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Innovation and National Innovation Systems in the Context of Developing Economies

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Abstract

Firm-innovation involves newer ways of doing things. Technological and non-technological aspects of innovation are affected by firm-specific and external factors. Knowledge, tacit and explicit, created within the organization or acquired from outside the firm is crucial to innovation. The ability to disseminate and 'exploit' knowledge requires learning across individuals, levels and departments in the organization. The ability to exploit knowledge depends on the given level of competencies and capabilities known as the 'absorptive capacity' of the enterprise. This capacity evolves with changing knowledge. The firm is part of a system comprising other firms, suppliers, customers, public R&D institutions, universities, legal and financial institutions and policy. A study of the interaction of the firm with this system is called the national innovation systems (NIS). The systems approach is context-specific. Inclusive innovation is a more relevant notion of innovation in developing economies and the system should encourage grassroots innovation. Moreover various components of the system do not work in a frictionless manner nor is knowledge, whether embodied or tacit knowledge available for free, off-the-shelf to developing country firms. Coordination among the components of the system has to be orchestrated by state policy.

Key words: Innovation, National innovation Systems, Knowledge, Learning, Absorptive Capacity

Introduction

The growth and development of a nation and its ability to compete internationally depends on *what* it produces and *how well* it produces it. Growth is seen as the panacea for problems of both developed and developing countries alike. Developing countries cannot compete only on the basis of their cheap-labor advantage; competitiveness comprises price and non-price aspects. Modern growth theories regard basic research and technological change endogenous to the system and the associated role of ideas and innovation essential to economic growth. All production takes place in the firms. Firms apply fundamental research and knowledge in science and management to introduce new or improved products or processes. They conduct in-house R&D and innovate or adapt borrowed knowledge, tacit and explicit, to suit their requirements ¹. Innovation is crucial for their survival, growth and profitability in an intensely competitive environment ². Thus firms must continuously *upgrade* their *products*, *processes* and *capabilities* in a 'continuum of technological

change'. This has to be synchronized with *business management innovation* . Innovation depends on technological opportunity and is an application of basic scientific research to develop solutions to a society's problems. It is a result of knowledge flows within an enterprise; between firms, sectors and regions and is influenced by the milieu in which the firms work. Moreover, the environment within which firms exist influences the firms' ability to innovate. The physical infrastructure, scientific, financial, legal, social, economic and educational institutions and organizations with interaction and feedback among these components affect innovation. Further, in a dynamic framework, the firm's organizational structure and its capabilities and the ecosystem is shaped by state policy. In sum firm, society and state are interconnected in the process of innovation and production.

This paper presents an analytical framework of innovation . Usually innovation is understood as expenditure on technology and its application ³. In a holistic perspective knowledge as *learning* is used, processed, disseminated and shared in an organization . Innovation depends on **firm-specificities** and the **ecosystem** within which firms and other actors interact in an evolutionary synthesis. The **systems approach to innovation** provides a framework which qualifies the automatic or a linear transformation of in-house R&D into innovation. It locates firms in an environment comprising institutions, organizations and state policy and postulates firms' interaction and feedback linkages with this environment influences firm innovation. Firms'

internal organization, competencies and R&D structures determine its **absorptive capacity** which influences its ability to take advantage of knowledge. The systemic approach is evolutionary, non-linear and asserts that innovation is path-dependent ⁴.

There are four related issues discussed in this paper. *One* , we use the broad definition of innovation and highlight the relation between innovation and knowledge. *Two* , we highlight the role of learning in a developing country firm. Associated with learning is absorptive capacity which determines the ability of the firm to adopt, adapt and utilise borrowed knowledge. The firm must continuously learn *and* unlearn new technology which includes change in competencies and organisational structures internal to the firm. *Three* , we outline the systems approach to innovation to appreciate the linkages between knowledge, innovation, learning, growth and competitiveness in terms of firm's interaction with its environment. *Four* , we note that innovation systems need to be modified in emerging economies as country contexts differ. Section I provides a broad definition of innovation. Section II presents the systems approach to innovation. The last section presents some conclusions.

Innovation, knowledge and learning

Innovation

Innovation is creation of a new or an improved product or a process or a newer way of doing things. It enhances productivity and reduces costs. It is an improvement over good/service currently produced or alters the method in use by the firm. Innovation may result in introduction of either 'new to the firm' (incremental or sustaining innovation) or 'new to the market' (radical or disruptive innovation) products and services⁵. It also includes concomitant changes in organization and marketing strategies. Conventional or narrow definition of innovation is the use of fundamental research in science and technology i.e. *technological innovation*. It is a result of in-house R&D, outsourcing, use of services of technical personnel hired from outside, imports of technology and capital equipment. Innovation defined in broader terms includes organizational and marketing innovation⁶. Together this is classified as *management innovation*⁶. Firms apply fundamental research in science and management to introduce new or improved products, services, processes and organizational and marketing methods. Innovation is thus an application

of the pool of knowledge available at a point in time. This knowledge keeps changing with the emergence of new ideas and research. This necessitates changes in organisational structures and work methods. Organisational structures and marketing methods of the firm must synergize with technological development. Intra-firm knowledge flows and learning and interaction with firms, users, suppliers, sectors and regions in an environment comprising organizations, institutions and state policy within which the firms are embedded all influence the pace and nature of innovation. Both, *internal* and *external* factors influence firm-innovation. The resource-based theory concentrates on firm's *internal factors* like size, age, ownership, governance patterns, in-house R&D expenditure, organisational and marketing strategies, legal status, education levels of owner and employees, company policy, market orientation, competition from local and foreign firms along with firm attitude towards feed-back from various agents, interaction with the universities and public-funded R&D institutions and communication skills of the firm⁷. Firm-specific factors internal to the firm vary across firms and thus result in differential firm performance. *External factors* comprising social, political, economic and business environment in which the firms operate also affects firm innovation. These constitute the regulatory environment, investment climate and physical infrastructure, institutions and state policy which define the contextual specificities within which firms perform.

Knowledge and learning

During globalization international competitiveness and growth have become functions of knowledge and innovation. Emerging economies aim to become knowledge economies. This requires investment in knowledge, skill development, training, education, R&D, technical personnel from abroad, capital equipment and machinery, ICT inputs, etc. Investment in

knowledge inputs leads to improvement in firm-level capabilities. The capabilities (*absorptive capacity*) of the firm helps internalize new knowledge and promotes learning. In a dynamic framework new knowledge is associated with a co-evolution of absorptive capacity. Knowledge is critical to innovation. It is defined as the familiarity or awareness of facts, information and skills which can be acquired by education and training. 'Knowledge creation' is the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge comprising research, learning, codification, dissemination and internalization. Knowledge is a non-rival and non-excludable resource with positive externalities. Explicit knowledge is codified and articulated and can be easily disseminated. Tacit

knowledge, contained in personnel experience, remains important.⁸ It is generated within the organization or borrowed from outside and adapted to suit the needs of a firm. In a dynamic framework, the firm's resources determine its absorptive capacity including organizational innovation⁹. Moreover technological and non-technological innovation and the absorptive capacity of the firm must co-evolve and all parts of the organization comprising individuals and departments must upgrade to exploit and generate new knowledge¹⁰. Accordingly the firm has to perform the role of a *learning entity*¹¹. Firm knowledge is not confined to in-house R&D but each department and individual in the organization is seen as a potential creator of ideas. All learning requires resources and time. Learning may be simple or complex or be at either higher or lower level. Lower level learning implies identifying problem areas and addressing them by governing variables. Higher level learning involves experimentation and interaction and thus a feedback system which pushes radical change.

