective may potentially result in the fragmentation of the BRICS group with the inclusion of six new members. The participation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the recent G7 summit in Hiroshima, alongside India's presence at the informal Quad summit, has been seen as an indication of New Delhi's alignment with the United States. However, much to the chagrin of the liberal countries, India still places significance on its involvement in the "anti-West" BRICS alliance (Dixon and Shepherd, 2023). India is a

member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and maintains diplomatic ties with both Russia and China, although encountering certain challenges.

One significant divisive factor pertains to the anti-United States (US) agenda advocated by China and Russia, a stance that has been further reinforced through the involvement of Iran. India and Brazil have raised apprehensions on the possibility of the bloc becoming excessively anti-Western and heavily influenced by Beijing (The Times of India, 2023). The expansion of the BRICS alliance is anticipated to contribute to increased competitiveness and potential tensions between China and India. These two nations have already experienced difficult relations due to an ongoing border issue. The presence of rivalry and tensions between China and India, as well as between Iran and Saudi Arabia, suggests that the potential for substantial agreement and collaborative action on several topics is limited.

The foreign policy pursued by Russia can be characterised as a strategic approach aimed at mitigating additional losses and maintaining or advancing circumstances that, over an extended period, would enable Russia to regain its status as 'great power in a pluralist international system' (MacFarlane, 2006, p.57). But, given the war at its border and the economic distress, Moscow is increasingly aligning with Beijing. China's objective is to position BRICS as an anti-western coalition, whereas India maintains the perspective that BRICS should be regarded as a "non-western" alliance and should continue to uphold its identity. Within the context of the new members, India saw all of them as potential relationships that are worth cultivating. From New Delhi's perspective, participating in a forum such as the BRICS entails a lesser extent of expressing alignment with Beijing, but rather signifies a country's intention to maintain neutrality or adopt a balanced approach in accordance with its unique national interests. However, apprehensions have been expressed regarding the possibility of the group becoming increasingly inclined towards China, thereby marginalising the voice and interests of New Delhi.

Since China has vastly greater capabilities than India and exerts more influence over certain newly admitted members, it is reasonable to assume that India will see a reduction in the scope of its

influence. The newly admitted BRICS members are expected to exhibit a respectful attitude towards India; nonetheless, it is anticipated that their practical approach will align more closely with China's worldview (Purohit, 2023). It is unclear how India will handle the shifting dynamics within the BRICS. New Delhi must, however, be wary of China using the BRICS as a tool in its quest for supremacy, as the group could easily morph into an anti-Western coalition. Given the existing circumstances, it seems that New Delhi's faith in unity in 'non-western' China dominated multilateral frameworks appears misplaced. Therefore, India will need a well-thought-out strategy if it is to stop China from using its position to advance its own geopolitical goals within the group. While the expanded BRICS does not truly represent the emergence of a new global order, but it does imply that the Global South is increasingly frustrated with the West and its multilateral institutions.

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The Valley of Sand: Tracing the Subjective Spaces in Thar Desert

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Many concepts evolved in social-sciences to understand and conceptualize a 'region'. Patterson has stressed on the significance of regional and areal components for conceptualization of the Indic civilization (1981). He organized a complex architectonic scheme of geo-cultural-areas, cultural-linguistic-regions and sub-regional areal-units and examined the super-local patterns and networks. Beaujeu-Garnier examined nearly forty definitions of region and identified only one-point of unanimity that region is different from the space that surrounds it, which means that a region is limited to geographical-extent whereas the space goes beyond, as per the subjective perception, activities and acceptance of the performer and participants. She concludes, a region means 'all things to all men'(1971, p.81). For geographers, the region is an intellectual concept, not an object (self-determined/given by nature), and an entity that has been created with a purpose by-selecting certain features which are relevant to an areal interest or problem (Whittlesey, 1954). Geographers classify region in three categories as instituted, denoted, and naively given and all three serve some purpose! The naively-given regions are 'recognized as meaningful territorial entity by the people who live there and/or by other people to whom it is of some concern' (Schwartzberg, 1967, p.89). Nearly all the branches of social sciences agree that the instituted regions are 'objective', whereas 'subjective spaces' are denoted and naively-given regions, which origin in people's perceptions, their mental perceiving of the world around them (Cohn 1967).

Historically, Thar Desert was given to the nomadic activities. The stagnant social, political and economic institutions in this limited-resource territory were basically the legacies of feudal polities. The inhabitants touch-upon and inter-weaved many themes individually, and reinforced some of them mutually. Thus, while working in their own subjective spaces, every inhabitant was simultaneously interacting with the subjective and objective spaces of other beings, in a structured common space of mutual needs and concerns. This work aims to illuminate a composite and multifaceted picture of the Thar Desert, through the study of distantly located habitations, and exploring the subjective identities that evolved amongst its inhabitants with a collective sense of the space (created-by effect of natural-features and man-made institutions) available around them.

Cosmopolitan Spaces and Societies

A close perusal of *Tawarikh-Jaisalmer*, *Bahis*, *Marwar Ra Pargana Ri Vigat*, and travelogues helps to locate the desert inhabitations were mainly subjective spaces for each resident who were otherwise living in the distant space (cities/hamlets). The distribution of population in each settlement of Marwar, Bikaner and Jaisalmer are thought-provoking, as majority of the settlements have mixed-population. The rural/urban settlements possessed cosmopolitan character. In Phalodi, the total *basti* (inhabitation) was 636 houses. Its inhabitants were classified as *mahajan* (Oswal/Maheshwari), brahman, *darzi* (tailor), rajput, *doum* (performer), *dhedh* (leather-worker), *chipa* (printer), *teli* (oil-maker), *nachana* (dancers), *thori*, *bojan* (cooks), *mali* (gardeners/vegetable growers), *sunar* (gold-smith), *kumhar* (potter), *sipahi* (soldiers), and *nai* (barber) (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.9). All these are professional categories and don't represent caste. Leaving aside one or two, all these professions were skill-based. It is important to highlight that the agriculturists are missing from this long-list of residencies. This indicates, the actors of agricultural sector mainly inhabited in distant territories, i.e., dunes. The peasant villages were small clusters of mixed-groups/castes, mainly performing agro-pastoral activities.

In 1663 AD, Nainsi recorded the populace of Medta. His record is unique as along with the classification of communities; it also provides intra-classifications of communities, as 'high' 'noble' and 'service providers'. *Mahajan* assemblage (money-lenders/big-traders) was called *lahan* which classified traders as Oswals, Mahesri, Aggarwal and Khandelwal. Smaller-traders were termed as *biji-jaat* (lower) and *lahan* of *biji-jaat* included Bhojag, Khatri, Bhats and Niratkari (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.83). *Nayat* (community) of brahmans included Pokharnas, Rajgur, Gujar Gaud, Parik, Dahma, Sarshwat, Sankhwal Uppadhyas, Shrimali, Gujarati, Gaud and Sanawad. Kayasthas were classified as Bisa, Dasa and Bhatnagar. The Sipahis community housed Pathans, Turk-musketeers, Deshawali and Kaji (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.84). The professional communities (*darji*, *naai*, etc.) were stacked as *pavan-jaat*. In total, fifty communities constituted *pavan-jaat* (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.85-6).¹ The royals, nobles and officials were not mentioned, but not absent. The luxuriant professional-group of Medta indicates affluence of economic activities. The description of Medta city and its adjoining-areas also hints to economic and social vibrancy. The professional opportunities in the region were limited to handicraft and skill-oriented jobs due to limited resources and harsh natural-conditions. However, these limited opportunities were significant for economic elevation of practitioners, as it permitted them to interact with their subjective spaces while inhabiting in objective-multilayered habitations.

The habitations of the Thar Desert were subjective spaces where each inhabitant was relating as per collectively-constructed-experiences, held by them individually. Thus, they were simultaneously negotiating on the matters of mutual-concerns. In year 1664, the residency of *qasba* Siwan (pargana-Siwan) was classified as per the professions, whereas the identities of villages were recorded as-per dominant demographic groups, for example, Rajputa-ra-baas, Patel-basai, Baniya-basai, Jat-basai, Paliwal-baman-basai (Nainsi, 1969 & 1968, vol.1, p.98, 120 & vol.2, p.224-228, 309, 310, 317, 319). These nomenclatures depict that villages were named after dominant social-groups and founder community. The villages were mainly administrative units that functioned autonomously for maintaining the social-life and informal economy. Absence of appeals to the state also indicates that the matters of mutual-care were settled through negotiations amongst the contending parties, as they were the stake-holders and affected parties.

Rao Maldeo built the fort of *pargana* Pokharan. While defining the fort and its integrities, Nainsi noted, 'the dwelling houses of officials were simple. There are hundred houses of Bhattis inside the fort. No *gaveti* (permanent village resident) are inside the fort' (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.309). The absence of *gaveti* inside the fort-complex clearly indicates that peasants were restricted in hamlets and fields were located at-distance from the seat of imperial-power. The census of Pokharan city highlights presence of Mahajans, along with many other professional-communities. The presence of Karsara community in Pokharan city was a deviation from the general settlement pattern as evident in other cities of Thar. Twenty *sanji* and thirty *malis* were also in city (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.310). *Sanji* and *Malis* were excellent vegetable-growers. Perhaps, their services were needed for fulfilling day-to-day grocery requirements.

In *pargana* Pokharan, nine villages were exclusively held-by Paliwal brahmans. In five villages, Paliwal brahmans and Rajputs lived together, but their *baas* (colonies) were separate (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.317). Eight villages were kept aside for settling the Rajputs. Pokharana Rathor's had thirty villages, out of which fourteen were inhabited and sixteen were abandoned (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.319). In Mahajan-*qasba*, thirty professional-communities were living with Mahajans. The settlement of these thirty professional-communities in Mahajan-*qasba* indicates that both, traders and artisans were working-in close co-ordination for attaining the mutual-goals, as handicraft was a major sector of economy. If, both factors of economy resided-in distant desert then their interaction and execution of production/distribution would have hampered. As both were expected to negotiate the long-distances in desert. Inhabitation in a common arena surely averted the distances and expedited the production. Thus, it is evident that the diverse communities were interacting and negotiating with

each-other, on the issues of mutual concerns, while functioning independently in their respective socio-economic zones.

Troth for survival: steering resource

The activities around tanks- annual cleaning, building *paal*, pulling-out sand, keeping water safe, regulation for water utilizations etc. were prime examples to visualize the concerns of stake-holders who jointly addressed the issues of mutual-concerns. In north, the technology and social organization for well irrigation necessitates partnerships that often cut across solidarities afforded by kinship, affinity and caste (Rosin, 2001). Besides common issues the communities were free to address their socio-economic activities as objective issues, in their respective subjective spaces. The experiences incurred from any natural surroundings are always immense. Similarly, the environment of the Thar Desert was imparting rich experiences to souls that were interacting with its landscape. Most of the travellers, wanderers and inhabitants had the common experiences about scarcity of water and harsh heat. These common experiences made most of them to believe in-certain protocols that were crucial for successful expeditions in Thar. Thus, whenever the travellers were transcending through the region of Thar, with or without proper guides/help, they kept looking for the water-resources, for relaxing and to prepare for onward journey. In c.1606, while travelling to Jodhpur, Josi Chund Damodar halted at *Kakroya-talab* (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.98). In 1637 AD, Mughal governor attacked on Rao Mohandas. Rao fled, his whereabouts were unknown. Thus, the locals searched for him in the *paal* of *Ghadasar-talab* near Phalodi. In search of Rao, Nainsi walked into the *paal* (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.120). This indicates that *talabs* were crucial centres for the escaper and fighting-forces to keep the water supplies intact.

The constantly moving armies of Marwar state were keeping control-over the water bodies. They always halted near *talabs* and ensured sway over other water sources. No desert army faced adverse experience (scarcity of water/harsh weather conditions) in the desert. Mughal sources highlight few instances about tough and hot weather of Thar Desert along with the scarcity of water that lead to death of many soldiers and animals. 'Jauhar and Abul Fazal describe at length the hardships and toils the royal fugitive and his party had to face in the 'Sahara'. Sujanrai Khattri highlights, the heat in the dreary desert of Rajasthan was so immense and the scarcity of water for miles together was so-acute that the imperial forces could not reach the place'(Sharma, 1968, p.13). This indicates that the Mughal army didn't had access to the water-resources of desert, whereas the armies that interacted and underwent training in desert were able to harness the water in sand-dunes absolutely

due to their experiences, familiarity and interactions with the physical environment of desert. The lack of experience and interaction with desert pushed the Mughal forces into difficult situation. *Mardumshumari* available at Bikaner State Archives highlights a similar kind of despair, in-which Sher Shah said ‘for a handful of bajra (millet)...nearly lost the empire of Hindustan’, this too after registering victory over Maldeo! For ensuring Mughal sovereignty and to protect the Mughal trade interests, Akbar aspired for a firm military-control over the desert regions. For this, he garrisoned Merta, Jalor and Nagaur as the strongholds and outposts of the Mughals (Fazal, 1978, vol.2, p.227). Aurangzeb made similar strenuous efforts to keep Marwar under control (Khan, 1869, p.261).

In year 1658 AD, Bhattis surrounded Pokharan with 2000 men (Nainsi, 1969, vol.2, p.137). So, Marwar approached allies against the Bhattis. All men supporting the Marwar state assembled at *athmaasiyo talab* (water sufficient for eight months). Nainsi and his forces held *dera* (halt) at Devijhar-*talab* and later at *bahalo-Dewada* Purohits (Nainsi, 1969, vo.1, p.138). Another halt was made at a *talai* (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.139). During this expedition the Marwar forces were constantly halting in separate groups. Interestingly, all the halts were organized at Rupa-ri-*talai*, Khoja-ri-*talai* and Bachihaay-*talab* near Lathi. Bocha Charan built Bachihaay-*talab* in a distance of 1.25 *kos* from village Charan-thal. After chasing-out the Bhattis from Pokharan, the Marwar forces entered the territories of Jaisalmer, where they looted and burned villages. During all these days of loot and plunder, the Marwar forces halted at *talab*-Jognihait (at Bhojak), as it had lot of wells and small-water-collection-units (*bera*); Lahor-*talai* of *talab* was located near the temple of Devi Sangviya (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.139-140). Many such instances indicate that the desert forces were halting only near the water-sources. In retaliation, Bhattis attacked on Pokharan and halted at *talab*-Ranisar in Phalodi (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.143). In vs 1718/1661AD, while Jaswant Singh was coming from Gujarat, his *dera* was arranged at *talab*-Kankariya (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.149). In the year 1657AD, Jaswant Singh moved from Ujjain and after a day’s journey, he halted on bank of river Shipra. Later, he halted on the bank of river Gambhir at Naraina (Nainsi, 1969, vol.1, p.176). All these instances help to understand that the different forces, acting in the desert in different times, shared common experiences. The scarcity of water was hitting the royals and regulars equally. Thus, their early common experiences nurtured a subjective space for interaction. Therefore, common efforts were made to ensure care and well-being of all.

The cleaning of *talab*, digging of *paal*, maintenance of common resources, etc. were the efforts that were actually guided-by the interactions of subjective spaces. Thus, the dikes were repaired in appropriate

season/time, to hold tines of inundation; and the canals were cleaned, so that the moisture gets satisfactorily distributed. Orders were given for expediting the construction of tank on *paal* of Jal Mahal and Man Singh temple.² Rawal Gharsi started the construction of Gharsisar Lake. While the construction of lake was midway he died. Therefore, his queen took-up the responsibility to complete it (Tod, 1920, vol.2, p.1217). Thus, the objective reality of water scarcity has played an early common effect on the mentalities and supplied uniform experiences to all the actors of the region. This created a subjective space for the inhabitants. There are innumerable references that refer talabs as *athmasiyo*, *satmasiyo*, *dasmasi*, *barsandiyo*, etc. Similarly, in semi-arid and arid areas receiving a limited or uneven rainfall, an accurate annual calendar is important (Wittfogel, 1957, p.29), as it comes handy to do the essential tasks (like sowing, cleaning talab) in time.

Orans were the sacred groves left around some religious places. *Orans* were common community properties that locals managed co-operatively. The management of *Oran* through participation of communities that were interacting in subjective spaces was effective for maintaining the ecological resources and protecting the sparsely available vegetation.

Draught and Demography

Akaal (draught) in Thar Desert were the times for the communities to come together and evolve mechanisms to minimizing the losses. They ensured this through mutual participation. Non-arrival of rains caused drought in year 1696. Due to it, *pargana* Sanchor became devoid of grass and fodder, so large number of cattle died. In-order to protect the remaining cattle, the inhabitants of *thal* came-out and sought refuge in the pastures of village Nai-khad. Nai-khad had functional *kositas* and the crop of *bajri* was coming-up. The migration of inhabitants with their cattle to other villages and the welcome extended by host villages, with sharing of resources with immigrants, suggests that the common experiences (of draught) of experienced region and collective learning were bringing them together in the tough times, as these people could perceive the space they occupied. It is evident that people's reaction to their particular space, and to the specific features-associated with that space-created an awareness and compassion within them, which they displayed by extending the resources to each-other. These involvements promote an awareness of a distinctive identity that further strengthens the ties between the people and their region, and it got expressed in socio-political actions. The mutual coming together of village communities to manage their resources/wealth are remarkable examples to highlight the subjective space habitations of the Thar Desert.

In Medta, few Chauhan Rajput branch broke-off from their lineage and declared themselves-Danga Jats. Fifteen villages of Medta had exclusive Jat population (Nainsi, 1968, vol.2, p.41). It is a unique case of breaking-away from the class/caste-alliances. Generally, it has been observed that these types of exits from community were done to elevate social status and to acquire share in the unattainable resources. During medieval times, this type of shift was mainly to gain access/share in the landed property of state, which was usually possible through enrolment in the *sarkar-ki-chakri* (state-services). But, this exit to merge in an agricultural community is unique. This escape from an elite group (Rajputs) was perhaps an effort to settle better with the demographically dominant neighbours. Demographically, the Jats dominated in territories of Medta.

The villages granted to brahmans and charans were called *sasan*, and these villages were exempted from taxation. All *parganas* of Marwar state had some *sasan* villages. Most of *sasan* villages were occupied-by the recipients; however, at later stage some *sasan* villages were abandoned. In most cases, scarcity and unavailability of water were the causes for migrations, which later paved for abandonment. Thus, it is clear that all the factors were instrumental in-forming the identity of Thar Desert. The nature, character and strength of the region have been significant as it allowed its biotic and a-biotic components to survive together while keeping the conceptual framework of one-region.

Locality and Frontier: Crossing over Thresholds

The physical complexities of the Thar Desert pushed the travellers to define this region as *Marusthali*. Most of them reached this conclusion without exploring all the dimensions that were within the physical frontiers. This limited unilateral approach under-cuts every notion of physical diversities. The physical features that define Thar Desert are dunes, scattered vegetation, scarcity of water, limited sources of surface water with limited quantity etc. This eco-system limits production of grains and other crops. Similarly, the pastoral activities were limited to the draught animals like bovines, sheep, camel, horse and goats. The breeding of horses and camels became specialized activities due to the favourable environmental conditions in the ecology of Thar Desert. This scenario is visible across Thar and serves a thread that connects all the inhabiting communities.

Historically, language has been the first and foremost expression of culture which allowed interactions. In Thar, language works as a binding factor and enhances the essence of locality. Being one of the components to demarcate the cultural space it provides glimpse into the selective approach routed via-culture. Primarily, it

was language that made the elaborate trade-exchanges/transactions possible in/via Thar Desert. The development of *Mahajani* script for maintaining huge records of trade is prime example of it. It is one of the most difficult scripts to decipher. The training for learning this language is strictly limited into the circles of business families, where the young traders are taught while they are mastering the tricks of trade. This automatically debarred other communities from this language. For centuries, traders have been maintaining *rokad-potha* in this language. Grierson calls Rajasthani a language (Grierson, 1908, vol.9, p.17). There are various dialects groups of Marwari language and nearly all of them are in use. All the versions are different from each other, mostly depending upon vocabulary, and at times on accent. Across Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Shekhawati and Dhundhar Marwari is spoken. The versions/variations in these regions is as per dialectical grouping based on the region in which spoken. Marwari language as a category is different from Mewati (Mewat), Marwari (Jodhpur and adjoining areas), Hadoti (Kota and Bundi), Thali (Jaisalmer), Bikaneri (Bikaner), Bagri (around Churu), Dhatki (Barmer), Sirohi and Mewari (Mewar). However, all these dialects were clubbed under umbrella of Rajasthani. It is bewitching as none of these languages are limited to their respective frontiers. For example, the Thali is the dialect for people who live in region of Jaisalmer. But the Kanjars and Kalbeliyas residing in Jaisalmer speak a language that is a rude mix of Sindhi and Thali. Similarly, the language used by *charans* is also very intriguing being guided by the principles of verse-making (meters) based on rules of Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary of Marwari. The *Manganiyars* (singer) use two very different languages one while singing and other for regular conversation and communication. *Jaga Bhajani* (praise-singers of Jeen Mata), *Bhopas*, *Kamad* and various other devotional singing communities are also living examples for understanding the essence and reach of cultural space owned by the Rajasthani language. Lodrick has purposed that language has 'done most to define Rajasthan as a subjective region in which perceived cultural space and instituted political space coincide' (Lodrick, 2001, p.31). Here, it is evident that various groups interacted in the cultural spaces, irrespective of their frontiers. Various such cultural-spaces are still vibrantly active due to the effect of locality that has survived in continuity. On the contrary, the frontiers of Thar Desert were denoted regions for the ruling classes and administrators.³ Erdman suggests that for the Rajasthanis the externally imposed analytic distinctions were of lesser importance than relationship among themselves as everyone knows who the others are. The different cattle-fairs organized in different areas of Thar are major events to witness the element of locality. During cattle-fairs the interactions with the state were also immense. As various states provided management for the fairs by putting officials on deputation duties, if the

fair-venue was located within their administrative territories. States took all the initiatives for organizing the cattle-fairs because substantially rich economic transactions were executed in these assemblages. Similarly, while operating in the overlapping economic circles/layer, the traders (Oswals/Maheshwaris/Mahajans) worked and apparently created different circles for the residents to interact, negotiate, participate and execute, which further strengthened the sense of locality.

In Thar Desert, the dominant model of human-environment-relation stresses 'the stability of locality'. The homogeneity of tough geographical unit provided the binding-force in which people respond to environmental crisis of various kinds and mobilize the social/natural resources to resolve the crisis. The desert has left a deep mark on the minds of its inhabitants and the occasional travellers. Even the robust fighting-forces have narrated the frightening experiences. Rajrupak mentions that the deep effect of desert has made hospitality, bravery and alarming habits as second nature of its inhabitants (Sharma, 1968, p.12).

Due to the lack of defined boundaries and marked frontiers of operations, constant struggles continued between different community leaders, who requested troops and men from other allies as per the requirement. Therefore, raids and loots became the norm of the day for getting hands-on the resources. The loots conducted by the hill tribe-Mers were limited to cattle and food items. Whereas the community leaders, who were famous for exploits, collected all the possible items available with the victims. The raids conducted by Satalmer, Maldot, Viramdev, Pabuji's attack on village of Sindh to secure camels, Shekho Bhatti Rao's raid (of Pungal) on Multan are popular instances to get an understanding about the dimensions of the raids/loots and plunders conducted by the settled community leaders and their operation areas. In the late 19th century Marwar Rajputs raided Sirohi (*Rajputana Gazetter*, 1879, vol.3, p.90). In Jaisalmer, Rajputs conducted raids and thefts in the villages of Jats and Bisnois (Chand & Mehta, 1948, p.225). These rampant raids are clear instances to understand that some efforts were made by the leaders or petty kings to mark the frontiers of their territories, but the impossibility of managing desert borders has always overturned their initiatives. Thus, even after the efforts of ruling classes and later administrators, the frontiers of desert states largely remained porous. Nomadism continued to dominate the desert landscape which didn't allow the statutory fixing of domains, thus rendering the frontiers ineffective.

As nomadism became integral part of Thar culture, it promoted a cohesive human-environment relationship, in-which the locals have learnt to deal with the environment compassionately. Most of the nomadic communities were associated with the pastoral activities. Rebaris travelled in sandy tracts with their *tolas*

(camel-herds) in search of open-land, where the animal can graze independently-picking twigs, leaves, and grasses and apparently breed. Historically, large numbers of cows-herds were kept and designated people from each village took them out for grazing. These cow-herds constantly moved from one place to another under guidance of one or two cow-herder (*guwal*). These movements were mainly for fulfilling fodder and water requirements. Extensive researches are required to understand the tricks of this trade, as only one or two souls manage the entire herd containing huge numbers of cattle over long-distances, generally without losing-out on cattle. *Bawariya* constantly roamed and performed service as local-hunter/chaser. The hooved voracious grazers like cows, *nilgais*, deer, *chital* etc., prove dangerous to the standing crops. If a large herd enters a field and plucks for a while, then the loss is definite! In order to avert these herd-grazers the villages hired services of *bawariya*. On various occasions, they were instrumental for arranging the fodder-supplies.

The *banjaras* were long-distance transporters. For trading they moved with large number of oxen to distant places. They had a dominant role to play in dry-land, due to absence of other forms of transportation. They constantly travelled through large landmass without fodder and food for the members (animal and humans) of caravan. While *en-route*, they managed food, fodder and water by-invoking the principles of locality (brewing language & tradition etc.) and by-connecting with the settled communities/villages (Choudhary, 2018, p.182). Thus, extending the subjective locality, the *banjaras* approached and operated well beyond the defined frontiers. Thus, challenges of nature have marked the Thar Desert as a habitation given to the subjective spaces, defined through the territorial frontiers within which localities have been developed by the inhabitants due to their constant crossing-over of the thresholds!

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Notes:

¹ The *pavan-jaat* were: *darzi, maali, sonar, naai, teli, neelgar* (dyer), *kalal* (liquor distilling class), *sikalgar, chipa, khelwaar, kahar, kasara thanthaar, lohar, khati, ghosi, tamboli, mocha* (cobbler), *saabangar* (soap-maker), *jatiya bangar* (weaver), *kumhar, bhadbhuja, gancha, tirgar, baajdaar, lakhara, bharaawa, pinjara, silawat, ghanchi, dhobi, saudagar, naalbandh, kharadhi, julaha, multani, kasabgar, tabab, kunjada, dakot, chitara, hamaal, bajigar, bhadihaar, babar naai, sargaro, khatik, balai bangar, jatiya andhodi range, nagar-naika* (dancer) and *aacharaj khapan-khosa*.

² *Arzdasht* written by Mohan to Mirza Raja Jai Singh, dated 14 *Mangsir Budi* VS 1697/1640 AD.

³ Denoted regions were primarily created for organizing and analyzing information.

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BRICS Dynamics: Redefining Global Politics and Security Challenges

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Abstract

The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) consortium has emerged as a formidable force in the realm of global politics, reshaping traditional power dynamics. This paper delves into the evolving dynamics of the BRICS consortium and its impact on the global political landscape, with a particular focus on security implications and challenges. Moreover, it addresses the security challenges faced by the bloc, both internally and externally, including divergent geopolitical interests and coordination hurdles. This study also examines the implications of BRICS' influence on the broader global political landscape, shedding light on its potential to shape future international relations. Understanding BRICS' evolving dynamics is crucial for policymakers and scholars alike, offering valuable insights into the contemporary global geopolitical landscape. By synthesizing a wide range of sources, including diplomatic statements, policy documents, and scholarly analyses, this research sheds light on the nuanced interactions within the BRICS framework and the consequential effects on global security paradigms. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating analyses of diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical dimensions.

Keywords: BRICS, Global Politics, Geopolitics, Policymakers, Security.

Introduction

In the 21st century, the global landscape has firmly established itself as multipolar, advocating for a fair and balanced international system. Within this paradigm, the BRICS group, exemplifying the ideals of multilateralism, holds a central position of influence (Cheng, 2007 p.148). The bloc has solidified itself as a formidable multilateral force with a clear mission to redefine the global power structure, driven by the determination of its member states to no longer be excluded from the top echelons of global influence. During its inception, it was foreseen as the leading catalyst for new demand growth and spending power on a global scale, especially among the nations of the Global South. The term “BRIC,” coined in 2001 by the

former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Jim O'Neil, in his ground breaking publication *Building Better Global Economy BRICs* (Gogio, 2020, p.10725). It represents a formidable dialogue and cooperation platform among member states, collectively representing a staggering 43% of the global population, 21% of the world's gross domestic product, 17.3% of global merchandise trade, and 12.7% of global agriculture production (Chatterjee, 2022, p. 5). Its primary objective is to enhance collaboration within the group and among its member nations, striving for sustainable, equitable, and mutually beneficial development. The inaugural meeting of the group took place in St. Petersburg, Russia, during the G8 outreach summit in July 2006. Subsequently, in September of the same year, the group formalized its existence as BRIC during the initial gathering of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly's General Debate in New York City (Petropoulos, 2013, p.112). In 2011, South Africa, recognized as an economic powerhouse in the Global South, characterized by its emergence as a thriving economy and a fledgling democracy, joined the BRIC nations, thereby transforming it into BRICS. This addition expanded the collective landmass of BRICS countries to encompass 26% of the global territory and contributed to 20% of the total global GDP (Saran, 2015, p. 626). Notably, more than 40 countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Algeria, Bolivia, Indonesia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Gabon, and Kazakhstan, have expressed a keen interest in becoming part of the forum during the 2023 summit chaired by South Africa. These nations share the view that BRICS serves as a viable alternative to global institutions often perceived as being dominated by traditional Western powers. They anticipate that membership will confer benefits such as access to development finance, and increased opportunities for trade and investment (Pant, 2013, p.103).

This platform stands as a beacon of hope, dedicated to fostering peace, security, prosperity, and development in our increasingly multipolar, interconnected, and globalized world. Within the BRICS coalition, we find a unique tapestry of nations spanning Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, bestowing upon their collaborative efforts a transcendent quality that holds exceptional value and significance. The central mission of BRICS revolves around the profound aspiration to cultivate, broaden, and intensify cooperation within the alliance and among its constituent nations, with a resolute commitment to achieving sustainable, equitable,

and mutually beneficial development. In their pursuit of robust market expansion, these nations departed from the predominantly neoliberal, market-centric economic framework advocated by the Washington Consensus. Instead, they embraced a range of diverse political-economic strategies during the 1990s. Remarkably, BRICS has swiftly evolved during its relatively brief existence, expanding its diplomatic influence and boldly asserting a more substantial presence both in the realms of economics and security (Pedro, 2016 p. 50). Moreover, BRICS embodies a heightened sensitivity to the unique challenges faced by the global South, presenting an extraordinary opportunity to forge a new and alternative world order that champions inclusivity, fairness, and global harmony.

BRICS: Role in Global Politics

The phenomenon of the BRICS group has ignited intense debates within the expert society, making it a highly controversial issue. One prevailing perspective tends to perceive BRICS as merely a collection of states superficially united, primarily through the lens of economic indicators in the analysis of international relations (Xing, 2019, p.4). Consequently, this viewpoint asserts that there exists no substantial basis for coordinated actions by these member states on the global stage. Contrary to this, another perspective highlights the immense potential of BRICS to evolve into a novel mechanism for global governance. Acknowledging the inherent differences in development approaches among member states, which have resulted in diverse economic landscapes and regional influence, this potential remains acknowledged. As a result, there has been a collective endeavour to gain a comprehensive understanding of BRICS' role in global politics. This entails analysing the potential benefits and obstacles tied to an extended role, as well as evaluating the potential repercussions for international relations at both the global and regional levels. This on-going discourse underscores the significance of BRICS as a critical player in shaping the future of global governance and international diplomacy.

The BRICS group can primarily be recognized as an irreplaceable force in global governance. Although member states had divergent rationales for their alliance, they shared certain commonalities. The prime driver behind their formation was the need to challenge the

entrenched power structure of the West (Saran, 2017, p. 627). They faced challenges in the prevalent system of global governance dominated by the developed nations of the West. The BRICS nations, united as a bloc, possess the capability to challenge global dominance collectively, a feat unattainable when acting individually, hence forming BRICS as a regional coalition with the objective of establishing a more inclusive governance architecture. The cooperative efforts among these five members not only advance their interests as developing nations but also contribute significantly to global governance, serving as a catalyst in the transformation of the world's economic governance structure. In the past decade, a fierce and on-going debate has raged among experts concerning the state of the contemporary world and the prevailing global order. The world was grappling with the severe repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis, which has significantly impacted global economic and social metrics. There is a contention that the BRICS group has the potential to function as a proficient global governance institution. Furthermore, it is believed that this could play a pivotal role in mitigating the existing disparities among BRICS nations in terms of global governance, an imperative need in the current scenario.

A faction of these experts argues that, despite the apparent decline in U.S. power, the existing world order remains fundamentally intact due to its liberal underpinnings and continued reliance on U.S. leadership, which continues to function effectively. This argument posits that the international system is robust enough to accommodate the ascent of emerging powers like China, India, and Brazil, resulting in a struggle not over its core principles but rather over the pursuit of enhanced leadership roles within its established framework (Kolesnichenko et al., 2016, p. 277). On the contrary, some argue that the world is teetering on the brink of chaos and impending anarchy in Eurasia. Renowned geopolitical expert Robert D. Kaplan has boldly advocated that the United States and the Western world must adopt a resolute stance against China and Russia, preparing for the looming specter of Eurasian anarchy. Kaplan asserts that both China and Russia, despite their displays of power, are fundamentally driven by their vulnerabilities rather than their strength. Simultaneously, the precarious social conditions in Central Asia may herald the emergence of an Arabian Spring-like movement in the imminent future, further exacerbating the perilous state of the Eurasian continent (Kaplan, 2016, p. 3-4)

Despite the numerous criticisms and negative forecasts that have been voiced by experts, predominantly from Western countries, the BRICS alliance continues to thrive and evolve. In fact, it has been steadily making progress over the years. What initially began as a platform primarily dedicated to discussions on economic and trade matters has now expanded its scope. BRICS nations have broadened their focus to encompass global politics and security concerns, which span a wide range of complex issues. These issues include economic considerations, energy policies, development initiatives, financial stability, and the pressing challenges of our time, such as terrorism, conflicts, territorial disputes, military power utilization, nuclear proliferation, organized crime, cybercrime, poverty alleviation, demographic challenges, and the urgent matter of climate change. BRICS, in its pursuit of addressing these multifaceted challenges, stands as a testament to the growing influence and collaboration among its member nations. The BRICS nations, are undeniably distinct entities, and this fundamental reality must be acknowledged before any endeavour to achieve convergence among them. These five countries not only exhibit strikingly different political systems, but also represent a wide spectrum of governance models. Its member states diverge significantly in terms of their available resources, absolute consumption levels, energy intensity, and demographic trends. Brazil boasts a predominantly urban population, while India remains largely rural. This diversity of political, economic, and demographic factors underscores the complexity of the BRICS group and the need for nuanced approaches to cooperation and collaboration among its members. In general, the BRICS nations, collectively wield significant influence that is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the global landscape. This coalition of nations exhibits a varied array of positions within the existing global framework. Moreover, these countries underwent substantial economic expansion in the initial decade after being identified as promising investment destinations in the 2001 report. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, these nations have been undergoing significant shifts in their political-economic structures. A shared factor in the diverse economic development trajectories of these nations towards high-performance status has been the proactive role of the state in formulating policies for resource mobilization, trade strategies, public procurement, stimulating public demand, and offering financial support (Oliver, 2020, p. 33).

BRICS and Global security

International security is a pivotal subject of conversation within the world's prominent organizations, and BRICS is certainly no outlier in this regard. In fact, BRICS is steadily evolving and advancing with each passing day. Initially rooted in discussions centred on economic and trade matters, the member countries have expanded their focus to encompass a wide array of global security challenges. These encompass multifaceted issues ranging from economic intricacies, energy concerns, and development challenges to financial intricacies. Additionally, they also grapple with formidable dilemmas like terrorism, conflicts, territorial disputes, and the use of military force, nuclear proliferation, organized crime, cybercrime, poverty, demographic shifts, and the pressing issue of climate change (Slonskaya, 2015, p. 4). BRICS is thus actively engaged in addressing these multifaceted challenges, reflecting the organization's commitment to ensuring international security and stability. The glaring truth is that the current international security system is fundamentally flawed, failing to effectively address the pressing challenges of our modern world. The cornerstone institutions tasked with upholding global peace and security seem increasingly out of touch with the complex realities of today's geopolitical landscape. What exacerbates this issue is the reluctance of many nations to acknowledge the need for change, often hindered by their limited global influence and vested interests in maintaining the status quo. This group of emerging powers possesses a unique and potent combination of economic might, political influence, and a shared vision for a more equitable world order. Together, they represent a formidable force with the collective power and determination to challenge the existing international security paradigm and reshape it to better serve the needs of our evolving global society. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the significance of BRICS cannot be overstated, offering a promising avenue for redefining the foundations of international security in a world that demands innovation and adaptability (Slonskaya, 2015, p. 9).

The BRICS nations staunchly uphold the United Nations as the linchpin for upholding global peace and security. They firmly assert that any actions pertaining to peacekeeping and peace making must adhere to the foundational tenets of the UN Charter and the universally accepted norms of international law. Within this framework, the BRICS countries vigorously champion essential principles such as respect for sovereignty, unity, independence, territorial integrity,

non-aggression, and equality among nations. Moreover, the group underscores the imperative need for a comprehensive overhaul of the United Nations, including its pivotal organ, the UN Security Council. Given that both China and Russia hold permanent seats on the Security Council, this issue takes on added significance in the broader context of advancing the restructuring of the global political architecture—a pursuit the BRICS nations ardently endorse (Luchi, 2020, p.10722). The members of BRICS are robust contributors to UN Peacekeeping efforts, displaying a formidable commitment to maintaining global stability. They play a pivotal role by actively bolstering troop numbers and prioritizing the comprehensive training of personnel. Notably, India emerges as a resolute force, standing as the third-largest provider of contingents. Over the period spanning from 2004 to 2012, India magnanimously furnished the UN with an astonishing tally exceeding 100,000 peacekeepers. Peacekeeping transcends being a mere facet of Brazilian foreign policy; it's an indomitable cornerstone, underpinning their international engagement. Meanwhile, South Africa emerges as a stalwart participant in these vital operations, contributing substantially to the cause. China, in its characteristic dynamic fashion, has transformed into a dynamic benefactor, channelling substantial financial resources and military personnel to invigorate peacekeeping activities. In the realm of aviation, Russia assumes an eminent role, dominating the supply of aircraft and helicopters crucial for UN operations. Despite their commendable contributions in this regard, it's worth noting that Russia falls short in other aspects of peacekeeping, marking it as an area with room for improvement. Even when confronted with the ground-breaking concept of "Responsibility to Protect," adopted by the UN in 2005 and put into practice during the 2011 Libyan crisis, BRICS + members approached it with deliberate caution, revealing their meticulous and deliberate approach to global affairs (Xing, 2019, p.11). Over the period of time, BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the three pillars of political and security, economic and financial and cultural and people to people exchanges. This prudent stance underscores their commitment to upholding peace and stability while navigating the complexities of international intervention.

Challenges of BRICS

BRICS has garnered both widespread acclaim and sharp criticism from various observers. Central to the group's foundation are; principles of non-interference, equality and mutual

benefit that guide bilateral relations among its members. Despite their collective aspirations, BRICS faces challenges in coordinating their policies, particularly in response to fast-evolving geopolitical crises. Differences in historical experiences, political systems, and levels of development can sometimes hinder consensus-building within the group (Stuenkel, 2020, p. 23). Consequently, economic competition and even conflicts within the alliance are virtually inevitable. This multifaceted mission underscores the intricate dynamics at play within BRICS, making it a complex and consequential force on the global stage. The BRICS alliance, undeniably wields immense potential on the global stage. While BRICS members share a common desire for a multipolar world order, they also have diverse geopolitical interests and strategic priorities. This diversity can occasionally lead to divergent stances on specific international issues, which may limit the bloc's cohesive action. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that there is divergent Interests among member Nations, where each member country grapples with its distinct set of challenges, spanning political discord, economic volatility, and territorial disputes, among others. Furthermore, the bloc is far from homogenous in its aspirations, particularly evident in the diverging views on United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms (Von Hau, 2012, p.192). In the face of such complexities, forging a consensus on pressing global issues becomes an arduous endeavour. Adding to the intricacy of this coalition is China's relentless push to deepen cooperation, particularly in market-driven digital economies, green technologies, innovation, and sustainable infrastructure, often taking centre stage in BRICS discussions. Conversely, other member nations prioritize regional cooperation, addressing domestic concerns, social responsibilities, and the well-being of their populations. In navigating this landscape of divergent priorities and challenges, the BRICS nations must navigate a delicate balance to harness their collective potential while respecting their unique perspectives and goals. Amid South Africa's unprecedented economic downturn, India grappling with internal issues like terrorism, and Brazil striving to address domestic concerns such as poverty and healthcare, the imperative now lies in fostering mutual understanding over the pursuit of emerging markets and profit-driven economies. The BRICS consortium has responded with a visionary concept of a financial architecture, giving birth to the New Development Bank (NDB). However, the NDB faces daunting challenges in achieving economic integration among its diverse member nations, given the vast discrepancies in their

economic sizes and GDPs. Consequently, the inevitable prospect of disputes arising in the equitable sharing of the NDB's burden looms large.

The Influence of external powers on individual BRICS members and the bloc as a whole. The grander vision driving BRICS encompasses challenging the supremacy of the United States, establishing alternatives to institutions like the World Bank and IMF, and fostering regional cooperation. BRICS can anticipate encountering significant challenges in the foreseeable future; with one of the most formidable being the dynamic shifts in the global order. These changes have propelled BRICS members, particularly Russia, China, and India, into prominent roles within regional and global affairs. This transformation has been driven partly by the United States' diminishing ability to maintain constructive global engagement and partly by the increasing geo-economic and political significance of BRICS nations over time. The challenge lies in fostering meaningful engagement among BRICS countries at the highest level to facilitate consultation, coordination, and cooperation on contemporary global issues of shared interest, all while promoting mutual understanding. Here are some suggestions for the group to effectively navigate and conquer challenges.

- Institutional adaptability is paramount: While the BRICS nations may harbour distinct perspectives on the group's purpose and significance, it is imperative that they establish an unyielding and enduring structure for on-going collaboration to effectively execute any mutually agreed-upon agenda. Simultaneously, the processes for shaping policies must remain fluid and all-encompassing. Preserving and prioritizing flexibility within the core essence of BRICS is of utmost importance. The pivotal involvement of leading research organizations and think tanks is indispensable in this regard.
- Reinvigorating age-old knowledge systems and practices is imperative: Frequently, the labels "developed" and "underdeveloped" are extracted from their narrow economic confines and unjustly applied in a much broader sense. This prejudice is indicative of a profound divide between Western wisdom and cognitive frameworks and the intricate actualities of the developing regions. It is of paramount importance for BRICS to centre its efforts on the resurgence of native wisdom and methodologies across various sectors, encompassing traditional medicine, healthcare, agriculture, water resource management, as well as design and construction methodologies.

The BRICS countries should work together to speed up the sharing and transfer of technology across their borders. Besides promoting private innovation, they also exchange knowledge about how to connect industry and universities. They should share insights on intellectual property laws that both safeguard intellectual property and promote the adoption and spread of new technologies. Beyond the economic advantages of these efforts, BRICS can also use their collaborative knowledge and influence to shape the TRIPS agreement within the framework of the WTO (Ding, 2018, p.7). To bolster their global influence and ensure a fair playing field, the BRICS nations must break free from the stranglehold of Western-centric benchmarking and rating systems. These prevailing systems are intrinsically tailored to Western ideals and frameworks, ill-suited to evaluate products and services originating from the unique context of BRICS countries. It is imperative that this collective consortium takes decisive action to craft and propagate BRICS-specific rating systems and benchmarks. These encompass an extensive spectrum of assessments, ranging from scrutinizing corporate governance performance to establishing rigorous capital market standards. Beyond the financial realm, these benchmarks should be strategically extended to other critical sectors like agricultural production, pharmaceuticals, and corporate governance. This transformative move will empower BRICS economies to assert themselves on the global stage and reshape the narrative of development on their terms. Regional frameworks play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the BRICS nations, as they are leaders within their respective regions and often find themselves surrounded by a cluster of smaller neighbours. This unique geopolitical position can occasionally give rise to regional tensions. However, it also presents substantial opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit. To harness the potential of this situation, it is imperative to establish synergistic regional economic and developmental frameworks that strike a delicate balance between respecting the sovereignty of individual nations and promoting a broader growth paradigm. These frameworks should facilitate cooperation, trade, and shared prosperity, ensuring that the BRICS nations, as well as their smaller neighbours, can collectively thrive in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Over time, these measures can foster "soft" connections among BRICS nations, strengthening cooperation and advancing their long-term goals.

Conclusion

In this comprehensive study, we have explored the role and challenges of the BRICS grouping in the sphere of world politics. The emergence of BRICS as a formidable force in international affairs has redefined the global geopolitical landscape. As a bloc representing diverse socio-political, economic, and cultural backgrounds, BRICS has exhibited a substantial impact on shaping international relations. This alliance, comprising nations with diverse backgrounds, cultures, and histories, has emerged as a formidable force on the world stage. As we have seen, BRICS is not merely a symbolic gathering of nations; it is a catalyst for change in the international security landscape. With its growing economic and political influence, expanding financial capabilities, and proactive foreign policy, BRICS is actively shaping the decision-making process in global affairs. Its members, representing nearly half of the world's population and boasting rich cultural heritages, bring a unique and complementary perspective to the table. What some may criticize as a potential weakness – the diversity within BRICS – is, in fact, one of its greatest strengths. However, it is imperative to remember that promises and declarations alone cannot secure success in global politics. The BRICS leaders must go beyond mere rhetoric and translate their commitments into tangible actions. In a world where empty pledges abound, BRICS has the opportunity to stand out by delivering on its promises. The true measure of its success will be determined by its ability to turn words into concrete results. In a landscape filled with uncertainties and challenges, BRICS has the potential to be a beacon of cooperation, unity, and progress. It is up to its members to ensure that their collective efforts lead to meaningful change in the global political arena. The world is watching, and the future of BRICS hinges on its commitment to turning its vision into reality.

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Contested Citizenship and Constitutionalism

A Study on Adjudicating Suspected Illegal Migrants in Assam, India

Neelakshi Talukdar and Akhil Ranjan Dutta

Abstract

The inconsistencies in laws pertaining to the Indian citizenship made the suspected illegal migrants to knock the doors of the court for asserting their citizenship. These inconsistencies made the citizenship interpretative in nature as the various layers of the judiciary have provided different interpretations while adjudicating the cases related to the suspected illegal migrants. While claiming citizenship, in a substantive number of cases, the plaintiffs have resorted to two fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India i.e. Article 14 pertaining to right to equality and article 21 relating to right to life and personal liberty. The courts have expanded the meaning of the said articles while adjudicating the cases. However, the interpretations provided by the courts in different cases have also been inconsistent in nature. That has made the citizenship issue more complicated in case of Assam. The present article endeavours to investigate these inconsistencies and their implications on the lives and liberty of the suspected illegal migrants.

Key Words: adjudication, contestation, equity, fair trial, justice

Introduction

Citizenship is a multidimensional concept and a complex reality which almost all the countries of the world have been struggling with. Assam, a federal unit in India's north-east has been the hotbed of citizenship contestations within the orbit of legality and belongingness. One of such contestations is the fate of suspected illegal migrants. This is a category of people who are neither citizen nor foreigner. This is a stage of liminality where the suspected people have been claiming for their citizenship. Their claim for citizenship becomes imperative for judiciary to intervene and to adjudicate action in the domain of citizenship. However, their claims for citizenship are even contested at the quasi-judicial and judicial level. These contestations have a great impact on the lives and liberties of those people who have been asserting for their

citizenship status through the process of adjudication. Present work seeks to analyse and interpret these contestations through the vantage points of two important fundamental rights enumerated in the Constitution of India i.e. Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 21 (Right to life and Personal liberty).

Citizenship is a constitutional subject and it falls under the Union List in the 7th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, the central government has enormous power in deciding on matters of citizenship in India. Article 11 of the Constitution of India has given overriding power to the Parliament in order to enact laws associated to citizenship (1950, 5). Using the power enshrined in the Indian Constitution Indian parliament enacted the law on citizenship i.e. the Citizenship Act, 1955. However, this legislation proved to be inadequate in addressing the critical issue of citizenship inclusively. This inadequacy has primarily arisen due to the complex and contested history of British India that finally culminated in the partition of the country on the eve of independence into two sovereign and independent states i.e. India and Pakistan.

The partition resulted in cross-border migration. The Constitution of India attempted to provide tentative provisions to address the issue of citizenship for those who migrated to India from Pakistan in the immediate past and post of India's independence. Those tentative provisions were streamlined while enacting the Citizenship Act of 1955. However, the unhindered migration from across the border made the provisions of the said Act inadequate to address the issues pertaining to the suspected illegal migrants. It resulted in adopting the Foreigners Order 1964, enactment of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) (IMDT) Act, 1983 and series of amendments to the Citizenship Act starting with the amendment in 1985. This amendment accommodates the provisions of the Assam Accord, 1985, the tripartite agreement on detecting, deleting and deporting foreigners from Assam. However, there have been inconsistencies in those Acts, Order and the Amendments for which any attempt on the part of the state to deal with the suspected foreigners have finally landed in the Court. The creation of the Foreigners Tribunal (FTs) under the Foreigners Order of 1964, a quasi-judicial apparatus to adjudicate the suspected illegal migrants have also proved to be contentious. It invited contestations in approaching the higher judiciary for relief and justice on the part of those who have been declared foreigners by the FTs.

With this backdrop, the present paper aims at understanding the process of adjudication over suspected illegal migrants and the unfolding contestations and contradictions in the process. It invokes the Fundamental Rights, particularly Article 14 (right to equality) and Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty), in understanding and interpreting complex citizenship dilemma in the courts which exposes those contestations.

Contested Citizenship and Constitutionalism

Citizenship and constitutionalism are two crucial concepts in the field of citizenship studies. Citizenship is a legal status of an individual residing in a particular political community which is ensured by the state. As a legal status citizenship guarantees entitlements, privileges and duties to a group of people. Rights, privileges and duties are the prime constituents of a good citizenry. Externally, state-based citizenship organizes 'individuals primarily by reference to the territorial and jurisdictional boundaries of states, and reinforcing the legally constructed character of that membership relation' for sustaining the system of sovereign states (Shaw, 2020, p.4). However, internally citizenship within the boundaries of the state revolves around certain 'story of peoplehood' or the formation of certain identities or culture which are contested most of the time (Smith, 2001, p.75). These stories are, however, not reflected in the legislations of the state since institutional mechanism works from the above and it is basically a top-down approach. Nevertheless, peoplehood demands the response of the state in inculcating the values of solidarity among different ethnic groups and religious communities (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000, p. 9). In both the external and internal aspects, the idea of citizenship has been trying to build a relationship through constitutional law amongst individuals. Constitutionalism intervenes at this juncture to citizenship. It is an idea which denotes that the government power is limited by the constitution. The citizen remains at the 'heart of modern constitutionalism' (Rosenfeld, 2009, p. 201) and the institutions of the state are governed by the constitutional parameters. One of the crucial components of constitutionalism is rule of law. Citizenship is an evolving idea that seeks all-encompassing institutional enactments of constitutional principles in order to deal with the manifolded contestation of citizenship. Rule of law tries to apply different ways in inculcating the values of a constitution so that it reaches to those whose legality to the land is contested. In this case, there is a prime role of judiciary to uphold the valuable rights of the people and establish justice in the society. Courts are very often pleaded to provide judgements and interpretation with regard to the protection of fundamental rights of the people. In this way judiciary comes up as the arbitrator of the constitution. Judiciary, thus, uphold the ambit of fundamental rights enumerated in the constitution. The intervention of judiciary in upholding fundament rights of the people is not a recent innovation. However, in the citizenship crisis the involvement of judiciary is very critical since citizenship entails all other rights to the people.

Inconsistencies around citizenship laws

When one talk about the laws of citizenship one has to keep in mind that laws are not sluggish, in fact laws are dynamic and it assumes different meanings through different interpretations. Through interpretative practices of the courts, law could be changed or amended (Roy, 2022, p.5). Citizenship laws create certain kind of subjects. By creating it marks out certain subjects from the purview of citizenship law. In India, apart from the Citizenship Act, 1955 and its subsequent amendments, three other critical developments can be seen in dealing with the complex citizenship issue in the context of Assam. These are the Foreigners Act, 1946 as well as the Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964, Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act (IMDT), 1983 and the Assam Accord which resulted in incorporating Section 6A in the Citizenship Act in 1985.

Citizenship and immigration laws that have been enacted in the postcolonial period are incompatible to deal with the ground reality which independent India, and particularly a state like Assam, needed. The Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act (1950) dealt with the expulsion of certain section of immigrants whose stay was regarded detrimental to the general public as well as the schedule tribe of this country. However, apart from recognizing the problem of illegal migrants in Assam, no promising action was taken to mitigate the problem of illegal migration. Even after its enactment, illegal migration continued to be the most troublesome issue. As a result, in 1957 the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act (1950) was repealed. In the meanwhile, the Citizenship Act, 1955 was enacted, but the Act didn't define a citizen. Since then, the Citizenship Act has been continuing its legacy with subsequent amendments considering the changing context of citizenship in India. In the process, to deal with the unavoidable problem of immigration, the judiciary intervened in the scene from 1961 onwards. The constitution of Foreigners Tribunals within the provisions of Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 became the starting point in this regard.

The beginning of adjudicated citizenship is witnessed in the structuring of Foreigners Tribunals in 1964. Created by an executive order, it aimed at dealing with the illegal inflow of people and particularly to deal with the plight of suspected illegal migrants. The cases of suspected illegal migrants are brought mainly by the border police on the ground of suspicion and referred it to the designated Foreigners Tribunals where the suspected person is a resident. The constitution of FTs in Assam brought about a new regime of reinterpreting the prevailing citizenship laws (Saikia, 2023, p.57). However, the role of FTs became contested in approving and negating citizenship to the plaintiffs.

The FTs were replaced by the IMDT Act, 1983 rearticulating and reassigning the burden of proof on the state at the first instance. During the heydays of the anti-foreigner's movement in Assam, the tribunals were brought under IMDT and addressed the legal question of citizenship of suspected illegal migrants. Meanwhile, with the increasing problems of illegal inclusion of voters in the electoral roll brought the foreigners issue at the central level. This led to the signing of another legal framework 'to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people' (Problems of Foreigners in Assam, 1985). Named as the Assam Accord, it laid down two specific dates so as to decide one's legal stay in Assam. Henceforth, the Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended in 1985 that incorporated the core provisions of the Assam Accord inserting Section 6A, an exception for Assam. Under these arrangements it was held that persons migrated to India before 1966 will be regarded as the citizen of India. Those who come in between the period of 1st January 1966 and 24th March 1971 would be detected and disenfranchised for a period of 10 years. These categories of people were needed to register themselves in the registering authority for the inclusion of their names as a legal process. However, those who entered in to India after 24th March, 1971 would be detected, deleted and deported from India. However, due to 'insurmountable difficulties' in determining whether a person is foreigner or not the Apex Court in the landmark *Sarbananda Sonowal* (2005) judgement made the provisions of IMDT null and void. Through this judgment, the FTs under the Foreigners Act as well as the Order were restored. Therefore, in the context of Assam during 1980s, citizenship adjudication process took the triangle form in terms of legislations so as to deal with the exceptional regime of citizenship.

The exceptional regime of citizenship has created criticalities in deciding time frames so as to determine citizenship in the state of Assam. It gave the different layers of quasi-judicial apparatus i.e. the FTs/IMDTs and the High Court and the Supreme Court of India to act on citizenship through judicial interpretations. The courts apart from checking documentary evidences and consulting the appropriate laws and rules while deciding on citizenship of the suspected immigrants also interpret the provisions, procedures and the contents, and thereby making the process interpretative in nature in restoring or rejecting the citizenship status of the illegal migrants. The process of interpreting citizenship is also critical. It is because of the anomalies arisen at the FTs, people approach the upper layers of the judiciary i.e. the high court and the Supreme Court of India to seek justice. In the process of adjudication, there are certain instances where courts have also provided diverse judgements in similar cases, hence making the process of citizenship determination more troublesome. Dues to these contestations or criticalities, the upper layers of the judiciary have resorted to certain fundamental rights while adjudicating the appeals against the FTs.

Adjudicating Citizenship of Suspected Illegal Migrants: Rights Based Issues

Rights are crucial components of Individual freedom in leading a dignified life. The right to equality and right to life and personal liberty of a person emerged as two important dimensions of citizenship in the process of adjudication by the upper layers of the judiciary. It has also made citizenship interpretative in nature. Right to equality and the right to life and personal liberty have been enumerated in the Constitution of India. It has its universal applicability and not confined only to the citizens. For this, the suspected illegal migrants residing in India can also avail these rights while asserting for the legal status of citizenship.

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution ensures the equality principle by stating that ‘the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law and equal protection of laws within the territory of India’ (1950,6). In Article 21 protection of right to life and personal liberty has been emphasized (1950, 11). Right to life is not about the physical existence of a person. It entails an all-encompassing right which helps a person to live freely within the political boundary of the state. We have already pointed out that because of inadequate legislations and unfeasible political negotiations, the citizenship ambiguities have reached the floor of courtrooms. Court orders and judgements have furnished the already grounded legislative gaps in many cases of citizenship. Thereby, the courts interpreted the legislative provisions in consonance with the constitutional principles and adjudicated action upon the fault-lines of these two in bringing out a new dimension to the concept. It may be mentioned that the Supreme Court of India, in the *State of Arunachal Pradesh vs Khudiram Chakma* (1994) had extended the protection of life and liberty principle to all including the aliens where the state is bound to provide protection to the life and liberty of every human being residing within its territorial jurisdiction.

The rationale behind choosing Article 14 and Article 21 in adjudicating citizenship contestation in Assam is that inadequate legislations have hampered petitioners’ right to live freely and to lead a dignified life. Secondly, the ideas and values of the Indian Constitution can be interpreted flexibly, thus, expanding the domain of judiciary for enhanced interpretation in deciding upon the claim of citizenship of suspected illegal migrants which is also divergent in nature.

In order to show the importance of fundamental rights enumerated particularly in Article 14 and Article 21, the present paper engages with a few relevant rights that have come up in the contested citizenship discourse as a process of adjudication.

Access to justice

The right to access of justice is one of important fundamental right which is also available to suspected illegal migrants. It is an essential prerequisite of fulfilling other rights. The prime concern of judiciary is to impart just decisions after considering all the evidential documents. The role of the courts is to provide justice for the greater benefit of the society. In dealing with the citizenship cases of suspected illegal migrants, courts need to discover and maintain the just procedure in establishing truth. In *Anita Kushwaha vs Pushap Sudan* (2016), the Apex court held that right to access of justice is one of the crucial fundamental rights within the meaning of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Apex court further held that right to justice encompasses certain other rights such as speedy, affordable and effective adjudicatory mechanism. In this process, the state must provide reasonable access to such adjudicatory mechanism in terms of distance. Thereby, the court come in to conclusion that the petitioner can transfer its case from one court to another with respect to Article 32 of the Indian Constitution and it's a part of right to justice which the Constitution of India has enumerated in Article 21. However, in transferring case from one FTs to another FTs within the Article 226 the Gauhati High Court in *Shariful Islam @ Soriful Islam and Ors vs the Union of India and Ors* (2019) held that the High Court doesn't have the power to entertain the prayer of petitioners for transferring its proceedings from one tribunal to the another since there is no enabling provision is mentioned in the Constitution for the applicability of Article 226 in transferring cases of suspected illegal migrants. It is important to point out here that in another judgement dated 27/12/2022 of similar level in *Jonglu Ali @ Janglu Ali and Ors vs the Union of India and Ors* (2019) delivered by the said Court, the division bench seek the intervention of larger bench on the question of whether power of High Court within Article 226 for transferring cases comes within the ambience of right to justice of the petitioner. Taking precedence from the judgement given in *Anita Khuswaha* case the division bench proceeded by saying that the High Courts have the power to transfer cases if the judges carefully consider the documents submitted by the petitioner (paragraph 107). In this way, the court can establish substantial justice following the principles of equity and fair play in adjudicating citizenship. However, it is still contested whether right to justice includes the transfer of cases from one FT to another FT. Nonetheless, the Apex court's decision in this regard proves the applicability of right to justice as fundamental right in transferring cases from one FT to another.

Right to fair trial

India is a democratic country which is governed by rule of law. One of the important aspects of rule of law is that no one should be punished without a fair trial. The prime role of judiciary is to protect the constitution which promises rights to its people. In a democratic country every person should be treated equally in a lawsuit and people should get a fair chance of being heard, that meets the principle of natural justice. Fair trial within the meaning of Article 14 and Article 21 of the Indian Constitution came in to prominence in *Zahira Habibullah Sheikh and Ors vs the State of Gujrat and Ors* (2006) that defines fair trial as a process where ‘bias or prejudice for or against the accused, the witness, or the cause which is being tried is eliminated’. In dealing with the question of manner of investigation which is carried out by the state, the full bench of the Gauhati High Court in the *State of Assam and Ors v. the Moslem Mondal and Ors* (2013) argues that ‘the right to get a fair trial is a basic fundamental and human right’ (paragraph 93). The court equates fair trial with fair investigation with reference to the matter of detection and deportation of suspected illegal migrants in the state of Assam according to the provisions of Foreigners Order, 1964. It also emphasized that the fair trial is also available to non-citizens as the Constitution has promised to the life and liberty of every person. Fair trial in protecting individual life and liberty must concern with the fair opportunity of the accused to demonstrate himself/herself in the court of trial. Taking precedence from the full bench judgement of Moslem Mondal case, in *Ayub Ali and Ors v. the Union of India and Ors* (2015) the Gauhati High Court pronounced that the principle of natural justice can’t be put in a straight-jacketed manner and it is not a one-way traffic. Since illegal migration has the potentiality to change the sovereignty and integrity of the country, therefore, the interests of the state should be kept intact while dealing with the cases of suspected illegal migrants. Thus, there is an expansion and a shift from the Moslem Mondal case where the right of the petitioner was focused, whereas in Ayub Ali case the court focused on the interests of the state along with rights of the petitioner. This signifies the divergence of court decisions in interpreting citizenship question within Article 21.

Right to live with dignity

A dignified life is a valued life. It is the precursor of establishing a just and equitable society. In terms of the rights of suspected illegal migrants the Gauhati High Court emphasizes upon the dignified life of a person which is impossible without citizenship. Therefore, citizenship status of a person is highly crucial and the Foreigners Tribunals must be cautious while taking decision in terms of the citizenship of the suspected petitioner. *Ex-parte* orders should not be opinionated without following an all-inclusive process

which the rule of the law prescribes. Otherwise, dignity of an individual would be harmed and the establishment of just society would be a mere dream. In the *Rajendra Das and Ors vs the Union of India and Ors* (2021), division bench of the Court headed by Justice N Kotiswar Singh and Malasri Nandi worded strongly that ‘it is through citizenship that a person can enjoy and enforce fundamental rights and other legal rights conferred by the Constitution...., without which a person can’t lead a meaningful life without dignity’ (paragraph 7). Therefore, the Court put its concern on the vitality of citizenship and its relationship with the right to live a dignified life in the contemporary scenario. It is also clarified that the other proceedings are not equivalent to the proceedings related to the citizenship. It is because, stripping someone’s citizenship status without analysing all the evidential documents would make a person stateless and that would be greatest crisis of the interpretation of laws. Right to life is one of such rights which can’t even abandon during emergency period; therefore, it has critical importance in peoples live. Hence, if a petitioner doesn’t get adequate opportunity to establish his/her claim then it would be regarded as the violative of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

Conclusion

The process of judicializing citizenship within the Constitution and the laws made there under are contested. The courts, while engaging with the fundamental rights of the proceedee has come up with divergent views and at times conflicting interpretations. The reason for which is the flexibility of the Indian Constitution which can be interpreted multidimensionally in different contexts and situations. However, the interpretations of courts have brought about new ideas of understanding citizenship which were under the veil otherwise. To be conclusive, the solution to illegal migration in the state of Assam is still unsettled. At this juncture, an effective and viable judicial interpretation to facilitate political negotiations and actions in terms of preserving person’s life and liberty as well as equality is a much-needed process.

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**Climate Change and Labour Force Migration in
Indian Sundarbans: an econometric exploration**
Nilendu Chatterjee

Abstract

Economic Development and environment always share a strong association between each other. Despite its positive effects on the development of economies, extensive uses of environmental resources have led to severe destruction and depletion of natural resources beyond the regenerative capacity of the environment. Such unsustainable uses have led to the problem of climate change – a major problem that has put the entire human civilization at stake. One of the direct effects of this climate change is frequent natural tragedies and severe depletion of natural resources. Indian Sundarbans is one such region where majority of the population are still very much dependent upon natural resources of forestry and fishery for livelihoods earning. Climate Change has not spared this region and its resources from its destructive effects and as a consequence it has forced people of Sundarbans to migrate elsewhere in search of employment. This study, based on primary survey of 500 households, is focused on inquiring whether climate change has been responsible behind labour force migration from Sundarbans in the last two decades. Econometric application of logistic regression analysis and ground level reality suggests that climate change has been responsible behind migration. Present study finds that people are of the view that there is depletion in resource base in this region due to climate change and such a fall coupled with dependency on resources have compelled them to migrate. The study is significant in the sense that it not only calls for protection and sustainable use of these resources but also suggests the authorities to develop alternative employment opportunities in the area and educational base which may prevent such phenomenon by reducing extensive resource dependency.

Key Words: Climate Change, Labour Force Migration, Indian Sundarbans, Primary Data, Logistic Regression.

1. Introduction

Geological records suggest that the climate of this universe has undergone substantial changes over the last five decades and it has been going from bad to worse with every passing day, owing to extensive exploitation of environmental resources and population pressure (Romm, 2011, p.450). Fifth report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Ch-4) explicitly states the human involvement in the process of climate change in the last century. In the coming decades there will be frequent changes in weather, harsh climatic conditions, consistent upsurge in temperature, severe changes in the pattern of agricultural production as well as availability of natural resources like forestry; fishes, etc. which will, together, make millions or even billions of people suffer (Jones and O' Neill, 2016, p.7). Millions of people are already exposed to the brutality of such climatic change which has forced them to migrate for livelihoods earnings (Romm, 2011, p.451). Several recent studies suggest that by 2050, there will be more than 50 million climate – induced migration of labour force in India which is more than the present number (State of India's Environment Report, 2022, p.56). In India, it is readily acknowledged that domestic migration of both forms – between state and within state – are higher than that of international migration, when it comes to shifting due to livelihood earnings behind which climatic changes is one of the important causes. Census record of 2011 suggests that inter-state migration and intra-state migration together accounted for 38% of total migration of Indian labour force which has further gone up at present (PLFS data, 2022, p.77).

Apart from several economic causes, the factor that has been forcing people to migrate, of late, is climate change and its cruel effects. By the words “Climate Change”, we mean the process by which human activities cause the nature and natural resources to deplete more than its re-generative capacity and thus the growth process causes excessive generation of harmful gases including Carbon-di-oxide. The definition provided by IPCC describes climate change as a long-run, persisting change in the property of climate and it can be felt. (Parry et al., 2007, p.15). All forms of natural resources – forestry, fishery, water –have been subject to severe as well as frequent changes and severe depletion. The fact that these climatic changes put the survival of

millions of people at stake and force them to migrate elsewhere in search of livelihoods earning, deserves proper attention and research.

Sundarbans, a UNESCO heritage, is a set of islands connected with zigzag, convoluted set of rivers and canals popularly known as 'khari'. Indian Sundarbans is spread across the two districts of north and south twenty-four parganas. The people of Sundarbans are heavily dependent on natural resources for earning livelihoods. The salinity in the soil prevents smooth agricultural practices and inhibits crop production which compel the people to depend on resources like fishery and forestry for sustaining. Sundarbans is one of the largest fish-suppliers of the state and despite several efforts being made by both central and state governments, supply of fishes; their species have been depleting over the last few decades. This fact holds for both open access fishery in the Bay-of Bengal as well as in the fish cultivation in the brackish water in ponds and canals. But in the last two decades there have been severe negative effects of climate change on Sundarbans and its people. Climate change has hit the people and environmental resource base of Indian Sundarbans by means of dual actions – firstly, the worldwide global warming has caused depletion of mangrove forestry and fishing resources and secondly, several cyclones and storm surges in the last decade with rising frequencies have aggravated the brutal effects of climate change. Between 2009 and 2021, there have been seven major cyclones in Indian Sundarbans, even though all of them did not have the land fall on Sundarbans. In 2009 we had Aila, in 2013 Mahasen, in 2016 Roanu, in 2019 we had dual destruction of Bulbul and Fani, in 2020 we had Amphan and in 2021 we had Yaas. All these cyclones together caused damage of almost 30,000 million US dollars in this region of 4.2 million population (source: Centre for Science and Environment, India). Apart from the catastrophic effects it seeks for rehabilitation, such frequent severe cyclones, coupled with global warming and population pressure, have not only caused depletion of resources but also have forced people to migrate elsewhere in search of employment (Debnath and Nayak, 2018, p. 125). Even Census of 2011 and PLFS data of 2022 suggest that these two districts hold important positions in the domestic migration in India with West Bengal holding the fourth rank in the nation. The environmental project of Food and Agriculture Organization in 2018 known as DECCMA conducted surveys in 51 different and important parts of the two districts of north and south twenty-four parganas and found that almost 65% migration from these two districts occur because of economic reasons and lack of agricultural productivity is one of the prime reasons. Even the head of this

DECCMA project from India, Professor Ghosh, commented that there is impact of environment behind this migration (Times of India, Nov 3, 2019).

Given this backdrop and the climatic harshness that the people of Indian Sundarbans have been subject to, in the last couple of decades, it has become important to investigate whether this domestic migration of labour force is climate driven or not? There can be possibility of Harris – Todaro form of real-wage difference induced migration. But even this real – wage gap may have been caused because of depletion of natural resources owing to climatic brutality which has been diminishing earning opportunities and forcing people to move out of the place. Thus, it becomes important to know the people's view – what the real stakeholders think. People who are subject to this severity of climate change, are the actual ones who can confirm whether such migratory movements are because of climatic harshness or anything else. Hence, we decided to inquire the reality from the ground itself by means of primary survey and asking the people of Indian Sundarbans. We have found, during survey, that members from our surveyed households have actually migrated to other parts of India or to other parts within the district in search of employment and they have direct or indirect dependency on natural resources. They have also identified paucity of natural resources and change in climatic conditions over the last two decades have been prime factors behind migrating abroad. Hence, there is a great deal of association between Climate Change and Migration. This phenomenon is very much prominent among the fishermen. Foresters also finding it difficult to acquire non-timber forest products due to mangrove destruction both by climate change and population pressure which has grown on an average of around 2% per annum in this region during 2001 to 2011 (Census, 2011, p.20).

Existing literature suggest that there are ample works on climate induced migration at the international level. But such studies are very few when it comes to Indian perspectives and almost missing for natural resource – dependent Indian Sundarbans. The problem of climate change and human migration was recognized in the 1990s and it is going bad to worse since then and by 2050 it will hit the world badly as came up in the study of International Organisation for Migration (Brown, 2008, p.18). Another study on the developing nations suggests that migration is actually going to harm in the long-run because by 2060 there will be at least 300 million people who would be facing climate induced migration and more than half of this number would be labour forces who would migrate in search of alternative employment. Only around 20% of such migration

would be from the developed OECD economies and higher proportion would be from the developing economies, especially from the resource dependent regions (Burzynskia et al., 2019, p.36). There is no homogeneous model of migration forced by climate changes at present. Parrish et al. in 2020 (p.15) developed a model for human migration and climate change on Malawi and the authors are of the opinion that such a model can be applied on all regions that face this problem and it would lead to develop a homogeneous model of climate driven migration. One cannot deny that Governments in every economy should take up this problem seriously. Global Warming, Climate Change and migration of labour forces have become an international issue worldwide. Hence, it demands action from three angles – how governments, both at the regional and national levels, are going to deal with the increasing number of migrants, what alternative policies do they have for these migrants and how these migrants are going to impact the future government policies (Bryne, 2018, p.771). Migratory shifting of labour forces owing to climatic conditions has become a universally accepted phenomenon and new researchers have been focusing on risk-reduction due to climate change, sustainable development of migrated labour forces and human rights of these people. Since this phenomenon is heavily experienced in the less developed nations, there is even issues of reverse migration of these labour forces back to their original workplaces by means of proper arrangements by the governments (Zickgraf and Perrin, 2016, p.11). Higher the frequency of destructive effects of the nature by means of climate change, more will be the expectations among people regarding the possibilities of such outbreaks in future and it will influence their decision-making process in favour of possible migration (Buchenrieder et al., 2017, p.28). Such has been the case with people of Sundarbans. Here we have witnessed the harshness of climate change not only as a part of global warming but also as a part of increase in the numbers and severity of cyclones and storm-surges. Few studies have focused on econometric application behind estimating the number of migrants and all of these studies have concluded that such numbers are only going to increase over the decades but their short-run and long-run predictions differ (Bohra-Mishra et al., 2014, p.9781). Gravity model, a hugely popular one in predicting migration, has also been giving similar predictions of increasing migration by the end of this century which is worrying, especially for the developing; populous economies like India (Rigaud et al., 2018, p.211). One can see from the above discussion that migration related studies are mostly on developed economies and for developing economies they are very few in number and the existing ones are forecasting based or narrative.

Such studies on Indian Sundarbans are missing. None of the studies have considered the people's view or considered their perspectives behind their decision to migrate. What factors, other than climate change, have been influential behind an individual's decision to migrate are also very much neglected in the literature of developing economies. This study looks to fill up that lacuna by means of econometric analysis based on the views of inhabitants of this place. A heritage place with utmost importance in the economy and geographic positioning of the state as well as of the nation, with absolute dependency on natural resources for livelihoods of its people, has been facing serious migration-related issues because of climate change and the causes of such a phenomenon needs to be investigated.

1. Data, Survey Design and Methodology

The present study is based on primary survey which was conducted in two different blocks of Indian Sundarbans – Basanti and Namkhana. Basanti has population dependent upon both forestry and fishery for sustaining. In Basanti there are people who are engaged in both forms of fishing – open access fishing and fish – cultivation of their own. In Namkhana, we have the famous hub of fishing –Frazerganj where majority of the people are solely dependent upon fishing and its subsidiary activities for survival. Here, open-access fishing is the primary form of livelihoods. During our pilot survey in December 2022 and our final survey in March and April 2023. For smooth, efficient conduction of the survey, we have followed a mix of stratified and random sampling procedures. For selection of blocks and villages, stratified sampling process was followed by us, and for selection of respondents and households, random sampling process was followed by us. Hence, we tried to capture the views of resource dependent communities as far as possible in order to get answer of our research questions. We have discussed with the members of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMs) and with the Fishermen Association who helped us immensely. During our survey, we have discussed with people from all socio – economic categories that exist in the society and we have found that a major proportion of the people are still dependent on natural resources, directly or indirectly. We have followed the ‘door to door’ and ‘face to face’ interview processes as suggested by NOAA panel and as a benefit of all these efforts we have received 100% responses which is even though unconventional but highly recommended and beneficial for developing economies. Interestingly, above 85% of the surveyed households have one or more than one member from

their family migrated to other parts of the district and the state in search of employment opportunities, because of the depletion in natural resources and lack of alternative employment opportunities near their places of living. A brief description about the surveyed households is given below in table – 1.

Table 1: Number of Households and Areas of Survey from Indian Sundarbans

Name of the District	Name of the Blocks	Area of Survey	No. of households surveyed from each block	Resource Dependent People (Direct / Indirect)	Families having one / more than one migrated member	Families having Member(s) migrated in the last 10 years
South 24 Parganas	Basanti Block	Jhorkhali 4, Jhorkhali Bazar Area and Jhorkhali lot 126	228	207	195	189
South 24 Parganas	Namkhana Block	Bijoybati village, Amarabati(east) Amarabati(west)	272	249	234	224
Total			500	456 (91.2%)	429 (85.8%)	413 (82.6%)

Source: Field Survey

The above table is self – explanatory from several aspects. Our primary data reveals the fact that above 91% people are still very much dependent upon natural resources and in the last decade members of 82.6% families have migrated for livelihoods earning, even though the overall proportion of migrated members is from around 86% families. This table reveals the fact that there is depletion of both forestry and fishery resources because there is a mixed of forest and fishery dependency in Basanti Block, whereas Namkhana is famous for complete fishery dependency. It also implies the fact that people are willing to migrate elsewhere from these places.

The question which hovers the center stage of this study is whether such migration has been caused by climatic changes over the last couple of decades. For this purpose, we have directly asked these 500 respondents whether they feel there is migration of labour force from this region due to climate change and their replies were either in a ‘YES’ or a ‘NO’. Apart from this direct question on migration driven by climate change, there were several questions on the socio-economic aspects which may influence the decision to migrate, directly or indirectly,

of the respondents. Around 44% of our respondents were female and there was active participation from people of all socio – economic castes in our survey.

Since the respondents by means of a direct ‘YES’ or ‘NO’, here our response variable is of binary in nature. We make these direct responses to the query against our dependent variable as a part of binary analysis by assigning ‘1’ to the ‘YES’ responses and ‘0’ to the ‘NO’ responses, respectively. Hence, we have followed the logistic regression analysis where our dependent variable (Whether people feel climate change has caused Migration in the last two decades) is the log-odds ratio which represents the ratio of the probability to say a ‘YES’ to the assigned question and the probability to say a ‘NO’. A brief description of the econometric modelling of the logistic regression is given below.

$$\ln \frac{P_i}{1 - P_i} = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^8 \alpha_i X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$P_i = \frac{e^{(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \dots + \alpha_8 X_8)}}{1 + e^{(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \dots + \alpha_8 X_8)}} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Or, } P_i = \frac{e^{(X\alpha)}}{1 + e^{(X\alpha)}}$$

$$\text{Or, } P_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{(-X\alpha)}}$$

where, P_i stands for probability of saying a YES to the main question of climate causing migration, that is, the respondent agrees to the fact that climate has been responsible for migration of labour forces. Therefore, $(1 - P_i)$ is the probability of saying a NO to that question or not making climate change as the responsible factor behind the decision to migrate. $\ln \frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}$ denotes the log-odds ratio, X stands for the vector of regressors or

dependent variables which are socio-economic in nature. X_i 's are the independent variables which are 8 in our study. α_i 's are the co-efficient terms representing the effects of all the regressors and ε_i is the random error term. In our study, we have found that out of 500 respondents, 454 people have agreed to the fact that climate change has been responsible behind the decision of migration. Hence, this number is more than the number of families having migrated members which implies that people, in general, believe that climate change has a significant impact behind migration even if they do not have any migrated member in their families.

The set of regressors or the 8 independent variables or attributes of our study are given below.

- Natural Resource Dependency of the family - (RD) (Dummy Variable- 0 for Yes; 1 for No)
- Natural Resource availability compared to past - (RA) (Dummy Variable- 0 for decreased availability; 1 for increased availability)
- Growth rate of State Domestic Product - (GSDP)
- Years of total Education of the Respondent - (EDR)
- Respondent's Sex - (SEX) (Dummy Variable- 0 for Male; 1 for Female)
- Family Size - (FS) (Total Number of Heads or Person in the Family).
- Availability of Alternative Employment Opportunities in the living Areas or Rural Areas - (AEO) (Dummy Variable - 0 No, 1 for Yes).
- Welfare Schemes of the Governments - (WSG) (Dummy Variable – 0 for No, 1 for Yes when a family enjoys the benefit of one or more than one Welfare Schemes run by either the State Government or the Central Government).

In the next section, we shall discuss about the findings of our study.

2. Econometric Findings and Analysis

The result of the logistic regression is reported below in the following table along with the marginal effects. It will help us in understanding about the relative influential significance or insignificance of the variables under study.

Table 2: Result of Logit Analysis or Logistic Regression

Variables	Co-efficient	Effects on Climate Driven Migration	Marginal Effects (dY/dX)
RD	0.304*** (11.44)	Highly Likely	0.0798*** (7.36)
RA	0.597*** (8.36)	Highly Likely	0.0441*** (8.04)
GSDP	- 0.098 (-1.04)	Ineffective	-0.0044 (-0.88)
EDR	- 0.098** (-2.10)	Unlikely	- 0.004* (-1.81)
SEX	-0.409* (-1.86)	Moderately Likely	- 0.029* (-1.83)
FS	0.094** (1.99)	Moderately Likely	0.055** (1.91)
AEO	- 0.254*** (-11.44)	Unlikely	- 0.169*** (-4.36)
WSG	- 0.096 (-0.76)	Ineffective	- 0.004 (-0.21)
pseudo R ² 0.875			
Log-likelihood ratio 201.49			

Source: Estimated by author

Note: Values in the paratheses describe the t-values of coefficients

Note: *** denotes significance at 1% level, ** denotes Significance at 5% level, * denotes Significance at 10% level.

Results obtained from the logistic regression is important from several aspects. It has strong implications, regarding the effects of individual socio-economic conditions on the climate driven migration. We shall go for a variable wise analysis. Resource dependency is positively significant at 1% level which implies that families having dependency on natural resources do tend to migrate which itself explains the negative effects of climate change on the depleting resources. When we consider the presently available resources with that of the past, result vividly shows that it has been depleting over the years and therefore it has significant impact on the decision of migration of a respondent. Higher the level of education, lower is the possibility to migrate indicating the fact that an educated person believes to earn livelihoods even without depending on natural

resources which is a significant outcome from the socio-economic perspectives. Next, we find that male members of the family are more willing to go abroad than their female counterparts but as a part of the family and due to the financially poor conditions of the families, they also get engaged in works and often migrate with other family members. This is the economic intuition behind the significance of this variable. The fact that family size is having a positive significant impact on the climate-induced migration signifies that families with more members find it difficult to earn livelihoods by depending on depleting stock of resources and therefore decide to shift elsewhere. Whenever there is availability of alternative employment opportunities near the living areas, there is reluctance on part of the villagers to migrate. It has strong connection with the significant effect of Family Size. Larger families, which is very common in rural areas, find it tough to earn because of the lack of alternative opportunities. We have two variables which are ineffective or insignificant in bearing any impact on the decision to migrate. Growth of State Domestic Production is having no impact which implies that the problem of climate change and that of migration are not associated with state domestic production. It may imply that this problem is completely environmental and despite the growth in SDP, there is tendency to migrate due to destructive effects of climate. It may also imply that the people of these areas are not getting any positive effects from the growth of SDP, that is, the trickle-down effects are not strong enough to discourage migration. Government's schemes are also ineffective which means even though there are several subsidiary schemes run by both the governments but these are not good enough to influence the decision of people to migrate. It implies that people primarily depend on natural resources in the Indian Sundarbans and climate change does have an impact on both the depletion of resources as well as on the migration of labour force due to this depletion but neither the growth of state domestic product nor subsidiary welfare policies of the government can restrict such decision significantly. The R – square of our analysis is 87.5% which implies that our included regressors are good enough to climate-induced migratory behaviour of the people and our estimated equation is a well-fitted one. We have also reported the marginal effects which account for change in the probability to say a YES in response to the basic research question subject to 1% change in the independent variables. Next, we have tested for the problem of multicollinearity which reports the degree of relation among the explanatory variables which is very common in cross-section analysis. Tolerance level of

association or Variance Inflationary Factor (VIF) among the regressors report the multicollinearity. These values are reported in the following table.

Table 3: Test for Multicollinearity

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
RD	2.36	0.4237
RA	2.87	0.3484
GSDP	1.98	0.5050
EDR	3.89	0.2570
SEX	4.98	0.2008
FS	4.26	0.2347
AEO	0.89	1.1235
WSG	2.99	0.3344
Mean VIF	3.0275	

Source: Estimated by author

As our mean VIF is less than 5, we can say it is within the bearable limit as per rule of thumb which says a mean VIF of above 5 should lead to reframing of the model. Hence, there exists no problem with the chosen regressors.

3. Concluding Remarks

Our study on Indian Sundarbans is based on econometric analysis of 500 households, surveyed from two blocks of Sundarbans where people are heavily dependent on natural resources, namely forestry and fishery, for sustaining. We know how hard climate change has been hitting ever corner of the earth on a regular basis. Apart from health, its catastrophic effects have direct consequences on the livelihoods earning, especially on the resource-dependent communities. Sundarbans is no different. It has been suffering from serious climate induced mishaps for the last two decades and such mishaps have had direct negative impact on the livelihood earnings of the inhabitants of this place. Our findings suggest, based on the views of the real stakeholders residing in Sundarbans, that climate change has been influencing resource depletion and domestic migration

of labour force from Sundarbans. Since, resource dependency as well as resource availability both have been influencing migration, there is serious call for policy setting authorities to restore resources as far as possible. Education and Alternative Employment Opportunities are the two key areas that need to be strengthened by the governments which may discourage such migration. Since, government's welfare schemes and growth of state domestic product have been non-influential, there is serious need, on part of the governments, to ensure proper distribution of economic wealth and facilities. As policy measures, one can suggest there is urgent need to develop proper infrastructure and generate alternative employment opportunities in Sundarbans along with ensuring conservation cum sustainable use of natural resources with proper economic policies that will be beneficial for all.

Notes and References

1. Full form of DECCMA is Deltas, vulnerability and climate change: migration and adaptation.
2. We have selected our regressors after going through existing literature and discussion with the people of Sundarbans during pilot survey.
3. Relative effects of regressors on the possibility of influencing decision of migration is decided based on the degree and magnitude of econometric significance of a specific variable or attribute.
4. The source of data on Growth of State Domestic Data is Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and we have used the GSDP data of 2022-23 in our analysis.

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Decoding Identity Politics and Caste Hegemony in New Age Cinema: A Case Study on the Film ‘Jai Bhim’

Noveena Chakravorty and Sharmila Kayal

Abstract

Indian society is uniquely equipped with social stratification of caste hegemony with hedonism often echoed through the chronicles in the form of cinema. New age cinema contemplates the prospects for movement, bustle, and multi-cultural egalitarian dialogue with discourse. New age cinema, on the other hand, is subject to be a torch bearer and catalyst of social change which experiments to be a voice of the subaltern voiceless section of society. The present research examines the Tamil cinema of ‘Jai Bhim’ through the lens of structural and ideological construction of marginality. It also assumes the ideation of representing the issues, dogmas, and sabotaged representation of their distinctiveness in the medium of cinema. The present study adopts the critical discourse analysis method which is qualitative (constructivism research paradigm of epistemological research) with conflict theory in the perspective of structural and ideological construction of the concept of ‘marginalization representation’. This study tries to understand the construction and role of other mainstream and regional films of similar genres in the past for dissemination of the very idea. The film ‘Jai Bhim’ powerfully captured the abuse and humiliation (two intrinsic factors of the structural construction of the social milieu) that layered on the deprived communities. This film is also a brutal condemnation of police viciousness towards marginalized sections of society. The film uncovers the truth with a complete standing against the system (conformist/ existing nexus).