Firms 'search' for a variety of *inputs or sources of knowledge* and draw upon '*local*' and '*non-local*' sources to become innovative¹². Moreover larger the number of sources, larger the number of associated technological paths that firms can follow. Also firms rely on more than one source at a time. External sources comprise transfer from domestic firms, suppliers, customers, universities, public-funded R&D institutions, MNCs, purchase of technology for payment of royalty or license fee, import of equipment and hiring of technical personnel . Not all firms can successfully and mechanically adopt, adapt, assimilate and exploit borrowed knowledge. MNCs are expected to influence transfer of knowledge to the subsidiaries or the firm with which a joint venture has been formed¹³. However a substantial part of knowledge transferred by MNCs through FDI is codified and packaged technology¹⁴. Most MNCs transfer only standardized technology to host countries and retain core competencies in design and innovation needed to develop 'new to the market' products or services within the home country firm. The latter require deepening of capabilities than simple skills needed to replicate standardized technology.

Learning has costs and the extent and success of transfer depends on the absorptive or organizational capacity of the firm and also helps evolve it further by learning from the external partner¹⁵. Learning is path-dependent and builds on the prior knowledge of the firm¹⁶. Collaboration with external agents can enhance competitive advantage for the borrowing firm. Learning and new knowledge acquisition from the foreign partner helps innovate especially in the international context¹⁷. The success and extent of flow of information or knowledge and its

management depends on the efficacy of transmission channels, capacity to absorb the flow and the desire to learn and imbibe this knowledge on part of the agents in the subsidiary or the recipient firm¹⁸. However this presupposes that the external firm is willing and honest in transferring the state-of-the-art technology or core competencies and knowledge which is more than simple, codified package of instructions to perform routine tasks. For learning and building of organizational capacity it is imperative that the individual managers and other agents interact within the context of organizational structures and processes and finally 'learn to learn'¹⁹.

In an enterprise the idea can emerge at the top and flow downwards or workers may evolve a better product, a more effective process of production, organisation and marketing arrangement.

Thus *creation and exploitation of knowledge and capability-building are simultaneous processes*. Learning especially in international joint ventures depends on individual capability, absorptive capacity, structural autonomy and improved organizational routines. Learning can take place within the old structures with the use of prior knowledge. However interaction with new knowledge necessitates formation of new organizational structures and routines. Initial absorptive capabilities determine the ability to learn at a point in time and new knowledge pushes to dynamise these capabilities to be able to draw upon and use this knowledge to address the problems of the firm. Thus knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and capability building are simultaneous processes and must co-evolve. For instance Japanese companies have used technological and non-technological innovation when faced with competition and the threat of losing market shares²⁰. Moreover it is not a one-time affair. Rather it has to be a continuum of technological development, both product and process, and innovation on organizational and marketing fronts. Also management of borrowed technology has to take place in a manner such that organizational knowledge creation enables the company to create new knowledge and disseminate it throughout the organization. Knowledge is embodied in products, processes, services and systems and happens continually, incrementally and spirally. Hence innovation inculcates a better way of doing things in the organization and is not confined merely to introducing new products or processes. This implies that technological and non-technological innovation are complementary and rely on knowledge from all sources. Pioneer firms anticipate change and take necessary actions irrespective of the source of knowledge. Successful adoption of technology is affected by simultaneous evolution of organizational structures and routines. Knowledge creation is a context-specific, never-ending process and involves a dialectical interaction between all the agents internal and external to the firm and the overall environment²¹. The firm is not merely an information processing entity; it is a *knowledge - creating and utilising* entity with intertwining individual and organizational objectives. This way it helps resolve the contradictions between the firm, individuals within the firm and the environment within which they are embedded. This allows generation of knowledge by encouraging interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. The interaction between the two forms of knowledge is formalized in the SECI framework which comprises socialisation, externalisation, combining and internalisation processes²². Thus two important dialectical interactions that occur through time and space are – one, between the agents and the structure and two, between tacit and explicit knowledge. The important idea is that the

firm is a dynamic and an organic entity rather than a collection of activities to be performed in an assembly line to complete a big task.

An associated aspect of knowledge creation is knowledge management which relies on an intensive use of ICT support to design and micro-cost management of firms' production and applies it to management of knowledge via management of supply chain and customer relations. *Knowledge management* comprises identification, creation and acquisition of knowledge. The four pillars of a knowledge economy are institutions, information infrastructure, education and skill levels of population and innovation capacity and capabilities of firms. Organisational capacity is used to promote creation of knowledge through absorption and assimilation ²³.

Knowledge management involves creation of a systematic organizational framework to 'create, identify and process new knowledge' ²⁴. Availability of new ideas with efficient knowledge management facilitates innovation. The main steps in knowledge management are as follows:

- *Identify gaps* in the organization. Access new knowledge – sources could be internal or external.
- *Compare the new and old knowledge* . New knowledge should be *unique* to exploit the competitive advantage and its benefits before it becomes publicly known to other organizations especially if the source is external to the firm (another domestic or a foreign firm or an R&D organisation).
- Steps to *close the gap* throughout the organization
- Employees should *share their tacit knowledge* with each other.
- Use of new knowledge *results in new products, processes, organization structures and methods of marketing* . However innovation should be sustained in future with newer ideas so as to maintain a continuum of change.
- *Ultimate aims* – reduce costs, increase productivity, solve problems and facilitate decision making.

Thus innovation requires strategic planning, integration of skills and collective learning at various levels in the organization and is cumulative or path-dependent. ²⁵

Systems approach to innovation

Firms are part of the *ecosystem or innovation system* ²⁶. The ecosystem creates a context in which all agents work in tandem to improve performance and competitiveness. Complementary to firm-specific factors the external environment in which the firm operates affects these processes of

knowledge creation, learning and innovation and informs the systemic approach to innovation. Both the firms and the organizations and institutions in the context of state policy constitute the National Innovation Systems (NIS) approach. According to Lundvall the national innovation system encompasses 'individual, organisational and inter-organisational learning'²⁷. Complementary to the study of the NIS are the regional and sector perspectives. The innovation systems (IS) approach provides an alternative dynamic and an evolutionary framework to the static neoclassical approach to innovation. The IS framework discusses country specificities in determining firm innovation. It includes the firms and the business environment comprising organisations, institutions and state policy which determine and influence firm performance and its ability to experiment and innovate. The firm-specific and external factors influence the innovative ability of the firm.

The *neoclassical approach* assumes that all firms are identical, have well-behaved production functions, have perfect knowledge or information and technology is freely available off-the-shelf to all firms. Moreover all technology and innovation is exogenous to this framework. It is a pro-market, linear approach which achieves static allocative efficiency to maximize profits and assumes that there is no effort required on part of the firm to 'learn' new technology. Rather it assumes that technology can be easily adapted to the circumstances of all firms and ignores the 'uncertainty, inappropriability and indivisibility' aspects of knowledge²⁸. Government intervention distorts efficiently working free markets. The role of the state is confined to the provision of public goods and infrastructure. These assumptions are however not fulfilled in reality. The neoclassical approach ignores the interaction between and feedback from actors in a system. It assumes a linear or a quasi-linear relation between research, innovation and growth and does not take into account the role of institutions and state policy or the feedback loops. The guiding principle is the cost of factors and the aim is to reduce it via R&D provided it is possible to appropriate the benefits of R&D and innovation. Hence allocation of resources to R&D should occur only if it is a profitable activity. Transfer of technology is costless and smooth and the diffusion of borrowed technology and knowledge is certain.