Keywords: New Age Cinema, Caste based politics, Film studies, oppression, critical discourse analysis, Caste Hegemony

1. Introduction

The challenge of caste in India is real, ubiquitous, and yet less discussed. People find it uncomfortable to talk about the invidious impact on lower castes. From literal times Indian society has seen atrocities grounded on the caste testament. Caste has been studied from different frames by different intellectualists in academia and sociology as well as anthropology as an important discipline in studying it Amarjit, S. (2021, pp.39-45). For example, Dalit women in India experience gender in an entirely different way from upper-caste women because, along with gender demarcation, Dalit women face caste demarcation Pankaj,

A. K. (2022, pp.143-157). The narrative, dialogue, and design of the film put these issues in front of the crowd by covering multiple scenes from embedded caste-based discrimination. Their experience of gender demarcation intersects with their caste identity, which intensifies their suffering. Dalit women witness gender-grounded demarcation and social rejection and smirch Pankaj, A. K. (2022, pp.143-157). '*Jai Bhim*' distinguished reality from fantasy and showed us that we are yet to pull off Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision, 'Article 17. Abolition of Untouchability: Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offense punishable in accordance with the law.' Our society failed to validate Martin Luther King, Jr's words "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." '*Jai Bhim*' is a nerve-wracking movie that puts human conscience at stake and the outcome calls Indian democracy into question. In 2018-19 and 2020-21, 348 custodial deaths have been reported and 1,189 were tortured. This data might fluctuate in real life as most torture and custodial violence never succeed in reaching the public record but it is sufficient to shock our conscience. The film might cover fragments of brutality but certainly not the entire discriminatory tangents. '*Jai Bhim*' has surpassed the filmic imagination by pointing up the ugly realities of the criminal justice system and nuances of the systemic weaknesses and failures. Cinema as an art form and seen as a reflection of society which represents the different aspects of society through a cinematic lens that profoundly portrays the matter in a very diligent manner the people are living where social problems like Casteism exist Amarjit, S. (2021, pp. 39-45).

Narratives- In '*Jai Bhim*', they took a star like Suriya and picked up a win-win case. When an anti-caste film has upper-caste oppressors and saviours, it implies caste as an individual belief. In films like *Visaranai*, the audience have experienced a sense of despair. These films never covered cases such as the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and Chunduru killings (1991) cause in real-world Dalits barely made it to the legal justice. In '*Jai Bhim*', Chandru sought the court to make Rajakannu free from the false accusation of larceny and to prove his custodial death. Also, the defence lawyer and Chandru made a row about whether Rajakannu is guilty or not but the whole thing challenged the purpose of human rights which cites that every human has the right to life unconditionally by the virtue of being born as a human. Several scenes have Communist red flags and logos but the remarks on the Ambedkarite Dalit movement for which the audience might have waited are not there in the film. The narrative of this film has been derived from the incident that happened in 1990 and which was the surge of the Dalit movement in South India. '*Jai Bhim*' has bifurcated the Dalit resistance by making a reference to communal violence and the Left movement.

2. Materials and methods

The present study adopts the critical discourse analysis method which is qualitative (constructivism research paradigm of epistemological research) with conflict theory.

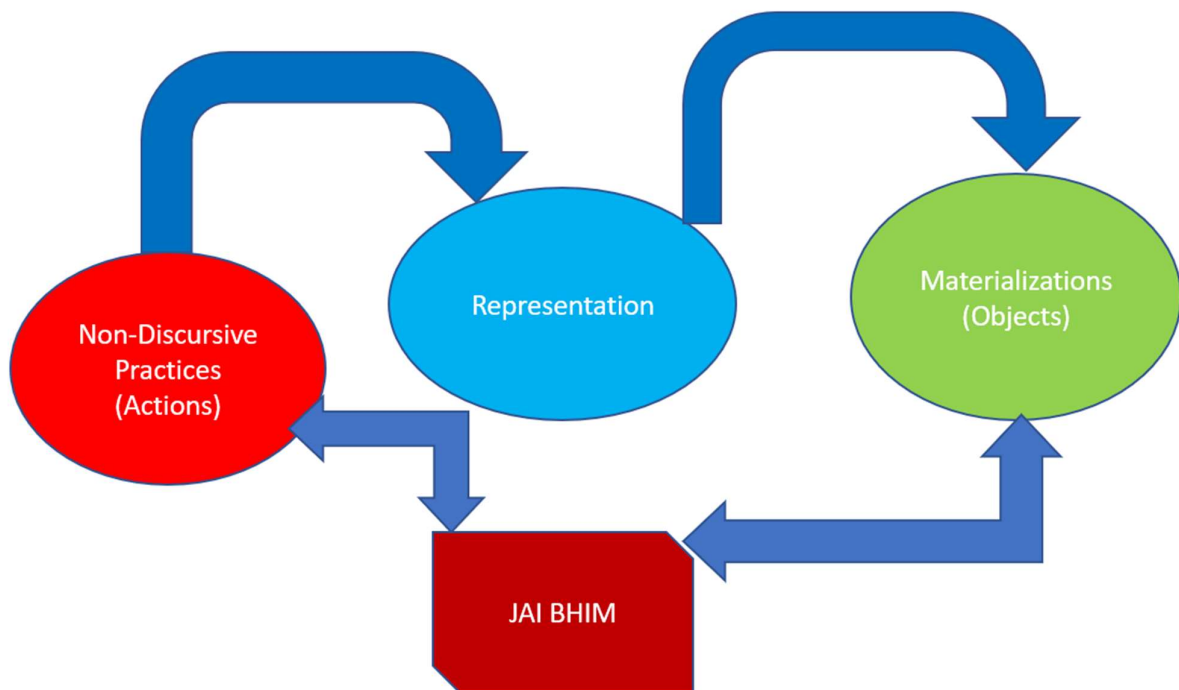
Conflict theory, first developed by Karl Marx, is a proposition that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited assets. This theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by agreement and conformity. According to Marx, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, primarily by suppressing the poor and helpless. An introductory premise of conflict proposition is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power. societal conflict is the force that eventually drives change and development in society. Marx's interpretation of conflict concentrated on the skirmish between two primary classes. Each class consists of a group of people bound by collective interests and a certain degree of property power. Marx theorized about the bourgeoisie, a group that represented members of society who hold the maturity of wealth and means. The riffraff is the other group It includes those considered working-class or poor. There are four assumptions of conflict theory -

- Competition- Conflict Proponents believe that competition is a constant and, at times, an inviting factor in nearly every mortal relationship and commerce.
- Revolution- It's an undercurrent situation which tries to break the atrocities, stereo typicality and indifferent behaviour to bring equality, harmony and assimilation for an equilibrium society.
- Structural Inequality- caste hierarchy, class struggle, hegemony and hedonism of ill balanced power structure.
- War – a voice of voiceless in terms to fight against odds/disparities.

Based on the conflict theory arguments and prepositions, it can be assumed that in November 2021, 2D Entertainment came up with the film 'Jai Bhim' directed by T. J. Gnanavel a former journalist, and produced by Jyothika and Suriya the eminent actors from south India. The film revolves around police bias against the underprivileged community. The entire film has been gleaned from a true incident of Sengeni and Rajakannu and it involves a case fought by Justice K. Chandru in 1993. Sengeni and Rajakannu were of Dravidian descent. The story revolves around a situation where Rajakannu (one of the characters of the film Jai Bheem) went missing after he was taken into police custody and Sengeni (the wife of Rajakannu) approached advocate Chandru (played by Suriya) for justice.

The objective of the study includes;

- To understand the construction of abuse and humiliation (two intrinsic factors of the structural construction of the social milieu) that heaped upon the underprivileged communities through the lens of Jai Bhim, and
- To find the role of other mainstream and regional films of similar genres in the past for dissemination of the very idea of caste-based portrayal.



CDA approaches in Jai Bhim (Conceptualised by the Authors)

Narratives of Jai Bhim and obstacles

The story, performances of renowned stars like Suriya, Lijomol Jose, and Manikandan, with Rajisha Vijayan, Prakash Raj, Rao Ramesh, and others in supporting roles, direction, and the social message was well received and universally acclaimed by the audience. Unlike other movie directors like K Balachander, Bharathiraja and Bhagyaraj, T.J. Gnanavel portrayed the real version of injustice towards the tyrannized community. 'Jai Bhim' has eventuated as one of the best Indian Tamil-language legal drama films of 2021. *The narrative of 'Jai Bhim' states the condition of Irula tribes – The plight - Rajakannu and Sengeni are from the Irula tribe and they have served as laborers to control rat infestation and catch venomous snakes. Rajakannu was assigned to catch a snake from a baron's house and the next day, the rich man's wife reported a complaint of missing jewelry pieces. Under suspicion, the police went after Rajakannu and*

searched his house without any warrant. Rajakannu being out of town for work, his pregnant wife Sengeni was brutally beaten and other relatives including his brother Iruttapan, his sister Pachaiammal, and his brother-in-law Mosakutty were tortured in the custody. The police caught Rajakannu on his way back home, release Sengeni, and kept torturing him until he confessed to the crime. Later, the police announced that all three men ran away. In early 2020, Suriya announced that he will be working with T. J. Gnanavel on a legal drama film based on tribal people. In 2010, Gnanavel was the dialogue writer of '*Ratha Sarithram*' (Tamil-dubbed of '*Rakta Charitra 2*') in which Suriya was cast. In '*Jai Bhim*', Suriya was shown as a retired Madras High Court Justice and former senior advocate K. Chandru who brought justice to Rajakannu and her family. The film was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. When Suriya joined the set, he was associated with another role in '*Etharkkum Thunindhavan*'. The subsequent lockdown kept delaying the shooting but it resumed in July 2021 and had been wrapped up by September 2021. In October 2021, '*Jai Bhim*' was given an "A" (adults-only) certificate by the Central Board of Film Certification which made it suitable for a mature audience.

3. Discussion

Caste-based Discrimination and Critical Analysis- Indian cinema has reflected the conception of caste through different angles and connotations like untouchability, honor killing in the situations of inter-caste marriage, and difference of problems in different locales like pastoral and civic bones and people dealing with its Amarjit, S. (2021, pp-39-45). The paper argues that contemporary filmmakers not only distract "the unconscious of caste" through unequivocal anti-caste aesthetics but also produce affective, suggestive documentation. In other words, they bring into presence what was preliminarily insolvable through the processes of condemnation (of casteist images) and the invention of anti-caste aesthetics) Edachira, M. (2020, pp. 47-53). The portrayal of violence in '*Jai Bhim*' was structured to emphasize the state against Adivasis, rather it has begotten some Brahminical sentiments among the audience. Various scenes centered around Sengeni wearing a gold *thali* were concentrated on Brahminical hegemony, she was affronted by the policeman as her husband was accused of stealing gold. In her defense, she stated that it was her husband's hard work that paid for that *thali*. In another scene, she wanted to sell that *thali*, which was very special to her and might be the only souvenir she was left with from her husband, just to pay what she owed to Chandru. While she was performing the sacrament for her dead husband, she was shown to cling to that *thali*. Just before Rajakannu was held in custody, he got a rattle for his unborn child and when Sengeni came before the high court, she said 'Please bring the father of my two children' which indicated an unborn child in her womb. The scene left the audience with a bout of jitters by creating an emotional impact.

Dalit women in India experience gender in an entirely different way from upper-caste women because, along with gender demarcation, Dalit women face caste demarcation. Their experience of gender demarcation intersects with their caste identity, which intensifies their suffering. Dalit women witness gender-grounded demarcation and social rejection and smirch Lalitha, S., & Pankaj, A. K. (2022, p-143-157). It emphasized the condition of the mainstream society where people feel animosity towards a rat-catcher or anyone from the lower caste as their fellow. Even if Sengeni didn't have a gold *thali*, do you think the police brutality alone would have impacted the audience? It is not like the upper castes are not aware of the brutal physical violence against Dalits and Adivasis but the film incorporating Brahminical middle-class sentiments has jolted the audience forward. Vanniyar Sangam of Pattali Makkal Katchi or PMK highlighted the scene that involved the character sub-inspector Gurumoorthy saying it is insulting to their community. PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss questioned the film's various scenes including a part that showed a pot of fire on a calendar in Gurumoorthy's home and put a defamatory allegation. He kept on going, claiming that the name Gurumoorthy might damage the good reputation of their PMK leader Kaduvetti Guru. But the direction team argued that no actual names of the individuals are mentioned in the film. Also, Suriya mentioned that the narrative was not to hurt any particular community but to question those in power. Suriya kept receiving threats from the PMK supporters and the Vanniyar Sangam, he was given police protection.

Research based on Yengde, 2018 talks about how Dalits in Indian cinema evolved, explicating and narrating the different issues that revolved around them. Yengde, S. (2018, P- 503-518) states that the film made by Nagraj Manjule (a Dalit filmmaker) *Fandry* in 2013 and *Sairat* in 2016 provides an analytical aspect to Dalit cinema that not only able to form a counter-narrative but also forms a constructive socio-cultural counter-culture. Filmmakers like Vetrimaaran, Lokesh Kanagaraj, Pa. Ranjith, C. S. Amudhan, Prakash Raj, Sathyaraj, and Siddharth came up overtly and supported Suriya's statement. The makers also received support from various associations including the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce and Nadigar Sangam. Another scene in which Perumalsamy slapped a pawnbroker for conversing in Hindi rather than in Tamil raised arguments like anti-Hindi sentiment and the BJP government also objected to it on social media. In reference to this, some said that Perumalsamy just tried to make him confused because he was trying to avoid the questions by not speaking in their native language. Vanniyar community applied a petition against Suriya and Gnanavel and on 11 August 2022, they were summoned before the court. The complaint was made saying various scenes of violence and hostility on a particular community were shown in the film but the court dropped the whole thing remarking that there are no such instances. Caste has been an integral part of the Hindu socio-artistic and ritualistic structure. generally Indian society is divided into

caste scales which more frequently than not, manifests in everyday lives; Hindi cinema is one of the most popular sources of entertainment in India and hereafter it also reflects upon socio-artistic practices, dialogues, and sensibilities at large Chauhan, V. (2019, p-327-336). Sengupta, R. (2023, pp. 214-225) in her research focused on films which especially sensitive to caste-based issues which are focused on courtroom struggles, legal trials, and the story of survivors. These selected three films also talk about ordeal, ferocity, and representations which often get affected by higher caste people and personnel.

4. Result and analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis- It aims to find out the retired values and beliefs that may be associated with the operation of accentuations in these pictures (Jørgensen and Philips, 2012, accessed on December 18). Fairclough by defining CDA conceptualized these scales as a three-dimensional model conforming to digressive events(micro), digressive practices(meso), and social structures(macro). Fairclough suggested that CDA exploration should shift between descriptive, interpretive, and explicatory stages (Melissa, Ethan, 2020, p. 377–83). Here, in this present study, the researcher tries to understand the intertextuality, and rhetorics through the narratives of this particular movie.

Themes	Possible Manifestations
Representation of Adivasis in a stereotypical way (food gathering and hunting)	The film begins with Rajakannu and his wife Sengeni catching rats. They were from an aboriginal group in service to the village landlord.
Dissatisfaction with current way of life	Many Adivasi groups were taken into custody and subjected to torture by The Habitual Offenders Act, of 1952, and ‘Jai Bhim’ underlined such systemic violence. Rajakannu’s wife Sengeni, brother Iruttapan, his sister Pachaiammal, and brother-in-law Mosakutty were put behind bars and brutally tortured until they got to know about Rajakannu’s whereabouts.

<p>Regrets over failed expectations</p>	<p>Rajakannu was later apprehended concerning a theft in the landlord's house. After the excruciating torture, the police announced his alleged escape without mentioning any firm exculpation. Thereupon Rajakannu's wife Sengeni appealed a habeas corpus petition in the Madras High Court, Justice K. Chandru, a lawyer, and civil rights activist assisted her.</p>
<p>Happiness- Authority or personnel from homogenous/homogeneity</p>	<p>Mythra, someone who gives adult education to the Irula tribe got to know about Chandru, a lawyer who is renowned for fighting cases on behalf of tribal communities and persuaded him for Sengeni. Chandru advised Sengeni to file a habeas corpus case.</p>
<p>Unhappiness with physical signs</p>	<p>Initially, the court asked them to seek a lower court, but Chandru mentioning the Rajan case requested a witness examination. The Solicitor general attested that all three men ran away the same night they were arrested. Chandru sensed the gaps and requested the court to look into Sub-Inspector Gurumurthy, head constable Veerasamy, and constable Kirubakaran in case of perjury.</p>
<p>Concealment</p>	<p>Advocate General Ram Mohan was assigned to defend the police and he argued those three men might have fled to Kerala. The police somehow managed Varadarajulu, the employer of Iruttapan to concede before the court who said Iruttapan told him over a call that he absconded to Kerala after committing the larceny.</p>
<p>Requisites</p>	<p>Later Chandru unveiled those three policemen who went to Kerala and made a phone call to</p>

	<p>Varadarajulu mimicking Iruttapan's voice. Chandru's requisition was granted and IG Perumalsamy was assigned by the court as the lead officer.</p>
Confused state of mind/action	<p>After a long search, Rajakannu's corpse was located near the border of Pondicherry, and the medical team mentioned the time of his death to be the day after he supposedly fled.</p>
Fatal	<p>The post-mortem examination cited the cause of death to be the breaking of the ribcage, and a bone pierced through Rajakannu's heart but the police theorized it was a car accident.</p>
Brutality	<p>In the end, Veerasamy confessed that it was a lock-up murder and he accused Gurumurthy of asking him to fabricate all the evidence and also staged that murder as a hit-and-run case where the rest of those two left him on the road.</p>
Confession	<p>After this confession, Ram Mohan asked them not to change their narrative in court, and in the meantime, the police moved Mosakutty and Iruttapan to another jail.</p>
Suspicious-Law and Order	<p>After the court's permission was granted, Chandru went through the call history of the police station, and a call was listed at 9:10 pm to Guru's residence which did not match Veerasamy's evidence and raised the suspicion even more. Chandru appealed to the court for some more time and discovered Iruttapan was persuaded by police to make that call to Varadarajulu.</p>

Intense Cruelty	A few days later, Iruttapan and Mosakutty were found, they came before the court and stated what they went through and how Rajakannu was killed.
Dissatisfaction	Perumalsamy testified that the policemen were also involved in bribery and Chandru added that a set of tire marks and footprints matching Guru's and Kiruba's were discovered at the place of death.
Nostalgia for past	With all the evidence, the court put the decisions in order. Rajakannu's murderer was arrested, Sengeni received three lakhs and half of the baron's land in compensation whereas Iruttapan, Mosakutty, and Pachaamma each of them received two lakhs.

Table1. Themes and manifestations of the movie 'Jai Bhim'

The Chundururu massacre, the Mirchpur killings, and the Kambalapalli incident, all these caste-based violence never came to the limelight but TJ Gnanavel seized widespread attention. In that very first scene, Gnanavel established a shot in which victims were segregated by their caste identity. The film featured real-life events of marginalized communities where they face discrimination and biases. The film is circled around people who are accused of something they did not commit. It was one of the many cases in which police were persuaded by upper ranks and they found a scapegoat. When we are supposed to trust the government with its law, order, and justice, we are just stranded being instrumentally handicapped.

The film caught the attention of the justice mechanism. The IAS and IPS officers are assigned to evaluate The Annual Confidential Report to find the gaps in the lower-rank sections. Even many guidelines were implemented by the Supreme Court to strengthen the custodial process. After the film, the denotified tribe, the habitual offenders acquired the Scheduled Tribe status which mollified the consistent victimization. They are the ones to be falsely accused. People still treat them as outsiders, they still do not have their own identification certificates. They are still serving the upper caste which violates equal rights.

This analysis brings back Rohit Vemula's case, a victim of caste discrimination at Hyderabad Central University who ended up committing suicide. It conveys a glare to the audience who are ignorant of the injustice and discrimination. In a closing statement, Adv. Chandru stated that the court should stick to its responsibility of securing justice for the people who are in jail under false charges. The real events shown in the movie unveil the misuse of the law which still exists even today. This film involved some misconstrued scenes like the village chief was supportive of the villagers in real but he is shown as a

contemptuous character in the movie. Although movies are just mere sources of entertainment, sometimes directors go out of the box with their storytelling, acting, and directing and the outcome transcends the boundaries. Susairaj, A. (2020, p-121-138) states reasons like the domination of the caste oppression in the past reflection of Tamil cinema have been echoed in the caste-stranded themes.

Mixed Reactions

The film might have impacted the mass thoroughly but it also poked many negative critics. Many commented it was ‘a cry-baby movie’, some said ‘just because you make a movie on tribals and human rights doesn't mean it's a good film.’, and many said directors just included those scenes to attain sympathy. The portrayal of human emotions made people think back to their surroundings. In the era when most people worship heroes and seek a drama or thriller, the unconditional rendition makes the audience aware of how Indian cinema has evolved. In 2021, ‘*Jai Bhim*’ topped the IMDb's most popular Indian film list and one of the most tweeted ones. Stephanie Thomson, an editor at the World Economic Forum said: “A good film does more than entertain or fill seats at the cinema. It has the power to change hearts and minds – and sometimes society more widely.” On 9 October 2022, ‘*Jai Bhim*’ won Filmfare Awards South. It has been nominated for Critics Choice Film Awards and South Indian International Movie Awards.

5. Conclusion

The author argues that Dalits have been stereotypically represented in line with the dominant culture. They've been represented stereotypically as demure, amenable, seedy, and underconfident individualities Chauhan, V. (2019, pp-327-336). In most movies that try to construct an identity, social issues like hierarchy, assimilation, milieu, hegemony, society dogmas, cultural practices, and caste struggle have been portrayed in a diligent manner. The degree of representation often resulted in stereotypical constructivism. Indian caste is ‘the most decisive impediment to India’s progress and power’, said Karl Marx. When he pulled the strings, people saw the inimical part of caste discrimination. Starting decades ago, this hereditary system has been interrupting the decorum of society. Herrero, D. (2021) in his paper analyzed the vital aesthetics of conventional depiction and developed the parameter to label anti-caste aesthetics. It was initiated by Hindus but ended up acquiring by every religion. This widespread discrimination has influenced the economic hierarchy where people with a higher level of education seemed to be part of the upper castes and vice versa. Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden (stated in Article 17). However, National Crimes Statistics has shown a surge in crimes against backward castes. They are mostly involved in informal sectors like textile, mining, agriculture, manual scavenging, and even forced prostitution. The principal photography started off in April 2021, before passing halfway, the production was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic but the production team

recommenced their work in July 2021, and on 2 November 2021, 'Jai Bhim' was first aired on Prime Video. Conventional Indian films are unsuccessful to deplore the societal realities of caste-based issues, illustrating multiplicity and justifying accumulation Herrero, D. (2021, Accessed on March 2021). Divya, A. (2022,) argues that Selvaraj's 'Karnan' valiantly breaks the stereo typicality by portraying hegemonized discourses against demanding justice, equal rights, and dignity.

For marginalized groups, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes sub-plans were introduced, but admittedly, more than half the people did not receive their fair share of the budget.

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A Priori analysis of Naga Social control: A Probe on Easterine Kire's Select Novels

R. Poojaa and Sreeja Balakrishnan

Abstract

*Social control is the spectrum of punctilios in any organised and well-developed society. This research paper effectuates a cogitation of social control in Naga society. The etiquettes, taboos, rules, practices, systems that Naga culture followed are interpreted with the in-depth analysis of Kire's novels, such as *Sky is my Father: A Naga village Remembered* (2018), *A Terrible Matriarchy: A Novel* (2007). The study employs the Social Control symbol under the social system traits which the British Anthropologist Clark Wissler formulated in his Culture Scheme ideology. The study is an attempt to explore the early, non-diffused and unaffected Naga cultural punctilios.*

Keywords: Clark Wissler, culture studies, Easterine Kire, nagas, social control

Social control is the rules, regulations and restrictions that are to be followed and to abide by the norms of the society. It implies the standardization of the society. Zald, in his "On the social control of industries" (1978) expresses that the determination of social control in varying dimensions of a society must be concurrent with acceptable and nonacceptable behaviours or etiquettes or practices that are culturally defined and dependent on cultural context. Thus, social control in a culture forms the pedestal of a society.

In Naga culture, the social control dynamics the rules, regulations, etiquettes, cultural taboos and cultural practices. Clark Wissler in his text, *Man and Culture* (1923) attempts to explain his readers about the social control system of tribes. He says that the type of symbol or trait-complex is common among many communities and in such communities, it was believed that "the ideas that evil fortune can be avoided by the strict observance of formulated prohibitions, or taboos, as they are often called, is equally so." (Wissler 1923, p. 77)

Easterine Kire is the first Naga writer to write novels in English. Her novels capture the beauty of Naga cultural exquisiteness. She develops her cultural novels in coherence with her community's de facto history. The author's narrative style and penmanship are highly notable, as her novels incorporates Nagamese language, specifically Tenyidie phrases and words. Easterine Kire has been awarded for her literary works.

This study uses Easterine Kire's two novels for analysis, such as *Sky is my Father: A Naga village Remembered* (2018), *A Terrible Matriarchy: A Novel* (2007). The researcher has used in-depth analysis

method for the discussion of social control aspects in the novels. The study of social control is identified using the British Anthropologist Clark Wissler's Culture Scheme ideology, which he also calls as Universal pattern in his literary work *Man and Culture* (1923). Wissler's Culture scheme is common to every tribal community and one such is Naga culture. Among the various traits listed in the Culture scheme, Social Control falls under the Social System trait. The uniqueness and research gap of this study is the employment of Anthropological ideology to study the essentiality of social control in Naga culture in Easterine Kire's literary works.

In Naga culture, taboos were strictly followed and the breaking of taboos were believed to result in death. The Naga society was maintained by authorities of village council like village head, village elders and members of the committee. Social control like taboo system, genna days, age-group system, clan rules, village council and morung helped Nagas attain an organized Naga culture and society. In the selected novels of Easterine Kire, incidents related to social control are identified. Kire has discussed social control in Naga culture to describe its unprecedented nature.

Taboos

Max D. Price in his *Evolution of a Taboo: Pigs and People in the Ancient Near East* (2020), describes taboos as types of avoidance behavior surrounded by a high degree of social energy and sewn into the cultural fabric through their appeal to a cosmological moral order. In the novels, taboos are majorly discussed by Easterine Kire. About Naga taboos, D. Nath in his *Religion and Society in North East India* (2011) comments, "there are taboos against offending Gods, spirits, cutting sacred trees, against religious functions, failing to contribute to a sacrifice etc" (Nath 2011, p. 132). Taboos were also followed in death, food, ceremonies, agriculture and other related aspects.

In the novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, Kire describes taboo in wasting food. She writes,

We never had enough to eat...My aunt, who was rich and had only two children, a girl and a sickly boy, threw away food because the children did not want to eat and she always made too much. Of course, she did not throw it away, as it would have been taboo, but she fed it to the pigs. (Kire 2007, p. 2)

Nagas clutched to taboos to maintain order. Taboos related to funeral, death, mourning, grave making are discussed in the following incidents. Taboos were followed in funerals to avoid commotions as it disrespected the dead. In the novel *Sky is my Father*, Kire discusses a similar incident. She says, "Sede recognised the ugly look on Roko's face and quickly intervened. He pulled Roko aside and hissed sharply,

‘Don’t you know it is taboo to fight beside a dead body?’ Sede drew Roko away and stayed by his side the whole day, preventing him from doing anything rash.” (Kire 2018, p.138)

In Naga indigenous culture, when a woman died during labour, her death must not be mourned as it was taboo. Such death was named as Lasü death or Lashüsia death. In the aforementioned novel the writer crafts an event to explain the taboo of Lasü death,

Kovi buried his face in his wife’s pillow and muffled his cried in it. His heart was as stone as he recollected all that he had heard as a child about a lashü death.

The strictest of taboos was upon the lashü death. No mourning for the dead. The dead woman was wrapped in a mat and taken out of the house through a new opening in the wall, and not the doorway; a lashü was the most abominable of apotia deaths. By late morning she was buried, hastily, tumbled into the pit and covered up with soil. Her husband and children were deeply grieved over her death, but they were too familiar with the taboos and feared breaking them by a public show of grief.

On the sixth day of his wife’s death, Kovi returned to the thehou. (Kire 2018, pp. 6-7)

Kire in her work *Walking the Roadless Road* (2019) states, “An apotia death, in particular referring to women dying during delivery. Victims of Lashüs are denied funeral rites because there is a very strict taboo on the lashü death. The word ‘apotia’ is of Assamese origin and is a term used for unnatural deaths.” (Kire 2019, p. 148).

In the indigenous culture of Nagas, taboos were followed in grave making for the dead. From an incident in the novel *A Terrible Matriacrhy*, it is known that, graves must not be repaired or constructed during any other months expect for month that were allotted for that purpose. Kire writes,

“You will make it seem as though he had died a long time ago if you make his grave now,” she insisted...We were still within the boundary of the village. January was the month for grave-making or repairs on old graves but it was taboo to do this kind of work in any of the other months...

“Who knows what further tragedy we might bring upon ourselves if we violate a taboo?” So we kept the mud a whole year. (Kire 2007, p. 150)

Nagas believed that breaking of taboo resulted in death and so they abided by the taboos. Kire in her novel *Sky is my Father* states, “Like other women of her generation, Piano knew how important it was to abide by all the rituals, especially the taboos forbidding work. *If you break the taboos, you break yourself*, her father had always said that and she had been an obedient daughter keeping her father’s works close to her heart.” (Kire 2018, p. 14)

In Naga culture it is believed that breaking of taboos were the reason for disorder in the society and those who broke the rules, were loathed by Nagas. In *A Terrible Matriarchy*, the Grandmother wants her widowed granddaughter-in-law to stay in her residence. But there were certain rules to be followed by the widow. As she was expected to stay in her paternal home for the mourning period, when the grandmother broke the rule, people chided them. Kire describes,

Grandmother...wanted Nisano and her son to stay with her...Nisano and Salhou went to live with Grandmother. It was a strange arrangement. Tongues wagged as we knew they would: ‘The girl is Vinilhoulie’s widow. She should live with his parents for a year before she goes back home to her father’s house. She is expected to tend his grave for a year. That is the way of our people... (Kire 2009, pp. 235-236).

Genna days

Apart from taboos, strict genna days were followed in indigenous Naga culture. Genna days were no work days; Nagas were restricted from working in their fields or any work outside their residence like hunting, fishing, herb gathering. Works that were done in genna days were believed to result in destruction or death. Genna days were considered rituals days and Shohe in her dissertation “A study of socio-cultural impact of Christianity on Nagas” (2021) quotes Arthur Radcliffe-Brown’s ideas on genna. She scribes,

Radcliffe-Brown’s (1964) elaborated on the concept of taboo as “Anything – a material thing, a place, a word or name, an occasion or event, a day of the week or a period of the year – which is the object of a ritual avoidance or taboo can be said to have ritual value”, hence the days on which the Nagas abstained from work because of ritual taboo may be called ritual days. (Shohe 2021, p. 62)

In the novel *Sky is my Father*, Kire describes genna day through the character Piano. She explains,

In another week, the genna days when no work was permitted would be declared, one each to prevent the fields failure to bear grain and failure to ripen. She had never violated a no-

work day before and had no intention of starting now. So that left her above fire working days before the Terhase.” (Kire 2018, p. 14)

In the aforementioned novel, Kire describes the seriousness of breaking genna days through a Naga folktale. She writes,

Like the genna days- no one violates a genna day; they are told the story of Khriesenu, yielding to his love’s request, took her to the forest on a genna day. She fell and broke her leg, and died. As he carried her home, he wept when he was walking in the valley but on every hill he crested, he shouted, ‘I have killed a stag.’ But when he had reached the village and shut the door to his house, he deeply mourned her death and was full of remorse for having relented to her plea to disregard the genna.

So the genna was death to those who defied it but life to those who abided by it. (Kire 2018, p. 52)

In the above stated incident, the characters of the folktales were said to break the rules by going out on a genna day, and so the male character Khriesenu’s lover died by breaking her leg. Longchar and Imchasenla in their article “Taboos of the Ao-Nagas: Change and Continuity” (2017) writes that breaking of taboos or ritual days were prohibited among Nagas. She writes, “The society is fully against the breaking of the taboo because it is usually considered objectionable or abhorrent.” (Longchar and Imchasenla 2017, p. 47)

In Naga culture, two types of genna days were followed regarding work in the field- fire genna day and water genna day. Apart from these two genna days, Kire describes genna days that were followed during festivals. Kire explains a type of genna day named khunuo lievi in her novel *Sky is my Father*. She notes,

The next day, the elders announced, ‘Tomorrow is khunuo lievi. It is a very strict genna day. No work should be done tomorrow.’ It was the first festival that Bilie’s three-year-old son had seen for he had been too young to remember that Ngonyi festival of the past year, or all the genna days that were part of the festival.

‘What is khunuo lievi, Apfü?’ he asked. Bilie patiently explained:

‘It is a day on which it is taboo for us to work. If we work on this day, our crops will be damaged by insects, birds and animals.’

...There were three more genna days before the festival came to an end. The care with which the genna days had been adhered to filled the elders with a sense of well-being. They had successfully held the genna to prevent the paddy dying, and another genna to

prevent sterility of the soil as well as the genna to ensure the fertility of the soil. It should go well for this year's harvest, they said to one another. (Kire 2018, pp. 56-57)

In the same novel, Kire describes another day named Kerütsu, during which the characters restrained from working, as it was considered as breaking of law by working in the fields. Kire describes, “‘Today is Kerütsu,’ Piano addressed her daughter-in-law, ‘You need not do much work in the field, and do take care that Levi does not pierce the ground with his spear.’” (Kire 2018, p. 62).

Kire, also describes another type of genna day in the same novel, during which talking to visitors was not allowed, as it was considered taboo. Apart from family members, the householders must not converse with visitors. Kire narrates the incident through the character Piano, in which she sent away her guests who visited her house. Kire writes,

In the late afternoon, Piano had an unexpected group of visitors...The genna included a taboo on talking to sojourners. So Piano stood outside her house and she would not look directly at her visitors. She seemed to be unaware of their presence.

‘Hei, it is a strict genna day today,’ she said, as though speaking to no one in particular and then she continued, ‘I may not speak to sojourners today so I am just talking to myself and to this boulder her.’ She fixed her eyes on the rock and continued to speak on. ‘My household is well for we have observed the gennas and lived by them...Ours was a good harvest and I am a fortunate woman, well provided for by the spirits...’

After she had spoken these words she turned towards her house, and her visitors, who had understood that she was observing the taboo on speaking to sojourners, went away. (Kire 2018, pp. 82-83)

T.C. Hodson in his article “The “Genna” amongst the Tribes of Assam” (1906) calls genna days as ““mysteries” of the classical past” (Hodson 1906, p. 102).

Age Group System

Through the system of age-group, Nagas determine people's age and generation that they belonged to. Age-group system is social system to maintain an organised society which they followed in the indigenous cultural period. In the novel *Sky is my Father*, Kire describes that the protagonist's age group and his group boys were expected to be well versed in sports. She writes,

Listening intently to his words was a group of young men, among whom was Vicha's son, Kelevizo, seventeen and half years old and an avid wrestler. He had thrown many young men from the age-group above his. The elders were eager to see how far he could go...

(Kire 2018, p. 8-9)

Boys belonging to age groups above seventeen, became warriors without their parents' permission. As they got older, they became more patriotic and fiercer. Naga young men in senior age-group were considered capable of starting his own family. Meanwhile, young women belonging to age groups below the boys' were considered as capable brides. So with few age group differences, they were married. Pupils belonging to same age-group always tend to stick together wherever they went like, herb gathering, fishing, hunting and field works. K.S. Zetsuvi in his work *Traditional culture of Angami Nagas* (2014), describes age-group. He says,

Usually, when a boy or girl attains the age of six or seven years, by which he or she is able to handle a dao or spade, they come together and form an age-group known as *thesu*...

When the children grow older and get matured enough to know their own responsibilities, these small groups belonging to the different clans come together as a group and form an age-group. The formation of a new age-group takes shape under the guidance of a reputed man in the society and this age group is named after its caretaker...

A man's life is attached to his age-group till his death (Zetsuvi 2014, pp. 26-27).

Village Gate

In old days, every Naga village possessed a village gate. Nagas ritually selected trees for constructing a village gate. It was celebrated as a festival. In *Sky is my Father*, the protagonist Levi's son discusses about leaving the village and Kire mentions village gate in that incident. She narrates, "Are their shades not the shades that trouble us when we go beyond our village gate..." (Kire 2018, p. 142). Zetsuvi in his *Traditional culture of Angami Nagas* (2014) about village gate comments,

The gates serve not only a line of demarcation but also for the purpose of defense. The gateway is closed by a massive wooden door which is hewn out of a huge single tree trunk...The door is decorated with carvings of human heads and animals which represent captured enemy-heads and the skulls of animals...Whenever an important question

demanding a collective action such as construction of a bridge, pulling a clan-gate...then a clan meeting is arranged to discuss the issue. (Zetsuvi 2014, p. 8-9)

To guard the village gate, there was a village guard, who was posted near the gate.

Curfew

Villagers in the evening go home together after fieldwork before the village gate was closed, as the fields and residence areas were situated in different locations. They call that time as going-home. Kire in *Sky is my Father* describes, “As the last stalk was planted, evening insect-noises filled the silence, the cicadas loudest of all. The village people called this time of the day, ‘going-home-time’.” (Kire 2018, p.13).

Thehu

In quaint Naga villages there were morung or thehu. Morung is one of the Naga cultural symbols. It used to be an educational institution and the purpose of thehu/ morung was for learning and remembering the history of Nagas. Morung plays the key role in Naga culture, as “the morung was the centre for attitude formation of young people where the young men received semi-military training and taught war tactics.” (Kire 2019, 32), says Kire in *Walking the Roadless Road*.

In the novel *Sky is my Father*, Kire discusses that important meetings took place in thehu. She writes, “‘The upper thehou, after supper,’ the man added in a conspiratorial whisper before he went off on his errand of informing the rest of his clansmen about the meeting.” (Kire 2018, p.1). Thehu was not only a meeting place but also acted as an institution to for boys to learn history, arts, traditions, legends and heroism of their ancestors.

In the same novel, Kire describes the importance of thehu. She narrates,

Talk at the thehu, the community house, often centered round what was called man’s talk. No women were allowed to come to the thehu or enter the male dormitories. Reminiscing about hunts and battles in the past made the thehu a place where any youth with a man’s heart inside him would linger and listen or add his stories as well.

But if the elders were there, the younger men listened closely without speaking much. They came to learn the stories of the village. It was good to be called a thehou no, a child of the thehou-it meant that such a person was well-versed in the stores and customs of the village. (Kire 2018, p.7)

Chattopadhyaya in his *Tribalism in India* (1978) describes Morung that, “It is here that the foundation of each generation are laid, moulded and built up. The growing youth is taught the meaning and significance of traditions, told of the valour and heroic deeds of the earlier generations and that it is in the glory of the past that the seeds of the future have to sprout.” (Chattopadhyaya 1978, p. 83).

Kichüki- Dorm system for youngsters

There were two types of dormitories in morung. One was for boys, called as male kichüki and another was for girls called as female kichüki. Kire in the novel *Sky is my Father* states,

‘Are you going to sleep in the kichüki tonight?’ Vipiano asked her son.

‘I would like to, Apfü,’ Levi answered.

‘Good. Do not spend all your time jesting but do listen to the stories that your parent has to tell.’ Levi mumbled, ‘Yes,’ for he had put the last mouthful of rice into his mouth. (Kire2018, p. 29)

Kire documents that the role played by thehu in Naga villages is more than a meeting house, as it is a learning place for young men and women from their elders. Since it is a dormitory, young pupil stays at night and listen to war stories told by their elders, who were addressed as parent. She writes,

Evening at the dormitory were exciting times when they exchanged stories and listened to the teachings of the man they called their parent, the elder chosen to be mentor for their age-group.

Each age-group had a parent and the dormitory was a long bed hewn out of a single log on which ten or fourteen boys could sleep. (Kire 2018, p. 31)

Kire narrates how teachings were done in dormitories. She writes through the experience of the character Levi. As the dorms were segregated by the age-group system, Levi crossed other dorms belonging to senior age group boys, he could hear laughter and jokes.

The night wind was cool. It was later than he thought. As he walked up to the male dormitory of his age-group, he crossed another dormitory. Loud laughter could be heard and raucous singing at intervals. It was the age-group above theirs. They were well-formed young men who made up an imposing group on the days they went to till the fields together. Many were married now for the harvest was over... (Kire 2018, pp. 29-30)

In thehu, Naga etiquette was taught to students about how to behave in public, how to respect elders, about following rules and regulations. In the same novel, Levi's parent teaches him the basic Naga etiquette.

‘If you are at a community feast and take more than two pieces of meat, shame on you. Others will call you glutton, worse, they will think to themselves, “has no one taught this boy about greed?” This is the key to right living-avoiding excess in anything-be content with your share of land and fields. People who move boundary stones bring death upon themselves. Every individual has a social obligation to village... A real man does not need to roar to show that he is a man.’

...Obscenity of speech does not prove anything, keep that in mind.’ (Kire 2018, pp. 30-31)

Likewise, about Naga etiquette, Kire explains in *A Terrible Matriarchy* novel. She writes that she has described “Some of the intricacies of etiquette” (Kire 2007, ix) in the novel, about “How to address elders, when to speak, when not to speak, the role that kinship plays and the more prominent role of paternal relatives as compared to maternal relatives etc.” (Kire 2007, ix).

As Morung played an important role in Naga lives by enlightening them with valuable education, Prakash Singh in his work *Nagaland* (1972), declares, “It was in these dormitories or club-houses that younger generation of the village was reared to manhood in the traditions of particular tribes.” (Singh 1972, p. 35).

The above analysed events in the select novels describes the nature of social control system in Naga culture, as it chisels the Naga society and Nagas in righteous path. By implementing the punctilios. Like Wissler comments, “the relation is clear-est when we turn to...social organization. Here, the important things are not material objects, but ceremonial procedures, prohibition, rules, etc.” (Wissler 1923, p. 96).

Aside from the above discussed social control practices, there are others in Naga society like, taboo in marriage, dress code, village council, shaming, praising, stigmatisation, social status, ceremonies, hunting etcetera.

Result and Discussion

Social control, apart from materialising, it is about people following a set of regulations and living an organised life. From the novels' incidents, it is learnt that Nagas had an organised community in their old culture. Their social control system taught people about the positive and negative means of social control that are to be followed in their day-to-day life. Social control encouraged Naga folks in leading an honest life which lacks in contemporary society. According to Travis Hirschi in his *Causes of Delinquency* (1969),

communities in which culturally dependent social control is implemented, are less likely to commit crimes. However, in the changing times, Nagas tries to uphold their traditions and cultural values by tributing them in desired means. Social control is lost due to various reasons of cultural diffusion like colonization, proselytism and war. Thus, the discussion of social control in the study of Naga culture is a necessary topic of discussion, which can be done in any other tribal literatures like Mizo, Assamese, Meitei, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and others.

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Comparative study of financial independence and happiness among housewives and working women in Kashmir

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Abstract

In this paper, we aim to explore the concept of women's empowerment and development beyond the sole focus on economic factors. We also aim to challenge the common Western notion that financial independence is the only way for women to become empowered and satisfied. A study was conducted to investigate whether married women working in the service sector in Kashmir are happier than homemakers or not. The study compared the happiness scores of working women and homemakers, and the results revealed that homemakers score higher in happiness (4.4) than working women (4.2). According to the study, 62 percent of working women reported feeling a lack of control over their lives, while only 37 per cent of housewives experienced the same. However, the study revealed a paradox in which 90 per cent of homemakers expressed a desire to have a job at some point in their lives. This paradox can be attributed to various social constructions that work against both working women and homemakers. It is important to have institutions and structures in our society that support women, enabling them to fully develop their potential without compromising their choices. The research utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. The happiness scores were measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, which was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills in 2002. To supplement this, ethnographic open-ended interviews were conducted with a purposive and snowball sample of married women aged between 25-50 years with one or more children and a living standard above the subsistence level. These in-depth interviews helped to understand the complexities and nuances that are unique to the society in Kashmir, enabling a better analysis of the issue.

Keywords; Empowerment, Development, Feminism, Social constructions

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1. Introduction

“All things are subject to interpretation whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power, not truth.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Human development specifically with regard to women is one of the most significant issues in academia. The concept is however dynamic and has been evolving over time in response to changing contexts. Presently the discourse is dominated mainly by the feminist understanding of the term which works under the liberal Western paradigm. Although the concept has evolved to include non-economic factors in its definition but still financial independence is still seen as a primary denominator for empowerment among women. In this regard, it is pertinent to see whether the employment of women really contributes to their happiness or not, a factor that forms an important part of development. Numerous studies conducted across the world suggest that financial independence does not necessarily contribute to the happiness of women, rather housewives were found happier in comparison to working women (Hamplova 2019, p 471; Berger 2013, p 23; Boye 2009, p 16; Lahelma et al. 2002, p 727). Using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, with respect to Kashmir it was also found that housewives tended to be slightly happier than working women. The biological nature of women, societal pressures, ideological baggage, and lack of women-friendly institutions are some of the factors responsible. The cultural nuances with respect to a particular society also determine and impact the choices women make, thus rendering the universalization of a particular narrative a fallacy. It is essential that the discourse of women's empowerment and development serve the women and not any hegemonic narrative and provide women the agency to make the choices they are rightful of.

2. Human Development, empowerment and happiness

Human Development is a comprehensive concept that has evolved over time to include all the aspects of human life. It aims to enrich human life not just economically but socially, politically, and creatively. Its main goal is to make people's lives better by granting them equitable opportunities/chances and choices. The first UNDP Human Development Report published in 1990 states “The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people

to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.” Pioneered by Pakistani economist Mehboob ul Haq, the human development approach provided a breakthrough in the concept expanding it from mere economic measures to emancipation in access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and a sense of participation in community activities. (Haq, 1990, p. 11)

The concepts of development, empowerment, and happiness are closely intertwined. Empowerment is one important component of development which also acts as a means to it. It is a multi-dimensional process that helps people define their lives as per their choices. Rappaport (1981, p. 1-5; 1984, p. 3) defines empowerment as a concept that connects social policy and social transformation to individual strengths and competences, innate support networks, and proactive actions. According to him, it is simple to describe empowerment as its absence, but it is more challenging to define it in practice because it can take many various shapes for different individuals and situations. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) incorporate person-environment interaction in the definition of empowerment. They suggest that it is a process by which people gain greater control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community, and a critical understanding of their environment. The process of empowerment involves shifting from a state of powerlessness to having some control and influence over one's own life and environment. It includes developing a strong sense of individuality, rejecting feelings of worthlessness, and actively participating in creating positive changes in one's surroundings (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995 p. 570-72). Empowerment is a crucial part of the development process, and it's through empowerment that comprehensive progress can be achieved. According to Mehboob ul Haq (1999), increasing people's options in all spheres of life—economic, political, and cultural—is the real goal of development. Although seeking financial gain is one of the choices people make, it's not the only one. He also believes that people are both the means and the end of development, rather than mere tools for the materialistic machine. According to him social and legal barriers that limit the access of women or of certain minorities to some of the key economic and political opportunities must be eliminated (Haq, 1999 pp. 17-26). A direct corollary of empowerment is happiness that of late has found a niche in the development debate.

Although there is no definite definition of happiness but the introduction of the gross national happiness index by Jigme Singye Wangchuk in the 1970s as a measure of development is an important landmark in this regard. The concept takes a holistic approach toward notions of progress and gives equal importance to non-economic aspects of well-being. Happiness has been generally distinguished as a state where positive emotions prevail over negativities. It is also coupled with satisfaction and contentment (Diener 2009, p. 11-58; Kim and Hatfield 2004, p. 173). The literature connecting development and happiness has been growing over time and finding recognition in the development debate.³ We can say that happiness which is closely defined as subjective well-being is one important aspect of development. It can act both as a means and an end to the development. Therefore, it is essential to see development as a holistic concept that must include the process of empowerment with the parameter of happiness as one of its goals. Human development not resulting in the happiness of people cannot be a comprehensive development.

3. Gendered Social Construction and Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment and development is the major issue of our times. As important as the issue is, it is equally vexed. The meanings associated with women's empowerment are largely inadequate or misconstrued, often defined in terms of economic, political, and biological autonomy.⁴ The present discourse on women's empowerment is largely based on 20th-century feminism which to its credit brought respite to the women discriminated since ages in the West

³ The literature linking happiness and development involves multidisciplinary study of the economics, psychology, sociology and public health. It underscores the importance of non-economic factors such as mental well-being, social and cultural factors and other broad aspects of human development. Amartya Sen (1999) in his book *Development as Freedom* explores the concept of development through the lens of freedom and empowerment, arguing that freedom and equality contribute to human well-being and happiness. Sen A. [Development as Freedom](#). New York: Alfred Knopf; 1999. For further literature on the subject see Easterlin, Richard A. 2001. Income and happiness: Towards a unified theory. *The Economic Journal* 111(473):465-84. Helliwell, John F., and Robert D. Putnam. 2004. The social context of well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 359(1449):1435-46 and Sachs, J. (2002). The origins of happiness. *Scientific American*, 306 (2), 40-47

⁴ While control over such aspects of life definitely contribute to empowerment but what is missed is that sometimes the choice to control is also controlled by the social environment. This will be discussed further in the paper.

e.g. in terms of voting rights, domestic abuse, circumcision of women, etc. The central feature of what they espouse is that patriarchy has been institutionalized throughout the structures. From birth, girls and boys are conditioned to conform to specific gender roles, which is emphasized in our society. The family is viewed as the primary institution of the patriarchy. This ideology seeks to dissociate biology and gender, asserting that childbearing does not necessarily imply child-rearing. Additionally, human nature is believed to be androgynous. It is accepted that sex differences are biological facts of life but insist that they have no social, political or economic significance (Heywood 2017, p. 228). Although feminism aims to free women from societal constraints, it often creates new ones. While feminism has accomplished many positive things, its central flaw lies in making men the standard by which women are judged. As a result, women who do not meet this standard are seen as inferior. It has become a commonplace belief that in order to achieve equality, women must work outside the home and perform all the same tasks that men do. In this regard, feminists like Betty Friedan in her book *Feminine Mystique* (1963, p. 236) pushed the idea that homemaking leaves women dissatisfied and unhappy. The idea that women benefit from being in the labor force was put forth for a number of reasons, including fair labor division and financial stability, but in reality, it was all a part of a broader capitalist scheme to use women as cheaper labor⁵. It was projected as a superior and empowering thing to do and rearing another human being an inferior thing. In this mad race to be like men, women are losing themselves. There has been a tussle going on between the essence and the constructions imposed by society both from the traditional and modern front. While tradition expects women to be perfect housewives devoid of any individuality, modern ideologies ask them to become something else in order to attain liberation. In the whole process, it is the women who are controlled and denied their choices. Pertinent to mention, the choices subscribing to the sensibilities of the Western liberal order are celebrated and the choices going against the dominant narrative are denigrated. The attempt to homogenize and universalize a parochial understanding of empowerment and liberation is injustice. What is needed is to allow women to think by themselves, for themselves devoid of any societal or ideological influences. The

⁵ For the account of capitalists' exploitation of women as cheap labor, see for example Pangle, Thomas L., and Timothy W. Burns. "Marx and Engels: The Communist Manifesto." In *The Key Texts of Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 365-80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139047555.017.

‘denaturalization’ that some strands of feminism call for in itself results in fake constructions that seek to alter the very core and substance of human beings. It is not nature that is unjust, it is the societal understanding that makes it look so. It is the society that attaches value and prestige to certain qualities and devalues others. Going back to pre-historic times when there was hardly any society to assign gender roles or to discriminate between sexes, we know that man was primarily a hunter-gatherer and woman child rearer. There were no societal constructions to assign superiority to either of the jobs. While this is not being suggested that these roles are strictly meant for each and that women can’t be food gatherers and men can’t be child raisers in modern times, the point is that there are certain intrinsic faculties in men and women that won’t change to cater to the dominant narratives. For instance, women have the ability to give birth and suckle the children. This makes them the prime raisers of children. However, in no way does it mean that man is absolved of raising the children but give the biology of women, man has to be the primary bread winner. As Tonnies (2002) succinctly notes, “As woman enters into the struggle of earning a living [...] Nothing is more foreign and terrible to her original inborn nature” (Tonnies, 2002 p. 166). Similarly, men are physically robust and thus fit for any hard and toiling job. Research indicates that mothers who stay at home or are homemakers tend to be happier than mothers who work, and that mothers who work are more likely to experience high levels of stress and poor work-life balance. (Hamplova 2019, p. 471; Berger 2013, p. 23; Boye 2009, p. 16; Lahelma et al. 2002, p. 727). More lately, a study conducted by Betsey Stevenson suggests that women's subjective happiness or well-being has been declining since the early 1970s (Stevenson and Wolfers 2009, p. 1-48). Scientists are perplexed over this trend as according to economic measures rise in consumption should result in higher utility or satisfaction which is same as subjective wellbeing or happiness (Stutzer et al. 2004, p. 89). Also, Treas, Lippe and Chloe Tai (2015, p. 111) suggest in their research that when everything is taken into account, housewives or full time home moms are marginally happier than full-time working spouses, but they are not better than part-time employees. It was found in the interactions between work status and other variables that factors such as public child care, women's labor force participation, GDP, social spending, and liberal gender ideologies play a significant part in furthering the happiness gap between full-time working wives and stay-at-home moms and part-timers.

Further, a few studies conducted in Europe substantiating the claim may be mentioned. In a study conducted by Dailymail in the UK, it was reported that 62 per cent of working women secretly harbour the desire to be housewives with 78 per cent saying they wouldn't mind being dependent on their partner (Dailymail, 7 October 2015). Also, a survey of more than 1,500 adults by the Telegraph uncovered attitudes that contradict feminist principles. It said that men and women appear to be happy to revert to their traditional roles as breadwinners and housewives. UK's National Official Wellbeing Index shows that "those who do not work because they are caring for children/loved ones have the strongest belief that their life is worthwhile" (Telegraph, 24 September 2014). A study by National Happiness Survey in England said that stay-at-home moms are more likely to think their lives are worthwhile than women who go to work with working women getting a score of 7.8 and housewives 8. All such studies point to the observation that for having a happy, fulfilled, and worthwhile life financial independence is not a factor as important as vehemently it is propagated. The argument that there are other things that lead to fulfillment and contentment of women strong enough.

4. Findings of the study with respect to Kashmir

A sample size of 100 women (50 working and 50 non-working) in the age group of 25-50 was selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling in Kashmir across the districts for the study. The results pertaining to the study of happiness scores among working women and housewives in Kashmir showed the following.

- According to a study, working women had an average happiness score of 4.2 on a scale of 0-6, while stay-at-home women had an average score of 4.4.
- The study also found that 62 per cent of working women either slightly, moderately or strongly agreed that they "don't feel particularly pleased with the way they are". In comparison, only 56 per cent of housewives agreed to it.
- Additionally, the study revealed that 62 per cent of working women felt that they didn't have much control over their lives, whereas only 37 per cent of housewives felt the same way.

- When asked if they have ever wanted to take up a job, 80 per cent of housewives replied in the affirmative.
- Among the working women surveyed, all of them reported that neglecting their health was one of the problems they faced. On the other hand, 42% of housewives mentioned that they weren't able to take care of their health despite staying at home.
- 42 per cent of the working women surveyed said that their job had a negative impact on their health and their children's well-being.
- A majority (90 per cent) of the respondents, both housewives and working women, agreed that there was a gap between what they wanted to do and what they have actually done in their lives.

5. Discussion

The study results substantiate the claim that working mothers do not necessarily experience higher levels of happiness and personal development compared to stay-at-home mothers. In fact, it appears that working mothers tend to score lower in these areas. However, the open-ended ethnographic interviews provided additional insights that were not initially captured. By conducting in-depth interviews with the same participants, we were able to better understand the reasons behind our findings. Working mothers in Kashmir live a stressful life especially in the early years of their marriage due to the double burden of family and job they have to take. The society in Kashmir places high equity on the 'job' which may or may not be paying decently. The value of education is often associated with earning money, which is a narrow approach to education. For instance, if a woman chooses to become a full-time mother after marriage despite having a higher education, society perceives her education as worthless. Many women end up taking any job available due to societal pressures. The affirmative response of the maximum number of respondents among housewives wishing to go to work cannot be ignored. Besides the factor of importance attached to a job in terms of utilization of education, better standard of living, and that it gives financial independence to women there are other reasons that play their part. From the in-depth interviews of some of the housewives, we could infer that staying at

home somewhat hampers the individuality of women. The social setting in Kashmir expects a married woman to do all the household work irrespective of her liking and comfort. The cultural setup operating in Kashmir tends to be suffocating for married women under the burden of expectations. A woman having the agency to choose to stay home and utilize her time as she wishes is unheard of. A housewife's time is taken for granted. It is taken to belong wholly and solely to her family. This compels many women to take a job outside and find a breathing space. It also explains why housewives feel their health gets neglected despite staying at home. Another factor that plays a part in women wanting to work despite so many odds is that of feeling secure. From the interviews it was also revealed that there is a growing sense of insecurity among women with respect to their husbands. Women feel if the husband turns out to be an infidel, owing to the job they won't be left to lurch although a support system of her parents' home of a woman is still in place in Kashmir.

The variable of ambition plays an important role here. Although it may be easier for women who are not seeking a career to become housewives, it is much harder for ambitious women to do so. For many women, employment provides opportunities for self-realization and individual fulfillment. The lack of women-friendly opportunities that allow women to balance work and home responsibilities is the main obstacle to the development of such women. Women's conducive institutions and structures need to be built so that women don't have to compromise on their choices. Institutions must be structured considering the biological needs of women so that they don't have to forgo their potential. The system of part-time jobs is a noteworthy example. Part-time job in Latin America is considered the best option by women as it makes possible for women to live the best of two worlds. Despite the instability that comes with part-time job itself, the majority of women in Latin America who are able to pursue paid employment choose part-time over full-time paid employment because it gives them more flexibility and a better "balance" between work and home duties (Edsel 2012). In this regard with respect to Kashmir, it is beneficial to establish teaching jobs and other jobs for women in the form of weekly or alternate classes. Additionally, jobs that offer flexible timings and few working hours per day should be created for women in all professions. According to a study conducted by Professor Alison Booth of Essex University, women are most content with part-time jobs that

enable them to balance their work and family life. (Telegraph, September 23, 2007). Self-employment is yet another feasible and preferable choice of women that allows them to have more freedom and attain better subjective well-being. This has shown to be a superior option for women in Asia since it gives them more freedom to manage their time independently and make more household contributions. Although the scale and productivity of this kind of employment is low but the flexibility of being one's own boss, tweaking the working hours allow them to be better off in terms of subjective wellbeing. For women in Asia, working for themselves is therefore akin to having the "best of both worlds" when it comes to achieving better states of being. (Edsel, 2012). While Kashmir has a cultural history of women doing self-employment (spinning, embroidery) and now the form and nature of self-employment has also significantly evolved but the avenue needs to be uplifted and facilitated for better productivity and scale. Whether self-employment provides the most subjective well-being to women in Kashmir can be another question worthy of research in future.

Furthermore, The IT revolution has created new opportunities for women to work from home. The trend of working remotely, which was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic, has enabled many women to pursue their careers from the comfort of their own homes. However, this area falls beyond the scope of this study and calls for further research, specifically with regard to the situation in Kashmir. It is important to point out the scope for further development in the present research. The sample size can be expanded and made more diverse. Studies on women entrepreneurs and women belonging to economically backward classes can reveal new insights into the issue. This study helps to understand the reasons for the stressful life working women live and also the problems faced by housewives. It discovers that societal norms work on both sides – from the traditional and modern ideologies. In the process, little agency is left to women to decide for themselves as they already carry a huge ideological baggage that defines their psyche and eventually choices.

6. Conclusion

From the study, we can draw several conclusions. Firstly, it is evident that the discourse on women empowerment has been hijacked over time, and reduced to being solely about economic

independence. It is essential to reclaim this narrative and understand it in the context of a person's overall happiness, without any influence from hegemonic narratives. It is important to recognize that nature is an important factor in shaping the differences between women and men. Denying this fact is a fallacy that can lead to unjust treatment of women. In order to create a fairer and more equal society, we must work to deconstruct the norms and values that promote discrimination and injustice. Thirdly, it cannot be assumed that women who work outside their homes are happier or more developed than housewives. This is because the work systems in place are often not accommodating to women, and the societal structures in place do not support the holistic development of those who choose to stay at home. Therefore, it is necessary to establish new spaces that are conducive to women's development, both for those who work and those who do not, so that they do not have to compromise on their choices and can live an empowered life in every sense of the word. Last but not the least, the earned freedom of choice must not end up imprisoning women into doing more than their capacity or in other words 'doing it all'.

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Struggles with Seasonal Hunger: Insight into Coping with Food Insecurity among Tribal Communities in Odisha

Sunit Kumar Sahu and Pushpa M Savadatti

Abstract

This research investigates the intricacies of food security dynamics among tribal communities during the lean season in the Koraput district, Odisha. This paper aims to assess the extent of dietary diversity and frequency of food consumption, as well as analyse the coping strategies employed by tribal communities during the lean season in the study area. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, data were meticulously collected from 390 households in four major tribal communities - Paraja, Kandha, Gadaba, and Bhatra. The findings illuminate a pervasive prevalence of food insecurity during the lean season. Coping strategies primarily involve dietary changes and prioritising less expensive and less diverse food options. Short-term food availability strategies and rationing were less commonly employed. Occupation and income levels emerged as key factors influencing food security, with agricultural and casual labour households facing higher levels of insecurity. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive and sustainable strategies to mitigate food insecurity among tribal communities during the lean season.

Keywords: Food security, Coping strategies, Tribal communities, Lean Season, Odisha

Introduction

Goal 2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), known as "Zero Hunger," is a crucial commitment to eradicate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This global initiative recognises that access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is a basic human right and a fundamental requirement for creating a world of equality. Despite being a major food producer and implementing extensive food security initiatives, India contends with pronounced challenges concerning food insecurity, hunger, and child malnutrition. The recently released State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2023, 209) report serves as a stark reminder of the significant challenges that persist in the journey towards food security. According to the report the ability of the Indian population to afford nourishing diet is disconcertingly low. India is at the bottom of this list due to stagnating or declining income levels, with a whopping 74 percent of its population unable to access a healthy food, placing fourth among the countries studied. The report further indicates that India harbors an alarming 224.3 million undernourished individuals. Notably, the Global Hunger Index (2023, 13) positions India at 111th out of 125 countries, reflecting a serious level of hunger with a GHI score of 28.7. This underscores the need for focused study to introduce comprehensive strategies to address the severity of hunger within the country. Understanding the dimensions of hunger, especially seasonal hunger, becomes paramount. This is particularly crucial for vulnerable populations, especially tribal communities, who bear the brunt of these challenges disproportionately in the country. Hence This paper aims to provide insights into the seasonal struggles faced by tribal communities in coping with food insecurity.

Lean Season and Tribal Communities in India

Seasonal fluctuations in income and the associated insecurity are a defining aspect of poverty in various regions worldwide, particularly in the agricultural areas of developing countries, including India. This period, called the lean season, is characterised by a scarcity of job opportunities and a drastic decline in income, leading to food shortages and malnutrition, especially among poor and underprivileged populations. Seasonal hunger and deprivation are significant obstacles to reducing

global poverty, but they have largely gone unnoticed. However, 300 million poor people in rural areas worldwide are estimated to experience seasonal hunger (Levy et al. 2016, 1).

Tribal communities in India, constituting one-tenth of the country's total population, face disproportionate levels of poverty and hunger, making them one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (2021, 12) report reveals a staggering number of tribal individuals, comprising more than half of the Scheduled Tribes population, approximately 65 million out of 129 million people, live in multidimensional poverty. This indicates that the incidence and intensity of poverty are significantly higher among tribal communities when compared to other social groups. For these communities, agriculture and minor forest products (MFP) are the two mainstays (Saboo 2019, 196; Mandi and Chakravarty 2020, 109). Additionally, they look for temporary jobs as city construction workers or farm workers in nearby villages (Mehta and Singh 2021, 269). While agriculture is often considered the primary economic activity in many tribal communities, farming on forested land hardly yields any surplus and is sometimes insufficient for household consumption (Mandi and Chakravarty 2020, 106). It is mainly due to the absence of irrigation infrastructure in the schedule areas of India (Axis Bank Foundation, 2021, 11) which limits farming to rain-fed practices. Consequently, agriculture becomes a seasonal activity, typically cultivated once or twice a year, and vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In addition, the loss of forests due to industrial development in the tribal region has decreased the MFP collection for these communities (Narasimham and Subbarao 2018, 194). As a result, these communities have a scarcity of work and a decline in income during the lean season. It has negative consequences such as malnutrition, food insecurity, and a variety of socioeconomic and health issues. It has negative consequences such as malnutrition, food insecurity, and a variety of socioeconomic and health issues. Despite legislation like the MGNREGA Act and other temporary employment policies, social protection measures are still insufficient, and efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty have not demonstrated effectiveness. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the various difficulties and susceptibilities tribal communities confront during the lean season in India.

The Case of Koraput District

This research focuses on tribal communities in Odisha's Koraput district, which is part of the Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput (KBK) region. The Planning Commission of India and NITI Aayog have classified this region as one of India's most destitute and underdeveloped regions. Koraput district has the most indigenous communities and experiences substantial hunger and malnutrition concerns, which are exacerbated by food insecurity during the lean season. Koraput ranks 29th and 27th out of 30 districts in the state on the food access index and overall food security index (Kumar and Swati 2018, 51) , showing the severity of the problem. Between 2007-08 and 2015-16, there was no improvement in this scenario.

Food insecurity is especially acute during the lean season for tribal households who rely on subsistence agriculture and do not have access to alternative sources of income or food. This issue jeopardises tribal communities' health and well-being and requires prompt attention to guarantee that households have access to diversified and nutritious foods throughout the year. As a result, it is critical to prioritise improving food security input indicators in Koraput District and other similar places. The goal of our research is to provide insights that may be used to inform policies and initiatives to improve food security in these areas.

Background of The Study

Seasonal food insecurity is a widespread issue that affects households across the globe, especially in developing countries where poverty is rampant. The coping mechanisms used by households to deal with seasonal food insecurity differ and are influenced by several variables, including socioeconomic status, livelihood systems, and cultural practices. Numerous studies have investigated the coping mechanisms used by households in various countries to combat both seasonal and long-term food insecurity. The Northern Cape province of South Africa showed signs of seasonal food insecurity, with the maximum prevalence and severity happening during the low-employment winter period according to the Study of Devereux & Tavener-Smith, (2019, 9) . On the other hand, the summer harvest saw the lowest occurrence. Similar findings were made by Ahamad et al., (2013, 1080) , who discovered that households in Kurigram, a northern Bangladesh

district prone to monga, see a decrease in food intake during the monga season. The authors found that household income, per capita medical expenditure share, utilisation of safety net(s), and location were the main factors influencing seasonal food insecurity. Seasonal food insecurity was connected to ethnicity and household wealth in research by Hadley et al., (2007, 549) on rural Tanzania. For the affluent ethnic group, social support was more effective, and prior food insecurity had an impact on current dietary indicators and women's self-perceptions of health.

Liwenga's (2003, 85) study on Gogo people coping mechanisms emphasises the importance of local knowledge in dryland adaptation. The author discovered that households in various wealth brackets have differing capacities for transforming more immediate coping mechanisms into proactive livelihood plans. Dil Farzana et al., (2017, 9) investigated coping mechanisms related to food insecurity using data from Bangladesh's food security and nutrition monitoring project (FSNSP). The authors discovered that households change their routine behavior or adopt new strategies to cope with food insecurity. According to Gupta et al., (2015, 7) study of coping mechanisms used by urban slum dwellers in India to avoid food insecurity, households frequently rely on less expensive items and eat fewer meals throughout the day. According to Mohapatra's (2012, 58) investigation into the difficulties Dalits and primitive tribal groups face in India because of aggressive mining operations and the destruction of the country's forests, these groups use a variety of coping mechanisms, including their own production, purchases, use of nature (the forest), and credit from ration shops and local money lenders. As a last resort, migration in distress was seen.

According to Sahu's (2018, 74) research on household drought coping, food insecurity, and women's roles in Odisha, India, coping techniques included using seeds, substituting basic foods, switching to low-value foods, liquidating assets, and relying on declining common property resources. In a rural West Bengal, India environment, just 20 per cent of households were found to be food secure according to Sarkar & Shekhar's (2017, 21) study. Consuming less expensive and less-preferred foods as a coping mechanism was followed by borrowing food from family members. Amfo et al., (2021, 884) 's investigation on how migrant workers in Southern Ghana manage food scarcities on cocoa farms. Among coping mechanisms were consuming unappealing

and immature foods, borrowing food and cash, and cutting back on meal frequency and quantity sizes. Employees who had more wealth, social capital, and education fared better.

Research Objectives

This study aims to bridge existing gaps in literature by addressing pertinent research questions. Firstly, it seeks to assess the extent of dietary diversity and frequency of food consumption during the lean season within the study area. Secondly, the investigation delves into the coping strategies employed by tribal communities to mitigate food insecurity during this period, elucidating the frequency of utilisation. Finally, the study explores variations in the intensity of coping strategies across different occupations and household income levels during the lean season. By addressing these research inquiries, this study endeavors to contribute novel insights to the current body of literature. Additionally, it aspires to provide a foundation for potential policy interventions, offering informed recommendations to alleviate seasonal food insecurity in the specified area. This research aims to enhance our understanding of dietary practices, coping mechanisms, and the impact of socio-economic factors, facilitating targeted and effective interventions for improved food security in the region.

Research Methodology:

This study utilised a cross-sectional survey design to evaluate the food security status and coping strategies of four major tribal communities, namely Paraja, Kandha, Gadaba, and Bhatra, residing in five tribal-dominated blocks of the Koraput district during the summer lean season during April and May 2022. A total of 390 households were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling, considering the diversity among the communities. Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire covering demographic variables, household food consumption patterns, and food coping strategies. Heads of households served as survey respondents, and the questionnaire was administered through in-person interviews. The questionnaire underwent a pretest to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Food security status was assessed using the World Food Program's food consumption score (FCS), employing a seven-day recall of household-level food consumption. Dietary diversity was calculated based on the number of food

groups consumed, with scores categorised as 'poor,' 'borderline,' or 'acceptable' following WFP guidelines. Despite efforts for a representative sample, potential biases may exist, necessitating careful consideration of findings within the study's specific context.

To evaluate the coping strategies of households during the lean season, we used a context-specific standardised coping strategy questions adapted from the World Food Program's Coping Strategy Index. The questionnaire was administered to the heads of households in the research area. It assessed coping mechanisms in three broad categories: dietary change, increasing short-term household food availability, and rationing. Household heads were asked about the frequency of adopting a particular coping strategy in the last month, using a Likert scale with options such as Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Very Often, and Always.

Food Consumption Status During the Lean Season:

The findings of the study underline the intense issue of food insecurity among the tribal communities studied, with a significant proportion of households experiencing varied levels of food insecurity throughout the lean season. The classification of household as "poor," "borderline," or "acceptable" provides a valuable framework for evaluating the severity of food insecurity and the need for immediate assistance. Food insecurity is prevalent in tribal groups, with 12.6 per cent of households classified as 'poor' and in need of immediate assistance. This indicates a serious deprivation of access to adequate food and nutrition, which poses considerable challenges to these households' well-being and health. Furthermore, 52.8 per cent of households are classified as 'borderline,' indicating vulnerability to food insecurity and the need for varied amounts of support. If enough support is not provided, these households risk sliding into the 'poor' category. Only 34.6 percent of households fall into the 'acceptable' category, indicating enough food intake without an immediate need for assistance. This emphasises the relative scarcity of households that are not food insecure during the lean season.

The differences in food consumption status across the four tribal communities are notable. The Bhatra community has the highest proportion of households with an adequate food consumption

status, indicating that they have better access to a variety of foods and nutrition. This is because the community has more favorable conditions, such as better agricultural methods such as commercial farming than subsistence farming, which leads to higher revenue levels and improves food security. The Paraja community, on the other hand, has the highest number of poor households, indicating considerable difficulty in obtaining appropriate food. This is due to factors such as limited resource access, lower income levels, subsistence agriculture techniques, and other socioeconomic issues that contribute to increased levels of food insecurity. During the lean season, occupation emerges as an important factor determining household food consumption habits. Casual labourers, who are frequently employed on a seasonal or temporary basis, are shown to be the most vulnerable to food insecurity. The increased share of households led by casual labourers falling into the 'poor' and 'borderline' categories demonstrates this. These findings show that the stability of work and income sources is critical in minimising the dangers of food insecurity during lean times. Households headed by contractual labor, semi-skilled/skilled workers, and self-employed/salaried workers exhibit lower vulnerability to food insecurity, indicating that more stable employment and income sources provide a buffer against food insecurity.

Income disparities among tribal households also contribute significantly to varying levels of food security status. Lower-income brackets, such as those earning less than Rs. 25,000 annually, demonstrate a higher prevalence of food insecurity, with only a small percentage falling into the 'acceptable' category. As income levels rise, the frequency of food insecurity decreases, highlighting a positive correlation between increased income and improved food security. The absence of households in the 'poor' category among those earning more than Rs. 100,000 annually further emphasises the favorable impact of higher income on food security among indigenous communities. The relationship between income and food security is likely influenced by various factors. The cost of food, access to resources for food production, and susceptibility to shocks, such as natural disasters or economic downturns, all contribute to the complex dynamics of food security during lean seasons. Higher income levels may enable households to afford an adequate quantity and quality of food, invest in agricultural practices that enhance food production, and be more resilient to shocks that can disrupt food availability.

Coping Strategy of Tribal Communities During Lean Season

Coping strategies encompass a spectrum of adaptive measures and actions undertaken by these communities to navigate and address the limitations in food availability. As we examine the findings, a nuanced understanding of the coping mechanisms emerges, shedding light on the varied responses employed by tribal households to manage the constraints imposed by lean periods in Koraput. From dietary changes to strategies to improve short-term household food availability and rationing measures. The most common coping mechanisms include eating less expensive foods and eating a limited variety of foods. This demonstrates a strong preference among these populations to prioritise limiting food expenses when faced with scarcity. Furthermore, purchasing food on credit appears as a regularly employed tactic, implying that communities may resort to this method to regulate food supplies. On the other hand, gathering wild food such as roots and tubers from the hill forest or harvesting immature crops from the farms is the least frequently used coping mechanism in this group. When we compare the coping mechanisms of the four tribal communities, we notice unique trends. As a dietary change coping mechanism, all groups exhibit a pervasive propensity to rely on less expensive food and consume a limited variety of food. However, borrowing food varies in regularity, with the Paraja community being the most frequent users. Purchasing food on credit is frequent in all communities, with the Paraja community having the highest frequency.

In terms of rationing strategies, limiting food portion sizes is more prevalent among the Paraja and Kandha communities, while the Gadaba community exhibits a lower frequency. Similarly, reducing the number of meals eaten in a day is more prominent among the Paraja community. These findings suggest that during the lean summer season, tribal communities predominantly rely on dietary changes as a coping strategy. They frequently use strategies such as relying on less expensive food and consuming a limited variety of food. Short-term household food availability and rationing strategies, such as purchasing food from credit and limiting food portion size, are employed to a lesser extent. The Paraja community demonstrates a higher frequency of employing these strategies, while the Kandha and Bhatra communities show slightly lower frequencies.

Conversely, the Gadaba community displays a relatively lower tendency to utilise these coping strategies, employing them rarely.

Furthermore, the occupation of the household head emerges as a crucial determinant impacting the intensity of food coping strategies during the lean season among tribal households. Farmers/owner cultivators, casual wage laborers, and contract laborers exhibit higher frequencies of relying on less expensive food and consuming a limited variety. Casual wage laborers also demonstrate a higher frequency of borrowing food from their social networks, while farmers engage more frequently in foraging for wild food or harvesting immature crops. These findings imply that different occupational groups employ coping strategies based on their unique circumstances and available resources.

Additionally, the household's annual income significantly impacts the severity of food coping mechanisms used by tribal households during the lean season. Lower-income households commonly rely on less expensive food, limit their food diversity, borrow food, and buy food on credit. Higher-income households utilise these tactics less frequently as their annual income rises, indicating a lessened reliance on external aid and increased food security. Lower-income households are also more likely to limit food portion sizes and eat fewer meals each day, whereas higher-income households face fewer restrictions in these areas. The stark differences in coping methods utilised by households with differing annual incomes highlight the vital need to consider economic disparities when developing interventions to combat food insecurity among tribal households. Higher-income households are less likely to be food insecure and have better self-sufficiency in acquiring food supplies during the lean season.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal the pervasiveness of food insecurity among tribal communities in the Koraput district during the lean season. The household classification as 'poor,' 'borderline,' or 'acceptable' provides vital insights into the severity of food insecurity and the need for immediate help. A significant proportion of households endure varied levels of food insecurity, with 12.6 per cent classified as "poor" and 52.8 per cent classified as "borderline." Only 34.6 per cent of homes are classified as 'acceptable,' showing a relative scarcity of households that are not experiencing food insecurity during the lean season. The differences in food consumption status between the four tribal communities are notable. The Bhatra community has the highest proportion of households with a satisfactory food consumption status, indicating significantly greater access to food and nutrition. On the other hand, the Paraja community exhibits the highest proportion of poor households, indicating significant challenges in securing adequate food. The Gadaba community stands out with the lowest proportion of poor households and the highest percentage categorised as having an acceptable food consumption status, suggesting a comparatively improved food security status among these communities. Occupation and income emerge as significant factors influencing household food consumption patterns during the lean season. Casual laborers and lower-income brackets exhibit higher vulnerability to food insecurity. The stability of employment and income sources plays a pivotal role in mitigating food insecurity risks during lean periods. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions and policies can improve food security among indigenous communities.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several policy implications can be drawn to address the issue of food insecurity among tribal communities during the lean season:

- **Targeted interventions for the 'poor' and 'borderline' households:** The research findings suggest that interventions to enhance food security among tribal communities should prioritise improving access to nutritious and diverse foods. While the Public Distribution System plays a significant role in providing monthly rations, it falls short of providing adequate sustenance for an entire family and lacks dietary diversity.
- **Strengthening agricultural practices:** To enhance agricultural productivity in the study area, the government should invest in key areas such as irrigation facilities, improved farming techniques, and essential services. This strategic investment will transform agricultural activities, ensuring they become more remunerative and contribute to regional food security during lean periods. A comprehensive approach is required, including training and support for farmers in adopting advanced techniques and sustainable practices. Strengthening agricultural practices boosts food production and improves access to nutritious food, thereby promoting overall food security.
- **Enhancing employment opportunities:** Governmental objective should be the expansion of stable employment opportunities, with a particular emphasis on tribal communities, particularly casual labourers. Despite the existence of policies such as MGNREGA, their efficiency is hampered by poor implementation and inconsistencies, restricting their ability to offer adequate employment. Hence interventions should include strong support for vocational training programmes, skill development initiatives, and the creation of self-employment options to address this. Households can obtain more reliable income sources by diversifying their labour possibilities, reducing their vulnerability to food poverty during lean seasons.
- **Income generation activities:** Policies should prioritise income generation activities targeted at households with lower incomes. This can include promoting small-scale enterprises, providing microfinance services, and supporting income-generating initiatives

such as handicraft production, animal husbandry, and agri-businesses. Increasing household income can enable families to afford an adequate quantity and quality of food, reducing their reliance on coping strategies during lean seasons.

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Children in dual-career families: A study of Srinagar

Syed Towseefah Rafique and Humaira Showkat

Abstract

Dual-careerism is not a new phenomenon. Dual-career families are pervasive, owing to women's increased access to education, technology and employment opportunities. Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) coined the term dual-career couple and generated uncountable areas of discussion related to dual-careers. The authors reported different dilemmas being faced by dual career couples and the ways of coping with them. Rapoport's study is very relevant even now. The challenges that come up with work-life struggle are natural and couples adopt different coping strategies. This paper aims to explore how Kashmiri dual-careers handle dependent children in the face of time constraints and what is the influence of dual-careerism on the children. Based on semi-structured interview guide, this study included 18 dual-career couples from Srinagar city, selected through stratified and purposive sampling technique. The sample included couples belonging to education and healthcare, with at least one child in the age group of 0-7 years. Findings of the study reveal that childcare remains one of the most stressful tasks for dual careers and couples are bound to adopt different ineffective strategies to manage children, especially those belonging to nuclear households. Parents show both concern and helplessness in child handling matters and fear their children to grow unhealthy. This study suggests the need for policy-based intervention in the matters of child management, so that children, being future of society, grow mentally and physically healthy.

1. Introduction

A dual-career household is defined as one where both spouses earn income and are dedicated to their professions in which they are specialised (Herman 2016, p.2). The pattern of dual-career arises when both the spouses own high qualifications, unlike dual workers, where husband and wife hold lower formal qualifications (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971, p. 519).

From the very hunting stage of human history, women have primarily been associated with child care. The freedom from childcare activities allowed men to join the domains of economy, defence etc (Gough 1971 (a) p. 768). Historically, women have been deemed as weaker and subordinate humans and it has taken women a long battle to prove their mettle and establish themselves as capable and dignified humans. The rapid social changes and technological access has revolutionized the lives of women by creating various opportunities for them to achieve advanced education and economic self-reliance. Today women empowerment is an important area of concern in all developed, developing and underdeveloped nations of the world. The modern woman being educated, skilful, creative and tech-savvy, has managed to make her place in most of the public domains. Today woman constitute a significant part of labour force. This shift of women from being dominated, exploited and dependent humans to being an important part of labour force has given rise to families with dual-careers.

Dual-careers are surrounded by innumerable challenges (Pradeepika and Kumar 2019, p.897; Mahajan 2020 p.15055). Work overload, time constraints, mental strain, elderly neglect, health neglect, are some of the common issues associated with dual-career family patterns. It is argued that the problems of dual-career couples aggravate with the transition to parenthood (Rahman et al. 2015 p. 92; Pradeepika and Kumar 2019, p. 898). Since humans being social animals, as stated by Plato, need continuous support from other human beings to live a healthy and wealthy life, it becomes extremely difficult for dual career parents to manage child-rearing amid paid work demands. This is in accordance with Gough (1971, p.764), who states that human children take many years to become self-dependent, unlike other animals. Studies indicate the crucial role of parents in the harmonious development of children (Durisic and Bunijivac 2017, p.149; Sanders and Turner 2018 p.5) and studies also indicate how the parental neglect acts as a risk factor in child development (Mak 1994 p.107; Tyler et al. 2006 p.1; Hwang 2019 p.16).

Since the work and family domain are interdependent, the mothers' preoccupation with employment makes this interdependence more problematic (Lokeshwari et al. 2013 p.71). Given the career-oriented life, mothers are tangled in multiple roles. A woman's engagement with paid work minimizes her family time and a career woman gets caught in a tight schedule, thus the dependent family members, be it children, the disabled or the elderly, eventually suffer from the new family arrangement. Neault and Pickerell (2005 p. 190) argue that the roles of

parenthood create more complications for dual-career couples because as Bryant and Kleiner (1989 p.9) write that one of the most stressful areas of concern for dual-career couples is childcare.

Dual-career parents look out for different alternatives to rear children; while some rely on joint families, some take support from baby sitters and some depend on creches. Since the forces of change have changed the family from the extended and production type to a nuclear and consumption unit (Mayowa 2019 p.104), most of the couples face the crisis of support in childcare.

In India also, families are increasingly changing and in Indian dual-career households the different sources of stress emerge from time shortage to perform multiple roles, presence of young children (0-12 years) in the family and increased responsibilities at work (Rudra De 2017 p. 219). Rudra de argues that due to preoccupation with childcare, Indian couples get least time for themselves and this in turn weakens the interspousal relationship. Work and family practices are different in the eastern countries due to differences in societal institutions and traditions (Hassan 2010 p.31). South Asian families are culturally more conscious and, thus, children are, mostly, not exposed to open and liberal socio-cultural environment. It has been found that Asian parents expect high obedience from their children (Dwairy and Achoui, 2010 p. 5). Asian cultural values have all along been misinterpreted in the West and rather represented in negative sense (Wong et al. 2019 p.836). Yim (2022 p.15) writes that cultural values are meaningful and functional for attaining different developmental needs in different social contexts. Yim discusses the different parenting styles and argues that not even the authoritarian parenting style can be said to leading to unhealthy outcomes. Yim finds Asian parenting patterns functional and writes that collectivism and humility component in Asian cultural values could be benefitting for South Asian young children. In India, the parental beliefs are culturally loaded; boundaries are prescribed and gendered patterns are followed (Tuli 2012 p.86). It is argued that autonomy and independence is provided to children in only certain areas (Tuli and Chaudhary 2010 p.17).

Given the cultural constraints in South Asian cultures, parents in dual-career households are caught in more complex work-life struggle, where young children's concerns take the central stage. In this backdrop, this study aims to explore how dual-career couples in Kashmir handle

the dependent children in the face of time constraints and what is the influence of dual-careerism on the children.

The study is qualitative and is based on semi-structured interview guide in which 18 dual-career couples from Srinagar city are included through stratified and purposive sampling technique. The sample includes couples belonging to education and healthcare, with at least one child in the age group of 0-7 years. Education and healthcare were chosen on account of the fact that these two sectors are counted among the main occupational sectors in India and in the Kashmir valley. While education sector operates on a fixed schedule of working hours during the day-time and employees are able to work out their personal routine and attend both family and work accordingly, healthcare industry runs 24 hours and employees are bound to follow the duty rooster which keeps on changing the whole week. This inconsistent work schedule gives employees tough time in dealing with work-family management. To reach the sample belonging to education sector, Amar Singh college, Srinagar and Higher Secondary school, Kothibagh were chosen and to reach the sample belonging to healthcare, J V C, Bemina and Govt. Health Centre, Budshahnagar were chosen. The final sample included two professors, five lecturers and two teachers from education. From healthcare, the final sample included three doctors, four staff nurses and two pharmacists. Their spouses were reached at their workplaces and some in their homes, according to their convenience. All the couples had at least one child in the age group of 0-7; on the whole, four couples had only one child, nine couples had two children and five couples were parents to three children.

The respondents were acquainted with the purpose of the study and after taking consent, each respondent was interviewed separately. All the interviews were written verbatim and since couples were interviewed separately, so a total of 36 interviews were conducted and out of 36 interviews, only 20 interviews could be audio-recorded, rest 16 interviews were only in written form due to either respondent's inhibitions or noisy environment.