National Innovation Systems

The national innovation systems (NIS) approach associated with the work of Freeman, Lundvall and Nelson addresses the issue of technology gap, innovation and competitiveness of firms in the context of organizations and institutions²⁹. Accordingly, the way institutions evolve and interact with other agents and components of the system helps understand the varied performance of firms and countries in terms of innovation and competitiveness. Thus the early authors focused on the creation, use and diffusion of knowledge and learning in the context of institutional and regulatory frameworks³⁰. In this framework firm-innovation is determined by internal dynamics and its interaction with organizations and institutions influenced by state policy. Thus the entire system creates and distributes knowledge³¹. Together the firms and the external environment form the innovation system (IS) or the national innovation system (NIS). The main components of the IS

are firms, infrastructure, educational, training, regulatory, financial, legal and social institutions *and* state policy which encourages networking of information. The *IS* approach postulates that with change in technological and non-technological factors specific to firms a concomitant change in policy, institutions and organizations must occur. There is constant interaction and feedback among the agents and components of the system which renders this approach dynamic. The degree of *IS* maturity either facilitates or impedes the firms' inclination to innovate. The *NIS* is a systemic approach to innovation aimed at creating institutions which promote scientific research and encourage learning within firms. The latter affects the absorptive capacity of the firm. The *IS* approach is evolutionary, path-dependent, non-linear and dynamic in which various actors of the system work in tandem via feedback loops which helps the system to evolve further. The three important pillars of innovation theory are the innovation systems, competence building and interactive learning³². Innovation in the *NIS* framework is holistic and involves the private and public sector institutions both. The process of innovation and learning is associated with knowledge creation and diffusion due to interactions between agents comprising consumers, producers, suppliers and the society in general. Institutions comprise laws, customs, traditions, contracts and social conventions created and followed by people. Institutional factors operate at the national, the regional and the sector level which results in varied performance of the firms across different sectors, regions and nations. Integration of the role of institutions, rules and culture is imperative in the analyses of technological innovation³³.

Freeman was the first to formalize the concept of national system of innovation underlining the role of the government in providing technological infrastructure and explored the circumstances in which free trade will push economic development³⁵. The modern versions of the *NIS* have been developed by Lundvall, Nelson and Edquist. They underscore the role of the institutions, especially when markets are inefficient, in developing countries. The *NIS* concept is defined spatially, sector-wise and according to breadth of activities involved³⁶. Geographically these may be local, regional or national or even supra-national assuming that the area has some amount of coherence with respect to innovation processes. Sectoral innovation system is concerned more with specific technological fields or product areas. This includes the concept of Technological Systems (*TS*)³⁷.

Innovation system is defined in both narrow and broad terms. The former comprises the science, technology and innovation (*STI*) mode of learning. It concentrates on the in-house efforts of R&D and technological innovation in creating new products and services. It can be further extended to include interaction between the firm and the public funded R&D institutions and university research departments which in the literature is termed as the triple helix model. Nonetheless it gives primacy to the science and technology and ignores the role of absorptive capacity and experience-based learning. The latter is an essential part of the broader definition of the *NIS* which is the doing, using and interaction (*DUI*) mode of learning,³⁸. The broad definition incorporates a systemic approach with inter-relationships between firm-R&D, public research institutes, universities and policy and gives importance to the process of in-house learning. The *DUI* mode views innovation as a 'continuous cumulative process' which includes not only radical but incremental innovation. It also goes further in terms of adaptation, diffusion, absorption and use

of innovation. Key to learning is inter and intra-organizational interface. High levels of R&D expenditure without organizational learning result in low level of innovation.

The firm's absorptive capacity has a bearing on the ability to benefit from new knowledge especially if it is acquired externally. These competencies include the skills of employees, managerial experience, in-house R&D and inter and intra-organizational relationships. The old set of capabilities needs to be replaced by a new set of capabilities as new knowledge evolves. This happens due to learning on part of the agents. Likewise with transformation of internal organizational structures and acquisition of new skills the components of the innovation system must also adjust in tandem thus maintain a continuum of technological change.

The core elements of NIS are –

1. The innovation systems vary across countries and the production and the knowledge structures co-evolve and involve learning and structural change.
2. Knowledge is specific to the context in which it is generated and has little mobility. Restrictions on the movement of knowledge may be intrinsic or man-made. Hence knowledge, both tacit and explicit, is not available off-the-shelf and freely to all the firms alike and there are information asymmetries.
3. Knowledge is a resource and interactive learning is the process which implies that innovation does not occur in isolation. Firms, research institutes and individuals must interact in ways defined by institutions. Institutions are a set of formal and informal norms and rules which govern interaction among people. Innovation does not take place in a linear fashion. Rather there is scope for interaction and feedback which informs future evolution in the specific context.

Thus NIS and innovation both can be defined in narrow and in broad terms.

Innovation, narrowly defined, is technological innovation comprising R&D and patent creation. Broad definition includes non-technological innovation as well comprising organisational and marketing innovation. i.e., newer ways of doing things or managing an organisation.

NIS – also can be defined in narrow or in broad terms. In narrow terms this is simply the STI mode and in broader terms it is the DUI mode of learning. The former is focused on scientific R&D conducted by firms which leads to innovation. The latter involves creating a system of learning, competence building and innovation by focusing on creation of relevant institutions.

However mere creation will not ensure that the relevant linkages will operate. Rather the political and social frameworks have to ensure that these institutions work. Thus the focus is on capabilities and institutions. However mere replication of the elements of NIS of one successful case in another

country context will not deliver. Local specificities or perspectives are important and should be factored in while devising institutional structures ³⁹.

The innovation systems approach is a systemic approach to innovation and learning which appeals to policy makers in both developed and developing countries as it focuses more on DUI than STI mode of learning . It is an *interdisciplinary and a holistic* approach as it considers a whole range of internal, organizational, firm-specific factors and external, social, institutional and political factors which affect innovation. It uses an *evolutionary perspective* in that innovation processes are non-linear, path-dependent, involve feed-backs and are specific to contexts and institutions within which they evolve. Thus it is difficult to choose a 'best practice' system among the various systems ⁴⁰.

There are no common components and definitions and is an 'ex-post' analysis. There are lessons to be learnt from successful country experiences by the follower countries. The latter can emulate their experience but their success in turn depends on the local capabilities and absorptive capacity and the ability to adopt, adapt, modify and assimilate the technology or the institutions borrowed from the successful countries. Hence the success of individual nations is a function of their institutional maturity. However institutions must be context-specific. Also the role of institutions is to facilitate the generation, use and spread of knowledge and make it accessible. The knowledge economy is of prime importance and the role of institutions is to assist in the interaction among actors ⁴¹ of the NIS in creating the ability to use and disseminate this knowledge ⁴². The OECD studies of the 1960s concluded that a 'research system' needs a nexus *between industry, university and the government* . The conversion of basic research into industrial use is considered one of the most important roles of the innovation system. *Government policy* minimizes coordination failures in the economy and integrates national, regional and local economic, social and science policies. Internal *economic environment* facilitates exploitation of scientific advance provided there is *international cooperation* . These are the basic components of a systemic approach to innovation.

Developing countries are industrial late-comers and pursue active industrial and trade policies. Some developing countries like India and China have acquired the status of emerging economies. A country's competitiveness is created and sustained through a highly localized process and requires context-specific institutional innovation to generate and diffuse innovative techniques and changes in them ⁴³. In the context of developing countries, the systems approach should be modified to incorporate the local specificities especially the global, informal and local spheres where innovation, both technological and non-technological, occurs and is equally important ⁴⁴. The state is assigned the task of a coordinator between the agents of the system ⁴⁵.

There are important implications of applying the IS approach to developing countries. Mathews (1999) describes the East Asian institutional arrangement as the 'national system of economic learning'. He argues that it is not the ability to undertake maximum R&D but it is the ability to diffuse and spread the created or borrowed technology to the largest possible number of firms

which is more relevant for developing countries. Most of the firms are not innovators but rely on borrowed technology. It is imperative to instigate the process with the support of institutions created to facilitate diffusion. This is described as 'technology diffusion management' (TDM). The institutions accelerate the adoption of technologies available, help disseminate new techniques and promote organizational learning. Mathews terms it as the 'national system of economic learning' (NSEL). Diffusion is not a passive process but an active process involving deployment of resources on the initiative of the adopters. Latecomers pursue the strategy of 'developmental resource leverage' (DRL) which first identifies the resources available and then exploits them to their utmost or 'leverage' to create a competitive advantage. Hence in developing country contexts the focus shifts from *innovation* to *learning* and from *individual firm* to the management of strategic process of *diffusion* and *upgrading*⁴⁶. However inclusive innovation is the preferred form of innovation suited to developing country contexts. In addition a cluster of firms supported by institutions to manage and diffuse technology becomes more relevant. The aim is to create new and better variety of products by continually upgrading firm capabilities to handle newer and evolving technologies that become available, which is the desired outcome of R&D and learning.

Along with in-house R&D firms especially in developing countries use borrowed technology or know-how which needs to be assimilated and disseminated in the organization. To facilitate this *learning* becomes more critical. *Managerial experience* is crucial in not just acquiring knowledge but chalking out a path which facilitates learning. Prior knowledge and established organizational methods should not deter to first, unlearn and then, learn afresh, i.e., should not make managers averse to change. Organizational structures internal to the firm and cultural contexts of the two or more partners can impede or foster interaction and collective action among the members of the firm and their ability to mutually benefit from external collaborations in a synergistic manner.

A vital aspect of technology policy in developing countries is related to *management of technology diffusion*. Firms acquire and improve competencies and blend them with organizational learning and strategic management. Firms must define their strategic goals to catch-up with the developed countries by mastering the borrowed technology in the initial period and then develop or adapt, use, indigenise and diffuse to ensure self-sufficiency. The diffusion pathways used by latecomer firms need to be adopted by these enterprises. Learning involves deepening and widening of technological capabilities of firms and adoption of innovative marketing, contracting and other organisational changes. Technological diffusion occurs by improving capabilities or improving access or links with customers in developed countries. Technological and non-technological changes should be concurrent and treated as complementary. Another crucial step is the process of capability improvement and its dynamics. The dynamics of capability building involves movement from a low capability stage to one where technologies are standardised, cost competency matters and finally a stage of maturity is reached. These are modelled as the innovation stage, imitation stage, technological competition stage and standardisation stage.⁴⁷ Accordingly large firms innovate, market power matters, size matters, diversification matters and market structure and competition (oligopolistic) matters or favours R&D and

innovation. Moreover as the product passes through different stages in its life cycle R&D varies accordingly. Large amount of R&D is incurred in the nascent stage and low in the mature stage. The process of resource leverage comprises first ensuring that all the requisite skills, knowledge and contacts are in place. It is followed by seeding which involves technology acquisition and adaptation and improvement. The third step is propagation which includes enterprise and product development and infrastructure to motivate firms to adopt new technology. The last step is developing industry structure and R&D capabilities to sustain the momentum created. This model involves sequencing of activities and depends on the prior capabilities created. Policies have to be designed to suit each stage and hence the State engineers the growth of an industry which did not exist earlier or in which the country did not have a static comparative advantage. The institutions used to assist in the process also need to be created. The 'institutional vehicles of leverage' are the large domestic firms, MNCs and public sector research agencies / labs which interact in varying degrees in different contexts across time and space. The process of technological advancement is an iterative process building new capabilities on the previous base.

Thus the economy is viewed as an evolutionary system which is dynamic and learns and adapts over time through a selective process. The system comprises individuals, firms, sectors, industries, public agencies, institutions and organisations who learn and whose activities are coordinated and capabilities enhanced in the framework of state policy. Economic learning helps deal with the unresolved issues and assists in technological diffusion. Diffusion and learning require a set of complementary institutions and organisations which must also evolve together and hence the system must evolve with all its elements included. Hence both the NIS and the national system of economic learning are evolutionary, systemic approaches which encourage learning by doing and using and management of knowledge diffusion. Thus increase in share of R&D in GDP does not lead to the status of a technological leader. For developing countries a greater emphasis on acquisition and enhancement of the capabilities to use borrowed knowledge and learn and evolve it to suit local contexts is perhaps more important than simply indulge in product or process innovation and R&D. More important are the institutional innovations and experiments which reflect firms' absorptive capacity than simply replicate the success stories of other countries. Another aspect of the NIS particularly relevant to developing countries is the assumption of frictionless transfer of knowledge between organizations and nations. International relations often tilt against developing countries; this makes the problem more complex.

Regional and Sectoral Innovation Systems

The NIS approach is a systemic understanding of factors external to the firm. The need to formalize regional innovation systems (RIS) arises due to lack of uniformity across different regions. Regional variations arise in knowledge, skill, social and economic structures, investment, infrastructure, institutions and research. This necessitates a regional perspective in understanding the diffusion of knowledge, despite advances in information and communication technologies. The elements of the NIS can also be observed at the regional level and inter-spatial

disparities in these elements can account for differences in concentration of innovation capacity. Levels of development and availability of infrastructure and institutions vary across different regions and hence governs geographical location of a cluster, a group of related industries or a group of diversified industries⁴⁹. The concept of RIS and its advantages motivate the emergence of regional groupings like innovative industrial clusters, districts and a *technopole*. The focus of the RIS is also on the role of and the interaction between the 'actors' (firms, customers, public funded research organisations and public agencies) involved in creation, use and exchange of knowledge, the role of *institutions* and organizations in support of knowledge generation and its dissemination within a region and the implications for *policy making* specific to regions. The local development affects the firms' ability to exploit the knowledge imparted in local universities and social networks. Administration should be responsive and inclined to promote cooperation between the local programs and policies. The relevance of RIS is established especially when a large part of the knowledge created cannot be codified and is therefore tacit or implicit embodied in people. The three pillars of the RIS are:

- Innovation and knowledge spill-over among firms which leads to cost reduction
- Set of region-specific institutions
- The role of regional policy⁵⁰.