2. Findings

2.1 Daily requirements of children

The dual-career couples in the study were very conscious about food and nutrition of their children. Both fathers and mothers showed extreme concern about the importance of healthy food habits for growing children. Mothers showed more stress and anxiety due to being under work-family pressure in the morning and evening, which are important food timings. Owing to time constraints, parents, together, take help from market foods to make children get attracted to colourful snacks, juices and candies. Parents also showed concern about issues pertaining to hygiene. Parents asserted that they were aware about the fact that their kids may or may not be hygienically maintained, back home, but they were helpless. Diapers not being changed as and when required, washroom habits being developed late, children doing toilet in their pants etc were the common issues dual-career parents talked about. Couples shared that the daily routine of work and childcare led them to conflicting situations.

A teacher shared:

We are extremely pressurised in the morning; breakfast, getting ready ourselves, getting the children ready, handling their moods, making tiffins and other family demands. It feels like we are going on war. Sometimes we are not even able to communicate properly and only give angry expressions to each other.

A nurse shared:

Our job is highly hectic. The varying work hours makes our family life more stressful. We are not able to frame a particular time table to attend our children's daily needs.

Couples with their young children going to school get relaxed for the day but growing needs of growing children also becomes unmanageable for them. Couples shared that they were not able to spend their fullest abilities for children's academic needs.

2.2 Quality time with children

Dual-career parents, in the study, expressed guilt for not being able to spend quality time with their children. Whether it was to ensure play time for children or academic guidance, parents reported that they rely on play schools and home tutors to train their children for schooling or to check their daily school activities. Parents lamented that though being highly qualified, they have tough time to deal with their children's home assignments and have to put pressure on children to finish the work quickly in shortest time. Parents submitted that they have to face the tantrums of their children due to not being available for them when they need so they take help from material luxuries. Parents take children to market often to compensate their parenthood guilt and get rid of the child's or children's wrath.

A doctor shared:

My service is critical. The odd timings associated with it complicates our family relationships. Our children are directly affected by it. Watching your toddler grow is fun and I sometimes crave to get that satisfactory time. Many times, I miss to celebrate important occasions with children; birthdays, festivals, functions.

A professor shared:

My morning, evening and the holidays are highly over-loaded. There is a huge assortment of household chores and on holidays there are relatives to be visited. Finally, it is only our children who remain unattended.

2.3 Handling role-conflict

For dual-career couples, role conflict is inevitable. Mothers, mostly, bear the brunt of being in a dual-career relationship and face enormous demands from both work and care giving domain. Mothers reported that they compromise on lots of personal and household chores but cannot compromise on paid work. Healthcare professionals, both fathers and mothers, reported that their occupation is highly demanding physically as well as mentally. Due to changing time schedules healthcare professionals are not able to fix proper routines for caregiving activities.

A staff nurse narrated:

Ours is day and night service. We miss everything, our health, our society, not to talk of our children. We have shrunk our social network. Our work and children remain our priority and ironically, in spite of prioritising our children, we are neither able to prepare our children for school nor to receive them in the evening. Sometimes we take help from neighbours and sometimes relatives.

Another respondent, a lecturer, shared:

Even if you are in a joint family, still you are not exempted from the physical and mental stress related to childcare. For example, my mother-in-law takes care of my daughter during the day but there is still huge domestic stuff left for me back home. I remain somewhat indebted to my mother-in-law for just attending my daughter and in return I have to take care of my mother-in-law's choices and interests. I try to compensate that by spending money on my mother-in-law.

Couples said that dependent children kept them crippled. Most of the couples reported that they kept their children engaged with television and cell phones. While eating food, maintaining the household or doing personal stuff, couples allot cell phones to the children to keep them at bay. In fact, couples feel that cell phones relax them from the tantrums of their children.

The contradictory demands of work and caregiving domain subjects couples to stress and strain and couples submitted that they themselves get stuck to their cell phones, whenever possible as it, at least, relaxes them from the mental stress and they, somehow, do away with the monotony of work-home struggle.

Dual-career families with healthy grandparents get some sort of comfort with the support offered by the elderlies. It can be said that the grandparents minimize the role conflict of a working lady.

A teacher submitted:

My mother-in-law prepares my 5-year-old for school and in the evening receives her, changes her uniform and feeds her till I am back.

Another respondent, an Assistant professor, said

My parents are in good health. My wife and I live with joint family members. We all have good advantage of the elderlies. Our children, mostly, remain in the company of their grandparents.

A doctor shared:

Medical work has a complex schedule, our priorities are different. I have shifted my residence here from another district. Even if my parents are healthy, why shall they leave their household for me. They live in their own residential place. Being away from home for my job, I cannot afford parental support.

Taking paid help is another alternative that dual-careers opt for, especially when family functions or festivals are around. However, couples mostly hesitate in sheltering helpers in their homes, owing to mistrust.

2.4 Socialisation of children in dual-career families

Dual-careers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding their children's mental as well as physical development. Couples shared that they had resources to provide their children the best commodities and best basic needs but they were not able to do anything, when it comes to mental growth. Couples said that they were able to make future planning for their children; making money and reputation remained the priority but they were not able to provide much social interaction to their children. Couples, themselves, asserted about the need of socialising for growing children, but due to modern families, mostly, being small, couples felt that their children do not even have society to grow.

Mothers, in the study, submitted that their children seemed to grow more demanding day by day and that their children didn't seem to have patience to wait for demands.

A lecturer shared:

My 6-year-old has learnt about online shopping. As I enter my home in the evening, he jumps on me and demands newer items each new day. What puzzles me is that it is not about the required stuff, he chooses hi-fi gadgets, costume clothes, packed foods and all that.

Another respondent, a pharmacist shared:

Our children don't face a normal life struggle to get trained for life challenges. We provide them constant support with the help of money, easy movement from place to place, unlimited choices, variety of foods and what not. Even to read, write and study we use internet, they do not get to see the complexities of life. The result is that they fail tomorrow in front of the unexpected challenges of life.

3.

Discussion and Conclusion

The challenges of dual-careerism are innumerable but childrearing, being the most crucial and unavoidable task, subjects dual-careers to conflicting and stressful situations. Dual career couples respond to these challenges by finding different support systems or by cutting down on certain unpaid tasks. The above study found couples caught in the complexity of work-family struggle where both work and family are equally important. Being located in South Asia, the family responsibilities in Kashmiri culture includes not only children and the spouse but elderly care, social relationships, neighbourhood etc. and all these responsibilities are expected to be performed within the context of traditional social norms. The traditional social norms create difficulties for couples because women are socialised not to expect care work support from their husbands and husbands are socialised to treat the household and care taking domain as women's. The presence of healthy grandparents minimizes the conflict and strain of a couple but mostly grandparents themselves belong to a life stage which demands them care and observation.

The above study concludes that dual careers are helpless in front of the life challenges and bound to take help from unnecessary money-making to handle their children. Dual-careers secure themselves by keeping their children involved with material luxuries and extravagance and this extravagance does not remain limited to dressing, entertainment and leisure only, the food and nutrition provided to children, to keep them happy, mostly comes from the market, thereby directing the children towards an unhealthy way of life. The study concludes that

children in dual-career families bear the brunt of dual-careerism and they are subjected to environment where they eventually develop flawed lifestyles.

Since dual-career couples find themselves extremely occupied with the family duties during the mornings and evenings, this restricts the parents to interact with their children. Children in dual-career families lack human interaction and are more engaged with the cell phones, which in turn hinders their social development and results into weak parent-child bonding. This weak parent-child relationship has been found to be responsible for deviant behaviour in children (Hussain and War, 2017 p. 168).

Since the basic socialisation of human beings occurs within the institution of family, where parents' role cannot be replaced by any other family member, it is safe to say that this crucial task of child rearing and development demands support at societal level. Given the demands and requirements of modern lifestyle, paid work is unavoidable and rather extremely important for both men and women, however, policymakers need to shift attention towards the growing child neglect due to dual careerism. Law makers, social workers and media needs to play its role in bringing the topic into public debate so that harmonious child development becomes a concern at political level. For example, since the assignment of home work has recently come into the focus of authorities and schools have been banned from putting such load on young children, especially kindergarten, this is a small step which at the same time gives some relief to dual-career couples. There is scope to do enough for the development of young children within the schools, e, g, making education more activity-oriented than bookish, which makes it boring for children and thus, parents have to put efforts to keep children motivated, minimizing the class size, so that teachers are able to provide individual attention to children, which in turn makes things easy for a parent, employing mother-teachers for lower kindergarten so that teachers feel connected with the small and immature children and are able to understand the child psyche. Day care centres are also a necessity for dual-careers and there needs to be proper monitoring of these pivotal institutions to ensure safe and healthy child caring. These institutions need to be brought within government domain so that parents feel secure in admitting toddlers, without bothering about the negative concerns associated with them. It is to be mentioned that many parents hesitate to admit children in day care centres due

to the fear of getting children used to sleeping medicines, improper hygiene management, improper nutrition etc.

At governmental level, much more is needed to make the work-home life of dual-careers convenient. Our work-places need to be made mother-friendly, so that mothers have some flexible work schedules to adjust to the needs of their children. Apart from that, our governmental departments can create vacancies for qualified mothers where there are work-from-home options and those who do not want to lose paid work get flexible work opportunities and can be paid accordingly. In the world of internet, scores of dignified jobs can be made available for qualified women which can help them in easy management of work-home struggle.

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Political Culture in India: An Overview

Prabhakar Kumar

Introduction

In the 1950s, the concept of 'political culture' was gaining ground around the world to make sense of politics and society undergoing massive churning. On the one hand, the new economic-political order dominated by the USA prompted profound interest in academia to understand the new societies and their political world, on the other, the new emerging political societies in South Asia and Africa themselves were at the crossroads of keeping imprint of its culture in political domain and the State formation intact with the universal ideas nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy. The general understanding of what constitutes political culture has its long journey in meaning and differences it has co-opted from culture, psychology, anthropology to the trends of socialization and political system in late 1950s. Pye (1991, 494) makes three clear distinctions between the emerging theories of political culture approach. One, culture as the '*generalized personality of people*' from the works of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer, that suggests that the culture and personality are identical factors moulding the behavior and conduct of an individual. Two, culture as '*collectivity*', that rejects the need to study any individual behavior to make sense of culture as whole or a group behavior. Three, the process of '*socialization as the link*' between the culture and the individual, which highlights the daily practice of culture as shaping the socialization process of society, which in turn produces personalities that mould and shape the culture. Pye's argument is based on this third strand of political culture where the dilemma in earlier cultural studies, especially to respond to the excitement and anxiety of emerging developing countries like India was somewhat tackled by the introduction of process of socialization and political recruitment in linking the culture and personality (Pye 1991, p. 496).

Almond & Verba (1966, pp. 6-12)'s field work conducted in five different nation-States brought the importance of the study of political culture at center stage in understanding the role of State, institutions, individual and society in making a democratic political culture. According to them, civic culture is best suited to the enduring functioning of democracy as it contains both the elements of tradition as well as modernity, giving a suitable cushion to political system to withstand the pull and push of society. Perhaps the element of civic political culture is what the leader of independent India were trying to cultivate with ethics of civic nationalism and rationalism in a traditional society like India.

Almond & Powell (1966) have defined the political culture as ‘the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics among the member of political system.’ Another important definition has been put forward by Pye (1965, p. 7), ‘political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and rule that govern behavior in the political system.’ This way political culture is the outcome of peoples’ attitudes, beliefs and behavior towards a political system which depends on the dynamics of social and economic variables.

Political Culture in India

The politics of post-independent India started with a hope and admiration around the universal ideals of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. The commitment to political and economic justice to its people was expected to herald a culture of equality and fraternity amongst the fellow Indians, which in turn would provide the base for vibrant civic polity. This moment of euphoria and certain optimism has to do with the legacy and promises of freedom struggle as well as the very act of giving ourselves the democratic constitution in the solemn faith of ‘we the people’. The point of arrival for a democratic polity based on culture of liberty, equality and fraternity was in the introduction of colonial modernity and Gandhian politics of 1920s and onwards that brought the common masses in public arena, making it more representative and closer to the people.

Nandy (1973, pp. 126-131) summarized the political culture in India in four different phases according to the tone and temperament of the evolving culture of politics in India under the rubric of colonial modernity:

First phase, at the end of eighteenth century, refers to the process of politics as ‘self-redefinition.’ They primarily tried to situate the primacy of State in the daily lives of Indians- which has been till date antithetical to the dominant Hindu traditions- along with the introduction of identity of Indianness and Hinduism to public discourse. Led by the reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who started speaking in the name of Hindu culture and its Indianness deriving from scriptures and traditions in light of western modernity and rationality.

The second phase, beginning at the second half of the nineteenth century, was characterized by the politics as ‘self-affirmation’ wherein the people who were leading in the first phase came to dominate the political space during this time. However, they were going through the moral anxiety of being low,

backward and inferior fed by the racial supremacy of the Britishers. This led to the formation of two wider groups namely, modernist and revivalist; originating from two distinct political cultures and their idioms addressing and adapting to two different sections of society. The idioms of revivalist political culture later became the intellectual sources for right wing politics at the beginning of twentieth century as well as in independent polity finally coming to dominate the political arena in recent times shaping and shaking the new edifice of political culture in India. The very emphasis was also on to choose the idioms of western modernity selectively that would not destroy the traditional character of identity but at the same time were also looking for the modernist referent within the Indian traditions as well.

Third phase was identified with politics as 'autonomy seeking having its origin in Gandhian politics of 1920s, when Gandhi took the rein of freedom struggle as well as dominated the scene in the working of Congress party. He creatively relied on the latent political resources of folks and peasant culture. By doing this Gandhi also brought to the fore of political culture traits of society which were considered weak and feminine by the modernist but were now considered the strength of Indian society and its rich traditions (Rudolph 1965). This phase also established the primacy of political in the life of Indians and political culture (Nandy 1973, pp. 129).

The final phase was the phase of politics as 'banality' wherein the primacy of politics got established in post-Gandhian era. This phase was also faced with the real task of State formation wherein the leadership of freedom struggle in general and Congress party in particular took the leading space. During this phase, the politics grew as vocation and economic rationality and political expediency informed the idioms and vocabulary of political culture. There emerged three distinct developments around the politics of banality. One, described by Weiner (1965, pp. 199) as the politics of district reaching to national stages. Two, the overarching importance of politics spilling over other domains of society, culture and economy, wherein politics became bereft of self-regulation. Three, the systemic ever-growing role of State and its power structure which resulted in the creation of a dominant party and powerful leader assisted by professional bureaucrats who had taken over the role of local leadership at the cost of neglect of leaders of periphery and regions in political space. Though the post-independence period had heralded the winds of freedom and gave politics the inner space in Indian society, it also signaled the betrayal of Gandhian politics and his saintly style which Nandy terms as sign of political retrogression and barbarization.

The primacy of politics in our society has also been referred to as the culture of politics in India. The culture of politics is contrasted with the political culture, wherein the former manifests the reactionary and

deviates from what political culture professes in a political system (Singh 1984). He calls this contrast a product of one that is rooted in Indian traditions of self-denying ascetic and the modern culture of western rationality, secularism, individualism which reflected in the self-indulgent acquisitive culture. He calls into the benevolence of Indian culture that is rooted in its diversity, social cohesion, spirituality as well as the communal freedom, a case in point to establish a political culture that is culturally oriented, rather than a politics-oriented culture. Prof. Raghuveer Singh's comment could be seen as a nativist lament on the state of political culture in post-independent India vis-à-vis the hegemonic politics of congress system (Kothari 2012) led by urban elites who had mostly attended the western universities and hence comfortable with the etiquettes and mannerism of modern politics. He disregards the definitive bearing of modernity, rationality, individualism, and scientific temperament on Indian freedom struggles, writing of Indian constitution and its transformative impact on post-independence polity. However, Gopakumar (1988, 221) puts this differently and calls it a gulf between the existing political culture and the culture of politics which has been too wide and rigid that it falls back to its old-fashioned traditional ties of caste, communalism and regional identity.

Next section draws on the arguments of Rajni Kothari and Sudipto Kaviraj to make sense of the paradox of political culture emanating from center, its regions and its institutionalization in the idioms of mass political culture, partly as the result of deepening of logic of electoral democracy (Weiner 1965, 208); and also what Foucault (Foucault 1979) called the logic of governmentality.

Institutionalizing Traditional-Modernity paradox: Reflections on the political culture at the center and tensions from regions

Rajni Kothari in his seminal work *Politics in India* (Kothari 2012, p. 255) has captured the moments of emerging political culture in four themes which has been the result of twin dynamics of 1) the cultural and personality variable vis-à-vis the process of socialization of individual and groups; and 2) the advent of new modern economic and political order and the challenges it manifests to address before the new nation-State. For Kothari, these four themes are not authoritative, yet instructive of generality of enduring values that have come to influence and shape the political culture in India and deepening of democratic polity.

Tolerance of Ambiguity

According to Kothari (2012, p. 262) the Indian society has been highly tolerant of ambiguity in political and social domain. This ambiguity has been a result of its historical experiences of adapting to new political order in terms of conquest from outside or the various ideological and religious movements in India. It paved the way for a political situation of noticeable tolerance for cleavages in terms of factional political dispute, autonomy of groups as well as individuals resulting in overlapping yet differentiated identities. Such an evolving mechanism of ambiguity in Indian political culture is representative of synthesis between the forces of tradition and modernity (Nandy 1973; Nehru 2004).

Authority as fragmented

The fragmentation of authority here refers to the culture of consensus in Indian political and social life, where the authority has always been dispersed, temporary and fragmented. Indian society based on rigidity of social structure and ideological fluidity in political life has produced a contingency in how the authority is exercised and who exercises that authority. What has remarkably happened under the strain of social political modernization and secularization of political authority with the mechanism of parliamentary democracy in place, is that the same culture of consensus is played out in new fashion albeit the old techniques of bargaining and transactions. The new political elites constituting the leadership of political party and bureaucracy has come to represent that secular authority. The role of consensus building and mediation is also indicative of the fact that political has been overwhelming in social and culture domain as well. Weiner (1965) has called it the emergence of bargaining culture¹ of politics in India, wherein, rather than going into the terrain of formal confrontations and institutional space of settlement for respective interest, groups and individuals alike look for mediation outside of it within the cultural elements of settlement which is permeating the new politics.

Ideology and Politics

In the political system, the political elites have been dominating the social and political life as well. This has resulted in political elite being seen a class responsible for keeping the moral compass intact as well as leading the nation in a heroic fashion, which was otherwise differentiated in earlier society where class and caste of Brahmins were the moral inducer and King or the State was supposed to act in political domain. This distinction has collapsed in new political order as the politicians are now expected to be

moral person as was the case in traditional order for Brahmins. But when the politicians don't live up to the expectations of people or don't deliver what they promised, this does not create anxiety amongst people. In a way, there seems to be a consensus on the expected hypocrisy from the leadership amongst public, which is understood, tolerated and even expected in political domain. This consensus, despite a difference between the moral idioms of the political actors on the one hand, and their actions on other, has resulted in a general ideology of political culture having its root in cultural milieu of Indian traditions.

Trust and Distrust

This dichotomy of trust and distrust present a difficult challenge to the new leadership as well as to modern polity having its lineage from the traditions of Indian public life. Indian tradition of morality has always dealt with questions of self and self-regarding action, embodied in the philosophy of Karma, unlike the western conception of other regarding action being its other side as Mill's famous dictum presented (Mill 1998). This was also the reason the moral orientation of individual was one of being doubtful about others' action in at least collective life. This anxiety and suspicion have also easily passed on to the new political order as even the leadership of Nehru was insecure around the fellow equally powerful leaders of congress party, although Gandhi was an exception as he had shown no interest in becoming part of formal power center.

Anti-Romantic view of political culture in India: A response to Rajni Kothari

Kaviraj (2010, pp. 78-99) has termed Kothari's formulation as romantic and uncritical description of understanding the Indian political culture and presented his own anti-romantic view of political culture in India. On the theme of traditions, Kaviraj calls Kothari's assumption of traditions as undifferentiated and homogeneous without any clear understanding of what tradition means and which traditions supports the modern political culture. Kaviraj accuses Kothari of conflating the distinction between tradition and modernity as both presents different social and political set up or the fact that societies could be non-modern in different ways.

Another critique emerges from the inadequate understanding of pluralism in Kothari's framework. No specific cultural or political unit is taken into consideration to explain commonality of pluralism or plural associations to explain its democratic credentials that suits and supports a democratic political culture. Rather, Kothari has just shown a kind of fuzzy continuity between the culture of north and south, the

variations has been taken as pluralism. The Pluralism referred by Kothari can best be the source of mutual respect in cultural and social sphere but how could this be taken as tolerance in political domain that supports democracy is a question unanswered by Kothari. This mutual tolerance is also the recipe for intolerance which could be displayed if one group of cultures had ways and means to overcome the other group.

Kaviraj's third criticism is based on the concept of consensus given by Kothari as the basis of political culture in post-independence polity. The political culture of India is premised on the culture of consensus involving bargaining. Kaviraj explains that it is not possible to realize any abstract idea of consensus if it does not stand on the ground of parity or equality. Any meaningful bargaining is possible only between two near equals and given the social, economic and political status of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, women and minorities in India, the question of equal bargaining is always doubtful. The tolerance was limited to a few and had a clear target of consensus. This shows that Kothari's consensus is of a selective memory as it does not consider the fact that bargaining is not for everyone. For Kaviraj, the reason the present political culture has tolerated violence of few over others and withstood tensions, is because it has been a part of traditions in Indian society and that repression has continued in the new system.

It appears that Kaviraj's accusation of Kothari is one of fundamental theoretical misgivings in latter's writing as well as of producing an alternative base of democratic structure in Indian traditions and culture that supports democracy. However, the fundamental question Kaviraj is raising is one of absence of such conditions for survival of democracy in India. One could see the visible contradiction being openly practiced and logic of democratic participation being subverted and at times, effectively diluted to perpetuate the dominance of rural feudal lords and strongmen in villages and regional politics.

In Sri Lal Shukla's Rag Darbari, Vaidya jee's character is one such example of how the logic of equal participation could be rendered ineffective and system could be appropriated by traditional elites for their corrupts gains (Shukla 2020) Therefore, the political culture of tolerance and pluralism, and consensus being the cultural elements supportive of Indian democracy is Kothari's double romanticization that is a consistency between romanticized past and romanticized present, without considering that such past flowing into present never existed (Kaviraj 2010, 98).

However, the anti-romantic view of Indian political culture presented by Kaviraj appears to be a purely academic view in the light of democratic gains India has made in last seventy-five years of its

independence. There was some general consensus at least at the level of leadership of what should be the aim and intent of new nation State and was backed by the people through the trust in leadership having its thread attached to freedom struggle. The State has come to occupy an overwhelming presence in social and economic life of the people.

Logic of electoral democracy and growing ambit of regional politics: A focus on the identity of region and peripheral political culture

Weiner (1965, p.199) has succinctly described the politics in post-independence India as spanning into two political culture –the ‘elite’ political culture and the ‘mass’ political culture. These two political cultures of Indian politics were representative of two different set of space and leadership engaging and manifesting different idioms. The ‘elite’ political culture has been in many sense the people who gave leadership in freedom struggle and in independent Indian politics and comprise of bureaucracy, judiciary and upper rung leadership in government as well as political parties. The emerging ‘mass’ political culture has been the direct manifestation and result of political and constitutional steps taken by the independent nation-States to encompass and address the aspirations of the people having its genealogy in freedom movement and promises it had made for future generations.

In terms of space, the elite political culture operates at the political nerve centers in cities, primarily in New Delhi. A typical member of elite political culture is an English-speaking upper class, upper caste who mediates in modern languages and idioms, while also having elements of traditions and conservatism in his/her social or cultural outlook. Owing to their overwhelming representation institutions and civil and political sphere, their mode of conversation has been mostly modern idioms and language of modernity.

The representative of mass political cultures are local party leaders, caste and community leaders, vernacular leaders who use the framework of modern political system and tools and techniques of electoral democracy to lay claim to higher up offices and make demands on political system on behalf of large number of people who they profess to represent. In this case they are not always traditional but use the framework of modern political structure but in traditional idioms based on traditional language.

Given the mixing and interchangeability of both the modern idioms and traditional idioms from both elite as well as the traditional political culture, it would be quite safe to say that there does not exist a clear compartment in Indian political culture. So, to say that one is completely modern and another traditional,

would be a mere oversimplification. The give and take between the elite political culture and mass political culture has been vividly displayed in the arena of electoral democracy as well as in the realm of governmental activities.

Weiner (1965, pp. 202-207) has identified three axes on which one can explain the emerging relationship and larger point of contact between the institutions of modern state and people in regions. First, the expanding net of government in terms of regulation and distribution. This has not only increased the contact between people and government and its institutions but also increased the competition between individuals, communities and regions for more resources and development work. Nevertheless, under new economic policies the earlier regime of regulation has been eased out but what has remained critical, and enduring is the role of State in day-to-day business of people be in terms of welfare scheme, job creations or other infrastructural development. Second axis is the dispersion of power. The dispersion of power along vertical as well as horizontal axis has brought people from below to the center stage of political and social life. Apart from the Panchayat institutions, the general shift in politics since early 1970s has given the vernacular leaders and political parties based on identities of caste, ethnicity and regions a better maneuvering power based on sheer logic of numbers to make their presence felt at national level. And finally, the democratization of power: The implementation of universal adult franchise which has ensured that the institutions of power are subject to popular control. It has altered the relationship between the leaders of political parties in regions and centers as well as the bureaucracy and social elites alike.

These three changes have brought to the fore the uncomfortable and odd reactions of national elites in political and social life vis-à-vis the rising regional leaders, that is the defensive political culture of elites as they find it hard to negotiate with traditional idioms of mass political culture backed by sheer logic of numbers in electoral domain (Weiner 1965, pp. 199-200).

Political Idioms and Political Culture: A resemblance

Morris Jones has attempted to understand the politics and society of India through the creative use of three political idioms which he classified as firstly, modern political idioms like constitution, rights, liberty, parliamentary democracy etc., secondly, traditional political idioms laced with caste and religion and finally, the saintly idioms based on personal sacrifices seen in the politics of Vinoba Bhave. According to Morris Jones, Indian polity is precisely a case of the interplay between both modern

political idioms and traditional political idioms which influence each other, whereas saintly political idioms are rarely to be seen (Morris-Jonas 1962, pp. 133-154).

This categorisation of political idioms by Morris Jones was primarily based on the individual conduct and use of idioms by any individual leader. Franda (1966, pp. 420-433) writes about political idioms of a Congress leader in Bengal, Atulya Ghosh, who was considered a Gandhian and nationalist by general mass in Calcutta. His staff and colleagues closer to him considered him as someone well read in western philosophy and modern idioms. Yet, to the dismay of many he was also a caste traditionalist, confusing people with his title 'Ghosh'- representing either milkmen or upper caste Kayasthya in Bengal, to make big fortune. This formulation of political idioms based on the conduct of individual leader, or their expression has been constitutive of political culture in India.

In functional domain this mass political culture cutting across the regions in terms of identity of caste, community, ethnicity and language has peculiarity and region-specific demands and expectations which might not be same with other regions and hence present a distinct political identity of each region and periphery. Of all the axis of changes and transforming elements in social and political space, the deepening of logic electoral democracy has been critical in creating the electoral regions in India- like Seemanchal in Bihar, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, or Bodoland in Assam -for better representation and redistribution of resources and development.

Conclusion: Reflections on the Vernacularization of Democratic Politics

The other end of the process of transition and consolidation of democracy when the people from below, from margins and different regions respond to the idea, practices and process of democracy in the terms of contingent values and demands on from the very system; is vernacularization of democracy and political processes. This weaves out a process of democratization wherein normative values and practices of democracy is said to be embedded and instilled with local political culture and its social values as the very process of democratization becomes part of daily political life and mass consciousness (Michelutti 2007, p. 462). According to Lucia Michelutti the process of vernacularization of democracy and political process in a sense tells us how democracy has taken social roots in India and in the process has produced new social relations and values which in turn has given new rigor, meaning and fresh energy to politics across the spectrum (Michelutti 2007, pp. 639).

Many experts, academicians, novelist alike have written and commented on village politics (Bailey 1963; Shukla 2020), local party politics in land redistribution (Renu 2020), caste and factional politics (Kothari 2012) regional electoral politics (Yadav & Palshikar, 2006), providing broader framework and the process of vernacularization of democracy in India. Moreover, the rise of Hindutva and majoritarian politics has brought to the fore another dimension of politics rooted in local culture and its value system in political and social domain. This forces us to think of the normative and praxis of process of democratization channeled through the route of peripheral and regional aspirations and contestation it presents in turn. In doing so when democracy and political process is presented as the daily life and practices, one could map out the politics of a region with its distinct character and local identity that reflects the political identity of periphery as well as becomes the constitutive of national political culture.

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**Data Politicalization Landscapes: an Untoward Hegemony in India and China's Data Governance
Framework**

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"The best way to get a bad law repealed is to enforce it strictly"

- Abraham Lincoln

Abstract

This paper will evaluate the political impact of India and China's data localisation policies and framework. India's different standpoint on data localisation seems to reflect the political scenario that persists in India, especially after their non-participation in the Osaka Declaration of Digital Economy owing to the predicament of WTO Agreements. This paper will also address the recent premise of data localisation in India and China under the pretext of the global perspective. Lastly, this paper will make a courteous attempt to analyse data localisation notions with some positive measures that can be taken in this regard.

KeyWords : Data Localisation , Digital Economy , Indian Perspective , Chinese Standpoint

Introduction

The current political climate can be inferred from data localisation; as the internet expands, so does its capacity to empower users, demand government accountability, and a challenge to a substantial portion of the established order. Concurrently, governments' internet utilisation to monitor users' activities, both domestically and internationally, is becoming more sophisticated. The revelations made by Edward Snowden in 2013 concerning the covert surveillance programme of the United States government prompted other governments to recognise the possibilities that the internet could offer in terms of data collection, analysis, and storage addressing data localisation. In spite of its negative consequence, data localisation still exists within the veins of the country to regulate and expand the digital economy of the country (Komaitis 2017, p. 360). Recent Indian policy debates have focused on data localisation and argument the civil freedoms, government functions, and economic perspectives. India should not limit its future potential to implement such restrictions by agreeing to comprehensive 'free flow of data' terms in trade agreements. Transparent and consultative processes should identify circumstances where narrowly tailored localisation requirements may be

appropriate. Localisation should be implemented in the least intrusive manner if the total costs and advantages justify it (Bailey and Parsheera 2018, p. 29). Governments and authorities are concerned about securing consumer data acquired and sent by digital corporations after the Snowden and Cambridge Analytica scandals. Governments worldwide are localising data to protect privacy, national security, surveillance, and cyber-terrorism. Data localisation ranges from free flow to rigorous limitations requiring all data to be stored inside the country's territorial jurisdiction (Hill 2014, p. 32). Though there are real worries about personal data protection, academicians and liberal economists have long warned that Internet and digital trade limitations will have significant economic effects (Mukhopadhyay 2020, p. 162). Data localisation impacts digital transactions between customers and service providers to varied degrees (Sridhar, Rao, and Potluri 2021, p. 27). The commitment to participation of the data localisation agenda has been incorporated into digital health initiatives utilised by displaced populations in low- and middle-income nations (Benson et al. 2023, p. 12). Data localisation regulations, which require specific data to be maintained within the jurisdiction of its location, may impede digital globalisation (Walters 2023, p. 162).

A Gullible Notion of Data Localization and Digital Economy

The digital economy in Southeast Asia is experiencing an unparalleled pace of growth. This phenomenon is substantiated by the proliferation of technology "unicorn" firms, four of which are headquartered in Indonesia, surpassing a valuation of \$1 billion, cross-border e-commerce platforms, and an expanding cohort of entrepreneurs who employ technology to drive innovation and expansion. Digital technologies can fundamentally alter and even disrupt every sector of the economy, including agriculture, finance, logistics, and social services (Beschoner 2021, 132). The convergence of Internet governance and commerce represents a complex policy dilemma within the contemporary digital economy (Mishra 2017, p.10). Electronic commerce integration into cross-border trading has presented many issues to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which has yet to respond. This tardy response in the multilateral system is due to the complexity of digital trade or electronic commerce and country conflict over Internet regulation and digital development. However, international trade agreements, particularly the WTO, help create a secure, predictable, and trustworthy global regulatory framework for digital trade and should be reformed quickly and meaningfully to support digital economy growth. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)'s limitations in liberalising the digital sector, eliminating new trade barriers like data localisation, and addressing "new" digital trade regulatory issues like cross-border data flows, data protection, cybersecurity, and online consumer protection. In recent years, Electronic Commerce Chapters of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) have included thorough provisions on such concerns, which could cause a conflict with the GATS. In addition, as digital trade laws are varied and often conflict between PTAs, this dispute could fracture and disrupt the global digital commerce framework. In this context, WTO law should be vital in ensuring a secure and stable legal, regulatory framework for cross-border

electronic trade and countering digital protectionism (Walters 2022, p. 52). While acknowledging the limitations of international trade agreements like GATS in addressing every obstacle associated with data transfers, they have the capacity. They should assume a more proactive stance in reconciling trade and internet policy goals (Walters 2023, 161). The free flow of data across borders is crucial to international trade, but numerous nations have restricted it. While pre-internet World Trade Organization (WTO) rules address some of these restrictions, they must be revised. Unfortunately, modern preferential trade agreements' electronic commerce portions are, too (Mitchell and Mishra 2019, p. 405). Transboundary information exchange is critical to modern international commerce. However, there are advantages and disadvantages to the transition from paper to digital in international trade. An increase in data regulation has ensued as countries and regions implement limitations on the transfer and retention of data in response to concerns (DEANE et al. 2023, 22). The OECD report proposes a definition for data localisation, outlines a roadmap to ensure that data localisations do not impede trans-border data flows, and makes recommendations to support such work. It focuses on data localisation in the context of data privacy and the governance of globalised data flows ("Privacy and data protection" 2020, p.15). Interventionist policies, such as data localisation and cross-border data flow restrictions, are essential to developing India's domestic digital enterprises, platforms, infrastructure, and competencies (Singh and Singh 2022, 12). In India, technological developments such as tokenisation, rupay, EVM chip and pin technology, and data localisation are influencing the future of electronic payment systems by reducing online fraud and digital larceny (Canadian Bar Association, Special Committee to Study an Electronic Payments System. 1976, 19). Following demonetisation for two and a half years, the digital economy, which is propelled by digital media and payments, online banking, and automation, holds the potential to transform India into an empowered society. The Indian government has implemented many incentives to foster the development of a digital economy (Sen 2020 , p. 45).

Correlated Analysis of Data Localisation in India and China

Covid 19 and the Osaka Declaration's Impact on India's Data Governance

The contentious issues surrounding data localisation also pertain to the classification of the data as either sensitive or non-sensitive. Healthcare and financial services data, among others, are widely regarded as sensitive information. In anticipation of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous nations, including India, implemented regulations specifically designed to govern this category of data. Even developed countries with advanced healthcare systems are grappling with the magnitude, intricacies, and swift dissemination of COVID-19 since its emergence in December 2019. This disease is transmitted via direct physical contact with individuals who may have had contact with a COVID-19 patient.

As a result, monitoring the communications of vulnerable groups, including patients, physicians, healthcare workers, and others, has become mandatory due to the disease's rapid transmission. Access to confidential patient data is necessary for this purpose, as it is also utilised in cross-national research and clinical trials. As a consequence, the pandemic has necessitated the exchange of information (Singh and Mishra 2021, p. 27). India is uniquely positioned to become a global centre for technology and innovation because of its abundance of scientists and engineers, over 9300 technology-based companies, and strengths in exporting IT and ITeS (information technology/information technology-enabled services). However, there is concern that there may be concerns with national security, privacy, and governance, as well as that Indian enterprises may not be able to access and profit from the data generated in the nation. As India attempts to create its own standards, the discussion around "data localisation" has gained steam over the past five years. Numerous countries throughout the world have also implemented data localisation policies. Since the new coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, several nations have changed their data legislation to allow access to and sharing sensitive patient data across borders for research and clinical trials. Services, including healthcare, shopping, and education, are now offered online. Cross-border data flows are becoming more popular as the conventional model of trade—which consists of the exchange of goods and labour mobility—becomes more unstable. To combat the epidemic, the Indian government has also actively participated in data exchanges, public-private partnerships, and cooperative research. The survey found that it costs close to INR 3.5 crore to create a data centre for a company with close to 100 employees. For a larger company, a self-built data centre could cost somewhere between US\$10-25 million per year. To reduce this cost, many SMEs store their data in a cloud or third-party run data centre. Multiplicity of infrastructure is an unviable business proposition, especially in a country like India, where a majority of the businesses are SMEs..India's G20 presidency has the potential to accelerate sustainable growth, promote inclusive development, economic stability, and help states overcome the effects of the covid-19 pandemic(Xiao 2017, p. 122). The most recent advancement occurred when Japan introduced the "Osaka Track" during the Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy. This initiative aims to establish standardised regulations for the international flow of data. In pursuit of becoming a global and information-centric metropolis, Osaka has realigned its economic strategy around the advancement of industrial technology, the expansion of the service sector, and the improvement of communication infrastructure. Two statements made at Japan's 28–29 June 2019 hosting of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Osaka, Japan, could have a long-term impact on international data privacy regulations. Although it is pretty vague, the G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration mentions the difficulties with data privacy about cybersecurity and intellectual property rights. 24 nations signed the Osaka Declaration on Digital Economy; however, four potentially significant countries—India, Egypt, Indonesia, and South Africa—did not participate. Even though Japanese Prime Minister Abe coined the phrase "Data Free Flow with Trust," it is not a novel idea regarding data privacy—even if it is unknown when discussing intellectual property or cybersecurity. The new factor is the growing number of nations enacting laws

and policies for data localisation , which can impact all three areas of concern because they are not only restricted to personal data. There is now a global fragmentation of perspectives on these problems rather than a fundamental split (Sekine 2023, p.117). Osaka's Asia Linkages Strategy does an excellent job of balancing foreign direct investment with upgrading local industries. This helps Asian countries that aren't as well developed with their economies ("Chapter 2. Global Linkages: The First Eurasian World System" 2022, p.52). The digital economy is growing; therefore, competition for digital technologies and solutions and norms, standards, and regulatory procedures is rising. The consistent inclusion of domestic standards and norms in the documents of multilateral institutions like the G20, the OECD, the WTO, and the UN gives digitalisation leaders, particularly the critical Group of 20 (G20) members, significant advantages in shaping digital regulation. Russia's impact on global and regional digital economy legislation is modest. The key G20 members—the U.S., Canada, the UK, the EU, Japan, Korea, China, and India—influence digital economy development and regulation. This assessment informs Russia's national law of digital infrastructure development, cybersecurity, digital platforms, global stable coins and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), data governance, and artificial intelligence (AI) policies, as well as its G20 and other multilateral engagements. The analysis shows that leading countries primarily influence the digital economy by setting local digital market conditions and defining global norms and rules. In digital infrastructure development, cybersecurity, and data governance, the US, UK, Japan, and partly the EU and Korea are at odds with Russia, China, and India (Borisova, Shilova, and Makkaeva 2021, p. 152). The BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa should work together to formulate common positions and promote them in the G20 and other multilateral forums. Other regulatory recommendations include exploiting digitalisation leaders' experience to reduce competition risks and boost Russian positions in the global digital economy.

China's Triumph on Data Governance Policies

The China Data Protection Law establishes a comprehensive framework to safeguard all data forms, with particular national security considerations. This legislation is expected to substantially influence the compliance obligations about data protection for businesses, as well as the transfer of data between China and other countries (Walters and Novak 2021, p. 301). The proliferation of Chinese entrepreneurialism and innovation is impeded by the nation's cyber and network security policies and laws. The impact of contradictions and tensions inherent in data localisation laws, which are components of Network Sovereignty policies, on artificial intelligence (AI) innovation, which is Unforeseen to the drafters of the Cyber Security Law, was the evolving nature of globalised AI innovation. There is an argument that the intentional utilization of "fuzzy logic" in the Cyber Security Law's formulation enabled regulators to subsequently interpret crucial terms about data in that legislation in a fluid and adaptable manner, which benefited Chinese innovation. After almost seven years of negotiations, India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2018, citing national interest and the belief that free trade agreements (FTAs) did not constitute free trade and led to more trade diversion than trade creation. Other members of the RCEP included countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, South Korea, New Zealand, Japan, and Australia. According to Panagariya (2000), the cost and benefit of a regional agreement depend on the quantity of trade creation compared to the amount of trade diversion. Some of the factors that went into India's decision to opt out of this mega multilateral agreement include an unfavourable trade balance, concerns about the impact on the dairy sector, an economic slowdown, past experience with FTA, the China factor, data localisation, rules of origin, and the experience of ASEAN countries with Sino-FTA. In addition, bilateral trade agreements with certain RCEP countries, including Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and South Korea, were already in effect. A comprehensive multilateral trade agreement with ASEAN nations was well on its way to being operational. Therefore, the level of trade between India and the other 12 countries that are members of the RCEP would have stayed the same once India became a member. If tariffs had been lowered, it would have been possible to see the effects in the remaining three countries: China, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition, there was concern that there would be a significant increase in the quantity of manufactured goods imported from China and dairy products imported from Australia and New Zealand (Gupta 2016, p. 157).

The phenomenon of cross-border e-commerce has experienced a notable surge in worldwide prominence, flourishing within China's 'One Belt One Road' programme. This policy aligns with the United Nations' sustainable development goals, particularly those aimed at nations in the Southern region. The three localisation techniques are the primary catalyst and critical business model innovation in cross-border electronic commerce. This study makes a scholarly contribution to the existing body of knowledge on supply chain innovation by positing that including overseas warehouses, bonded warehouses, and supply chain finance as capabilities are integral to business model innovation in cross-border e-commerce (Li 2022, p. 391). Big data has a significant effect on the production and existence of individuals. The current framework of legal and judicial safeguards, sanctions, and enforcement mechanisms designed to protect information rights is inadequate in mitigating the severe repercussions of widespread disclosure and unlawful operations. This article combines qualitative and quantitative analysis following the Information Full Life Cycle Theory. Using data from the China Consumers Association's Survey Report on App Personal Information Leakage as an example, it concludes that unauthorised access, unauthorised provisioning, and unauthorised transactions have emerged as significant sources of personal information leakage. Legislative protections that need to catch up, technological limitations, the falsification of informed consent, and a dearth of administrative oversight are the primary causes of this issue. The right to protection of personal information should be systematically regulated through various initiatives. Its initial purpose should be to determine whom and how to protect. Secondly, a transition from identifiable subject regulations to risk control is required. Thirdly, legislation must be all-encompassing,

requiring a shift from isolated to systemic reforms. Protection initiatives should additionally incorporate management, self-regulation, and oversight. Legislative authority should encompass physical and virtual realms to balance viable safeguards and the prudent utilisation of personal data (Guo 2021, p. 65).

The precise delineation of the scope of sensitive personal information holds significant importance in determining the extent of data collection. However, in China, there exists a need for a clear definition of the boundaries of sensitive personal information. The practical application of Article 28 of the Personal Information Protection Law, which aims to define the scope of sensitive personal information using the approach of "listing and summarising," presents challenges. Moreover, it is deemed unsuitable to categorise information solely into two broad categories: general personal data and sensitive personal information. To accurately identify sensitive personal information, it is necessary to consider specific scenarios and employ the scenario integration approach, grounded in the contextual integrity theory. This approach enables the establishment of objective criteria for assessing whether the material in question qualifies as sensitive (Novak 2021, p. 251). Political, economic, and geopolitical factors have impacted data localisation in India; due to foreign pressure, specific requirements have been loosened, whereas others have been effective against Chinese firms (Lukings and Habibi Lashkari 2022, p.27). China's data localisation is motivated by pragmatic security considerations, industrial advantages, and technological progress; the Holistic National Security Concept and technological nationalism also exert an influence ("The Chaotic Attractor of Foreign Direct Investment — Why China? A Panel Data Analysis" 2020, p.47).

Recent Trends of Data Localisation in India And China

China's Internet governance policy has evolved into four stages, with the general office of the State Council at the core and multiple departments responding positively. Multi-party cooperative governance has become the most critical governance mode. Policy Governance prioritises service and management. However, the Internet governance strategy still needs to improve, including the primary agencies' roles clashing and the lack of legal policy documents. People call the 21st century "the information age" because of the many ways we use information. Drawing upon political and historical sources and an analysis of Chinese participation in international institutions, the progression of the Chinese Internet governance paradigm is evident. Due to its historical connections with China and its significant influence on the development of the local Chinese Internet, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been seen as the optimal international entity for overseeing the worldwide Internet. The Chinese contribution to the ongoing global Internet governance discourse remains the same. China's involvement in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) implies a cooperative approach (Wang 2022, p. 235).

India is affected by the digital revolution and growing digitalisation. The Indian government launched the "Digital India" plan to address its significance and ability to disrupt practically every element of society. A digital economy

with a vast global market is India's goal. India increased 47 million internet users (+8.2%) between 2021 and 2022, reaching 658.0 million in January 2022. Indian internet penetration was 47.0% in January 2022. Digitisation requires data security and protection. Although the digital economy is young, personal data processing is rising. Data transactions are necessary for almost every action in the digital age. The Internet has spawned new markets, especially for private data collection, organisation, and processing. "The world's largest taxi company, UBER, owns no vehicles; Facebook, the most popular social media platform, creates no content; Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory; similarly, Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate" is timely and odd. All companies are "Data Driven" (not "information Driven") and use data to make critical decisions. The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act 2023 affects antitrust issues in digital markets in substantial ways. A consensus has arisen among competition regulators from various jurisdictions regarding the intersection of data protection regulatory issues and antitrust concerns in markets supported by data-driven business models. Following the recent implementation of the legislation, the current state of affairs in India is conducive to ensuring that the competition and data protection regulatory instruments operate in concert (Srinivasan, Sinha, and Modi 2023, p. 41). Cross-border data flow standards are disputed, affecting Global South's digitalization strategies. Data localization is one of the most controversial policy tools for states to regulate cross-border data flows. A new sort of resource securitization, data securitization, led to data localization. State-specific political and economic factors and national and foreign interest group pressure shape this process.

Concluding Remarks :

Data localisation is a double-edged concept that, on one aspect, acts as a catalyst to boost the digital economy. On the other aspect, it compromises the data privacy of individuals. Cross-border data flow is a globally disputed concept due to its influence on the political agenda of India and China. Building domestic digital infrastructure, enterprises, platforms, and competencies in India requires interventionist policies like localisation and cross-border data restrictions (Singh and Singh 2022, 16). Because of this, the present legislation in India spent very few words determining the agenda of cross-border data flow. But to mitigate these two polarised parameters, it is pertinent to accrue a balanced mechanism to precipitate the advantage of data localisation and digital economy through narrow tailoring and competing public interest.

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COVID-19 DISRUPTED LIVELIHOOD AND MISSING FEMALE LABOUR FORCE IN URBAN KERALA

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Abstract

The current study aims to examine the paradoxical scenario observed in Kerala, where women have achieved significant socioeconomic progress, yet face low rates of female labour force participation and interrupted livelihood opportunities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective is to identify the specific activities individuals are involved in at home and investigate the underlying cause for their limited involvement in the labour force in urban areas, despite the increased employment prospects that come with rapid urbanisation in the State. Furthermore, the study aims to examine the hindered economic activities of the female workforce during the 50-day national lockdown period caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. The study mostly relies on primary and secondary sources of data. A survey was done among 163 urban women in Thiruvananthapuram district to determine the primary economic activities of the female workforce in cities and the factors contributing to their low participation rates. In addition to conducting 20 telephonic interviews with female workers in the Thiruvananthapuram corporate area, informal interactions with various stakeholders were also carried out to gain insights into the livelihood challenges faced by women workers in urban areas during the lockdown time. The findings indicate that multiple socio-economic and cultural factors influence the level of female involvement in the urban labour force. The study demonstrates that the lockdown period has had a detrimental impact on economic operations across several sectors in Kerala, resulting in a disruption of livelihood for women workers in urban areas.

Keywords: - COVID-19, Female Labour force Participation, Livelihood, Lockdown, Urbanisation

Introduction

Historically, women have been expected to contribute to the welfare of their family members. Nevertheless, growing urbanisation led to significant advancements in the socio-economic standing of women. Women have a significant role in rural to urban migration worldwide. The majority of individuals migrate either when they get married or when they have the potential to work in the target location (Rao 1974, pp. 78 -80). Typically, in urban areas, middle-class women

tend to secure employment in white-collar occupations and professions, while lower-class women often find work in the informal sector. Since the early 1990s, the existing literature indicates that the rate of women's participation in the labour force has remained unchanged in the worldwide context. The female labour force experienced a decrease of 2 per cent points between 1990 and 2013, ultimately reaching a level of 50 percent (UN 2014, pp. 7-8). The issue is of a global magnitude, with a greater emphasis on the developing world, particularly in South Asian economies like India and other countries classified as third world. Female labour force participation in India reached its highest point at 33 percent in 1972-73 and began to fall in the late 1990s. Based on the NSSO PLFS survey conducted in 2012, the percentage was 22.5 per cent for the period of 2011-12. According to the UN study, India's female workforce participation rates in 2013 were the 11th lowest among all countries. According to the World Bank (2017), India has one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation in the world, with only certain regions in the Arab world having even lower rates.

According to the most recent NSSO PLFS survey, the percentage of women participating in the labour force (of all ages) in the country has reached its lowest level of 17.5 per cent during the year of 2017-18 (NSSO PLFS survey 2019, p. 8). The significant absence of women in the workforce in India serves as a reflection and reinforcement of the marginalised social position of women in the nation. The subordinate position of women results in significant social and economic burdens, including an unfavourable sex ratio, elevated maternal mortality rates, and prevalent cases of anaemia and malnutrition (Live Mint 2014 & 2017). Hence, the government has consistently implemented strategies to enhance their engagement levels over the course of numerous years, mostly by offering educational scholarships and reservations, fostering self-employment and capacity building, as well as providing skill training, among other initiatives. The increase in educational achievements among women may have contributed to their decision to leave the workforce in recent years. However, the issue of low female workforce participation has been a persistent structural problem for a considerable period of time. The fact that a significant number of educated women in metropolitan areas are not participating in the workforce represents an unparalleled squandering of talent. Urbanisation plays a crucial role in influencing the rate at which women participate in the labour force. The expansion of urban areas due to industrialization leads to a rise in non-agricultural job options. These opportunities are more easily accessible for women due to evolving family norms. This has been observed in several studies (McCabe and Rosenzweig 1976, 141-160); (King 1978, pp. 399-407); (Kemal

and Naci 2009, pp. 28-34).

Urbanisation and Missing Women

Urbanisation in India leads to increased work prospects for women, particularly in the service industry. (Sumit Mazumdar and M. Guruswamy 2006, pp. 10-12). When compared to rural settings, the employment opportunities available in urban areas tend to be more numerous, varied, and financially rewarding. As a consequence of this, when the percentage of people who live in urban areas increases, there will also be a commensurate increase in the participation of women in the workforce, particularly in occupations that are secure and paid well. However, it is essential to keep in mind that this influence might not manifest itself until after a certain amount of time has passed, as was seen in the case of Turkey (World Bank 2009). When determining what constitutes an urban area in India after the census in 1971, it has been uncommon practise to take into account the degree to which women participate in various economic pursuits. Gender discrimination has influenced the definition of what constitutes an urban region, which highlights the disadvantaged socioeconomic situation of women in the country. Is it time to do away with the implicit bias against women that exists in the idea of the city? The state of Kerala, which stands out in comparison to the rest of India in terms of its achievements in fields pertaining to gender equality, is the primary focus of this particular research study.

Paradoxical Situation in Kerala

According to literature, the presence of health infrastructure, women's education and awareness, and their access to resources can lead to improvements in health outcomes and the gender ratio (female to male) (Abhishek Kumar & Arup Mitra 2017, pp. 10 -12). In Kerala, the state boasts the greatest female literacy rate, the largest ratio of females to males, a high child sex ratio, a low maternal mortality rate (Census of India 2011, pp. 409-413 and NSSO PLFS 2019, pp. 40-45), and a high nutrition status among women. Furthermore, in 2011, the State experienced the highest urban growth rate of 47.72 per cent, as reported by the Census of India. This increase can be attributed to the rise of service sector activities in the State. However, it is noteworthy that the labour force participation rate of women in the State has constantly decreased, especially in urban areas, as indicated by the Census of India in 2011, the Economic Review in 2016, and the NSSO PLFS in 2019. Indeed, research indicates that enhancing healthcare services and educational opportunities would result in increased female engagement in the labour market. Consequently, this

would empower them to participate in the decision-making process (Maitra 2004, pp. 259-291; Agarwal and Srivastava 2009, pp. 68-89).

When one considers the relevant literature, it is patently obvious that the situation in Kerala is unique. Can we refer to the situation in Kerala as a paradox given that there has been significant advancement in the social status of women, yet despite this, their participation in the labour market continues to be low, particularly in light of the growing urbanisation that is taking place? The state of Kerala is notable for its duality, which can be seen in the fact that women have achieved considerable strides in social development, but their participation in economic activities is still restricted. In addition, preliminary evidence suggests that the recent epidemic of Corona virus Covid 19 and the subsequent statewide lockdown have had a significant negative impact on the ability of women workers to maintain their livelihoods. This is especially true for women who are engaged in the informal sectors in urban areas. As a direct result of this, it is projected that there will be a sizeable drop in the proportion of women who participate in the labour force in the state for at least the next two years. In this particular study, the authors intend to investigate the issue of low female involvement in the workforce in general, as well as its current state in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is to investigate the progression of women's participation in the labour force in India and Kerala. In this study, an effort is made to correlate the varied levels of educational attainment held by female workers in metropolitan areas of the state with the types of economic activities they engage in. In addition to this, the research investigates how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected the participation of women in the labour force in urban areas.

In the course of the research, both primary and secondary sources of information were investigated. In order to conduct research on the pattern of female labour force participation in the state and the nation, secondary sources of information, such as NSSO reports and other Economic Reviews, have been employed. The research makes use of the NSSO data collection, which covers all rounds dating back to the 43rd Round (1987-88) and continuing up to the most recent data that is available (NSSO PLFS 2017-18, pp. 8-12). Utilising data on the female labour force participation rate across all age groups, as defined by the Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status (UPSS), was used to calculate the female labour force participation trend. The trend was determined by analysing the data.

The rise of service sector activities is seen as the primary cause of urban growth in Kerala, as per the Census of India in 2011. According to the State Urbanisation Report of 2012, the districts

of Kannur, Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Thiruvananthapuram have a higher number of individuals involved in service sector activities, as indicated by the existing literature (State Urbanisation Report of Kerala 2012, pp. 52 -61). Thiruvananthapuram district has been chosen, using a random selection method, to investigate the cause of the low urban female labour force participation rate. Thiruvananthapuram is the capital of the State which offers more employment opportunities in tertiary sector. To identify the nature of economic activity of female workers in the urban area of Thiruvananthapuram district, census data has been used. Concentration index of various classes of women workers have been calculated based on the Census of India, 2011. The formula followed for the Concentration index is shown below.

$$CI = \frac{\text{(Number of Workers of a particular class of workers in a local body} \div \text{Total number of Workers)}}{\text{(Number of workers of the same class of workers in the district} \div \text{Total number of workers in the district)}}$$

Primary data from a total of 163 households in two districts have been gathered throughout the course of the 2017-2018 period for the purpose of determining the primary economic activity that women workers in metropolitan areas engage in for a living. As per the 2011 census of India, there exist two distinct categories of urban areas. There are two types of towns: statutory towns and census towns. Thiruvananthapuram district comprises of one corporation and five municipalities, which are considered statutory towns. Additionally, there are a total of twenty-three census towns in the district. For the current investigation, one census town and the corporate area were randomly selected, taking into account the variability of the population in Statutory towns.

Based on the 2011 population, the corporate area is comprised of 88 wards. Two wards, specifically wards 12 and 48, were chosen at random. A total of 56 samples were gathered, with 28 samples being obtained from each ward. The selection of samples was based on the total number of households in each ward. In addition to the corporate area, samples are gathered from the Vattiyoorkavu Census town. A total of 107 samples have been collected in the Vattiyoorkavu Census town, corresponding to the total number of houses. Hence, a total of 163 homes in two urban regions of the district were surveyed to gather primary data during the 2016-17 year. The data collected has been analysed using SPSS software, specifically version 20. In order to comprehend the challenges faced by female workers in urban areas during the COVID-19 lockdown period (from 24th March 2020 onwards), a total of 20 telephonic interviews were conducted with women employed in the Thiruvananthapuram corporation region. Furthermore, engaging in informal dialogues with other relevant parties and analysing stories from newspapers facilitated the process of reaching a definitive judgement regarding the matter. The next section

examines the socio-economic status of women in urban areas, as well as their activities and the issues they face.

Female Labour for Participation in India and Kerala

The disparity in employment between genders can be attributed to differences in the rates of female and male labour force participation. The female labour force participation rate in the country is consistently declining in rural areas and exhibits a variable pattern in metropolitan areas. Both female and male labour force participation in Kerala above the national average.

Both female and male labour force participation in Kerala above the national average. The data shows that the rate of female participation in the labour force is consistently greater in rural areas compared to urban areas within the state. Women in rural areas are actively involved in agricultural and related activities, but in urban areas, their economic engagement is contingent upon their employment in the service sector. Despite the State experiencing a significant urban growth rate of 47.72 per cent between 2001 and 2011, the participation of urban females has been steadily declining from the period of 2004-05. A primary survey was done among 163 women dwelling in the urban regions of Thiruvananthapuram district during 2017-18 to determine the reasons for the absence of the female labour force in urban Kerala and to understand the activities these women engage in at home.

It has been noticed that the value of the concentration index of the female workforce in each of the chosen urban regions is more than one in the case of workers in the tertiary sector. In every other category, including cultivators, agricultural labourers, and home labourers, the ratio is lower than one. Calculated index values for each of these categories in the metropolitan region governed by the Thiruvananthapuram corporation are, respectively, 0.15, 0.23, and 0.89. The cultivators, agricultural labourers, and domestic labourers in Vattiyookavu each had index values of 0.12, 0.15, and 0.53, respectively, according to the calculations made. The concentration index of growers is either below 0.5 or on par with that value everywhere that look. It is clear from the concentration index itself that the expansion of metropolitan areas creates more options for women to find work in the service industry as these areas rise in population.

The study indicates that approximately 72 per cent of the respondents have a family size ranging from 4 to 6 individuals. These households do not adhere to the nuclear family structure, while being located in urban areas. Their family consists of members ranging from 5-year-old youngsters to those as old as 78 years. The interview with the female participants in this group indicates that, on average, they dedicate 3 to 5 hours to preparing food items based on the

preferences of their family members. It has been observed that they hire part-time maids on alternate days, regardless of the job status of women in the household.

Among the 163 women respondents in the sample, 73 percent are without employment and 27 per cent are involved in economic activity. The survey also indicates that approximately 58 percent of the homes in the sample contain two or more individuals who are employed, including the women who participated in the study. A noteworthy statistic reveals that 93.6 per cent of the unemployed individuals surveyed rely on a single employed individual within their family. Only 6.4 per cent of the unemployed individuals in the sample have more than one employed person residing in their households. According to the data, 52 per cent of women who are unemployed and participated in the survey have multiple children and are involved in childcare activities at home. The study indicates that the low participation of women in the labour force in the area is mostly due to factors such as the conflict between work and home responsibilities, as well as the high and consistent wages of their spouses, which make their own contribution to family income insignificant.

The report indicates that approximately 53 per cent of the individuals surveyed possess a college degree. Out of the graduate population, 79.1 per cent have secured employment, while 7 percent are currently involved in private tuition operations on a temporary basis. The survey indicates that a significant number of women respondents in the area are actively engaged in the tertiary sector, particularly in activities such as travel and tourism, teaching, IT-related professions, and the medical field. It has been shown that 44.1 percent of employed women work in the government sector, while the remaining women are either self-employed in the informal tourist sector or work in the organised tourism sector. Non-graduates have the lowest percentages of female labour force participation. It indicates that attainment of secondary or higher secondary levels of education need not be sufficient to participate in the urban labour market of Kerala.

‘U-shaped’ Relationship between the Level of Education and Female Labour force Several studies have established a 'U-shaped' relationship between the level of education and the female labour force participation rate in India, based on data from various rounds of the NSSO survey conducted during the post-liberalization period (Klasen and Peters 2013, pp.4-11; Luis A. Andres, Basab Dasgupta, George Joseph, Vinoj Abraham, Maria Correia 2017, p. 16). From the samples, it is evident that there is a 'U-shaped' correlation between the amount of education of the respondents and their percentage share in economic activity. However, the data obtained

from the sample respondents may differ slightly from the national data because the sample respondents do not include any illiterate individuals, whereas the national data does.

The study indicates that 14.4 per cent of unemployed participants are actively seeking a productive economic endeavor to improve their level of living, regardless of their educational qualifications. 17.8 per cent of unemployed women participate in temporary economic activities within the agriculture sector as seasonal workers (1.2 per cent), in stitching and garment-related work (3.7 per cent), and in various other occupations such as home tuition, cleaning staff at hospitals and hotels, and front office management in hotels (12.9 per cent). Indeed, 44 per cent of female respondents express a lack of interest in participating in economic activities as a result of their family responsibilities and other domestic caregiving duties. Only a small percentage (1.2 per cent) reported that their spouse lacks interest and support in their economic endeavors, perhaps causing turmoil in the household setting.

The Outbreak of Coronavirus COVID-19

The global epidemic has caused widespread terror and significantly altered the economic and social landscape worldwide. The inaugural instance of COVID-19 in the nation was documented in Kerala in January 2020. Since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in March, tourism activities in the State have been entirely affected. The tourism sector in the State incurred significant losses due to the cancellation of tickets, tour packages, and hotel bookings. Research indicates that women are employed in various roles within the tourism industry, including front offices, housekeeping, guiding, and transportation by air, land, and water. This employment can be found in both the organised sector, such as hotels and tourist agencies, as well as in the unorganised sector, which includes street side shops, food path hawkers, dhabas, and the like (Nair 2016, pp. 49-53). Females are actively engaging in the informal sector of tourism activities in the State. The lockdown has had a serious impact on individuals operating home stay facilities, restaurants, handlooms, small stores, and street vending establishments around the State. The lack of data on female workers in the tourism industry hinders our capacity to accurately assess the extent to which their livelihoods have been affected by the coronavirus.

The initial survey findings indicate that approximately 56 per cent of working women are involved in the tourism sector. Furthermore, the lockout has placed women workers in a dire predicament. Furthermore, the findings from 20 telephonic interviews conducted with diverse

female employees working in government, private, informal sectors, etc., indicate that individuals engaged in the government sector experience a higher level of safety compared to others. The layoff of employees in the IT industry commenced as early as the second week of April. From April 2020, a reduction in remuneration ranging from 10 per cent to 30 per cent has been announced for employees in private sector ventures and unaided schools. Many female workers from the northeastern region, who were employed on a contractual basis in restaurants, beauty parlours, and hotels, have been laid off and are currently awaiting repatriation to their home state. Another group that is impacted is women who work as fishers. According to the Economic Review of 2018, the data from 2016-17 indicates that 81 percent of allied fish workers are women. The implementation of social distancing measures has posed significant challenges for their fish vending operation during the lockdown period, ultimately impacting their livelihood. The shutdown of the fish market in the state has caused significant distress and hardship for the people. In addition to fisherwomen, saleswomen, construction workers, and domestic workers encounter comparable challenges. As a result of the implementation of social distancing measures and the lack of available public transit, people are unable to commute to their place of employment. The majority of individuals are not receiving their pay due to the control exerted by agents over their work supply.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that metropolitan women who are also caring for either their own children or their own elderly parents or in-laws have a more difficult time combining the regular responsibilities of running a family than their counterparts in rural areas do. This is the case regardless of whether the caregiving is being provided by the woman herself or by her spouse. They are unable to work as a consequence of this since their occupations and the customary responsibilities they have as a family member are incompatible with one another. In addition, the high and stable income of their spouses is another factor that pushes them to steer clear of low-paying employment. This is because their partners are more likely to be able to support them financially. The fact that the pandemic of Coronavirus had a negative impact on the employment opportunities that were available to women working in the travel and tourism industry, in the fish selling business, and in other informal sectors of the construction industry was another discovery revealed by the research. In a summary, the findings of the search shed light on the fact that in the future, one may be able to anticipate a large decline in the participation of women in the labour

force, particularly in metropolitan regions of the state due to the loss of jobs, and the findings shed light on the fact that one may be able to anticipate a significant decrease in the participation of women in the labour force in the future. As a direct consequence of this, it became necessary to provide supplemental air packets that were created especially for the female workers in the state.

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Different Ways of Searching Michelle de Kretser's *The Lost Dog*

Vidya Rajagopal and Rinu Krishna K.

Michelle de Kretser's third novel *The Lost Dog* (2007) begins as Tom Loxley's dog runs off the leash to chase a wallaby and disappears into the foliage and gets lost in the Australian bush. This sudden loss of grip on the leash and fleeing of the dog and the search that ensues imparts in Tom, a professor, and scholar specializing in Henry James, a train of thoughts and images. Thus, the novel shuttles between Tom's memory of his past in 1970s India, his parents, their migration to the 'Lucky Country' of Australia, and his attempts to find himself in contemporary Australia (de Kretser 2009, p.207). Tom's weeklong search for his lost dog provides the backdrop for the unfolding of kaleidoscopic images where the writer conveys Tom's love-hate, devotion-dejection relationship with his 80-year-old mother, Iris de Souza, and his attraction and obsession towards Nelly Zhang, a 4th Generation Chinese Australian artist and her mysterious past and equally mysterious paintings. His memory of his Englishman father, Arthur Loxley, from whom he got his love for literature, poetry, and criticism is also part of the narrative. The novel obviously displays the narrator's diasporic consciousness through ruminations on multiculturalism, identity, memory, experience, self, acculturation, animality, his Anglo-Indian ancestry, and his Indian roots. This is the main plot of the novel. The loss and the search for the dog is the subplot in which the main narrative unravels.

However, in this paper, we have attempted a subverted reading of the book where we have considered the story of the missing dog as the main plot. This means that we are focusing on the Other (the dog) and not on the Self (Tom). We are just curious to know how de Kretser has engaged animality as a literary device that unravels and resolves the riddle of diasporic consciousness in the protagonist and his "memory game" (2009, p.57). This is because Tom is the metaphorical lost dog in the novel and the 10-day-long search for the dog is also Tom's search for his Indian Australian identity and his journey to hope and self-discovery as well as acceptance of life's inherent confusion and chaos. Laura Albritton (2008) wrote in her review of the book, "The lost dog is a metaphor for Loxley himself, and for all he holds dear. It is a framing device, and a good one, although Loxley's sangfroid about his pet may surprise some readers" (Albritton 2008, p.201). Albritton was referring to Tom's attention and attraction toward artist Nelly even when his dog is missing. Literary Animal Studies scholars have shared their uneasiness with the symbolic use of animals to convey

human predicaments. Nevertheless, de Kretser's use of the dog in the novel moves beyond metaphorical constraints to a great extent.

While staying in Nelly's house in the bush, on a walk with the dog, he sees a wallaby and starts chasing and Tom suddenly loses his grip on the long leash and loses the dog. "You don't deserve an animal" jolts the lady at the animal shelter before she hangs up on his enquiry about his lost dog (de Kretser 2009, p.71). The guilt intensifies as the story unfolds and Tom revisits his memory of the dog along with his childhood memories. Why did the sudden running away of the dog and the subsequent missing enkindle in Tom a train of thoughts about himself? The answer lies in his memory. Just as his family was about to leave for Australia after the luggage is loaded and the farewells are said, Tom runs back into his Indian home using the excuse "to use the lavatory" but to touch and see everything one last time (de Kretser 2009, p.20). "Glancing through a window to fix a view forever—the last time, the last time—he saw a dog on the shadowed edge of the lawn: a tiny, heraldic beast, one forepaw raised; milky as marble. Then it was gone. Fear opened its wings under Tom's heart. Already a neighbor had acquired a dog he didn't recognize" (de Kretser 2009, p.20). Perhaps the dog was his connection to his last memory of his home and of his roots in India. The loss of the dog invokes in Tom his multicultural identity.

In the novel, the name, and the exact look of the dog are tactfully withheld by the author. When the dog runs off, Tom explores the bush each day "calling, whistling, calling, calling" out the dog's name to find him, but we are denied to hear its name (de Kretser 2009, p.23). Somewhere we are told that he is a "lean white dog, rust-splotched" with floppy ears and liver spots on his muzzles (de Kretser 2009, p.5). We know that he is 12 years old, and was Tom's birthday gift from his now ex-wife, Karen. We are told that the dog is "hard-muscled, swift and strong" and spends more time snoozing rather than chasing birds (de Kretser 2009, p.6). Nelly adoringly calls him a "speckled beast" before checking his name tag (de Kretser 2009, p.8). However, we are not told what the tag reads. Tom also conveys that the dog has developed a certain confidence in his ability to charm and his ex-wife, Karen refers to the dog as "a chick magnet" (de Kretser 2009, p.8). This conscious namelessness of the dog gives him an identity, that is obvious and mysterious at the same time. The dog we meet in the novel is Tom's dog for sure, but through acute descriptions of the dog's canine behaviour and gestures de Kretser successfully invokes in us the memory of our own dogs and their ritualistic performance of companionship. This provides the 'lost dog' a curious combination of individuality and generality, that pet animals in literature usually embody.

De Kretser has treated the dog and his relationship with Tom with empathy and respect. She has not used reductive anthropomorphism to convey the miseries of the pet dog lost in the Australian bush for a week. Rather the image of the dog pops up now and then through Tom's memory during his search for the lost dog showing the presence the dog had in his life. We are never told what or how the dog thinks except for when Tom thinks for the dog while watching him. This 'looking at' reminds him about "the otherness of the dog" and his incapacity to decipher its Otherness (de Kretser 2009, p.22). In Tom's attempts to understand the "point of view" of his canine companion, he almost always acknowledges his limits (de Kretser 2009, p.22). In such a moment, de Kretser discusses the "dog's gaze" in passing, and thinks about animal communication and the limits of anthropomorphism during the dog-human game of fetch (de Kretser 2009, p.22). "The man had thrown the ball away, the dog had obligingly sought out the object the man desired and dropped it as his feet, and behold the man hurled it away again. How long could this stupidity go on? ...Tom would feel the dog's gaze on him as he threw the ball the second time" (de Kretser 2009, p.22). This animal gaze, disarms Tom, just as it had disarmed Derrida.

Tom confesses that in all his dealings with the dog, its "otherness was apparent" and he acknowledges the "expanse each had to cover to arrive at a corridor of common ground" (de Kretser 2009, p. 22). This is reminiscent of Haraway's agility training of her dog, Cayenne "in the contact zone" though Tom is not a dog trainer (2008, p.205). "Multispecies contact zones" for Haraway "change(s) the subject—all the subjects—in surprising ways" (2008, p.219). This transformative potential of contact zones is evident in Tom's memory of his companionship with the dog. It is through Tom's memory of the dog, that he ponders on his past and his life. Tom suffers a great deal as he misses the dog, he travels back and forth to the bush and the city and searches everywhere for the dog. Three days after the dog had gone missing, Tom finds his mornings to be vacant, as he realizes that "it came from not having to walk the dog" (de Kretser 2009, p.68). Later he thinks about the relationship the dog had with him, which was "like marriage, their relation had entailed the downward adjustment of expectations...what had the dog hoped for from him? Something more than the recurrence of food in a dish, surely; surely some untrammelled dream of loping camaraderie" (de Kretser 2009, p.22). At the end of the novel when the dog appears, Tom realizes that just as he was searching for the dog, the dog was looking for him too. He repeats: "It was the other way round...He found us" (de Kretser 2009, p.262). Suddenly he feels guilty for losing hope, for almost giving up on the search, for discounting the dog's companionship with him. This gives Tom hope in relationships, human and nonhuman. "He recalled the gifts of hope and reassurance he had been offered, and cried with his hands over his face" (de Kretser 2009, p.266). According to Maryam Mirza, *The Lost Dog* "presents love and

relationships, whether human or otherwise, as an ameliorant, perhaps the only one, that can ease Tom's anxieties about his identity as an immigrant" (2018, p.12).

However, when the novel begins and the dog is suddenly lost, Tom had his doubts. Initially, Tom gets concerned about the difficulties a city dog might have to face in the wild Australian bush. According to Tom, the dog had "no traffic sense" and "would not willingly be out in this rain" (de Kretser 2009, p.7). Later when Mick Corrigan comments that the dog must be hunting for food, Tom understands or perhaps underestimates and states, "He's a city dog. He wouldn't make the connection between a sheep and food" (de Kretser 2009, p.236). Corrigan's pragmatic reply, "Dog's a dog, mate" unsettles Tom (de Kretser 2009, p.236). His suggestion to get a new dog to replace the lost one infuriates him further. Thus, de Kretser establishes the identity of Tom's dog as a 'pet dog' – not only as an irreplaceable nonhuman individual whose loss causes emotional distress in Tom, but also signifies the genetical, ethological, physiological, and zoological changes that have happened to dogs under human domestication, that has made going back to the wild impossible for them. According to Erica Fudge, the main characteristics of pet animals are that they are "individualized animals" who live with us in our homes and whom we don't eat for emotional reasons (2002, p.28-9). Mariam Motamedi-Fraser in her talk with Indian Animal Studies Collective adds another factor that is unique to pets, which is that "they die" (2022, "Dog Disputes"). By this Mariam meant that we experience the death and loss of our pet animals, thereby giving them the gift of 'death'. Though Tom is always composed when he speaks about his lost dog, we are made aware of its grave absence from his life. Tom's experience of the absence of his dog reminds him of the deep companionship that his dog bestowed on him further. This reinforces the obedient domesticity and the pet identity of his dog. "A dog: Tom had pictured a faithful presence at his heel, an obedient head pressed to his knee" (de Kretser 2009, p. 22).

The torn image of Goya's painting of Dog on the lavatory door of Nelly's apartment is also not an accident, but a conscious placement by de Kretser (2009, p.46). Francisco Goya was a Spanish painter of the 18th-19th century and the painting is of a dog looking up, its body completely concealed by something huge. The dog in the painting too evidently looks lost and in a lot of distress like how Tom assumes his lost dog to be. Thus, Tom finds "Goya's ambiguous dog, poised between extinction and deliverance, gazing over the rim of the world" unsettling and disturbing reminding him of his missing dog, who might be dead or alive in the bush (de Kretser 2009, p.46). He utters, "That's a painting I can hardly bear to look at" (de Kretser 2009, p.46). This ambiguity of existence is also something that Tom seems to share with Goya's dog. The painting thus signifies the diasporic identity of Tom and the liminal existence of the pet dog lost in the wild Australian bush.

The painting of Goya's Dog on the lavatory door brings us to the inescapable scatological imageries in the novel and its proximity to animal images, as both seem to be capable of invoking memories of the 'self' within Tom. de Kretser weaves this abject consciousness in Tom rather interestingly. Tom's father, Arthur Loxley, an Englishman in India is "branded" as "the leftovers of Empire" (de Kretser 2009, p.18). As an immigrant, Tom identifies himself as shit in the Australian land. In one such instance, "Fear put out live shoots in Tom. Instantly identifiable as foreign matter, he feared being labeled waste. He feared expulsion from the body of the nation" (de Kretser 2009, p.209). Shit is also something that connects Tom with his childhood memories about India as he often recalls "the aromatic streets of his childhood, where faeces, animal and human, lingered on display" (de Kretser 2009, p.146). In one of Tom's memories of his childhood, his grandfather and India, as he was walking past a Hindu temple, his grandfather, an Anglo Indian who has grown despicable towards everything Indian speaks about the filth around them. Thus "Filth" for Tom is a combination of "celestial and animal couplings" in the temple sculptures, of "coconuts and holy images and garlands of marigolds" and "the rosettes of dung in the street" (de Kretser 2009, p.282). See how de Kretser tactfully and beautifully connects 'filth' to human-nonhuman-morethanhuman entanglements that India represents for Tom. Shit also transports Tom to his childhood with his mother in a small apartment in Australia. The stench of his own shit reminds him of his mother, and his days of sharing a lavatory with her when it "had been impossible to avoid the stench of her faeces" (2009, p. 53). Shit connects Tom to his mother, his home in India, as well as his dog's animal instincts.

Towards the end of the 5th Chapter, Tom sees that "something glimmered white in the grass" (de Kretser 2009, p.141). He stoops and finds it to be a pile of old dog shit. Tears pour down his cheeks; he loses composure and loudly mourns the loss of his dog for the first time. In the next chapter, Tom ponders on the wild side of his dog which still prevailed as a sort of "animal residue" in his home as "grit", "earth", fur, marks, and a "sweetish reek" which he refused to get rid of (de Kretser 2009, p.167). He observed:

The dog hid blood-threaded bones down the side of a couch...There was his ecstatic fondness for rolling in filth. He would dig in his ear with a hind foot; extract the paw and lick it. Now and then while snuffling along a footpath he would hastily eat a turd. His desires were beastly. At his most docile, he remained an emissary from a kingdom with enigmatic laws (de Kretser 2009, p.168).

It is this "wild core" in the dog that appeals to Tom and connects him to his "odorous, unhygienic, surplus" Indian past and his own inherent animality (de Kretser 2009, p.146). de Kretser thus ponders on the undeniable animality that persists

in pet dogs and the human admiration and dejection of such animalities, of our own animal roots. “It was not the end of disgust, which is an aversion to anything that reminds us we are animals. But the dog unleashed in Tom a kind of grace; a kind of beastliness” remarked the narrator (de Kretser 2009, p.168).

The very next image de Kretser imposed on us is of his elderly mother’s mess in the lavatory and “the fragrance of faeces” that filled the house (de Kretser 2009, p.173). “On the floor near the seat lay part of a large turd; the rest had been tracked over the linoleum. Faeces and wadded paper clung to the sides of the lavatory bowl. The seat, imperfectly wiped, showed pale brown whorls” (de Kretser 2009, p.169). Tom later ruminates about all kinds of shit and he wonders, “Was unrestrained shitting the symptom of a deeper unravelling? Language defines humans; and, Faeces are like words, ... they both come out of bodies” (de Kretser 2009, p.187). Tom’s comparison of words and thoughts to shit is significant here, for we know that he is a scholar and a writer, whose new book is almost ready for publication. Nelly’s obsession with images and her enigmatic artworks also normalizes the scatological process of creation. Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection is clearly at work here, where through abjection the distinction between the self and the other, the subject and the object is diminished. We are all connected through shit. In abject “I am at the border of my condition as a living being” stated Kristeva (1982, p.3). “If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything” (Kristeva 1982, p.3).

From here, through shit, de Kretser connected old people, children, and animals to the subversive power of filth, for they are messy creatures refusing the hygiene of an orderly world. The “docility” of his old, senile mother reminds him of “beasts, waiting to be killed or fed” (de Kretser 2009, p.58). Iris’ accidental shitty mess of old age used to be a childhood ‘find the shit’ game for Tom. As a toddler, he refused to use “the pot” and would shit anywhere to the discovery, alarm, and dismay of his mother (de Kretser 2009, p.204). “Once a glistening serpent lay coiled inside one of her shoes. The child was visibly excited by these incidents, gleeful even while scolded” (de Kretser 2009, p.204). Note the comparison of the shit to a coiled serpent, like the coiled serpent resting in the base of the *kundalini* according to Indian spiritual belief. For Iris’ father, Tom’s grandfather, “Children are animals” who must be scolded and trashed to discipline for “The two things they understand are food and pain” (de Kretser 2009, p.204). A narrative that ensues through Tom’s thoughts focuses on shit and its undeniable presence and significance in the everyday. “Was excrement part of the world or part of the body? It blurred the distinction between inside and outside. Among the things it offended against was the human need for order” (de Kretser 2009, p.187). Tom suddenly remembers a sewage worker from India, “one of casteless thousands assigned to work with shit” who came to unclog a local sewer (de Kretser 2009, p.187). He observed, “He was

the humblest of beings and he was charged with transgressive magic. If the Indian dread of contamination was at work, so was a wider taboo. The opposite of what is seen is obscene. The cess man embodied the return of the private and unsightly to public view” (de Kretser 2009, p.187). That sewage worker for Tom embodied the mysterious power of the abject to challenge hierarchies and through such imageries, de Kretser connects casteism and speciesism.

de Kretser does not stop here and engages a key debate in Animal studies in the novel. In one instance, Tom’s aunt Audrey expresses relief that “he’s only a dog” and not a child (de Kretser 2009, p.237). This leads Tom to a rather lengthy contemplation about the paradoxes in human love. He goes:

Love without limits was reserved for his own species. To display great affection for an animal invariably provoked censure...It was judged excessive: overflowing a limit that was couched as a philosophical distinction, as the line that divided the rational, human creature from all others. Animals, deemed incapable of reason, did not deserve the same degree of love (de Kretser 2009, p.237).

These thoughts about human love inevitably led Tom to human need or perhaps love for food – meat to be specific. Here de Kretser delivers a short speech on speciesism, language, and affect:

Tom wondered if the function of the scorn such love (for animals) attracted was to preserve a vital source of food: because to love even one animal boundlessly might make it unthinkable to eat any... It was a topic that aroused unease. When eating out with friends, Tom had noticed a fashion for naming the animal that had supplied a dish. *I’ll have the cow. Have you tried the minced pig?* An ironic flaunting was at work: I know very well that this food on my plate was once a sentient creature, and that doesn’t bother me. Euphemisms are symptomatic of shame; to avoid them was to deny shame, deflecting it with cool (de Kretser 2009, p.237).

An uncanny reversal of what Carol J. Adams’ called “absent referent” in her *The Sexual Politics of Meat* is at work here (1990, p.13). In this monumental work that explores the intersections of feminism, language, and vegetarianism Adams observed, “Behind every meal of meat is an absence... The ‘absent referent’ is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product” (Adams 1990, p.13). Thus, the lamb when butchered and served on the plate becomes mutton, which creates a distance and detachment between the meat eater and the lamb. This transforms “someone” to “something”, unlike in the case of pet animals, who are always considered as “someone” like Tom’s dog

(Adams 1990, p.13). However, in some other languages, like Malayalam, we do not see this 'absent referent.' Here the name of the animal alive is the same as the meat of the dead animal to which we add the word 'meat' (eg. *Aadu irachi* (goat meat), *pothu irachi* (buffalo meat), *panni irachi* (pig meat) etc.). This deflection of absence and direct reference to the animal counters shame and guilt as it flaunts an anthropocentric right to meat eating. This is problematic as de Kretser observed. In the novel too, the animal on the plate is called by its name when alive, because it "is cool" which signifies the knowledge and denial of animal sentience in many meat-eating Australians (de Kretser 2009, p.238).

Meat and meat-eating references recur across the novel often pointing toward the paradox of animals as pets and animals as meat and human love for both. When Nelly says, "Cows. I always want to go over and talk to them. It's something about their faces," the farm owner Mick Corrigan comments, "You could tell them how terrific they'll look on a plate" (de Kretser 2009, p.237). In another instance when Tom conveys his dismay at the missing of his dog to a colleague, Vernon Pillai. Pillai remarks: "I am very fond of animals...I intend to eat many, many more before I die" (de Kretser 2009, p.70). When Tom ties the dog to the gate of a gallery, from inside he sees "a couple leaving the gallery stop to fondle the dog's floppy ears" and also "The word Beefmaster passed on the side of a van" (de Kretser 2009, p.21). Such instances signify that de Kretser intended a pun when Tom says that his dog is a city dog who does not know how to hunt and does not understand the "connection between a sheep and food" (de Kretser 2009, p.236).

However, just as de Kretser discusses meat and the limits of human love, and cautiously steers away from de-animalising Tom's dog, she is quick to compare the rich gallery owner and art dealer Carson Posner to a cat. Posner, also a close friend to Nelly, always had a disconcerting effect on Tom who considered him "a gross, material creature" (de Kretser 2009, p.87). Thus, when Posner visits Tom uninformed, it makes him uncomfortable for he appeared to Tom as "confident as a cat" as he spoke, and Tom noticed that "there was a light, feline tread to Posner's words" (de Kretser 2009, p.179). Thus, for de Kretser too cat becomes a mere metaphor for a cunning businessman. The history of differences in the relationship and representation of dogs and cats and human prejudice towards both can be a topic for another day.

To conclude Michelle de Kretser in her novel *The Lost Dog* has entwined animal crisis with human crisis. In Tom's memory, the compartments between concepts like race, animal, human, filth, self, and individual become porous, invoking a delighted acceptance of his entangled diasporic identity in Australia. When we look at de Kretser's 'lost dog' by considering it as the main plot, we find that she has consciously and cautiously employed Tom's dog and other animal imagery to signify the undeniable animal presence in our lives, as pets, as images, as language, as farm animals, as food,

as memories, and so on. According to Archer-Lean, there has been an interest to “explore the material realities of the more-than-human as well as the violence implicit in the human/animal relationship” in Australian fiction since the mid-1990s (2021, p.282). Michelle de Kretser can be considered as one of these writers who considers the paradoxical human/animal relationships seriously. de Kretser’s critique of speciesism and meat eating in the novel particularly offers a multispecies conscience to look at the animals we love and the animals we eat. The lost dog’s discovery of Tom after a week ignites in us hope just as it does in Tom. It invokes in us faith in animal-human companionships and the miracles of entanglements in such ‘contact zones.’ It also reminds us to acknowledge ourselves as human animals with very many limitations especially when it comes to knowing nonhuman animals. Thus, at the end of the story of the lost dog, just like Tom did, the readers feel compelled to ask the dog: “What went on out there, eh? What a story you could tell” (de Kretser 2009, p.273).

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**Russia and Ukraine Conflict: Issues and Challenges to International
Humanitarian Law**

Rupal Malik and Benarji Chakka

Abstract

The Ukraine conflict has exacted a profound toll on civilians, marked by widespread violations of IHL as reported by numerous international bodies. It is patently evident that Russian attacks exceptionally affected civilians, civilian areas, and infrastructures protected by IHL, including hospitals, schools, dams, and nuclear plants in Ukraine. Reports underscore that the weapons used in these attacks were highly indiscriminate, encompassing internationally prohibited cluster bombs, ballistic missiles, and wide-area impact explosive weapons. Deploying prohibited weapons, including cluster munitions and imprecise explosives in densely populated regions, has resulted in consequential civilian casualties and loss.