Despite ICT revolutions spatial concentration is visible and crucial for developing tacit knowledge. RIS is different from the NIS in terms of regional inter-firm relations, infrastructure and institutional. Policy and regional endowments also affect the firms. Proximity of firms help scale economies evolve and internalize externalities known as the agglomeration economies which arise due to firms being part of an industrial cluster. This may be impeded by dearth of evolved and dynamic institutions at the regional level. Regional institutions collectively responsible for encouraging innovation are termed as *institutional thickness*⁵¹. *Institutional thickness* depends on the presence of strong institutions which interact, cooperate and exchange with each other, there are efficient governance systems to resolve inter-institutional conflict and the guiding principle of inclusive innovation in this milieu is to promote regional socio-economic development. Sectoral Innovation System (SIS) views the use of multiple technologies (and other forms of innovation) across a sector. Pavitt provides a theoretical basis for understanding sector patterns of technical change⁵². Producers and users of innovation are generally not the same firms or sectors. A sector comprises firms involved in producing similar and inter-linked products using common knowledge⁵³. However firms in the same industry or sector will perform differently due to firm-heterogeneity. SIS has national, local and international dimensions. Like the NIS the sector IS must be located in the context of evolutionary theory which sees innovation as path-dependent, non-linear and dynamic. The IS framework comprising national, regional and sector innovation systems explains why some countries are more innovative than others. It helps trace the transition from 'emerging' to 'mature' innovation systems. Despite efforts to push the STI modes of learning and increase in GERD, countries may fail to compete internationally. Policy addresses

inappropriate or missing institutions and organizations, poor absorptive capacity of firms and weak network and interaction among the components of the system. Moreover replication of institutions which have delivered elsewhere may not work in all contexts. This urges an institutional and policy *experimentation* to encourage the DUI modes of learning which suit developing country contexts. Policy experimentation is critical to design effective innovation policies . This includes:

- Build a 'common vision' for firms, governments, knowledge institutions and media
- Reduce corruption
- A National Innovation Strategy comprising sectoral and regional initiatives, competition between regions, promote RIS, use links between domestic and international firms.
- Establish links between industrial, education and trade policies.
- Support experimentation at the level of firms, universities and industries. This includes providing incentives for experimentation.
- An innovation policy assigns a central role to the *government* to create conditions conducive for innovation. The aim of an innovation policy is to facilitate transition of the developing country IS to mature and socially inclusive IS. This transition requires creating components critical to the system comprising capabilities, networks and institutions. Recommendations for designing an innovation policy are:
 - Identify the constraints and problems.
 - Develop policy-learning with reference to institutional specificities. However replication of the best IS is not advised. Rather policy makers should experiment and learn by implementing new measures and instruments and learn how they influence the system's ability to innovate.
 - Any experimental policy should address both the STI and the DUI modes of learning and innovation.
 - Promote formation of soft institutions.
 - Facilitate interaction between MNCs and domestic users with emphasis on local level experimentation.

Development of knowledge inputs requires concerted efforts on part of the public and the private sectors to develop human capital, improve quality, equity and access to HEIs, increase funding in public-funded institutions and forge strong links between universities and industry. This requires an innovation policy which encompasses the ST policy as a core component but also addresses non-technological innovation aspects. Policy must warrant that innovation *promotes sustainable development* with least *environmental costs* and addresses the needs of the masses. Policy must support *grassroots innovation* along with top-down R&D conducted in universities, public-funded institutions and in-house efforts of the firms. It should drive STI in not only high-tech manufacturing and service sectors but also in micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs), traditional manufacturing and primary sector. Developing countries usually operate behind the

technology frontier and rely more on imported technology. This means innovation in them is more *incremental* ; this necessitates a reduce dependence on foreign technology in the long run. Imported technology should be indigenized and adapted to local conditions.

Conclusion

Innovation is both technological and non-technological; the latter implies newer ways of doing things complementary to scientific R&D. Hence innovation policy has broader implications than an S&T policy. Innovation depends on institutions governing labor markets, education, work-environment, legal, social and financial frameworks. It is economic, political and cultural simultaneously. The two learning modes – the DUI and the STI modes are both complementary to innovation. The DUI mode is experience, and the STI, is, science based. The IS must aim at designing innovation-policy as an amalgam of the two modes. New technology cannot be exploited successfully in production units using older forms of organizational structures, individual competencies and capabilities. The level of absorptive capacity influences the ability to use knowledge. As new knowledge becomes available the internal capabilities co-evolve. It is found that firms which promote intra and inter-firm interaction and obtain feedback from users, clients, suppliers and research institutions and universities are generally more innovative. Developing country firms undertake incremental innovation more often than radical innovation with a focus on inclusive innovation. These firms depend more on external know-how than indigenous R&D and have weak links with public funded R&D bodies, local universities and various elements of the NIS. Due to externalities and poor IPR protection systems governments in these countries have to play a pro-active role in promoting innovation by coordinating activities of all agents present in the system. The IS approach or framework helps us understand that IS is unique to each country and is context-specific. Hence governments play a central role in successful working of the IS through its innovation policy. This also makes a case for the need to preserve policy space and experiment to evolve the right mix of institutions.

The relationship between firm innovation and the environment encompassing it is crucial to the development of a production culture of innovation among owners and workers both. Firm competencies and systemic components must ideally co-evolve with new knowledge. Hence innovation is path-dependent and non-linear. Feed-back loops in the system help firms grow and become competitive. The ability to use foreign technology depends on the given level of firm-capabilities or the absorptive capacity. Creation of knowledge-economies is contingent on research, knowledge, suitable manpower and experienced management. Economic and social problems faced by developing countries differ from developed countries in myriad ways. Besides the market, the role of the state is fundamental to innovation; history is replete with examples of successful firms subsidized by the state at public expense in the advanced capitalist countries. The innovation systems approach should be adjusted to suit the patterns of knowledge and learning functional in developing countries. Policy should advance grassroots and inclusive innovation to

involve the economically weak sections of the population in the process. Finally, the systems approach to innovation provides an evolutionary framework focused on knowledge, learning, interaction and competency-building.

NOTES & REFERENCES

The term 'knowledge' used throughout the paper implies explicit and tacit knowledge.

1.J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* , 1942, New York: Harper & Brothers.

2.Schumpeter (1934) views innovation as a means of earning abnormal profits by pioneer firms until late-comers catch-up and erode these profits followed by a new set of innovation. In contrast Schumpeter (1942) relates innovation and R&D intensity to the oligopolistic power of firms free from competition and use their financial resources for innovation to preserve market shares. However this model does not provide an insight into technology diffusion process of firms. It ignores the role of knowledge and learning.. These are known as the *Mark I* and *Mark II* approaches.

3.This is the interaction between technology push (J. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, 1934, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Schumpeter (1942), *op.cit* . and demand pull (J. Schmookler, *Invention and Economic Growth* , 1966, Harvard University Press, MA.) theories whereby different actors in the system interact and contribute to innovation.

4.Disruptive innovation occurs when the innovator captures the low-end market and the new market footholds and then moves to capture the mainstream consumers by meeting their quality requirements. Sustaining innovations occur when existing products are improved upon thus capturing the incumbent's current customers by meeting their expectation of good quality products.

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Analysis of Luxembourg Firms', CEPS-INSTEAD Working Paper No.1, January, 2010. <https://ideas.repec.org> [Accessed on 6.6.2017]

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9.Organizational innovation comprises allocation of work roles and administrative efficiency. (N. J. Foss, J. Lyngsie, and S. A. Zahra, 'The Role of External Knowledge Sources and Organisational Design in the Process of opportunity Exploitation', Department of Strategic Management and Globalisation Working Paper No. 6, April, 2013, Denmark.