These attacks raise serious concerns about Russia's adherence to IHL. Such actions contravene the core principles of IHL, potentially constituting war crimes. The paper examines Russia's conduct in the conflict, focusing on alleged indiscriminate attacks and incidents involving critical infrastructure, such as the Kakhovka dam and Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Consequently, this research aims to assess the extent to which these attacks by Russia violate international law and can be categorized as potential war crimes. This analysis emphasizes the pressing urgency of the situation and underscores the imperative for immediate attention from the international community and relevant organizations.

Keywords: Attack, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Russia, Ukraine, Violation.

1. Introduction

Contemporary times have witnessed a notable shift in the landscape of armed conflicts, with Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs) becoming increasingly prevalent. However,

amidst this evolving backdrop, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine stands out as a paradigmatic example of an International Armed Conflict (IAC) according to established international legal definitions and recognition. This enduring struggle has not only captured global attention but also exemplifies the distinctive characteristics and complexities associated with IACs. IHL (International Humanitarian Law), establishes legal obligations and protections that apply to the parties that are involved in armed conflict. Both Russia as well as Ukraine are signatories to the GCs and their AP-I.

The protracted dispute between Ukraine and Russia in the eastern regions of Ukraine originated as an NIAC, which subsequently evolved into an IAC involving both state parties. The commencement of armed hostilities in Eastern Ukraine dates back to early 2014, following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Subsequently, pro-Russian separatists residing in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine held a referendum seeking to assert their autonomy and secede from Ukraine. An armed conflict quickly erupted in the region; pitting forces supported by the Russian government against the Ukrainian military (Cavandoli, and Gary 2022, p.383). The conflict has since evolved into a state of active stalemate, characterized by frequently consistent bombardments and confrontations along the front line that divides the Russia-Ukraine controlled border areas in the eastern territories.

The resumption of hostilities occurred in early 2022. Following the events of 24 February 2022, it can be asserted that an IAC was initiated between the military forces of Russia and Ukraine (Ellison 2022 p.123). This event satisfied the criteria for the application of IHL concerning the use of force. The ensuing hostilities have caused significant loss of life, with 27,449 civilian casualties (UN-OHCHR 2023 p.6). According to the United Nations, the conflict has led to the internal displacement of over sixteen million people (IDMC 2023, p. 3). As a result of the ongoing conflict, an additional six million people from Ukraine have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries (Duszczuk and Paweł 2022 p. 36). Notably, a significant proportion of these displaced persons have sought asylum in Poland, a member state of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), where the USA and other allied states have undertaken efforts to facilitate their reception and integration.

The initiation of hostilities targeting the city of Kharkiv commenced on the 24 of February, coinciding with the onset of comprehensive armed confrontation. At the onset of their incursion

into Ukraine, Russian military units initiated a persistent and unabated series of indiscriminate bombardments upon Kharkiv, which stands as the second most populated city within the territorial boundaries of Ukraine. The alleged perpetrators engaged in the consistent bombardment of residential neighborhoods on a frequent basis, causing numerous civilian casualties and extensive harm of civilian property. A significant number of the aforementioned attacks were executed through the use of cluster bombs, which are widely prohibited under international law (UN-OHCHR 2022 p.3).

The author in this work argues that Russia has used various weapons and carried out various attacks in violation of international law during the conflict with Ukraine. These alleged weapons and attacks are considered indiscriminate and are explicitly prohibited under established legal frameworks, which resulted in excessive civilian harm and casualties. The use of these weapons and these attacks by Russia violates the fundamental principles of IHL and therefore constitute acts that may be classified as war crimes, which need immediate attention from the international community and organizations.

Accordingly, the present paper analyses the legal issues that became apparent in the Russia-Ukraine war, mainly focusing on the indiscriminate attacks and attacks on the Kakhovka dam and Zaporizhzhia Nuclear power plant taking into account the IHL framework.

2. International Humanitarian Law issues:

From the perspective of scholars of law, both the conflicting parties that is Russia and Ukraine have grossly violated the basic norms of IHL. The normative framework of IHL strictly obligates the state parties to adhere to the norms of IHL. At the same time, the state parties are expected not to use weapons that are prohibited by international treaty mechanisms which include cluster bombing, the use of weapons against installations containing dangerous forces, objects that are designated for dual purposes, and others. These issues will be discussed in detail in the following parts.

2.1 Repercussions of inherently indiscriminate weapons: Russian forces' use of cluster munition and scatterable mines in Ukraine:

Russian forces have repeatedly carried out devastating and indiscriminate attacks using cluster bombs, killing, and injuring many civilians in their homes, on the streets, in parks, in cemeteries, and while waiting in line for humanitarian supplies. On April 15, 2022, Russian forces used cluster munitions in and around Myru Street in the industrial neighborhood at southeast of the city center of Kharkiv. The attack took place in the late afternoon and destroyed an area larger than 700 square meters, where nine civilians were killed, while 35 were injured including a few children. Many of the victims died or were injured in the courtyards between buildings, while others were injured in nearby streets and parks (Amnesty International. 2022, p. 6).

Amnesty International documented and found evidence that Russian forces in its attacks have used 9N210/9N235 cluster munitions against civilians in Ukraine. Medical professionals retrieved metal shards from patient's bodies that matched the kind of prefabricated pellets found in these munitions. In addition to cluster munitions, Russian forces have also used PTM-1S scatterable anti-personnel mines against civilians in residential areas in Kharkiv (Mine Action Review 2023 p. 363). These mines combine the worst features of both cluster munitions and anti-personnel land mines. They have been forbidden under the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction.

Cluster bombs are inherently indiscriminate weapons. They release hundreds of submunitions over a large area, many of which fail to detonate upon impact becoming de facto landmines (Borrie, and Rosy 2006, p. 31). For these reasons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), 2008 restricts their use, production, stockpiling, and transfer. This convention has already been joined by 110 countries making it an effective treaty to ban these highly indiscriminate weapons. Even though Russia and Ukraine are not parties to the CCM, yet both state parties can consider the treaty of persuasive value in guiding them during the ongoing conflict. Moreover, they are still bound by the customary international humanitarian law restrictions for inherently indiscriminate weapons.

The deployment of cluster munitions and scatterable anti-personnel mines by Russian forces in Kharkiv is a clear breach of the fundamental principles of distinction, humanity, and precaution as well as Article 51 (4), (5) of AP-I and Rules 11 and 13 of the customary international humanitarian law. Since these weapons are inherently indiscriminate in nature and pose a serious threat to civilians.

2.2 Violations of the distinction principle: Russia's deployment of inherently indiscriminate weapons in Ukraine:

Russia began indiscriminate strikes on Kharkiv residential neighborhoods and Mariupol regions starting in the early days of the invasion at the end of February, resulting in the forcible displacement of more than half of the city's inhabitants by late May. A constant onslaught of unguided rockets and artillery munitions killed and maimed hundreds of civilians. They caused extensive destruction and damage, rendering dozens of massive multi-story buildings with hundreds of apartments each uninhabitable (KSE Institute 2023 p. 8). The weapons were wide-ranging, intrinsically imprecise, and should never be deployed in densely populated metropolitan areas.

Unguided rockets like Grads and Uragans, which Russian forces have frequently employed to shell Kharkiv's residential neighborhoods are inherently inaccurate and have indiscriminate effects when fired in populous areas and are unable to distinguish between civilians and military objects (UNHRC 2023, p. 47). The typical circular error probability for regular artillery rounds without precise guiding equipment is over 100 meters. Such mistakes resulted in the loss of civilian lives and caused substantial devastation and damage to homes and other civilian objects in densely constructed residential zones.

As the conflict was mainly surrounded by densely populated urban areas, civilian objects, and essential infrastructure were extensively targeted and attacked with heavy explosive weapons, which ultimately caused grave risks for civilians (ODIHR 2022, p.16). In this conflict use of explosives with wide impact areas was the main cause of civilian harm raising serious issues of indiscriminate attacks and civilian protection.

It is very evident that Russia has violated the principle of distinction on a large scale by focusing its attacks mainly on civilian residential areas and by using inherently indiscriminate weapons, which has caused excessive harm to civilians and their objects in Ukraine.

2.3 The Impact of Explosive Weapons on Civilian Infrastructures:

The employment of explosives with wide-area effects in dense civilian areas across four regions throughout the hostilities has had profound and devastating consequences. According to the OHCHR, these attacks resulted in 1,495 civilian casualties, accounting for a staggering 70% of all civilian deaths and injuries during the specified period. It is worth noting that the real number of casualties is likely to be much more, given the extensive and far-reaching consequences of such attacks on the affected regions, including Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, and others.

The repercussions of these explosive weapon attacks on buildings and critical infrastructure have been nothing short of severe. Thousands of residential structures, schools, hospitals, and facilities housing essential services have suffered damage or complete destruction in these areas. In Chernihiv, for instance, the city endured significant damage to hundreds of houses and other structures as Russian military efforts to seize the city unfolded. Similarly, entire sections of Kharkiv were left in ruins as a result of explosive strikes.

It is crucial to emphasize that these direct and indirect attacks on Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure by Russia constitute a grave violation of the fundamental rules of IHL, including the principles of distinction, precaution, and Rule 28 of customary international humanitarian law. These actions demand the attention of the global community and underscore the urgent need for accountability and civilian protection in armed conflicts.

3. Assessing the legality of Russian attacks within the parameters of IHL

The sustained Russian attacks during the conflict in Ukraine have led to a significant and deeply concerning number of civilian casualties. The extensive coverage in news reports and

photographic evidence vividly illustrates the scope and impact of these attacks, which extended beyond the Donbas region and reached areas as significant as the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

Russia has invoked the argument of "Anticipatory Self-defense" to justify its pre-emptive attacks as a means of protecting itself. However, it's important to note that this argument lacks recognition under the established legal structure (Dib 2022, p.101). The principle of anticipatory self-defense remains unrecognized within the international legal realm, adding a layer of complexity to the legal assessment of Russia's actions (Hole, 2003, p.69).

In evaluating the legality of the Russian attacks, it becomes evident that these actions constitute a violation of the GCs of 1949 and their APs of 1977. The GCs provide the foundational standards to be upheld during times of armed conflict, with a primary focus on safeguarding civilians and non-combatants. In light of these legal obligations and principles, Russia has fallen short in its compliance with the fundamental tenets of IHL. The failure to ensure civilian protection and their objects underscores the urgency of addressing these violations within the broader context of international law and accountability for actions during armed conflicts.

4. Attacks on the Installations containing dangerous forces

The increasing intensity of Russia's attacks has been accompanied by the targeting of installations containing dangerous forces. Russia directed its strikes on dams, power stations, nuclear reactor plants, and other facilities containing dangerous forces. The impact of Russian attacks also extended to neighboring European countries.

In late 2022, Russia focused on attacking the facilities containing dangerous forces in Ukraine. Russia targeted energy facilities with Iranian-made suicide drones and hundreds of long-range missiles from sea and land. Russian missiles targeted gas stations and electric railway networks. Dozens of missiles were launched to target electricity generation and heating plants in Ukraine as Ukrainians suffer from a harsh winter (Nikolaieva and Wim 2022 p. 6). Not only that, Russian missiles destroyed 60,000 tons of grain on the Ukrainian coast and caused severe damage to storage facilities and infrastructure. The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam and the attacks on Zaporizhzhia station also led to severe detriments to the environment and the civilians in Ukraine.

4.1 Attacks on the Kakhovka Dam

The Kakhovka Dam was a water reservoir built next to the hydroelectric power station on the Dnieper River. The dam contained 18 cubic kilometers of water. In June 2023, the dam collapsed due to Russian attacks, releasing huge amounts of water. Several villages and agricultural lands were flooded. The floods displaced thousands of civilians and many suffered due to the lack of drinking water and electricity. It also had catastrophic effects on the environment and affected more than 700,000 civilians with the lack of necessary facilities.

Moreover, the destruction of the dam led to long-term repercussions that are no less dangerous. Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Dnipropetrovsk regions will face a severe scarcity of irrigation water in the long run. The released water carried pollutants from gas stations, sewage, as well as chemicals and pesticides from agricultural stores causing further harm. (Acaps 2023 p. 2)

Russia's attacks on the Kakhovka Dam, causing its destruction, are a serious violation of the principles of IHL. The possible claim by Russia that the dam was a military target and being used for military purposes, therefore the Russian attack was intended to stop a Ukrainian counterattack are unacceptable claim, because the collapse of the dam led to disasters for the civilian areas surrounding it. Therefore, it constitutes a flagrant violation of the principles of IHL.

Article 56 of AP-I provides that attacks against installations that contain dangerous force such as dams and nuclear power plants constitute a violation of the rules of IHL. Whenever such attacks lead to the release of dangerous force that causes immense civilian harm. The criteria specified under Article 56 was met during the attack on the Kakhovka Dam. Its destruction led to the release of huge amounts of water in the surrounding villages and agricultural lands. The floods caused the death and displacement of thousands of civilians, along with submerging thousands of hectares of fertile land.

The dam water washed away chemical fertilizers from warehouses and carried with it exhausts industrial waste and machinery oils. The waters have contaminated both the Kinburn Spit National Park and the UNESCO Black Sea Biosphere Reserve, among other sites. Floods laden

with polluted water wiped out many rare plants, and endangered animals, as well as large areas of vegetation.

The massive scale destruction caused by Russian attacks on Ukrainian environmental resources amounts to widespread long-term and severe crimes against the natural environment specified under AP-I. The determination of environmental damage, although apparent, presents challenges in terms of quantification and measurement.

4.2 Targeting Zaporizhzhia Station

Zaporizhzhia station, an atomic power plant located in southeastern Ukraine, is the largest nuclear station in Europe. In March 2022, Russia targeted the Zaporizhzhia atomic power plant. The International Atomic Energy Agency indicated that a fire caught in one of the buildings adjacent to the station (IAEA 2022, p.3) but the station's equipment was not damaged.

Russia's attacks on Zaporizhzhia station constitute a grave violation of Article 56 of AP-I. Similar to the attack on the Kakhovka Dam, the attack on the Zaporizhzhia station cannot be justified under the pretext of the station being a military target (Zeith, and Eirini 2022, p.3) under Article 56 (2) of AP-I, as there is no clear evidence of these facilities providing direct and significant military support to Ukraine. Whereas, even if the station is being used for military purposes or provides a definite military advantage, Russia has not taken all the feasible precautions to avert the release of dangerous forces provided under Article 56 (3) of AP-I, thereby violating key principles of IHL. There is no doubt that the Zaporizhzhia station fulfills all the elements of Article 56 in order to enjoy protection which are:

- Containing a dangerous force
- Targeting it could lead to the possibility of unleashing dangerous forces, which would expose the lives of civilians to great danger.

The first element is clearly fulfilled by Zaporizhzhia station, as it is the largest station in Europe and among the ten largest nuclear plants around the world. With respect to the second element, which is the possibility of releasing dangerous force, it may perhaps be less clear but verified considering the possibility of radiation leak due to the bombing of the station or surrounding buildings.

Regarding nuclear power plants and dams, IHL has granted another layer of protection. This is due to the risks involved in targeting these installations, as they contain inherently dangerous forces that if released, could lead to disasters regardless of the precautions taken or the military advantage anticipated. Article 56 of the AP-I, Rule 42 of the customary international humanitarian law, and Article 15 of the AP-II (Second Additional Protocol) stipulate the necessity of providing special protection to nuclear power plants and dams by conflicting parties. Russia did not respect this commitment because it targeted buildings near the nuclear station, resulting in fire breakouts.

According to the principle of distinction, parties to the conflict are prohibited from targeting civilians, civilian objects, or any target that is not of a military nature. There is no conclusive evidence to prove that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear station and Kakhovka dam were legitimate military targets. Therefore, targeting the installations containing dangerous forces in Ukraine is a blatant violation of the principles of IHL.

Under the principle of precaution, parties to the conflict are committed to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians and their objects. They are obligated to choose the method of warfare that is best able to avoid civilian harm, even while targeting military objectives. While targeting facilities containing dangerous forces like dams and nuclear power stations there is a clear indication of causing excessive civilian harm by unleashing dangerous forces contained within irrespective of the anticipated military advantage. Therefore, by directing attacks on the Kakhovka dam and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear station, Russia has committed breach of the principle of precaution and proportionality.

Russia did not comply with the principles of IHL during its active hostilities with Ukraine, as there was no warning issued for civilians before launching attacks. Russia chose the means and methods of targeting that caused exorbitant harm to civilians and their objects. Russian attacks against facilities, such as the Kakhovka dam or Zaporizhzhia nuclear station, constitute serious violations of the principles of IHL, and some of these may amount to war crimes (Human Rights Council 2023, p.7). These breaches of IHL require serious action by the International Criminal Court and Security Council to look into the crimes committed by Russia that targeted installations containing dangerous forces in Ukraine either by stepping in to investigate itself or establishing a special tribunal.

4.3 Challenges for International Human Rights Law

Russia and Ukraine, as state parties, have ratified a core set of human rights treaties, including but not limited to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Convention against Torture. These international instruments are foundational in their commitment to upholding fundamental human rights and ensuring the protection of the right to life, irrespective of whether a nation is in a state of war or peace.

However, it is evident that Russia has violated these rights, with a particular focus on the right to life, by directly and indirectly causing casualties among Ukrainian civilians that number in the tens of thousands. The gravity of these human rights violations cannot be overstated, and it is incumbent upon the international community to hold Russia accountable for these egregious actions.

While the application of international human rights law during times of armed conflict is inherently complex and challenging, the duty to respect and protect the rights of the Ukrainian people remains an imperative one. It is within this challenging context that the international community faces the formidable task of reconciling the principles of international humanitarian law, which govern armed conflicts, with the unwavering commitment to safeguarding fundamental human rights. Finding a balance between these imperatives is paramount in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict while upholding the principles and values enshrined in international human rights law.

5. Conclusion

The war in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on civilians with widespread IHL violations as reported by multiple international organizations. It is evident that Russian attacks in Ukraine were indiscriminate since they targeted civilian areas and places protected by IHL, such as hospitals and schools. The reports also indicate that the weapons employed in the strikes were

highly indiscriminate, including internationally forbidden cluster bombs, ballistic missiles, and explosives with wide-area impact. The attacks on densely populated regions, such as Kharkiv, have caused extensive damage to civilians and forcibly displaced millions of them.

The Russian government has repeatedly denied committing breaches of IHL or war crimes, but the evidence suggests otherwise. The use of indiscriminate weapons, the targeting of civilians, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and attacks on the Kakhovka dam and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant all constitute war crimes under international law.

The Russian army's indiscriminate attacks violated the fundamental principles of IHL. Russia has not adhered to the core obligations of the GCs and AP-I. On the other hand, some of the attacks may also be classified as war crimes, making the International Criminal Court competent, nevertheless, bringing a case against Russia is challenging since Russia is not a signatory to the Rome Statute. Besides the Security Council's inability to take considerable measures to protect civilians due to the Russian veto, the General Assembly of the United Nations must intervene to prevent further violations of IHL and to ensure the safeguard of civilians in Ukraine.

The global community has a responsibility to hold Russia accountable for its war crimes in Ukraine. This can be done through a variety of means, such as criminal investigations, sanctions, and diplomatic pressure. However, it is also important to provide aid to the victims of war crimes and to help rebuild Ukraine after the conflict.

5.1 Suggestions

- Establishment of an international criminal tribunal to investigate and prosecute war crimes committed in Ukraine, either by both the parties willingly or by the efforts of the international community and organizations.
- Imposing additional sanctions on Russia to put pressure on it to end the war and withdraw its forces from Ukraine.
- Financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine to help with the war effort and to rebuild after the war.

The efforts of the international community for this cause will pave the way for international and non-international armed conflicts of the future to conduct hostilities in accordance with the principle of IHL and afford great care and protection to civilians and civilian properties.

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Education and the Genesis of Political Consciousness: Navigating Religious Dimensions in Dogra

Ruled Kashmir

Rutba Peerzada

Abstract

This article argues that the contemporary political scenario in Kashmir is deeply intertwined with religious facets, rooted in the historical context of, what Mridu Rai calls, the ‘Dogra Hindu state.’ The interconnection of religious identity is not arbitrary; rather, it emanates from deeply embedded religious distinctions that permeate policies and administrative procedures of the Dogra state. Education, viewed through this lens, was employed to cultivate a ‘great divide.’ These religious undercurrents persist and exert influence even within India’s ostensibly ‘secular’ framework. The article specifically explores the role of religious dimensions and educational policies as a divisive tool during Dogra rule, illustrating how it became a potent political instrument shaping Kashmir’s distinctive political landscape and political consciousness.

Education under Dogra’s: Challenging the ‘divine’

In his autobiography, *Atish-e-Chinar* or the Flame of Chinar, Sheikh Abdullah (1986, p. 5) mentions that ‘Muslim families rarely sent their children to schools... Due to their extreme poverty and the ruler’s indifferent attitude’. In contrast to the princely rulers of Mysore and Baroda, who established higher education institutions that played a significant role in resisting colonial rule, the Dogra’s, who governed a primarily Muslim population, displayed a limited commitment to educational matters. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, indigenous madrasas (for Muslim boys) and patshalas (for Pandit boys) assumed the responsibility of imparting basic religious education, along with instruction in Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and mathematics to their students. The Dogras exhibited a lack of emphasis on the extensive advancement of education, particularly noteworthy in the Kashmiri region where minimal efforts were made to develop educational infrastructure for both Hindus and Muslims (Kanjwal, 2023, p. 163).

As per the text of Census of India, 1931, Vol XXIV (pp. 260-61), the Brahmanic Hindus occupied the fifth place with 111 literates in a thousand. The Aryas (Arya Samajis within Hindu) were sixth with 59 literates per mile of population. The Buddhists ranked seventh, while the Muslims occupied the last position with 19 literates per thousand of the population. The 1931 census, compiled by Pandit Anant Ram, Commissioner of Census, and Hira Nand Raina, Assistant Census Commissioner, delineated the ‘reasons’ for the low literacy levels among the state’s Muslim population paraphrased as follows, (1931):

“The underdevelopment of Muslims is attributed to their focus on agriculture, which limits the agriculturist’s ability to dedicate ample time and energy to personal education or that of their children. A commonly cited saying in the state captures this sentiment:

‘Pari patti gali taratti, Hal vage tukra khage’

(Education brings ruin. It is by ploughing that bread can be earned),

reflecting the agriculturist’s perspective on education. However, it is worth noting that the awakening among landowners is rendering this saying increasingly outdated” (p. 261).

Fayaz Kotay’s (2016) examination of Girls’ Education in Princely Kashmir, 1900-1947 reveals that the Dogra rulers’ autocratic governance resulted in a lack of emphasis on the socio-economic progress of the state’s populace. Maharaja Gulab Singh focused on consolidating territorial holdings, showing minimal involvement in education. Ranbir Singh, his successor, marked the first monarch expressing interest in education (Rasool 1986, pp. 173-74, cited in Wani 2019), although his approach was influenced by indigenous considerations, promoting religious education in Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit. Despite this, Ranbir Singh aimed to disseminate classical Hindu knowledge exclusively among the ruling class and religious elite (Zutshi, 2003, p. 172).

From 1921 to 1931, the census did record an 86 percent increase in educational institutions for both boys and girls, excluding technical schools for boys (Census, 1931, p. 261). Besides government-supported schools, there were aided *Maktabs* for Muslims and *Pathshcilas* for Pandits. However, these institutions saw a decline, attributed to new regulations withholding financial aid from schools within a two-mile radius of government schools.

In a socially conservative environment with limited government-backed infrastructure for educational progress, these local *Maktabs* and *Pathshalas* had played a significant role in imparting not only religious education but also basic subjects, catering to both boys and girls. Consequently, one immediate consequences of this regulation, which removed grant-in-aid for *Maktabs* and *Pathshalas*, was the discontinuation of education for many female students. The male-focused educational infrastructure was still making some progress, while little or no corresponding development was made for female education actively. Kotay’s (2016) study shows that even years after the 1931 census the budget allocation for girls was abysmal. The Dogras did not prioritize the widespread promotion of education among the masses, and particularly for the people of Kashmir, minimal infrastructure was established

After the period of 1889, British government assigned a Resident to the state during Pratap Singh's rule, forty years after the Dogra rule began. Although education through Christian Missionaries played a pivotal role but, as Hafsa Kanjwal (2023) argues, more than that education as an element of state centralisation also emerged during the same period. The education policy was deeply ambiguous in matters of mass education and especially related to those of Muslims. As mentioned above, in the census of 1931 (p. 254), the reasons cited for abysmal number of Muslim literates was that they being agriculturalist do not devote much time to educating as they believe that ploughing the field will get them bread and not reading. This reflects sheer bias and prejudice at the level of the institution of the Dogra government. In actuality as most of the peasants and bonded labours under the rule of the Maharaja were mostly Muslims; the heavy taxations on artisans and *shawl bafis* (shawl weavers) were enormous making it impossible for them to do anything other than work. Robert Thorps account in *Cashmere Misgovernment* tells us that these artisans and peasants were not allowed to leave the state for better life conditions and if they were caught leaving the state, the punishments would be grievous (Wani, 2019). The uncertainty surrounding education arose partly from the Dogra rulers' desire to forestall the formation of a local elite class that could seek inclusion in the bureaucracy. During that period, the bureaucracy was largely composed of non-Kashmiris, mainly Urdu-speaking Punjabis, along with a significant representation of Kashmiri Pandits. The Dogras were apprehensive that an educated majority community might assert claims for bureaucratic employment, potentially disrupting the existing power dynamics. However, at the beginning of the century, with colonial administrations influence, several educational institutions were set up and also the state's first institute of higher learning Sri Pratap College was established. Kanjwal (2023, p. 163) says that the policies of the Dogra government predominantly favoured Kashmiri Pandits, who experienced increased accessibility to educational opportunities, given their growing representation within the administration.

In the valley, the Kashmiri Pandits emerged as the primary beneficiaries of educational policies, gaining increased representation in the administrative structure. The formation of the 'State Council' in 1889 under British administration, lacking Muslim representation, exemplified what Mohammad Junaid (2017, p. 382) terms the 'Dogra apparatus of capture.' Coercive taxation measures, including *nazranas* or gold coin gifts, were imposed only on Muslim jagirdars, with Kashmiri Pandit and Jammu Rajput jagirdars being exempt (Rai, 2004, p. 45). Neglecting the education of Muslims was a deliberate strategy of the 'Hindu State,' as Mridu Rai notes, aiming to maintain a cheap peasant labour force to fill the treasury. Abdullah (1986, p. 10), in his personal account, revealed discriminatory practices, such as the rejection of his scholarship and age restrictions on Muslim students. Private individuals like Tyndale Biscoe and Annie Besant established

schools tailored to elites, mainly Kashmiri Pandit and Hindu families. Only after Muslim socioreligious reform organizations emphasized education did schools and Islamia College emerge, initially for the urban population. Muslims seeking higher education often had to attend institutions in Aligarh and Lahore, presenting discouraging educational statistics compared to the broader Muslim and Pandit populations in the state (Dar, Sikand, Zutshi in Kanjwal, 2023, p. 168).

Therefore, even though Muslims constituted a majority of the state but it was population groups from other religious denominations that were at the helms of affair of the state especially the Kashmiri Pandits. Their proficiency in administering revenue matters meant that changes in governing authorities had minimal impact on their community's status. During the Sikh rule, the Pandit community gained privilege over Muslims, evident from the significant number of land grants acquired by its members. This elevated status was further reinforced by the Dogra rulers, who awarded *jagirs*, *chaks*, and *maufi* grants primarily to the Pandits in line with medieval political conventions (Beg, cited in Wani, 2019, p. 73).

Since 1916, efforts like the Sharps Report advocated for expanding primary education and providing scholarships to Muslim students for higher education. In response, the Dogra administration defended its position, claiming that the leadership of Kashmiri Muslims bore the responsibility for their education. Until 1931, the attitude remained unchanged, attributing low Muslim literacy rates to disinterest rather than discriminatory policies. Achieving political recognition then required groups to align with or actively embody religious community identities. Consequently, Muslims began collectively expressing their demands using terms like "Muslim youth" or "Muslim student" to underscore their unity. This shift towards communal focus played a pivotal role in shaping political identity in the colonial context (Kanjwal, 2023, p. 164).

Adhering to their established tradition, the Pandits were the first to acquire proficiency in English to meet the requirements of alignment and compatibility necessary to maintain their authority within the colonial administration. Ironically so, they initiated the 'Kashmir for Kashmiris' movement (*mulki* and non-*mulki*) for the same purpose when Maharaja Pratap began to shower favours on the Punjabi's (Khan, 1983, p. 4) leading to the introduction of the 'hereditary state subject' provision, as a result of appointment of the State Subjects Definition Committee, on January 31, 1927 which as of today is being contested in the Supreme Court of India in the petitions against the Article 370. The provision of "Kashmir for Kashmiris" stipulated that 'all persons born and residing in the state before the commencement of the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh Bahadur, as well as those who settled in the region before the commencement of Samvat 1942 (1885

AD) and have since maintained permanent residence in the country, are recognized as hereditary subjects of the state.’

By 1931, the valley became a focal point for a notable nationalist movement against Dogra rule, primarily stemming from discontent related to feudal bondage. Responding to Muslim community grievances, Hari Singh initiated a Commission, led by G.B. Glancy. The Glancy Commission proposed reforms in the administrative framework, advocating for increased Muslim representation in the State Council and services, and suggesting improvements in Muslim education. Recommendations included expanding the recruitment of Muslim teachers, engaging more religious instructors (*mullahs*) for Arabic instruction, and establishing specialized scholarships for Muslim students within the Department of Education. While the government established the position of Mohammedan Inspector in 1932 to oversee Muslim students’ educational matters and granted scholarships for higher education abroad, these moves should be viewed as conciliatory measures to pacify unrest rather than indicating a substantial change in Dogra sentiment towards Muslims. In fact, the ‘Roti Agitation,’ initiated by the Pandit social organization ‘Yuvak Sabha,’ successfully thwarted reservations for Muslim employment in the state, showcasing the Pandit community’s alignment with the feudal and sectarian governance prevalent in the princely order. Consequently, they solidified support for the order, aligning with Hindu Dogras and communal organizations in the subcontinent (Bazaz, Abdullah, cited in Wani, 2019, p. 40).

In one of the seminars held in 2008 in Kashmir University, Agha Ashraf Ali, an educationist noted when discussing his grandfather’s advancement in the Maharaja’s administration, that his grandfather was the first Muslim to complete matriculation, he said

“Muslims of the state were not as defunct of IQ as were made to believe, Intelligence is same as opportunity; when opportunity is given then people who have same education will do well, if not better”

So, by the year 1947, the prevailing situation underscored that a significant majority of Muslims within the region remained devoid of basic literacy as well as opportunities. Wani (2019, p. 73) observes that as of 1950, the state exhibited a per capita income of Rs 208 (at 1960–61 prices), with a literacy rate of 5 percent.

In addition to this, the ‘Dogra apparatus of capture’(Junaid, 2017) which was carried out through mechanisms of exploitative taxations, discriminatory educational policies, politics of language-Hindi for

Hindus and Urdu for Muslims; the unsurprising resultant was that the Hindus of the state particularly the Pandits and the Muslims perceived their political interests as fundamentally divergent. This division stemmed from the fact that the elite Pandits attributed great importance to their political influence, which was primarily derived from their prominence within the realms of education and administration. Paraphrasing Kanjwal (2023)

“For the privileged Pandits, the political influence stemming from their dominance in the educational and administrative domains was a factor that profoundly shaped their identity. The Pandits perceived their influence in state institutions as an inherent entitlement. They viewed merit as an integral aspect of their identity, believing that if Muslims failed to attain their status, it was due to an inherent deficiency of merit rather than the structural conditions of the state” (p. 165).

The Valley of Kashmir was not isolated from the events unfolding worldwide. The heightened tensions stemming from the economic depression following the Great War of 1914–1918 also had an impact on the valley, which was already suffering under the exploitative regime of the Dogra. This influence is exemplified by events like the wage dispute initiated by workers at the state-owned Silk Factory in 1924. Scholars note that the significant use of force to suppress it serves as evidence that this might have been more than just a skirmish.

Within the emerging social class, individuals educated in Aligarh, Lahore, and elsewhere were acutely aware of their marginalization and the injustices under the Maharaja’s rule, and Sheikh Abdullah emerged as a representative from this stratum. Beginning his education in a maktab, he progressed through various schools and colleges in Srinagar, Lahore, and Aligarh, ultimately passing the MSc examination. Upon returning to Srinagar, he faced employment challenges; desirable positions then were being occupied by Pandits and Dogras mostly, leaving Muslims with less favourable options who were derogatorily called “*hattos*” (Singh, 2008; Parra, 2019, p. 37). Abdullah turned to teaching with a modest salary, as the Civil Services Recruitment Board had no Muslims due to limited education options, for only Hindi and Sanskrit were offered as options and Urdu, Persian and Arabic were not. Around sixty percent of were recruited without referring to the boards while the remaining candidates were obligated to provide comprehensive familial details, subject to the government’s discretionary rejection of applications without the obligation to provide explicit justification (Abdullah, 1986, p. 17). Abdullah’s experiences heightened his awareness of the valley’s political and economic hardships, prompting him to engage actively in anti-Dogra politics.

The prevailing context, marked by a lack of dignity and equitable opportunities, spurred his commitment to addressing these issues.

Albion Bannerji, who was an Indian Civil Servant who also held the post of the Prime Minister of Kashmir from 1927-29, resigned due to differences with the Maharaja over the manner of rule and their lavish lifestyle that was sustained by the poor population of Kashmir. On the state of affairs he famously remarked (cited in Khan, 1978):

“The Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohammedan population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages, and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is no touch between the government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances... It (the administration) has at present no or little sympathy with people’s wants and grievances” (p.175).

Education as a natural ally of Politics: Reading Room and the Memorialists

The observations of Bannerji had a profound impact on several young Muslim men who had recently graduated from the universities of Aligarh and Lahore. Consequently, change in public sentiment started to manifest against the (mis)rule of the Dogras. These men, who had received a modern education, were also well-informed about the global anti-imperialist movement. Therefore, they organized themselves into a Reading Room Party in the downtown area of Srinagar, established a Night school and conducted regular meetings. It was the young members of this Reading Room Party who initiated collective actions against the Dogras.

“The concept of the reading room originated from Munshi Naseer Ahmad, who, having faced consistent denial of a government job on various pretexts, enrolled in the former Teacher’s Training School at Magarmal Bagh out of disappointment and frustration. During the meeting, participants were introduced to the necessity of resisting Dogra occupation. Three individuals—G. N. Gilkar, Muhammad Rajab, and Muhammad Yahya Rafiqi—immediately joined the cause, and later, following considerable persuasion, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah also became a part of the initiative” (Pandit, 2018).

Initially, the group’s apparent purpose was to discuss and deliberate on current events and common problems, but it soon expanded to evolve into a political party. In the early stages, members were satisfied with writing subversive articles that exposed the despotic and discriminatory practices of the Dogra regime.

“The Reading Room Party included individuals such as Mubarak Shah Naqashbandi (MA, LLB, later appointed district judge), Peerzada Ghulam Rasool Shah (Headmaster of Islamia High School), Peerzada Ahmed Shah Fazili, Hakim Ali, Hakim Ghulam Murtaza, and Mufti Jalal-ud-din. Later on, Sheikh Abdullah sought the assistance of Ghulam Ahmed Ashai, who had recently been dismissed from his position as Inspector of Schools on fictitious charges, to draft a memorandum against discriminatory recruitment rules. This memorandum had a lasting impact on the state’s politics, marking the initial step in cultivating leadership for the struggle against Dogra rule” (Pandit, 2019). Education had become an inherent companion of politics.

While the Reading Room Party was propelled by a cadre of intellectuals inspired by global communist movements, it also garnered substantial support from Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah. Educated at Deoband, a pivotal hub of the Khilafat Movement, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah’s student experiences acquainted him with the intersection of education and politics. Motivated by this exposure, he endeavoured to replicate this model in Kashmir.

Prior to the 1924 Silk-Factory strike, the Memorialists, a group of Muslims comprising clerics and businessmen, submitted a memorandum, decrying the unequal treatment of Muslims in the valley. They highlighted the absence of equality and the lack of initiatives to uplift the underprivileged Muslim community. Despite being the majority, Muslims felt underrepresented, while the smaller populations of Pandits and Rajputs were disproportionately overrepresented (Swami, 2006, p. 12). Sheikh Abdullah’s involvement with the Memorialists became his entry point into Kashmiri politics. The Young Men’s Muslim Association, an offshoot, advocated democratic and constitutional means for reform, championed by Abdullah, while a smaller faction, led by Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, advocated a revolutionary stance against Dogra rule.

Young Men’s Muslim Association and the First Rebellion of 1931

In June 1931, a critical moment unfolded during the Young Men’s Muslim Association gathering, culminating in Abdul Qadeer Khan, a Pathan Muslim, delivering a speech advocating an uprising against Hari Singh’s administration. Khan’s incendiary speech led to his imprisonment, making him a focal point for anti-Dogra sentiments in Kashmir. Abdullah framed Khan’s persecution as a struggle “for the cause of Islam and for the Muslim masses,” urging his supporters to be prepared for sacrifice (Hasnain, 1988, p. 45, cited in Swami, 2006, p.12). Khan’s trial on July 13, 1931, marked a turning point, triggering a

confrontation resulting in the death of 28 protesters, now commemorated as Martyrs Day. The incident's impact on the anti-Dogra struggle led Sheikh Abdullah (1986, p. 22) to liken it to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre's impact on the Indian freedom struggle in 1919.

Praveen Swami (2006, p.13) contends that Abdul Qadir's speech in June significantly influenced the dynamics within the Young Men's Muslim Association, favouring the ascendancy of the religious right. Shahla Hussain's (cited in Kanjwal 2023, p. 39), perspective is that although religious considerations might have prompted the protests following the events of 1931, they were not rooted in religious bigotry but rather stemmed from underlying socioeconomic issues. According to M. Ishaq Khan (1973, p.174), the populace labelled as 'dumb driven cattle' had elevated their resistance to a revolt. Even women actively participated in the struggle, with the notable instance of facing cavalry charges in Maisuma Bazar of Srinagar (*The Khidmat*, April 17, 1946, cited in Khan, 1973). Swami asserts that Abdullah's speech in the mosque on Eid before the July 1931 incident, along with later speeches by Qadir, succeeded in entangling Jammu and Kashmir in the brewing Hindu-Muslim conflict in northern India (2019, p.13). Contrastingly, Ishaq Khan (1973, p.174) argues that although Abdullah's inflammatory speeches during public meetings in the mosque provoked public anger, the government's policy of excluding Muslims from state service, the issues of heavy taxation leading to the destruction of industries, forced labour, stringent laws punishing Muslims for cow-slaughter, and the overt oppression by the Maharaja's officials became the focal points of discontent among educated Muslims in Srinagar, including Abdullah.

The events of July 1931 triggered a significant nationwide political response, bringing Muslim leaders together in Shimla to express deep concern over the tragic jail massacre. Succumbing to public pressure, the Dogra government established the Glancy Commission, tasked with investigating the issues raised by the state's Muslim population. Echoing concerns from the 1924 memorandum, the commission addressed matters such as excessive taxation, forced labour (*begar*), educational reforms, restoration of Muslim shrines, and equitable access to government employment. The commission's efforts led to the creation of the Praja Sabha, initially advisory and later gaining legislative powers. In a collective decision, Muslim leaders declared a protest day against the monarchy on September 22, demanding the immediate release of imprisoned figures Sheikh Abdullah and Mufti Jalal-ud-Din, held for their involvement in post-Khan trial violence.

Rise of the Muslim Consciousness: The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim/National Conference

The transformation that happened after reforms based on Glancy Commission's recommendations also meant that there was a formal recognition of political parties for the first time in the region, thereby granting legitimacy to activities such as newspapers and political assemblies. As a result, in 1932, Sheikh Abdullah and the burgeoning Muslim leadership founded the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference with the aim of achieving political consolidation among the Muslim populace of the state. At the same time while employing the assistance of various influential Muslim figures who remained loyal to his rule, such as Nawab Khusro Jang, Abdul Rahman Afandi, Khwaja Salaam Shah, and Khwaja Noor Shah, Maharaja Hari Singh effectively mitigated the intensity of the subsequent waves of protests. This diplomatic approach allowed him to reach a resolution with the religious leadership in Srinagar and their adherents (Swami, 2006, p.14). So, while the Muslim Conference was able to garner support from diverse groups in the state including the Muslims of Jammu but at the same time Hari Singh had successfully solidified his relationship with Mohammad Yusuf Shah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir. According to Praveen Swami, this development signalled the conclusion of the alliance between the emerging and established elites, old and new, in Kashmir, prompting Sheikh Abdullah to establish the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. The Dogra administration had managed to encourage a shift towards a communal structure within the organization by strengthening their support for Mirwaiz. Sheikh Abdullah was often accused by the Yusuf Shah's group for leading the Ahmadiyas, a sect deemed deviants by the Sunni. In fact Abdullah was also called *Qaidiani* some his opposers, an alternate name for Ahmadiyas. With Abdullah's growing exposure to the developments outside the state and his leanings towards both, Nehru and his socialist ideas, he wanted the party leadership to aim for Hindu- Muslim unity with the empowerment of all communities. Mridu Rai (2004) contends that the marginalization of Muslims from the economic and political resources within the Hindu-led state gave rise to a religious sensibility that played a crucial role in shaping political mobilization. As a result, religious discourses became intricately intertwined with discussions on rights. Influenced significantly by figures like Prem Nath Bazaz, a Kashmiri Pandit and a prominent socialist, as well as Jawaharlal Nehru, Sheikh Abdullah recognized the need to broaden his political platform to encompass various communities. It was under this influence, coupled with political pragmatism and foresight, that Abdullah made the pivotal decision to transition the party from the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (JKMC) to the more inclusive All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), signifying a commitment to representing all communities within the state. But many contemporaries of Abdullah especially from Jammu did not perceive the National Conference as an adequate representative

of Jammu Muslims (Bhan, Duschinski and Misri, 2023). As of 1947, the ideological unity in the Kashmir Valley was notably absent. One section comprised secular nationalists, primarily represented by the National Conference. The second group encompassed Muslim nationalists affiliated with the Muslim Conference, while the third faction consisted of socialists associated with the Socialist Party and the Kisan Mazdoor Conference. In contrast, the status quoists, a group predominantly composed of the Pandits, alongside a handful of Muslim jagirdars and high-ranking officials, held a distinct ideological position (Wani, 2019, p. 37). Consequently, not everyone rallied behind Abdullah's call for a unified struggle against the Dogras. Nonetheless, a prevailing sentiment had been firmly established—the “trampled pride and hope of the people of Kashmir was like molten lava ready to flow” (Abdullah, 1986, p.12). The Dogra administration's policies, particularly those pertaining to education as a tool of the ‘great divide’ between communities, had transformed into a political instrument shaping the future of the state.

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All is not well with Physically Challenged: A Phenomenological Study of Their Access to Sanitation Facilities in Urban Spaces

Shameem Ahamad Ganayee and Mohmad Saleem Jahangir

Abstract

All people, including persons with disabilities (PwD), have a fundamental right to access adequate sanitation facilities. However, acquiring sufficient sanitation is just one of many issues that they encounter daily. The study was undertaken to understand how welcoming the sanitation facilities of urban Srinagar (Kashmir) are to the person with such a disability (limited only to physical and sensory in this paper). A purposive sampling was undertaken to recruit the participants. At the outset, 25 participants (both Male and female) interacted and only 08 participants (only males) showed curiosity and agreed to participate. The female participant (4 in number) disagreed to participate. For the collection of data, an in-depth face-to-face interview method (an attempt to examine the lived experiences of disabled people) was administered to all the participants. The finding revealed people with disabilities face barriers in accessing appropriate sanitation, such as a lack of wheelchair-accessible toilets or grab bars in bathrooms. Furthermore, sanitation facilities provided by the city administration to the PwD, are limited and unfriendly. They face difficulties in accessing sinks or enough water to wash properly, and this is likely to put them at increased risk of ailment. These barriers not only affect their physical health but also in avoidance of visiting the city. From the conclusions, policymakers of urban Srinagar (Kashmir) need to see proper sanitation for PwD as a positive, value-added component of urban infrastructure.

Keywords; Sanitation, urban spaces, Kashmir, lived experiences, assistive devices

Introduction

Proper sanitation is crucial for maintaining public health and preventing the spread of disease. It includes practices such as proper waste disposal, clean water supply, and adequate hygiene facilities. Without proper sanitation, communities are at a higher risk for outbreaks of infectious diseases, which can lead to increased illness and death. Restricting access to basic sanitation is expected to have a substantial negative impact on people's health in terms of psychological problems, infectious and water-borne diseases, and safety concerns for people with disabilities (Groce et al., 2011, p 617). Additionally, poor sanitation can also have economic impacts, such as decreased productivity and increased healthcare costs. Pruss-Ustun et al. (2008, p 895) estimate that 10% of the world's total illness burden (measured in disability-adjusted life years) and 4% of global mortality are caused by inadequate access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. There are more health hazards associated with poor access to water and sanitation than just infectious diseases. (Groce et al., 2011, p 618). Overall, proper sanitation is essential for protecting the health and well-being of individuals and communities. UN-Habitat (2003, p01) introduced the term 'adequate sanitation' which went beyond mere access to a particular type of sanitation system. 'Adequate' sanitation was defined as access to sanitation that is convenient for all household members, affordable, and that eliminates contact with human excreta and other wastewater in the home and neighborhood. However, people with disabilities are facing more problems due to the lack of proper sanitation anywhere. They mostly face problems when they visit outside their home, especially in public places. Even though, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which came into force in May 2008, ensures persons with a disability equal access to the physical environment and the identification and elimination of all obstacles and barriers to such accessibility; also stresses the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and also ensures that international cooperation, including international development programs, are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, (UN, 2006. Furthermore, in September 2010, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution recognizing that the human right to proper sanitation is a part of the right to an adequate standard of living. However, People with disabilities should be routinely included in all water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) initiatives due to the

fact that the mounting body of evidence strongly links them to extreme poverty and social marginalization, and this is cause for worry (Groce et al.,2011, p 618). The lack of support bars in latrines for those who struggle to hold themselves in a sitting or squatting position—a problem that is especially problematic for women—or accessible sinks and washing stations are just two examples of the structural barriers that face people with disabilities (Jones and Reed, 2005, p 135; Snider and Takeda, 2008, p 02). The issue extends beyond the institutional obstacles to adequate sanitation, the ignorance of water and sanitation providers, and individuals with disabilities regarding suitable infrastructure layouts and accessible technologies for modifications (Jones et al., 2003, p 06; UN ESCWA, 2004, p 01). The problems are not limited to structural and technical there are also social barriers because many studies from various countries report that persons with disabilities often face stigma and discrimination from others when using both household and public facilities. People fear that persons with disabilities would contaminate water sources or that they would make the latrines dirty (Tesfu & Magrath, 2006, p 22; Pradhan & Jones 2008, p 01) which adds stigma and discrimination. Kendra, 2008, found that; people with certain types of disabilities may need to take a longer time to use the facilities – a stigmatizing experience when using communal latrines. Even Individuals with physical, intellectual, mental health, and sensory (blindness/ deafness) disabilities routinely report incidences of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse when using public facilities (Groce et al., 2006, p 04). They are rare to find in the decision-making process which adds to the burdens. This is also a case where the structure is unfriendly to the disabled. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to provide access to improved sanitation and improved water sources to all by 2030’ (UN, 2015). This will require services to be delivered to the hardest to reach, the poorest, and those whose water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs are currently not addressed by mainstream programming. People in the community who struggle because of a disability suffer especially serious consequences to their health, dignity, and quality of life when they do not have access to WASH. And can affect other members of their households acting as their caregivers (Wilbur et al., 2018, p157). In addition, it causes unfair circumstances like poverty, discrimination, stigma, and exclusion from jobs and education, as well as health disparities (WHO, 2022, p19). People with disabilities are reportedly more likely to have insufficient access to WASH facilities. The ‘World Disability Report estimates

that 1.3 billion or 1 in 6 people worldwide – experience significant disability’ (WHO, 2022, p02). According to the 2011 Census, 1.23 billion people were living in India, of which 2.1 percent (or over 21 million) had a disability of some kind. Of these people, 12.6 million were men and 9.3 million were women (Saikia et al., 2016, p02). Accordingly, the new SDG will not be met ‘unless access to WASH is improved’ to 1.3 billion. However, in India government has made proactive legislation to address the need for basic services for persons with disability. India is a signatory to the Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region. India is also a signatory to the Biwako Millennium Framework for action toward an inclusive, barrier-free, and rights-based society. India signed the UN Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities on 30th March 2007, the day it opened for signature. India ratified the UN Convention on 1st October 2008 (MDWS, 2015). But how far it achieves the aims is yet to be celebrated. Because almost 560 million Indians lack toilets and where toilets do exist, they remain inadequate for people with special needs, such as Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly (Das et al., 2016, p 01). Sanitation in public places especially in the urban space is essential for the hygiene and public health of persons with disabilities. From the ongoing discussion, the present paper is a step to situate persons with disability in the sanitation facilities provided by urban spaces.

To understand the undertaken problem, a phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences of people with disability. The purposive sampling technique was used. As Etikan et al., (2016, p2) describe it is a deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses’. At the outset, 25 participants (both Male and female) interacted and only 08 participants (only males) showed curiosity and agreed to participate. The female participant (4 in number) disagreed to participate. They were not forced to participate, even though a female helper was hired to interview them. The researcher visited two weeks (in total) one week in December 2022 and one in January 2023 to haunt the participants. The universe of the study was restricted to the urban space, Lal Chowk of Srinagar district, Jammu, and Kashmir. The inclusion criteria (based on the demand of the topic) for participants were: a) having a disability (physically handicapped and vision impairment) and b) visiting urban spaces. c) resident of Kashmir valley,

and d) Ready to participate. In-depth interviews were conducted with all the participants. All the interviews were conducted, based on knowledge about disability and sanitation (through a rigorous literature review). The interview ranged from 30 to 40 minutes.

Aim of the Study

The short- and long-term implications of lack of access to basic sanitation faced by persons living with physical, and sensory (blindness) impairments are not routinely discussed or evaluated. The present study is undertaken to understand how welcoming the sanitation facilities of urban Srinagar are to the person with such a disability. The paper is also intended to provide an overview and an introduction to key issues faced by the disabled.

Ethical considerations

Participation was based on informed consent. Guardians/caretakers provided consent as well. For some participants who used a wheelchair, consent was obtained from their primary caregiver at the time of the interview. Wherever possible, interviews with participants were done separately and in private at the participant's choice. To record the interview separate consent was informed. At the end of the interview, the interviewer shows the recording to the participant for deleting or editing. The researcher also ensures that the information collected from the participants will be kept confidential and protected from unauthorized use. The researcher also offers support and resources if participants need them during the interview to avoid influencing their responses. All the interviews were conducted at those places (which are easily accessible to the participant so that they do not face any problems due to their disability they face).

Results and discussion

After analyzing the data three themes were generated viz: a) barriers to accessing sanitation b) health implications and c) avoidance of visiting the city. The themes are further divided into sub-themes.

Barriers to Access/ Unfriendly Facilities

The sanitation facilities provided by the city administration to people with disability are limited and unfriendly.

Size and type of commode

The size and type of commode of the toilets are not favorable to people with disability. One of the participants stated, *'using sanitation facility is a privilege of able persons, the city administration entertain only them. We are forgotten. Whenever I use the toilets, I face various problems. Back home I have installed the English commode, which is easy for me, as it takes me a lot of support to use the Indian commode. To date, I have not seen any English commode toilet here'* P2. Another participant in this regard stated, *'the sizes of toilets are not so friendly. I usually face challenges to enter the toilet with the wheelchair, due to the size of the doors'* P1. Not only are the doors of the toilet in the proper size, but the entrance of the washroom facility is also not proper and friendly to people with disability.

Location of the toilet

As the previous researchers also highlight, the location of the toilet matters in the sense of disability. People with disability face many problems in availing the facilities of sanitation. The location of the toilet adds salt to the injuries. Out of the major six washroom facilities provided by the city administration, only one is at the proper place for easy access. The rest of the five are at the location, if availed one needs to the helper. In this context, one of the participants described the locations, *'sanitation facilities in the form of washrooms are not meant for us. As I searched the toilet for nature's call, I was unable to locate one easily. I am very thankful to the gatekeeper of the restaurant who guided me to find one'* P4. In this regard, signboards can help all in general, particularly disabled ones. City centers are meant for a busy life. People here are in a rush. They don't have time to help those in need. So the location of the toilet needs to be properly located. One of the participants stated, *'the location of the washroom one I could easily find. Is opposite of another side of the road. Availing this I have to cross the road, which used to be full of traffic'* P8.

The location of the sanitation facilities needs to be looked at by the city center in the ongoing smart city project.

Lack of Ramp and Iron rode

In general, the sanitation facilities in the form of washrooms/latrines provided by the city administration, are without ramps (for wheelchair-using people) and side iron sticks (for vision-impaired people). People with such disabilities are facing various problems due to the lack of these two important facilities which can enable them to use regular sanitation facilities. One of the participants, who once visited the city, described the plight due to the lack of a ramp, *'as I was approaching the toilet, I see stair only. I was not able to bear the pain out of nature's call. So I entered without a wheelchair. That time I realized the importance of ramp'* P1. Another participant, who faces problems due to the un-installation of the side iron rode, stated, *' I often time visit city due to the study purpose, every time I face the problem due to the un-installation of side way iron rode'* P7. Paths toward latrines are feasible for people without disabilities; the people with disability are facing various problems due to this. This according to one of the participants is a long pending demand and narrated that *'the lack of the feasible construction of paths towards the latrine to allow for easy access by use of wheelchairs adds problems and need to address. As I often experience trouble, due to this'* P3.

The height of the tap/sink

People who use wheelchairs face also the problem of the height of the sink. Even if someone manages to enter the toilet with the help of others or with the watch and ward of the sanitation facility, washing hands properly is also part of the problem. The majority of the participants find difficulties defecating or answering a call of nature in the sanitation facilities provided by the city governance. The facilities for PwD are unfriendly. They face various difficulties in accessing sinks or taps to wash properly. One of the participants stated, *'As I could not stand due to the disability I have. Availing of washing facilities is beyond my physical strength. It adds hurdles in accessing the washing facilities due to the improper installation of sinks and the height of the taps.'*

Furthermore, as cleanness is half of the faith in Islam, washing properly meant a lot to me. In such a scenario (inaccessible washing facilities) you can imagine the plight' P6.

Health implications

Access to latrines is limited for this section of the population and, therefore, their health may be compromised in terms of sanitation-related infections. Reports suggest that, when persons with disabilities need assistance to use the toilet, individuals may significantly restrict their intake of both water and food throughout the day, waiting until evening to ensure that a member of the household is nearby to assist them with toileting activities (Bailey & Groce 2006, p56). Even times people with disability, restrict food to one meal a day which leads to serious undernutrition or malnutrition in individuals who may already be nutritionally compromised due to disability-related health concerns (Yousafzai et al., 2003, p1101). The lack of a latrine or an inappropriately-designed latrine can place increased stress on a PwD. One of the participants stated, *'whenever I have to go outside of my home, I take very little food. Many times I face problems using the toilet or sanitation facilities outside' P1.* Furthermore, which have health implications as well? However, the problem due to the lack of sanitation facilities has also a direct link with getting the infection and other viruses. As one of the participants stated, *'walking through crawling inside washroom has devastation effect on our health. I always fear fever, running nose, if I used toilet outside of my home' P8.* It is a fact that using latrines that are not appropriate for a disabled person increases their risk of infection significantly. Another participant narrated about the health compromises he does regularly, *'I don't bother about the cleanness of the toilet as I could not see. I am fed up with claiming. I reached that juncture of life, where I accept everything as normal. I am not negating the fact that there are no health issues out of bad and inaccessible sanitation facilities available here' P7.* The majority of the participants were not able to relate health implications with sanitation. It might be due to a lack of knowledge about the link. Overall, sanitation facilities must be made accessible to all people with disabilities to ensure their health and well-being. This includes accessible toilets, and sinks, as well as appropriate assistance and support from the administration. Inaccessible sanitation facilities can have serious health implications for persons with disabilities.

Avoidance visiting city

Rather than showing resilience and protest the persons with disability adopted avoidance as a tool for the problem of sanitation. In Foucauldian terminology, avoidance is normal for people with disability. The lack of accessible public washrooms, the absence of handrails, and the insufficient space in bathrooms make it difficult for people with disabilities to move around freely and safely. This problem can also discourage them from participating in social activities, attending public events, and exploring new places. As one of the participants stayed at home as a tool to be safer and stated, *'why should I visit a city which prioritizes only the people without disabilities? They don't think about people like me. The best method to avoid the problem of inadequate sanitation facilities is to be at home'* P4. City administration must prioritize the development of accessible and inclusive sanitation facilities to ensure that PwD can fully participate in urban life. This can include initiatives such as installing ramps, providing larger toilet stalls, and ensuring that all public toilets/washrooms have accessible features like grab bars and sinks at a lower height. Another participant stated, *'urban spaces are known to as accommodative without any inequality. However, the facilities the city government is providing are against what the cities are known to be. I usually try to manage to be at home. The washroom too is paralyzed like me'* P3. Improving sanitation facilities for PwD cities can create a more equitable and accessible environment for all citizens. The entire participants directly or indirectly were disappointed with the facilities provided by the city government. One more participant narrated, *'if I would not be an employee I would never visit the city again. At my office, I manage the sanitation facilities, but outside my office, the sanitation provided by the city government is an insult to people like me'* P5. Adequate safety, security, and dignity for individuals when they urinate or defecate is another aspect of sanitation (Hans, 2021, p04). However, in the present study, these all things were missing for people with disability.

Conclusion

People with disabilities face barriers to accessing appropriate sanitation, such as a lack of wheelchair-accessible toilets or grab bars in bathrooms. These barriers not only affect their physical health but also their emotional and mental well-being. It is important to recognize that everyone, regardless of their abilities has a right to proper sanitation. This includes designing and constructing sanitation facilities that are accessible and ensuring that they are properly maintained. By making sanitation inclusive and accessible for all we can promote health and dignity for individuals with disabilities. Disability issues must be considered at all levels. It is not just a matter of human rights but also of economic necessity and enlightened self-interest for governments, health institutions, and civil society to include people with disabilities. Furthermore, rather than seeing proper sanitation for disabled persons as a waste of money, policymakers of urban Srinagar (Kashmir) need to see it as a positive, value-added component of urban infrastructure. As also Lockwood (2001, p06) had shown, that towns that provide good toilets increase their visitor rates and retail turnover.

Conflict of interest (nil)

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Traversing Spatial Politics and Power Dynamics in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Sathish Kumar C

Abstract

Contrasting the inherent antagonism within distinct settings, one can observe spaces marked by attributes such as "backwardness, ignorance, and limitation." In contrast, a more general environment, such as Bombay in India, often referred to as the 'City by the Sea,' embodies a space characterized by "noise, worldliness, and ambition." It is important to note that individuals' identities are intricately intertwined with the specific spaces they occupy, and deviations from these spatial contexts can lead to societal or state-imposed sanctions. This is particularly evident in the case of the tailors' village, which stands in stark contrast to the countryside. As a consequence, Maneck's local identity and way of life are imperilled by the rapid forces of modernization.

Key Words: Politics, Space, Marginalization, power, down-trodden

Space lacks inherent significance until it is endowed with meaning through human attachments, thereby acquiring the status of a place. In the context of Rohinton Mistry's novel "A Fine Balance," which unfolds against the backdrop of India during the tumultuous State of Emergency (1975-77) under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, a narrative takes shape that centres on key characters. This narrative orbits a diverse cast of marginalized and disenfranchised individuals within the larger Indian society as they endeavour to establish their presence within the urban environment. This endeavour reflects the construction of a connection or identity-based classification system that delineates the boundaries of similarity and difference (Morey 2004, p. 95).

Scholars have not yet achieved a unanimous consensus regarding the exact definition of the concept of "home." Cresswell's viewpoint, for instance, suggests that a home signifies a location where an individual can authentically express their identity, thus fostering a deep sense of attachment and rootedness within a specific environment (Cresswell 2004, p. 24). In contrast, institutions that provide individuals with specific attributes offer an alternative perspective. However, it's important to recognize that homelessness goes beyond mere physical displacement; it can signify a profound sense of loss. In the novel "A Fine Balance," the main characters undergo multiple instances of displacement and experience periods of homelessness. Nevertheless, within the narrative, there is a brief moment when they find an apartment that offers them a reassuring place they can truly call home (Upstone 2009, p. 115).

The notion of home extends beyond the physical framework, encompassing all its contents, which are essential for endowing it with new significance. This transformation is evident as Rustom, within the narrative (Mistry 2006,

p. 40), starts to discern "new deficiencies" within the home. Within this confined space, the individual exercises a measure of authority over its functioning. An example of this dynamic can be seen in the nameplate bearing the inscription "Mr and Mrs. Dalal," symbolizing a balance of power that provides Dina with an equitable role in the apartment. This stands in contrast to her previous experiences at her brother Nusswan's residence (Cresswell 2004, p. 109).

As she embraces the role of a homemaker, her responsibilities expand to encompass repairing leaks, honing knives, and procuring furniture and kitchen utensils (Rybczynski 2014, 153). This focus on her evolving role is noteworthy. While she was obligated to undertake domestic duties at Nusswan's residence, in her current environment, she willingly assumes these tasks as a means to establish her personal imprint on the house (Pink, 2004, p. 53). Dina's relationship with Rustom, characterized by mutual interdependence, exemplifies her autonomy and authority within Rustom's apartment, a space she regards as her "heaven" (Mistry, 2006, p. 41).

As a widow, Dina departs from Nusswan's residence to carve out her distinct identity within her own apartment. The absence of Rustom fundamentally alters the apartment's significance, rendering the rooms, once filled with furniture, now imbued with a sense of remoteness (Mistry 2006, p. 48). These possessions continue to serve as poignant reminders of the past, preserving cherished memories. Dina actively challenges the societal norms that expect her, as a widow, to confine herself to a life of self-sufficiency. She adeptly juggles various roles, transforming herself in a manner she describes as "like magic" (Mistry 2006, p. 274). Drawing from the references cited, Dina's unique use of space subverts the prevailing norms. For a widow, in particular, venturing beyond the domestic sphere challenges established conventions (Massey 1994, p. 11). Consequently, the space evolves into a stabilizing entity, transforming into a place where she finds solace and freedom to express her true self.

In the northern region, the concept of "true" lies, where one's profound affections are concealed beneath the surface of desires. Circumstances compel Maneck to attend distant places that resonate with his yearning for home. Although his thoughts remain anchored in the idea of "home" (Mistry 2006, p. 7). Maneck grapples with the challenges of adapting to the fast-paced life of the "big city" (Mistry 2006, p. 240). To bridge the emotional gap created by his remote home, Maneck finds comfort in an amiable and bustling urban environment. Unlike conventional friendships that often thrive on shared interests and similarities, Maneck's connection with others focuses more on shared activities than on their individual identities. This underscores the significance of collective experiences over personal characteristics (Duyvendak and Wekker 2016, p. 27). Despite their varying cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, they enjoy each other's company during chess lessons.

Upon liberating himself from the confines of an unfavorable college hostel, Maneck's newfound abode in Dina's flat bestows upon him the liberty to openly articulate his opinions. In this space, his viewpoints are not merely

acknowledged but also actively put into practice. In his family, however, his attempts to suggest improvements for their shop or advocate for their soda business were met with resistance. This was largely due to his father, Farokh Kohlah, who adamantly clung to his authoritarian control over the business. This, in turn, fueled Maneck's resentment towards the dictatorial authority exercised by Farokh (Mistry 2006, p. 219). In stark contrast to the authoritarian locus of control within his family home, which demanded unwavering obedience and conformity to his father's decisions, the collaborative locus of control within Dina's flat allowed for the implementation of Maneck's suggestions. This, in turn, led to favorable outcomes. This exemplifies the transformative potential of a "chosen family," wherein a more supportive and open environment can yield positive results (Jory 2010, p. 496).

While questions may arise regarding Dina's motivations for accommodating the tailors in her apartment, their arrival had a transformative effect, infusing the space with a "joyful family atmosphere" (Mistry 2006, p. 426). This transformation exemplified a shared sense of household dynamics in which domestic tasks, traditionally perceived as women's responsibilities, were willingly distributed among all members. Distinctions, such as the allocation of specific spaces or possessions, initially set aside, were quickly discarded. They all partook in communal activities, including sharing drinks, symbolizing mutual trust, support, shared responsibilities, and resilience (Mistry 2006, p. 399). This fleeting period of harmony, akin to the kittens that had found sanctuary in the apartment, was followed by the loss of Dina's flat, rendering all of them in various states of homelessness.

In 2011 census, people were found in various locations, including sidewalks and other public spaces. When applied at the national level, this definition simplifies the idea of home to a traditional dwelling, suggesting a more typical understanding. In contrast, for Om and Ishvar, homelessness takes on a more tangible and profound significance. This is because they undergo multiple displacements within the narrative, primarily due to their caste and class identities.

Upon departing from Asraf Chacha's residence in the city, Om and Ishvar find themselves compelled to seek shelter in various inadequate and unsuitable locations. These circumstances subject them to a relentless and unpredictable existence, marked by a lack of economic, social, and political security. Consequently, they are denied fundamental human rights, including access to sanitation, healthcare, and clean drinking water. Their substandard living conditions make even basic activities, like taking a shower, an "unimaginable luxury" (Mistry 2006, 387) Their social homelessness further compounds their challenges, hindering their ability to secure or retain employment, as a pervasive fear of the homeless population prevails. This, in turn, amplifies their struggles in accessing suitable housing. A vivid illustration of this plight is the tailors' encounter with the Rations Officer when they apply for a ration card. This card not only serves as a source of sustenance but also provides access to subsidized resources. Furthermore, residing in a state of homelessness denies them recognition as individuals and deems them unworthy of security and

sustenance (Curtis 2002, p. 506). Consequently, within this harsh reality, they must contend with a realm that stands as an arena where the foundation for their very survival is constantly under threat (Appadurai 2019, 28).

The inherent contrast between distinctive settings manifests an inherent duality. Some spaces are characterized by attributes such as "backwardness, ignorance, and limitation," creating a specific ambiance. In contrast, more general settings, exemplified by Bombay in India, often referred to as the 'City by the Sea,' embody an environment characterized by "noise, worldliness, and ambition" (Williams 1973, p. 9). The connection between individual identities and the spaces they inhabit is deeply intertwined, and any deviation from these familiar environments carries the risk of societal or state-imposed punishment. Comparatively, the tailors' village, as opposed to the countryside, represents a scenario where Maneck and his family's local identity and way of life face a significant threat due to the rapid forces of modernization (Shah 2006, p. 21).

"The demon of progress," as it encroached upon the town, posed a significant threat to the local identity of its residents, with Farokh Kohlah particularly affected (Mistry 2006, p. 215). The local identity is a concept that pertains to the profound connection individuals hold with small-scale places, offering distinctive characteristics in contrast to other locations and evoking unique emotional and perspective-related responses (Shao 2017, p. 14). The advent of progress notably disturbed Farokh on multiple fronts. Physically, the town underwent a transformation as narrow mountain paths were replaced by broader ones. This alteration, in turn, changed the color of rivers from brown to another hue. The very fabric of the community also underwent a shift, as the influx of people drawn by modernization began utilizing the forests for firewood, resulting in barren patches on the hills. The landscape lost its ability to offer psychological solace to Farokh as he felt the invasion of exhaust from lorries and other aspects of modernization was "destroying his senses" (Mistry 2006, p. 217). Moreover, modernization led to a reduced demand for a traditional recipe that held deep cultural significance. This change was emblematic of the broader transformation that Farokh witnessed in his beloved birthplace, which had been regarded as a paradise by his forefathers. The invasion of progress and the accompanying changes subjugated these aspects of local identity, leading to a diminishment of their importance and fulfillment.

Mistry deviates from the archetypal narrative and, in doing so, subverts the commonly held notion of the "idyllic," which is often associated with qualities such as "peace, innocence, and simple virtue" (Williams 1973, 9). Through the deliberate use of minimal descriptions, Mistry underscores the pervasive presence of aestheticized elements and the acts of violence committed against them.

Caste stratification, which forms the foundation of the caste system, extends its influence beyond socio-religious boundaries and permeates the economic sphere as well. This stratification is deeply entrenched, manifesting as institutionalized dominance (Sharma 2019, p. 24). Both upper-caste and Dalit women in the village encounter

subjugation by men, in addition to the challenges faced by Dalit men who grapple with poverty and the burden of their caste. The patriarchal power structure places Dalit women in a particularly vulnerable position, subjecting them not only to domination by upper-caste individuals but also by Dalit men.

The prevailing concept of the 'close-knit' rural-urban relationship often revolves around the intricate connections between these two settings. This connection is primarily established through a sense of security. When individuals in the village experience mistreatment, they often seek a livelihood in the city, emphasizing a self-contained approach. This interaction serves as a means of fulfillment. Moreover, it stands in direct contrast to life in the village, where inter-caste conflicts persist. While the city is considered an exclusive "epic centre of social transformation," (Sharma 2019, p. 24) this transformation often results in acts of violence, highlighting the impact of modernization. Improved transportation facilities facilitate this shift, altering the dynamics and bridging the gap between the village and the town. However, it also leads to a reduction in Ashraf Chacha's customer base as clients flock to a new ready-made clothing store.

The novel's setting is an unspecified 'City by the Sea,' but its physical layout and the places visited by Maneck and Om, including Victoria Garden and Hanging Gardens, closely resemble Bombay. These unnamed locations in the novel embody an "everyospace" with multiple layers of history and meaning, and the urban environment exists as both "Bombay and not-Bombay simultaneously" (Morey 2004, p. 122). The central plot of the story is intertwined with the Emergency declared by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which spanned from 1975 to 1977. Indira's slogan, "Garibi Hatao" (Eradicate Poverty), was often met with mockery, as it appeared that, instead of eliminating poverty, she was eliminating the poor. During the Emergency, lower-class individuals were "most severely" impacted, primarily due to two key programs: slum clearance and sterilization initiatives, both of which had a significant effect on Om and Ishvar (Frank 2002, p. 401).

Under the pretense of revitalization efforts, demolitions are carried out, effectively excluding individuals from participating in discussions that affect their daily lives (Conkan 2020, 11). Consequently, they have no choice but to depend on unauthorized and unofficial means of support, such as engaging with those who provide assistance in exchange for various services. The declaration, "While there is government, there will be work for me," underscores the persistence of the government's 'legitimacy.' As long as this perceived legitimacy endures, people will continue to resort to illicit activities for their survival, especially during challenging times (Mistry 2006, p. 17).

As indicated by the concept referenced, "segregation" pertains to "the degree to which two or more groups dwell separately from one another, occupying distinct areas within the urban environment" (Rasse 2019, p. 1). This process of urbanization within a given context often leads to divisions. Due to their lower-class status, Om and Ishvar frequently find themselves in extremely unclean and unsanitary conditions. Understanding this concept of segregation

and the existence of "non-places" can shed light on the transient spaces occupied by marginalized individuals. Numerous studies have explored this notion, focusing on domains that emphasize the isolation of marginalized communities in rural areas. This isolation is described as "the most conspicuous and long-standing manifestation of caste discrimination" (Shah 2006, p. 73).

Within an environment where the very presence of Dalits is considered polluting, it is not surprising that they are often relegated to residing in specific neighborhoods that are seen as more "permissible" (Shah 2006, p.73) The term 'allowed' in this context underscores the authority that dictates their exclusion from certain areas. Consequently, this exclusion deprives Dalits of access to essential public services, including clean water. Due to the strong association between Dalits and pollution, the village well is deemed the exclusive domain of the upper castes. Narayan and Ishvar face physical abuse when they attempt to enter a school and are accused of defiling slates and chalk. It is worth noting that the punishment they endure could have been even more severe had it not been for certain factors (Mistry 2006, p. 114).

The novel portrays the urban poor as dispossessed and placed at the lowest level of the societal hierarchy. These individuals rely on marginalized areas that provide shelter for many others. Slum areas are marked by their precarious conditions, which include a lack of crucial civic amenities. These marginalized urban spaces symbolize the contradictions that emerge from these circumstances.

As the text suggests, these places are positioned as being "outside of all places" (Foucault 1984, p.3). Despite their physical location within urban settings, it is crucial to adhere to a concept of urban living that maintains a sense of detachment, as this characterizes the broader "urban fabric" (Lefebvre 1970, p. 3). This detachment is particularly relevant for individuals who have been marginalized due to a combination of economic, political, and social factors. It is within this framework that their nonconformity is managed and constrained. Over time, Om and Ishvar use their meager salaries to acquire household goods for their makeshift dwelling. While the shack retains its temporary nature, the improvements made to render it "more comfortable" signify a notable shift (Mistry 2006, p. 183). Consequently, the shack evolves from being a mere makeshift shelter into a more permanent and inhabitable space.

These spaces possess a temporal dimension. They encapsulate the passage of time, while the lives of the jhopadpatti residents are fraught with insecurity. Their shanties may face the threat of demolition, the slum lord might forcibly evict them, or the monsoon could wreak havoc, destroying their shelters and possessions. Such spaces exist "beyond the time of a common, ordinary, predictable world" (Agier 2012, p. 323). The social exclusion experienced by the urban poor results in a state of placelessness and timelessness, where people's lives are reduced to a perpetual state of waiting. For instance, the tailors must wait for water in the jhopadpatti, and this water is only available for a brief period in the mornings. They have to wait for trains to pass to relieve themselves on the railway tracks. They are

continually in a state of anticipation, waiting for a better job with improved income that would enable them to leave the slum and return home.

In his work "Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity," the Augé Marc delves into the attributes of non-places within the context of super modernity (Augé 1995, p. 53). The third section of the book explores the concept of non-places, which are locations primarily designed for transient and transitory purposes, serving as passages to more significant destinations. In this context, numerous individuals are transported to an irrigation site, where they receive "food, shelter, and clothing" in exchange for their labor, exhibiting characteristics reminiscent of a traditional way of life (Mistry 2006, p. 113).

A "non-place" is characterized as "a space that defies definition in terms of relationships, history, or identity" (Augé 1995, p.77). In a similar vein, it temporarily accommodates both objects and individuals. People reside in rows of huts, with each hut providing accommodation for twelve individuals. Several attributes, such as a sense of attachment to a specific location, a uniform and homogeneous environment, the imposition of strict discipline, and a heightened emphasis on the points of entry and departure, can be associated with the lived space at the irrigation site. Just as one undergoes scrutiny when entering a transitional space, upon their arrival at the irrigation site, the security captain meticulously inspects the meager possessions of the group. This inspection is part of the oversight exercised by the authorities (Mistry 2006, p. 332).

The individuals residing in this place share a collective identity, one that is distinct from the anthropological notion of a specific place (Augé 1995, p. 101). In this collective existence, individual identities are absent, and this collective identity prevails. Despite their numerous efforts to establish some level of separation, these attempts prove futile. Their desire to escape the torment they refer to as the "narak of heartless devils" transforms them into a group similar to beggars (Mistry 2006, p. 366). Within this diverse assembly of people, any distinctions related to caste or their previous settings become irrelevant. Much like non-places, the tin huts create an environment characterized by "neither singular identity nor relationships; only solitude and similitude" (Augé 1995, p. 103).

The interplay between space and identity is intricately interconnected, and a closer examination of this interrelationship enhances our understanding of how the characters experience marginalization in their spatial contexts (Gilman 1910, p. 153). The conceptualization of space concerning the characters' identities helps clarify the physical and psychological dispossessions they endure, offering insights into the societal, political, and economic factors responsible for their predicaments. The novel presents a departure from the romanticized portrayal of the urban-rural divide and segregated spaces, instead offering a more authentic depiction that vividly illustrates the challenges confronted by marginalized individuals.

The exploration of marginalized individuals' experiences centers on their struggle to establish their identities while contending with continual displacement. In this context, the possession of a home becomes a crucial prerequisite for attaining social and political recognition, rendering homelessness a legal offense. Spatial theories have been employed to offer a deeper understanding of the marginalized urban spaces and the people residing within them, which result from the intricate interplay of socio-economic dynamics. Future research endeavors can delve into the physical transformations experienced by individuals affected by spatial marginalization, with a particular emphasis on examining the intersections of caste, class, and gender in these processes.

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**Climate Change Induced Floods, Livelihood Damage and Policy
Challenges: A Case of Traditional Fishing Community of Kuttanad Region
of Kerala**

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Abstract

The excessive rainfall in the short duration precipitated by climate change has created uneven damage to various stakeholders in the Kuttanad region, including agricultural and traditional fishing communities. Frequent flooding has created multi-faceted problems for the life of inland fishers in the Kuttanad region, and it appears that the government is more worried about farmers than fishermen regarding the opening and closing of the shutters at Thanneermukkom Bund. Given the livelihood damage, the policymakers must provide a long-term sustainable solution for improving the condition of the inland fishermen in Kuttanad.

Introduction

There has been an acceleration in global hydrological cycles due to climate change, causing disasters such as thunderstorms and flash floods that affect the livelihoods of deprived communities. (Hossain et al., 2020, p. 19). However, the burden of climate change is unevenly shared, in which developing countries will be the most affected (Parvin et al., 2016, p.1). Changes are vivid in the pattern and intensity of rainfall, creating catastrophic flooding in some locations (Olajide & Lawanson, 2014, p. 43) and disrupting human settlements' prosperity, safety, infrastructure, livelihoods, and well-being. The Kuttanad region of Kerala is a classic case to study the livelihood impact of frequent flooding. The excessive rainfall in the short duration precipitated by climate change created uneven damage to various regional stakeholders, including agricultural and traditional fishing communities. The resulting policy responses appear to be further worsening the situation, and therefore, the article hereby looks into assessing the extent of livelihood damage caused by climate change, and then the article tries to connect with the discussion on how far the policy response is successful in containing livelihood damage well within the limit.

Overview of Agricultural Practices in the Region

Kuttanad region is a unique geographical space, often termed the 'Rice Bowl of Kerala', spread across Alappuzha (57 per cent), Kottayam (30 per cent) and Pathanamthitta (13 per cent) districts (MSSN, 2007, p. 3). It is a low-lying area extending over 874 km^2 , of which approximately 304 km^2 are garden lands with an average elevation of 1 m above sea level, mainly used for paddy cultivation. Water from four rivers, including Meenachil, Pamba, Manimala, and Achenkoil, drains the land below sea level during both monsoon seasons, causing catastrophic flooding for an entire year. The southwest monsoon alone sees a discharge of 1,89,000 ft³/s. Agriculture was the main occupation of the region, and it can be divided into three segments. The garden lands are used for cultivating food crops, and the wetlands are utilised for paddy operations and fishing. And finally, inland fisheries and shell-fishing are done in water locations. The vast majority of people in the area rely on the production of fish and rice for their living, but the growth of tourism has opened up new revenue streams for the area.

The government has been working hard to transform Kuttanad into a region known for its rice cultivation more than a century ago, and the strategy is evident when examining water management initiatives like the Thaneermukkom bund and Thottappally spillway. Thaneermukkom Bund was built in 1974 to stop tidal action and saltwater incursion into the Kuttanad low-lands across Vembanad Lake. On the other hand, the objective of the Thottappally spillway was to redirect the flood waters towards the sea before they reached the area, and it was a part of the project based on recommendations made by the Vaidyanathan Commission, established in 1954. Nevertheless, the barrier initially benefited farmers by avoiding seasonal saltwater incursion into the backwaters. But it created a terrible long-term impact on the region's environment. The barrier was laid primarily for agricultural development and became a hurdle between the polluted freshwater body in the upstream region of Kuttanad and salty water from the Kochi side. However, there was no water stagnation in Kuttanad before the creation of the barrier, and the area benefited from the purifying effects of the ebb and flow of the sea's tidal activity. The salinity of the water helped to limit the growth of water weeds, and the region's stagnant cesspools, now overgrown with weeds, are the perfect place for mosquitoes to flourish. Therefore, water-control projects had outcomes that were at odds with their intended results. They even damaged the ecosystem and created a turnaround effect

on the environment's physical, biological, and human components. Several recently implemented environmental changes to flood management and saltwater entrance regulation to increase rice production have primarily led to a deterioration of ecological equilibrium.

Kuttanad region has been using fertilizers and insecticides 50–75 per cent more than other regions, and the presence of DDT and its derivatives, DDE and DDD, have been found in soil sediments and water. Pesticide levels up to 10 times the authorised hazardous threshold for the particular species were found in the organic tissue samples of fish, prawns, and clams from Vembanad Lake. These substances include several well-known carcinogens. The region's difficulties are made worse by the extreme degradation of the aquatic environment, which is mainly brought on by human activity and results in the depletion of fishery resources and health risks to the populace. The frequent flooding has further worsened the livelihood issues in the agricultural sector. However, the policy of the response to tackle the agrarian situation has, in turn, created an adverse ripple effect on sectors, mainly traditional fishing communities.

Traditional Fishing Community and Livelihood Issues

The fishing occupation has a long-rooted history in which the fish collection, stocking and preservation ideas exist in ancient Hindu scriptures (Nayak, 2007, p. 8; Ray, 2013, p. 2). Despite playing a crucial role in supplementing the nutritional requirements of many, especially those in under developed and developing countries, the fishermen community are among the most marginalized groups in society. However, the situation of the inland fishermen population in the Kuttanad region is not different from the rest. It has become the most vulnerable and less addressed category than the other regional stakeholders. However, a perfect harmony existed between the inland fishers, fish wealth and the water bodies, but this synergy was disrupted by the massive floods witnessed by the state in 2018 and the floods in subsequent years.

Frequent flooding has created multi-faceted problems for the life of inland fishers in the Kuttanad region. Usually, the rainy season brings abundant fish to the fishermen, but heavy floods have disrupted this pattern, leading to a decline in inland fishing and adversely affecting the livelihoods of the fishermen (Achutha Menon, 2018, p.88). The torrential rains are responsible for swiping large fish lings and eggs (Manorama, 2019, para.2). All these reasons resulted in a decline of 80 per cent dip in his catch during the last five to six years. However,

the increase in the price of fish has not concomitantly associated with an increase in fishermen's income due to less catching. On the other side, the availability of the fish population has been negatively impacted by ecological changes, and aquatic weeds like the African Payal have expanded swiftly. These changes in the physical and biological subsystems have also affected the human subsystem; the fishermen in the region have been most negatively impacted, but other groups have also suffered.

Traditional fishers with several years of experience have always complained about 'outsiders' using harmful fishing practices that affect the balance of fish diversity in the water bodies. However, the voices of such marginalised classes seem less audible to reach the authorities. The unscrupulous fishing practices like using small mesh-sized nets, explosives, poisoning, and electrification are standard in this area, resulting in the massive destruction of fish wealth in Kuttanad, which directly affected the fish catch of inland fishermen. Most of the inland fishermen rely on Vembanad Lake for fishing. However, a recent report shows a shrinking water-carrying capacity of the Vembanad Lake. A five-year study by the Centre for Aquatic Resource Management and Conservation on Vembanad Lake identified a significant reduction in the lake area (from 365 sq. km in 1990 to 206.30 sq. km in 2020). The water retention capacity of the lake has reduced by 85.3 per cent (2617.5 million cubic meters in 1990 to 384.66 mcm in 2020) (Martin, 2023, p.6).

The floodwater in the Kuttanad region carries harmful sediments and pollutants, such as soil particles, chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, and other contaminants, which adversely affect fish diversity in the water bodies. The fish diversity in Vembanad Lake has declined from 150 species in the 1980s to 90 in 2020 (Martin, 2023, p.6). Floods have resulted in the entry of invasive fish species like Nile Tilapia, Arapaima and Alligator gar in Vembanad Lake. The IAS (Invasive Alien Species) is a severe threat to the indigenous fishery of the lake (Sudhish, 2022, p.2). Charru Mussel, another bio-invasive species in Vembanad Lake, seriously threatens the high return-yielding Peal Spot population. The floodwaters that carry nutrients and other organic materials into the water resulted in the proliferation of water hyacinth, a highly invasive free-floating water plant. It creates challenges for fishermen by disrupting navigation, causing damage to fishing gear, and reducing access to fishing sites. Since this aquatic weed depletes the oxygen content in the water, it affects the life of marine organisms in the water. The oil from the tourist boats contaminates the water bodies and threatens the aquatic species. Many

homes have toilets constructed with direct exits into the backwater system's canals and streams. Solid trash from the medical schools in Alappuzha and Kottayam, sewage from the towns of Cherthala, Thiruvalla, Changanassery, and Alappuzha, as well as the oil and waste from roughly 300 houseboats operating between Alappuzha and Kumarakom, are all dumped in the Vembanad Lake. During the renowned Sabarimala pilgrimage season, Pampa becomes a sewage drain.

The COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 had significant implications for the livelihoods of fishermen, as fishing is an unskilled occupation, and water bodies are common property resources. COVID-19 resulted in several new entrants to water bodies who had lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. It has increased the competition for fishery resources, putting additional strain on the traditional fishers.

The frequent floods of Kerala make Kuttanad, a low-lying region, unsafe for living. The floods resulted in the massive destruction of the land and property of many inhabitants of Kuttanad. Affluent families are now purchasing properties outside the Kuttanad region, though not possible for inland fishermen due to two reasons: firstly, their meagre income prevents them from buying new properties, and secondly, their livelihoods depend on the water bodies, making displacement unthinkable. The fishermen share a deep and enduring connection with the water bodies.

The severity of flooding in Kuttanad is attributed to the unplanned construction of pipelines and a poor drainage system. The floods have damaged the properties of many in the Kuttanad region. Although the government has approved natural disaster compensation for those who have lost their homes and land, the fund distribution still needs to be completed. Some reports have indicated the presence of political favouritism in the allocation of funds, further exacerbating the unfavourable position of fishing families.

Considering all the facts, at this juncture, the policymakers must provide a long-term sustainable solution for improving the condition of the inland fishermen in Kuttanad. Putting fish eggs in Vembanad and similar water bodies can be a good option. However, regular monitoring and effective punishment should be there to prevent illegal fishing practices. The government seems more concerned about farmers than fishermen regarding the opening and closing the shutters at Thanneermukkom Bund. The fish population is already in decline; therefore, closing the shutters for a long time to prevent salty water from entering Kuttanad is

detrimental. Even though the flood has resulted in the proliferation of water plants like water hyacinths that threaten fish, effective management can make the boon a blessing. For instance, in Neelamperoor, a Kuttanad region village, authorities have agreed to supply dried water hyacinth plants in return for money for making crafts for a private firm in Tamil Nadu. Such projects should be extended throughout Kuttanad, and interested fishermen should also be included. Authorities should ensure the timely dispersal of flood compensation. Even though fishers are vulnerable, they remained resilient throughout the years until the floods in 2018. Afterwards, they were affected by the 'deep dip' in fish wealth primarily due to floods. The authorities must pay attention to Kuttanad's inland fishermen and help bring back their smiles.

Concluding remarks

In addition to destroying Kuttanad's delicate ecology, infrastructure expansion has worsened the problem of climate change. Due to anthropogenic interference and climate change, the backwaters themselves are disappearing. The government must develop policies that consider the idea of a harmonious cohabitation between people and water and low-lying areas. Frequent floods have created livelihood damage to various stakeholders in the region in which traditional inland fishermen were the most affected, but lack of policy focus has become a reason for the further worsening of this sector. The policy priorities given to agricultural practices have created adverse outcomes and become a reason for the worsening of the traditional fishing community. Urgent policy attention, therefore, requires protecting the livelihood of traditional fishing communities due to the frequent flooding in the context of severe climatic changes.

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Climate Change and India's Urban Switch from Internal Combustion Engines to Electric Vehicles

Shivanjali Shukla and S. Lingamurthy

Abstract

One could argue that using only vehicles with electric propulsion is the most realistic way to deal with the problems caused by the auto industry's carbon footprint and its future reliance on oil. Electric vehicles are considered a sustainable technology option due to their low CO₂ emissions, short- to medium-range air pollution reduction, low operational costs, and high efficiency. Electric cars aren't very popular in India because batteries are overpriced, leading to the high cost of the vehicles, and the vehicles can only go a short distance on electricity resulting in consumers having range anxiety issues. The high cost of making new technologies and the fact that many current technologies are still in their early stages make it hard to use alternate and intermediate sources of power in vehicular movement. This is why an increasing number of policymakers, administrators, and regulators in India are interested in accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles. The Indian government has been incentivizing the movement from automobiles powered by gasoline and diesel engines (ICEVs) towards electric vehicles. since it called for only E-vehicles to be on the road by 2030. The study focuses on the motivating forces and crucial obstacles specific to a developing nation like India, making it distinct from other studies.

Keywords: - Electric Vehicles, CO₂ emission, Climate change and Urban Transportation

1. Introduction

Reliance on costly and unreliable foreign oil sources, urban air pollution and concerns about climate change have led policymakers and researchers to look for alternatives to conventional Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles (ICEVs). The Earth's average temperature has risen by about 1 degree Celsius since prior to the industrialization period, with most of the current warming trend likely caused by human activity since 1950 and progressing at an unprecedented rate, making battling climate change an international priority. Global warming leads to climate change due to the toxic greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂), and the main reason behind this is the pollution due to Internal combustion Engine Vehicles (ICEVs)(Change n.d., 2023). Smog and contamination of the air are prompted by several kinds of pollutants and greenhouse gases that are emitted by driving automobiles. Despite the continued reliance on petroleum and diesel for public transit in cities, there has been an introduction of renewable and transitional power options in the market. As a result, automobiles powered by these sources are already being seen on the roads. Arguably, the use of

completely electrical drive trains is the most practical approach for addressing the problem of the carbon footprint left by the automotive sector as well as its reliance on oil in the near future. Consumers in India have been unenthusiastic about purchasing electric vehicles due to the expensive cost of batteries and the restricted range of operation for automobiles driven only by electricity. The early stages of existing technologies and the high cost of developing new ones provide significant challenges to the broad implementation of alternative and transitional forms of energy in the transportation sector (Avci, Girotra, and Netessine 2015, 774).

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are regarded as an environmentally-friendly technological option because of their many benefits, such as decreased atmospheric pollution in the short to medium term, decreasing carbon footprints, and high efficacy. An electrically powered vehicle (EV) is a kind of vehicle that utilises one or more electrically powered motors or traction motors to provide propulsion. An electric vehicle (EV) may get power from an external source via a collector system, or it can be self-sufficient with a battery, solar panels, fuel cells, or an electric generator that converts fuel into energy. Electric vehicles, or EVs, include a wide range of transportation options, such as roadways and railroad automobiles, watercraft, as well as electric planes or spacecraft (Goel, Sharma, and Rathore 2021, 3).

The different categories of EVs include; Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEVs), powered by fuel and electricity and have an engine and electric motor. Here the batteries get charged by the engine and the energy is generated when decelerating and braking. Hybrid vehicles (HVs) employ an internal combustion engine and an electrical motor as an energy converter. Hybrid electric vehicles are used globally because they give a contemporaneous performance without any reliance on the infrastructure for charging. The second category of EVs is Plug-in Hybrid Electric vehicles (PHEVs). They are like HEV except for having a small engine and larger batteries. The battery recharging is either by the braking system or by plugging into an external electric charging point. The benefits of PHEVs are; that they use 30-60 per cent less oil than conventional vehicles, and PHEVs emit less greenhouse gas than conventional vehicles. The third category of EVs is Battery Electric vehicle (BEVs) is fully electric vehicle. These vehicles are also known as plug-in vehicles, EVs or battery electric vehicles (BEVs). In addition to decreasing gas emissions from the fleet of light-duty automobiles, the plug-in EVs could also decrease reliance on vehicles powered by fossil fuels (Mahmoudzadeh Andwari et al. 2017, 419). The Battery EVs dominated the Indian market in 2017, accounting for over 70% of trades and this proportion is projected to increase in the future years (Zhao, Doering, and Tyner 2015, 670; Tupe, Kishore, and Johnvieira 2020, 4866; Chandra and Minal 2019, 13; Kumar and Padmanaban 2019, 140; Affonso and Kezunovic 2019, 2).

2. Transformation of vehicles into EVs.

It is very interesting to note that the first EV was constructed in 1834, Thomas Davenport developed a first-ever electric vehicle (tricycle) powered by non-rechargeable batteries, and following the development of the lead acid battery, a rechargeable battery-powered electric vehicle was developed by David Solomon in 1874, and with this development, the first electric trolley system was constructed by Frank Sprague in 1886, with this development taking twelve years (Sharma et al., 2020, 1).

In 1900, BGS electric vehicles established a world record of 290 km/charge. By 1912, over 34,000 electric vehicles had been registered in the United States. Unfortunately, EVs disappeared by the 1930s due to two developments: the first was Henry Ford's mass production of the "Ford Model T" in 1925, which reduced its price by more than a third compared to its price in 1909, making EVs more expensive than ICEV; and the second was Charles Kettering's invention of the automobile starter motor, which helped remove the need for manual cranking in ICEV and enabled electric ignition and start. As a consequence of these two developments, IC engine-based vehicles were not only less costly than EVs, but they were also more user-friendly than EVs in terms of customer satisfaction, as IC engines could be used in distant locations. After 40-year, evolution had a rebirth, however, there were few innovations at the time that contributed to this. As a consequence of the 1973 Arab oil crisis, deteriorating smog in London during the 1950s, and a revival of emission laws in California during the 1960s and 1970s owing to rising air pollution, the need for alternative energy sources surged.

EVs are highly popular and can compete in terms of performance with traditional internal combustion (IC) engines. Model S, Model X, and Model 3 are among the most popular electric automobiles on the market at present. Other well-known electric automobiles include the Nissan Leaf, Chevrolet Bolt, and BMW i3. Currently, available hybrid electric cars (HEV) are mostly plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs), such as the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry (Situ 2009; "FUNDAMENTALS OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES - NPTEL - YouTube" n.d.).

3. Motivational factors for the adoption of EVs

3.1.Environmental issues

Most of the current warming trend is likely due to human activity, and it has been increasing at an unprecedented rate since 1950, making climate change a major global concern today. Since the pre-industrial period, human activities have increased Earth's global average temperature by about one degree Celsius. This number is currently increasing by 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade("Global Warming vs.

Climate Change | Facts – Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet” n.d.). The harmful emissions of greenhouse gases (CO₂) are causing global warming, which in turn is causing climate change. The primary source of this pollution is automobiles with internal combustion engines (ICEVs)(Change n.d., 2023).

Smog and air pollution are caused by various pollutants and greenhouse gases emitted by moving automobiles. A few examples of air pollutants and greenhouse gases include particulate matter (PM_x), CO, CO₂, Methane (CH₄), NO₂, Volatile Organic compounds (VOC), SO_x, hydrocarbons, etc(“Climate Change Is an Increasing Threat to Africa | UNFCCC” n.d.). Among these, particulate matter is a byproduct of the combustion process. Micrometer-sized particles penetrate the body and have an effect on the heart, lungs, and brain, including other organs. It is one of the main causes of air pollution-related cancer, and diesel engines produce more PM_x than gasoline engines. Included in the list of greenhouse gases are CO, CO₂, and CH₄. These gases trap infrared radiation, which thus contributes to climate change and global warming. These gases are mostly emitted by IC-engine automobiles. NO_x gases, volatile organic compounds, and total hydrocarbons contribute to the formation of the ground-level ozone layer, which is extremely harmful to humans because it can cause linings in the lungs and respiratory illnesses such as asthma and lung inflammation. Catalytic converters can be used to filter out NO_x gases, but they are expensive(“Climate Change Is an Increasing Threat to Africa | UNFCCC” n.d.).

Electric vehicles (EVs) are seen as a clean technology option because of their multiple benefits, such as decreased atmospheric pollution in the short to medium term, reduced carbon footprints, high efficacy, etc. Powering an electric automobile may either come from the vehicle's battery, solar panels, or a generator that converts gasoline to energy; or it might come from the vehicle's off-vehicle power supply(Goel, Sharma, and Rathore 2021, 2).

The overall amount of carbon dioxide that an automobile emits during its entire life cycle varies substantially based on the kind of power source that is utilised, as well as the location in which the vehicle is manufactured and driven. Coal is a kind of fossil fuel that is solid at room temperature and is used to produce power and heat homes. Because coal is solid, unlike crude oil and natural gas, it cannot be extracted from the ground in the same way; rather, it must be dug out. In coal-fired power plants, several types of coal, including bituminous coal, sub-bituminous coal, and lignite, are burned to generate electricity(“What Is Coal Used for? | U.S. Geological Survey” n.d.). The heat that is produced as a result of the burning of coal is put to use by being converted into high-pressure steam, which then drives a turbine to produce electricity(“Global Warming vs. Climate Change | Facts – Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet” n.d.). By the year 2020, the production of electricity will account for two-thirds of the coal that is burned. In the

year 2020, coal was responsible for producing 34 per cent of the entire amount of energy (“Coal Power” 2022). In the year 2020, China was responsible for more than half of the world's coal generation. More than sixty per cent of the electricity that is produced in China, India, and Indonesia comes from coal.

If the source of energy that is used to power the vehicles is renewable energy rather than fossil fuels like coal, and if the technological development needed for recycling the batteries are fulfilled, then electric vehicles can be seen as the future of India and will be helpful in the achievement of the goal of net zero emissions.

3.2. Climate change and urban issues

Climate change is a global occurrence that significantly impacts urban places and their inhabitants. The warming of the planet's climate is increasing the occurrence and intensity of natural catastrophes, including floods, droughts, and tropical diseases. These issues have detrimental effects on fundamental urban services, infrastructure, housing, and the overall welfare of individuals. At the same time, cities are a significant cause of climate change due to the high greenhouse gas emissions associated with urban life. Seventy-five per cent of the world's CO₂ emissions are attributed to urban areas, and transportation and construction are two of the biggest culprits (“Climate Change Is an Increasing Threat to Africa | UNFCCC” n.d.; “The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC” n.d.). Success can only be realised with a global, regional, national, and local level of coordination and activity. Therefore, cities must perform a major role in the fight against climate change. Several municipalities are now implementing measures to reduce industrial pollutants via the utilization of renewables, adoption of eco-friendly production techniques, and the implementation of regulations or incentives. Cities' air quality and health will be improved as a result of reducing emissions from industry and transportation.

In India, public buses continue to be the cheapest mode of transportation and a driver of economic activity. In 2015, according to a poll conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), over 66 per cent of urban households said bus travel was their cheapest means of transportation. The largest monthly per capita spending was reported for buses in both urban and rural regions (INR 94.89 and INR 43.30, respectively). Today, more and more urban transport systems use alternative and transitional fuels. Some Life cycle assessment studies have shown that alternative and transitional fuels are more efficient and produce less greenhouse gas emissions than regular diesel and petrol. However, their usefulness is limited since the technologies are still in the initial stages, are excessively costly, and are mostly unknown to consumers. New technical and political solutions for enhancing the implementation of renewable and transitional in nature power sources have been presented by a plethora of research in recent

years. Future studies should include not just the technical features of these technologies, but also the broader political, economic, and social circumstances in which they are accepted(Li and Loo 2014, 21).

3.3.Climate change and health issues

Climate change has both direct and indirect effects on human health. Drought and floods are both possible outcomes of changing precipitation patterns as a consequence of climate change, as can the devastation caused by hurricanes and other severe weather events. Climate change's impact on the environment may also have an indirect influence on health. For example, respiratory and cardiovascular problems may be harmed as a result of increased air pollution. Insect and other species' survival, distribution, and behavior may be affected by variations in temperature and rainfall, which can lead to shifts in infectious illnesses. Rainfall, storm surge, and ocean temperature all increase the risk of water-borne disease. People may be exposed to foodborne diseases as a consequence of tainted food due to climate change. Climate change may also have a negative impact on people's mental health and well-being. Human health may be affected by climate change by altering the intensity, length, or frequency of existing health issues, as well as by introducing new or unforeseen health issues or dangers in previously unaffected groups or regions(Crimmins et al. 2016, 45). It is vital to have an effective public health response to reduce the hazards of climate change in order to avoid injuries and diseases and improve overall readiness for public health.

While electric vehicles (EVs) are effective in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution, it is crucial to recognise that their batteries can be a fire risk if not disposed of correctly or subjected to car accidents, potentially resulting in the release of harmful substances into the air (Christensen et al. 2021, 4)Lithium-ion batteries, which are often used in electric vehicles, are composed of organic compounds in addition to heavy metals like nickel and copper. The primary cause of the highest concentration of certain metals, such as zinc and cobalt, in soil samples is the presence of zinc-carbon and cobalt in utilised lithium-ion batteries. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of electric car batteries that are approaching their end of life. Discharged batteries, if not properly disposed of, may contaminate the groundwater with hazardous heavy metals and poisonous substances, particularly if they are not recycled (Prates et al. 2022, 6). Cobalt (Co) is an increasingly sought-after chemical element in the industrial sector. Upon release into the environment, certain discarded lithium-ion batteries contain substantial quantities of cobalt, which may provide a potential threat to both people and animals, depending on the cumulative accumulation over time. Inadequate management may result in the discharge of pollutants into our water, atmosphere, and soil. Given these circumstances, maintaining the optimal condition of batteries and properly disposing of utilised Lithium-ion batteries serves as an effective

approach to reduce the introduction of hazardous waste into our environment and lessen our dependence on exhaustible natural resources. Lithium-ion batteries are recycled using hydrometallurgical, pyrometallurgical, and direct methods after they reach the end of their lives. Despite substantial study on lithium-ion battery management, there are currently no globally accepted or unified guidelines for the ecologically acceptable disposal of lithium-ion battery waste (Ahmadi et al. 2017, 113; Kang, Chen, and Ogunseitan 2013, 5498; Montoya-Bedoya et al. 2020; Sambamurthy, Raghuvanshi, and Sangwan 2021, 635; Zhang et al. 2022, 4).

Without current specific research and discussions on the advantages and disadvantages, it is not feasible to determine, how potential adverse effects resulting from depleted batteries may be reduced. Hence, it is crucial for logical reasoning and assessing noteworthy insights about lithium-ion batteries and the possible health hazards associated with battery end-of-life. In the near future, the problem of battery disposal or recycling might be effectively addressed by the implementation of insightful regulation and advancements in technology which can be achieved through research and development (R&D).

3.4.Climate change and economy

The electricity required to power electric cars may be generated from a wide range of energy sources, including those that do not rely on oil or fossil fuels at all - the widespread adoption of electric vehicles has the potential to reduce reliance on oil. This variety in the energy source for powering electric cars reduces the susceptibility of economies to swings in the price of oil as well as interruptions in oil supply that may be caused by natural disasters or by human activity. Several nations have set goals to lessen their reliance on oil by increasing the number of people driving electric vehicles instead of cars powered by oil-based systems. The transition to electric mobility has resulted in a fundamental shift in the ecology of the industry. Co-benefits from the transition to electric cars are reliant on the capacity to expand local manufacturing capabilities to minimise imports, create new enterprises and generate jobs. We need an industrial strategy that encourages innovation and encourages businesses to invest in developing their own local skills. Thus, mass growing use of electric vehicles is a frequent indicator for assessing an electric vehicle system's ability to reduce oil reliance(Su et al. 2011, 3; Battistelli, Baringo, and Conejo 2012, 56) .

Since delicensing and opening up of FDI in 1991, the industry of vehicle manufacture in India has seen significant growth and expansion. At the present time, the market for vehicle production in India is the fifth biggest in the world. Directly, the industry provides 7.1 per cent of the GDP, while indirectly, it accounts for 22 per cent of the GDP generated by manufacturing (Rosak-Szyrocka, Żywiołek, and Shahbaz 2023). According to information provided by the Society of Automobile Manufactures (SIAM), the total

number of automobiles that were manufactured in India in FY21 was 22.6 million units. India is the leading producer of two-wheelers in the world as a result of the fact that two-wheelers accounted for 80 per cent of the total output.

4. Conclusion

For cutting CO₂ emissions and decreasing reliance on fossil fuels, plug-in electric vehicles and electric vehicles have emerged as an attractive option but there are lot of technological challenges faced by the EV market of the economy be it from manufacturer's side or from customer's side. To determine and combat the technological challenges associated with the implementation of alternative and transitional energy sources in transportation, additional research is required. Additionally, future enhancements to the energy density, operating temperature range, and life cycle of battery packs are necessary to decrease expenses while expanding the driving range and battery longevity of electric vehicles. Due to the fact that raw materials comprise 75 per cent of the associated expenses of producing biodiesel, choosing an economical raw material is crucial for lowering prices.

Battery power, longevity, and energy efficiency are all important considerations for hybrid and electric vehicles. An EV's qualities, such as battery charging time, driving range, and the vehicle's maximum load capacity, can be classified based on technology. The time it takes to charge and the distance it can travel are two of the most stressful aspects for customers. EVs are becoming more popular in developing countries like India because of the recent advancements in electric vehicles. As EV manufacturers strive to reduce production costs, many innovations are expected to impact the current EV landscape in the near future (Goel, Sharma, and Rathore 2021, 5).

Primary obstacles are exorbitant expenses, insufficient charging network, apprehension over limited driving distance, and insufficient knowledge among consumers. The suggested measures include governmental incentives, allocation of resources towards charging infrastructure, breakthroughs in battery technology, and comprehensive educational efforts. These interconnected solutions are designed to address obstacles and promote a flourishing electric vehicle industry (Zhao, Doering, and Tyner 2015, 669; Tupe, Kishore, and Johnvieira 2020, 4877; Chandra and Minal 2019, 14; Kumar and Padmanaban 2019, 140; "The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC" n.d.). Currently being the fifth largest car manufacturing market globally, the adoption of electric mobility has caused a significant transformation in the industry's ecosystem. We need an industrial policy that fosters innovation and incentivizes enterprises to invest in cultivating their own local expertise resulting into decarbonizing the supply chain of EVs.

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The Resounding Silence: Exploring the Culture of Silence in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

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Abstract

Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina is frequently lauded as one of the pinnacles of realist fiction, presenting an intricate tapestry of Russian society in the late 19th century. The novel does not simply narrate the story of a doomed love affair; it masterfully showcases the culture of silence, social conflicts, and disparities of an evolving Russia, torn between the rigidities of its traditional values and the temptations of Western modernization. The depiction of Tolstoy's characters exhibiting their reticence and disparity through silence is observed. The first line of Anna Karenina is a harbinger of the underlying conflicts that shape the novel: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its way." Beyond family dynamics, the novel delves into conservatism, societal dissatisfaction, contrasting values, and the clashing forces of change.

Keywords: culture of silence, family, marriage, conflict, society, conservatism, modernization

The nineteenth century witnessed a perception among certain artists and intellectuals that Russian high society was entangled in a culture of vanity and deception, driven by the pursuit of social order within the upper ranks of society. In his novel *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy effectively illustrates the significant influence of societal norms on the protagonist, leading to his unfortunate and tragic destiny. Despite the prevalence of adultery in society, Anna stood out as the sole individual who faced the repercussions of her emotional honesty in selecting Vronsky as her partner and subsequently seeking a public divorce from her husband. Tolstoy proceeds to illustrate the capricious nature of the society surrounding Anna. The individuals in Anna's social circle experienced unease due to constrained behaviour of Anna, as they adhered to a closed system of traditional cultural norms. In the scholarly article titled "*Russian Perspectives on Anna Karenina, 1875-1878*," A.V. Knowles asserts that *Anna Karenina* addresses not only existential inquiries

regarding the meaning of life, the complexities of love and marriage, and the dynamics between spouses and their offspring but also sheds light on pertinent societal issues of the time, particularly the role and status of women in society. Knowles also points out that the portrayal of Anna as a prominent protagonist serves a beneficial purpose in shaping societal perceptions of women during the specified historical era (Knowles 1978, 301). This is primarily attributed to Anna's relentless pursuit of emotional authenticity.

There was development both in action and character. Besides treating the wider problems of the purpose of life, the question of love and marriage, the attitudes between husband and wife, and of both to their children, and the effects of a breakdown of a marriage upon the parents, it had something to say about contemporary problems - the place of women in society, the problems of landowner and peasant with the resulting poor state of agriculture, and the need for local government. There were also comments on what Soviet critics later called the difficulties created by the onset of incipient capitalism. (Knowles 1978, p. 301)

According to the analysis provided by Forrester in the book "*Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*," Russian society in the 19th century had two predominant perspectives of women. Firstly, women were often portrayed as manipulative individuals driven by shallow ambitions, resulting in their slander. Secondly, women were frequently perceived as lacking in ambition as they were confined to limited domestic spheres, leading to their being patronized. Nevertheless, Anna's character revealed a profound sense of realism and admirable qualities. She demonstrated a solid commitment to her principles and displayed unwavering empathy, significantly impacting the novel's narrative. Tolstoy's portrayal of Anna as the central protagonist profoundly influenced contemporary society, prompting a re-evaluation of women's status as independent individuals with equal significance in their pursuits and aspirations. Tolstoy's selection of Anna as a central protagonist in the novel was a judicious choice, justifying the title bestowed upon her. However, depriving her character of a gratifying resolution may have had adverse consequences.

During the specific historical period under consideration, societal norms had come to accept and normalize the occurrence of adultery. However, it is noteworthy that Tolstoy deliberately denied Anna, as a literary character, the opportunity to attain a favourable resolution or fulfilment. Suppose the character of Anna in the novel reflects the values and beliefs of contemporary readers, Tolstoy's message has two possible interpretations: either society must be at fault, or Anna herself is at fault. The critics raise concerns regarding the justification of Anna's fate, given that her character meets a tragic end due to her succumbing to the pressures she faced. In her article "*Scapegoating, Double-Plotting, and the Justice of Anna Karenina*," Catherine Brown provides an overview of the different perspectives regarding Anna's ultimate fate in the novel, which can be considered deserved. This article examines the concept of Anna serving as a scapegoat for persecution, both within the context of the novel and in the real world during its publication. In essence, Anna's sacrifice resulted in her condemnation within both tangible and abstract communities, even though adultery was as prevalent during that era as it is in contemporary society.

There exists an overlap between Anna's scapegoating in and by the text, since the narrative not only criticizes those who censure Anna for, and only for, the openness of her adultery, but also implicitly supports them in con-demning open adultery more than discreet adultery. (Brown 2011, p.181)

According to Brown's argument, this evidence supports Tolstoy's assertion that when a woman defies societal norms, society perceives her actions as personal affronts and seizes every chance to criticize her, aiming to enhance its significance and moral righteousness. The societal response to critiquing Anna for her choices confirms Tolstoy's depiction of the correlation between the superficial nature of Anna's fictional society and the shallowness prevalent in people's actual lives. In a sense, this phenomenon dismantles the boundary separating the realm of fiction from that of the people. However, it is crucial to recognize that Tolstoy's commentary on Anna's destiny is

fundamentally rooted in examining societal dynamics. The tendency of individuals in society to prioritize perceptions often leads them to disregard their shortcomings. Brown renders:

They include those which imply that her suffering is justified, and those which lower her dignity. Wholly justified suffering is not tragic: the deterioration of Anna's character, her abandonment of her son, and lack of interest in her daughter, function in part to make her suffering seem appropriate. Tragic protagonists also have a degree of stature, but Anna's dignity is eventually lost: her attendance of the St Petersburg theatre is desperate rather than defiant, and during her last journey she is presented as psychologically disturbed. All of these features can be seen to limit the degree to which Anna is a scapegoat of her text, by presenting her as deserving of a degree of non-tragic suffering. (Brown 2011, p. 186)

According to Tolstoy, individuals who ignore their imperfections tend to criticize the weaknesses of others as a means of achieving personal satisfaction. The ability of society to persist as a counterforce to innate human nature can be attributed to the comfort derived from repetition. Every society is characterized by a set of implicit rules and unspoken expectations. During the 19th century, the Russian aristocracy experienced a significant burden of societal expectations, which had the potential to stifle an individual's ability to express himself effectively. The phenomenon of cultural silence extends beyond the mere act of concealing truths and serves to uphold a collective pretence within society. Despite her luminous presence in society, Anna is burdened by the double standards placed upon her. The protagonist's involvement with Vronsky transcends mere passion, representing a profound yearning for authenticity and sincere emotional connection. Nevertheless, the societal norms and expectations cast her as an outcast, whereas Vronsky

experiences minimal repercussions. The presence of a gendered disparity highlights the prevailing culture of silence that disproportionately affects women, who often feel compelled to suppress their aspirations to conform to societal expectations.

Dolly, the wife of Stiva, serves as another representative character exemplifying the phenomenon of silencing. Despite being aware of her spouse's extramarital affairs, she maintains a reticent stance, thereby preserving the unity of her familial unit. The act of sacrifice undertaken by the individual in question, motivated by maternal love and societal norms, serves as a poignant representation of the multitude of voices suppressed due to the obligations associated with maintaining familial reputation. As Russia underwent the process of modernization, significant changes were observed in its core, namely the expansive rural landscape. The liberation of the serfs and subsequent agricultural reforms resulted in a substantial divide between the nobility and the peasantry. Levin's endeavours to implement contemporary agricultural techniques on his estate exemplify the overarching obstacles encountered by the aristocracy. The individual's enthusiasm for agrarian reforms is often confronted with opposition from both the peasantry, who harbour scepticism towards alterations, and their colleagues, who perceive these modifications as unwarranted disturbances to the established order. A.V. Knowles states:

There is clearly no loving happiness between him and Dolly, but they organize their lives well enough and Dolly even feels some humility before the father of her children. The family as a whole lives reasonably happily. But, wonders Stankevi', what if it had been Dolly who had transgressed? What would have happened to the family then? Would not the children have suffered? Would Stiva's face have kept its openness and kindly smile? And what would have been Dolly's fate? All the meaning of the family as a unit, all its potential, stability, and morality depend on the wife and mother. If she destroys the family she will as certainly destroy herself, for all the meaning she has as a woman will vanish. (Knowles 1978, p. 307)

The disparity between the nobility and the peasantry is quite apparent. While the aristocracy enjoys a relatively wealthy lifestyle, they remain oblivious or apathetic towards the hardships faced by the general populace. The implemented reforms, intending to emancipate the serfs, frequently worsened their circumstances as they confronted the intricacies associated with newfound autonomy and property rights. The convergence of the two themes is evident in the personal lives of the characters. Despite encountering external transformations, the Russian nobility continues to be trapped by their reluctance. The union between Levin and Kitty in Tolstoy's novel serves as a symbolic representation of this convergence. Although he presents himself as an advocate for progress and change in public, he frequently encounters challenges in meeting societal expectations within his personal life. The journey undertaken by the couple serves as a reflection of the broader societal transformation, highlighting the imperative for both external and internal reform.

The life of Anna serves as a compelling illustration of the profound repercussions that arise from the intersection of societal transformation and the prevailing culture of silence. Amid a dynamic societal landscape, she harbours a deep longing for authentic affection, yet finds herself constrained by the inflexible societal norms imposed by her privileged social sphere. The novel *Anna Karenina* effectively exposes the underlying tensions within a society on the verge of significant change. The coexistence of a culture of silence within the context of agricultural reforms serves as a poignant reminder of the intricate nature of human existence. The pursuit of progress extends beyond surface-level reforms, necessitating a critical examination of prevailing societal norms and the willingness to challenge oppressive silences. A set of implicit rules and unspoken expectations characterizes every society. During the 19th century, the Russian aristocracy experienced a significant burden of societal expectations, which had the potential to stifle an individual's ability to express themselves effectively. The phenomenon of cultural silence extended beyond mere concealing truths, instead serving to uphold a collective pretence within society. Despite her luminous presence in society, Anna is burdened by the double standards placed upon her. The protagonist's involvement with Vronsky transcends mere passion,

representing a profound yearning for authenticity and sincere emotional connection. Nevertheless, the societal norms and expectations cast her as an outcast, whereas Vronsky experiences minimal repercussions. The presence of a gendered disparity highlights the prevailing culture of silence that disproportionately affects women, who often feel compelled to suppress their aspirations to conform to societal expectations. In his article, *Tolstoy and Anna Karenina*, Maninng portrays the crucial point at which Anna is totally devastated when she has in mind the father of her second child was Vronsky and her confession of it. The cry of her silence was loud and he denotes:

Her affair with Vronsky passes beyond the mere social diversion of an unmoral society. It is the same with Vronsky. His mother who smiles at the intrigue in the beginning cuts off his allowance when he declines to leave Anna for a brilliant career in Siberia, where his less able comrade Serpukhovsky wins rapid promotion. It is because of this depth of feeling that Anna so lightly throws her security to the winds when Vronsky falls at the races. She does not think of the price which she must pay for her confession that Vronsky is the father of her next child. In her mind Vronsky has replaced Karenin and her starved cravings as a wife re-assert themselves. (Maninng 1927, p. 513)

At the core of the Russian aristocratic culture resides an unspoken set of behavioural norms, which emphasise upholding family prestige and societal expectations. Consequently, a prevailing atmosphere of reticence prevails, wherein individual aspirations and veracities become submerged beneath the burden of societal norms and anticipations. Anna's involvement with Vronsky can be interpreted as more than a mere romantic endeavour but a bold act of defiance against the oppressive societal norms that promote silence and conformity. As she endeavours to pursue genuine love and establish meaningful connections, societal forces progressively drive her towards seclusion, exemplifying the profound consequences of questioning deeply ingrained familial norms. Anna's social exclusion underscores the gendered aspect of family expectations and the degree to which society is inclined to uphold a culture of silence.

Tolstoy presents a dichotomy between two contrasting environments: the alluring but frequently shallow urban locales of St. Petersburg and Moscow and the authentic and down-to-earth rural landscapes symbolized by Levin's estate. The portrayal of the urban setting in *Anna Karenina* is marked by a conspicuous display of wealth, indulgence, and a rigid conformity to established social conventions. The salons, balls, and theatres are prominent venues where the prevailing culture of silence is particularly conspicuous. Interactions are characterized by caution, and individuals diligently uphold their outward image. The extramarital relationship between Anna and Vronsky, which originated within an urban environment, emerges as a focal point of controversy, illustrating the city's lack of tolerance towards violations of social norms. On the other hand, rural landscapes provide a respite from societal affectations. Levin's challenges in agricultural pursuits and subsequent union with Kitty symbolize a reconnection with authentic emotions, diverging from the superficiality imposed by societal norms. However, even within this context, the phenomenon of maintaining silence continues to prevail. Despite his inclination towards progressive ideologies, Levin occasionally yields to the influence of conventional familial norms. The divergent environments in which the story unfolds play a significant role beyond their superficial function as mere settings. They profoundly influence the characters' choices, particularly in relation to familial obligations and societal expectations. The urban environment amplifies Anna's growing sense of isolation. The urban thoroughfares, theatrical venues, and social gathering places that were once venues of adoration for her have now transformed into restricting confines. On the other hand, it is worth considering whether her destiny could have taken a divergent course within the compassionate environment of rural areas. Their romantic connection flourishes amidst the serene rural landscape, shielded from the intrusive gaze of metropolitan society. However, it is essential to note that even these individuals are not entirely exempt from the influence of familial expectations. The process by which they achieve a shared understanding is evidence of the hidden conflicts that numerous couples encounter, regardless of their external circumstances.

Religion holds significant influence within the social sphere of humanity, as its teachings are translated into observable behaviours exhibited by individuals. Religion is a framework and perspective through which individuals navigate their social and spiritual existence. In the introductory passage of his journal titled “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,” Marx posits that religion serves as a focal point for the marginalized individual, offering solace in an otherwise devoid and alienating society. It is described as the essence of a world lacking compassion and the nature of a condition devoid of vitality. It serves as the opiate of the masses. Marx places significant emphasis on the role of religion within society, highlighting its potential to be utilized to oppress individuals and groups. The unwavering faith in religion can occasionally lead individuals to exhibit irrational behaviour akin to being influenced by a sedative such as opium. The principles and mandates of religious doctrines often exert a compelling force on individuals, compelling them to engage in specific actions, which is clearly shown in the novel:

. . .he said with a smile showing sympathy for the priests' tastes. There is no doubt that the letter can provide partial proof; but the evidence must be obtained by direct means, namely from witnesses. In short, if you give me respect and give me trust, let me make a choice about the methods that must be taken in this. Whoever wants results, he must use methods. (AK 2004, p. 476)

There exist multiple terminologies about religious matters. According to the lawyer, cases of this nature (specifically, divorce) were adjudicated by the Spiritual Department, known for its deep involvement and meticulous attention to even the most minor aspects of such cases. In the context of household matters, it is customary for individuals to seek guidance from religious leaders, mainly priests, within the Christian community. It is evident that religion significantly influences various aspects of human existence. Every religious tradition encompasses social and religious norms. Humans possess various limitations in multiple aspects, encompassing both observable and supernatural phenomena. Additionally, humans face limitations in predicting future events about themselves and others, among other areas. Due to this inherent constraint,

human beings rely on religion to seek assistance and attain spiritual enlightenment. Karenin encountered various challenges when confronted with the issues arising from his relationship with Anna. Karenin, who has steadfastly adhered to Christian beliefs, posits that religion significantly impacts an individual's attitude and personality. Karenin's actions indicate a lack of consideration for the Christian law that had previously guided him, wherein he demonstrated forgiveness and love towards his adversaries. A dialogue occurred between Levin and the Priest. The clergyman stated:

You want to get married, and maybe God grant you descent, don't you? Then education, what can you give to your sons, if you don't can defeat in you the temptations of demons that will attract you're in the absence of faith? 'He said in a scolding tone, but soft.' If you love your child, you are a father good will not just expect wealth, luxury, or honour for your child; You will expect his safety, spiritual development, in the light of truth. Is that not the case? What will you answer him if the innocent child asks you: 'Papa, who created everything that interests me in this world-earth, water, sunshine, flowers, grasses?' 'What might you answer to him: 'I don't know?' You are impossible did not know that, because God with his love who great has opened it to you. Or your child asks: 'What awaits me after death?' How You give him the answer if you don't know anything? How will you give an answer to him? Is will only you give him the pleasure of the world and the devil? It's not good!" He said, then stopped while shaking his head and looked at Levin with eyes that showed kindness heart and soft attitude. (AK 2004, p. 59)

Marx appreciated the protestant reforms which impacted social life at the time. One of the spirits of the Protestant Reformation that appeals to Marx is anti-clericalism. For Boer, anti-clericalism has always been essential and very satisfying because it has become an open space for critical thinking on theology or religion (Boer 2014, p. 62-63). The depiction of Russia in Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* symbolizes a nation grappling with its sense of identity and facing critical choices. A dichotomy exists between conventional cultural values and the appeal of Western modernity. As urban centres increasingly adopt European ideals, there is a prevailing notion that

change, in its various manifestations, is an inevitable phenomenon. Within the context of evolving social dynamics, the individuals portrayed in the literary work face the challenge of navigating their internalized reticence. A prevalent cultural phenomenon involves upholding a façade, preserving the existing social order, and subduing personal aspirations for the collective benefit of the family unit and broader society.

The silence exhibited by Anna in her relationship with Vronsky can be interpreted as an indication of her constrained existence within her marital union with Karenin. The individual desires expression of authentic love and passion, yet societal conventions impose silence upon her. In the case of her brother Stiva's adultery, Anna appears to be very powerful and had control over the overwhelming scenario of in the family. She witfully handles the situation in the family and persuades and helps Dolly to resolve the awful, unpleasant, and frustrating circumstance in the family. When it comes to her case, she turns out to be silent though she had taken a stand to live the life she desired. She was unable to strongly confess and outwardly live a social life. The aristocratic expectations bestowed upon Anna compelled her to revert to the patriarchal framework regarding expectations of women's behaviour. The eventual ostracization and tragic demise she experienced serve as a poignant illustration of the profound repercussions that arise from daring to question and challenge this prevailing silence. Despite the ongoing transformative processes in Russia, the personal lives of the characters depicted in the narrative continue to be confined within the confines of a culture characterized by reticence and secrecy. Levin, acting as a representative of the rural aristocracy, endeavours to bring in agricultural reforms. The individual encounters opposition in response to his progressive ideals. As he navigates the evolving dynamics of his estate, the individual also encounters personal gaps in communication, particularly in his association with Kitty. The difficulties they face in their communication efforts indicate a broader societal dilemma: the need to embrace change while being anchored to historical traditions.

Conclusion

One of the most notable instances of irony in Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* is the juxtaposition of the inexorable and inevitable nature of change with the enduring presence of a culture of silence. The characters within the narrative exhibit a perpetual transformation state while the societal structure undergoes instability concurrently. However, the burden of unexpressed thoughts and emotions persists, exerting a suppressive influence. The urban centres depicted in the novel serve as prime examples of dynamic transformation. The individuals actively discuss novel concepts, contemporary trends in Western fashion, and forward-thinking ideologies. However, within these establishments, the phenomenon of a pervasive culture of silence is most deeply entrenched. Instances of scandal are often suppressed, acts of indiscretion are frequently disregarded, and efforts are consistently made to uphold a carefully cultivated image. Occasional instances of rebellion and expressions of individuality accompany the prevalence of a culture of silence. The transformation of Kitty from a disillusioned young woman to a self-assured spouse and mother symbolizes a progressive departure from prevailing societal norms. The individual's personal development in response to the shifting environment serves as a metaphor for the capacity to discover one's expression during a profound absence of sound. *Anna Karenina* is a testament to the inherent dualities that define the human condition. As societal progress continues, it is evident that certain enduring constraints persistently restrict the essence of human nature. Tolstoy's depiction of the cultural phenomenon of silence in the face of unavoidable change serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities and decisions that shape our identities, both on an individual level and within the broader context of society.

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**Analysis of Social Stigma and Prejudice
on Women Characters in Khaled Hosseini's
A Thousand Splendid Suns
Sona T & S. K. Ponmalar**

Abstract

Under a patriarchal society, women are subjected and restrained with tonnes of burdens, sacrifices, and social exclusions. Khaled Hosseini portrays how they live and struggle under the hands of prejudiced Afghan society and wicked Taliban, which is very much reflected in his writings. His works can bring out the authentic representation of psyches and difficulties of women unchanging with the time. The apprehension of the females trapped in the predicament of freedom, originality, steadiness, and security is unfathomable. However, Hosseini tries to illustrate the accurate experiences, emotions, desires, and actual traumatic encounters of Afghan women through his female characters. Seeing its significance, the present study is set to assess the partiality towards women in the Afghan realm decisively. To attain empowerment, women have to come across many predicaments, abandonment, and exploitation in their whole lifespan. This unwavering condition gets worse over the class conflicts and rule of the Taliban, which affect the people predominantly female groups. Thus, this paper seeks to scrutinize how the women characters are prejudiced and stigmatized in the conflict-stricken society.

Keywords: Stigma, Male dominance, Prejudice, Brutality, Education, Identity, Empowerment.

For the past three decades, the literary world has witnessed phenomenal success in exhibiting the ongoing burning issues related to women and their anguish other than those disputes in the culture for an extended period. They mainly concentrate on the cruel world of women with stunning frankness and misconceptions. They investigate the unexplored and confined female psyche, which is inaccessible for rural women to know their fundamental rights. Most of these novels depict the psychological and physical suffering of frustrated women as housewives, daughters, and others. The despair and suppression of major women communities caused by the male community in society are explained in South Asian novels. Freedom could be enhanced when the inhibited mind-set of women changed by the anticipation of attaining emancipation.

The patriarchal ideas always restrained them from achieving liberation from exploitation and enslavement. This society treats women as a secondary category, which denies the most basic needs that are essential for humans.

Khaled Hosseini is one of the celebrated novelists for his pragmatic insight and portrayal of his homeland, Afghanistan. He competently depicts the prevailing old and contemporary socio-political conditions of Afghanistan and the dictatorship and enslavement of women in the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan through his novels. He skilfully represents the realm of reminiscence, love, friendship, humiliation, and the status of Afghan women. Besides, the centre of ideas of his novels is the influence of human relations in the culture, which has to endure contrary and wild differences from conflict to harmony consistently. He exhibits his opinion on the tragic circumstances of Afghan society and specifically on the predicament of Afghan women who are targeted more — one hand in home and enforced governance.

His novels elaborate on how women are confined and broken because they rely upon the male community, and they must emerge from the traumatic encounter to shackle the restrictions to gain emancipation. A woman like Mariam struggles to survive in society because their emotions are always suppressed or rejected. So they undergo lots of trauma, especially if it indicates their mental illness. Hosseini's novel "A Thousand Splendid Sun" is proposed to be taken for this article, A Thousand Splendid Sun. Thus, the current study aims to analyze the stigmatized chauvinistic practice that exploits women in this society.

Hosseini also investigates the interaction between oppression, suppression, and self-determination experienced by women, mainly in the domestic sphere. He notably presents the unchanging notion that Afghan women who are traditional followers are encountering a series of issues in the Taliban regime and its aftermath. Commonly, his female characters like Laila and Mariam are concerned about their feelings, dismissing the prevailing customs and societal setup and longing for freedom and a progressive life. In this aspect, Hosseini explores a wide range of female characters like Mariam, Pari, Susana, and Laila, who have different experiences that question the recurring face of patriarchal conflict, the dominance of Russia, and the atrocities of the Taliban.

This societal setup always makes women endure everything without questioning it. They are treated as ragged dolls, as any man can do anything to them. They always take violence as a weapon to control the women and their actions. Usually, men believe that violence is the best tool to oppress all kinds of female communities. In addition to it, the ethnic conflict also made women suffer more. This shows the exact scenario Laila heard that Pashtun militiamen were attacking Hazara households, breaking in and shooting

entire families, execution style and that Hazaras retaliated by abducting Pashtun civilians and raping Pashtun girls, shelling Pashtun neighbourhoods, and killing indiscriminately (Hosseini 2013, p. 173). Women are always targeted to harm most brutally. Many women can handle these abuses differently from others. The constraint on women's freedom provides more desire to search for empowerment.

Traditional values and customs still govern South Asian countries like India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; women find it challenging to manage their gendered roles as mother, wife, and daughter. They are stuck in between their family and society. They are advised to bear everything that happens in life, as Nana said to Mariam: Only one skill. And it's this: tahamul. Endure (Hosseini 2013). They cannot find time to even think about their dreams and desires. They don't even have time to contemplate their emotions and feelings. If they try to make that time, they are considered as an alien and stranger in the society who breaks the convention. This tragic state of women forces them to live a wilful life. Thus, this society is mainly patriarchal, which causes them to do everything according to the social dogmas and system.

For many years, women constantly become the victims of traditional norms and dogmas. Throughout her life, she is entirely forced to depend upon men, which leads to losing her originality. A woman, being an individual, has the power to access fundamental rights without any intervention. The patriarch always forces them to be persistent, not to talk aloud, not to keep their head high, not to get consent for the Marriage, and the list is endless. Mary comments that women want power that belongs to her, not to overpower a man; I do not wish them (women) to have control over a man" (Wollstonecraft [1792] 2017, p. 81). The matriarch community needs to understand their strength and also should focus on their own life. They don't need to depend on the men of their family. They need not bother about men's opinions towards them. It is not easy for them to free themselves from conventional clutches. They must cross many struggles and hurdles to reach their desired societal status. She can be an independent individual to live her life as she wishes.

In General, most Afghans do not know how to read and write. The total number of schools and literates in Afghanistan remained low per global need. Afghans are deprived of education as they are ignorant and traditional people. Hosseini emphasizes the importance of women's education as it paves the way for their emancipation. Afghan women are primarily uneducated, like Mariam and Nana. Thus, he uses quotes like "Marriage can wait, education cannot" (Hosseini 2013, p. 114). The parents do not even ask about their daughter's concerns about the Marriage. They consider the daughters as a burden and believe that by marrying them, they will be free from their responsibility. Even though they have great ambition, they are compelled to look after their husband's needs and remain in the kitchen after the Marriage.

After the Taliban regained their power in Afghanistan, they still made their life miserable by imposing unethical laws. To make it worse, the Taliban even bans women from working in media houses and prohibits them from any business. In addition, even in the Twenty-first century, the Taliban dictates a nationwide ban on University education for Afghan girls. The Taliban knows that if women get an education, they will demand their rights and question their atrocities. Furthermore, the Taliban already excluded girls from secondary schooling. But Hosseini earlier mentions "And also I know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated" (Hosseini 2013, p. 114). A good education paves a way to think independently to survive in a biased society.

Under the Taliban, Afghanistan is constantly at war, and people cannot get proper hospital care for ailments. Women are denied treatment by male doctors and are allowed to be treated only by female doctors. "This hospital no longer treats women" (Hosseini 2013). Consequently, female doctors are fewer in number, which deprives sick and pregnant women of getting proper treatment in the hospitals. In this way, Laila went into labour; she was accompanied to the hospital by Mariam and Rasheed. During that time, female doctors were unavailable and didn't have the proper facilities to do the labour. She gives birth to the son with the help of a nurse and Mariam. This shows the utmost brutality of stigmatized rules, which cost many lives, especially women. No one is worried about the physical and mental health of women. Some women are raped brutally and left without proper medication. They are forced to bear many children without knowing about their natural health. There is a sense of fear and isolation experienced by almost every woman in Afghanistan. From childhood, Mariam felt isolated after her mother committed suicide. She feels guilt as she is responsible for her death. Even after Marriage, she has felt alienated from the other humans. She builds her world and lives on it. It shows the mental state of Mariam.

Hosseini focuses not only on their physical pain but also talks about mental torment and suffering. From birth, Mariam doesn't know her real identity. As she grows up, she learns she is unlike other children in Herat. Mariam's father, Jalil, doesn't accept Mariam and his mother as his family. Nana and Mariam are kept from their hometown, almost hidden from the real world. Jalil doesn't give any respect or recognition to Nana. He only shares his entire attention with Mariam when he visits her. He could not fulfil her desire to watch an animated movie with him. When Mariam visits her father, she is not allowed to enter the mansion, which makes her suffer under the cold night. Not even once did he come out to see her well-being; as a child, she could not comprehend her mother's words. Later in her life, she understands her mother's

comments "A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn't like a mother's womb" (Hosseini 2013, p. 27).

Moreover, after her mother's death, her father didn't refuse her alliance with Rasheed, as his wives forced her to marry him. "Mariam was no longer keeping track of who was saying what. She stared at Jalil, waiting for him to speak up, to say that none of this was true. (Hosseini 2013, p. 47)." She hopefully looked at her father to save her from clutches. He was not even shown any protest or refusal on this matter. This made Mariam furious with her father, especially after Rasheed ill-treated her.

As per law in Afghanistan, Women should wear a burqa to hide body and face. But in reality, it conceals their real emotions and identity. A character like Laila's struggle between tradition and modernity encourages them to plunge into a dedicated effort to crave an identity for themselves as an ideal individual. Mariam is the epitome of traditional embodiments who struggle to discard the conventional norms for long. Laila is nourished with modern thoughts like education and independence are essential in a woman's life. They focus on creating a name for them as an individual in the society. After many struggles, with the sacrifice of Mariam, she achieved her and Mariam's dream.

Generally, society ignores the existence and involvement of women in society are constrained by patriarchal ideologies. The parents, especially the men, believe that girls are born to bond in the Marriage. As the mothers don't have a say in it, they must unthinkingly follow their husbands' words. Child marriage is prevalent in the Afghan society. They are forced to marry double their age men, irrespective of their age difference. As the girls are considered a burden and responsibility, they want to marry them as early as possible. But most women always feel that "To get married and end up doing just what your mother did seemed to me not only terrible but damnable" (Deshpande 2009). Mainly, women are restricted from expressing their feelings and emotions in these aspects. They are not allowed to study further and to follow their dreams. Marriage is a namesake that provides license to men to have sexual intercourse without their wife's concern. This similar situation could be seen in the novel "The Pearl That Broke Its Shell" by Nadia Hashimi. In that, Abdul Khaliq is attracted to Rahima and wants to marry her to appease his carnal desire. Through the following lines, he is a man who believes a woman is only to satisfy a man's hunger for him. After Marriage, their life becomes miserable, and they should focus on fulfilling a wife's duty.

On the surface level, one can see the women leading comfortable and luxurious lives, but internally, they are wounded and strife-ridden. Their so-called easy and comfortable life fails to give them peace, love, and satisfaction, which they cherish the most, and they must live without it throughout their lives. They are

mostly deprived of love and care. This type of plight makes her life even worse. Women are considered inferior to husbands as men's sexual property is intensely embedded in tradition-bound South-Asian society. The husband feels that he has the right to treat her as his puppet and possession. The husbands do not bother about their wife's needs and comfort. They focus on fulfilling their own needs and comfort. Likewise, the writers portray women like Mariam and Rahima, whose husband only uses them for physical pleasure. Besides, he always ignores her and marries Laila despite their vast age gap. Mariam hates her husband as he will spoil the life of Laila. After Laila's Marriage with her husband, Mariam and Laila are indifferent to each other. Later, they developed an unusual relationship, like a mother and daughter. At the novel's end, she saves Laila from her husband and makes her unite with her lover, Tariq. Thus, Mariam strongly implores a fundamental transformation in the state of women from being a plaything in the hands of men to becoming a strong partner to save their rights and dignity.

Every female character in Hosseini's novel underwent a series of abuse either at home or in society. Most Afghans are uneducated; they believe in superstitious beliefs and age-old traditions without knowing the pros and cons. If we take Mariam's mother, she is considered an outcast as she gives birth to a child out of wedlock. She lives in a secluded area away from Kabul with her daughter, Mariam. Yet Mariam's father, who already has a family, is considered an excellent social man. The woman might not know about his marital status, and even then, she is the one to be blamed as Nana pesters Mariam to learn that "Learn this now and learn it well. Like a compass facing north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember it." (Hosseini 2013, p. 7). The man who has an illegal affair is considered a gentleman in society. Still, women undergo humiliation and are treated as untouchable, even their children, especially when it is a girl child. Nana and Mariam are also accused and suffer, but not Jalil, who is equally responsible. She will be treated as an enslaved person, servant, passive wife, and sexual worker and will not get any privilege from their own family. This stigmatized practice makes them endure much pain and sacrifices.

In this manner, Rasheed, a shoemaker, is the perfect embodiment of male dominance which prevailed in the Afghan society. He is very violent. He is a typical male who behaves rudely as he wishes and considers women as a plaything. He brutally abuses Mariam physically, mentally, and verbally, even Laila, at some point in the novel. "If she was lucky, she was given a reprimand or a single kick to the rear, a shove in the back. Other times, she met with assortments of wooden clubs, fresh tree branches, short whips, slaps, often fists" (Hosseini 2013, p. 92). He always constrains Mariam to do everything according to his demands. He insists they wear a shawl and doesn't allow them to go out without him as per Taliban law. Then, he uses

his wives for physical pleasure and household work. "Mariam is a different breed of man. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilt. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only. I want you to remember that" (Hosseini 2013, p. 69). This line shows the original thoughts of Rasheed about the women in his family. Apart from that, he doesn't involve them in any household decisions or even he doesn't ring them to his shop. He believes that women are restricted to being the four walls and to do household work.

In the earlier days of Marriage, he behaves nicely with Mariam. When he finds out Mariam and Laila are pregnant, he treats them well. After Mariam's miscarriage, he drastically changes his behaviour towards her. He always yearns for the boy child, but Mariam cannot conceive again. Rasheed ignores her daughter's existence. He treats Zalmai with utmost care and buys everything he desires. Rasheed mentions that it's Zalmai Television and so on. He hates girl children, so he keeps his distance from his daughter Aziza. Later in the novel, he makes them admit her to the orphanage under certain circumstances.

Nevertheless, when Laila gives birth to a baby boy, Rasheed treats them well. He supports and cherishes his son with extended love. Zalmai also considers Rasheed as an idol for his life. He obeys his father's words without any inhibitions. After Rasheed learns that Aziza is not his daughter but Tariq's son, he is outrageous and starts manhandling Laila. Mariam and Laila do not understand how to control him as he is about to kill Laila. So, she killed Rasheed to save Laila. Even though she knows she can't escape from Taliban governance, she wants to protect Zalmai and Aziza from her beast husband to be not like Rasheed; thus, Mariam says, "You treat your mother well" (Hosseini 2013, p. 351). Though Rasheed is the father of Zalmai, Mariam and Laila don't want to become like his father. Both Aziza and Zalmai are not biological children of Mariam. Yet she loves them as like her, especially Aziza, she resembles her own life.

In contrast, there is a saying that Women are another woman's worst enemy. They constantly speak about how men treated women brutally. But they forget how a woman degrades and humiliates another woman. Especially when a woman is a mother, she is considerate and compassionate toward her daughter. The same mother reduces other' daughters. Jalil's wives force Mariam to marry a man who is double her age. When Mariam's half-sisters are studying at Mehri School. "the last trace of their husband's scandalous mistake. Mariam is considered a disgrace to their family; she is away because she is the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame" (Hosseini 2013, p. 48). When a woman cannot give birth to a child, she will be named as barren and disgraced in society, in particular by a woman. Every woman must understand that

they should be united without restrictions and prejudice to save one another from a male-dominated society, like how Mariam saved Laila from Rasheed.

Unlike Jalil and Rasheed, Laila's father, Hakim is a compassionate man with progressive thoughts and actions. He gives complete freedom to his wife and daughter; even his wife won't wear a burqa when she goes out. Hence, Rasheed warns Mariam not to talk with them as Hakim and his wife don't live conventional lives. Rasheed says “Best you stay away. She's a nosy gossip, that one. And husband fancies himself some educated intellectual. But he's a mouse. Look at him. Doesn't he look like a mouse?” (Hosseini 2013, p. 79). Yet Hakim doesn't bother about another opinion of him.

Consequently, he was a teacher who constantly imparted the importance of education in Laila's mind from a young age. Not only that, even after he is terminated from his job by the Soviet government, he is focused on educating his daughter. As a responsible father, he clears all her doubts in major subjects after he comes home. When the Soviet regime gave women some privileges, they started university studies. This made traditional people enraged against Soviet rule. However, he advises Laila to grab the opportunity. “It's an excellent time to be a woman in Afghanistan. And you can take advantage of that, Laila” (Hosseini 2013, p. 121).

Laila had a good upbringing, unlike Mariam. She had a different lifestyle and lived as she wished. Laila Even Hakim doesn't stop Laila's friendship with Tariq. They share a special bond at some point, becoming a romantic relationship. Like Hakim, Tariq also supports Laila in every step of her life. Later, Laila accepts to marry Rasheed after she hears the news of Tariq's death and conceives with Tariq's child. After Rasheed is killed, Tariq is the one who guides and supports Laila and her children as he mentions “I'll follow you to the end of the world, Laila” (Hosseini 2013, p. 39). Tariq proves that every man is not self-centric and egoistic; some are very good and understanding after living amidst cruel beings. With these types of men, women can easily survive this ruthless society.

Hence, for years, women have constantly degraded and not allowed to secure certain positions in the world. The patriarchal dominance has always targeted women in various sects like Marriage, education, fundamental rights, and so on in this society. Disc discrepancies come up from different diagonals to shackle the women's hope. The leading female roles like Mariam and Laila are souls who go through pain and face all the political circumstances, ethnic divergences, and the governance of others in their lives. Mariam knows that if she commits the crime of killing Rasheed, she can't escape from the hands of the Taliban. If Mariam doesn't take steps to save Laila from Rasheed, their life would be even more painful

than the present one. Also, Aziza won't get a better life with Laila and Tariq. She would have a tragic life at the orphanage and can't know whether she survived the war. Mariam's courageousness saves Laila, Tariq, Aziza and Zalmai.

As a result, Afghan women are in a state of perplexity and encounter emotional vulnerability. It depicts the diverse women's personalities and the diversity within each woman living in a prejudiced society. Claims of equality and liberation haunt most women; they find it difficult to adjust to the burden and reality of life, especially to pass through traditional values and practices. Hence, every woman struggles to overcome hurdles in their life to create their own identity, like Laila and Mariam. For other, Mariam leaves this world but for Laila she lives in her own heart like a radiance of thousand suns. Henceforth, it represents the emergence of strong women who break the expected way of living in a prejudiced society.

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**Making Development More Sustainable:
The Role of Participatory Initiatives in the North-Eastern States of India
Sreelekha. R. G**

Abstract

The United Nations created the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in recognition of the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in reducing poverty and the need to accomplish the task of eradicating poverty. When we analyse the case of North Eastern States (NES) in achieving these goals, the recent data revealed that the poorest residents of India are concentrated in this area. In the absence of development initiatives and effective governance this region necessitates greater institutional engagement, a decentralised power structure, prohibition of discrimination, observance of human rights, and people-centered economic and social policies. The study is based on secondary data which attempts to analyse the developmental challenges faced by NER (North Eastern Region) and to find out to what extent the concept of empowered participatory governance is pertinent in this case and to analyse the various participatory initiatives taken by different levels of Governments and the extent of its effectiveness to ensure sustainable development in the NES.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, Empowerment, Decentralisation, People's Participation, Gram Sabha

Introduction

Sustainability, which is essentially the capacity to maintain people, civilizations, and ecosystems on Earth, is an issue that face modern humans and communities. It is anticipated that in the future, these difficulties would grow in importance. A society's and its members' primary goal should therefore be achieving sustainability (Rosen 2018,1). According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, development must be sustainable in order to guarantee that future generations will be able to meet their own needs(WCED)(1987,8). In order to achieve sustainable development, the right to information and participation was emphasised at both the UNCED Earth Summit (1992) and the World

Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). Thus, a fundamental principle of sustainable development is the consideration of the social, environmental, and ethical aspects of human activities and decisions (Ward 2012, 41-42).

The cornerstone of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda (SDG 2011) aims to end poverty and hunger while also advancing health, happiness, gender equality, access to clean energy, sustainable industry, ethical building and manufacturing, preservation of marine and terrestrial life, climate change, mitigation, peace, and equity. Every development project is assessed for effectiveness according to how well it affects people's lives, as well as income levels and other outcomes. Consequently, development requires efficient governance, which calls for more institutional participation, a decentralised power structure, the outlawing of discrimination, the respect for human rights, and people-centred social and economic policies (UNDP 2002, 51-83; Eapen 2006, 416). Generally speaking, development is a process that raises people's standard of living. Fung and Wright's concept of empowered participatory governance upholds the values of empowerment, deliberation, and participation by giving the general public the ability to actively participate in and influence laws that directly affect their lives. This strengthens democracy by fostering a new development culture that will act as a counterbalance to economic globalisation (Fung and Wright 2003, 3-4).

Lagging of Development in the North-East

The North Eastern region of India, comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim, is home to 3.78 per cent of the nation's population and 7.98 per cent of its total land area. Moreover, the proportion of ST people in states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland exceeds 85 per cent (Singh 2022, 22). According to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021, people who live in NES are highly deprived in terms of health, education, and style of life. The report revealed that the poorest residents in India are concentrated in this area, Assam (32.67 per cent), Meghalaya (32.67 per cent), Nagaland (25.23 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (24.27 per cent), Manipur

(17.87 per cent), Tripura (16.65 per cent), Mizoram (9.80 per cent), and Sikkim with (3.82 per cent). The poverty rates in Assam (32.67 per cent), Meghalaya (32.67 per cent), and Nagaland (25.23 per cent) are all higher than the national average (25.01 per cent) (Niti Aayog 2021,34).

The SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) India Index 2019 by NITI Aayog offers crucial insights into the social, economic, and environmental conditions of the country's states and union territories, including the Northeast. Of the 28 states in the NES, Arunachal Pradesh (ranked 26), Meghalaya (ranked 25), Assam (ranked 23), and Mizoram (ranked 21) have the lowest overall index scores. There are three states ranked between 10 and 20, namely Nagaland (18th), Tripura (15th), and Manipur (13th). Using the 2019 index score, the NITI Aayog separated the states into four categories according to how much they have deviated from the goal: "achievers" with a score of 100, "front runners" with a score of 65 or more, "performers" with a score of 50 and above, and "aspirants" with a score of less than 50. According to this classification, no state or union territory in the country was classified as an achiever or aspirant. Of all the NES, Sikkim was the only one to qualify as the front-runner; the other states were classified as performance groups (Singh 2022, 23).

The NES remained one of the most backward regions of the nation, plagued by history and geopolitics. The pain of separation created barriers to future economic development. Land and sea trade and commerce connection were severed, as was access to key markets, including the East Bengal port of Chittagong, the gateway to East and Southeast Asia (now Bangladesh). By limiting connectivity to a 27-km-wide Siliguri corridor, establishing it as a 'remote area', and restricting access for the flow of goods and people. The development also hindered by its tense relations with the majority of its neighbours: with 96 per cent of its borders being international borders, private investment has shied away from the area. The NER is suffering from lack of infrastructure and employment opportunities, subsistence farming, resource limitations, lack of public investment, low productivity, governments' inability to regulate floods and river bank erosion, displacement for the sake of development, ethnic violence etc. Distinct ethnic and cultural identities, anger and dissatisfaction with isolation, backwardness, distance, and governance issues have created an environment that is conducive to the emergence of violent insurgencies. Moreover, there are significant differences in the degree of development between and within states in NER (Singh 2022, 22; Ministry of Development of NER 2020,1).

Participatory Governance: As a Sustainable Development Strategy

The literature on public policy attributes the growth of participatory governance to a paradigm shift away from "government" and towards "governance," which focuses on the standards of democratic procedures inside such institutions, as a response to the shortcomings of representational political systems of government (Heinelt 2018,1-16). Comparatively speaking, participatory institutions are relatively new developments in democratic government, especially in the global south. In theory, if not in fact, these include citizen juries in the UK, ward committees in the local government of South Africa, participatory city budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, village governance in Kerala, India, and citizen's juries in the UK (Piper and Deacon 2009,415-433). The neighbourhood, town, rural, or urban community has been recast as a potential development agent because they are places where social interactions between groups of people occur often. In difficult places, communities—especially those that are rural, poor, and marginalized—can be strengthened, formed, rebuilt, and encouraged to help themselves (Eversole 2011,52).

Robert Putnam's examination of the conditions for generating social capital, comprising social organisation elements like trust, norms, and networks helped to spread the idea that participation is an efficient means of action. This idea is a powerful, receptive, and useful institutional framework that can improve societal performance by facilitating coordinated action (Putnam et al.1993,87-90). In addition to expressing a commitment to advancing democracy by acknowledging and supporting social groups who have historically been marginalised, participation stands for voice, equity, and empowerment (Puri 2004,2512). By encouraging citizens to engage in political and critical discourse, social groups help citizens exercise their right to participate in politics, limiting the authority of elected officials and holding them responsible (Chandhoke 2012,43; Smith 1985,188).

Participatory Governance Initiatives in the North Eastern Region

For the people to be economically and politically empowered and capable of determining their own future, it is imperative that every NES maximise its capacity for self-governance and establish participatory institutions. Perpetuating peace and prosperity in the NES can only occur when its citizens engage in the democratic process. In this instance, the people must be

granted the power to manage resources and take part in the formulation and implementation of development programmes (Ministry of Development of NER 2020,13).

The Indian Constitution was amended to include the 6th Schedule in order to protect tribal self-rule, address local issues, and preserve the democratic customs and rich cultural heritage of its people. The chairman of the committee that drafted this plan was Gopinath Bardoloi, the Assamese chief minister at the time (Choudhury 2005). Tribally dominating states had the option to adopt Panchayati Raj Institutions or keep their current forms of traditional self-government, as stipulated by the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim are the non-Sixth Schedule States in the Northeast that have ratified the 73rd and 74th amendments (Panchayati Raj Institutions), with the exception of the NC Hills Autonomous District Council and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council(Choudhury 2005; Laskar 2012,283).

Assam

Assam has worked to enhance local self-government, village development, and administration ever since gaining independence. It has also passed the 1948 Rural Panchayat Act and experimented with Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). The laws regulating panchayats were amended and harmonised by the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, giving them the necessary authority and powers. By the 1972 Assam Panchayati Raj Act (APRA), Anchalik Panchayats were abolished and a two-tiered PR system was instituted.

From the beginning of independence, Assam has experimented with Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), passed the Rural Panchayat Act of 1948, and sought to improve administration, village development, and local self-government. The Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 updated and unified the legislations governing Panchayats to provide them the required authority and powers. Anchalik Panchayats were eliminated and a two-tiered PR system was established by the Assam Panchayati Raj Act (APRA) of 1972. Additionally, it created Mahakuma Parishads and Gaon Panchayats, which have more authority than the aforementioned Gaon Sabhas at the village level and the sub-divisional level, respectively. The Mahakuma Parishad essentially held all of the power, while the Gaon Panchayats played a key role. Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik

Panchayat, and Mahakuma Parishad were the three levels of government reinstated by the APRA, 1986 and Mahakuma Parishad took a supervisory responsibility.

In accordance with the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, Assam passed the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 (Bhattacharjee and Nayak 2001), which formed the District Planning Committee to create district-level development plans for both rural and urban areas collectively, and the Gaon Sabha to ensure direct democracy at the village-Panchayat level. This resulted in the establishment of a three-tier Panchayat System in the State, consisting of Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat, and Zilla Parishad. The Act established the Finance Commission and the State Election Commission, as well as the crucial reservation policy for women, SC, and ST (Bhandarjee and Nayak 2001, 4). The 2011 Assam Panchayat Amendment Act ensured that women will have a 50 per cent reservation in the PRIs.

Assam has 27 District Panchayats, 2197 Village Panchayats, and 192 Intermediate Panchayats. The Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar 2017 went to Dhemaji Zilla Panchayat in Assam, and the Best Panchayat National Award went to Dimoria Anchalik Panchayat in Assam in 2017 for their respective efforts in computer education for rural youth and establishing their own revenue stream. The Konwargaon and Azara Grama Panchayats in Assam are widely recognised for their efforts towards promoting good governance and producing revenue from their own sources, respectively. The latter won the 2018 National Panchayat Award in recognition of their role in the digital revolution in rural India. One of the major Grama Panchayats in the Kamrup Metropolitan District, Sonapur Grama Panchayat in Assam was named the best-performing Panchayat under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar-2020 for their exceptional work in the development of Grama Panchayat infrastructure (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Arunachal Pradesh

In Arunachal Pradesh, Panchayats have a long history as traditional village institutions that evolved into the present-day Gram Panchayats. The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) Panchayat Raj Regulatory Act, passed in 1967, and on 2 October 1968, a four-tier system of self-government was inaugurated, consisting of Gram Panchayats at the village level, Anchal Samiti at the circle level, Zila Parishad at the district level, and Agency Council at the agency

level. In accordance with the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendment to the Constitution, the State of Arunachal Pradesh passed the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act in 1997 which established a three-tiered Panchayat Raj structure for the state with Gram Panchayats at the village level, Anchalik Samitis at the circle level and Zilla Parishad at the district level and Panchayat elections under the new system were held in April 2003 (Choudhury 2005). Now the State consists of 2108 Gram Panchayats and 25 District Panchayats (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Manipur

Manipur's Panchayat Raj system consisted of 161 Gram Panchayats and 6 District Panchayats. National Panchayat Awards 2018 were given to Saiton Gram Panchayat in Manipur for their contribution to revenue production through the use of natural resources, fish farms in the well-known Loktak Lake, and organising open auctions to distribute fish farms among the populace. Manipur's Phayeng Gram Panchayat established the Ward Bal Sabha (WBS) and Mahila for the benefit of women and children, and in 2020 it was recognised as a Child-Friendly Gram Panchayat. Manipur's Keinou Gram Panchayat has been given a Sashaktikaran Puraskar for 2020 for own source revenue generation. The Panchayat Ghar now has a (RO+UV) treated drinking water plant kiosk (Water ATM) where residents may purchase 20 litres of water at any time for 10 rupees. The main tactic used by the Panchayat was to mobilise resources from various sources and rely on the ward members to ensure recoveries in each of the wards (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Sikkim

Based on the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act, the Sikkim Panchayat Raj Act, was passed in 1993 which provided for Gram Panchayats at the village level and Zilla Parishads at the district level. The Act provided for Gram Sabhas to review the annual report of the Panchayat, mobilise voluntary labour and the implementation of developmental initiatives. The present Panchayat Raj structure of Sikkim consists of 6 District Panchayats and 198 Gram Panchayats (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022). The Sikkim extended 50 per cent reservation to women through the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Act of 2011.

The South District of Sikkim's Poklok Denchung Gram Panchayat won the 2017 Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar, West District's Martam Gram Panchayat won the 2018 National Panchayat Awards and the West Sikkim Sangkhu Radhu Khandu Gram Panchayat of Dentam Constituency got the Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award 2020 for their contribution to women empowerment, overall governance and sanitation and planned activities respectively (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Tripura

The Tripura Panchayat Act was passed in 1993 which provided for a three tier structure constituting of Zilla Panchayat, Panchayat Samithi and Gram Panchayats. At present there are 8 Zilla Panchayat, 35 Panchayat Samithi, and 591 Gram Panchayats in its local government structure. The Act established Gram Sabha and Gram Sanads (Tripura's equivalent of Ward Sabhas). In each of the GP's wards, Gram Sanad is held. According to the Act, the Pradhan is responsible for calling both the Gram Sanad and Gram Sabha meetings (President) and in the absence of Pradhan, Upa-Pradhan (Vice President) is authorised to call such meetings with the prior consent of GP. Gram Sabha is entrusted with the creation of a budget, planning of annual accounts and the preparation of audit report of Gram Panchayat. Similarly, Gram Sanad has entrusted with the responsibility to select beneficiaries for various development projects (Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993). Moreover, 50 per cent reservation of women in PRI is guaranteed through the (Fifth Amendment) Act, 2010.

For their initiative in good governance by ensuring a sustainable source of income Khowai Panchayat Samiti, Khowai District, Tripura, was awarded the Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar in 2017. The Khasiamangal Gram Panchayat in Tripura's Teliamura R.D Block received the Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar 2020 for their proper implementation of all State and Gram Panchayat initiatives. In addition to development projects, the Panchayat was successfully implemented social awareness campaigns such *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *Total Literacy Campaign*, *Ayushman Bharath Abhiyan*, *Movement against Domestic Violence*, *Jal Shakti Abhiyan*, and *Observance of Road Safety* (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Similarly, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram have decentralised government structures. The Okosto Gram Panchayat in Nagaland succeeded in checking dropout and by providing a mid-day meal and free and compulsory education for all children. The Panchayat conducted Bal Sabha to ensure the personality development of each child and received Child Friendly Gram Panchayat Award in 2020. The Sialsir Panchayat in Mizoram is well renowned for its efforts to save water through local volunteer contributions, the construction of pit and check dams in steep locations, and rainwater collection. Similarly, Mawlynnong (Village Council) in Meghalaya is a village that has received distinction on a national and international level for its cleanliness (Ministry of Panchayat Raj 2022).

Major Efforts to Achieve Sustainable Development in NER

The North Eastern Council, which serves as the area's focal point for social and economic improvement, was established in 1971 by a parliamentary law that signalled the start of a new era of organised and planned effort for the rapid development of the Region (North Eastern Council 2022). The NES has received special attention from the Indian government in its development programmes and objectives. The NER states receive 90:10 of the central assistance. According to the current policy, each non-exempted central ministry or department must allocate 10 per cent of its gross budgetary support (GBS) for centrally sponsored programmes and the central sector to NER. To oversee the regional development initiatives, a new Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has been established in 2001 (Singh 2022,26).

The government takes the initiative to upgrade the infrastructure for transportation. In 2018 the construction of a new greenfield airport in Pakyong, Sikkim, was completed, and in 2022 the new greenfield airport in Halongi, Arunachal Pradesh, was officially opened. The government worked to improve the Brahmaputra (NW-2) and Barak (NW-16) rivers' navigability and to expand and renovate the airports at Guwahati, Imphal, Dimapur, and Dibrugarh. This will enable the effective use of a low-cost option, especially for freight transit. Through the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route, NW-2 and NW16 are connected to the ports of Haldia and Kolkata (Singh 2022,26).

According to Singh (2022), 33.45 per cent of the country's bamboo acreage is in the Northeast Ecoregion (NES). The Government of India reorganised its National Bamboo Mission in 2018–19 with the goal of accelerating the growth of the complete value chain. The government also modified the definition of a tree in the forest legislation in 2017 so that bamboo was no longer included. An effort to promote bamboo in the NES has been made with the establishment of a bamboo industrial park in the Dima Hasao district of Assam and a bio-refining facility in Numaligarh. NES generates 53 per cent of the marketable surplus in fruit and is mostly self-sufficient in vegetable production, giving it a substantial comparative advantage in a variety of horticulture commodities. The Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH) aims to promote the sector's overall growth through area-based, regionally-differentiated initiatives. Sikkim, India's first organic state, has already cleared the way for other states. On 50,000 hectares of land, the Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCDNER) programme of the NER aims to establish organic farming. In addition, the government started a number of programmes to revitalise the tourism sector after understanding its importance. By developing interstate integrated tourism circuits, the biological, cultural, and geographic variety of the Northeast region can be harnessed.

Poverty Still Persists in North Eastern Region

While the overall percentage of multidimensional poor people in India decreased by 9.89 percentage points from 24.85 per cent in 2015–2016 to 14.96 per cent in 2019–2021, Assam saw a fall of 13.30 percentage points between 2015 and 2021. Assam's multidimensional poverty rate dropped dramatically from 32.65 per cent in 2015–16 to 19.35 per cent in 2020–21. Arunachal Pradesh (10.48 per cent), Nagaland (9.73 per cent), Manipur (8.86 per cent), Meghalaya (4.76 per cent), Tripura (3.50 per cent), and Sikkim (1.21 per cent) were the states that had the biggest decreases (Goswami 2023; Niti Aayog 2023, xviii).

The recognition listed above does not imply that local government in the NES is efficient or successful in every way. As seen previously, the startlingly high rate of poverty exposes the actual situation to us. Nearly thirty years have passed since the 73rd Amendment was ratified, yet real public participation in development is still a pipe dream. The public is not allowed to

meaningfully participate in the rural development efforts carried out by these local organisations since most state governments lack the political will to grant the authority to the local bodies, lack awareness of rural people, etc. The debate over devolution that exists between the state administration and the PRIs is another key problem that requires careful settlement (Laskar 2012,283).

The higher concentration of the poor among the agricultural self-employed is a reflection of the underperformance of the agricultural economy in six of the eight NER states: Arunachal Pradesh (66.8 per cent), Assam (33.6 per cent), Manipur (77.3 per cent), Meghalaya (63.6 per cent), Mizoram (93.1 per cent), Nagaland (NA), Sikkim (67.7 per cent), and Tripura (15.5 per cent). Implementation of wage and infrastructure development initiatives (NREP, RLEGP, JRY, EAS, JGSY, SGRY) shows that except in Tripura and Nagaland, local institutions and Panchayats played very little role in program planning and implementation (National Institute for Rural Development (n.d).

Poverty and underdevelopment in NES are caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of a favourable growth environment, traditional modes of production, a higher concentration of the impoverishment among self-employed in agriculture, the small size of the techno-managerial unit of most farmers, the inaccessibility of hills due to rugged terrain, floods, and water stagnation in about one-third of the plains. High soil acidity is caused by a number of factors, such as low food grain productivity per unit land, limited space for commercial production, limited access to formal credit, a higher supply of non-agricultural labour than demand, low wage rates influenced by higher supply, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, mind-set etc.(National Institute for Rural Development (n.d).

Suggestions for Improvement

When it comes to achieving all the other SDGs, education is the primary driver of development. By putting inclusive education policies into place, the NES must enhance their early education initiatives and lower school dropout rates. Ensuring quality and efficacy requires improvements to the infrastructure supporting technical training, higher education, and skill-based learning. A targeted healthcare plan is urgently needed, as is support for the health infrastructure in the form of new construction, renovations, and expansions of existing secondary and tertiary care

facilities, as well as the use of mobile technology units. Training must also be provided to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of qualified healthcare professionals, and traditional knowledge systems should be encouraged. The NES has to design a comprehensive plan for the industrial and economic growth of the area that includes using local resources and traditional knowledge, creating job opportunities, and expanding infrastructure. Governments, however, are unable to fulfil the SDGs on their own; additional important stakeholders must also be included in order for the SDGs to be realised (Singh 2022, 26–27). The National Institute for Rural Development states that the establishment of farmer self-help groups (SHGs) based in clusters, the neutralisation of soil acidity and local production of high-quality seeds, the formal credit delivery system, the implementation of farm schools at the block level, social mobilisation initiatives, and the cluster development approach will all contribute to the empowerment of farmers and participatory development. Here, financial, operational, and functional autonomy of participatory institutions is a mandatory condition (n.d).

Conclusion

Despite having more access to foreign trade and an abundance of natural resources, the North-eastern region of India remains the most underdeveloped in the country. Local government is deemed the most effective means of advancing sustainable development and motivating the populace to do the same; development is viewed as an engine of sustainability, and democracy becomes a prerequisite for development. Decentralisation on an institutional and structural level alone, however, will not guarantee local democracy and sustainable growth. Rather, the creation of a democratic political culture, the decentralisation of budgetary authority both vertically and horizontally, a proactive and politically motivated government response, the correct application of the Right to Information Act, and the rise of powerful social movements are necessary to support and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that eliminate all forms of poverty and environmental hazards.

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Mainstreaming Millets for Sustainable Future

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Abstract

Communities exercise their choice of food selection based on a sum of sociological factors like its taste, palatability, nutrient composition, availability in the market, media driven social trends (marketing), social traditions and cultures, and household budget. It has been extensively researched and acknowledged that the prevailing mainstream food practices of both global north and south have caused irreversible damage to the environment in terms of harmful emissions, and hence are highly unsustainable. The production, transportation and consumption of food are directly intertwined to the generation of greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental concerns including major land use patterns. Therefore, in order to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, one must dwell deep into the existing food practices or “how we do food”. Food and Agricultural Organization and United Nations have come up with an alternative sustainable practice in terms of consumption of millets, as they are celebrating the year 2023 as the international year of millets. However, incorporating consumption of millets in the everyday lived realities of communities has faced various sociological repercussions.

In this paper, the research question strives to discuss the social role of millet and ways of mainstreaming it. Methodologically, the paper uses case study as the research method. The paper suggests that the dialogue surrounding food must integrate health, environment and society. The sociological blockages that arise in the adoption of millet cultivation could be removed by active participation of all the stakeholders of society.

Keywords: Sustainable development, millets consumption, alternative food practices

Introduction

Sustainable development is a concurrent theme in the sociology of food discourse. The present mainstream foodway has been rendered unsustainable by rapid industrialization, globalization, commercialization of agriculture and food processing, excessive dependency on animal protein and artificially processed foods, the widening gap between food supply of poor and rich country and lack of food and nutritional security (Reisch et. al. 2013, p. 2). We live in a world where hunger and malnutrition have engulfed almost 800 million people worldwide on one hand, and on the other side, 1 to 1.5 billion people are either obese or overweight due to faulty dietary pattern (Millstone and lang, 2003, p. 63). It has been extensively researched and acknowledged that the prevailing mainstream food practices of both global north and south have caused irreversible damage to the environment in terms of harmful emissions, and hence are highly unsustainable (Jackson, 2009, p.22). Food is an important social agency and does not operate singularly as it is enmeshed in the network of food-energy-water (Leck et. al. 2015, p.446). The production, transportation and consumption of food are directly intertwined to the generation of greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental concerns including major land use patterns (Westhoek et. al. 2014, p.197). Therefore, in order to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, one must dwell deep into the existing food practices or “how we do food”. Sustainable food consumption, elaborated extensively by the UK Sustainable Development Commission is an inclusive concept encompassing all the stakeholders of the society (Reisch et. al. 2013, p. 2) Sustainable food system is directly linked with sustainable agriculture. Vandana Shiva and Poonam Pandey (2006, p. 1) elaborates the components of sustainable agriculture, which are – natural resource sustainability and socio-economic sustainability. Natural resource sustainability comprises the ecological stability of the agricultural process arising out of the confluence between water, soil and biodiversity, whereas, socio-economic sustainability engages the sociological aspect of agriculture; it denotes the harmonious equilibrium between agriculture, environment, market, and human society. Both these were ignored for a long-term leading to agricultural, environmental and sociological imbalance. Hence, rethinking on food and sustainable development is an urgent concern of all nations.

From the perspective of policy makers and diplomats, the post-World War 2 era is increasingly getting characterized by global trends of dietary change, alternative food networks, concerns of global food

supply and food security. The present movement towards a process of food “delocalization” indicates availability of different foods, different methods of cultivation and different dietary consumption patterns – disseminated worldwide with an aim to increase the political, social and economic interdependence of nations (Pelto and Pelto, 1983, p. 507). The idea of food, identity and sustainable development are interconnected as food delocalization and agricultural globalization are increasingly getting confronted by local culture and morality (Bonanno and Constance, 2001, p. 13, Shiva 2004, p.716, Finnis, 2008, p. 464). For social innovations to be successful, it must penetrate into the everyday mainstream lives of ordinary people. Hence, food sustainability becomes a core issue of sociology.

It is essential to make our food habits resilient to catastrophic climate change (Wiskerke and Viljoen, 2012, p.20). While many policy makers and researchers debate about ways of making the current food production sustainable, some have arrived at a consensus of promoting alternative food ways in terms of organic and vegetarian diets (Evans and Abrahamse, 2009, p.500). There have been inspirational experiments globally on new ways of eating. Food and Agricultural Organization and United Nations have come up with an alternative sustainable practice in terms of consumption of millets, as they are celebrating the year 2023 as the international year of millets (Sharma, 2023, p.1). This acts as a starting point for other climate smart crops to enter into the normative food habits of everyday life. Millet remains one of the oldest cultivated grains cultivated in India and worldwide (Banerjee et. al. 2020, p.20412) and comprised the most important Indian diet since Vedic period, but however the introduction of green revolution during 1960s rendered millets as ‘orphan crops’- less consumed and often forgotten. Their production declined alongside their consumption and were eventually replaced by commercial crops, as the subsidised inputs, incentivised procurement and their inclusion in the Public Distribution system supported the production of commercial crops. Despite the high nutritional value along with the ease of cultivation, millets have remained in the margins in recent decades, the scientific and sociological research on millets is scant (Banerjee et. al. 2020, p.20413) and this paper strives to fill this research gap.

As the mission to mainstream millets unfolds, this paper strives to unravel the social role of millets i.e., its relationship with social class, caste, identity, gender and geography. Methodologically, the paper uses case analysis. According to Morgan and Smircich (1980, p. 498), the research question should inform the methodology, hence case study was chosen as the apt research method. Patnaik and Pandey (2019)

defined case study as the process which is striving to manifest the why and how of a particular contextual reality or a unit of analysis. It tries to understand the gap between the plan and the execution – the idea and the reality. This paper further suggests that Millets have holistic sociological benefits.

Originality of the study:

The attempt to manifest the mainstream consumption of millets is a concern for policy makers because it involves a conscious attempt to influence the daily food consumption decisions. This requires a rigorous sociological lens of inquiry apart from economical and commercial. There exists a severe dearth of sufficient sociological literature addressing these concerns.

The ensuing sections, elaborates the story of millets.

The case study of Millet – climate smart crop with bio-cultural heritage

This section starts with the case study of Burlang Yatra – an indigenous rural community seed festival organized by the indigenous millet farmers of the districts of Kandhamal in Orissa as documented by Lopa Saxena (2020, p.2). The case study documents the regeneration of millet cultivation in India in general and in Orissa in particular, where the farmers have consciously shifted their perspective from millet as climate resilient survival crop to millets for its effective cost management, rural employment generation, nutritional compositions, health benefits and pro-biodiversity qualities (Saxena, 2020, 16). Nitya Sharma (2023, p.1) elaborates that the International Year of Millet (IYM) 2023 aims to initiate a dialogue about the multiple health and nutritional benefits of millets and their aptness as a smart climate resilient crop (Brahmachari et. al., 2018, p. 6). Vandana Shiva and Poonam Pandey (2006) claim that it is pertinent to implement agricultural practices which are sustainable from the scratch till the end level (the customer level). Here sustainable cultivation is holistic and society driven. Francis et al. (2017) advocate for the resurgence of local food to make the global food supply chain more sustainable and ensure food security and food sovereignty.

In this context, Habiyeremye et al. (2022, p. 2) described the capacity of millet, to grow in diverse agroecological zones of Rwanda including highland to lowland. Singh et al. (2022, p. 11) suggested that

brown top millet require attention of the concerned policy makers, scientists, academics and farmers to unleash its full potential and capabilities. Food and Agricultural Organisation (n.d., 2023) elaborated six essential qualities of millets, for which they are often referred to as ‘Miracle crops’ or ‘Crops of the Future’. The qualities are as follows:

- a) Millets offer solutions to food scarcity as they are only crops that can be cultivated in harsh climatic conditions. Hence, it is pertinent to use millet for curing world hunger crisis.
- b) Millets are nutrients loaded with gluten free properties and a low-glycaemic index, making it essential for diabetic patients and people suffering from various other co-morbidities.
- c) Millets can be cultivated in unfavourable climatic and soil conditions like in drought or in arid land. It demands minimum investment and maintenance, making it an effective and efficient crop in improving overall biodiversity and ecological balance.
- d) Millets have the potential to offer sustainable livelihood opportunities to small and marginal farmers as they require minimum investment.
- e) Currently the global food supply chain is over dependent on few mainstream crops, which make it vulnerable to sudden shocks and global market failures. Millets can act as shock absorbent cushions as alternative food supply source.
- f) Millets have various therapeutic and pharmaceutical usages that require innovative ideas.