10.Especially with regards to knowledge obtained from an external source, absorptive capacity comprises the ability to first identify, then assimilate and finally exploit the information and technology in either embodied or tacit form. This involves the ability to recognize the existence of external knowledge, to imbibe it and to finally use it to address firm's issues. (W. M. Cohen and D. A. Levinthal, 'Innovation and Learning: The Two Faces of R&D', *The Economic Journal*, September, Vol. 99, No. 397, 1989, pp. 569-596.; W. M. Cohen and D. A. Levinthal, 'Absorptive Capacity: A New Perspective on Learning and Innovation', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Special Issue : Technology, Organisations and Innovation*, Vol. 35, No. 1, March, 1990, pp.128-152.) ; F. Damonpour, 'Organizational Innovation: A Meta-analysis of Effects of Determinants and Moderators', *The Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 34, No.3, 1991, pp. 555–590; J. Jansen, F. Van den Bosch and H. Volberda., 'Exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, and performance: effects of organizational antecedents and environmental moderators', *Management Science*, Vol.52, No.11, 2006, pp. 1661-1674 and T. Schmidt, 'Absorptive Capacity – One-size Fits All? A Firm-level Analysis of Absorptive Capacity for Different Kinds of Knowledge', *Managerial and Decision Economics*, Vol. 31, 2010, pp. 1-18. Most studies show that an important component of absorptive capacity is the in-house R&D of the firm. The ability to exploit external source of knowledge or technology is determined by where does the firm stand with respect to the technology frontier. Movement up the tech-chain by using external know-how depends on the ability to use that technology. In this context in-house R&D plays a significant role in affecting absorptive capacity.

11.I. Nonaka, 'The Knowledge-Creating Company', *Harvard Business Review*, July– August, 2007, pp. 162–171.

12.Search is 'local' when the firm cites its own patent in its own field of production, is 'internal-boundary spanning' if it cites patents internal to the firm but outside the main technology or area it works in, is 'external-boundary spanning', if it cites patents outside the firm in its own area and is 'radical' if it refers to patents outside the firm and not in its area of operation (K. Laursen, 'Keep Searching and you'll find: What do we Know About Variety Creation through Firms' Search Activities for Innovation?', *Industrial and Corporate Change*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 2012, pp.1181-1220., p. 1183). These searches are constrained by time and resources. The latter comprise funds and the quality of skilled personnel . External sources of search or information on innovation

comprise competitors, customers, suppliers, universities, inter-firm collaboration and labour mobility. R&D in subsidiaries of MNCs in developing countries are more 'exploitative' in nature compared to that located in developed countries which are more 'exploratory'. 'Radical' search behavior is triggered by individual foresight, technological exhaustion, organizational slack or emergence of a 'problem' which needs to be addressed. Hence firms must conduct both local and non-local search. This search is limited by costs and 'cognitive biases' (Laursen 2012, *op.cit* . p. 1208). Further research is needed on which organizational practices promote search and what kind of innovation occurs – radical or incremental?

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18. Knowledge transfer is optimal provided the knowledge is transferred at the right time, in the correct form and in the appropriate location (Lin, (2005), *op. cit.* ..
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21. I. Nonaka and R. Toyama, 'The Knowledge-Creating Theory Revisited: Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process', *Knowledge Management and Research and Practice* , Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 2-10, give the notion of the 'space' or the 'ba' (p. 6) where knowledge creation takes place. Ba can be physical or virtual and inside or outside the firm. The concept has similarities with the NIS concept of Lundvall, Nelson and Freeman.
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Is housing policy always an answer to housing issues of new towns like Navi Mumbai: A case of informal spaces in modern India

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Introduction

Rapid urbanization in India in the last 25 years has led scholars to focus on cities. Key parameters of urbanization are being debated now. These parameters are migration, employment and infrastructure which include housing, water, electricity, health, transport. Urbanization has witnessed huge shift with the phenomenal numbers of population shifting to urban areas. These facts have been repeated over the years by academicians¹. These cities have functioned as magnets for employment for many and therefore have been termed as cities which are crucial parts of the production economy of the country. However, again cities to an extent have provided answers to the employment question to many, especially to the labouring class who do not get employment opportunities in their native rural spaces. However, due to lack of space, resources and government formalities and regulations have failed to adequately answer the housing issue. Scholars have also pointed out how successive governments although have made efforts to address the housing question through its policy, but have always failed grossly to provide a basic and important service like housing to its voters especially the labouring class². These policies have witnessed series of changes over the years has been discussed below. The case of Navi Mumbai which is at times referred to as the twin city of Mumbai is an interesting case of housing issues that the city has witnessed over the years and the concurrent housing policy of the city is a very interesting case for the above point.

Navi Mumbai is comparatively a new city which has witnessed inflow of migrants from various state, class groups and social origin. The city and the government has provided housing to various class groups; but on a holistic basis has not been able to provide housing to the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) and LIG (lower income group) group. The housing sector of the city has provided various options to the MIG (Middle Income Group) and HIG (Higher Income Group) groups. Earlier CIDCO (Cities and Industrial Development Corporation) --- the planning body of Navi Mumbai had played active role in their housing, although there were many issues like negative filtering with the housing of the lower income group. However, right now there are big real estate companies entering the housing market of the city, the housing issues of the EWS and LIG group has been completely neglected. Nevertheless, the role that CIDCO played for the housing of EWS and LIG housing were fraught with problems. Right now the government authority responsible for making of the Navi Mumbai city, CIDCO has taken a different approach. The approach is of minimal participation in their housing. Does that indicate that these groups who have not been able to fetch housing in the city and therefore have left the city. The answer is 'no'. These groups have functioned in a strategic way and used various resources under the political economic framework

available to them. The land of the city currently belongs to three groups. These groups are CIDCO, NMMC (Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation) and MIDC (Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation). The labouring poor have been able to make channel through these institutions and the local political parties for getting their basic services. The paper attempts to explain that when the policy fails to cater to the housing needs of these groups, the people have their own indigenous ways to provide for their housing.

1. a. Informal Housing and Urban Poor in Navi Mumbai

Navi Mumbai is the twin city of Mumbai build foremost to decongest the commercial capital of India. Navi Mumbai had a very detailed plan by authorities and promised to deliver housing resource to all class segments. Therefore, the plan documents termed the city as 'common man's city'. However, when scholars have analyzed the ground realities after 40 years of growth of the new city, the results and observations are quite different. A particular segment of society which is the economically weaker section and lower income group, who are very well part of the economy of the new city, find it very difficult to locate formal housing in the area. They have to then make way for themselves in the informal settlements. In fact, after so many years of development of the city, one finds a complete change in language in government documents relating to the new city. The new 'common man's city' now intends to be a 'world class city'. There is a huge shortage in formal housing. The paper indicates how people are using their resources, own indigeneity, social networks in filling this gap. There are various state and non-state local actors involved in their housing and are extremely influential in making available these kinds of houses. The paper focuses on identifying these actors and also understanding the different ways in which these people influence housing of a segment of population. After all housing is a basic necessity and in the absence of the government's role, individuals would use various networks in fulfilling these needs of theirs. Then, informality becomes a way of living in the urban city.

Fundamentally, informal settlements in new towns like Navi Mumbai have a tendency to conglomerate near to the urban villages for specific reasons which need to be analysed. This is a first category of informal settlements. The other informal settlements are those that have come up on MIDC land in the Navi Mumbai (Navi Mumbai land is divided into NMMC land, CIDCO land and MIDC land and District magistrate land) and have been there since the inception of the town providing continuous supply of workers and labourers required in building the new city. They have a specific pattern and process in demanding their rights to housing and challenging issues arising due to difficult housing situation. Although after years of fighting difficult housing situations these slums and squatters look like chawls, government documents still refer to them as *jhopad patti* since they are still lying as unregulated settlements and illegal lands . This is the other kind of informal settlement. The other informal settlement being the temporary structures that one finds near the construction site.

Housing Issues in Urban India: A review of plan documents

With the continuous increase in population of the urban areas from migration, housing has become an even more serious issue. The city which has become an important instrument for generating wealth for the country has attracted huge labour forces that help in sustaining the economic dynamism of the urban. However, their housing although mentioned in plan documents as important, when it comes to the numbers of units build or allocated for the lower income group, the issue has been proved to be extremely neglected by the government and executors of policy 3 . The labor force live in housing clusters in the metropolitan region without proper layout, proper service lines and other facilities which are necessary for daily sustenance. The removal, resettlement and up-gradation of these clusters involves challenges with many groups. This section attempts to understand the issues of housing in urban India from the five years plan documents.

Table 1. The Five year plans and the major policy initiative in the housing sector in Urban India:

The five year plans	The main policy initiative in urban housing sector
The First five year plan (1951-56)	Endorsing of the idea of slum clearance. Slum was considered a hurdle in city growth and their existence could not be allowed.
The Second five year plan (1956-61)	National Building Organization was established in 1954, Government of India initiated a number of different social housing schemes like LIG housing scheme.
The Third five year plan (1961-66)	Effective control of urban land through levying of tax, Objective of making land available for lower income group, introducing the category of Economically Weaker Section
The Fourth five year plan (1969-74)	Encouraging financial investment in housing from organizations like Life Insurance Corporation
The Fifth five year plan (1974-79)	The programs for the construction of housing colonies by State Housing Boards, main funding agency of housing was Housing and Urban Development Corporation, plan Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) put to practice.
The Sixth five year plan (1980-85)	Environmental Improvement of Slums, focus on providing basic services to slums, other component of the plan was the Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns
The Seventh five year plan (1985-1990)	Witnessed a shift from a major share of public sector investing in housing to the private sector investments increasing to the total investment, National Housing Policy (1988) launched.

The Eighth five year plan (1992-97)	Housing and shelter up gradation scheme for the urban poor as part of Nehru Rozgar Yojna introduced
The Ninth five year plan (1997-2002)	Direct intervention by the government in the case of lower segments of the housing market and selected disadvantaged groups
The Tenth five year plan (2002-2007)	National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy 2007 mentions “ 99 percent of the housing shortage of 24.7 million at the end of the 10th Plan pertains to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low Income Category (LIG) sectors.
The Eleventh five year plan (2007-2012)	Master plan concept “is not well suited to rapidly growing cities of India and added that “the master plan concept contributes to the proliferation of slums”.

Source: Planning Commission, Government of India.

The Shift in Housing Policies over the Years

The housing policies have witnessed marked changes over the years. The changes in the housing policies have been associated to various factors like the development trajectory of the country, economic restructuring of the country, globalization, class influence on policy making and the role of the West in the Indian policies. However, the major shift in the housing policy of India has been with the economic restructuring of the economy. Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the New Economic Policy (NEP) have changed the direction of the policies to a major extent. The policies reflect that the state which initially used to be the welfare oriented state have witnessed a shift to the developmental state. The notion of development in the policies has been reported to be very skewed which benefits only a minor section of the population. Further, the policies are increasingly becoming market oriented, where the prime motive of the policies intend towards profit generation⁴. The section below aims to highlight some of the changes that the housing policies have witnessed since their inception.

A very significant feature of the housing policies of India which demands attention is that the first ever housing policy of independent India was launched only in 1988. Prior to 1988 there was no housing policy. In fact, many have reported a lack of comprehensive urban policy in the early years of planning in the country. The initial policies focused only on housing of refugees and industrial growth of cities, the actual problems of cities was hardly discussed. However, post 1980s the urban issues and housing issues have caught the attention of the policy makers, planners and there is growing research work on issues like built environment in urban areas, spatial relations of cities and so on. This shift has been associated with the identification of cities as growth engines of the national economy in the planning organizations. In contrast to this view, ironically estimates show that 99 per cent of the housing crisis is in the lower income category and among the weaker section category in the cities of the country⁵.

Another very significant feature of the housing policies of India is that the Second Plan had mentioned that from the experience of the government, the government realized that slum clearance and relocation of urban poor to another area was not a solution to the housing issues of urban poor in the cities. Slum clearance was considered to be a costly affair on the government exchequer and it also resulted in loss of property of the urban poor. Therefore, slum manifested great opposition from the residents of the slums. In the subsequent years the policies regarding housing of urban poor shifted to providing them tenure security, basic services to their existing housing in the attempt to regularize and legalize their tenements. The approach of providing basic services to the urban poor settlements in the cities was termed as Environmental Improvement of Slums (EIS) programme. These programmes which have met with partial failure and partial success in various cities have also been studied in detail by scholars. Scholars mention that providing basic services to the urban poor would prove to be a success when it is linked to the question of security of tenure of the urban poor. However, the point to be understood is post 1990s the eviction of urban poor from their slums have witnessed an increased momentum in cities. This phenomenon has been described to the increasing importance of land in urban areas for the cities. As the cities have become the focal point of development, land in cities has been regarded as the key to developing built environment required for attracting foreign investment in the cities. In such a scenario urban slums are regarded as wastage of space in the cities.

In simultaneity with the issue of increasing slum clearance in cities, in the urban housing policies one notices the development of infrastructure in cities as having taken a centre stage. This relates to the spatial restructuring of cities and the associated changes in the built environment that the urban areas are witnessing in the cities. One such programme that has been recently launched in the year 2005 is JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission). Firmly, the idea behind the urban renewal projects has been city beautification and cleaning (by removing unclean 'objects' like slums), which ultimately attract foreign investors to the city for investing in the city and generating economic surplus from such investments. This ultimately leads to the growth of the brand 'globalized India'. The emergence of the brand 'globalized India' is one where millions are forced to bear the cost of ensuring profits for a minuscule population of political and economic elite. This is justified under the banner of national or public interest. However, the irony is that the victims of this process are referred to as beneficiaries. Unfortunately, an urban reform process of the scale and intensity of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) follows the same pattern and paradigm.

Land is a very important resource with regard to the economy of the urban poor. It is the base resource which helps them to construct their own dwelling even outside the formal market. It helps them to earn by generating their meager income from small home based enterprises at the individual level. It also serves various other functions. However, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) seems to completely neglect this aspect. Its various reform measures aim at commercializing and profiteering from the land which is such a crucial resource for a major segment of the population. One of the mandatory reforms under the state government is the repeal of Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) which gives a free hand to the builder lobby

to capture vast and huge tracts of land in the metropolitan cities for building commercial and residential complexes. Therefore, sparing no space for the housing of the urban poor. Interestingly, the government has already agreed on a hundred per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in real estate. Now, with Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) being repealed the stage is clear for the entry of giant multinational real estate firms to exploit land in Indian cities for business purposes ⁶. Therefore, in the current political economy of the urban areas of the country, repeal of ULCRA seems to confirm to the pro-market paradigm of the government.

The central government's Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is expected to convert select cities into the world class urban centers, foremost by providing infrastructure services to all economic classes. The sub-mission for basic services that fall under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) would benefit the poor only if they have security of tenure and their settlements and dwelling units get connected to these networks. The question of security of tenure for housing of poor can be approached at two different levels. First, security of tenure provided at the sites where the urban poor have been living for many years, mostly unregistered public lands. Secondly, security of tenure where the urban poor are relocated at, after their displacement for development projects. The first one has been dealt in this section, while the second one has been dealt in the next section. The land question becomes even more central when the intention is of making affordable housing with basic services available to the poor. Since the mission does not address this question, how would a city become world class without reaching out to half of its population is something to ponder upon. On the contrary the mission will instead encourage process that would displace the poor rather than include them in the process of city transformation. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is expected to convert select cities into ' world class' ones ⁷. . However, the term 'world class' is now being used more as a paradigm for urban development signifying cities with international standard infrastructure particularly roads, airports, public transport, open spaces and real estate projects. These all projects require land and the land would obviously come from taking away informal lands used by urban poor to survive in the city.