As per Chandel et. al. (2014, p. 1109), India remains one of the biggest producers of Millets globally with a contribution of 334500 tones, which translates to 43.85% of the world production. Millet cultivation is predominantly seen in the countries of Asia, Africa and some parts of Europe, as a choice of coarse cereal grown by small, marginal and tribal farmers (Banerjee et. al. 2020, 20413). Millets are essentially of two types – major and minor. The major millet category consists of Sorghum and Pearl millet, whereas the minor group has Barnyard millet, Finger millet or Ragi, Foxtail of Italian millet, Kodo millet, Proso millet, Brown-top millet and little millet (Maitra, 2020, p. 58). Scientific research has proven that the nutrient value of small millet is higher than popular mainstream choices – rice and wheat,

as they have higher content of fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals (Banerjee et. al. 2020, 20415). Millets have 60-70% dietary carbohydrates, 6-10% protein, 12-20% fibre, 1.5-5% fat, 2-4% minerals and other phytochemicals (Hadimani and Malleshi, 1993, p. 18) . Often scientists have hailed millets as a functional food. By definition, functional foods are diets with bioactive ingredients which enhance physiological health of humans and shelter them from varied chronic diseases (Banerjee et. al. 2020, 20414). Abeysekera et al. documented that value added functional food can be produced out of Sorghum and pigmented millets variety which in turn may lead to the deterrence of non-communicable diseases. Medical researches further elaborate that small millets are bursting with anti-oxidants that protect the phospholipids membrane around heart, nerves, muscles and red blood, which prevents varied forms of cardiovascular attacks, carcinogenesis and rapid ageing (Theriault et. al. 1999, p. 318). According to Maitra and Shankar (2019, 92), millets are a perfect solution to the growing world malnutrition number, as majority of the population are dependent on cereal-based diets. Millets can provide nutritional security to the malnourished population of the developing countries. In India, millets, a kharif crop, require less water and agricultural inputs than other staples such as wheat, rice and maize. Agricultural research has shown that they strengthen the agro-diversity, help in the yields of grains and forage, prevents soil erosion in arid regions and assures higher C sequestration.

As the world economy gathers consensus around implementing sustainable cropping practices, there needs more documentation of the repercussions of these globalizing practices on the small farmers in terms of their cultural acceptance, resilience, adaptability and economic restructuring, especially in the countries of global south, as layers of social conditioning inform the decision-making process.

The following section elucidates the findings of the study.

Findings

a) Millet, social status and identity – the theoretical framework

In the Indian context, food and agriculture traverse through various layers of sociological understanding (Khare & Rao, 1986, n.d). Sufficient literature is available on the symbolic aspects of foodways (Douglas, 1984, p. 97, Lentz, 1991, p.9). An examination of the local semiotic rendition of the meanings attached to

various crops and agricultural practices provide us with a picture of how globalized commercial agricultural practices negotiate with local moral economy and meaning. Finnis (2008, pp. 465-471) researched on the changing perspective of food and cultivation in the context of South India. He dwells deep into the concerns of economic, environmental and agricultural change and the subsequent consequences on the local dietary patterns and adaptations. According to his research, Millets have a sociological meaning in many Southern states of India – an inferior crop. Consumption of Millet is associated with lower social and economic status, social backwardness, and lack of luxuries. Here, rice consumption is considered as a status symbol for the families as it is allied with notions of becoming “advanced” and “cultured”. Often rice is offered to the guests and Millet is consumed on everyday basis. Millet is also sometimes identified with a tribal identity, hinting at geographical and social backwardness and deprivation. Even though Millet has health and nutritional benefits, it lacks the social status. Millet is popularly known as a ‘poor man’s diet’ in India (Umanath et. al., 2018, p.1036). The shift to rice consumption is also a project of development and identity assertion by the tribal community, where the cultivators and farmers become the agents of change, the local influencers dictating the terms of social development. This impacts the cultivation of Millet on a larger scale. A similar observation was made by Leitch (2003, p. 441) highlighting the power of local moral economies and identities (sociological factors) on governmental policies and regulations, and vice-versa. Sometimes, policies imposed by external authorities and agencies can also obliterate a particular traditional taste and its associated material culture by permanently changing the dietary pattern for a long run. Shah (1983, p. 121) corroborated this social behavior stating that low nutritionally rich diets are often shunned by lower income groups to imitate the food habits of high-income group families (reference group). Food habits are often are results of food politics that have a heritage.

Factors behind dietary change of a community are interplay of various complex factors (Lentz, 1991, p. 2). Other than social status, economic rationality also plays an important part, as Lentz (1991, 03) elaborates in the case study of Millet cultivation getting substituted by cash crop (eg. Cassava) production amongst the farming community of Zambia, even with high personal inclination towards Millet. In Zambia, Millet required high labor-intensive techniques and with increased tax burden and male members of the community migrating to other forms of industrial labor, the shift to an economically

easier crop was a rational-practical choice for the cultivators. This dietary evolutionary behavior typically points towards the theory of “cultural materialism” as devised by Marvin Harris (1987, p. 565), which explains why humans eat what they eat – economic rationality being one of the basic rationales. In this case, the basic motivation towards change in food consumption pattern was eradication of poverty. Debojyoti Das (2020, p. 377) explained in his research, how historically tribal population of Tuensang district, Nagaland were forced to shift to rice cultivation from millet in an attempt to “modernise/baptise/civilise” the tribes. Historically, millets come laden with varied sociological negative symbolism. As the dialogue on alternative food system emerges, it is pertinent to take into cognisance the sentiments of the consumers and cultivators (Kloppenburger et. al. 2000, p. 180). The research of Carly Nicholas (2017, p. 871) also indicates the need for thick ethnographic and qualitative studies in the rural societies of India to understand local contextual underpinnings of food consumption for an informed policy making.

As per National Council of Applied Economic Research report published in 2014, the production of millets has decreased significantly, as the cultivation land allocation has shifted to wheat and rice (Times of India, 2023, n.d). Therefore, there is a need for reorganization of local farming knowledge and its associated sociological meanings.

b) The social capital of Millets

Presently, healthy nutritious food habits are being adopted by economically empowered urban communities in the pursuit of “organic food” consumption, ignoring the traditional stigmas and taboos (Brown, 2017, p. 376; Erler et. al., 2022, p. 124). In this case study of Bengaluru city, the researchers have documented how millets metamorphosized into a lifestyle product from a staple food (Erler et. al., 2022, p. 125). The government of India has launched a slew of initiatives to improve the rate of production and consumption of millets. The G20 summit held in New Delhi in 2023 celebrated the idea of millet as the smart crop by organizing 11 mouth watering dishes that were served to global leaders (Raj, 2023, n.d). Famous food bloggers are also preaching the benefits of millets religiously in their respective platforms. The positive impact of globalized media in sensitizing communities about different aspects of sustainable living has already been researched and proven (Jie, G., and Jiahui, L. 2023, p. 873). The researches on the

growth of alternative food practices in the global south have highlighted the crucial role of media and the various marketing techniques of organic product suppliers (Erler et. al., 2022, p. 124). Millet consumption has become a matter of knowledge and social capital in the urban milieu in India. A similar case study has been reported in Nepal (Pallante et. al, 2016, p. 92) where there has been a growth in the niche consumer basket of millets which are otherwise underutilised and marginalised in the world of everyday food consumption. The study has also shown the readiness on the part of niche consumers to pay extra for a certain variety of finger millets. This urbane trend eventually propels the rise in the overall millet production, in turn, making environment and lives of small farmers more sustainable. Therefore, mainstreaming a particular food consumption pattern has various cultural and social predispositions which needs broader scholarship. The scholarly work by Chikkanna et al, (2020, p. 1446) documents the opportunity that millet farming offers as potent tool for women's economic empowerment and autonomy. Similarly, a case study from the University of Dharwad, North Karnataka reveals that women are making roti from sorghum, and pearl millet, and beside supplying to marriage and other social parties are also supplying to hotels, retail and wholesale dealers, at the cost of Rs 3-5 per roti, which showcases the contribution of millets in women's livelihood. Other than class and gender as the lens of analysis, geography too plays a pivotal role. In the research by Patel et. al. (2013, p. 1), it has been shown that marginalised street vendors of urban centre of Maduri in Tamil Nadu are popularising the sell of millets as a nutritious 'fast food'.

Apart from the economics of millet consumption, food activism and food politics inform heavily the rise in the consumption of millet in the urban centres. The transformation of millet from marginal to miracle food is further documented by Meek (2022, p. 871), as a process of empowering the local via food politics which is known as bioregionalism – an emerging tool of analysis questioning the interconnectedness of political economy, geography, history, identity and food consumption.

Conclusion

In lieu of a conclusion, the paper suggests that attitude towards potential dietary change should be more about supporting a sustainable future. According to Wiskerke and Viljoen (2012, p. 19), sustainable food provisioning is a challenge for farmers, scientists, academicians, policy makers, and politicians. Even

though the policy makers have decided to harness the power of millet, it is essential to activate and empower the local level in order to effectively reap the benefits of millet cultivation. The dialogue surrounding food must integrate health, environment and society. The sociological blockages that arise in the adoption of millet cultivation could be removed by active participation of all the stakeholders of society – inclusive of all class, gender and region.

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**Socio-Economic Impact of Ethnic Conflict:
a Study of Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas**

Ms. Arentula and Yamsani Srikanth

Abstract

Nagaland, a state in northeast India, is home to diverse Naga ethnic tribes, each with a rich cultural heritage. The Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas are one of the economically backward tribes inhabiting the Shamator and Kiphire districts of Nagaland. The long relationship and contact between these two dialect-speaking Yimkhiung (Langa) –Tikhir (Tikhialiu) and their interdependence on socio-cultural matters suffered a setback due to the bitter hostilities and violent incidents over the decades on the issues of language and identity. The data for this study is collected from a sample size of 133 respondents through personal interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires drawn from six villages and five towns from Dimapur, Kiphire, Kohima, Mokokchung and Shamator districts. The conflict between these two communities has generally impacted critical aspects of development in the region. This paper examines the impact of ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes on various aspects of socioeconomic development. This study found that due to ethnic conflict, both Yimkhiung and Tikhir have resulted in the loss of human lives, separation and break up in families, increased burden on women, migration and displacement, loss of education and weakening of social relations among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities.

Keywords: Displacement, education, ethnic conflict, Nagas, violence, women and youth.

Introduction

‘The term ‘ethnicity’ has its roots in the Greek term *ethnos/ethnikos* and contains a multiplicity of meanings in history’ (Malesevic 2004, 1-2). ‘Ethnicity is primarily a cognitive phenomenon shaped reciprocally in the perceptions of the members of a group and those of non-members’ (Vine 1997, 50). ‘Ethnic identity is a self-conscious and vocalised identity that substantialises and naturalises one or more attributes, usually

one being a place of origin, inheritance, ancestry, language, religion, or territorial, which attaches them to collectivises as their innate possession and their mytho-historical legacy' (Tambiah 1989, 335). Defining ethnicities involves names like culturally distinct people, nationalities, races, cultures, etc. 'Ethnic conflicts are one particular form of conflict with the goals of one conflict party defined exclusively in ethnic terms and distinctions. The term 'conflict' describes a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatibly, yet from their perspectives entirely just, goals' (Cordell & Wolff 2011, 1-6). 'Ethnic conflict is when the goals of at least one party are defined in ethnic terms, and the conflict, its causes, and potential remedies are perceived along ethnic lines' (Reuter 2011, 9).

'In most cases, the ethnic conflicts resulted in violence, homicide and destruction of property, as witnessed in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Myanmar, India and Ethiopia and significant losses of civilian lives, as recorded in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka' (Tambiah 1989, 337). 'Another ethnic conflict is between the Oromia and Amhara tribes in Ethiopia because of friction and new demands by the smaller group' (Teshome 2021, 25-30). 'Dominant Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhist religion had occupied a pre-eminent societal position; thus, the language issue has brought the Sinhalese and Tamil into a conflict' (Perera, 2008). 'In the case of Myanmar, the ethnic minorities have felt marginalised and excluded from the mainstream and are being given differential treatment' (Chaturvedi 2012, 223-239). Ethnic conflicts are the sheer misery they create: people are killed, tortured, maimed, and raped; they suffer from displacement, starvation, and disease. Ethnic conflicts have dire consequences and not all of them occur in equal scale everywhere. 'The social scientists need to conduct in-depth studies on ethnic conflict to understand its causes and how it can be prevented, managed and resolved' (Cordell & Wolff 2011, 1-6).

Ethnic Conflicts in Northeast India

'Northeast presents striking socio-cultural features regarding ethnicity, language, and socio-cultural practices. As a result, there has been ethnic assertion in every group of its socio-cultural and political aspirations. Ethnic conflict is a chain of massacres between the warring groups. This does not undermine the importance of the fast-emerging political consciousness among these communities (Oinam 2003, 2032).' Ethnic conflict in the northeast region has become endemic since independence. India's Northeast has been sharply on the rise of population displacement from ethnic conflict since 1980. 'The crucial factor for the ethnic conflicts in the region is socio-eco-political encroachment by different ethnicities on each

other in order to establish territorial supremacy or to preserve or dominate their cultural identities' (Khobragade 2019, 1167).

Ethnic Conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir: The context

The Yimkhiung tribe in Nagaland comprises people who use six different dialects: Langa, Tikhir, Mukokru, Chirr, Longphuru, and Phunungru. The Langa dialect is used as the Lingua Franca by every Yimkhiung individual. The Tikhir dialect-speaking people are spread in the eastern area of Nagaland under the districts of Shamator and Kiusam headquarters in Kiphire. 'The conflict within the Yimkhiung ethnic fold, the Tikhir people (linguistic minority group) have sought to throw off their attributed identity as a Yimkhiung sub-tribe and claim a different disposition for themselves as a distinct major sub-tribe. This struggle has extended bitter and violent hostilities over decades in Nagaland's Kiphire and Shamator districts' (Das 2014, 35).

The Yimkhiung language, with the Langa dialect, was once the language of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Tikhir dialect was set aside, and the Yimkhiung language dominated the region. The quest to recognise certain dialect-speaking groups as tribes became the factor for communal tension and thus resulted in physical violence between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. In the past few decades, the consciousness of ethnic identity and diversity has significantly increased. Tikhir-speaking people always felt that their language was different; however, they were forced to use another dialect (Langa) in everyday interactions as part of the Yimkhiung community, which generated feelings of alienation. 'The Tikhir tribe believed in not benefitting equally from state development programs, which caused feelings of insecurity and hatred towards the Yimkhiung community. Tikhir dialect drifted little from the original language and became distinct over time' (Das 2014, 35). The various dialects between this Langa (dominant group) and Tikhir (minority linguistic group), the linguistic affinity is discernable even today. In the process, language has become a vital tool to subjugate a minor ethnic group by more prominent and decisive dominant groups. 'It is significant to note that language not only became an instrument of identity assertion by the minority people but was also used as a catalyst for consolidating their rights, which eventually intensified the demand for a separate identity' (Gupta 2016, 3).

The quest to recognise a particular dialect-speaking group as a tribe has triggered communal tension between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. During the conflict, both communities suffered; their properties were destroyed; houses, furniture, utensils, horticulture gardens, etc., were burnt. Hundreds of people were rendered homeless, and many hundreds fled to safer areas. It led to the loss of lives, displacement of people, and destruction of properties. Hundreds of people were injured, children orphaned and women widowed. Most of the time, ordinary people were unaware of the actual causes of the conflict, but as part of the mob culture, they participated in raiding or defending on ethnic lines. The conflict occurred in the same kitchen between the brothers, relatives and families of the same blood. Displacement led to the deeply felt need for security and consolation among the people and the process also caused severe trauma. Sometimes, to mobilise people along ethnic lines, community leaders accused other communities of their economic and social backwardness. The accused tribes also do the same thing to get mobilised. As a result, the sporadic conflicts spread to the entire region, leading to a lack of development in these areas. Conflict within a society can cause members to become frustrated if they feel as if there is no solution in sight. As a result, people become stressed, adversely affecting their social and cultural lives. The conflicts started for a cause by some leaders, but the sufferers are always the ordinary people.

After the ethnic conflict, few people who were once displaced returned to their native village places. The significant impact of this conflict was a complete breakdown of trust and social cohesion among the affected communities. During the conflict, mobs of both tribes were involved in burning houses and destroying each property. The situation was further aggravated since the riots destroyed the interdependence among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir villages. All these instances of ethnic conflicts posed a significant threat to the recovery of the communities' (Borgohain & Sinha 2014, 80-81).

The Yimkhiung and Tikhir ethnic conflict and its associated issues impacted the region's socio-economic development. Some key socio-economic development indicators related to the Naga ethnic conflict include economic, social life, education, employment, and quality of life.

Impact on Economic Life

The ethnic conflict had a tremendous negative impact on the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Many families were affected by the loss of wage labour work, insufficient money, and wastage of stock foods due to the

ethnic conflict. The conflict-affected areas were unsafe to move out of, so many farmers were forced to buy food items that otherwise were grown on their farms. They lost and could not harvest their crops. Many farmers and daily earners barely survived, but nothing remained. Everything had been damaged and burnt out due to ethnic violence, the conflict between communities was not widely spread. It had happened in a few villages; however, it resulted in a substantial economic downfall, extreme poverty, increasing food insecurity and worsening environmental degradation in the region. The violent clashes between the Yimkhiung have badly affected the economy, causing uncertainty, rise of debts and disruption of normal economic activities. Due to clashes, the village to another village blocked their way. Hence, many could not escape from the village for their safety and were stuck in the middle of such violence. Mobs and leaders were fighting for their benefit and to fulfil their ideas. However, only the ordinary people eventually suffered the loss of life and the destruction of physical and human capital.

‘Conflict leads to slower economic growth in a region and deteriorates the socioeconomic conditions of the population’ (Das et al. 2015, 82). The period 1981-2015 shows a total absence of development in physical infrastructure under the Kiphire and Shamator districts due to increasing violence in this region. There has been a climate of social and economic gloom and uncertainty about the future because of frequent threats of racial violence that frighten non-local investors and even discourage local businesses. For this reason, the Yimkhiung and Tikhir villagers are no longer interested in bringing business ideas since there is no guarantee of security against ethnic conflict in affected areas. Community conflicts have disrupted physical and social infrastructure, which stops economic growth and increases unemployment. Economic growth and development in the conflict area have been lopsided for over four decades. Due to uneven development, people from this community are even compelled to move to other places for their livelihood. Some move for their study or seek jobs. Many young people moved even to other states for employment out of compulsion, but only a few made it, and some found the wrong ways to earn money.

Impact on family relations

It is found that family relationships and social ties between Yimkhiung and Tikhir are weakened due to conflict. The husbands and wives from different warring communities separated, and many sacrificed their wives on the altar of ethnicity. Thus, the ethnic conflict has destroyed the relations between the families of both tribes. The relatives of the common ancestor living in Tikhir village can no longer maintain bonhomie

with the relatives of the same ancestor living in Yimkhiung villages. During the violent clashes, the Mobs began to attack either man or husband from the opposing tribe. There were instances where mothers and their children were forced to run away for safety, abandoning their dead husbands who were brutally beaten. Wives became their husbands' enemies because they were from different ethnic groups. The ethnic conflict had created a vast family burden, including children's education, food and daily economic needs.

Tikhir tribe who have participated in group discussions and interviews. It is found that the relatives of the common ancestor living in the village can no longer maintain bonhomie with the opposing community. The dominant community had alienated the Tikhir ethnic group living for many decades. Family and relatives started separating according to the ethnic group, and sadly, families are forced to detach from their own ethnic but cannot fight back because they are weak and helpless. Husbands and wives from different warring communities became separated. Marriages to two opposing Yimkhiung ethnic groups have become taboo for the Tikhir community, but for the Yimkhiung tribe, marriage has no restriction. Many families migrated to other places for safety during these riots without safeguarding their houses and property. Many of those families who shifted to other villages and far places informed that they permanently settled in the migrated place since relocating and restarting the family was the most challenging. In some cases, once the situation got normal, families returned to their native places since they depended entirely on agriculture in their native villages. The situation was more aggravated because the riots destroyed the interdependence between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir villages. According to respondents under the farmer category, most villagers earn either by depending on agriculture or wage labour. However, that also becomes difficult since village interdependence has broken completely after the conflict. Some families could not continue their children's education because they lost daily earnings. Due to community riots, many have struggled to maintain the family's living expenses.

Impact of conflict on women

Ethnic conflict has impacted many women living in conflict areas. 'For women, the suffering of ethnic conflict continues for a long time in their lives. However, their suffering is often sidelined, particularly in the developing countries' (Habib & Soomro 2021, 316). In Shamator village, most of the respondents suffer from nightmares. Some villages under Kiphire also suffered from this disorder. The conflict had a devastating impact on the women of the region. Due to conflict, some women were widowed and left

homeless. Matrimonial bonds within Tikhir and Yimkhiung become an issue, so women from either Yimkhiung or Tikhir dialects become insecure when married to other sub-dialect men. 'Conflict has a devastating effect on the lives and dignity of women. The adverse effects of conflicts hit women and girls harder than their male counterparts due to deliberate gender-based violence and discrimination that is rampant in patriarchal settings like India' (Choudhury & Kumar 2020, 7). Women or mothers had to manage other household chores even during community conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. During those times, there were real hurdles for the women in the family. During the conflict, women also had to raise children, care for the home, and meet the family's needs. The children's safety and education were the primary concerns; only the mother took responsibility during such a terrible time. Many widow mothers were compelled to run away with their children to another place in search of a safer place. Being a widow, she had faced lots of grief alone in such community tension since all the burden fell on her. She alone had to take on additional roles in the family, including finances and children. Due to ethnic clashes, many mothers have faced difficulty managing and protecting their families.

Impact on children's mental health

All the respondents in the study have opined that children are actual sufferers in the conflict, creating a negative impact on children due to the conflict. Most respondents were concerned about the negative impact on the children's education. Many children have been hugely affected because students cannot get their education peacefully, or sometimes educational institutions have to be shut down in conflict areas, significantly impacting students' future careers. Many respondents who are teachers have shared that during such an ethnic crisis formative period, children's minds have been sabotaged irreparably. Young children of main warring zones were traumatised in such a way that their educational career was also nipped in the bud. Further, the antagonistic feeling and hostility towards each other have been indoctrinated in the minds of the children of contending parties. Moreover, sadly, they are very young to understand the situation, unknown of time but in fear and trauma, seeing the violent conflict. In such a violent environment, parents did not allow their children to go to school since it was not safe and they were not allowed to move around outside their homes. Such stress affected children's concentration and resulted in many dropping out of school. During the community clashes, some children lost their parents and became victims of the cause. These orphans were compelled to stay at somebody's home as babysitters and forced into child labour, a prevalent issue in Nagaland that many Nagas still ignored. All these problems children faced were because

of negligence by leaders and officers. Many govt schools remain the same with no improvement, teachers and zero enrolments. Today, many children are deprived of their rights; they are mentally disturbed due to the violent atmosphere. Growing up in a warring zone naturally causes children to become weak in their studies and keep fewer future goals.

Impact of ethnic conflict on youth

The ethnic conflict severely affected the youth, especially the forerunners, during the formative period. Many youths in conflict-affected areas are less rational, lack goals and are likely to decide things first. This kind of violence has caused untold problems for individuals, families and society. The feeling of insecurity and the complex social environment had failed them in many ways and disturbed their concentration in all aspects of life. Since there was no scope in the educational field, young men were motivated to join the army, and young girls kept their last choice in marriage. The Tikhir tribe were a minority group, and the strength and force of the dominant group had the worst impact and disturbed all aspects of life due to ethnic clashes. The conflict has caused them to lose their self-identity from the rest of society and live a life of insecurity. Such a violent environment influenced many Tikhir boys to leave their studies, take up weapons, and become militia fighters. Many youngsters gradually gave up their studies, and young people eloped or married without a plan or job for their living. Unfortunately, this ethnic conflict deprived the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga youths of their fundamental rights and risked many young people's lives.

The adverse effect of ethnic conflict was mental trauma and insecurity complexity in many young people, immobilising their further studies. Sometimes, they have to face injustice and discrimination due to identity issues. Inter-community issues and corruption deprived them of their education and future, and unless the narrow tribalistic mindset stops, the future of the youth will be a disaster. Deep-rooted tribalism often leads to injustice, exploitation and discrimination of the weaker, minority and poorer sections of the people in Nagaland, depriving them of social justice and the many rights and privileges of the minorities and the weaker sections of society. Most respondents have reported that youth become victims of unemployment and lose social morality because of ethnic conflict. Many have believed the future will be a disaster unless there is a solution between these two communities.

The education scenario after the ethnic conflict

Since the inception of ethnic conflict, the performance of educational institutions and students started declining drastically. For this reason, many parents employed in the government sector requested transfers to other places at Kohima and Dimapur to obtain a good education for their children. The majority of the respondents from both communities, Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes, have agreed that conflict also has an impact on the educational system. The study's respondents said that the conflict has caused a generation gap in education standards among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes compared to the others in the state. The community tension had hampered education to a large extent. The attack of villages between the adversaries disturbed the environment so much that while the children of their peer groups in other towns were pursuing education in peace of mind, the children of affected villages/areas were instead on the run for survival, completely stunting their education further, the mind of the warring groups were also engulfed with a vengeance without enough basic amenities of substances whereby many were compelled to give up studies. Many school and college students had dropped out, especially from Tuensang and Kiphire. The reasons behind dropping out of school and college are conflict, economic hardships, and communication problems. There were threats and arrest if they disobeyed their orders. Out of unsafe and fear of being targeted by violence, children were stopped from school by their parents, so many children were discouraged from continuing their studies.

In the year 2007, when the situation was terrible due to ethnic violence in the town and village under Shamator district, a few schools had to be evacuated for the stay of police personnel who came for the duty of maintaining law and order in the area. Education is a critical institution that plays a significant part in society, but sadly, hundreds of children could not study due to the violent atmosphere. Many students had significant academic losses and dropped out due to migration and residence relocation. A similar study by Borgohain & Sinha (2014) found that due to the ethnic conflict between Garo and Rabha tribes, student enrolment in school had declined, and teachers' numbers also had fallen in educational institutions, leading to a massive loss of education for the students. As a result of the conflict, the community and government are no longer interested in or give no attention to educational infrastructure facilities in the affected region. Ethnic conflict has caused significant damage to the education system in this region and the rise of illiteracy, which paved the way for many evil practices like child labour, unemployment, poverty, a weak economy and early marriage.

Impact on social life

The study found that ethnic conflict had a massive impact on the social life of both communities, the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes. All activities of life have been badly affected. The relatives of the common ancestor living in Tikhir village can no longer maintain bonhomie with the relatives of the same ancestor living in Yimkhiung villages. As the movement gains momentum, the Tikhir organisation accentuating their ways of life restrained to speaking the Yimkhiung language or cutting off the relation and association, both the parties are diminishing to articulate speak the language of each other and separating the Yimkhiung and Tikhir association organisation. Even in religion, separation they had been sprouted. Although the Tikhir were not officially recognised as a tribe by the Govt, parties are still running their organisation as autonomous entities. The conflict has affected the peaceful coexistence of the community and identity. The significant impact of this conflict was a complete breakdown of trust and social cohesion among the affected communities (Borghain and Sinha 2014,72-73). Since it is an ethnic issue, the people were compelled to hide their identity for a purpose and sometimes had to use other dialects if they were away from their territory. The situation was more aggravated because the riots destroyed the interdependence between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir villages. Most villagers earn either by depending on agriculture or wage labour. However, that also became difficult since village interdependence broke entirely after the conflict, which hindered the peace and mutual understanding in the social lives of Yimkhiung and Tikhir. Community conflict had naturally brought fences even to other Nagas, not only to particular tribes, responsible for the isolation and minimising interaction with the rest of the society.

Conclusion

The ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes had a massive impact on the socio-economic development. Both communities suffered in crucial areas such as employment, education, economy, environment and quality of life from the inception of the ethnic conflict. Coexistence and peace have been absent in the communities, interrupting the region's development. The leaders and apex bodies of various associations of Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities have been working on this conflict resolution to end violence and make peace between the communities. After many deliberations and efforts from multiple stakeholders, the Nagaland state government issued a notification recognising the Tikhir, a separate tribe, on 1 January 2022. Nevertheless, the efforts to improve the peaceful and conducive environment between

the Yimkhuing and Tikhir should continue to bring development to the region. Thus, at least the next generation should progress with unity and vigour in Naga society.

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Russia's Challenge to NATO's Enlargement Policy: A Critical Analysis of the Ukraine Conflict

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Abstract

This paper explores the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine critically, using it as a case study to demonstrate the major challenges that Russia poses to NATO's enlargement policy. The complicated interplay between the conflict's escalation and NATO's continuous desire for expansion is at the centre of this paper. The study begins by shedding light on how NATO's enlargement programme, purportedly intended to foster peace and security, has negligently become a fuel for geopolitical turmoil in Europe. The developing crisis in Ukraine is a dramatic illustration of the tensions that have arisen as a result of NATO's expansion plans, with Russia viewing these moves as direct threats to its national security. By delving into the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, this article thoroughly dissects Russia's passionate opposition to NATO's expanding reach. It investigates the fundamental motivations and strategic factors motivating Russia's resistance, offering insight into the broader consequences for European stability and international relations.

Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of the 21st century has been marked by a series of complex challenges, none more significant than the ongoing tension between Russia and Ukraine. Central to this dynamic is NATO's policy of enlargement, a strategy aimed at incorporating new member states into the alliance. The post-Cold War period has been marked by considerable instability, characterized by numerous crises between NATO and Russia. These tensions arose due to NATO's enlargement, the Kosovo war, Western support for colour revolutions, the U.S.-backed missile shield, and other factors. Over the past two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, interactions between NATO and Russia have fostered a profound

sense of mistrust on both sides. Both NATO and Moscow exhibit a common trait: the pursuit of proactive foreign policies. NATO has demonstrated its proactivity through membership expansion, military operations, and diversification of its activities. Concurrently, under Putin's leadership, Moscow has pursued an assertive foreign policy, aiming to weaken Western unity and enhance Russian power and regional sway. For both entities, taking action is crucial for asserting their existence and influence (Kanet and Larive 2012, 76).

These divergent interpretations extend beyond mere rhetoric or verbal disputes. The tensions between Russia and NATO carry tangible consequences for stability in Europe. Hence, this paper delves into the heart of this intricate relationship, focusing specifically on the critical lens of the Ukraine conflict. The conflict in Ukraine, which unfolded against the backdrop of NATO's enlargement efforts, has intensified the longstanding rivalry between Russia and the Western alliance. It is crucial to assess whether NATO's expansion contributed to the Ukraine crisis and to explore potential future enlargement strategies. This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis, scrutinizing the motivations, implications, and consequences of NATO's expansion policy in the context of the Ukraine conflict. By examining the historical antecedents, the evolution of NATO's policy, and the events leading up to the Ukraine crisis, this research aims to unravel the complex interplay of geopolitics, security concerns, and national interests. As we delve into this critical analysis, we explore the multifaceted dimensions of the conflict, shedding light on the strategic calculations and ideological clashes that have defined Russia's challenge to NATO's enlargement policy. Through this examination, we seek not only to understand the past but also to illuminate potential pathways for future diplomatic engagement, offering insights crucial for policymakers and scholars alike in navigating the intricate geopolitics of the 21st century.

NATO and its enlargement policy

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is an international military alliance comprising 31 member states from both Europe and North America. Its official establishment took place with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949. The composition of NATO has significantly transformed since its inception. Initially formed by the original 12 founding nations, the alliance

experienced expansion during the Cold War period, welcoming, West Germany, Greece, Spain and Turkey into its fold. The reunification of Germany in 1990 led to the incorporation of East Germany into NATO's territory. Following the end of the Cold War, NATO entered a notable phase of enlargement. After the Cold War ended, NATO underwent a remarkable phase of enlargement, integrating Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999, followed by Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. Further additions included Croatia and Albania (2009), Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), and most recently, Finland in 2023.¹ NATO's procedure for admitting new members is outlined in Article 10 of the treaty. According to this article, any European state can join NATO if all existing member countries unanimously agree to its membership. The procedure entails the invited state submitting its accession document to the Government of the United States. Once this step is completed, the U.S. government informs all NATO parties about the successful accession. This meticulous process underscores the significance of mutual consent among member states.²

Significance of NATO's enlargement policy

The Study on Expansion approved by the NATO Council in September 1995 observed that the enlargement of NATO should “complement the enlargement of the EU, a parallel process which also ... contributes significantly to extending security and stability to the new democracies of the East”, and that “NATO's enlargement must be understood as only one important element of a broad European security architecture that transcends and renders obsolete the idea of “dividing lines” in Europe” (Forster and Wallace 2001, 14). NATO's pursuit of increasing its membership is rooted in its core objective of fostering collective security and stability among nations. The development of NATO's policy on enlargement naturally progressed throughout the 1990s. Within the alliance, intense debates occurred about the advantages and disadvantages of broadening its membership. Supporters argued that expanding NATO would aid the transformation of ex-communist nations into democracies, address security issues in central and eastern Europe, and establish a unified security structure across the continent (Asmus, Kugler, & Larrabee, 1993; Talbott, 1995).

NATO officials argued that expansion not only promoted democracy and stability but also improved the alliance's capacity to combat terrorism. At the 2002 Prague summit, US President George W. Bush emphasised the importance of NATO enlargement. He emphasized that “each new member brought valuable military capabilities to enhance collective security”. This was evident in Afghanistan, where troops from Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia and Lithuania, as well as 16 NATO allies, worked together to confront global terrorism (George W. Bush, 2002). This argument underscores the strategic importance of NATO's enlargement, showcasing how new members contributed effectively to joint efforts in addressing contemporary security challenges.

On the other side, sceptics contended that NATO was no more necessary for Europe's security after the end of the Soviet Union. They felt adding former communist nations was expensive and could provoke Russia, making enlargement risky (Mandelbaum 1995, 11; Art1998,385). NATO leaders yielded to pressures to assist former communist countries, expanding the organization beyond its initial mutual defence scope. Concurrently, a growing sense of Western mistrust of Russia emerged in the enlargement decision-making process. (Ivanov, 2011). A significant decision made by NATO was that Russia would not have veto power over any decisions on enlargement, establishing an expanded European security framework that would exclude Russia from its primary decision-making procedures (NATO, 1995).³ This development underscored the evolving dynamics of NATO's relationship with Russia, indicating a shift towards a security framework that limited Russia's influence in the region.

Russia as a challenge to NATO's enlargement policy

The challenge posed by Russia to NATO's enlargement policy can be traced back to the early 1990s. Even before NATO openly discussed its enlargement policy, the Russian government, led by Boris Yeltsin, perceived the alliance's eastward expansion as a direct threat to Russia's national interests (Sergounin 1997, 61-62). This apprehension intensified when NATO formally initiated a study on enlargement in late 1994. Russian opposition to this idea became vehemently vocal. President Yeltsin strongly opposed NATO expansion during the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe session in Budapest in December 1994. He criticised the approach harshly,

saying that it put Europe in danger by causing it to pursue a "cold peace." (Sciolino 1994). This event marked a pivotal moment when Russia openly challenged NATO's expansion plans, setting the stage for ongoing tensions between the two entities. Russia's opposition to enlargement remained well into the middle of the 1990s and only subsided once the Permanent Joint Council was established, as described in the May 1997 Founding Act. Despite the fact that this action cleared the way for NATO's initial eastward expansion, which included the Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary in 1999, Russia remained sceptical about the expansion regardless of its formal connection. However, Russia made it clear in February 1999 that any further NATO expansion would be seen as crossing a "red line" (Maitra 2021, 39).

Russia believes that NATO's expansion toward its borders signifies the West's attempt to increase its influence while weakening Russian power. For instance, Sergei Karaganov articulates that NATO's expansion represents an extension of its influence, particularly in critical military and political domains. Despite this, the West's determination in enlarging NATO contrasts sharply with its refusal to acknowledge Russia's right to its sphere of influence. According to Karaganov, this position has prevented the end of the Cold War. Even though there are no longer any ideological or military confrontations, the geopolitical rivalry that dominated that time has returned to the fore in the world's most important international relations (Karaganov, 2016). According to Russia's geopolitical perspective, NATO expansion would be acceptable if NATO transitions into a primarily political organization with a reduced military focus. To achieve this, the West must involve Russia in ensuring Europe's security. This involvement could happen either through Russia becoming a full member of NATO or by establishing a new European collective security mechanism (Diesen & Wood 2012, 455).

The expansion of NATO's membership, conducted without involving Russia in the decision-making process, not only raised concerns but became an important cause of Russia's aggression towards neighbouring states. This anxiety increased as a result of NATO's substantial military presence in Europe, its 1999 military intervention in Serbia, which was pro-Russian, its support for democratic uprisings in Ukraine and Georgia, its recognition of Kosovo's independence without Russian consent in 2008, and the idea of a European missile defence system (Allison 2014,

1271). In reaction to the probable NATO offer of a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine, Russia stepped up its resistance to enlargement. When NATO leaders gathered in Bucharest in 2008, Putin issued a grave warning: "We view the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders... as a direct threat to the security of our country."⁴ There have been increased tensions between Russia and Georgia as a result of these developments in NATO's enlargement policy, particularly the possibility of granting Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP). The war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 effectively stalled Georgia's NATO aspirations. This conflict highlighted the security concerns arising from NATO's expansion near Russian borders. Subsequently, in 2014, Russia's annexation of Crimea occurred amidst the ongoing Ukraine conflict, viewed by Russia as a response to NATO's enlargement policy. This study will delve into the evolving Russia-Ukraine conflict, contextualizing it within the backdrop of NATO's enlargement and its implications on regional security dynamics.

NATO's Expansion and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: unravelling the connections

The origins of the conflict in Ukraine can be attributed to the country's ambitions to align itself with Western organizations such as the EU and NATO. Following the Soviet Union's dissolution, Ukraine's efforts to establish closer ties with the West have faced opposition from Russia (Kudors and Pabriks 2016, 68). Ukraine established official ties with NATO in 1992 following its independence and subsequent membership in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. However, significant advancements in these relations were made during Viktor Yushchenko's presidency. (2005–2010). Viktor Yushchenko restored Ukraine's strategic objective of "full membership in NATO and the European Union" in the military policy of the nation in April 2005.⁵ Although, these aspirations of both Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO in 2008 were thwarted by Russia's invasion of Georgia, underscoring the complex geopolitical challenges faced by nations seeking closer integration with Western alliances (Khan 2008, 1-14). This Russian invasion of Georgia marked a first aggressive challenge for NATO's enlargement policy, posing significant implications not only for Georgia but also for Ukraine.

However, President Yanukovich's pursuit of closer relations with NATO, despite Russia's invasion of Georgia, underscores the complexities of Ukraine's foreign policy decisions during his second term. He emphasised “the value of Ukraine's alliance with NATO in 2010, claiming that despite Ukraine's lack of readiness to enlist, the vast nation could not survive without this cooperation” (Yanukovich, 2010). Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk announced in August 2014 that he intended to ask parliament to approve Ukraine's membership in NATO. The following month, President Petro Poroshenko took part in the NATO summit in Wales and made announcements regarding the willingness of certain NATO members to provide lethal military support to Ukraine. Following the summit, President Poroshenko spoke before the U.S. Congress, pleading for Washington to grant Ukraine "special" security status, signifying the highest degree of cooperation with a non-NATO partner (Poroshenko 2014).

During Yanukovich's presidency, Ukraine and NATO maintained active collaboration, conducting joint seminars, tactical exercises, and strategic operations. Despite Ukraine's non-membership status, this cooperation raised concerns in Russia, viewing it as a potential threat to its security. The intensification of Ukraine's relationship with NATO, marked by joint military activities, exacerbated tensions. The Kremlin perceived these interactions as a direct challenge, prompting a forceful response. Russia's aggressive actions, notably the invasion and annexation of Crimea, can be seen as a manifestation of its deep-seated concerns about NATO's expanding influence in its vicinity.

The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, leaving the country in a state of heightened vulnerability. Faced with this blatant act of aggression, Ukraine sought increased support from Western allies, particularly NATO, to bolster its security and deter future Russian aggression. From 2014 to 2019, Ukraine made significant strides in strengthening its ties with NATO, marking a period of intensified cooperation and strategic alignment. A coordinated effort to improve Ukraine's military capabilities was announced in 2015 by joint military drills between NATO nations and Ukraine, including Operation Fearless Guardian, which included 2,200 participants (Weisman, 2015). The Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, underscored its commitment to NATO integration by passing a law on June 8, 2017, prioritizing this integration as a foreign policy

objective.⁶ Following that, NATO formally added Ukraine to its list of prospective members on March 10, 2018, recognising the nation's commitment to the alliance. On September 20, 2018, the Ukrainian parliament passed modifications to the constitution that made NATO and EU membership the country's main foreign policy goals. On February 7, 2019, the parliament passed a constitutional amendment by an overwhelming margin, further solidifying Ukraine's determination to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance (Pifer, 2000, pp.50-53). These events emphasised Ukraine's strong commitment to joining NATO and marked a pivotal time in its quest for Euro-Atlantic integration and improved security cooperation.

Ukraine's aspirations for NATO membership have accelerated since President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took office in May 2019. Ukraine enrolled in NATO's enhanced opportunity partner interoperability programme in June 2020, a move that suggested a desire for stronger ties with the organisation but did not ensure immediate membership. The National Security Strategy of Ukraine, which emphasises NATO membership, was updated by Zelenskyy's administration to reaffirm its commitment to NATO integration. Zelenskyy emphasised the significance of achieving a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine's security and defence during a meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in October 2020 (Zelenskyy, 2020). In response Secretary-General Stoltenberg emphasized that "Russia does not have the authority to veto Ukraine's accession to NATO".⁷ These developments of Zelenskyy highlighted Ukraine's increasing closeness to joining NATO. However, in February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, indicating the escalating tension and aggression between the two nations. Russia's occupation of Ukraine is a complex issue, rooted in historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors. However, Russia's main worry is on the substantial security risk it sees if Ukraine were to become a full member of NATO and use Article 5's collective defence clause. Article 5 of the NATO treaty states: "The Parties agree that an armed attack on one or more of them in Europe or North America is an attack on all. They will assist the attacked Party or Parties with necessary actions, including armed force, to restore and maintain security in the North Atlantic area."⁸

Russia's aggressive actions in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be directly attributed to NATO's enlargement policy. The expansion of NATO membership, coupled with its

military presence and interventions in neighbouring regions, triggered alarm in Russia. George Kennan would undoubtedly have recognised Putin's response. Author of the "containment" strategy against the Soviet Union, Kennan declared in 1997 that "expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era." "Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western, and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion, to have a negative impact on the advancement of Russian democracy, to revive the Cold War atmosphere in East-West relations, and to push Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly against our wishes," Kennan continued (cited in Moskowitz, 2022)." The Russia-Ukraine conflict is seen as a response to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, underscoring Russia's strategic moves to safeguard its interests in the face of perceived threats emanating from NATO's expansion policy.

Conclusion

In the wake of the critical analysis of the Ukraine conflict within the context of NATO's enlargement policy, it becomes evident that the geopolitical chessboard of Europe remains a complex terrain, marked by persistent tensions and potential flashpoints. The case of Ukraine has not only revealed the deep-seated animosities between Russia and the Western alliance but also highlighted the intricate interplay of historical grievances, national interests, and regional security dynamics. NATO's steadfast commitment to its enlargement policy, exemplified by recent developments such as Finland's membership, underscores the alliance's enduring vision of a Europe united under its protective umbrella. However, this ambition carries profound implications. The open-door policy of NATO, while rooted in transformative ideals, has thus far failed to engender trust and cooperation with Russia. Instead, it has acted as a catalyst for hostility, leading to periodic episodes of conflict, such as witnessed in Ukraine.

In the foreseeable future, adhering to NATO's ongoing policy of enlargement as usual could sustain instability in Europe, maintaining the threat of Russian hostility and the possibility of military conflicts. While NATO's ambitions are admirable, they require a careful reassessment, taking into account the intricate geopolitical landscape. Moving forward, diplomatic efforts should

prioritize open dialogue, compromise, and sincere attempts to address shared concerns. By adopting such prudent approaches, the alliance can aim to mend divisions and create a more secure, steady, and collaborative European future.

Notes and References

¹ As of the joining of Finland, NATO's membership currently stands at 31 countries. See. "NATO Member Countries," NATO, last modified June 8, 2023. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

² Under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the eligibility criteria for adding new members to the alliance are outlined. This article serves as the foundational framework guiding the accession process, emphasizing the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. For more details see.. "Enlargement and Article 10," NATO, last modified August 3, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49212.htm.

³NATO. "Study on NATO Enlargement (Ch. 2.C.27)." September 3, 1995. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm.

⁴ Vladimir Putin, 'Remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin at NATO Bucharest summit press conference', 4 April 2008, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903>.

⁵ BBC News. "Medvedev warns on NATO expansion." March 25, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7312045.stm>.

⁶ Interfax Ukraine. "Rada Restores Ukraine's Course for NATO Membership as Foreign Policy Priority." *Interfax Ukraine*, June 8, 2017. <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/427216.html>.

⁷ NATO Secretary General: It's Not Russia's Decision Whether Ukraine Will Be a Member of the Alliance. (2021, June 14). Eurointegration. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/06/14/7124429/>

⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (n.d.). Article 5 - Collective defence clause. *NATO Official Website*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm

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Title: Labour migration: A study of lived experiences of interstate migrant workers in Kashmir

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Abstract

Migration is a universal phenomenon, which has been witnessed since time immemorial. Being global, it is governed by various positive and negative factors operating at both sending and receiving places. However, living away from the origin places exposes migrant workers to an array of challenges, thereby sharing different experiences while being at the host place. They are subjected to various adaptations and suffer from a lack of various amenities in terms of better housing, work conditions, and elementary citizenship rights. As a result, they become one of the vulnerable sections at the host place. Thus, using a mixed method approach, this paper attempts to understand the experiences of 100 interstate migrant workers while living and working in Kashmir Valley. The findings report that they migrate for better job prospects while surviving in rented accommodation with limited basic amenities. Besides, long work hours with differential economic gains were some other key findings.

Keywords: Kashmir, Labour migration, Lived experience, Migrant workers.

1. Introduction

Migration is a complex global phenomenon that involves the movement of people from one place to another. The nature and pattern of migration whether temporary or permanent, short-term or long-term, internal or international is mediated by an array of factors and circumstances operating at micro, meso, and macro levels. As the causes of migration vary greatly, the movement of people due to economic factors has been of prime importance (Saikia 2014, p. 38). Studies have shown that people usually migrate to increase their income, add to their assets, and ameliorate their overall living standards (Abizu 2018, p. 79). As a result, migrant workers accounted for 169 million across the world in 2019, according to the study conducted in 2021 by the International Labour Organization (ILO), thereby, forming 4.9 per cent of the workforce globally (quoted in Labour Migration, 2022).

According to the National Commission for Enterprise in the Unorganized Sector (2008), the pace of internal migration has accelerated drastically in developing countries like India due to regional disparities followed by unemployment (quoted in Pattanaik 2015, p. 19). Migrant workers thus moved from low-productive areas towards high-productive ones, however, the boom of urbanization led to the development of urban centres in which migrant workers play an important role. Similarly, the growth of industrialization and modernization widened the gaps between rural and urban areas which also drifted the influx of labour towards the industrializing units while fulfilling the needs of the labor-intensive market. It thus resulted in the beginning of a flexible and informal labour sector, thereby creating avenues for the migrant labour force to get easily adjusted to low wages, and minimum security thereby, resulting in an upsurge in the migrant workforce (Sanyal and Maity 2018, p. 58). Nevertheless, out of various segments of the informal labour market, agriculture forms the major segment of unorganized workers followed by construction workers which constitute the second-largest segment (Alex 2013, p. 153). Thus, migrant workers belonging to lower socio-economic strata, with less education and devoid of adequate skills get easily adjusted within this sector thereby resulting in the employment of 400 million people living in India within various segments of the informal sector (Pattanaik 2015, p. 22).

As far as the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, the Kashmir Valley, in particular, has been one of the hotspots for labour migrants across India. Besides being one of the tourist destinations, it also acts as one of the important host places for interstate migrant workers. People from different northeastern regions of India usually migrate back and forth between their origin and host places for employment purposes. However, while belonging to poor socio-economic strata with large family sizes, and less income with fewer or no landholdings, they get easily absorbed in several segments of the informal sector such as industrial units, construction sector, manufacturing units, mining and brick kiln, home-based sector, etc. Besides some of them also prefer to work as self-employed. The nature of this form of migration is thus, short-term and seasonal which involves the movement of migrant workers starting from March till October. As a result, there is inadequate data related to the prevalence of migrant workers to Kashmir Valley who migrate every year for job purposes. However, according to Census, 2011 it has been estimated that Jammu & Kashmir accounts for 536,699 migrant workers. It is distributed among all the ten districts of Kashmir Valley, out of which Srinagar has the highest population of 56,164 persons (D-series: Migration Tables-Census of India, n. d). Besides, according to Data news and analysis (2016) between two lakh to five lakh migrant workers move at the peak

of summer and work from March to November each year. Aside from the cool atmosphere, greater earnings and an abundance of labour are some of the main elements that encourage migrant workers to migrate (quoted in Shafi 2017).

Thus, migrant workers while being engaged in the informal sector play an important role in contributing local labour market as well as sending remittance to the origin place, thereby enabling sustenance, smoothening consumption, and buying durables. However, it is pertinent to mention here that although the informal sector contributes half to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it acts as an unorganized sector setting forth several challenges and issues for these workers in their respective host societies. They are subjected to poor living and working conditions which makes them one of the marginalized sections at the host place. Likewise, inadequate implementation of various social security and other welfare measures puts them at risk thus constituting the poorest section of society. Thus, considering the nature of the issues that they face while being away from their family members in different socio-cultural contexts, the paper focuses on understanding their pattern of living, work experience, and the associated challenges that they may encounter while being at the host place.

2. Context and setting

To understand the experiences of interstate migrant workers while being away from their origin place, the study was conducted using a concurrent triangulation mixed method. This design enabled the collection of data both qualitatively and quantitatively, thereby, resulting in more defined and accurate results. As the migrant workers were involved in several segments of the informal sector, migrant workers engaged in street vending, rag picking, and the construction sector were selected for the study. This selection enabled highlighting the experiences of diverse groups of a labour market that were present at the host place. In terms of inclusion, only those male migrant workers who voluntarily gave their consent to participate and who have been migrating to Kashmir Valley for not less than three years were included in the study. The female workers and children were excluded considering the aspect of 'family' which holds significance during the migration of females and children. Thus, 100 such male workers who have migrated without their families have been considered to maximise and represent the migrant workers, which were selected both by purposive and cluster sampling.

Since the respondents usually prefer to live in groups, random clusters were selected from the district Srinagar of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Srinagar, being the urban area, with the highest prevalence of migrant workers in the whole Union territory according to Census 2011 (as mentioned earlier) was selected as the universe of the study. However, the respondents comprising n=40 (construction sector), n=30 (street vending), and n=30 (rag picking) were taken from two places; *Lalchowk* and *Madina Sahab Hawal Chowk*. The former represents the main market of Srinagar city that acts as one of the business hubs for both local and non-local workers. The latter represents the old part of Srinagar city having a defined '*nakka*' (labour chowk) where the workers gather every morning to get hired for regular casual work. This selection enabled the identification of the respondents easily.

3. Data collection

As the study involved both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect the data, an interview schedule comprising both open and close-ended questions was used. In-depth interviews were also conducted to have a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences. However, 20 out of the total 100 respondents were purposively interviewed based on the 'saturation' which was already achieved after interviewing 18 respondents. However, to recheck, the researchers conducted a few more interviews that finally resulted in the conclusion of the interviews with 20 respondents. Thus, data was collected by directly approaching migrant workers (in the case of street vendors and rag pickers) and indirectly through employers (in the case of construction workers). After acquainting them about the purpose of the study, the researchers interviewed the respondents who voluntarily gave consent. However, in a few instances, a particular time was fixed considering the availability and feasibility of the respondents in terms of work hours. All the interviews were documented in written form as the researchers felt that the respondents were reluctant. Hence no tape recorder was used and *the principles of acceptance and confidentiality* were taken into consideration with each interview lasting for 40-60 minutes. Nevertheless, in-depth interviews lasted for a few hours to days depending on the availability of the selected respondents.

4. Findings

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

The migrant workers in the present study were interstate labour migrants who have travelled from different parts of India. Of the migrant workers (N=100), respondents belonging to the street vending, rag picking, and construction sector were considered for the study. In terms of age group, the majority of them were between 31-40 years, which was followed by the respondents falling between 41-50 years. However, a lesser number of them were falling above 50 years. Besides, the respondents migrated from various parts of India with the majority belonging to Bihar. It was followed by respondents who traversed from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab with an average monthly income earned ranging between 5000-10000 while being at the origin place among all the respondents. Similarly, in terms of religious affiliation, the majority of them (n =70) belonged to the Hindu religion, followed by a smaller number of respondents (n=30) who belonged to Islam. As far as marital status is concerned, the majority (n=60) were married, whereas (n=40) were unmarried. Further, in terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents (n=75) were illiterate and had never been to school, which was followed by (n=15) who had studied till the primary level. Besides (n=06) had studied till the middle level and only (n=04) respondents had studied till the secondary level. It thus clearly reflects the poor educational attainment among the selected respondents. Additionally, it was found that the majority (n=72) had migrated in groups either with their friends or relatives, whereas only a small proportion (n=28) had migrated all alone.

4.2 Source of livelihood at the origin place: As far as the modes of earning at the origin place are concerned, it was found that the majority of seasonal migrant workers comprising 50 per cent (n=50) were working as agricultural labourers in their fields before migrating to the host place. It was followed by 30 per cent (n=30) of respondents who were working as casual workers on other's farmland in the absence of their land. Besides, a small section comprising 20 per cent (n=20) were working as construction workers while being at the origin place.

4.3. Reasons for migration to the host place: As far as the reasons that influenced them to migrate are concerned, it was found that the majority 62 per cent (n=62) stated availability of work throughout the year in

terms of better work options as a fundamental factor governing their migration. It was followed by 38 per cent (n=38) of respondents who stated high wages compared to their origin place as the reasons for their migration. Besides, pleasant weather conditions also influenced some of them to migrate.

One of the respondents from Bihar stated;

‘I like this place. The weather is pleasant compared to our place. It is cool and calm, so we work easily.’ (Street vendor)

Another respondent from Uttar Pradesh stated;

‘We get work throughout the year compared to our origin place. So, we come again and again.’ (Construction worker)

Thus, it becomes clear from the author verbatim that pleasant weather conditions along with other factors also governed their migration as they belonged to hot and arid zones which makes it difficult to work and survive in harsh climatic conditions.

4.4. Living experience: The living experience was analyzed through the nature of the living place, availability of basic amenities, and mode of living while sharing a common space.

4.4.1. Nature of living place: In terms of the nature of living while being at the host place, it was disclosed that the majority of respondents comprising 65 per cent (n=65) were living in structured rooms. Whereas small section including 35 per cent (n=35) was living at a construction site. It is pertinent to mention here that those living in structured rooms comprised all three categories of respondents, whereas those living at construction sites were only construction workers. Besides, while interviewing the respondents it was disclosed that those living in structured rooms had a single pucca room with concrete ceilings and walls followed by proper ventilation. Nevertheless, those living in construction sites were subjected to survive in shabby conditions with no provision of doors and covered windows and were exposed to living in under-constructed structures with or without basic amenities. Thus, they were subjected to stealing, dust, infections, unforeseen rains, and sudden adverse climatic changes while being at the host place.

4.4.2. Expenses of accommodation: In terms of expenses of accommodation paid by the respondents, it came forth that the majority of them comprising 44 per cent (n =44) were sharing rent in a group. It was followed by 35 per cent (n=35) of respondents who were not supposed to pay any rent as they were living at construction sites. However, a small section including 21 per cent (n = 21) was paying rent singly as they were living all alone while being at the host place. In terms of amenities available to the respondents, all of them revealed that they had drinking water and electricity available at their living places. In the case of toilet facilities, all of them disclosed that they had a single bathroom either within or away from the premises.

One of the respondents from Punjab narrated;

‘We have to remain in a queue and wait for the turn. Sometimes it becomes an issue and we go for an open defecation.’ (Ragpicker)

4.4.3. Nature of toilet facility at the living place: As far as the availability of toilet facilities is concerned, the majority of them comprising 60 per cent (n=60) had toilet facilities within the premises, whereas, 40 per cent (n=40) had toilet facilities away from the premises. It is pertinent to mention here that the respondents living at the construction sites had toilet facilities away from the premises.

One of the respondents from Uttar Pradesh revealed;

‘We have no toilet facility at our living place. We have one bathroom in the compound where we take baths openly’. (Construction worker)

Thus, it is evident that the lack of proper bathroom facilities was a source of concern for the respondents.

4.5. Work and Employment

Another important aspect that was studied was the work and employment status of the migrant workers and it was assessed through wage rate, working hours, and means of transportation while traveling for work purposes.

4.5.1. Daily income: In terms of daily income earned at the host place, respondents comprising 60 per cent (n=60) were earning between 300-600 daily in the case of street vendors and rag pickers. While those involved

in the construction sector comprising (n=40) were earning above 600 rupees. It is important to mention here that the respondents earning above 600 rupees were working either as skilled or unskilled workers with a definite wage rate.

4.5.2. Work hours: In terms of working hours, respondents who were involved in street vending and rag picking used to work around 12 hours a day, with a few of them working for 10 hours with or without short lunch breaks. However, those engaged in the construction sector were usually working for 8 hours a day, with a few instances of working up to 11 hours.

One of the respondents from Bihar revealed;

‘We start our day from 9 a.m. and work till it starts to dark in the evening. Later we come home and prepare our meals’. (Street vendor)

4.5.3. Means of transportation: As far as the means of transportation required for reaching the workplace is concerned, it was disclosed that depending upon the nature of work and the distance between the living place and the work site, the respondents preferred different modes of transportation. The majority comprising 35 per cent (n=35) did not use any mode of transport. It has been attributed to the fact that they were living on the same work site. It was followed by 25 per cent (n=25) of respondents who traveled by foot due to the closeness of the workplace. Besides it was followed by 20 per cent (n=20) who traveled by bus due to long distance. Further, an equal proportion comprising 20 per cent (n=20) used to travel by their means in the form of a purchased bicycle, thereby enabling them to cover long distances and save money. It is important to mention that among all the categories, a bicycle was frequently preferred by the rag pickers as it enabled them to collect the rag in the same vehicle.

One of the respondents from Punjab stated;

‘Living on the worksite with fewer amenities helps us to save transportation charges. The employer did not pay for it, so we adjusted and preferred the work site.’ (Construction worker).

Another respondent from Uttar Pradesh narrated;

‘We have purchased bicycles here, so we do not face any issues as it saves both time and money.’ (Ragpicker).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Migration is eminently a historical phenomenon with its traces derived from the beginning of human civilization. Shaped by numerous push and pull factors that are both natural and man-made in their form, migration in response to escape poverty and to alleviate living standards has been the precursor for an impoverished section of the modern-day world. As a result, people move from less developed regions towards the developed ones to earn more and remit enough. However, living and working in different places other than their origin exposes them to a myriad of challenges. Hurdles faced in accessing basic amenities, healthcare services, issues concerning identity, adaptation to social customs and practices, etc. are some of the crucial ones (Majumdar and Pritha 2015, pp. 88-89). Therefore, the purpose of the study was to shed light on the experiences shared by migrant workers while living in different socio-cultural contexts.

Evidence suggests that the movement of labour migrants is usually governed by push and pull factors operating at the origin and host places. According to Sridhar, Reddy, and Srinath (2012), movement of migrant workers was determined by the lack of better job prospects and low income (288). In another study conducted by Sanyal and Maity (2018), having higher wages compared to the origin place became an important cause of migration (57). Similar findings were reported in the present study in which the respondents revealed the availability of better job avenues followed by higher wages as one of the pull factors. However, pleasant weather conditions also became a pull factor in a few instances. Movements in response to changing climatic conditions have been also witnessed in Western Sudan where an elder family member migrates to another part to escape drought, thereby managing economic crisis through a shorter duration of migration (Brown 2009, p. 21). Similarly, considering the means of livelihood while being at the origin place, the findings of our study concluded that the respondents were mainly dependent on agricultural work which became a prime source of income for them. While others were fulfilling their daily needs by being involved in the construction sector as casual workers. These findings are in line with the results of Srivastava and Sutradhar (2016a) in which it was disclosed that the workers were working as agricultural and casual workers while being at origin places (29).

In terms of the living experience, our study confirmed that the respondents were living in rented accommodation, mostly in groups within a single room. Nevertheless, some of them who were involved in the construction sector were living rent-free preferably at the worksites. Besides, all of them had access to clean drinking water and electricity in their living place. Whereas, poor availability and accessibility to toilet facilities were profoundly discussed by the respondents particularly those living at work sites. These findings are in line

with another study which disclosed that the majority of internal labour migrants survive in a single rented room with instances of workers in other cities where they were living in temporary settlements on worksites that were neither owned nor any rent paid by them (Babu et al. 2017, pp. 340-341). However, in terms of quality of living, the availability of clean drinking water and the provision of electricity varied among the respondents (Babu et al. 2017, pp. 343-344.). Similarly, in the case of toilet facilities, most of them were devoid of any such facility and were subjected to open defecation with a few instances of using community toilets in several parts of Indian cities (Babu et al. 2017, p. 344.)

The present study also tried to highlight the conditions of work and employment and it was found that those involved in self-employment (street vendors and rag pickers) used to work long hours stretching up to 12 hours a day to earn between 300-600 daily. While daily wagers (construction workers) had fixed working hours with a definite wage rate ranging above 600 rupees depending on the level of skill. Similar findings have been confirmed in the study carried out by Benach et al. (2011), in which working for long hours to survive at the host place was evident among the migrant workers (2). In another study, wage differential was governed by the level of skill acquired by the workers in which respondents earning between 250-700 rupees per day were highlighted, thereby confirming the results of our study (Dhal 2020, 5). In addition, different modes of transportation used by workers to reach the workplace were also studied. The findings revealed that most of them were living at workplaces that saved their out-of-pocket expenditure on travel. It was followed by respondents who traveled by foot, bus, and in a few instances by their vehicle to save travel expenses as they were not provided with any means of transportation by their employers. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Srivastava and Sutradhar (2016b) in which results reported that employers seldom offer transportation for workers who used to live at a distance from the workplaces, often a considerable expenditure for the workers (35). Thus, the workers preferred living together with friends, acquaintances, and coworkers, thereby preventing themselves from the deplorable conditions of surviving and traveling while being at the host place (Srivastava and Sutradhar 2016b, 35).

Hence, it can be concluded that migrant workers migrate to maximize their income which enables them to survive during the lean period while returning to their origin place. However, the innumerable challenges they incurred at the host place did not deter them from traveling several miles away from their home. They try to earn enough and diversify their income to fulfill their family needs.

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**Internal Conflicts: The Representation of Domestic Space in the Select Novels of Anne
Tyler**

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Abstract

Since time immemorial, domestic space envisages the physical surrounding of a house or a hut but Mary Douglas, interpreted the meaning of domestic space as an association with emotions and human bondage. Remarkably, Mary Douglas, British social anthropologist conceived the meaning in a different perspective and explained that it is a space bound for women but it is found that domestic space is a container of social process to fill it with human emotions. The present paper brings out the representation of domestic spaces of men, women and children in Anne Tyler's Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant and The Clock Winder. To substantiate further, the victims encounter the culture of silence within the familial confinement with different modes of domestic behaviour. In the context of Culture of Silence, the domestic Space in these novels, persuade the characters to combat the internal conflicts revolving around the families of both these novels. Moreover, the paper also lists the recommendations of the domestic theorists such as Nicole Westmoreland and Kelly Lowe towards a conducive environment in the family by obliterating the internal conflicts.

Key Words: Domestic Space, Emotions, Human bondage, Culture of Silence, Internal Conflicts.

Introduction

In general, the term 'domestic space' gained momentum only in 1970 by the British social anthropologist, Mary Douglas and this term was associated only with the women of the household. Before the 1970s, the domestic space was interpreted by associating with the structure of the outer building of the house but later Mary Douglas found that there were also internal family conflicts referring to inexpressible emotions which surround an intimate partner in a domestic relationship. Relatedly, these internal conflicts within the family address more

psychic conflicts among the family members. In particular, any partner who can be male, female, or any intimate relationship gets affected by peculiar or mysterious behaviour of one's family members. For instance, even within their own realm of domesticity, individuals fight for rights to establish their equality. Significantly, both in Literature and in the cultural or traditional paradigm of domestic confinement, inmates of the house were subjected to verbal, physical and emotional abuse.

In accordance with women's space in the domestic sphere, they take care of the household duties without protest. On a close examination, it is found that women occupied only the private boundary of the domestic space whereas men indulged in public space for outdoor activities. The present paper analyses the different roles possessed by men, women and children in the domestic space to bring out the conceptual framework that both the partners should contribute to the healthy and happy environment of domestic space. According to Gaston Bachelard, he comments in his *The Poetics of Space*: "there is a ground for taking the house as a tool for analysis of the human soul". (Bachelard 1964, p. 36). In his opinion, the space of the domestic sphere encompasses the social containers for emotions more than the enclosed structure of the building which has been discussed as a huge space of an individual with a hope of a family comfort.

Domestic Space in Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*

The paper contributes to the roles played by men, women and children in the domestic space of Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Since time immemorial, men appeared to be detached completely from home and they considered the space outside home to be thrilling, sensational and illuminating but the space inside the home appear to be doomed, gloomy and uncomfortable and accordingly men reflect their aloofness or detachment behaviour flagrantly. As a matter of fact, men's outlook towards home is based on the process of childhood socialization and parenting. Most of the men internalized that home is a model for females containing both positive and negative qualities while for men, the outside of the home is a

public space represented mainly as a positive confinement for adventure and enthusiasm. Interestingly, Roger Hart in *Children's experience of Place*, informs that boys maintain a greater distance from the home than girls as highlighted by Jerome Tognoli (Tognoli 1979, pp. 599-607) Similarly, Beck Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, longs to be away from his family even after begetting the three children, Cody, Ezra and Jenny. Specifically, Beck being the breadwinner of the family creates a protocol of staying outside the family by leaving Pearl in desertion. In addition, Beck expresses his inability to be with the family due to a petty incident when Cody, the eldest one recalls the arrow incident in which he has been projected as an antagonist. Moreover, the culture of silence is prevalent in the Tulls family due to the stealthy departure of Beck, the irresponsible father. More strangely, Beck's desertion is connected with the archery incident when Cody aims an arrow at Ezra who jumps on him to prevent the shot. In the tussle, the arrow wounded Pearl in the shoulder. (Voelker 1992, p. 126)

However, Maxine Wolfe notes that, Girls are not afforded opportunities for privacy as defined by being alone, because they have to share the space with other members of the family as stated by Jerome Tognoli (1979, p. 601). According to Whiting and Edwards in 1973, they experimented cross-cultural work and brought out the findings that "girls maintained a closer distance to the home than boys when measures were taken randomly throughout the day" (Whiting & Edwards 1973, p. 171). Further, Bonnie Loyd projected that "men's venturing out into the world is a way of asserting masculinity, whereas staying at home means that one is less than a man". (Loyd 1975, p.10) It is understood that girls have been clipping their wings in the past and are provided with restricted tasks whereas boys were completely free without any restrictions. Within the limits of culture of silence, Pearl Tull, being the single mother, attaches herself more deeply with the sense of home and children than Beck. On close scrutiny, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* presents inter and intra psychic human family structure with an analogical interpretation.

In general, Pearl Tull has given the impasse in parenting involving violent mother and absent presence of father. Though Beck leaves the family in the lurch, it is observed by Leo Schneiderman that Tyler's families have only a half-life, perhaps because their members do not love or hate each other with enough intensity" (Schneiderman 1996, pp. 65-81) In truth, Tyler invades into the private sphere and cares more for proximity of the characters rather than intimacy. We cannot comprehend the individual's character without introspecting the family

system of her portrayal of American homes. Interestingly, Tyler's characters especially, the children in the Tull family, remember their domestic space as a haunting place without a loving mother and an absent father. Decidedly, the mother is apotheosized in the child's world and whatever is communicated to the child is informed through the mother. Unfortunately, Pearl becomes an insane mother to her children through the corporeal punishment. Arguably, the children become sick of 'home' and for 'home' without receiving love and compassion within the domestic space.

Representation of Domestic Space in *The Clock Winder*

On account of the plot, Tyler brings out a strife or a loss of lives to precipitate the rest of the action and reduces the burden of the consequences in the domestic space of *The Clock Winder*. In the light of family and community, Dorris Betts explains: "She does not recount the gradual passage of time but instead enters it at a still spot near some point of change, insight or decision for the protagonists". (Betts 1983, pp. 22-37). In other words, Elizabeth Abbott in *The Clock Winder* represents a change when she is disrespected by her family consisting of her minstrel father, sister and mother. According to Dorris Betts, Tyler always finds a ray of hope for the protagonists not to escape but find a permanent solution for the unpremeditated intricacies. In another context, Frank Shelton says, "Tyler's fiction constantly almost obsessively deals with the vexing relationships between distance and sympathy". (Shelton 1984, p. 852)

To substantiate further, Tyler also throws more light on distance and sympathy among the relationships in order to understand the essence of life within the culture of silence. Due to the prevalence of domestic space in Elizabeth Abbotts' family, Elizabeth confronts the culture of silence to encounter the repercussions of domestic life. In a deterministic way, Mary Robertson explains Tyler's novels as "the boundary between insiders and outsiders is continually transgressed" (Robertson 1985, p. 119) Considering the fact of relationship, Tyler boldly alternates her novels for the characters to face the miscommunication with the relatives and acts of closeness with complete strangers. Predictably, Elizabeth Abbott meets the challenges in her domestic world of minstrel father and ignorant mother who frequently compare her

attributes with her younger sister regarding her talents. At the other end, Elizabeth Abbott transgresses her domestic space with the thought of clinging on to a culture of silence without protest.

Internal conflicts in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*

Interestingly, the domestic theorist, Nicole Westmarland puts forth that social work also has to ensure safety and protection to the affected victims of the household. Furthermore, she projects that if the domestic environment is transformed into a notable and valuable source of inspiration, then the family attains comfortability and at the outset, both the partners become more thoughtful, dedicated and remain normal in abnormal circumstances. The theorists, Westmarland and Kelly suggest that if the domestic environment is worth living then

“We can all walk back into the house without feeling a bit scared to be honest... I mean now I trust him because he gets in before me. I text him at the lights and he has a cup of tea ready for me and he'd never have done that before. I would spend ages out of the house just walking around the shops so I didn't have to go home. (Westmarland & Kelly 2013, p. 8)

From these lines, the theorists unravelled the reality behind leading a happy life among the partners without internal conflicts.

In most of the city homes, women are attached more and also extend protection to home and men. Owing to this fact of femaleness at home, men tended to get frightened with tension. To add to the complexity, men are kept on tenderness and they attain a kind of tension when they are dependent on women who act as the nourishing mother who feeds and clothe them. It stands to reason that most men, due to the frightening environment at home, escape to the public spaces such as bars or restaurants or parks to socialize with other men by inviting them to play card games or watch sport on television. In the case of *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, Beck Tull decides to run away from the responsibilities after observing Pearl's role in motherhood. Interestingly, Pearl being a single mother, lives for the sake of her children.

Significantly if men are assigned the roles of provider and protector, he has to make a safe living for his partner and children rather than solely being the breadwinner of minting money for his family. Relatedly, in the midst of an emotional crisis, he develops intimacy with his partner to combat the difficulties instead of accusing his partner for the reason behind the insurmountable problems. As we shall see, Pearl appears to be a less mother and more shrewd in nurturing her children. However, Cody, the eldest, recalls the internal conflicts with his mother and brother who have outside connection beyond the troublesome home.

In the personalizing family system, the power is controlled and dominance over the children is followed by way of reduction rather than using commands and there in a smooth and conducive environment is created between the children and parents. Concomitantly, the parent -children relationship serves to approach the line of demarcation and the children identify themselves with more of better communication, inexpressible feelings. To illustrate, the parents reduce their level of authority by their negotiable instructions: “Don’t you think it is time to go to bed now because you’ll be tired in the morning” (Sibley & Lowe 1992, p. 191) This particular instruction would make children obey or oblige without a second thought instead of ‘Go to bed’. While this differentiation in modes of articulation and accent in the parents’ attitude speak at length about how the children would end up with the modes of behaviour in the future. Evidently, in the absence of a father in the Tull family, Ezra places his trust on his mother where Jenny looks at Pearl as a shrieking Witch. More than once, Pearl calls Jenny with uncouth words such as “Serpent”, “Cockroach” “hideous little sniveling guttersnipe” (*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* 1982, 66) At this point, to sum up the comments of Sibley and Lowe, if either the mother or the father acts aggressively, the children become violent. Consequently, even on her deathbed, she calls them “Duckers and Dodgers” (*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* 1982, p. 34) Besides, Pearl is addressed as a witch in her Baltimore neighbourhood. At the outset, Pearl agrees to accept the feeling of desolate, despair and disillusionment. On the other hand, Jenny, the youngest, inherits the internal conflict of verbal abuse from her mother and executes the same to her daughter. Suddenly, Jenny realizes and puts an end to her disgruntled self of disappointments.

Eventually, men's distance from the domestic environment or from domestic work produces negative emotion and also shows their inability to define human bondage within the family. Not surprisingly, his children detest their father figures for their persistent disassociation with domesticity. Hence, the domestic space signifies cultivating self-realization, humaneness, protection, proximity in showing love, affection, sympathy and empathy towards other members in the domestic relationship. In short, instead of exercising patriarchy, men can arduously work to share the physical and mental burden of their spouses in order to mitigate the exacerbating pain which has been undergone by women. Generally, family is the honeycomb from which any individual resides and inherits the traits to execute them in society. On the contrary, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* puts the reader in shock waves wherein the plot revolves around the mysterious internal conflicts between Pearl Tull and her husband, Beck Tull. and how Pearl being the maternal figure strives hard to bring forth children in a single mother family.

Moreover, the plot takes an odd turn while Pearl's peculiar and harsh mothering due to the internal conflicts lead separation from Beck Tull to reflect on the cruel approach to parenting in the Tull family. To sum up, Beck should have contributed towards offering a competent and protective asylum for the children without internal incompatibility. Fundamentally, Anne Tyler recognizes that if the spousal relationship persists with internal conflicts between the two partners, then undoubtedly, there exists a contradictory or unpleasant relationship between the mother and the children which would pave way for adverse internal conflicts. Ironically, Cody becomes the most affected soul in his family and his mental anguish gets intensified while his mother favours Ezra with utmost kindness and care. Rather than searching for salvation, Cody derives pleasure out of giving troubles to Ezra. Literally, in order to avoid the tirades of his mother, Cody puts on the disguise of a virtuous man to become the favourite of Pearl instead of Ezra. Persistently, Pearl reflects her internal conflict towards Cody by making a comment that: "You have been mean since the day you were born". (*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* 1982, p. 61)

Decidedly Anne Tyler conglomerates both goodness and badness in Jenny Tull to bring a conflated species of human mother. Unlike Pearl, Jenny builds a personal space and avowedly takes responsibility in caring for her children. In comparison with Ezra, Cody puts Ezra in a discomfited state and blames him for the intensified internal conflicts. More bitterly, Cody expresses his rage towards his biased mother and deserted father, Beck. At the end, Cody attains salvation by redeeming his actions and he goes out to form an ideal home with his wife. On the contrary, men don't proceed with the roles to be carried out in the domestic space and if they take up the roles of a proper leader, proper role of a father and husband, then interestingly he can build a comfortable home to cherish the happenings around his family consisting of wife and children. Likewise, it should be asserted that if men and women are to attain satisfactory relationships within themselves in terms of emotions or thoughts, they must begin to redefine the place of home physically and symbolically in their lives. In fact, had Beck imbibed the qualities of a good provider and a proper father, the internal conflicts in the domestic space of the Tulls would not have existed.

Internal Conflicts in *The Clock Winder*

Primarily, patriarchy posts much threat to the domestic environment to the opposite partner and children and without further delay, it contributes more to the suppression of behaviour in women and children. Firstly, the child experiences the bitterness of his or her own confinement when parents demand an extreme form of restricted environment to the children by curtailing its rights. In short, the child becomes stressful with anxiety and begins to alienate itself from the parents. According to Bernstein's theory of domestic mode and problem behaviour, he talks about power relations in the family. To demonstrate, Bernstein observes that a family with a power functioning system characterizes the very fact of thrusting dominance and authoritarian relationship with their children. These parents are always highly demanding and never maintain intimacy with their children and are found only to be picking the negative aspects of them.

Following this criticism, Elizabeth Abbott, while spending her time with her family, observes her mother keeping herself engaged in the kitchen and always making food for the family. During one of her conversations, her mother asks her why she is idle and lazy and why can't she perform some dynamic activity to make herself active and vibrant. Instantly, Elizabeth responds that she walks the dog and in fact she imagines that the neighbours thought of her as a black sheep- "the minister's never do well daughter who lay in bed till eleven and then had no better occupation than walking the dog". (*The Clock Winder* 1972, p. 129) Within the context of the family, the parents develop internal conflicts with their children to derive power relationship with their children by positioning them in a restricted area in which either of the parents identifies himself or herself with authority.

For instance, the parents raise their voices through commands such as 'go to bed', 'do this', 'get out of my sight' (Atkinson 1985, p. 150). For the most part, In *The Clock Winder*, the minstrel father of Elizabeth Abbott places Elizabeth Abbott in restricted area by demanding his complete attention, Unfortunately, he exercises patriarchy in controlling Elizabeth's endeavours. During her bitter conversation with her minister father, Elizabeth gets disappointed and feels unhappy when her father finds fault with her idleness including her slovenly habits, disorderly appearance, a helpless girl and a late riser who rises late to watch television As the minister frequently develop internal conflicts with his daughter by indicating that " You're disrupting an entire household" (*The Clock Winder* 1972, pp. 135-136) Whatever the accusations might be, Elizabeth relaxingly takes a pack of cigarettes to smoke by adding fuel to the burning fire. Besides her father asks her to do some activity to place her on record but Elizabeth remains stubborn and says, "I can't think of any other job I'd be good at" (*The Clock Winder* 1972, p. 136)

Apart from the daring resistance of the plot, Mrs. Emerson in *The Clock Winder* places her sympathy and love on Elizabeth Abbott to perform a closer relationship than with her own offspring. Significantly, the crux of the matter is framed by Tyler in such a way that Elizabeth Abbott earns more fondness of Mrs. Emerson than her own children who are looked upon as outsiders. In the final analysis of the parent-children relationship, it should be noted that more

of a curtailed environment prevails in *The Clock Winder* to target internal conflicts between Elizabeth Abbott and her minstrel father. Precisely, the patriarchal restrictions of Elizabeth's father induces increased pressure between the father and daughter as Elizabeth's father orders her to pay a visit to Mr. Cunningham's house to look after him on his sick bed. Though Elizabeth initially refuses to take care of the old man, out of her dominative father's repeated compulsion, she visits to pay attention to Mr. Cunningham. However, Elizabeth's ordeal of internal conflicts with her father forcibly pushes her forward to leave her home which is filled with domestic complexities to another world of Mrs. Emersons. Therefore, the paper contributes to the prosperity of family life which strengthens the relationship without internal conflicts.

Conclusion

Conclusively, while a mother distances the adults from children's space and the father works for the integration of these two entities then the children struggle with mental anguish and needless tension. At the other end, parents have to be democratic in nurturing their children as long as two or more children are to be reared. They also have to execute their diplomacy in treating their children equally in all aspects. Emphatically, Tyler provides a space for both Pearl Tull and her children in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* to lead a quiet and a serene life but Pearl expresses her inability to attend to her children by treating them equally. It is noteworthy that Pearl is effective in relationships which are interconnected with parenting but she uses abusive language to cultivate internal conflicts. Hence, parents must need to relieve tension and ambiguity from the home environment of children as they consider equality by consolidating the freedom to adopt in a newly required formulation of togetherness in the family during the adolescent period of their children.

In the point of view of Elizabeth Abbott in *The Clock Winder*, Anne Tyler produces sympathy and empathy for Elizabeth while she is entangled with internal conflicts in her own family. Subsequently, due Elizabeth's father's egoistic behaviour, she suffers with troubles and turmoil as her father neglects to offer her fatherly love in the domestic relationship between the father

and the daughter. At the outset, Elizabeth escapes from the internal conflicts of her father to dwell in a more personal space for her to think, evaluate, improvise to reach her goals. Thus, the paper has laid its emphasis on the contribution of both men and women in the domestic space by obliterating the prevalence of alienation among the intimate partners to bestow the complacent zone for the children in Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* and *The Clock winder*.

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Revisiting religious and national question in Sikh discourse: Towards a new paradigm in Sikh political thought

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Abstract

This paper aims to re-imagine Sikh political discourse theoretically through a non-modernist lens and strives to frame a new conceptual or epistemological framework for Sikh sovereignty and its non-dualist enunciation. It affirms a position wherein Sikh political thought is perceived as inclusive in its approach that transcends the modernist logic of constructing 'inimical' binaries. Sikh political doctrine and its non-dualist supposition of 'Miri-Piri' (non-dichotomous understanding of spiritual/religious and political sphere) has been explored to argue for an idiosyncratic proposition on Sikh political thought. The question of Sikh nationalism and its relationship with Sikhism and Sikh religious doctrine has also been addressed. Sikh nationalism and the concomitant question of Sikh nationality have been conceptualized in an avant-garde framework that transcends territoriality and statist discourse.

Keywords

Sikhism, Sovereignty, Modernity, Non-duality, 'Miri-Piri', Religion, Public Sphere

Sikhs and the Public sphere

The question of exploring Sikh political thought is contingent on first exploring the most vital political concept, which is the concept of sovereignty. The notion of sovereignty that has been explored in the paper was first developed by Arvind Pal-Mandair in his work on *Sikhs, Sovereignty and Modern Government*. Mandair in his major work has asserted that the notion of sovereign experience communicated by Guru Nanak and developed by the later Gurus based on the reality

of a liberating experience is democratic, in other words the operative logic of Guru Nanak's philosophy is within everyone's reach. The experience that got actualized as *shabd-guru* and then further materialized as institutions of Guru Granth(Adi garnth) and Guru Panth(khalsa) these principles constituted a model of sovereignty that could be regarded as *heteronomic* (Mandair, Sikhs, Sovereignty and Modern Government 2015, 116). A *heteronomic* sovereignty is envisioned as a paradigm of sovereignty, whose operative logic dovetails with the self's relationship to the other. The notion that the self exists in the world in terms of its relationality with the other (ego loss) (Mandair, Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed 2013, 138-139). The implications of this heteronomic model of sovereignty, was a Sikh lived experience or a life world that is embedded in a spirit or consciousness or develops it liberating spirit or consciousness from the harmony between the institutions of *shabad –guru* and *miri piri*.

It ensues in a lived –experience that not just maintains the internal diversity and plurality but allows it to thrive immanently within panth , even as the panth's unfoldment happened along an ossified and exclusive line. This aforementioned development of ossified and exclusive identity manifest in the form of social and political religious groupings such as the Khalsa or Tat Khalsa. Nevertheless, the operative logic and the ideational spirit of *shabd-guru* and *miri-piri* maintained its philosophical influence. The consciousness derived from this operative logic of *shabd-guru* and *miri-piri* doesn't allow any dualist metaphysical distinction between the spiritual and the worldly, the religious and the political or the sacred and the profane. Despite, the progressive implications and potential of the philosophical motifs the Sikh life world suffered an irreparable loss with the colonial encounter. It can be argued that the encounter with the secularizing and modernizing forces of western modernity and especially since the annexation of Sikh Kingdom in 1849, the inclusive heteronomic model got embroiled in a conflict with a peculiar paradigm of sovereignty bestowed by the European colonial forces. And later the process got accentuated with the consequent nationalization and modernization of Sikh tradition by Sikh modernists emanating from the Singh Sabha Movement and later the Akali –SGPC network.

In the fervour of the competition between political groups, modernist Sikhs reformulated *Sikhi* (The original and indigenous term for what is now known as Sikhism) as a ‘world religion’ and ‘nation’ along European lines and the Westphalian model. Roger Ballard and Arvind Pal-Singh Mandair both have argued that by emphasizing or focusing on the term ‘*quam*’ as a translation of nation and religion or a religion which is national and political in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. ‘Sikhi’, the term used to signify non-modernist Sikh spiritual tradition and philosophy got completely transformed into modern Sikhism and the model of *heteronomic sovereignty* was superseded by the modernist principle of *autonomic sovereignty*. The most vitriolic manifestation of autonomic sovereignty was the ethno-nationalist or separatist movement of late 1980s and early 1990s and can be considered a logical culmination of the trajectory that modernist Sikhs have chosen a century ago.

Apropos of the aforementioned process and logic of asserting oneself as a legible body in the public sphere the heteronomic sovereignty, which constituted the main logic through which the sovereignty got manifested in pre-modern time got supplanted to a great extent by a uniquely modernist principle of autonomic sovereignty. And this was characterized by an idea of envisioning a group of people with its idiosyncratic religion (Sikhism) and their own land (Punjab). It is the hegemonic influence of the modernist form of autonomic sovereignty, manifesting in the form of an independent Sikh ‘*self*’, which denies its relationality vis-à-vis the ‘*other*’, in this way the experiential reality of Sikhs or Sikh life world is forced to enunciate itself through the binary of the ‘*private versus the public*’, which is nothing but modernist framework in disposition. The insidious impact of this form of autonomic sovereignty as argued earlier was the ethno-nationalist or the separatist movement of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. It can be argued that despite the modernization drive, the earlier form of heteronomic sovereignty was never really completely vanished. It is observed that albeit the enormous resilience of the idea of heteronomic sovereignty, as it got relegated to the private sphere from the time Indian nation-state came into existence. Still, it remained to exist in the traditionalist discourses that are kept privatized (Mandair, Sikhs, Sovereignty and Modern Government 2015, 116).

Here, it becomes vital to create a sort of distinction between Jurgen Habermas understanding of religion and the public sphere and that of Mandair's. Habermas in his late works named *Religion in Public Sphere* after early part of 21st century has endorsed religious citizen's argument in the informal public sphere, but not in the formal public sphere of Law making, parliamentary functioning etc. It can be argued that citizens with religious disposition engaging in political discourse, albeit it has to be within the purview of informal public sphere are granted the permission to enunciate purely religious argument to argue for the policies they want to espouse. The aforementioned citizens have the right to the legitimate demand of seamlessly interpreting their reason into non-religious reason.ⁱⁱ Concurrently, he also asserts that religious subjects should, 'be allowed to express and justify their convictions in a religious language if they cannot find secular translations for them'.

Mandair on the other hand radically differs from Habermas because he believes that Habermas by allowing religion/ religious argument or reason to be a part of public discourse even in informal public sphere accepts the hegemony of the category of '*religion*', which according to Mandair will only lead to the entrapment in the binary of religious-secular and between different religious traditions and in this way the non-western and non-dualist tradition like *Sikhi*, would be afflicted from the western or modern dualistic binary thinking and its entrapment by being classified as *religion*. Therefore, Mandair denounces the whole discourse of *post-secular* espoused by Habermas as another form of western imperial ideology to suppress non-western epistemologies and idiosyncratic experiences. The model of sovereignty developed by Mandair to explain non-western or pre-modern traditions of self-rule, which is different from the modern conception of sovereignty, is fruitful in explaining the problems of modern conception of sovereignty and its crisis imposed on Punjab.

But despite the useful attempt by Mandair to transcend the binary of religious-secular or avoid public-private dichotomy and to develop an independent political subjectivity for non-western discourse, Mandair in my undersatnding suffers from the same problem that afflicts other modern authors working on religion and tradition like Sikhism. The major component of the

problem is the framework deployed to study religious/spiritual traditions. Mandair develops his argument from a *Lacanian epistemic framework* and uses the same western epistemologiesⁱⁱⁱ especially from the post-structuralist and post-modernist frame. And, by doing that ignores the indigenous model for understanding social reality or social ontology as well as history and religious categorization. Here, I am not arguing for a relativist or particularist epistemological framework, but arguing for a position of hybridity of methods and co-contamination of thoughts and ideas in grounding any notion about self, sovereignty and religious or spiritual traditions. This question is inextricably linked with question of framing universals. In other words, can we really have non-western conception of universals and can frame concepts that truly indigenous.

The pertinent question here is that ‘Can the epistemicide unleashed by the logic of colonial knowledge be reversed, without resorting to a parochial localism?’ In this the methods and epistemologies like the notion of *emergentist universal*^{iv} along with the ideas of *co-contamination* or *hybridization* are really useful notion to frame both Sikh universal, which is neither parochial nor embedded in certain dualistic and exclusive modernist operative logic. And, hence despite attempts to transcend modern European framework for the study of religion, Mandair in my view falls in the same trap of modernity and its dualist logic which he very vehemently tries to transcend.

Rethinking Sikh Nationalism: Transcending the Shadow of Territoriality

After critiquing the conventional model in comprehending religion like Sikhism and delving into the discourse on Sikh sovereignty and public sphere, it becomes pertinent to develop an alternative frame of Sikh political thought and nationalism that transcends the modern European epistemological framework. The root of modern Sikh national consciousness lies in the Sikh religious and communal consciousness (Deol 2000, 113). In the case of Punjab and Sikhism religious question is inextricably linked with the national question. Therefore, to properly comprehend Sikh religious and political discourse one has to explore the question of Sikh nationalism.

In all the major theories of Nationalism, State and territory is a prerequisite or a precondition for any sort of nation to emerge. In the discourse of Sikh nationalism the Sikh identity and Sikh nation is territorialized. There are territorial limits to the imagination of the nation. This limit makes sure that sovereignty lies in the state and hence is territorialized. This territorialized Sovereignty gives impetus to the movement for an independent Sikh homeland, Khalistan.

French revolution gave the idea and slogan that all sovereignty resides in the political community or the 'nation' and in the 'Westphalian' discourse nation and state is inextricably linked. This 'derivative discourse' of nationalism in the language of Partha chatterjee (Chatterjee 1986, 38), makes *territorialization of identity* necessary for any discourse on nation to emerge. There can be other ways of conceptualizing Sikh nationalism that can transcend the shadow of territoriality in which sovereignty of the Sikh nation is not dependent on any specific spatial territory and hence Sikh nation can be conceptualized without necessarily articulating the demand for a Sikh homeland i.e. Khalistan.

This can be done by conceptualizing Sikh Sovereignty in a different manner that is through exploring Sikh history and the history of Khalsa and reiterating its universal value which is not confined to a particular ethnic group or territory. In this sort of conceptualization Sovereignty is embodied not in the territory which fuels the demand for a separate Sikh nationhood, but lies embedded in the five anterior markers of Sikh 'faith'. This *embodied* Sovereignty is more in tune with the globalizing times than the emphasis on *territorialized* Sovereignty which forces Sikh to demand for a separate homeland, Khalistan (Shani 2014, 115).

This notion of sovereignty can also be called as true self-authorization which emanates from the autonomy of the self from the clutches of temporal authority of nation-state. This can be substantiated by giving the example of Guru Nanak's discourse with Nath Jogis in seminal text called Sidh Gosht. Where Nanak was asked by Nath Jogis about his Guru, and from where he draws his authority from? The reply by Guru Nanak enunciated Sikh conception of sovereignty,

which emanates not from any temporal or national source, but from the conception of *Shabd-Guru*, which is nothing but a manifestation of a state of equipoise consciousness that transcends self-centeredness or ego and also the dualistic notion of self against the other (Sandhu 2007, 103). When Guru Nanak was asked by Siddhas during the famous debate between Siddha and Guru Nanak, known as SidhGosht that who is your Guru, Nanak replied Shabd is my Guru and I am the disciple of Shabd. Siddhas asked Nanak:

Where does the Sabad reside that will carry us across? What supports the breath that extends the distance of three and seven fingers? How can one be stable, while speaking and playing, to realize the ineffable? Listen holy Nānak! How do you instruct the mind? Nanak replies:

The gurmukh is connected to Truth through the Shabad, and with love one is united with Ek Oankar. One becomes wise, perceptive, and, through perfect destiny, is united with EkOankar. The Shabad is deep within the hearts of all beings, and wherever one looks, is seen. As air is Pervasive so is EkOankar pervasive in Sunn i.e the state of emptiness resonating with Sunn Samadh and Sahaj Consciousness. It is without attributes nirgun and with attributes that is sargun as well. With grace, Shabad resides deep within the heart, and skepticism is purged. The body and mind become pure and the pure bani and nam are enshrined within the heart. Nanak says: The Shabad shall reveal this: The True One supports the breath that extends the distance of three and seven fingers. The gurmukh speaks about the essence, and realizes the ineffable and infinite. When the Shabad is enshrined in the mind then the ego is removed. When the One is seen inside and out, the love of nam is present. Through the True Guru's Shabad, one is united with EkOankar (Sandhu 2007, 103).

Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair in his work on philosophical reflections on Sabad(Word) : Events-Resonance-Revelation argues that the Sabdic sovereignty got supplanted by epistemic sovereignty of modern secular knowledge. Mandair also tries to reinterpret Shabd as not just any other linguistic tool, but as a non-existent entity, whose grand state or the ontological state is non-oppositional unity (Mandair, Philosophical reflections on Sabad(Word): Events-Resonance-

Revelation 2023, 66). According to Mandair the internal logic of Shabd is to contradict the Law of Non-contradiction that is Mandair conceives the idea of Shabd in consonance with the logic of dialetheism^v. Mandair strives to bring Sikh concept of like Shabd and Nam in framework that transcends the dualistic tendencies present in larger secular modernist logic, wherein language and the materiality of language interdict any space for formulating the notion of spirituality and relationality, as Shabd, which is perceived as language and language due to its materiality is seen as antithetical to any notion of revelation. Revelation or any idea of spirituality conceived through the concept of Shabd is relegated to the margins and never conceptualized, in other words framed and rendered as ineffable^{vi} or incapable of performing an efficacious action in the real world. Mandair attempts to undo this conception and frames the idea of Shabd as an event –expression in time not beyond time and frames Shabdic or Sabdic sovereignty through the logic of non-oppositionality and relationality and thinking in time or not reducing time to space.

This relational ontology, rooted in time, albeit has the advantage of apprehending Shabd as a concept that transcends both the modernist tendency of conceiving Indic concepts as ineffable and the pre-modern logic of conceiving concepts as revelatory or transcendental. This is despite the brave attempt to reinterpret Sikh concepts as efficacious and action driven, the major limitation in Mandair's conceptualization relates to the complete sidelining of any metaphysical rendition or transcendental imagination of concepts like Shabd and Nam and this renders Mandair's interpretation as just another secularized conceptualization emanating from post-modern or post-structuralist logic of thinkers like Deleuze and Julia Kristeva. In other words it loses its autonomy to speak for itself and the whole attempt to frame concepts in a decolonial yet universal mode remains a distant dream.

It can be argued that despite this the *non-dual equipoise state of consciousness* or *Sahaj* and *Shabdic* or *Sabdic* potential as it is called in Punjabi is the source of Sikh sovereignty, which is also the expression of *self-autonomy*, *self-realization* and *authorization*. This conception of 'self' and 'sovereignty' is universal and goes beyond parochial logic of nation-state and its construction of inimical 'other'.

Prominent philosophical anthropologist or sociologist J.P.S Uberoi similarly has argued, in his case he take the semantic or embedded meaning of the five symbols of the Khalsa rests in the liturgical conflation of two contradictory forces. The unshorn hair(kes) is related with the comb(kanga) which performs the function of restricting the hair and conferring and orderly arrangement to it, in the same manner the bangle(kara) imparts the exact orderly command over the sword(Kirpan) (Uberoi 1996, 12). Therefore, in my view there were no territorial limits to the assertion of Khalsa, because Khalsa unlike modern Western idea of nationalism had universal underpinnings. Khalsa or the Sikh nation had the notion of embodied sovereignty which was universal and not particular or confined to any limits of territory.

Therefore, Sikh community should be conceptualized as a 'Post- Westphalian' community which is universal in nature and transcends the limits that State and territory imposes on any community. This conceptualization of Sikh community or nation incorporates diversity and does not create an 'inimical' other which is the case in western notion of nationalism. This conceptualization also makes the demand for a separate homeland for Sikhs, redundant because Sikh community in the light of this conceptualization is sovereign and does not need a separate territory of its own, that binds them to the logic of nation-state and its particularistic or parochial tendencies.

Many scholars working on Secessionism as a political idea have critiqued Secessionism as conservative political ideology or political idea. Political theorist Neera Chandhoke working on Kashmir has argued that secessionism can only be justified when there is an institutional injustice against a certain group or where constitutionally a certain ethnic group has been denied equal rights (Chandhoke 2010, 60). Moreover she argues that any problem that is the result of the working of the nation -state or emanates from the inner logic of nation-State, the solution to that problem or crisis cannot be another nation-state. The Kashmir Problem according to her is the result of the way nation –state or democracy works or functions by excluding certain groups, the solution to that could not be another nation –state because these problems are not specific or endemic to one nation-state but is inherent in the very logic of the functioning of state.

The analysis by Neera Chandhoke could be applied to the situation in Punjab and the demand for secessionism could be repudiated by using the same logic. In fact the new conceptualization of Sikh nation evades or eschews the need for any territory because of the unique nature of its sovereignty and therefore the demand for secessionism in any case becomes redundant. This new conceptualization of Sikh nation also acts an antidote to communalism or communal consciousness in Punjab, because in this new conceptualization there is no need for a separate territory and concomitantly no need for the creation or construction of an 'inimical' other and this destroys the very basis of communalism.

Sikh nationalism in this avant-garde conceptualization also does not give space to the Sikh political elites to create nationalist discourse by framing an exclusive Sikh identity. The competition that exists between Indian State and the Sikh 'political system' represented by SGPC, Akal Takht and Akali Dal also becomes less intense with this sort of conceptualization of Sikh nationalism. Religion as an ideology that is used for political purpose for protecting or safeguarding non – religious economic interest as argued by Ashis Nandy (Nandy 1998, 177-178) and that works through interpellation by the efforts of elites will also have no space to flourish in this new conceptualization of Sikh nationalism.

This new notion or conceptualization of Sikh nation or community is inclusive in nature and allows for the fluidity of religion, diversity or plurality, which is integral to religion in Punjab to flourish. This conceptualization accommodates diversity because of its universal underpinning and because of the universal values of equality, liberty and justice that it embodies without any discrimination on the grounds of creed, caste, race, religion, sex and social position. In this way it can also keep communal consciousness in Punjab at bay by negating the communal discourse and space along with the process of '*otherization*' that accompanies the communal discourse.

Conclusion

The paper started with an attempt to delve into the idiosyncratic conception or framework embedded within Sikh tradition, especially the embodied and *heteronomic* sovereignty that allow plurality, diversity and fluidity to flourish, which acts as a bulwark against communal and parochial nationalist ideologies. This epistemological framework is experiential in nature and grounded or embedded in lived reality of Sikhs. It then explored the unique understanding of public sphere and nationalism that can emanate once we abandon the modernist conception of exclusive religions with no *syncretic space and fluidity*. The conception and rethinking of Sikh nationalism and national question which is inextricably linked with the religious question was propounded in a manner that defies the exclusivist and dualist logic of modern nation-state and its concomitant idea of territoriality. In other words a Sikh universal, which is emergentist in nature is imagined or conceptualized that ushers new understanding of Sikh political thought.

This conception is based on an epistemological framework that defies all modern binaries of universal-particular or secular-religious, public-private and self-other. It grounds itself on the original tenets of Sikh philosophy, which defies dualistic thinking as manifests in the concepts like *Miri-Piri* (non-duality of religion/spiritual and politics).

In this frame of thinking, or operative logic, there is no inimical 'other' and even when the other is conceptualized, it is seen as an integral and entangled with the 'self'. This entangled framing is not based on modernist and post-modernist absolutist and relativist epistemological framework, but it grounds itself on a creative understanding of Sikh corpus and its operative logic, which perceives Sikh political thought and Sikh sovereignty as rooted in its autochthonous or indigenous logic emanating from the efficacious and action driven *Shabdic* or *Sabdic* potential. This move paves the ground for a notion of spirituality or ontology that is thoroughly relational in nature and also having enough space to accommodate and enunciate diversity and plurality with sui generis conception of sovereignty and nationalism. The paper also links and attributes the failure of

communalism in Punjab to the same conception and operative logic manifesting at the social and political level through the entangled lived reality or experience and philosophy of common Sikhs.

End Notes

- 1) The concept Shabd-Guru signifies the primacy of word and language over ego. Mandair takes a Lacanian position in his argument and asserts that one is born in language and it precedes our existence and this notion resonates with the conception of Shabd-Guru. Miri-Piri is the doctrine of inextricable relationship of spiritual/religious with political as developed by Guru Hargobind. It forms one of the most important principles and doctrines in Sikh discourse and philosophy.
- 2) Habermas main text on the subject is '*Religion in the Public Sphere*' published in 2006. The English translation of this latter text is '*Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the "Public Use of Reason" by Religious and Secular Citizens*'. It is noteworthy that Habermas also explains his perspective in his text 'On the Relations between the Secular Liberal State and Religion' published in *Political theologies: Public Religion in a Post-Secular world* in 2006.
- 3) Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of knowledge. It is primarily about the question of how we know what exists and is generally conflated with Ontology which is about the nature of reality or being or what truly exists. Epistemology and Ontology are two basic philosophical concepts that are used to formulate and understand complex social and political reality.
- 4) The notion of *emergentist universal* is based on an emergentist nature or conception of reality. This conception is taken from critical realist school of social science and

philosophy. Roy Bhaskar the founder of *critical realism*, propounds reality to be *layered and emergentist*. This emergence is contingent and that takes spatio-temporality into context. This notion of emergentist reality when applied to the debate on universals or on the knowledge and epistemologies of framing universals then it gives birth to emergentist universals.

- 5) Dialetheism is logical system resembling the notion of paraconsistent logic and was first formulated by the philosopher Graham Priest, and used by other philosophers like Jay L Garfield in relation to certain South Asian and East Asian Philosophies like Buddhism. According to dialetheism, there are true contradictions and there can be some true statements, whose negation are also true, this certainly violates the law of contradiction as it results from the Aristotelean Logic of non-contradiction. Dialetheism foregrounds the operative logic of non-oppositional unity that ensues from Shabdic intensity as conceived by Mandair. This is an attempt by Mandair to bring Sikh concepts in parallel with other non-metaphysical school of Indic thought like Buddhism
- 6) Ineffability thesis is the idea of fathoming Shabd in the light of Judeo-Christian discourse of revelation, which sort of resonates also with the positivist materialist notion and claims of epistemic sovereignty that silences Sikh concepts and renders them ineffable that is incapable to speak, to make things happen and to have efficacious consequences in the world. In other words seen as event that is beyond time and on which nothing can be said it entails the logic of ontotheology, which is nothing but a transcendental assumption rooted in a dualistic metaphysics.

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The Khasi Work Ethic

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Abstract

The work ethic of the Khasis of Meghalaya is imbedded in the Khasi religion and provides a strong moral compass as to how one should approach work, the attitude one should have towards it and the principles that should guide all activities of man. For a Khasi work can be viewed as a form of worship a conforming to the will of God, an offering made so one can find a place in the dwelling of God in the after-life. There are words and phrases in the Khasi language that have been developed by the Khasi ancestors that on the one hand attempt to motivate people to hard work and propel them towards honesty in dealings and on the other seek to rebuke and ridicule the disinterested and the lazy. This body of knowledge has been passed down through generations as 'teachings or lessons' which all Khasis must adhere to. An analysis of the traditional work ethic draws attention to the changed attitude towards work clearly reflected in the growing ills affecting Khasi society.

Key words: *trei* (work), *smat* (hard working), *jutang* (covenant), *niam im* (religion of the living), *kamai ia ka hok* (earn righteously) *jingsneng* (lessons/teachings)

Introduction

The Khasis refer to work as *ban trei ban ktah* reflecting the physical nature of it where *ktah* involves touch and *trei* refers to work. The Khasi definition of work has been shaped by the ideas put forth by their ancestors regarding the purpose of man on earth. They believe that a life of ease and comfort is not a noble one rather dignity and honour is gained through the diligent performance of work. From the viewpoint of the Khasis, any constructive activity that creates a positive outcome beneficial to self, family or community can be defined as work. Work for a Khasi involves the exertion of energy valued in *ban pynmih ia ka umsyep* or to work till one sweats. Work activity is not restricted to the generation of an income and hence housework, care of children, gathering firewood and edible plants from the forest, repairing fences and carrying water are all activities categorised as work. Khasis have always had a clear-cut division of labour between men and women with children too expected to contribute to the family at an early age such as in assisting in household chores and caring for siblings, grazing cattle, feeding livestock and so on. Women cook and clean, take care of the children, help out in agriculture, and sell produce in the market. The role of men is seen in warfare and politics, protection of women, hunting, the lifting and placement of monoliths

and performance of rituals (Ngapkynta 2000)¹. All physically demanding work are to be performed by men who are believed to be empowered with twelve strength *U rang khadar bor* while women are seen as physically weaker since they are possessors of only one strength or *shi bor* and are hence never expected to do the job of men. Khasis have always been known to be extremely hard working and society expects every man and woman to work productively. In the past Khasis were known to be engaged in activities such as wet-rice farming, iron-smelting, excavation of metals, forest-based industries, handloom weaving, pottery, livestock rearing, limestone excavation and coal mining, agricultural production, trade and commerce (Ngapkynta 2001).

The work ethic of the Khasis is imbedded in their religion which they call *ka ñiam trai*. The term *trai* is a derivation of the word *tynrail* which means roots. *Ñiam Trai* is the original religion of the Khasis on which is rooted their culture, tradition, and way of life. In the last census conducted it is seen that the followers of the traditional faith are a minority today as a large majority of Khasis 74.59 per cent have converted to Christianity. The Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Buddhist collectively make up a total of 16.38 per cent, while the religion of 0.32 per cent is unknown leaving 8.71 per cent as other religions (2011 census) of which *ñiam trai* is a part. Though the followers of *ñiam trai* are small in comparison to other faiths, yet cultural continuity especially in ideas related to matriliney has been maintained and the general guidelines behind the conduct of the Khasis remains unchanged and their work ethic firmly entrenched in their consciousness.

Origin of the Khasi Work Ethic

Primary reference to work among the Khasis is seen in their legend of origin many variations of which exist. H.O. Mawrie (1973) explains one such version which states that in the beginning there were sixteen huts of people the *Khadhynriew Trep* living in the abode of God called *ka dwar U Blei*. Earth or *ka pyrthei* was their place of work and they regularly travelled up and down both worlds through a tree connecting *ka dwar U Blei* and *ka pyrthei*. One day the tree was cut down stranding seven huts or the *Hynniew-Trep* on earth². These took on the name Khasi, using the phrase *ki khun U Hynniew Trep* or the children of the seven huts to describe themselves. Attention is drawn to the wrath of God on the cutting of the tree and to resolve it man had to enter into a sacred agreement with him known as *ka nia ka jutang*.

‘Under the terms of *ka nia ka jutang* man had to follow *Ka Hukum* (the ways of God) in all spheres of activity, failing which man was to suffer the consequences of his deviance in one form or the other’. (Nongkynrih 2018, p. 158)

The Khasi work ethic stems from this agreement between man and God which can be further explained by looking at two aspects of the Khasi religion: *ka niam-im* and *ka niam iap*. As Nongkynrih points out, *Niam im* is the religion centered on the living and it consists of a body of beliefs and directives on how the Khasis should live their lives in accordance with the will of God. *Niam-iap* is religion centered on the dead and consists of beliefs pertaining to the after-life and rituals which must be performed for the dead. Death is the only way a Khasi can move back to the dwelling of God on condition of his adhering to the norms of *ka niam im* and the performance of rituals pertaining to *ka niam iap* on his death³. The work ethic of the Khasis is essentially linked to *ka niam im* which dictates how a Khasi must live his life.

Work Ethic and Ka Niam Im

Khasis have an obligation to adhere to the will of God in all aspects of life. *Ka niam im* 'is based on the ethic of right living and conduct which the Khasis term as *Kamai ia ka hok* (earn righteousness)' (Mawrie 2001, p. 8). Earning of righteousness is at the core of the Khasi faith. It is a moral compulsion for a Khasi family that it must walk righteously, live righteously, do righteous acts, and earns righteously (Mawrie, 1983). Righteousness must be reflected in every action of an individual, in every activity he engages in whether it is economic or otherwise but it is especially important to conform to *kamai ia ka hok* in order that one may be transformed into an exalted state necessary to enter the house of God. In order to earn righteousness a Khasi should know how it can be acquired. In trying to understand God, the will of God and the earning of righteousness the Khasi ancestors developed a body of knowledge passed down from generation to generations collectively known as *ki Jingsneng Tymmen*, *Jingsneng ki Longshuwa* or lessons of the elders and lessons of the past generations. Such lessons 'draw their legitimacy from the Khasi traditions either in the name of ancestors... or as the words of wisdom coming from the old' (Nongkynrih 2018, p.163). Since the Khasis were without the written word this meant that oral tradition was the chief vehicle for transmission of culture. It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the *Jingsneng* were codified. Khasis regard their ancestors as wise and insightful and they look forward to reuniting with them in the house of God but to do so they have to honour the *jutang* contracted by their ancestors with God. Hence conformity to the work ethic is essential for a Khasi.

Attitude towards Work

Every Khasi parent has a moral obligation to inculcate positive values and attitudes in children. They emphasise on the use of a stick referred to as *u dieng sympat*⁴ as a form of chastisement of errant children.

Work ethic must be imparted to children so that they imbibe the importance of being responsible and self-reliant. This explains why boys and girls are taught house hold chores and expected to do their part in the care of young siblings. It is a common sight in villages even today to witness a child of seven or eight washing dishes, cooking rice or carrying an infant on his or her back while the mother is engaged in other responsibilities. A popular idiom ‘*Wat long khun jynreiñ⁵ mih na ka doh dait ruh ia ka doh*’ (Mawrie 2014, 89) warns children not to have the qualities of a parasite that is unable to survive on its own and needlessly sucks on the flesh of its parents. There is an expectation that every individual must one day be independent and contribute positively to the family.

Khasis believe that there is much one can learn from the natural world especially when it concerns rising from bed. One must be habituated to waking up early and starting the day on a positive note.

Hikai ba phin khie dang step phyrngab,

Pynmlien ban khie dang riew ka tyngab:

Lane khie noh dang riew u ‘iar nyngkong,

Kynthei, shynrang khmih la jingtrei la jong; (Berry 1978, p. 5)

Berry notes the belief that one must rise at the crack of dawn just as the crows start to caw or the rooster begins to crow and then begin the days’ work. This is in harmony with the western idiom that ‘the early bird gets the worm’. Getting up before dawn to attend to business and household responsibilities is regarded as a virtue. In the past this was a common feature among traders who had to leave early in order to travel long distances on foot from one village to another and farmers whose fields were located a distance away from home. Getting up late is considered undesirable and a person regularly committing such an act is demeaningly referred to as a *lah sngi* or noon riser. But it is not enough to be simply hard working. A degree of intelligence must be possessed and displayed in the performance of work. In Mawsynram the term *Daista* is used to refer to a person who is lacking in intelligence, is stuck in the past and is not street-smart. A person who shows no inclination towards work is insultingly referred to as a *thadsngui* or *phullui*⁶, meaning an individual who prefers to laze around in the sun. Sarcasm is thus a powerful weapon used to shame people into conformity.

Like Radhon Singh Berry, Sib Charan Roy Dkhar (1959) too compiled the teachings of the Khasi ancestors pertaining to various aspects of life in his *Ka Niam-Ki-Khasi Ka Niam Tip Briew Tip Brieu*. Some of these teachings present a picture of the Khasi attitude towards work. ‘*Long kiba smat ki bam jaituh ki bam alhia;*

wat jaipdeh' (18), '*Wat ju ia bynnud ka kti ka kjat*' (44), '*Pynsmat pynsting la ka met*' (46) are all instructions on developing a particular mindset. Khasis are expected to be always preoccupied with some productive work or the other and must display a keen willingness to undertake any chore or activity. Hard work is second nature to them and laziness is considered an abhorrence. This attitude is not just confined to the economic field but extends to household matters as well. The terms *jaituh*, *jaipdeh* or *alhia* refer to different aspects of laziness and are used as a form of insult when addressed to an individual. An individual displaying such traits is often regarded as being insufficiently disciplined and would remain a blotch to the parents' good character. There is an expectation that the willingness to work should not be confined to the space of ones' own home or for ones' benefit only but to be willing to help out others whenever the opportunity arises. This explains the belief that one should not be selfish in the use of their hands and feet *wat ju bynnud ki kti ki kjat* and acts of charity can be positively viewed as work and constructive in earning righteousness. There is an assumption on the link between work and physical fitness; an active person is *smat* and this would make him or her light-footed (healthy) or *sting* and would be blessed with a long life-span. *Ban smat ban sting* is thus the key to longevity.

Economic Independence, Honesty and Condemnation of Greed

The Khasi work ethic is reflected in the kind of mindset one should cultivate. '*Bam la ka um syep: bam la ka kamai hok: ka bam ei wat treh*' (ibid, p. 18). The Khasi ideal of acquiring righteousness in life requires that a man has a high desire for economic independence. He must stand on his own two feet and eat off the sweat of his brow. Apart from what one may inherit, everything else must be earned. Khasis believe that accepting anything for free is morally wrong as it is not the fruit of his labour and therefore belongs to another. This can therefore be equated to stealing and would prevent the individual from earning righteousness. An undeserved reward has the capacity to contaminate that which has been cleanly acquired and must therefore be rejected. Dkhar further argues that this includes money sourced from corruption and gambling; crime, smuggling and spoils of war which deserve no merit. All profit earned, all business conducted and all wealth collected should always be done so cleanly (Mawrie, 1983)⁷. What one earns can therefore be described as pure and worthy in the eyes of God and anything not conforming to this is regarded as impure or polluted and must be set aside in order for one to have any chance of being accepted back by God after death.

Honesty is considered a virtue and one is expected to remain honest at all times even in the face of poverty. Khasis believe that ill-gotten gains never lead to much good. Cheating is taboo and is equated with stealing (Mawrie 2014). A Khasi is expected to live a simple life and work hard at all times, wealth is not the indicator of salvation but rather may pose dangers in the attempt to gain *ka hok*. It is better to suffer through the rigours of poverty and have ones sins washed away rather than have an easy life and forget the path of righteousness and God (Dkhar 1959). The Khasi ancestors believed that it was wrong to compare oneself with the rich and prosperous as that would create a feeling of discontentment and impure thoughts. Being obsessed with the wealthy would lead one to loot, plunder and even murder (Berry 1980). Greed never leads to happiness and one should be contented with the fruits of one's labour and must refrain from being infatuated with the wealth of another. There are certain terms used by the Khasis to indicate an undesirable quality in an individual such as *beit spah* to be easily impressed by wealth and *ba khwan* greedy and wanting whatever one sees without working for it. Such a person is often compared to a much feared serpent featured in Khasi folktales called *U Thlen* who lives off human blood.

On Loans, Poverty and Begging

Sib Charan Roy Dkhar (1959) points to the view of the Khasis on loans: '*shu trei kat kaba nang lap ban lait bam-shah bam ram*' (46), '*Wat ju pynshah ram*' (18) and '*Trei, kam, Duk habar ne ha dpei, Tang kaba don-hok don-sot ei*' (36). Khasis regard the taking of loans to save oneself from financial distress as highly undesirable and suggest that one should take up whatever work comes one's way and work whenever one can in order to avoid having to borrow from another. This indicates a sense of dignity in labour where no task is too small nor beneath an individual and taking up any work is more honourable than seeking credit from another. But there is also an acceptance that in case the inevitable happens and one must borrow, it is the duty of the borrower to clear all dues on time and so remain free from the grasp of creditors. The Khasi forefathers had great insight on the burden of loans and so the advice to all creditors '*Wat ju marmlien aisut tyngka basang, Ba ka sut ia ka kamai ka bam krang*' (Berry 1980, p. 17) which means one should not ask for interest on loans for it is taboo as interest wipes out completely the earnings of the borrower. The rich are advised to help the poor and not to profit from their misfortune as such interest are not considered clean.

Those who face extreme hardship and poverty are comforted and reminded that they must work even if poverty is reflected in the kitchen and outside as this will give them righteousness. Poverty is not an excuse for one to stop working. As long as the individual works even if the returns are bad his efforts are not wasted as his chances of entering the house of God is better when he earns in righteousness. This is the reason why beggars are a rare sight among the Khasis; begging is not approved of and can never be resorted to at any

cost as it 'is considered synonymous with stealing' (Mawrie 2014, p. 25). Begging shames not only the beggar but all those connected to him⁸. Khasis argue that it is better to eat only a simple meal of *ka ja bad ka mluh* or rice and salt than beg. For a community where meat features prominently in their diet and edible plants abound everywhere, such a simple meal would be seen as a great sacrifice; begging is considered so abhorrent that it is better to eat humbly *tang ban teh kpoh* or just enough to hold the stomach together, than resort to it. Poverty can never be used as an excuse for laziness as this would keep one trapped in the vicious cycle of it. If one is poor one must work harder to get out of it. The people of Mawsynram village are known to be extremely hard working engaging mostly in trade. For them poverty is an unacceptable condition and so they speak of the shame of a mouse entering a house and leaving empty handed, 'mih thullui ka khnai'. This idiom reflects their attitude towards poverty and the need to work hard and prosper.

Attitude towards savings

Khasis stress on the importance of savings *ban kynshew tiak tiak* and their attitude towards spending is reflected in the phrase *ngi ki Khasi ia ka pisa ngi dait da ka bniat* where they assert that Khasis hang onto money with their teeth. To be tight-fisted is a virtue; extravagance or lavishness is seen as foolish and wasteful, commonly referred to as *leh beit*, *leh lutphut*, and *leh sahu*. This reflects the western idea that a fool and his money are easily parted. Dkhar (1959) notes that the Khasis say that whatever affluence has been showered by God must be stored or saved and not be fittered away as this affluence may not return. A woman is expected to play a prominent role in managing the family finances. She is expected to balance the accounts, be tight fisted and maintain the financial health of the family. Berry (1980) refers to women as *Lukhimai* or the goddess of wealth, the keeper of the house and collector of earnings⁹.

Vices to avoid

The Khasis value time and feel that it must be spent constructively. All actions should lead to the accumulation of righteousness. Excessive speaking or spending time on idle gossip is discouraged and those who waste time in needless conversations are seen as having an argumentative nature *kito te ki heh tang ka nia* and would never amount to much. Gambling, taking hasish and excessive drinking are undesirable activities and people are warned not to befriend thieves, gamblers and drunkards and those who waste time fishing and trapping birds as such individuals are seen as having a bad influence (Jeebon Roy 2009). Every well-bodied individual is expected to *kitkhia iala ka jingim* or to be responsible for their own existence.

Laitphlang (1976) argues that it is unimaginable that anyone would come to this world and eat for free without working with the exclusion of infants, children and the disabled.

Work is so important to the Khasis that they name a few days of the week after certain activities. Friday or *sngi thohdieng* is the day when women, men or even children make their way to the forest to collect fallen branches or chop down withered trees for firewood. Saturday called *sngi saitjaiñ* is the day for washing clothes and women gather together by the banks of streams and rivers to wash the week's accumulated laundry. Sunday or *sngi U Blei* is the day set aside to worship God. There are certain terminologies that Khasis use to indicate the intensity of energy one has to put in to complete an activity. To *trei shitom* means to work hard, *trei bordi* indicates to work using all one's strength, *trei doh iap* is to push one's body beyond tolerance and *trei minot* means to work diligently. *Kit khia* is to be responsible and *pyndep la ka kamram* is to complete one's duty.

Conclusion

The Khasis had a rich and vibrant economy in the past. In agriculture they were engaged in cultivation of rice and grew a variety of vegetables and fruits; they were exporting betel nut and various forest produce. They were well known for iron smelting and export of limestone. They had extensive trade relations with the plains of Sylhet and Assam. Their work ethic led to a productive existence. However this cannot be said of the Khasis today. There appears to be a decline in commitment to the beliefs associated with the Khasi work ethic simply because many associate the Khasi tradition with the traditional faith which is viewed as conflicting with Christianity. Other factors are the closure of border markets, operation of new political forces, urbanisation and changes in land ownership patterns and in the social environment. The concept of *kamai ia ka hok* and its attainment is not a driving force compelling people to work. People earn wages or a salary but there is no incentive to work hard and an absence of commitment in work. Corruption has made insidious inroads in Khasi society with flagrant display of wealth. A sense of arrogance among the educated youth prevents them from involving themselves in agriculture and manual labour. The entrepreneurial mindset which Khasis were once famous for has not been nurtured. The high rate of unemployment is testimony to this. With the proliferation of banks and easy availability of credit Khasis do not hesitate to take loans to fulfill their consumerist lifestyle. The vices that the Khasi forefathers warned about are endemic. The state has a high number of alcoholics, drug addicts and HIV positive patients. Many youngsters have taken to criminal activities such as theft, extortion and swindling. Begging which was practically unknown among Khasis has unfortunately surfaced though the numbers are still low. The idea

of easy money and quick get rich schemes has lead to regular arrest of drug peddlars many of which are the youth. Prostitution and human trafficking is on the rise.

There is an urgent need to revive the traditional work ethics of the Khasis many of which are very much in tune with modern economic systems. There is no need to import ideas from outside to propel the youth to committment and hard work when the rich legacy left behind by their ancestors is enough to get the work done. To blindly reject tradition on the grounds of religion or that it is outdated is to ignore one of the biggest assest of a nation.

Notes and References

1. According to Professor Hamlet B Ngapkynta (2000) the Khasis of the past had ways for training boys and girls for physical fitness and strength and for nuturing talent that would benefit both the individual and community. Emphasis was laid on the development of a healthy nature, spirit and intelligence and inculcation of proper conduct (68-69).
2. Mawrie (1973) states that when man had righteousness in his heart he lived with God but when sin or evil entered his body as reflected in the cutting of the tree of righteousness, he lost his place with God (11-13).
3. Nongkynrih (2018) observes that a spirit denied entry into *ka dwar U Blei* shall forever roam the earth 159-160.
4. A slender stalk of the *dieng tiaw jaiñ* (*Rosa indica*) is generally used to spank children.
5. Here Mawrie (2014) refers to a type of body lice which Khasis say emerges from the flesh and feeds on the same flesh 89.
6. The terms *thadsngui*, *phullui* and *daista* are of the Mawsynram dialect and not of the popular Sohra dialect spoken in Sohra (Cherrapunji) and Shillong.
7. Mawrie (1983) points out that only that which is acquired through *ka Umsyep Khuid* or clean sweat is acceptable as directed by God (32).
8. Mawrie (2014) notes that it is the duty of a clan to take care of all its members and a person who begs would create an impression that his clan has failed in its duty (25)
9. According to Berry (1980) an honourable woman is akin to pure gold shining in her purity but if she deviates from her role and interferes in the male bastion, she falls from grace bringing dishonour to her family and problems to her clan thus highlighting role differenciation in a matrilineal society (40-41).

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Transformations in Society and Social Media: Exploring the Virtual Sphere

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Abstract

The technological advancements not only change the way we live but also has a far-reaching impact on how we think and perceive our surroundings. These advancements have given us an impalpable domain; a stage to perform and present oneself. A platform where one can curate a self, move along and feel the virtual landscape. This exposure in the cybernetics has questioned the notion of Being like never before as it has plunged the scope of presence of mind and body. Social media and virtual spheres have certainly presented with numerous opportunities and benefits, but undeniably thinned the line between what we perceive and experience in real world and how we float in the virtual one. This gives rise to hyperreality which refers to a phenomenon, in which real and the fabricated world are intermingled in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish the former from the latter. We often put an exaggerated version of our lives, which is much more interesting and flattering than that of real life, thus projecting a façade where reel identity precedes the real one. The virtual sphere has expanded to almost all domains of our lives, thus rendering us glued to the screen. This paper aims to understand the notion of hyperreality in virtual sphere, thus acknowledging us the dangers of 'second self' or the projected selves.

We make our tools and our tools make us. (Mitchel 1994, p. 59)

The nature provided with a physical realm, in which living species continued to thrive. But as, human civilization continued to develop, it created an intangible space i.e., cyberspace. As that space was made available to public, it proved as gamechanger and played a significant role in altering the behaviour and perception of human beings at large. There are various applications and interfaces available to move in that virtual world. Social Media holds a significant place in the post-modern world. It is a connecting interface where user uploads pictures and events of theirs and to which their friends can react as they wish. It is a digital reproduction of real life and communication with friends without real life interaction. This digital simulation of reality, where an online identity, more vivid than the real self is formed, denotes the hyperreal. Hyperreality is a term coined by French philosopher and culture critic, Jean Baudrillard to address the phenomena in which simulations blend with reality or tries to be more real than the reality itself, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models

of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (Baudrillard 1994, p. 1). He is of the opinion that the age of hyperreality has rendered both real and reproductions meaningless and this is world full of information, but devoid of any meaning.

In the same sense, social media has rendered our real life meaningless. It has embedded so deeply in our lives, that the virtual identity has taken over the real identity. The ‘Hated in the Nation’ is an episode of the series “Black Mirror”, created by Charlie Brooker, basically set in the dystopian future and is a comment on contemporary social issues. It shows the dominance of hyperreal over real and how a human being is reduced to disembodied sign for consumption in the symbolic exchange of cyberspace. The social media is overrun by signs and these signs hold great power, i.e., #. This episode also shows the precedence of hyperreal over real and actions in hyperreal world have consequences in ‘real’. The individual in hyperreal world loses its subjectivity and becomes a sign. The documentary “Social Dilemma” (2020) warns the effects of social media. It allows a few people i.e., tech designers and content creators have a great control over the way, how billions of people act, think and live their lives. As Markham states, “For some Internet is simply a useful communication medium, a tool; for others, cyberspace is a place to go to be with others. For still others, online communication is integral to being, and is inseparable from the performance of self, both online and offline” (Markham 1998, p. 20).

According to Albert Borgman, the virtual world is a glamour that creates friction with our real world. It isn’t just a symbol but a reality in itself bearing no reference to actuality. Lil Miquela, an Instagram star, is the perfect example of this, she is a fashion influencer having ties with fashion giants, but is merely a CGI creation and have no relation to reality. We can see the extent of how simulations are set in our society through this robot’s presentation on internet. It has the same impact as of real influencers. People yearn for this robot’s life style. All this has become a part of our culture and we make a conscious effort to change our lifestyle to fit in a world that isn’t real at all.

Undoubtedly, the technologies of hyperreal world have the potential to enrich our lives. Though the immersive technologies have entered and benefitting almost all spheres of our lives but there is always room to exploit to next level. A short film “Hyper Reality”, created by Keiichi Matsuda describes the phenomenon in relation to rapidly growing technologies. “Our physical and virtual realities are becoming increasingly intertwined. Technologies such as VR, augmented reality, wearable and the internet of things are pointing to a world where technology will envelop every aspect of our lives. It will be the glue between every interaction and experience, offering amazing possibilities, while also controlling the way we understand the world” (Matsuda 2016, Para 2). Recently, Indian techies innovates NIMO – a minicomputer

with 6 screens, in the form of spectacles. It is a light weight wireless system that sits on your head. The introduction of AR/VR sets to retail can prove a gamechanger. It can give the experience of physical shopping on an inline platform like Amazon. We already have a few apps that let us try things like cosmetics, frames, sunglasses etc., but imagine going to stores and check how it looks on you without even trying it through AR technology. Beside AR/VR sets, NFTs have become an important part of virtual world. NFTs are non-fungible tokens, which means that they are unique and non-replaceable. They are stored and traded on blockchain, a digital public ledger, and can be bought and sold. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Metaverse, is making efforts for an entire shift of paradigm. He is set to incorporate technologies that will alter the home space as well as workplace, apart from communication and gaming world.

Apart from communication apps, video games also have a far-reaching impact on the psychology of human beings. The video games dates back to 1950s and 1960s when computer scientists began designing simple games and simulations on minicomputers and microframes. One of the first such games on a video display is Spacewar. In the early 1970s, first consumer video game hardware was released. The earlier games, because of low resolution screens and low computational power posed various technical challenges to the designers, but still managed to fabricate fun, excitement, captivating and challenging experiences. Video games passed through various stages to come at its present state. Various popular games include Pong, donkey Kong, Mario Bros and Pac-Man. Pong and Pac-Man were comparatively simple and gave a glimpse of what can be achieved with computation and imagination. With the passage of time as technology advanced, game designers endeavoured for more complex visual features with sophisticated gameplays, ultimately leading mainstream game designers to test more challenging (fictional) fables. The Mario Bros was presented with more convincing game experience, both graphically and logically. The Mario's World presented in first NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) in 1986 was quite minimal, but later on developed to more complex actions and graphics. The development of Mario's World from 1986 to 2007 was remarkable. It flourished towards a more realistic representation of their characters and worlds, including the desire to break the rules that exist in real life. The same can be seen in various other games released in the said time span, for e.g., Grand Theft Auto, Sonic, The Hedgehog or Fallout. In 1997, an action-adventure video game series, Grand Theft Auto was published. GTA has many sequels and it primarily focuses on an open world where the player can choose mission to progress an overall story, encompassing thrill, driving, shooting, occasional enacting, stealth and racing elements. The point with noting in the sequels of GTA is that with every new release, the higher the formal realism is reached, the more controversial its content became. The 2D universe of GTA introduced players to extreme violence, the 3D universe released in 2001 took it to a whole new level of criticism, as it allowed players to pay the services

of prostitutes to recover their health, and if they wished, kill them to get some of their money back and finally the HD one, missions in which the player must start a gang war to up their level were added, as well as interactive sex scenes, drunk driving, nudity, drug dealing, torture and sexism. Thus, the series as a whole, shows a growing desire to challenge the social conventions we observe in real life. As observed by Baudrillard, simulations are “more real than the real”, and the virtual reality (VR) is seamlessly blending with the reality. VR doesn't only look real, but also feels real by influencing the five senses. Keep is of the opinion that VR looks forward to a time when its simulated worlds will seem more real than real, when the latter will come to have uncanny sense of appearing similar to the virtual. The role of NFTs, in video games is also noteworthy. NFTs have gathered interest from game developers as they provide a lot of benefits to the players. In the virtual world, traditional games are run on blockchain technology to give the gaming industry a unique turn. Games based on NFT are getting huge attention from all across the globe and are a part of income for many people. In games, NFTs are of various types including characters, weapons, clothes, lands and much more. Many fashion giants are also launching the collections of wearables in the form of NFTs, which one can purchase for their avatar in the video game.

Baudrillard also accepts the supremacy of the virtual world over real world as VR is a type of ultra-reality which terminates both reality and illusion. He also refers to an integral reality, in which multidimensional world can be experienced. Baudrillard tries to establish that VR is so powerful that real looks too miniaturized that it does not even have time to happen. VR is so captivating that with its interaction, people feel like what they are experiencing is real. There are various multiplayer online role-playing games that begin the play by creating avatars which can be of any gender, race and class and can be played with other players worldwide. VR has thus annihilated the distance everywhere and keeps the players so immersed in this artificially fabricated world that they lose touch with real life. The cyberspace is more interactive and allows people to engage in different realities much more than a TV, especially, in online gameplay such as Second Life. It offers multiple realities to its users and the game starts with choosing an avatar. One can have any sort of features, body type and can dress according to their own preferences, which is not the case in real world. The contemporary world has a such consumerist approach that the bodies in VR are crafted perfectly, men with muscles; women with curves and pretty face features. The interactiveness in the game is really high. It isn't like other games such as World of Warcraft, Star Wars Galaxies, where players play predefined game, instead it allows players to act as protagonists and create their own virtual world, from political parties, protest, sell and buy objects using real dollars. The players have rights to buy property and run their business. The players can visit anyplace which is designed on the lines of real world and can engage in any sort of criminal activities. The game being of multilayered nature allows you to enjoy a virtual world within

a virtual world i.e., you can watch the Machinima, a special programme filmed with a virtual cast, rendering it the highest point in integral reality. Thus, this virtual world sounds more fun than mundane routine; some people even daydream second life, in order to escape the sour reality. The addiction and fondness of virtual reality makes the reality less distinct and more distant. The virtual reality and its interactiveness is not limited to games only but includes chatrooms too. Chatrooms meets the need and aim of communicating with others. As in the case of games, one can create an avatar of one's own liking and can give even false descriptions which are closer to one's own ideal man or woman. Moreover, one can create various identities by signing in different accounts, which can differ racially, culturally, economically and even sexually. The real self is overpowered by the digitally constructed self. Gillies states that, "The decentring power of cyberspace has enabled the subject to disappear into the 'Hyperreality' of digital reproductions and representation that bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard) (Mambrol 2017, Para 24). Virtual reality offers us an escape from cruel and unfair world and lets us to be anyone we want as depicted in a postmodern film, Ben X, where an autistic boy retreats in virtual reality in order to escape the bullying, he faces at school and as contrast to his life, he is very brave in the game. Such immersing games can be very addicting and may have psychological impact as people start acting out as avatars, they can lose touch to real life, family and friends and surround themselves with alike digitally constructed identities. The virtual adultery has a great impact on people's lives and also caused strife in relationships. It may seem comical but the characters of virtual reality are real people, as Gabby Kent points out, "In Second Life, all the characters are real people somewhere in the world and that's why there's always such betrayal felt". The VR headsets took the gaming experience to a new level. These headsets also have a history starting from 1991, but with time the quality of these headsets improved a lot. It allows to experience the virtual reality as you are in this reality itself. It cuts you from the physical surroundings around you and immerses you in the virtual reality. It helps you to control your avatar through body movements. The high-tech VR haptic suit takes you deep down in the virtual reality as it allows you to feel the touch, pain etc. experienced by your avatar. It gets one so immersed that one tends to forget the physical reality as portrayed in Ready Player One, a 2018 American science fiction adventure film directed by Steven Spielberg that is based on Ernest Cline's novel of the same name. It is set in the year 2045 where everyone spends a great deal of time in virtual reality to avoid the dystopian real world where poverty and despair are widespread as a result of global warming and overpopulation. The movie is set in a game called OASIS, in which the gamer has to reach to easter egg in order to earn the ownership of OASIS, and Wade Watts and his friends tries to complete the game before an evil corporation can do so. The gadgets displayed in movie are pretty high tech and immersive. The movie also addresses the chaos caused by VR and focuses

on the importance of reality. The movie not only addresses the reason why one tries to escape reality but also focuses on the importance of reality. James Halliday, the CEO of OASIS quotes that, “I created the OASIS because I never felt at home in the real world...I just didn’t know how to connect to how to connect with people there...I was afraid for all my life, right up until the day I knew my life was ending”. He also shares his regrets and at the end tells Wade the importance of reality, that it’s the only real thing and can’t be escaped. The movie uses various references of pop culture like The Shining, The DeLorean time machine, Tyrannosaurus Rex from Jurassic Park and The Easter Egg from game Adventure.

The VR technology is not limited to games only, but is expanded to every domain of human experience including education, training and work. The VR is used to train soldiers for various purposes, indicating the change from boot camps to virtual military bases. It is also used by medical, driving schools and in pilot training, there are among few to name. Stacy Gillis emphasises the unreal dividing lines between the real and VR: “Cyberspace undermines the symbolic distance between the metaphoric and the real, abandoning the latter by presenting an increasing real simulation of a ‘real’ reality. Information loses its body in cyberspace” (Mambrol 2017, Para 25) The developments in technology have changed our lives like never before. The functional AR systems that provided immersive experiences to users came into picture in the early 1990s. AR (Augmented Reality) is a type of technology that allows digital images and information to be displayed onto the physical surroundings. It presents a better version of the real physical environment that is accomplished through the use of digital visual elements, sound or other sensory prompt and delivered through technology. AR overlays the digital world over physical one and incorporates three basic features: a combination of real and virtual worlds, real-time interaction and precise 3D registration of virtual and real objects. VR blocks the real entirely whereas AR changes one’s ongoing perception of real-world environment. The hardware components used in AR are a processor, display, sensors and input devices; the displays which are worn on human body includes HMD (Head-mounted Display) and HUD (Head up Display). AR is available in smartphones which can be used in number of ways such as snapchat lenses, in apps that assist you find your car in parking lots. This is also available in various kinds of shopping apps that lets you try clothes, makeup and accessories from the comfort of your home. Maybe the first most famous example of AR in gaming world is Pokémon Go which was released in 2016. The game starts with choosing an avatar and then it puts you on the map of your physical surroundings. The Pokémon’s can appear anywhere in the physical world, designed with the view of prompting physical activity and aiding the growth of local business due to escalated foot traffic. But it received a lot of criticism specially for creating public nuisances. AR is surrounding every side of our day to day lives. It is used by upgraded navigation systems to overlay a route over the live view of road. Various furniture and homeware giants

like IKEA and Pepperfry use AR apps that lets you to check how a piece of furniture or décor will look and suit your place. The use of AR is also done at historical sites, bringing the past to life by projecting ancient civilizations over today's ruins. It is also used in various sectors including architecture, military, education, neuroscience and many more. MR (Mixed Reality) refers to the integration of real-world environment and the one generated by computer. It is widely synonyms to AR and physical objects go along with the virtual one while interacting in real time. Hololens developed by Microsoft came picture in 2016 and Hololens 2 in 2019. The cost of these MR/AR sets were US\$ 5000 and US\$ 3500 respectively at the time of launch. These are used in various fields as mentioned earlier. The market of these headsets is limited to professionals due to high cost. Many companies are trying to develop the gadgets in lighter forms, both on body and pocket. Some are even trying to amalgamate all the three said realities i.e., AR, VR and MR into one reality i.e., XR (Extended Reality) and thus in one gadget.

Sherry Turkle, a MIT professor, studied the interaction and behaviour of people on MUDs in her book, "Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet". Referring to MUD, it can be defined in various ways. Originally MUD refers to Multi-User Dungeon which is a text based virtual reality, presenting a role-playing videogame embedded in imaginary world full of fictional characters. Some MUDs are also forged around the dice rolling rules of Dungeons & Dragons series of game. MUD also refers to Multi-User Dimension, that is a computer programme or a sort of cyberspace that allows you to create an avatar for gaming or chat rooms as discussed earlier. The classic MUD, is a text based virtual reality that allows various players that entered in a particular MUD, take part and exchange dialogue in that particular virtual world by typing the description of their environment, situations, characters, actions and the players on the other end will respond to the view on their screens in the same way. Turkle, from this study, tries to conclude that one can know the postmodern world based on the virtual experiences, as one acknowledges the façade of surface simulation on screen, in the same way one can explore reality. Since almost everything is just a surface to explore and doesn't hold any distinctive value, our day-to-day life holds nothing real and is diminished to any another role-playing game, especially for the MUD player, reality ends up as 'RL' – 'Real Life'. Turkle defines it as, "...MUD players can develop a way of thinking in which life is made up of many windows and RL is only one of them" (Turkle 1997, p.192). Turkle pointing to the idea of unified self adds that, in the virtual world, it is also a myth, as one can engage in endless stream of roles and one can engage in endless stream of roles and characters that can be explored and played, that seems equally real to one's true self. This role-playing activity isn't limited only to identity but involves an alternative lifestyle too. Referring to the traditional model of identity, those things that didn't fit were repressed, but this isn't the case in postmodern world. She adds pointing to postmodern self: We do not feel compelled to

rank or judge the elements of our multiplicity one can devote to living life as a play of fictions and quench their thirst by indulging in fantasies, without any guilt or awkwardness, as the judging self that was limiting has been easily knocked out. One can be anyone and do anything in virtual world and it is misleading to refer it as playing as the life that one is constructing in virtual world is more extensive than the living physical reality.

Turkle writes that, “In sum, MUDs blur the boundaries between self and game, self and role, role and simulation”. According to one player, “You are what you pretend to be... you are what you play”. (Turkle 1997, p. 192). Sherry Turkle’s philosophy is leading on the same lines as of ‘The Futurological Congress’ where our selves are enjoying the façade built on screen, instead of questioning it as we are taking everything at ‘interface value’; where we don’t bother to question where it comes from or who created and why but we are enjoying the wonderful manipulated façade. Here we can see an attempt to ‘deconstruct’ reality.

Conclusion

Life has been turned as symbolic arena as popular culture takes everything and converts it into a simulation. The advanced technology is portraying two aspects of a culture; the one in which we create realistic simulations and the other where we can describe reality as a kind of simulation. The development of second self and its drastic impact on real life is already discussed, but the question of it being an entertainment unit or a way to escape mundane life still stands. Not only this, virtual sphere has raised the question of ‘mind’ and ‘body’, as body can be said as the host of mind, but in the virtual space, the self is there, but not the physical body. Needless to say, the technological advancements have done wonderful job in almost every sphere of life, but further advancements behold a hyperreal future ahead of us, and, needless to say, many among us are rooting for same.

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**Looking through the glasses: Exploring the additive *Rasa* and Construe of artistic response
in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire***

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Abstract:

The Harry Potter books have continually demonstrated the ability to capture the reader's attention through the power of imagination. Harry Potter drives and stimulates the reader's fantasy as any good fantasy does. These books are extremely beneficial for young readers and help them acquainted with different moral principles and tenets. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the aesthetic experience in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire and to carefully consider the elements of the book that inspire creative expression through the prism of Rasa, an Indian aesthetic philosophy. Despite the fact that many Indian writers, aestheticians, and critics have presented varying interpretations of it, Rasa is a theory and a critical method for understanding drama that stems with Bharata Muni. Rasa is a device that assist in revealing the artistic perception of the text Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, while encouraging the enhancement and the presence of other aesthetic qualities.

Key words: *Rasa, Harry Potter, Indian Aesthetics, Fear, Emotion*

Literature is the enclosure of knowledge. Literature impacts and induce the individual to examine the prominence of different social standards. It is characterized as a description of various culture and society around the world which discovers many aspects of human life. Literature exposes the readers to the narratives of different kinds of people, their lives, thought processes, desire and connections. Generally, it refers to different categories and genres of text including novels, fictions, non-fiction, poetry and drama. Literature, on the other hand, is a complex subject, as new modes of communication create distinct genres of current literature.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, discourses on youth experiences and new ideas by adolescent authors surfaced. After the publication of S. E. Hinton's" first Young Adult Novel, *The Outsider* (1967), Young Adult Literature was recognized as a genre and as an aesthetic representation of life itself. The current

popularity of the genre has been established through the works such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series and Suzanne Collin's *Hunger Games* trilogy. Nilsen and Donelson in their book, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, trace the history of Young Adult genre. They claim

Before 1800, literature read by children and young adults alike was largely religious. Such books as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) reminded young people that they were merely small adults who soon must face the wrath of God. In the 1800s, the attitude of adults toward the young gradually changed (Nilsen and Donelson 2007, 41).

As a work of Young Adult Fiction, the *Harry Potter* novels have established a fantastical world that keeps readers engaged and delighted while allowing us to assess the limits of the genre in terms of reality. Despite the fictitious setting of the novel series, the lessons it teaches can very well be applied to reality and daily life. The events and values depicted in these fictional tales do, however, actually take place as a result of inner development and human experience. These stories imaginatively and symbolically outline the crucial processes in achieving liberation and independent existence. Stories about an alternate wizarding world and its realities can therefore help people to see a variety of possibilities and, in particular, alter the manner in which people interpret their own world.

The evolution of Young Adult Literature is closely related towards the perceptions of the adolescents and young adults. These texts reach a large array of readers at developmental ages of their life. There is always a greater sense of responsibility, as these texts mould the young minds of the future. Young Adult Literature includes distinctive components that assist the reader to feel connected to the narrative. The genre has given rise to numerous subgenres that deal with more significant and ethical grounds. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is a British Young Adult Fiction, consisting of seven fantasy books about an eleven-year-old boy named Harry Potter.

Literary critics believe that the *Harry Potter* novel's historical success is primarily due to its ability to create a completely unique universe where individuals of extraordinary stature deal with common problems. The book *The Essential Guide to Children's Books and Their Creators* edited by Anita Silvey denotes that:

The stories are chock-full of the right ingredients: quirky and courageous characters, magic, humor, whimsical and bizarre settings, and a convincing blend of fantasy and reality. And

throughout, the narratives are woven with age-old themes of good and evil. (Anita Silvey 2002, 388).

The enchanted world of the “*Harry Potter*” series coexists with the actual world of reality. The witches and wizards learn magic at the “Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry”, which is situated in a parallel universe. This establishment is concealed away from the muggle eyes. As the realm of imagination, it attracts young explorers to an array of strange new creatures and marvels. Among many factors the key contribution in the success of the genre is the world that this charmed and endearing characters the author has created.

Literature is highly valued in contemporary aesthetics. The organization of specific aesthetic aspects while emphasizing literary characteristics makes the application of aesthetics to literature rather challenging. Other types of art, like painting or cinematography, where the relationship between the two is clearer in terms of perception or sensory or visual experience of the artwork, are less complicated in this process. But the only media used in literature is language. Realising its aesthetic value is possible through the concept of appreciation. If one appreciates literature for its own sake, it is possible to write upon its aesthetics. Aesthetics studies all artistic mediums. It focuses at the creation, conception, and presentation of works of art by artists and how viewers interact with, respond to, and critique them. It also looks at how viewers experience and think about art, including why some individuals favour some works over others and how it can influence their attitudes, worldviews, and outlooks on life.

The ancient Indians were proficient in understanding the taste of art—not the physical taste, but the mental taste that can capture the emotion conveyed in a work of art. The delight readers sensed and relished was called *Rasa*. Bharata Muni’s initial *Rasa* theory was intended exclusively for drama and its analysis. Later, poetry was included, making the theory robust enough to be applied in the analysis of novels. With the assistance of the theory of *Rasa*, this paper would be meaningful in understanding different emotions and the aesthetic values that the writer intended to convey through the novel *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Rowling is distinguished from the most other writers because she possesses two crucial components: emotion and imagination. Human beings can feel a wide range of emotions when confronted with array of circumstances during their lifetime. Since the *Harry Potter* series tries to capture the essence of life, it deals

with emotions in a manner that makes readers feel for themselves. The series embodies the emotions that Rowling utilises to interact with the readers.

Emotional experiences in literature are expressed in such a way that they are unbound from the limitations of the individual; they stop becoming the experiences of a particular hero or heroine and instead become the experiences of all receptive readers. The Indian aestheticians established a theory, to discuss about the aesthetic quality of a work of art that elicits a response in the reader or audience but cannot be adequately expressed. The relish of that sentiment was called the *Rasa*. The dictionary meaning for the word '*Rasa*' in English means "a flavour, sentiment, or emotion: regarded as one of the fundamental qualities of classical music, dance, and poetry". *Rasa* originates from Bharata Muni as a theory and a critical method for comprehending drama, despite the fact that many Indian writers, aestheticians and critics have offered various interpretations of it. He has elaborated *rasa* as:

We must start the theory of *Rasa* or aesthetic emotion with Bharata's maxim, *Vibhāvānubhava-vyabhicāri-samyogad rasa-nispattib:* i.e., the *Rasa* is accomplished as a result of the conjunction of *Vibhava Anubhava* and *Vyabhicāribhāva*. (Das Gupta 2017, 191)

The rapture of *Rasa* is conceived through the combination of the *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and the *vyābhicāribhāvas*. The pinnacle of these *Bhāvas* result in the delight of *Rasa*. The *Sthāyibhāvas* are called the dominant states (Seturaman 2017, 18). The *Sthāyibhāvas* accompanied by the other *Bhāvas* relish *Rasa* which are classified into eight. They are *śrngāra rasa*, *karuṇa rasa*, *hāsya rasa*, *adbhuta rasa*, *vīra rasa*, *bhayānaka rasa*, *raudra rasa* and *bībhatsa rasa*. Their corresponding *sthāyī bhāvas* (dominant state) are *rati*, *śoka*, *hāsa*, *vismaya*, *utsāha*, *bhaya*, *krodha* and *jugupsā*, respectively. (Seturaman 2017, 18). They can be broadly categorised as emotions or emotional states.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is about more than just the protagonist. It consists of a set of circumstances and emotions that evoke an artistic reaction in the reader. The *Harry Potter* books have shown time and again to have a fantastic ability to draw us in through the power of imagination. Like all good fantasy, *Harry Potter* stimulates the reader's fantasy. The objective of this paper is to examine this experience of beauty in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and to carefully examine the qualities of the book that elicit an artistic response through the lens of Indian aesthetic theory of *Rasa*.

The fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* revolves around the Triwizard Tournament, featuring one student from each of the three wizarding schools. Students who are qualified and interested in participating in the competition must place their names on a handwritten piece of paper and put in the ceremonial fire goblet. As Hogwarts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore calls out the names, the Goblet of Fire spits out a piece of paper with the names of the magically chosen participants written on it. Only one student from each school is allowed but four names fly, including Harry Potter. This is where the adventure begins.

The narrative advances by displaying a memory lane from Tom Riddle's family. The Riddle family was mysteriously and strangely murdered at dinner, fifty years ago on the same day. Frank Bryce, who was the landscaper for the Riddle's family was suspected that he would be associated with the murder. In the present, Frank Bryce is looking after the Riddles' home after they have died suddenly. Harry, Hermione and the Weasleys head to the Quidditch World Cup, where they meet Ludo Bagman and Mr. Crouch. Harry, Ron and Hermione head to the top box and Winky, a house-elf is found saving a seat for her master. The night after the game, Death Eaters, the allies of Voldemort, torture four Muggles by levitating them in the air. The trio flee to the woods, where Harry finds out that his wand has been missing. Someone in the crowd utilizes his wand to release the Dark Mark. Later, Winky the house-elf is found holding Harry's wand at the scene.

The trio reaches the Hogwarts School after the incident. Dumbledore announces the Triwizard Tournament, and the appointment of Mad-Eye Moody as the new professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts classes. Hermione starts an association committed to the freedom of the house-elves. On the Halloween night, the Goblet spits forward the names of the champions who will take part in the Triwizard Competition. Only wizards aged seventeen and above can compete. Harry Potter is picked alongside with Cedric Diggory, Fleur Delacour and Viktor Krum. The Goblet's decision is conclusive and Harry is compelled to take part in the competition. Harry and Cedric are the only participants left after completing three separate challenges. They compete on a maze ground and approach the trophy at the same time. Hence, both come to an agreement to take the trophy together.

The trophy ends up being a portkey, driving the two of them to a burial ground that Harry had found in his dream. Voldemort recaptures his actual physical structure and rises up out of the cauldron. Voldemort elaborates his fall and ascend to power to Harry and his Death Eaters. After the explanation, he challenges

Harry for a duel. Harry prepares for death, yet the incapacitating spells save him. In the mid-air, a light from the two wands impacts and remains reinforced. The spirits of the past casualties of Voldemort come from his wand to safeguard Harry, giving him an opportunity to protect and save Cedric's body. Harry goes back to Hogwarts by once again touching the portkey. Dumbledore conveys a speech at the supper, describing to everybody, how Voldemort killed Cedric. He additionally discusses that what's to come looks dismal and that they should stand together. As the witches and wizards board the train, Harry gives up his gold to the Weasley twins for their Joke shop and mentioning that they invest some of it to buy Ron another sets of dress robes.

The main emotion that surrounds the book *Goblet of Fire* is fear and darkness. The gloomy and unsettling happenings in the wizarding world has persisted for a long time even before Voldemort's reappearance. Because of such fear, dementors guard Azkaban, nonhuman magical beings continue to lack wands, and house elves continue to be mercilessly repressed. The narrative itself opens fifty years ago, with a description of an unexplained murder of the Riddle family at dinner and the subsequent exoneration of their groundskeeper, Frank Bryce. In the present, the Riddle House's window is lit when Bryce, now an elderly man, awakens in the middle of the night. He investigates the matter and overhears that Wormtail and Voldemort are discussing to kill Harry Potter. When Voldemort notices Frank, he immediately kills him. “He was screaming so loudly that he never heard the words the thing in the chair spoke, as it raised a wand. There was a flash of green light, a rushing sound, and Frank Bryce crumpled. He was dead before he hit the floor” (Rowling 2014, 13). Therefore, fear is the main sentiment that the book discusses.

The *Harry Potter* series has a recurring theme of fear, and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* is no exception. The Triwizard Tournament serves as the first example of how dread is portrayed in this instalment. It is a perilous tournament with three dangerous challenges that makes the competitors fearful. Harry is forced into the competition against his will, where he must conquer his dread of the dark and the potentially fatal obstacles. The Triwizard Tournament was initially established some seven centuries ago as a cordial competition among the three most prominent European institutions of magical education: The three magical institutions of Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang. A representative is chosen from each educational institution, and they engaged in a series of three enchanting challenges.

The schools took it in turns to host the tournament once every five years, and it was generally agreed to be a most excellent way of establishing ties between young witches and wizards of different nationalities — until, that is, the death toll mounted so high that the tournament was discontinued (Rowling 2014, 189).

The revival of the Dark Lord Voldemort is also a significant catalyst for the pervasive fear shown in the novel. The resurgence of Voldemort has brought forth a malevolent and formidable power, casting a persistent shadow over the wizarding community. It is apparent that both the wizarding community and the principal protagonists are experiencing a significant degree of fear in response to this occurrence.

The dominant emotion of fear is depicted in the characters due to the return of Lord Voldemort. The outcome of this fear relishes the Terrible Rasa “*bhayānaka*” (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 102). Bharata Muni in his *Natyasastra* explains the emotion of fear as:

It is -caused by Determinants such as acts offending one’s superiors and the king, roaming in a forest, seeing an elephant and a snake, staying in an empty house, rebuke [from one’s superiors], a dark rainy night, hearing the hooting of owls and the cry of animals that go out at night, and the like. (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 124).

The determinant “Seeing an elephant or a snake” (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 124), means seeing something that makes the character elicit fear. Harry first encounters Voldemort and his snake Nagini in his dreams at the beginning of the story, to which he responds with fear. From his dreams, Harry discovers that Voldemort has plans to kill him. “All Harry knew was that at the moment when Voldemort's chair had swung around, and he, Harry, had seen what was sitting in it, he had felt a spasm of horror which had awoken him... or had that been the pain in his scar?” (Rowling 2014, 15). By witnessing snake in his dreams, Harry expresses the determinant of fear, where the reader also encounters the ‘terrible sentiment’ of meeting the villain. Therefore, the relish of *bhayānaka* can be seen.

The next determinant “Staying in an empty house” (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 124) is expressed in the scene through Voldemort, staying with Peter Pettigrew in the abandoned house of the Riddle family. The circumstances and the description of the mansion confront the readers with a spooky feeling.

It stood on a hill overlooking the village, some of its windows boarded, tiles missing from its roof, and ivy spreading unchecked over its face. Once a fine- looking manor, and easily the largest and grandest building for miles around, the Riddle House was now damp, derelict and unoccupied. (Rowling 2014, 1).

Lord Voldemort used the mansion as his headquarters after returning there with his servant Peter Pettigrew. He remained there, in the empty mansion, preparing to murder Harry. This determining factor makes the readers feel the terrible sentiment.

The other consequents, as listed by Bharata Muni as follows, corroborate the determinant fear: “trembling of the hands and the feet, horripilation, change of colour and loss of voice” (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 114). Several characters in the story likewise convey this consequent. The Riddle family is mysteriously killed at the beginning of the novel. The Riddles had an expression of ‘terror’ on their faces, which was later discovered during the investigation of the murders. “The doctors did note (as though determined to find something wrong with the bodies) that each of the Riddles had a look of terror upon his or her face – but as the frustrated police said, whoever heard of three people being frightened to death?” (Rowling 2014, 3).

The consequent and the determinant of fear keep travelling throughout the plot. The reappearance of the ‘Dark Mark’ is also one among the fearful event that takes place in the book. A riot breaks out at the 422nd World Quidditch Championship as a huge gang of Death Eaters invade Mr. Roberts's tent, ruin everything in their path and torture both Muggles and Muggle-born. The ‘Dark Mark’ as Rowling describes “it was a colossal skull, composed of what looked like emerald stars, with a serpent protruding from its mouth like a tongue” (Rowling 2014, 109), was launched into the sky by Bartemius Crouch Junior, where most of the Death Eaters vanished in fear and the episode of terror comes to an end. Fear remains a constant emotion throughout the book because of the Death Eaters, who are Voldemort's devoted followers. They cause chaos and fear when they infiltrate Hogwarts and the Quidditch World Cup, accordingly.

Barty Crouch Jr.'s use of the Imperius Curse to manipulate and control individuals is also a disastrous concept provoking the emotion of fear. It highlights how someone can be coerced into acting against their will and presents the issues of trust and loyalty. Harry provides a further example of the effects of the determinant fear. The element of terror travels through the plot, while he faces the tasks of the Triwizard tournament. The determinant fear is further elucidated to be represented through the consequent “tremor of the limbs, panic” (Bharata and Gosh 1950, 124). The above-mentioned consequent, ‘the tremor of limbs’, is expressed by the physical description of Harry's trepidation as he tackles his first task in the Triwizard Tournament.

He stood up, noticing dimly that his legs seemed to be made of marshmallow. He waited. And then he heard the whistle blow. He walked out through the entrance of the tent, the

panic rising into a crescendo inside him. And now he was walking past trees, though a gap in the enclosure fence. (Rowling 2014, 298)

J.K. Rowling depicts Harry's complete state of panic as having 'marshmallow' legs, a sense of separation from what is happening, and thinking it is all a very vividly coloured dream. Unavoidably, the reader experiences some sympathetic fear towards Harry. These details significantly increase the suspense among the readers.

In the *Harry Potter* books, fear tends to make people foolish. The Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge is an illustration of this. In *Goblet of Fire*, he is so adamant about not believing in return of Voldemort, that he flatly rejects Harry's eyewitness account. Additionally, he disregards all of Dumbledore's wise counsel for keeping the Dementors from retaining control of Azkaban Prison. Because fear divides society and confuses its victims, the Death Eaters feed on it. Through the course of the plot, fear and its consequence and determinant remain the central theme.

Some emotional states are at the heart of the human experience. One could identify the *Bhayānaka Rasa* as portrayed, suggested, and communicated by the protagonist and other characters in the "*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*" book. Moreover, the Theory of Rasa has a general standard for appreciating all forms of creative literature. It is a theory that takes into account every stage of the literary process, from the artist's initial inspiration to the reader's or perceiver's ultimate interpretation. *Rasa* is a subtle state that must be pervaded by a variety of distinct emotions and a plethora of feelings to come together before it can be created.

The "*Harry Potter*" series is composed with impressions, which culminate into a range of emotions and varied Rasas. The series includes several disastrous occurrences. Everyday life is filled with depressing occasions like losing loved ones and unrequited love. Despite the grim surroundings and darkness, the series possesses a glimmer of optimism. *Harry Potter* series has a lot of potential to spread compassion, love and positivity, because of its universal capacity to connect with both children and young adults across cultural boundaries. To demonstrate the relationship between aesthetics and literature, one must pay attention to the content of such an event and observe what happens during this aesthetic reading experience. Finding the expressive features of a literary work can result in attaining the complete beauty of the work of art.

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The Tapestry of Otherness: Depicting Muslim Identity in Literary and Inscriptional Sources of Early Medieval India

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical identification of Muslims by indigenous Indian communities. Through an extensive analysis of literary sources and inscriptions, it traces the evolving terminology used to refer to Muslims, from early terms like *mle'cchā* and *yavanā* to later designations like *Tajīka* and *Turūshka*. These labels carried not only social connotations but also religious and cultural significance. This paper explores how these designations reflected the perceptions and treatment of Muslims by indigenous communities. It delves into the socio-cultural context, highlighting the dynamic interplay between religious beliefs, social order, and cultural interactions. By illuminating the historical identification of Muslims, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of India's diverse cultural and religious landscape, and provides insights into the complexities of identity formation and social categorization within the Indian context.

Introduction.

In the annals of early Medieval India, Muslim identities intertwined with diverse origins, leaving a lasting impact. They were labelled with terms that reflected the complexities of the varna system, encompassing not just religious identity but also social compatibility. These labels aimed to categorize those outside the norm. The term *mle'cchā* was one such categorization applied to these diverse Muslims and others, relegating them to societal margins. Originating from diverse ethnic backgrounds, they clashed with established varnashrama dharma principles governing the lives of social insiders. The term *yavanās* encompassed these multifaceted Muslims and outsiders, portraying them as morally incompatible. The label *turushkā* covered Muslims and others of Turkic origins, adding ethnic diversity to the narrative. Perceived as foreign interlopers, they existed beyond the varnashrama dharma's moral order, placed in the category of the "other." These generic terms tried to encapsulate the multifaceted existence of these individuals, casting them into social ostracism. Their moral order, woven with diverse backgrounds, clashed with the established norms, perpetuating a narrative of exclusion and otherness in early Medieval India. As B.D Chattopadhyay asserts,

"The Brahmanical discourse of society, informed by this notion of otherness, was therefore always marked by a keen apprehension about the other and of the collapse of the social order through the instrumentality of the other" (Chattopadhyaya.2017, 63)

A scarcity of research surrounds the profound impact and apprehensions instigated by the Muslim invasions upon indigenous societies. Scholars such as, Sheldon Pollock have

endeavoured to traverse the uncharted territories of understanding. (Pollock, 1993. 262-263) Their efforts sought to illuminate the multifaceted dynamics that had arisen following the advent of Islam as a discourse of state power and politics. This discourse erected barriers between Muslims and non-Muslims, setting them on divergent trajectories. Curiously, the written sources of the time scarcely portray Muslims as Muslims, relegating their identity to the periphery of historical documentation. It is within this enigmatic tapestry that we encounter the earliest mention of *musalmān* woven delicately into the fabric of a Sanskrit commentary by Avalokitavrata. This ancient tome, preserved through a Tibetan translation, captivates the reader with its intriguing portrayal of the traditions of the "*musalmān*," reminiscent of a resplendent praise or eulogy dedicated to a revered king. (Leonard van der Kuji. 2006, 169-202) The historical depiction of early Muslims remains enigmatic, necessitating a quest for deeper insights into their societal roles and interactions. The absence of precise religious classifications prompts contemplation of the multifaceted complexities shaping relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims during this transformative era.

In thirteenth century, evidence emerges, shedding light on the emergence of the term "*musalmāna*" and the subsequent unveiling of Islamic beliefs. (Sircar, 1963. 141-50) (Hultzsch, 1882. 241-245) We encounter intriguing nuances that precede this pivotal era, stretching back to the realms of the pre-Islamic world. Within the contours of antiquity, the term "*Parāsika*" resonated as a descriptor for the Iranian people, casting a subtle shadow upon the tapestry of ancient civilizations. D.R. Bhandarkar astutely observed the distinction between "*Parasikā*" and "*Pahlāva*". The latter, "*Pahlāva*," bore a striking resemblance to the Iranian "*Pahlav*" and was commonly associated with the Parthians. On the other hand, "*Parāsika*" found its roots in the Pahlavi term "*Pārsik*," designating an inhabitant of Pars, the ancient Persia or modern-day Fars. (Bhandarkar.1926, 133-34) It is worth noting that the connotations attached to these words shifted and evolved, resonating differently across different periods. With time, a metamorphosis occurred, transforming "*Parasika*" into a generic term that intertwined with other descriptors such as "*mle'cchā*," "*yavanā*," and "*śakās*." Echoing through the verses of Kalidasa's *Raghuvamshā*, we encounter a mention of a battle between King Raghu and the *Parāsikas*, etching the name into the historical consciousness. (Bhandarkar.1926, 134) The Kolatunga Chola inscription, too, leaves traces of the presence of the *Parasikās*. (Hultzsch. 1989, 104) B.D. Chattopadhyaya, posits that this could possibly be the first reference to Muslims as *Parāsikas*, imparting a fresh connotation to the term. (Chattopadhyaya.2017, 16) As we navigate this intricate tapestry of shifting meanings and evolving identities, we are reminded of the fluidity of language and the contextual underpinnings that infuse words with layered significances. It is within these historical ripples that we glimpse the metamorphosis of the term "*Parāsika*," transcending its original boundaries to encompass a diverse range of peoples. The emergence of "*Musalmāna*" and the rise of Islamic beliefs mark a transformative juncture, unveiling a new chapter in the intricate story of Muslim identity in India.

Within the tapestry of Hindu texts, echoes of social divisions and hierarchies reverberate, reflected in the references to various groups such as *chandalās*, *mle'cchās*, *parāsikas*, *yavanās*, *śakas*, and *pahlavās*. The *Vridhdha Yajnavalkya* text cautions against touching *chandals*, *mlecchas*, and *parasikas*, implying a social stigma associated with these groups. (Kane. 1930, 356) The *Amarakosa* (Kane. 1930, 354) and *Manusmriti* shed light on the shifting status of *yavanās* and *sakas*, initially considered as kshatriyas but later relegated to the position of Sudras due to their disassociation with Brahmins. This demonstrates the fluid nature of

social positions and the influence of Brahminical norms on the categorization of different groups. In epic literature, such as the *Mahābharatā*, *Vishnupurāna*, (Kane. 1930, 355) *Hari 'vamsa*, *Ramāyana*, and *Kadambāri*, (Kane. 1930, 356) the term "*Parāsikas*" finds mention, weaving itself into the intricate narrative fabric. The *Mahabharāta* encompasses references to *śakās*, *mle'cchās*, *pahlāvas*, and *yavānas*, painting a vivid portrait of the diverse groups that existed in the social landscape of ancient India (Kane. 1930, 354) Additionally, the *Khare'patnam* inscription and the *Vadāvali* grant of Anantadeva (Mirashi.1955, 115-120;120-27) make note of the term *Yavanās* and *mle'cchās*, respectively, further solidifying their presence and significance in records. Scattered across ancient Hindu texts, these references offer glimpses into prevailing social perceptions and categorizations of their time. They provide insights into the intricate social fabric, revealing divisions, transformations, and interactions among diverse groups. Exploring these echoes enriches our comprehension of ancient Indian society's complex tapestry, hierarchical structure, and social group interactions. Nevertheless, a critical perspective is essential, acknowledging the biases and contextual influences that coloured these portrayals in Hindu texts.

Another term, *tajika* emerges as a descriptor for foreigners. The connotations associated with these terms varied based on geographical inclinations. The term "*tajik*" bears an associative semblance with other terms like "*yavanā*" or "*turushkā*," further highlighting the interconnectedness of these designations. Scholars have offered different interpretations regarding the origin of the term *tajik*. David Pingree suggests that "*Tajik*" is derived from "*pahlav tazig*," (Pingree.1981, 172-182) while Sudermann opines that it originated from the Arabic tribal mix of "*tayy*." (Sundermann. 1990, 163-71) These divergent viewpoints provide glimpses into the complex etymology and diverse cultural influences that shaped the evolving terminology. Inscriptions also contribute to the historical documentation surrounding the term *Tajika*. The Kavi plate inscription from Broach, Gujarat, mentions the presence of the word *tajika*. (Mirashi, 1955. 96-106) The Navasari plates of Pulakesiraja refer to the defeat of a raiding *Tajika* army. (Mirashi, 1955, 137-135) The inscription of Pratihara Vatsaraja celebrates a victory over *Tajika* (*Tajikeso*). (Ramesh and Tewari. 1989, 49-57) The Rashtrakuta grant of Krishna III from Chinchani highlights a triumph over *Tajika* forces. (Sircar. 1987, 55-60) Furthermore, a grant from Indra III and the Panjim plates of Jaykesi I make mention of individuals of *tajika* descent. (Chattopadhyaya,2017, 20) These inscriptions provide insights into interactions between indigenous and foreign forces, shedding light on victories over *Tajika* adversaries. They enhance our understanding of the socio-political landscape and cultural interactions in medieval India, connecting ancient civilizations and the dynamics between native and foreign elements. They reveal the adaptable nature of identities and the power dynamics of the medieval period, elucidating the complex tapestry of cultural exchanges and the perceptions of foreign entities within indigenous society.

The ancient inscriptions reveal shifts in titles for rulers and ethnic groups. The Chinchani plates from the ninth to early tenth centuries in the Rashtrakuta era mention *Madhumati Sugatipa*, referring to him as a *Tajika*. In these plates, he wished the strength of the sun (*suryatejah*), signifying his might and authority. Further evidence of the usage of the term

Tājika emerges from the Kangra Jawalamukhi Prasasti, a script composed between 1433-46. (Buhler, 1987. 190-05) Here, *Srimad Sahi Muhmmāda*, a *tājika* ruler, is wished fame and prosperity. These instances highlight the continued usage of the term *Tājika* to describe rulers of foreign descent during different periods of Indian history. The Kalachuri-Chedi Inscription further corroborates the usage of *tājika* to refer to Muslims. Notably, it employs the peculiar term "*Avartakanivavtayitiri*" which translates to "*repeller of the unrepellable*," symbolizing the defender of the King mentioned in the inscription. (Mirashi, 1955. 137-145) This inscription underscores the Sanskritization of ethnic names, coexisting alongside references to *mle'cchās* and *yavanās*. with time, the usage of the term *tājika* begins to wane from the tenth century. In its place, the term *turushkā* emerges, which not only replaces *tājika* but also *parāsika* and *yavanā*.¹ References to *turushkā* can be found in early Indian literary sources from the seventh century onward. The Chinese annals of the Tang Dynasty possibly make mention of the *turushkā*'s and the *Tu-Kiue*, further highlighting their presence and influence. (Chattopadhyaya.2017, 23) These insights, gathered from diverse inscriptions and records, reveal shifts in ethnic labels and interactions between local cultures and external influences. They reflect changing cultural exchanges and evolving socio-political dynamics over time.

In ancient Indian literature, the *Mahākavyas* stand as monumental works written in Sanskrit, offering glimpses into the complex tapestry of intercultural encounters. Within these epic compositions, the terms "*yavanā*," "*turushkā*," and "*mle'cchā*" emerge as interchangeable descriptors employed to depict Muslims. Notable examples include the *Mahākavyas Saluvanhyudayā*² by Rajanatha Dindima and *Rastraudhavamsā-mahākavyam*³ by Rudradevi, both of which delve into the intricate details of contacts and intrigues between Hindus and Muslims. The term "*yavanā*" takes center stage as the primary designation for Muslims, often used in conjunction with "*turushkā*." These terms offer a window into the rich cultural interactions between the indigenous population and the Muslim community in ancient India. Examining inscriptions, the 1276 A.D. Palam Baoli inscription unveils captivating genealogical narratives. It begins with the *Tomāras*, followed by the *Chauhāns*, and culminates with the *Sakās*. Notably, the inscription references the third genealogy of Delhi (the *śakās*) from *Sahavadina* up to *Sri Hammirā Gayasadinā*, encompassing the reigns from Shahabuddin to Balban, respectively. (Prasad, 1990. 3-15). The Sarban stone inscription, chronicling the construction of a well, captures the rulers of Delhi in its narrative, further adding the terms "*mlecchā*" and "*turushkā*" to the discourse. Meanwhile, the Naraina stone inscription, commemorating the construction of another well, hails the powerful *śakā* lord. This "*śakā* lord" is identified as King Muhammad Shahi in the inscription, signifying the Muslim rulers of the time. While the Muslim kings were not solely expressed as "*śakā* lords," "*turushkā* kings," or "*tājikas*," the Palam Baoli inscription reveals a diverse array of terms used to address them. These terms include "*paramabhattachāraka*,"⁴ "*maharajidhirāja*,"⁵ "*samrāt*," "*nrpati*," "*nrpati-vāra*," "*nayāka*," "*prthvindra*," "*bhumipati*," "*bhupāti*," and "*nrpā*." This array of designations illustrates the diverse honorifics bestowed upon Muslim rulers during this culturally rich era. Moving beyond epic works and inscriptions, we find additional references to *yavanā* and *mlec'chā* used to describe Muslims. For example, Maharaja Ajayasingha's

inscription refers to invading parties as *yavanā* and *mlec'chā* aligning with the identification of these parties with the Muslim community. The Annavarapadu plates from Andhra also follow this trend by using the term *mlec'chā* to describe Muslims. (Sharma and T, EI. 169-90) In essence, this analysis unveils the diverse range of terminology found in ancient Indian literature and inscriptions, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of cultural interactions and the nuanced perception of Muslim identity within ancient India's historical context. The *Mahakavyās*, inscriptions, and plates provide glimpses into the complex dynamics of cultural encounters and the nuanced understanding of Muslim identity within the historical context of ancient India

In the fourteenth-century text *Madhuravijaya* Muslims are termed *turushkās*. (Sastri, 1929. 242) The Kharepatan plate from 1095 uses *yavanā* and *mle'cchās* for those who troubled Gods and Brahmanas. Jagadu, a contemporary of Visaldeva Chalukya Vaghela rulers in the thirteenth century, wrote *Jagaduchārita* and referred to Muslims as *turushkā* and *śakā*. He also supported Jain temples and contributed to the construction of a *masīti* or mosque named *shimali*. (Buhler, 1892. 18) Importantly, *turushkā* wasn't exclusive to Muslims. Anyone opposing Brahmanism was labeled *turushkā*. King Harsa of Kashmir earned this title in the *Rajtarangīni* for his temple plunder and deity desecration. (Stein, 1979) The exclusion of outsiders from the social order wasn't based on ethnic or religious factors and terms like *yavanā*, *mlecchā* and *turushkā's* are not religiously motivated (Chattopadhyay, 2017, 63). This notion of exclusivity, rooted in the Brahmanical ideology of Varnashrama Dharma, developed over time, considering anyone opposed or outside it as *mle'cchā*. Brahmins employed these terms with flexibility, and the *yugapuranā* provides a description of this concept;

“Then that red-eyed and red-attired clever *mle'cchā* king Amlata will destroy the *Varnas*; he will totally upset the established order”. (Parasher, 1990. 121)

The puranas describe *Yavanā* rule as an inevitability of the future:

“There will be *Yavanās* here for reasons of *dharma*, *arthā* and *kamā*. They will not be properly anointed kings and will follow evil customs (*yugadosa-durācarah*.” (Parasher, 1990. 122)

In the Markandya Purana, *mle'cchā* and others were mentioned as being slain to protect the four varnas (Parasher, 1990, 121). This enduring concept allowed for the inclusion of *turushkā* and *tajikas* within the existing categories of *mle'cchā* and *yavanā*. Both *yavanā* and *turushkā* were perceived as disruptors of the established social order, a view supported by Romila Thapar, who emphasized that *mle'cchā* primarily conveyed the idea of social and cultural difference. (Thapar, 1989, 224) Early Indian Muslims, mostly foreign immigrants or their descendants, differed from the earlier inhabitants in non-religious ways like dress, cuisine, languages, and beliefs. Over time, as more converts embraced Islam, the initial ethnic distinction faded, and the term *musalmān* replaced ethnic references in later centuries. The Vilasa grant of Prolaya Nayaka used ethnic labels like Greek (*yavāna*), Turk (*turushkā*), and Persian (*Parāsika*) for Muslims, but it didn't reflect their Islamic beliefs except for dietary restrictions like pork. Early Indian inscriptions from the first centuries of contact rarely

mentioned Islamic beliefs or identified Turks as Muslims. (Thapar, 1989. 286) In ancient and medieval Sanskrit literature, foreigners were often referred to as *mle'cchās* a term connoting a lack of culture and civilization. By the end of the first millennium B.C., *mle'cchā* was used for indigenous communities outside the agrarian caste society. (Parasher, 1990. 45,213)

We can say that these historical terms provides valuable insights into the complex history of Muslim communities in India. It illustrates the dynamic nature of identity and terminology, influenced by factors such as geography, politics, and culture. Analysing these historical references enriches our understanding of the cultural landscape and the nuanced interactions between different communities in the Indian subcontinent.

Unveiling the Lexicon: Diverse Ethnonyms in Ancient and Medieval Indian Inscription.

The following data provides insights into the historical terms and references used for Muslims in various inscriptions and sources over the centuries.

1. June 22, 736 A.D. - *Tajika* - Kavi plates of Jayabhata. (Mirashi, 1955. 96-102)
2. October 9, 736 A.D. - *Tajika* - Prince of Wales Museum plates of Jayabhata. (Mirashi, 1955. 102-109)
3. Second half of Eighth Century - *Turushkā*- Hund, Attock District Pakistan. (EI, Vol 38. 94-98)
4. 795 A.D. - *Mleechā* and *Tajika* - Inscription of Pratihara Vatsaraja (EI, Vol 41. 94-97)
5. 9th C. - *Mleechā* and *Tursushkā*- Gwalior Inscription of Bhoja (EI, Vol 19. 99-117)
6. 926 A.D. - *Tajika* - Chinchani Plates of Rashtrakuta King Indra III. (EI, Vol 32. 45-64)
7. Middle of 10th C. - *Tajika* - Chinchani plates of Rashtrakuta Krishna II. (EI, Vol 32. 55-60)
8. Middle of 11th C - *Turushkā*- Udaipur Inscription of Paramara Bhoja (EI, Vol 1. 223-238)
9. 1059 A.D. - *Tajiya-vamsā*- Panjim Plates of Kadamba Jayakesi I (Morae, 1931)
10. 1079 A.D. - *Turushkā*- Amoda inscription of Ratnapur Kalachuri Prithvideva I (CII, vol.4, Part 2, 404-405.)
11. 1095 A.D. - *Yavanā* - Kharepatnam inscription of Silhara Anantdeva (CII, vol. 6, 115-120)
12. 1100 A.D. - *Turushkā* - Kashmir (Stein, 1961. 353)
13. 1109 A.D. - *Hammirā*- Rahan inscription of Gahadavala Madnapala. (IA, vol.18, 14-19.)
14. 1110 A.D. - *Hammiravarā*- Benaras (Ayangar, 1941. 48-53)
15. 11th - *Parāsi* - Chidambaram inscription of Kolutunga Chola I. (EI, Vol 5. 104)
16. 12th - *Tursushkā, dustā* - Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi (EI, Vol 9: 1963. 323-324)
17. Twelfth century (early years) - *Hamvirā*- Mahoba inscription of Chandelle Jayavarman. (EI, Vol 1. 217-222)
18. 1127 A.D. - *Mleechā*- Vadavali inscription of Silhara Aparaditya I. (CII, vol.6. 120-7.)
19. 1164 A.D. - *Mleechā*- Delhi Siwalik pillar inscription of Chahamana Visladeva. (IA, vol. 19, 215-219)
20. 1167 A.D. - *Hammira-virā*- Hansi stone inscription of Chahamana Prithviraja II. (IA, vol. 41. 17-21)
21. 1167 A.D. - *Turushkā*- Jabalpur inscription of Kalachuri Jayasimha in Madhya Pradesh. (CII, vol.4, PART 1.324-31)
22. 1175 A.D. - *Hamvirā*- Benaras college plate of Jayachandra (IA, vol. 18.129-34)
23. 1180-1 A.D. - *Turushkā*- Kumbhi plates of Kalachuri Vijayasimha. (CII, vol. 4, PART 2. 649)
24. 1191 A.D. - *Gori, Turakā*- Etawah Fort inscription in Uttar Pradesh. (Pushpa Prasad, 1990. 43-5)
25. 1190-2 A.D. - *Mleechā Matanga, Gori* - Ajmer Rajasthan. ⁶
26. 1197 A.D. - *Hammirā*- Machchilsar, Jaunpur inscriptions of Ghadavalas. (Pushpa Prasad, 1990. 58-70)
27. 12th C - *Yavanā*- Jhansi stone inscription of Sallaksanasimha. (EI, vol. 1. 214-17)
28. 12th C - *Mleechā*- Etawah, Uttar Pradesh. (Pushpa Prasa. 1990. 92-93)
29. 1206 A.D. - Adhiraja of Garjanaka, called as *Durjāya* - Kadi Plates of Bhimaadeva II. (IA, vol. 6.194-96)
30. 1226 A.D. - *Mleechā*- Kadi Plates of Bhimaadeva II. (IA. vol.6. 199.)
31. 1230, 1231 A.D. - *Garjjānaka* - Kadi Plates of Bhimaadeva II. (IA. vol. 6. 200-204)
32. 1238 A.D. - *Mleechā* Garjja naka - Kadi Plates of Bhimaadeva II. (IA. vol. 6, 205)
33. 1239 A.D. - *Mleechā*- Grant of Queen Somaladevi. (IA, vol. 6. 207)
34. 1242 A.D. - *Garjjānaka* - Grant of Queen Somaladevi. (IA, vol. 6. 208)

35. 12th, 13th C - *Hambirā*- Badaun stone inscription of Rashtrakuta Lakhanpala. (EI, vol.1, pp.61-6).
36. 1253 A.D. - *Turushkā*, *Mlecchā*- Dabhoi inscription of Vaghela Visaldeva. (EI, vol.1. 20-32)
37. 1261 A.D. - *Tursuhkā* - Ajaygadh inscription of Chandelle Trailokyavarman. (EI, vol.1, 325-30.)
38. 1262 A.D. - *Turushkā*- Sundha Hill inscription of Cacigadeva (EI, vol.72, 77)
39. 1264 A.D. - *Musalmāna* - Veraval inscription of Vaghela Arjunadeva. (EI, vol.34. 149.)
40. 1276 A.D. - *Śakā* - Palam Baoli inscription of the time of Balban. (Prasad, 1990. 3-15)
41. 1325 A.D. - *Mlecchā* and *Yavanā*- Mallavaram inscription of Vema.
42. 1327 A.D. - *Sakā*- Naraina, Delhi (Prasad.,1990. 22-27.)
43. 1328 A.D. - *Mlecchā* and *Turushkā* - Sarban Delhi. (Prasad., 1990. 27-31.)
44. 1328 A.D. - *Sakendrā*, indicated to Sultan Mahmud of Delhi - Batihagarh stone inscription of Jallala Khoja. (EI, vol.12. 44-47)
45. 1330 A.D. - *Yavanā*, *Turushkā*, and *Parāsika* - Vilasa grant of Prolaya Nayaka. (EI, vol.32. 239-68)
46. 14th C. - *Garjanēsā*, *Mudgāla* – Gujarat.
47. 1385, 1403 A.D. - *Yavanā*- Annavarappadu inscription of Vema of Pantanadu (EI, vol. 36. 167.)
48. 1424 A.D. - *Gauri-Kulā* - Lalitpur stone inscription (Prasad, 1990. 183-199)
49. 1596 A.D. - *Yavanā*, *Allavidāna* – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917. 3.11; 3.37; 3.39)
50. 1596 A.D. - *Turushkā* (referred to soldiers of *Dillisvāra*) – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 3.33)
51. 1596 A.D. - *Mlecchā* (reference to *Bhupāti*) – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 3.33)
52. 1596 A.D. - *Mugila* (referred to Humayun) – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 4.6.)
53. 1596 A.D. - *Pathāna* – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 7.35)
54. 1596 A.D. - *Patrisāha* – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 7.35)
55. 1596 A.D. - *Sulatāna* – Gujarat. (Rudrakavi, 1917, 6.28)
56. 1607 A.D. - *Mlecchā*, *Yavanā*, *Sakā*, and *Turati* - Rampura, Mandausar MP. (EI, vol.36. 121-30)

An analysis of the data reveals historical trends in the terminology used for Muslim populations in the Indian subcontinent. Earlier centuries featured "*Tajīka*" and "*Turushkā*," while later periods saw "*Mlecchā*" "*Yavanā*," and other terms. These shifts reflect changing politics, culture, and religion. The data indicates the diverse contexts where these terms were used. They often carried religious and political meanings. Different regions, like North India, South India, and Gujarat, used various descriptors, showing nuanced views of Muslim identities. The data also shows continuity and change across centuries in how Muslims were perceived. Specific terms reflected ruling dynasties. Coexisting terms suggest linguistic and cultural blending. For example, "*Turushkā*" expanded its meaning to encompass diverse groups, illustrating cross-cultural interactions and enriched identities in the Indian subcontinent. This linguistic and cultural syncretism resulted from cross-cultural interactions and exchanges within the Indian subcontinent. As the term "*Turushkā*" broadened its scope, it mirrored the amalgamation of cultural influences, languages, and communities in the region. This expansion demonstrates that languages and identities were not fixed but evolved in response to shifting dynamics, enriching the cultural mosaic of the Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our analysis of ethnonyms in ancient Indian inscriptions for Muslims offers a window into the complex history of Muslim identity. The changing terminologies, regional variations, and coexistence of multiple terms reflect the intricate historical processes that shaped how Muslims were recognized and categorized. This investigation deepens our understanding of ancient Indian society, intercultural dynamics, and identity formation within

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² Chandra Prabha, *Historical Mahakavyas in Sanskrit, 11th to 15th centuries A.D.*, Delhi. 1970. Chapter 11

³ *Rastraudhavamsa-mahakavyam* published as Embar Krishnamacharya. ed., *Rastraudhavamsa kavya of Rudradavi*, with an introduction by C.D. Dalal, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No.5, Baroda, 1917.

⁴ *paramabhataraka*, an epithet of the sovereign ruler, is used for Shamsuddin Iltutmish (1210-1236).

⁵ The title maharajidhiraja given to Sultan Mahmud Khalji figures in two inscriptions. dated 1437 and 1446, in Deogarh fort.

⁶ Prithviraja Vijaya, cited in Chandra Prabha, *Historical Mahakavyas in Sanskrit, eleventh to fifteenth century A.D.*, Delhi, 1976, chapter 4.

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Constructing History through histories: Revisiting Independence Struggle through Select Malayalam Films

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Abstract

Literature and the formation of nations are inextricably intertwined. It is a popular medium through which the memory of an event or a group survives. Films express a creative vigour that is seen to successfully consolidate the otherwise imagined nation into a concrete whole. With the advent of postmodern historiography local histories gained prominence. To sharpen the focus of analysis this paper concentrates on the role and strategies adopted by popular film narratives in revising traditional historical understandings and voicing the marginalised fragments of the nation's history. From the Pazhassi rebellions in the late 18th century to the slogans of Inqilab from the prisons of Kalapani in the 20th century the texts foreground important emplotments in the nation's history. The select films engender the spirit of resistance and reformation usually disguised in the form of familiar familial plots. This paper demonstrates the effectiveness of and strategies through which popular literature questions established truths. Suppression of plural historical perspectives is rallied against acceptance of multiple modes of representation thereby revisiting authorised history.

Keywords

Nation, History, Memory, Mimesis, Employment

The independence struggle of the nation is a narrative that holds the Indian people together. Other cultural binders like epics, anthropology, psychography, international boundaries, etc only play a secondary role in unification. Periodic redressal of the sacrifices made for freedom ignites a sense of patriotism and togetherness in the otherwise variedly organised state cultures. With the linguistic approach, History as a discipline was no longer considered a grand narrative as it often neglects the quest for evasive realities and completeness. Consequently, fiction and its allied formats became strong contestants in the proliferation of truth and the curbed regional contributions of a nation started finding

vent through more popular formats like novels and films than through academic publications. The emphasis on regional contributions of history portrayed through movies helps to deconstruct this nationalistic space which often acts like a grand narrative.

Ekam sat viprah vahudha vadanti - the truth is one but can be realised via different paths; histories accessed through different media complete a nation's History. The historical space occupied by the Indian Independence struggle is not a monolithic one and comprises other little narratives. According to Michel de Certeau, "History or everyday life is 'unreadable' precisely because it is plural, temporal, incalculable and non-systematic. Historiography is a strategy which takes the multiplicity of history and orders it into a 'readable form'" (Certeau 1984, 35). A similar procedure of plot advancement is found in films too. Aram Veesser claims: "History is not merely the chronicle of the past, but rather a pragmatic weapon for explaining the present and contributing to the future" (Veesser 1989, 11). Romila Thapar believes that all human centred narratives about an incident are to be considered before documenting the event for posterity. Victims and perpetrators of an event carry different memories. She argues:

There are in addition many representations of an event between the point at which it happened and the present, and that these representations are significant to the eventual understanding of the past Every narrative is a context which is consciously or subconsciously derived from a world view and an ideology. (Thapar 2000, 5)

On a larger panorama, Indian films like *Mother India* (1940), *Nastik* (1954), *Junoon* (1978), and the Oscar-winning *Gandhi* (1982) were truthful portrayals of the independence struggle whereas biopics like *The Legend of Bhagat Singh*, *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* and commercial successes like *Lagaan* and *Rang de Basanti*, though considered less historical, were acknowledged to elaborate the past in one way or the other. The Malabar region in Kerala mapped the first seed of anti-foreign resistance as early as 1766 with Hyder Ali fighting against the British. Academic documents foreshadow many contested terrains, regional leaders, encounters, etc. related to the historical interpretation of these uprisings. The hypothesis is that the selected visual fictions are part of alternate histories that simultaneously reassert existing historical truth claims, emphasise regional flavour, and acknowledge seemingly subordinate positions. The select films concentrate on Kerala's role in the independence struggle, their understandings, beliefs, and worldview.

To consolidate the argument and for effective comprehension, the paper uses the ideas proposed by Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur to probe the hypothesis further. According to White: "All historical narratives

presuppose figurative characterisations of the events they purport to represent and explain. And this means that historical narratives, considered purely as verbal artifacts ...” are subjective and do not have a claim to absolute truth (White 2001a, 231). It is the personal choices of the historians that decide inclusions and exclusions in history. This validates the capacity of movies to narrate the past. Paul Ricoeur, on the other hand, confirms that the “historicity of human existence can be brought to language only as a narrative” (Ricoeur 1985, 67). Academic history and popular history serve different purposes and cater to distinct audiences. Children are introduced to their identity and nation through books and films simultaneously.

Taking a cue from these arguments, four Mollywood movies are chosen as representative texts - *1921*, *Veeraputhran: The Legend*, *Kaalapani*, and *Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja*. Dominant works related to independence from Kerala include books like *A History of Kerala* by K M Panikkar, *A Survey of Kerala History* by A. Sreedhara Menon, and *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala* by S. Raimon et al. These academic books record, reminisce, and interpret the past. They concentrated on geopolitical factors, military strategies, and socioeconomic consequences of the war. On the other hand, popular reel portrayals use personal stories and dramatic elements to capture the human experience during this tumultuous period of Independence struggle making it more relatable to a wider audience. The Malabar region of Kerala, directly under the British Madras province had ample opportunity to experience the atrocities of colonial rule and hence have more vivid and prolonged engagement with the Indian freedom movement. Even though all the selected texts picturise the death of the hero they leave behind rejuvenated and traditionally rooted followers and community members to carry on their legacy.

Kerala’s demands for freedom and societal respect from the far south were by no means unheard but the paper considers they were poorly represented in the Indian Cinema world. The release of the four chosen films altered this state considerably. All the selected texts are accoladed movies chosen from different periods of Kerala motion film history but concentrate on the Northern part of present day Kerala. These popular films catalyse a re-shaping of the past within a contemporary framework. It includes all those intricate ways in which national imagination, aspirations, and citizenship are moulded within a regional milieu. Popular histories interrogate a nation's regional histories and cultural boundaries. The choice of such accounts in films is based on oral and mnemonic illustrations carefully researched by the production houses. They prefer to choose memories of cultural twists and advances from the past that have weakened as time passes and the groups get accustomed to new stimuli. In the introduction to *The Collective Memory Reader*, Jeffrey K. Olick and others note the importance of memory studies:

Studying (and theorising) memory allows us to shift attention from time to temporalities, and thus to understand what categories people, groups, and cultures employ to make sense of their lives, their social, cultural, and political attachments, and the concomitant ideals that are validated– in short, the political, cultural, and social theories that command normative attention. (Olick 2011, 11)

These movies categorised combine visuals, music, dialogues, and stardom to recreate a bygone era. These movies have a predetermined mission and vision along with financial success. Academic textbooks often print and propagate the ideology of the ruling class because of the prevalent monitoring systems. Such historical narrations usually terminate with the death of a king or empire, whereas these movies based on collective accounts, project shared memories of a group of people, bound by nationality, culture, religion, gender, or others to recall traces from the past. Movies with patriotic zeal connect the viewers to a narrative past more quickly than most other genres. Both History and films differ from chronicles and archives because of their narrative nature.

Kaalapani released in 1996, though not a box office favourite, is a text that conscientiously dealt with an often-overlooked episode of the Indian Freedom struggle, namely, the treatment of political prisoners. Unlike historical documents, movies stimulate the psychological and emotional contours of the public imagination. When the horrors heard about are enacted before their eyes, the audience cannot but admire the indomitable spirit of freedom fighters and take pride in it. Historical documents attest to the presence of political prisoners like Veer Savarkar, Batukeshwar Dutt who was a protester against the Simon Commission, Barindra Kumar Ghosh who was associated with Alipore Bomb Case and Jugantar movement, notable 1857 Indian Uprising participant Fazl-e-Haq Khairaba and so on. The movie does not portray any real-life martyr but duplicates the above-mentioned warriors with subtle strokes that border on impersonation. Activities of Gandhiji and Nehru are referred to. Predictably popular histories are exaggerated but such depictions systematically force the audience to infer from their passive collective knowledge. The suffering and transformation of Govardhan Menon, the protagonist, is a moral yardstick for easy reference and is portrayed with an aura of credibility that catalyses the viewers' pride and honour for the bygone era.

The regional flavour provided by the movie cannot be disregarded. Sustaining drama and suspense, the movie discusses local norms, class distinction, the rise of the educated middle class, etc. Bribery, poverty, caste discrimination, and other atrocities are clearly revisited. The circular jails, today a tourist

destination, remain a silent reminder of a horrifying phase of the independence struggle. Objects like steam engines, bullock carts, antique pocket watches, weapons, coal iron boxes, and single-lens binoculars all appear on the screen authenticating a perfect milieu. Unlike academic histories, this descriptive detailing recalls a sense of justice and craving for freedom possessed by the masses and celebrates the sacrifices, resilience, and camaraderie of prisoners from a personal point of view. The rustic village backdrop, the innocent hardworking commoners, the corrupt British political rule, the resistance of educated Indians, betrayal, and failure all are marked mnemonic strategies in the movie. Academic histories are stories of frontline activists whereas these movies provide a varied experience that strikes closer to the chords of moviegoers. The stark beauty of the island and the grim reality of the circular jails are effectively juxtaposed with the help of light and shade techniques by the cameraman.

Another movie that this paper draws attention to is *Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja* (2009) starring Mammooty and recalling a rebellion that took place fifty years before the Sepoy Munity of 1857. With an ensemble of South's acknowledged actors, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* is an acclaimed epic period drama film based on a real historical figure Pazhassi Raja (1753 -1805). It portrays an important junction in Kerala's awakening to a sense of justice and freedom. Today revered among the first Indian warriors of independence, Pazhassi, the lion king of Kerala, single-handedly kept at bay the larger and technically advanced forces from Mysore and East India Company for nearly fifteen years. He lived in exile supported by tribal warriors of Wayanad for nearly six years. The film won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Malayalam, Background Score, Audiography, and Padmapriya from the movie received Special Mention. It also received numerous other State and Filmfare awards.

The story of Pazhassi is not a new one. A film with the same title and storyline was released in Malayalam in 1964. Moreover, *Vadakan pattu* narratives too have popularised the errands of this guerilla prince. This Pazhassi film with its exorbitant budget and magnificent cast revisited the folklore with lightning intensity. In the film, as in folk imagination, Raja is depicted as a tall man riding a horse and using a gun. Contrary to this, Jonathan Duncan the then governor of Mumbai who convened peace talks with Pazhassi describes him thus: "Raja had long hair and a short thick beard, and was a small man. Sometimes he was in the habit of wearing a red cap. His face radiated a great glow" (Sagar 2012). Though such deviations have been identified, the movie has adhered to historical accounts immensely and revisits Pazhassi's revolt with a patriotic zeal. Along with Pazhassi, his fellow warriors like Edachena Kunkan, Yogimala Machan, and Thalakkal Chandu, real-life persona are brought back to life.

The story of exploitation through taxing and unjust treaties, a common corrosive strategy during colonial expansion, is once again enacted before the public eye. The heroic strategies of Pazhassi provide an emulative contour of Kerala's freedom history. The decade-long struggle is projected as a strategy other Indian provinces failed to emulate. Pazhassi's methods of guerilla warfare were unheard of in British India. The weakening of princely states is attributed to family feuds, unwise contracts signed, illegitimate heirs, power struggles, disloyalty, etc. among members of the princely states. The film redefines valour, friendship, loyalty, military acumen, sacrifice, bravery, etc. and portrays The East India Company as the perpetrator of corruption and violence. Pazhassi's power to assemble a casteless yet powerful army with Kurichya, Thiyya, and Nair troops fighting side by side with traditional weapons and democratic ideals is a tale for posterity. Ranks and caste binaries were overlooked and skill and strategy were acknowledged. The popularity of the movie lies in picking the best from this large historical database and arranging them harmoniously in a three-hour movie.

The national movement in Malabar was anti-feudal as well as anti-colonial, as the people were subjected to both feudal exploitation and colonial oppression. The movies *1921* and *Veeraputhran: The Legend* focus on the Malabar of the early twentieth century, focussing on the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 and the years after that. The tenant question was a burning issue in the political context of Malabar, which is emphasised by all the historians alike. S. Ramachandran Nair, in his book *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, states: "When the Congress became pro-Kudiyani in the Malabar politics, the landlords as a class, with the connivance of district administration, intensified their oppression of the tenants" (Nair 2004, 60). Both the aforementioned movies underline the fissures that occurred in the social fabric of Malabar as a result of the divide and rule policy adopted by the British government to polarise the Hindus and Muslims so as to make the administration easier for them. The freedom movement was actually a conglomeration of the nationalist movement, the tenancy agitation, and the Khilafat movement.

The movie *1921* was released in 1988 and was directed by the doyen of Malayalam movie industry I. V. Sasi. The film has Khader, a retired corporal of World War I, as protagonist, enacted by the leading actor Mammooty. Other major characters include Unnikrishnan, a nationalist revolutionary, and Radha, a progressive woman who questions all kinds of injustices like exploitation and untouchability. The film has various historical characters like Variyamkunnathu Kunjahammed Haji, Ali Musaliar and Seethikoya Thangal. The movie without deviating much from authentic history books, focusses more on the social

dilemmas existing in society, and how these age-old practices of untouchability related to caste hierarchy and the exploitation of the tenants by the landlords pushed the common man to the inevitability of taking arms. 1921 is a blood-smeared chapter in the history of the Nationalist struggle as far as Kerala is concerned, as the rebellion by the tenants who were Mappilas generally, against the landlords who were mostly Hindus and the British, reached its culmination in that year. The movie portrays how the people of Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks engaged in guerrilla warfare mostly as their crude weapons were not useful to stand against the trained Gurkha regiment of the British army.

While not transgressing historical events or historical figures much, the movie drives home the issues of caste, class, and gender to the forefront. The attempt to add a local colour to the entire struggle by focussing on a fictional character other than any other historical figures like Variyamkunnath Kunjahammad Haji or Ali Musaliar, helps the director to appeal to the experiences of the ordinary man, and construct a history from below, from the perspective of not the elite or intellectual, but the common man. Thus, the film addresses issues of untouchability and how this heinous practice sometimes resulted in the conversion of the lower caste to other religions hoping for a more dignified life as a human being. The women of lower caste were the sexual toys of the upper caste and even their husbands could not question if they were molested by the upper caste landlords. The efforts from different parts to erase these evil practices are also showcased through the character of Radha enacted by Seema. As in any riot, women were in the most disadvantaged position, as they were raped and converted, and abducted by the rioters. Conversion to Islam was forcibly done at the time of the rebellion and the film attributes it to the anti-socials creeping into the group.

The rebellion that started off as a peaceful, non-violent movement changed its colour gradually, and the British government brutally suppressed the rebellion using force. Historians like A. Sreedhara Menon are of the opinion that the people became so desperate that “they committed indiscriminate acts of forcible conversion, arson and murder besides looting and destroying public offices” (Menon 2008, 67). The Wagon tragedy which is considered the most gruesome incident in the history of anti-colonial struggle in Kerala is also portrayed in the movie. The movie as a whole narrates the incidents related to Malabar Rebellion from the perspective of the local people, elaborating on the genesis of the rebellion as well as the excruciating experiences that they went through. The British government could twist “the peaceful movement against

the alien rule into a Hindu-Muslim riot” (Menon 2008, 65). The film becomes successful in reformulating the narrative regarding the Malabar Rebellion or the Mappila riot. The oppression and exploitation that the people suffered for generations resulted in explicit resistance against the foreign invaders as well as the internal colonisers.

Veeraputhran: The Legend, a biopic of Mohammed Abdu Rahiman, a freedom fighter from Malabar, was released in 2011. Directed by P.T. Kunju Muhammed, the movie has Narain in the lead role, supported by actors like Raima Sen, Devan, Kalabhavan Mani, Siddique, and so on. The film is an adaptation of a Malayalam novel titled *Mohammed Abdu Rahiman: Oru Novel* by N. P. Mohammed. The film also revolves around the freedom struggle in Kerala, especially the Malabar region, and events related to that. Mohammed Abdu Rahiman was the brave son of Kerala as stated in the title itself, referred to using the sobriquet “Kerala’s Subhas Chandra Bose.” Coming to the forefront of the Nationalist movement dropping his studies in 1921, Abdu Rahiman stood as the voice of secular views and values. He gave vigour to the nationalistic sentiments in the age of Khilafat movement and the violent suppression it suffered in the hands of the authorities. He “dreamt of a nation founded upon secular values and the concept of fraternity” and “engaged in a relentless battle to attain it” (“Muhammed” 2020, 2). History presents him as a man who fought for the rights of his community and region against the British, trying to draw the attention of the National leaders towards the plight of the people of Malabar.

The film portrays the smart, bold, and young Abdu Rahiman who is daring enough to challenge even the authorities. Participating in Salt Satyagraha in Kozhikode resulted in him being manhandled and imprisoned for violating the rule. It emphatically underlines how he upheld secular values and opposed the fanatic attitude of some Muslim leaders who supported the partition of the country. The *l-Ameen* newspaper was used by him for disseminating nationalistic ideas among Muslims. The film concentrates on the hardships that he had to confront being a reformer in his own community as well as an opponent of the British masters. When Netaji formed Forward Bloc, he joined it and was imprisoned for five years. A head that never subjugated, a spirit that never lacked vigour, Abdu Rahiman’s life and ideals are part of many popular historical narratives other than this film. Many poets including Ayyappa Panicker have written verses singing his glories. The film portrays Abdu Rahiman as a visionary who could sense the danger involved in religious polarisation and hence dedicated his life for erasing the disharmony that was emerging amidst Hindus and Muslims.

Different from academic history, popular history does not follow the methodology of historical narration. Hence, one can witness a hero-centric approach being followed by the director in his attempt to deal with the freedom struggle of Malabar, depicting Abdu Rahiman in a heroic light, sacrificing his life for his country. Even the alteration of the climax endorses this argument as no authentic history or biography of the leader has raised the accusation that he was poisoned to death. Official records say that he died of a heart attack. Towards the end, the film tends to satisfy the needs of the common audience by establishing a hero-villain dichotomy, thus attempting to appeal to the sentiments of the audience. Again, the personal life of Abdu Rahiman is explored in detail in the movie such as his love for his wife, her death, his loneliness after that, his memories of her and so on. Hence, one can state that different from academic history that concentrates only on selected points related to the movement, the popular historical narrative explores the life of the person extensively.

It is not that the above-mentioned characters or events are forgotten in Kerala. Tombs, museums, place names, and monuments exist as reminders. But these are static mnemonic devices. The projection of folklore and historically vibrant leaders in the reel form puts associated memories in a state of flux. Pazhassi's or Abdu Rahiman's powers, as cultural bearers, to initiate cultural understandings were diminishing. The movies revitalise these powers and help continue their legacies in the popular imagination. The films help memory inducing devices to operate as objective correlatives that rekindle the nationalistic spirit. The films have chronicled the social, political, and military history of their respective eras enabling a visual historicity in the minds of the viewers. The movies together paint a nearly original cross-section of Kerala between the 18th and early 20th centuries. The very concept of India was unheard of in Pazhassi's times and injustices of the Company's proposals were overlooked but the walls of Kalapani reverberate with sounds of freedom for the nation and its people. This knowledge reassigns the region's role in the national narrative of independence.

The historical events for each script are selected ahead and are intended to evoke a certain reaction from the viewers. It is this referential function of narratives that leads to understanding and interpretation. Astrid Erll says:

Representations of historical events (such as wars and revolutions) and characters (such as kings and explorers), of myths and imagined memories can have an impact on readers and can re-enter, via mimesis³ the world of action, shaping, for example, perception, knowledge

and everyday communication, leading to political action— or prefiguring further representation. The circle continues. (Erll 2011, 155)

All creative works are imitations of life. Ricoeur has introduced three levels of mimesis. Previous knowledge of each viewer enables imitations at level one. Production of a narrative is the result of mimesis². Mimesis³ is the viewer's (re)action after watching the text/movie. In a circular motion, these comprehensions make and break histories. Human beings are defined by the stories they tell about themselves. History validates one's citizenship and hence when historical incidents are revisited it channelises formulation of appropriate correlatives and paves the way for renewed national pride. Filmmakers interested in historical repositioning concentrate on participating members rather than historical events, ensuring the emotional participation of viewers. Recalling sagas, related to independence from the margins, evokes a sense of confidence and pride as well as re-documents the region's role in the national framework.

It is identified that the choice of emplotments has regenerated a historical consciousness and the audience is reminded, in an entertaining way about the nation's trials and tribulations with the East India Company. As White attests, "the difference between competing narratives are differences among "modes of emplotment" which predominates them" (White 2001b, 377). Hence, these films reproduce culture and become a performance, which according to Paul Ricoeur, creates "a common space for exchange between history and fiction" (Ricoeur 1985, 180). For Ricoeur, identifying the "pastness of the past" is the first step toward writing one's history (Ricoeur 1985, 188). The teasers, advertisements, posters, and reviews are all tools of popular culture. Pazhassi Rajas's tomb, circular jails, Mappila revolt memorials, museums, etc. are mnemonic sites that evoke the state's pride, promote historical tourism, and serve as an educational tool for those interested in Kerala's history. The movies pique interest in the period and encourage viewers to explore further. White claims: "We give our lives meaning by retrospectively casting them in the form of stories. And so too with our nations and whole cultures" (White 2001a, 228). The paper finds the subjective choice of tropes emplotted in these movies has initiated a revisiting of the freedom struggle from a regional point of view.

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Perspective Section

Radicalisation in Bangladesh and Security Implications on India

Shahnawaz Mantoo and Gulzar Bhat

Abstract

Radicalisation of any type is dangerous and can destabilise social cohesion and integrity of any country. Bangladesh which got independence on the basis of cultural nationalism emerged as a young South Asian state but the same culture has undergone radical changes since then. India and Bangladesh share a historical, cultural and geographical relationship and therefore it is natural that any kind of change in one state would have its impact on the other. The radicalisation in Bangladesh has serious security implications on internal security of India and particularly on North-east region. The kind of religious radicalisation which has taken place in Bangladesh has given rise to militant groups and subsequently these radical organisations have developed links with groups active in North-east region.

Key Words: security, neighbourhood, north-east, radicalization, illegal migration

Introduction

One of the immediate concerns about the larger South Asian region is the arc of failing or troubled states around India. This geographical reality poses a serious challenge—one that has considerably undermined the strategic significance of India. The neighbouring countries are suffering from political instability which poses a serious challenge to India and this can be termed as a tyranny of geography (Stanley, 2008). As a result, it faces serious and dangerous external challenges from all directions.

However, it is practically unimaginable that India may be able to achieve powerful status without a peaceful neighbourhood. One of India's known geo-strategic experts; V P Dutt highlighted that a country's immediate neighbourhood must enjoy primary importance in foreign policy arrangements (V P Dutt, 1984, 136). Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee echoed that, "Friends can be changed but not neighbours" (V N Khanna, 1997, p. 315).

India's North-east and Bangladesh

India's north-east is placed between Bangladesh, Tibet, Bhutan and Myanmar with a strategically significant Siliguri corridor linking it with the rest of India. This corridor is significant to the survival of North-East India in peace, and it is essential in a war situation as well (Narahari, 2002, 13). The region is linked with the mainland of India by the road and rail connectivity, which pass through the narrow land corridor between Kishangang (Bihar) and Coach Bihar (North Bengal).

After the independence, India faced certain nation building process challenges particularly in northern part of India which is ethnically diverse and is characterized by lopsided economic development. These concerns gave an impetus and created suitable circumstances for ethnic conflict of various kinds. George Varghese (2004) termed the unique identity of the region by calling it as another India, which is characterized by diversity, relatively little known and certainly misunderstood. One of the responses central leadership took was the making of autonomous districts and regions through the constitutional mechanism of the sixth schedule.

The relationship between northern part of India and Bangladesh is based on shared cultural connections, emotional and historical heritage. India-Bangladesh share 4096 km (kilo metre) border, out of these, 1880 km is with the NER, 1434 km is the land border and 446 km is river-based tract.

The statement that "Bangladesh is India-locked" and North-Eastern areas are "Bangladesh locked" indicates that these two South Asian neighbours are deeply linked and hence impacted each other's internal politics. Bangladesh's geographical location and North-east's Bangladesh locked location constitutes a weak security point for India, as the area is very close to China and also the presence

of insurgent elements within the region. In the backdrop of India-China 1962 war, the Indian defense experts consider the chicken neck corridor to be insufficient and consider Bangladesh as time saving and cost-effective way to transport military logistics to North-east region in case of a military misadventure. This Siliguri corridor is considered as an important point to conduct effective military operation against the anti-national elements in North-east (Safiuddin, 2009).

This passageway holds economic significance due to its role as a cost-effective channel connecting the Northeastern states with the mainland of India, facilitating the transshipment of industrial goods to and from this region. Bangladesh, serving as a connection between SAARC and ASEAN, benefits greatly from its close proximity to Myanmar and other Southeast Asian nations. This advantageous geographic position positions Bangladesh as a key facilitator for enhancing interregional cooperation in economic, political, and security aspects. (Gurudas Das, 2008, pp. 167-69). With the implementation of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway connections, South and Southeast Asian countries are poised to utilize Bangladesh as a primary transit hub, fostering increased economic interactions among themselves.

Bangladesh is considered as the safe home to most of the insurgent elements operating in North-east India, and also being provided weapons and ammunition. The NSCN led by Isak-Muivah, ULFA, and Bodo militants have utilized Bangladeshi territory to regroup and arm themselves, leading to subsequent attacks on the Indian State. Within Bangladesh, groups like Jamaat-e-Islami and other militants express hostility towards India. Additionally, some elements in the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladesh Rifles support secessionist groups in India's northeast due to their pan-Islamic leanings. Therefore, Bangladesh's role in the insurgency movements in the North-East is significant, and any policy measures to address militancy in the region should acknowledge this crucial factor. In rural areas, slogans like "Amra Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghan" (We will be Taliban, Bangladesh will be Afghanistan) are voiced.

India has largely been unconcerned towards Bangladesh not much attention was given to eastern borders than western borders. Further this sort of negligence will be playing into the hand of enemies. The evident link between Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Service Intelligence) and Bangladesh's

DGFI (Directorate General of Forces Intelligence) implies a close interconnection of the borders of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Due to the high population density along the Bangladesh borders and its increasing presence in West Bengal, Assam, and parts of Tripura, safeguarding this border is more intricate than the western border. (E N Rammohan, 2005, p. 111).

Bangladesh: A Land Bridge for Jihadis/Terrorists to Mainland India

Bangladesh is strategically significant for the security and stability of India. The geographic position of Bangladesh contributes towards the safe haven for radical militant groups to use it as a 'corridor of peril' to destabilize north-east India through these proxies. It provides an access to arms for the terrorists and insurgents of the North-east and can link up with the Maoists.

The current dispensation in Bangladesh has taken hard action against the terror groups operating within Bangladesh and even those who are active in India, *jihadi* and non-*jihadi*. The concern in Bangladesh is the radicalisation of a section of Bangladeshi migrants, living in Europe, West and South-East Asian countries have been influenced of *Jihadi* ideologies. Their objective is to evolve an Islamic state in Bangladesh and make it part of the so-called Caliphate of the Islamic State (IS) (Bhattacharjee, 2016). It must be understood that these intelligence agencies as well terrorist organisations like ISI, Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) Bangladesh, Al Qaeda in the Subcontinent (AQIS) and IS are not looking at Bangladesh only but want to make inroads in north-east India, especially Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, West Bengal, and right up to Bihar that has a sizeable Muslim population.

The first group of 200 Naga militants led by Kaito Sema (Commander-in-Chief) of Naga Home Guards (as the underground Naga army was then called) went for training to East Pakistan in early 1962 through North Cachar Hills. The group then returned back to Nagaland in March 1963 and blow up the railway track near Rangapahar in May 1963. It is also fascinating to know that Naga insurgents groups during the India-China 1962 war did not create any nuisances and remained inactive (B N Mullik, 1972).

Another group of Naga militants/insurgents under the leadership of Duso Chakhesang crossed over to Pakistan through the Chin Hills of Burma in October 1963 and returned back to Nagaland in May 1964. After the suspension of peace initiatives headed by Jayaprakash Narain, another big group of 1000 insurgents led by Zuheto Suma crossed over to Pakistan in October 1964. At the peak of insurgency there were about 7000 men and women of Mizo National Army, most of them in East Pakistan. They were virtually given a free run well supplied with weapons and food by Pakistan (Sanjay Hazarika, 1995, p. 117). Mowu Angami made an unsuccessful effort to take group via Myanmar which was intercepted by the Myanmar Army.

After the independence of Bangladesh till the assassination of Mujibur Rehman the bilateral relations were cordial. But, soon after his ruthless assassination the military of Bangladesh took over the reins and revived earlier policy of hosting anti-India insurgents on Bangladesh soil (Anil Kambog, 2005). Mizo insurgents again regained their lost ground in CHT and other areas (The Times of India, 1984).

A more comprehensive involvement of Bangladesh support to North-east radical elements was disclosed in a 10 page press release on the occasion of Raising Day of the Border Security Forces - BSF in November 1995. It equally disclosed that most insurgent groups were getting arms from Thailand with the active involvement of Bangladesh intelligence agencies. It also highlighted the deep coordination between Pakistan's ISI and Bangladesh intelligence agencies. The then Home Minister of India Indrajit Gupta highlighted the same in his reply to a starred question in Lok Sabha on December 3, 1996 (Times of India, 1996).

On December 21, 1997, Bangladeshi immigration and security officials arrested Anup Chetia, who was the 'general secretary' of ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), in the North Adabor area of Dhaka. This arrest occurred in the context of several allegations, including illegal entry into Bangladesh, possession of two counterfeit Bangladeshi passports (bearing the numbers 0964185 and 0227883), possession of an unauthorized satellite phone, and the illegal possession of foreign currency from countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Thailand, the Philippines, Spain, Nepal, Bhutan, Belgium, Singapore, and others (Wabir Hussain, 2003).

Chetia's two other colleagues, Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prasad Goswami, were also apprehended along with him the same day. Dhaka often cites this arrest of ULFA leader to authenticate its claim that the country would not allow anti-India elements in Bangladesh.

In October 2001 parliamentary elections Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-Jamaat-e-Islami coalition won a landslide victory in the eight and formed the government. In the background of this victory, National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak-Muivah NSCN (IM) established its tents at Maudaung, Naghalphum, Sumsong, Salopi, Pantmpara, villages Nandari and Po-Longia in the district of Maulve Bazaar and at Ujjainpara in Bandarban area.

ULFA, the United Liberation Front of Assam, reopened its bases in different places, which included Majidi, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Mohangaon, Bhairab Bazar, and Pulchari. Furthermore, they reestablished their camps at Adampur, Banugashi, Jyantipur, Jayadevpur, Shrimangal, and Cox's Bazaar.

In January 2004, India had forwarded a list of 194 Indian insurgent camps located inside Bangladesh. This took place between January 6 and 9, 2004 when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) met in New Delhi.

ULFA leaders especially Anup Chetia (General Secretary) and Paresh Baruah (Commander-in-Chief) have established interests in Dhaka, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar and several other places. They have used Bangladeshi passports to travel to other countries.

Anup Chetia runs an NGO (non-governmental organisation) known as Manipuri Sanskritik Parishad and used it as a means to gain contact with several NGO's, human rights activists and lawyers. The amount of support enjoyed by Chetia can be gauged from the fact that Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and some lawyers associations objected his extradition to India. ULFA's owns huge business from hostel, hospital and a motor driving school to garment trade. One ULFA hostel is identified on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka; two other joints are at Mirpur and Mogobazar.

Awami League after assuming power in 2009, showed resilience against these terrorist Organisations and asked them to leave the country, however, there was no follow-up. The Bangladesh government also detained Anup Chetia (ULFA general Secretary) and slapped a court case for illegal stay, possession of foreign currency and forged documents of passport. However, extradition of Chetia was denied by Bangladesh on the pretext that no extradition treaty exists between two nations. Finally India was successful in extraditing in December 2015.

Conclusion

The paper has concluded that due to both religious radicalisation and political instability in Bangladesh, there are huge security implications on North-east India. There is a direct correlation between the politico-religious radicalisation in Bangladesh and the insecurity of North-east India. Any kind of political and religious radicalisation has spillover effect on the security of North-east region.

In the light of these developments, the security challenges that India faces vis-à-vis Bangladesh are no mean matter. Besides the imperative to foil cross-border intelligence and terror operations from Bangladesh, India confronts major and serious long-term security implications. It is likely to get not only more economic refugees from Bangladesh, but also an influx of climate refugees. The ethnic expansion of Bangladesh beyond its political borders not only sets up enduring trans-border links but it also makes New Delhi's already-complex task of border management more onerous. It is perhaps the first time in modern history that a country has expanded its ethnic frontiers without expanding its political borders.

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Locating Women's Movement within Local Dynamics: A Case of North-East India

Barasa Deka

Introduction

The unfolding of the various relations within a given context largely shapes the comprehension of the world that we live in. Such relations based on deep rooted categorization and division have created the conditions not only for discrimination but also remained unchallenged for a very long period. The gender relations, more specifically the relationship between men and women is a crucial one, expression of which in different contexts (societies) has brought various pertinent questions to the forefront which are not only important for understanding our social structures but also challenges our worldviews about certain assumed realities (often thought to be unchangeable). If the understanding of any society and its institutions needs to be located in the backdrop of this relation, then the fundamental question one requires to address will be, is this a relationship based on equality? The rise of organized feminism and Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in particular, has contributed to reveal that this relationship is not based on equality, but largely on subordination, discrimination and exploitation, where women are made subject to such conditions. This is reflected in the process of tracing the origin of the women's movement. 'The origins of the women's movement in the western world can be traced back to the French Revolution of 1789' (Osborne, 2001:7-9). Its origin is also connected to the linkage it establishes with other movements, for example, there has been a strong link between movement for abolition of slavery and the feminist movement. These developments were followed by the issues of women's education and enfranchisement, finally giving way to Women's Liberation Movement. Throughout the period of its development question of prevailing gender inequality remains central to any feminist enquiry.

The rationale behind such continued inequality has undoubtedly been rooted in the acceptance of the notion that such inequalities are natural, god gifted and hence immutable and cannot be changed. Feminist investigation has questioned the very basis of this supposed to be natural phenomenon, and hence proved that this inequality between sexes is nothing but socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. The different status men and women enjoy in society is indeed socially and culturally determined and almost everywhere (with a variation in degree), women as a group are considered inferior to men. 'They enjoy fewer rights, control

fewer resources, work longer hours than men, but their work is either undervalued, or underpaid. They face systemic violence at the hands of men and society, and they have little decision making power in social, economic and political institutions' (Bhasin, 2000:5-6).

Such inequality has been part of the composition and functioning of any given society even though degree and nature of the same may vary depending on various other dynamics of that particular society. The struggle to attain equality for women has continued for a very long time and often confronted with stiff resistance from patriarchal composition of communities and families, though formal equality has been ensured to women in democratic polities. Therefore, it is very crucial to understand the gap or the contradiction that exists between the formal endorsement of gender equality and contextual location of women. As such along with the role of the democratic polities/ State to ensure gender equality, it is essentially important to understand the location of women in the particular context of their societies/communities in order to comprehend their unequal and subordinate position. Relation of inequality between men and women is conditioned by how identities of both are shaped by their communities and how roles and responsibilities, power and resources are distributed amongst them. Therefore, depending on their location within their communities the status and position of women vary. Further it can be argued that the position of women may vary in a society, depending on the interplay of gender with other social groupings. Communities operating through a kind of gender relation are also reflective of the power dynamics between men and women. They not only play a vital role in shaping the life of women, but also at times operate as a space of both denial and bargaining.

The dynamics of women's movement

In the midst of the prevalence of deep-rooted gender inequality and the communities as one of the agents for continuation of that such inequality, the nature and role of women's movement becomes essentially important to understand. Women's movement in India although addresses certain common concerns, it must be considered that its expression would vary while responding to a particular context. The constitutional guarantee of equality irrespective of sex has deemed to have resolved women's question in India to a larger extent. However, continued persistence of gender inequality in Indian society, despite exhaustive provisions of individual rights, may largely be reduced to two important reasons, amongst many others. Firstly, due to the

prevalence of group-based inequalities the provision of group rights/community rights has been considered which carries a potential to become detrimental to the enjoyment of individual rights especially women's rights and the second being the patriarchal composition of the various communities.

While looking at women's movement as responding to a particular context, the focal point of argument would be to understand the role women came to play in various struggles/movements that occurred at different historical moments. The historical account of women's role and contribution in struggles against various inequalities and discrimination has largely remained forgotten or unacknowledged. In interrogating women's movement in India, location of women in various others movement provides the crucial background. The understanding of women's movements is intimately related to the encircling of women's issues in various other movements. Of all these movements where women came out to be a huge force, crossing the barriers of their private confinements, nationalist movements are the crucial ones that occupy a central place in political history of the world. This is especially true of the third world countries where one can witness a different trajectory of women's movement, from that of the west, due to its close affinity with nationalist movement. Jayawardena (1994:2) was of the view that 'feminism was not imposed on the third world by the west, rather than historical circumstances produced important material and ideological changes that affected women, even though the impact of imperialism and western thought was admittedly among the significant elements in these historical circumstances'. While establishing the attachment of the women's movement with the nationalist movement, it is imperative to mention that, it is not the only historical moment where women's question was raised. Much before women's question encircled within nationalist movement social reform movement raised them for the first time. 'What we today call the Indian Women's Movement (IMW) emerged as a part of the Social Reform Movement 1800s' (Gandhi & Shah, 1992: 16). Although it cannot be argued that the mobilization of women within nationalist movement in the third world radically redefined their role in the society, yet it did open up a new space for them to articulate their own issues. At the same time, it brought the issue of women's status in these societies to the forefront. The deep-rooted relationship between nationalism and women's movement in India does not indicate that nationalist movement was out of patriarchal influence. In the context of India the colonial experience has largely been regarded as site of women's encounter with the public sphere. 'The first historical accounts of Indian women date from nineteenth century and are a product of colonial experience' (Forbes, 1998:2). At the same time it cannot be claimed that women's Movement in India is an evenly developed phenomenon.

In the backdrop of the uneven nature of women's movement in India, one of the important ways of understanding it would be to uncover its relation with the regional dynamics. Local feminisms that developed in a close proximity to other local movements, constitutes a very important aspect of analyzing women's movement in India. These local level movements concern itself with particular interest wherein interest of a community is largely involved. In absence of strong autonomous women's movements, when women's issues are raised within these movements, it appears that most of the time they get secondary attention vis-a-vis the primary goal of these movements. By virtue of the membership in the community women are drawn to these movements which in turn create a space for women to raise the issue of their own concern. These spaces have motivated the creation of different women's organizations in the local level as well, mostly within these movements and also outside of it. But to what extent these organizations have been able to provide the platform for generating women's agency and emancipation is a much contested question.

The experience of women's movement in the North-East India

In context of the Northeastern region of India, the nature of women's movement is entangled with various other complexities. These complexities are largely encountered with in the process of the interaction with both the British and the Indian State system. The understanding of the region depends on multiple factors which primarily include the comprehension of the complex history and its inclusion into the Indian State at various stages of political development in the post- independence era. At various historical junctures there has been a reflection of the uncomfortable relation with the Indian State that has been the product of multiple contributing factors and also rooted in a sense of deprivation, neglect and domination, felt commonly by the region. The repeated reorganization of the region and the troubled history of accession of the hill areas into Indian federation, demographic complexities much contributed by the history of immigration and immensely diverse culture of the region has been core to the understanding of the socio-economic and political life of the people of the region.

In such a complex socio-economic and political context, how does one address the issue of gender? In the backdrop of the multiple issues confronted by the region it becomes evident that women in this region are also located in a complex relation within their private and public lives. Gender issue is entangled with the issues of

security, immigration, militarization, insurgency, human rights violation and above all ethnic politics (very dominant in the recent past). Women in the region share a history of marginalization both in the hands of the state and their community. For a very long time women of this region have been represented under the veil of gender equality wherein emphasis has been given to the enjoyment of higher status and position in comparison to the women of other societies. This has contributed in sidelining the history of marginalization and domination of women of this region. However, contrary to the dominant narrative of gender equality, there has been rise of new scholarship and consciousness that emphasize on unveiling the myth and reality of gender equality in the societies of the region. 'The gender issue is yet to get adequate attention in the development planning among the large tribal population because of the stereotype idea that tribal societies are free from gender discrimination. This view is basically rooted in the romanticized view of the so-called primitive and small-scale societies documented in the earlier anthropological and ethnographic account' (Nongbri, 2003: 194).

The understanding of the nature of women's movement in the region needs to be located with the broader space of various other movements. The Northeastern region has remained a fertile ground for various movements and women constitute a major force within these movements. Hence it provides the impetus to engage with the role of women within them and also the nature of women's movement may be traced. Historically the participation of women in various movements can largely be traced to the influence of nationalist movement. Nationalist movement not only witnessed the participation of women of this region, but also women's organizations of the time also directed its activities towards the movement. Formation of women's organizations has occupied a substantial part of women's activism in this part of the country. Formation and activism of women's organizations became the focal point of reference in understanding the dynamics of women's movement in this region. For example in Assam, women are actively involved in various women's collectivities/committees, which were called Mahila Samities. In the other Northeastern states as well women have formed some very prominent and active women's organizations. Thus, the location of women and formation of organizations within these movements or relations to such movements provide substantial ground for understanding women's movement in this region.

It has been argued that visible changes in the lives of women were witnessed after the entry of British in the region since 1826. 'The British occupation of Assam in 1826 is the starting point for any modernist narrative relating to Assam. Ideas of formal education, particularly women's education, social organisation for social

purpose and not based on kin or religion as in the past, printing and reading of books and journals were new ideas, were unknown earlier' (Mahanta, 2008: 3). In the midst of changes occurring due to the entry British, it is important to understand how particular women's issues were raised by the women's organizations of the time. Women's organizations formed in the pre-independence period took women's education as one of the major goals. One of the very crucial developments of that period was the construction of gender identity through literature and depiction of the status of women and also defiance of such construction through the portrayal of women of Assam in various literatures. Although the literature of the pre independence depicted much of the story of the victimhood of women albeit some reference to strong women, visible changes may be seen in the literature that narrates the story from victimhood to agency under the prevailing social customs and tradition. In this regard the role of women leaders who formed women's organisations such as Chandraprabha Saikia led the way. Her first piece 'Devi' possibly the first short story published by an Assamese woman, appeared in Assamese magazine Banhi in 1921 under the maiden name of Kumari Chandraprabha Das. The theme of the story which depicts the struggle of a child widow is presented in a manner to reflect the feminist concerns. This may be considered as a unique way of presenting literary works which tries to break the existing patriarchal structure. Saikiani's rigorous pursuit of gender equality was later on reflected in her novel 'Pitri-Bhitha' published in 1937, which can be considered as the first Assamese novel by a women writer dealing with feminism. Visible changes were also witnessed in the writings of other women writers. Until then the representation of women in the literature was seldom beyond the traditionally defined role of them. The publication of journals such as 'Ghar-Jeuti' further gave boost to women's issues in the pre-independence period. The writings in this journal focused on the women's issues and worked as a collaborative force of the women's organizations. These two particular developments have contributed to the holistic understanding of women's movement to a larger extent. The Assam Mahila Samiti (later known as Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti) as the first state level organization established in the year 1926 under the inspiring leadership of Chandraprabha Saikiani, played a major role in the mobilization of women in the nationalist movement. It became the most prominent organizations through which the direction and nature of women's movement in Assam is largely understood. In the post-independence period it continued play important role in the social sphere. However, the political role and activism of such organizations are much debated one.

The post-independence period brought new ways of understanding women's movement in the region. The continuity in the nature of women's movement may be witnessed along with the changes. From the 80s

onwards the resurgence of identity politics in a very dominant way has brought into the forefront the question of women's stake into it. It also marked the formation of various women's organizations within the various movements of that time. From the attachments with the nationalist movement women's organizations got linked with other local level movements in the post-independence period. The Assam Movement was such a historical moment where mass mobilization of women was witnessed around the issue of 'Assamese Identity'. However, in terms of creating agency to women in the form of greater public space for women the contribution of this movement has been questioned. 'The Assam Movement was characterized by the mass representation of women. But one ever saw any woman make it to the ranks of their decision making bodies' (Behal in Fernandes & Barbara, 2002: 145). In the similar way, participation of women on a large scale can be witnessed during the Bodo Movement in Assam. Women were drawn at mass scale for the cause of the community and goals of the movement. One can witness a uniform pattern in the development of women's movement in this region to a larger extent. The Bodo struggle for community rights also created the space for women's organizations and greater public visibility for them. Similarly the developments in other parts of the region also lead us to the understanding that how women's issues are engaged with other community concerns which continuously pushes them to the backseat. The issues of conflict, peacemaking, human rights violation, and insurgency have occupied the socio-political scenario of the region in such a way that women have been drawn more towards putting the society in order than that of concentrating on specific women's issues. The examples of Nagaland and Manipur may be cited here. In such a situation the understanding of women's movement cannot be drawn from some generalized standards.

Conclusion

It can be inferred that women's movement has been located in a larger space of other movements where question of community interest is involved. At the same time the question remains whether that space was empowering for women or not. However, it cannot be argued that the space for detachment is not open for women's movement to assume an autonomous nature. In the general context women's movement in India assumed a kind of an autonomous status from the 80s onwards. What exists as the women's Movement in India is a combination of various strands. It needs to be investigated in relation to the unfolding of local dynamics

and also with embeddedness of women within their communities. The nature of women's movement in this region is associated with the peculiarities of its own. Gender issues are reflected in a continuous interaction with other issues. Therefore, it is not surprising that those issues concerning women are pushed to the backseat. One of the very crucial spaces of denial for women has been the political space. The entire region has been marked by very little visibility of women in the political sphere. This is despite a very strong history of women's activism and presence of host of women's organizations. This is indicative of the fact that the space of women's activism could not make way beyond certain restrictive forces. The political sphere must constitute one of the major areas wherein women's movement needs much rigorous engagement.

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The BRICS New Development Bank: An Alternative Paradigm to Global Financial Governance

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Abstract

The emergence of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) signifies a significant shift in the landscape of global financial governance. This research paper delves into the unique role played by the NDB as an alternative model in the realm of international finance. Through a comprehensive analysis of the NDB's structure, functions, and operational strategies, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of its impact on the global financial order. The paper begins by tracing the historical context of the NDB's formation, examining the motivations and aspirations of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in establishing this financial institution. It explores how the NDB operates as an alternative to traditional international financial institutions, focusing on its distinctive governance mechanisms, lending practices, and investment priorities.

Keywords: New Development Bank, Alternative, financial, Governance,

Introduction

The rise of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as a counterforce to the West has sparked a discussion in the field of international political economy regarding their influence on global governance. The focal point of this debate has been the BRICS' structural power within the global system, specifically their ability to alter the established institutions and rules that govern international interactions. Scholars have questioned whether institutions like the National Development Bank (NDB), touted as an alternative to Western global governance bodies, possess

the necessary power to bring about fundamental changes in the existing norms and rules (Atale, Nikhil 2012, 4). Our argument contends that while the NDB represents a departure from Western institutions its structural influence is limited and insufficient to prompt significant shifts in the underlying foundations of global governance.

The increasing involvement of the BRICS as a collective entity in global governance signifies a noteworthy transformation in our perception of the global system (Stephen, Matthew, 2017, 17). Consequently, understanding how the BRICS integrate their institutions into global governance becomes a crucial inquiry. To address this, it is imperative to explore whether the BRICS, acting as non-traditional powers rather than individual states, are instigating innovative changes in the global governance structure or merely bolstering the existing system's legitimacy. This examination necessitates a reconsideration of the concept of structural power, encompassing the social interactions domain where both Western and non-Western actors engage in trade and express their interests.

In this context, the application of structural power elucidates how the BRICS, through mechanisms like the NDB, utilize exit-voice pressure via alternative avenues to influence global governance structures. This article delves into the initial strategy presented by the NDB, analyzing it as a singular case study. While the BRICS function as a political coalition, the focus here is on the NDB as a multilateral institution, dissecting its role as a source of structural power for the BRICS collective.

1. New Development bank a shift from West to Rest

“After lengthy negotiations spanning two years, the leaders of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) reached an agreement on July 15, 2014, in Fortaleza, Brazil, to establish the New Development Bank (NDB). This development marks a significant stride in their endeavor to construct a more stable global financial system, less susceptible to crises” (Modak, Purvaja 2021, 8). If successful in its mission to provide developmental funding for its member nations and

other developing countries, the NDB holds the potential to revolutionize the international economic order. The creation of the NDB is groundbreaking for several reasons. “Unlike existing institutions, the NDB, due to its broad reach, stands out as a genuinely global entity, Additionally, this event signifies the first instance since the 1944 Bretton Woods conference (which led to the formation of the IMF and the World Bank) where the United States lacks influence in the governance structures of an international development bank. It is crucial to note that the US is a founding member of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)”(Røren Beaumont, 2019, 432) Historically, this moment is also unprecedented because it marks China's active involvement in creating a multilateral institution, positioning China as the driving force behind the NDB project, especially evident in the initial details of the bank's governance structures.

Despite opposition from India and Brazil, China managed to persuade its partners to establish the NDB's headquarters in Shanghai. Additionally, China successfully advocated for the establishment of the first NDB regional center in Johannesburg, indicating that a significant portion of the funding, not allocated to BRICS nations, will likely be directed towards infrastructure projects in Africa, aligning with China's priorities. With a GDP of US\$9.2 trillion, surpassing the combined GDPs of Brazil (US\$2.2 trillion), Russia (US\$2.1 trillion), India (US\$1.8 trillion), and South Africa (US\$350 billion), China wields de facto veto power in most of the NDB's crucial decisions, despite the theoretically equal voting powers since all five members contribute US\$10 billion to the bank's initial subscribed capital of US\$50 billion. China's financial dominance is also evident in its contributions to the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), where it provides US\$41 billion, a fraction of its US\$4 trillion foreign reserves, while Russia, Brazil, and India contribute US\$18 billion each, and South Africa, the smallest economy, adds another US\$5 billion (De Oliveira, Jose A. Puppim, and Yijia Jing,2019, p. 67)

Given China's apparent influence in the NDB, it remains to be seen how much autonomy non-Chinese officials, both senior and junior, will have. The BRICS leaders agreed that the institution's first president would be Indian, with a Russian chairing the board of governors and a Brazilian heading the board of directors (Van der Pijl, Kees. 2017, p. 28). This presidency will rotate,

ensuring that China does not hold the bank's presidency for two consecutive decades, a significant concession. If China allows such autonomy and freedom within the NDB's operational structure, it would demonstrate a commitment to multilateralism, setting it apart from the United States.

The BRICS nations exhibit diverse cultural backgrounds, political systems, and economic fundamentals, leading to potential disagreements and tensions within the BRICS group and the NDB's governance structures. However, it is essential for Western policymakers not to dismiss these initiatives as unworkable or irrelevant. The aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (2007-09) has shown signs of recovery in the US and Europe, but a considerable portion of financial and political elites in emerging markets no longer perceive the US-led international financial system, based on US dollar dominance and unregulated financial markets, as legitimate (Soederberg, Susanne, 2004, p. 41).

This era witnesses a historic power shift from the West to the Rest, with the NDB serving as a significant institutional representation of this phenomenon. To manage this transition smoothly, Europe should avoid consistently aligning with the US in obstructing reforms to the international monetary and financial system. Such alignment would only escalate tensions and foster a power struggle between competing blocs, pitting the US and Europe against the BRICS. (Stuenkel, Oliver, 2017, 7). While Europe will continue as the US's junior partner, it can play a crucial role as a mediator between the US and the BRICS, contributing to a more balanced global power structure.

2. Achievements of new development bank in financial governance

The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) celebrates its eighth anniversary in July 2023, marking a significant milestone since its inception. Proposed during the 2012 BRICS summit in New Delhi, where leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa discussed the establishment of a new development financing institution, the NDB officially came into being at the sixth BRICS summit in Fortaleza in 2014. Over the past six years, the bank has demonstrated notable achievements and faced various challenges.

“One of the key successes of the NDB is its impressive credit ratings, including AA+ long-term issuer credit ratings from S&P and Fitch, AAA foreign currency long-term rating from the Japan Credit Rating Agency (JCR), AAA institutional rating from the Chengxin and Lianhe rating agencies, and AAA rating from the Analytical Credit Rating Agency (ACRA). Additionally, the NDB has approved USD 15 billion for more than 53 projects and established a Project Preparation Fund to support viable projects in member countries by enhancing project preparation” capabilities, conducting feasibility studies, and aiding project implementation (Humphrey, Christopher, 2020, p. 54.)

A significant departure from traditional multilateral financial institutions has been the NDB's focus on local currency funding for its member nations. It has successfully initiated local currency bond programs in China, South Africa, and Russia, with plans to implement similar programs in India and Brazil. This approach aims to mitigate currency market volatility and reduce dependence on Western markets.

Addressing the challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the NDB has introduced innovative financial instruments, such as the Coronavirus Combating Bond and two COVID Response Bonds, totaling USD 1.5 billion for three years and USD 2 billion for five years, respectively. Furthermore, green finance has been a priority for the NDB since its inception, with the issuance of its first green bond in 2016 in the China Interbank Bond Market (Mujumdar, Anita, and Alexey Shadrin, 2021, p. 67).

The NDB's distinctive ownership structure sets it apart from other multilateral financial institutions. All five member countries have equal voting shares and contributed equal capital during its establishment. This egalitarian approach signifies a shift from the dominance of Western nations in existing multilateral institutions, emphasizing the increased role of developing countries in shaping the global financial landscape.

Looking ahead, the NDB faces the challenge of continuing to advance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in developing countries amid the complexities of a global pandemic and a turbulent political, economic, and social climate. Additionally, discussions are

underway to expand the NDB's membership, with the recent inclusion of Egypt, Bangladesh, and the United Arab Emirates. However, while expanding to include more member states might enhance funding capacity and credit ratings, it could dilute the NDB's original purpose of challenging Western hegemony in the multilateral banking system. The future of the NDB and its competition with established multilateral development banks remains uncertain, making its ongoing journey a challenging one.

3. New Development bank, Alternative to existing financial global governance

The New Development Bank (NDB) stands as an alternative to existing global financial governance in several key ways:

3.1 Inclusivity and Representation: The NDB represents a group of emerging economies, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS nations). By giving a collective voice to these economies, the NDB ensures a more inclusive representation of diverse perspectives in global financial decision-making processes, which traditional institutions might not fully encompass.

3.2 Focus on Development Projects: Unlike some existing financial institutions, the NDB places a strong emphasis on financing sustainable development projects. It prioritizes investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, and other sectors crucial for the socio-economic progress of its member countries. This focus aligns with the developmental needs of emerging economies, fostering growth and reducing disparities.

3.3 Flexible Lending Policies: The NDB adopts flexible lending policies, allowing member countries to access funding with fewer conditionality's and bureaucratic hurdles. This approach contrasts with the often-stringent requirements imposed by traditional international financial institutions, offering borrowing countries more freedom in tailoring financial agreements according to their specific needs and circumstances.

3.4 Promotion of Multi-polarity: The NDB promotes a multi-polar world order by challenging the dominance of Western-centric financial institutions. By providing an alternative avenue for development finance, the NDB encourages a more balanced distribution of global economic power, fostering cooperation and understanding among nations from different cultural and political backgrounds.

3.5 Sustainability Focus: The NDB integrates environmental and social sustainability principles into its projects. This emphasis on sustainable development aligns with global goals such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and demonstrates a commitment to addressing pressing global challenges like climate change and poverty.

3.6 Innovative Approaches: The NDB explores innovative approaches to financing, such as green bonds and other sustainable financial instruments. By embracing these methods, the NDB demonstrates adaptability and a willingness to explore new avenues for funding development projects, potentially setting trends that traditional institutions might follow.

Conclusion

BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) emerges as a transformative force, offering a compelling alternative approach to global financial governance. By spearheading a paradigm shift in international finance, the NDB challenges the established norms of traditional institutions and embodies the collective vision of its member nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Through its inclusive structure, the NDB empowers emerging economies, granting them a significant voice and influence in shaping the global economic landscape. This inclusivity is not merely symbolic; it translates into practical policies that promote sustainable development, social progress, and environmental responsibility. The NDB's focus on financing infrastructure and development projects underscores its commitment to uplifting communities and narrowing socio-economic disparities, thereby fostering a more equitable world.

The BRICS nations require a certain level of structural influence to effectively integrate the New Development Bank (NDB) into the global governance framework and establish its credibility. This bank provides an innovative channel for actors to engage in financial development activities. It

has successfully introduced a unique model of a multilateral Development Bank (MDB) by implementing a strategy where borrowers and non-borrowers are represented effectively. Unlike other MDBs, the NDB's power balance relies on its lending capabilities and the robust political systems of its shareholders. The NDB ensures its financial sustainability by employing market instruments. Its financial objectives encompass providing tangible resources (funds), fostering innovation within the financial system, and gaining legitimacy within the financial structure. This approach offers valuable insights into the BRICS nations' structural power in the realm of global governance.

Moreover, the NDB's flexible lending practices, emphasis on innovation, and alignment with international sustainability goals exemplify its responsiveness to the evolving needs of the global community. In an era where traditional financial institutions often face criticism for their rigid approaches, the NDB's adaptability stands as a testament to its effectiveness in addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century. While the NDB is not without its challenges, such as political tensions among member nations and the need for harmonizing diverse policy frameworks, its successes in funding impactful projects and promoting a multipolar world order are undeniable. As the NDB continues to evolve and mature, it holds the potential to further disrupt the existing financial global governance models, offering a blueprint for more inclusive, sustainable, and collaborative approaches to international finance. In essence, the BRICS New Development Bank signifies more than just a financial institution; it represents a shared commitment to reshaping the future of global finance. Through its alternative approach, the NDB paves the way for a more balanced, cooperative, and equitable world, where the benefits of economic progress are accessible to all, regardless of their geographic location or economic standing. As we move forward, the lessons learned from the NDB's journey can inform and inspire a broader reimagining of international financial governance, fostering a future where prosperity knows no boundaries.

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Commentary Section

THE WAVE OF 1985 AND AFTER: ASOM GANA PARISHAD

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Abstract

With the formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the direction of territorial legislative issues in Assam started to move altogether. The Party got to be the primary territorial party to make a government in 1985. Individuals within the state, especially the center Assamese community, formed the party within the trust that the innate group's future etymological, social and assets would be shielded. However, over time there were differences of opinion within the party, which led to its role fading. The sentiment of the Assamese people towards AGP seemed to be shattered over time due to different internal and external grounds of the party itself. Here is an attempt to make a comprehensive study of AGP.

Keywords: Assam Accord, AGP, NAGP, Regional, Election, Minority, Decline

Introduction

In the late 1970s, the political landscape of Assam changed for various social, cultural, political and intellectual reasons. There was development among the electorates but that may have been another aspect of the evolution. The reason is due to the widespread immigration wave of foreigners into this sod. In the year 1979, an Assamese student organization, namely Sodou Asom Chhatro Santha launched a massive agitation against foreign immigration. Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, Assam Karmachari Parishad, and many other civic organizations. In 1983 the election was organized but many organizations of Assam boycotted this election and considered the election illegal without removing foreigners from the electoral role. As a result, the polling rate of the election came out with the lowest percentage which is 32.74 per cent and it became the lowest rate of elections in Assam's electoral history¹. When the situation in the Assam movement intensified, the main leaders of the Assam Movement were invited for a peace deal by the centre. Meanwhile, Presidential rule was introduced in Assam during that time to ensure peace. This turned out as a changing phase in the socio-political history of Assam. After a long process, the

¹ Retrieved from <https://sec.assam.gov.in/> date of access 03.10.203. Time 3.30 pm

Assam Accord was signed, which brought hope to millions of Assamese. The agreement finished Assam's turmoil and cleared the way by shaping a political party and shaping a government in Assam in no time from there on (Baruah, Sanjib) As a result in 1985 AGP party formally founded as a regional political party in Golaghat district of Assam. The introduction of the AGP at the political event held in Golaghat ushered in a new era in Assam's political history. The Sodou Asom Chhatra Santha was commanded by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhriku Kumar Phukan, and a conference was held in Lakhimpur district in 1985 under its auspices. The conference played a significant role in the formation of the first regional party in Assam. The AGP was able to form the first regional political party government in Assam in 1985 due various positive aspects and effects. During that time, everyone living in Assam, especially the Assamese middle class people received a message of hope for the preservation and security of their language, culture, etc. However, the AGP was able to instill this hope among the people through its positive actions.

Research Methodology

This research article largely adopts historical, descriptive and analytical methods to understand and explain the whole scenario and controversies of AGP. The research article employs objectives analysis of available materials. A research method comprises consultation of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources includes unclassified sources such as data published in government documents, various official declaration/ statements, reports, etc. to make the research authentic and well documented. Secondary sources include books, scholarly articles in journals, news papers and relevant press reports, etc. Internet source is also used for overall enrichment of the study.

An analysis of assembly elections since 1985

16 December 1985 marked the beginning of a new era in Assamese politics. AGP won 64 seats in the first election and formed the government in the state led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. This rise of the regional party was significant. There was a strong belief that this government would change the fate of millions of people.

The AGP formed the government and became Assam's first regional ruling party in the 1985 election. The rise of AGP was equally important not only for Assam but also for the Northeastern

region of India. Within the 1985 election, the AGP battled for their 105 seats and won 63 seats with 34.54 per cent of vote (Borah, Navajyoti. 2019). Another vital advancement within the election was the rise of a devout minority political party, the United Minority Front of Assam (UMFA). UMFA challenged 56 seats but won one seat with 10.85 per cent of the vote (Bora, B.2009). It was therefore in third place and was represented mainly in areas dominated by religious minorities. The Assam Accord divided the Assamese population into two groups. The larger part supporting the AGP-led agreement had a place to one side, whereas the other side was made up of minorities, particularly Muslims, carrying the pennant of the UMFA (United Minority Front of Assam). As a result, the legislative issues of Assam got to be polarized in two headings, which was not so clear within the early stages. In the year 1991 Assembly election, there were a total of 1393 candidates for 126 constituencies including AGP. In this election, the major change of AGP was its fragmentation. Another faction of the AGP emerged as the New Assam Gana Parishad (NAGP) (Karmakar, Rahul). The party was led by Dinesh Goswami (former union law minister) and Bhriugu Kumar Phukan (former home minister of Assam). So in this election major changes took place. The result of this election was not as before, this time congress was on top. Indian National Congress secured 66 seats out of 126 contested seats and AGP and NAGP won 19 and 5 seats respectively. This time BJP won 10 seats out of 47 challenged seats. The total vote share of AGP decreased to 24 per cent compared to the previous figure of 34 percent. This time it was seen that the role of AGP gradually declined and lost the prior position. Afterward in 1994, NAGP consolidated with AGP with Bhriugu Phukan as the working president of AGP. Within the 1996 Assembly election of Assam, AGP had an alliance with a few other political parties. The scenario of this election was little bit different. Congress won 34 seats out of 122 challenged seats, whereas AGP won 59 seats out of 96 challenged seats. This time CPI was contested for 11 seats and won 4 seats. With the passage of time the manifesto of AGP, Bangladeshi immigrants seemed to be leg behind. In the 2001 election, there were major changes occurred. Till then the atmosphere of Assam had changed a lot. Many problems had come within the state, which led to a huge change in the socio-political phenomenon of Assam. For the very first time in this election, AGP and BJP had an alliance. For this reason the former allies of AGP namely CPI, CMP, and United People's Party left the alliance with AGP. In this 2001 Assembly Election INC won 71

seats out of 126 challenged constituencies with a vote share of 39.75 per cent. AGP secured 20 seats out of 77 challenged constituencies and BJP won 8 seats out of challenged 46 constituencies (Borah, Navajyoti). The voting rate was 20.02 percent and 2.51 per cent respectively.

In 2005 the party again split into two parts AGP and Asom Gana Parishad Progressive (AGPP). AGP beneath the leadership of Brindavan Goswami and AGPP were driven by former Chief Minister of Assam Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. Within the 2006 Assembly Election Congress won 53 seats and AGP 24 seats out of all 126 voting demographics. As a result, congress shaped the government and Tarun Gogoi got to be the Chief Minister of Assam. Steadily the part of AGP as a state political party declined due to a few inside and external major reasons. In the last assembly elections of 2016, the AGP won 14 seats and zero seats in the 2011 elections (neuroquantology.com). AGP contested in 29 seats and won 9 seats in Assam assembly elections 2021. In the 2021 Assembly Election BJP led National Democratic Alliance held control with 75 seats which marks the primary time a non-INC union winning successive terms in the state.

The fall of Asom Gana Parishad

The Assam Accord's basic provisions for disenfranchising and expelling illegal aliens couldn't be materialized comprehensively because Parliament-approved laws made it more difficult to verify illegal alien status in the form of the IMDT Act. Meanwhile, the state's law and order situation has worsened considerably. As a consequence, the AGP administration was deposed in November 1990 and President's rule was imposed. However, the party was unable to retain power in the subsequent assembly elections. Disagreements among party officials led to the party's split in March 1991.

In 1991 congress won the election. In this election, the Indian National Congress focused on more important issues compared to the agenda of the AGP. Such as issues of peace and advancement, communication advancement, unemployment issues, and resolution of the issue of demand for separate Bodoland and Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Slope District. This time usage of the Assam Agreement seem not impact the voters at large. In the 1993 election, the prior major territorial issues were not being shown. which hurt the emotions and sentiments of Assamese people on a massive scale. Another difference was that the 1993 election saw a large number of candidates contesting independently on the basis of their community, caste, title, etc. which created

communal sentiments among people and took away a large number of votes. By expanding their grassroots bases, the two major political parties- the BJP and the AIUDF, each representing a distinct ideological objective, effectively driving out the AGP as a kind of bartering partner. In the midst of the final AGP government in 1996, a vile conflagration of debasement broke out among Assamese people. Savagery and riots were the primary causes of the party's decline in this election. The congress made the most of the situation, formed a coalition with various local political groups, and managed to hold onto power for three terms in a row. AGP was unable to accelerate its grassroots mobilization throughout this period.

Conclusion

The Asom Gana Parishad played a strong role as the first regional party in Assam. However, over time there were differences of opinion within the party, which led to its role fading. The sentiment of the Assamese people towards Asom Gana Parishad seemed to be shattered after the 1985 election. The Indian National Congress was able to take its lead in time behind such a weak role of the Asom Gana Parishad. In 2016 assembly elections were contested together by Asom Gana Parishad and the BJP which made us think in some ways. Therefore the AGP was born to fulfill regional interests, to eliminate the insecurities of Assamese; therefore the merger with a national party showed how weak the AGP's position became. For the AGP to revive, to touch the emotions of Assamese again, some ideas may need to be changed. But the first glimpse of its rise as a regional party in India was incomparable.

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Assessment on usage of plastic bags for consumer packaging

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Abstract

Plastic waste continues to be a colossal threat to the environment, and their disposal has been a serious issue for both the government and the waste management policy makers. Nowadays, consumers have varied alternatives for the usage of plastic products like plastic bags, bottles, plastic sheets and packaging. In spite of all the efforts being made to limit its use, unfortunately its utility was increasing constantly with the addition burden of the extensive waste generated by its usage. Most cities in India faced this problem of waste management with regard to the plastic bags being a potential environmental threat with deterioration of the ecological venues. Keeping these aspects in mind, the main objective of the current study was to evaluate the detrimental causes of extensive usage of plastic bags for consumer packaging, and to determine the various strategies to be utilised for reducing the deterioration to the environment.

Key Words: Assessment, Consumers. Environment, Plastic, Waste

Introduction

The usage of plastic bags had mainly increased due to its ease of usage and low cost. Most plastic bags are discarded and thrown away as trash or rubbish after a single use. The plastic bags presence in the environment is around 1000 years approximately (Tudor et. al., 2018, p. 595). Around 80 per cent of water pollution is caused by plastics bags that come from the land with around 267 species being affected as a whole, and numerous marine animals being killed every year due to this problem (Alam et. al., 2018, p.121). Various other pretty common items associated with plastic waste are the death of marine species, and wild/domestic animals, etc. Closure of sewage systems is also a very common problem that has arisen because of plastic bags in urban areas (Menicagli et. al., 2019, p. 737). Currently, many countries imposed ban partially or full-on plastic bags usage. Others are finding alternatives to properly manage plastic waste or use some other materials but still many countries are using plastic and plastic bags in various commodities especially food items (Wang and Li 2021, p. 1070; Suleman et. al., 2022, 49483).

The practise of throwing plastic bags results in them being found in to the drainage, the blockage created is a nuisance, creates unsanitary environment which results in hazards to health and spread of water-borne diseases. Accumulated litter reduces rainwater percolation, resulting in low water levels. The quality of soil reduces as the plastic present in the manure remains in the soil for years. This result in increase in landfill and resources needed to transport and recycle them. The problem further aggravates by the developed countries shipping off their plastic waste to countries like India. Most of the wildlife on the planet is in seas and oceans. Hundreds of beings are at risk of injury and death for ingesting and getting entwined in plastic bag floats. Floating carry bags can be mistaken as jellyfish by marine animals that eat them. Majorly the sea turtles are at a huge risk from plastic bags. They risk extinction for ingesting large amounts of plastic with particles of plastic remain undigested. Misunderstanding plastic garbage as food items, marine organisms swallow them and die. (Chitrakshi Khairnar et al., 2019, p. 139)

Plastics pollution is widespread and increasing quickly worldwide. Plastic consumption has expanded about 200 times in the last 50 years, growing faster than any other material. Booming plastics waste has already outgrown our capacity to manage it, and only 9 % of the plastic waste has been recycled. Mismanaged plastics leak into the natural environment, causing detrimental effect on plant growth, soil invertebrate animals, birds, marine species (Nizzetto and Sinha, 2020, 11) and what's worse, potentially entering the food chain to the detriment of human health (Carney Almroth et al., 2022; 2020; Tan et al. 2023, p. 281)

Restricting the use of disposable plastic products and directing to environmentally friendly alternatives is regarded as one of the essential approaches to address plastics pollution. As a kind of typical SUPs, single-use plastic bag has surged enormous demand up to 4.8 trillion a year worldwide. Without proper management, plastic bags can block waterways and exacerbate natural disasters, acting as one of most harmful macro plastics to marine biota (Besseling et al., 2015, p. 248). Hence, single-use plastic bag has acted as the focus of the object in the policy control. Banning plastic shopping bag has been commonly issued in Italy, India, New Zealand, Kenya,

Mongolia and Bangladesh; and biodegradable bags, cloth bags and paper bags are listed as viable alternatives (Tan et al., 2023, p. 281)

With the advancement of technology and the rising ‘throwaway culture’ among the user, the electronic waste or e-waste were now becoming a major environmental problem for the urban world especially for the developing countries like India, if not handled properly. The purpose of this paper was to explore e-waste as a new urban environmental issue in India. Research into the quantum of e-waste generated in India metropolitan cities was analyzed. The role of recycling process of e-waste by informal sector in five major cities viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore were reviewed and the adverse effects of e-waste on urban environment were also analysed. As per the ASSOCHAM study, 2014, India was likely to generate e-waste to an extent of 15 lakh metric tons (MT) per annum in 2015. As e-waste contains several hazardous constituents including the most toxic one ‘mercury’ and ‘lead’, they have an adverse effect on environment that pollute the air, soil and water. Informal workers use primitive methods to extract valuable material from the e-waste components, which bring great damages to their health and local environment. (Pandit, 2016, p. 530)

India is one of the world’s large and fastest-growing economies. With the expanding development, the usage of plastic for anthropogenic activities has expanded many folds and India alone generated around 3.3 million metric tonnes of plastic in the financial year 2019. 79 per cent of the plastic generated worldwide enters our land, water, and environment as waste; part of it also enters our bodies through the food chain. The industry in India states that 60 per cent of what is generated is recycled and we had assumed that we had solved the problem of plastic waste by recycling, or burying it in landfills. But we were incorrect. Plastic garbage is omnipresent today. It is filling up our oceans and harming marine life and affecting all organisms in the food chain. With the development of economic growth of the country per capita consumption of plastic will only increase in the coming years and we will end up generating more plastic waste. The review paper aimed to examine the major impact of plastic waste in India and how to reduce plastic consumption, considering measures such as phasing out or banning multi-layered plastics that cannot be recycled, contemplating renewable raw materials, promoting the use of bioplastics,

incentivizing the recycling business, and making the rules and guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) simple and enforceable. (Chauhan et al., 2022, p. 456)

To further improve the plastics reducing effects, extensive efforts have been made to reduce the usage of plastic bags and to promote the recycling of plastic bags. For instance, the Nepal government issued a Plastic Bag Reduction and Regulation Directive in 2011, which prohibits the usage of plastic bags which are thinner than 20 microns in the retail sector. (Bharadwaj et al., 2020, p. 95)

Reusing plastic bags is perceived as one of the typical pro-environmental behaviours given the plentiful benefits this behaviour could bring about, such as saving money, conserving resources, and protecting the environment. However, as most of the existing research focuses their efforts on the usage of plastic carrier bags; (Nielsen et al., 2019, p. 428; Martinho et al., 2017, p. 3; Thomas et al., 2016, p. 126) the results regarding people's reuse of old plastic bags are scarce. Then the dynamics behind this behaviour become crucial to boost this recycling behaviour and to reduce the extensive usage of plastic bags. (Martinho et al., 2017, 3; Wan et al. 2014, p. 1070)

The main environmental and health concerns for plastic bag (PB) consumption are the release of heavy metal (HM) and chlorine (Cl) during its service life and disposal. (Alam et al, 2018, p. 121)

As one of the flagship amendments to the Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2021, the pan-Indian ban on a group of single-use plastic products (SUPPs) introduced in mid-2022 provided a departure point towards more progressive plastic waste legislation. The amendments have mostly been welcomed, yet challenges persist to facilitate its implementation, assess potential environmental impacts of alternative materials, and socio-economic concerns raised by various stakeholders. (Nøklebye et al., 2023, p. 219)

Recommendations

With the prolific usage of these incongruous looking plastic bags from the past few decades, India saw the rise of its usage and the even more detrimental issue of its waste pileup. The plastic waste alone in the country accounted for a large drain on the exchequer to dispose it off safely without

causing extensive environmental degradation. As most consumers in India utilized the ubiquitous plastic bag for most of their purchasing and storing household items, India came up with the stringent ban on the usage of plastic bags citing that only plastic bags of 50-micron thickness could be utilized. Consumers, especially students in schools and colleges should also be made aware of the hazards of the plastic bag usage, and instructed to shift over to using other degradable fabric, jute or other utilitarian bags which could be safely used and recycled too.

Conclusion

The ban on plastic bag usage in India has garnered many benefits with the consumers being more aware of the hazards of utilising the plastic bags, and instead now using other alternative fabric bags or one-time use paper bags for their multiple purchasing aspects. Most consumers come equipped with their own shopping bags and this has led to a healthier aspect in the ecological aspect too. Consequently, the waste generated by plastic usage has decreased too, but still more can be done for cutting down its usage completely.

To prevent further usage of plastic bags, strategies could be adopted like charging the consumers who indiscriminately use plastic bags. Also, if plastic bags of 50-microns are used, the consumers must be made aware of waste segregation at the disposal stage, and to avoid the dumping of plastic waste near water sources and unnecessary littering.

Education plays a major role in improving the environmental culture of the consumers and to irradiate the usage of plastic bags completely, especially among the younger generation and in the rural areas.

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