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) provides a provision of basic services to the urban poor including security of tenure at affordable prices. While the former may be achievable, it is not clear how the latter would be achieved particularly as there is no mention of how land prices would be made affordable. Certainly the market is not expected to do so as envisaged under the mission because of the repeal of Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) and the opening of real estate market to foreign investment. The market in fact has led to spiraling of land prices excessively. The most important fear is that the Urban Renewal Mission would lead to more slum demolitions and displacement as it has been happening with great intensity across cities. Further, the relocation and rehabilitation tasks of the project affected people are extremely complicated in the Indian society. This along with an official policy of non-recognition of slum dwellers who are squatting or living in unauthorized settlements would make the situation more precarious ⁸.

One of the optional reforms on Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is earmarking at least 20 to 25 per cent of developed land in all housing projects (both public and private agencies) for Economically Weaker Section (EWS) / Lower Income Group (LIG) category with a system of cross subsidization. This reform is aligned with the goal of 'Affordable Housing for All' in the National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy, 2007 (NUH and HP). The National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy, 2007 (NUH and HP) mandates reservation of 10-15 per cent land in new public/private housing projects or 20-25 per cent of Floor Area Ratio (FAR)(whichever is greater) for Economically Weaker Section (EWS) /Lower Income Group(LIG) housing through appropriate legal stipulations and special initiatives.

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) points out that of the total housing shortage in a city, a large proportion is among the Below Poverty Line (BPL). The reform assumes that Earmarking Developed Land (EDL) in all housing projects will reduce housing shortage among the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Lower Income Group (LIG) households by increasing supply of land for housing the poor. Further, Earmarking Developed Land (EDL) considers that housing is not just about shelter but also a place from where poor make their livelihoods. Legitimate housing will enable poor to earn a legitimate living in the city. The ultimate objective of Earmarking Developed Land (EDL) is to increase the supply of affordable land for housing the poor with adequate access to basic services. However, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) confirms that Earmarking Developed Land (EDL) will by itself not be sufficient to ensure housing for the poor. Housing for the poor will require convergence with two other important components. First, effective governance and second, livelihood promotion. The component of effective governance systems can both enable poor to access housing as also be part of the planning, design and construction processes. Assuming this will lead to demand based intervention and integration with the mainstream city. The second component of livelihood and income generation , it assumes that housing for the poor is huge construction activity and has potential to trigger the local economy by providing jobs to many skilled and unskilled workers. Interestingly, only construction can be considered for this purpose as creation of any kind of wage employment under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is an inadmissible component. On the other hand livelihood should be considered along with relocating urban poor to developed lands as economic source is important to maintain living in the concrete houses ⁹.

The concept of relocating urban poor to a developed land has failed in several circumstances. The case of Navi Mumbai in India proves the point to a good extent. Navi Mumbai which was to cater to the housing needs of the urban poor in the city, constructed low income settlements in the heart of a main node of the city, in Vashi, in sector 2. It was found out in a socio-economic survey conducted by CIDCO (Cities and Industrial Development Corporation) the authoritative body for creating Navi Mumbai, in 1995-96 that most of the population living in the tenements do not belong to the Low Income Group (LIG) or Economically Weaker Section(EWS). Only 8.5 percent of the population residing in these structures belonged to the Lower income Group (LIG). It has been mentioned that the proportion of poor people residing in such housing is low because huge

market pressures have forced a quick sell off to higher income groups and a negative down filtering has occurred. The city of Navi Mumbai has also been the victim of negative filtering. The low income houses that were built for the urban poor were easily sold to the middle income group by the poor. The urban poor faced with the twin case of disadvantageous economic condition and comparatively high selling prices of the houses were forced to quit from the low income structures.

2. a. The failure of policy of housing in the case of Navi Mumbai

The development of Navi Mumbai is a vibrant example of satellite town development in India. To decongest Greater Bombay, the Bombay Metropolitan Regional Planning Board (BMRPB) in the early 1970s proposed a regional plan for the Bombay Metropolitan Regional. The plan proposed was development of a metro center, a twin city of Mumbai, to be named as New Bombay and to be build opposite the old city. Accordingly, the government allocated land opposite to Bombay island for development. This location seemed to be ideally suited because it was not too far away from Bombay and yet was separated from the main city by a stretch of water which is called the Thane creek. In March, 1971 CIDCO, the officially designated New Town Development Authority (NTDA), undertook to prepare a development plan for Navi Mumbai. In October 1973 a draft development plan was ready ¹⁰. . The draft plan was a critical document containing the planning foundations of Navi Mumbai. The project of Navi Mumbai was begun mostly to decongest the main city of Mumbai. Further, the project mentions development of the city as an independent satellite city and as a tertiary and commercial center (by shifting major tertiary and commercial sector offices from South Bombay to Navi Mumbai). Industrial growth in the trans-harbor region, which was already begun by MIDC (Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation) was also identified as important for the new city growth. Further, the 'Foreword of New Bombay': Draft Development Plan clearly states that the new city was to be built for the common man.

Table 2 Housing built by CIDCO and the private sector in Navi Mumbai:

Year	CIDCO	Percent	Private	Percent	Total
Up to 1980	6724	6	1121	1	7845
1981-1985	37670	31	5100	5	42770
1986-1990	19420	16	11525	11	30945
1991-1995	27817	23	16625	16	44442
1996-2000	17341	15	29577	29	46918
2001-2007	10488	9	38042	37	48530
Total	119460	100	101990	100	221450

Source : The official website of CIDCO

At the time when the New Bombay concept was taking shape, it was quite clear that the new twin city was planned to become a city in which every citizen rich or poor would be able to live. One of the main objectives of the project put forward by the state government stipulated that the new town was to reduce disparities in the amenities available to different sections of the population. Sometime later the words that were used in the forward of the NBDP (New Bombay Development Plan) also pointed towards a town that would be planned in such a way that it would benefit the common man and not just a small elitist section of the population. The NBDP (New Bombay Development Plan) stipulated that 'every family living in New Bombay shall have a dwelling of its own, however, small and that New Bombay 'will not be another grand city, it will be a city where the common man would like to live. However, post 1980s the housing stock of the city has been growing at a rapid pace with the entry of private builders. However, the latter has also inflated the cost of land and housing to such an alarming extent that even a middle class family finds it difficult to own a house in Navi Mumbai- a city which was to provide affordable housing to all. In fact, with the advent of private builders on the scene, CIDCO itself has turned into a speculator by charging exorbitantly for the land plots which in turn raises the house price. This has over time eroded the role of CIDCO (Cities and Industrial Development Corporation) as housing agency for the urban poor of the city ¹¹.

2.b. Land in Navi Mumbai

The Draft Development Plan of 1973 clearly states that Navi Mumbai should develop as a self-financing project as its growth cannot lead to the deviation of financial resources from other parts of the state or from other commitments of the government. Therefore, CIDCO the organization which was to create the new city of Navi Mumbai was provided with a very meagre amount of 5 crores to start its work ¹². The only resource given to it was land which would have to be developed and sold. Therefore, land was the only resource which CIDCO would have to develop to the extent of profitable pricing and selling to maintain its economic and financial stability and power. CIDCO was set up with the idea of generating infrastructural development for the new city on the basis of full cost recovery from the sale of developed land. Therefore, CIDCO's land pricing policy for Navi Mumbai has been based on factors such as rising value of developed land after mid-1980s, its own cost of developing the land and the most important the increasing pressures of the market after economic liberalization in 1991. Full cost recovery from land meant expenditure on land development including establishment and administration cost. Literature reflects that the pricing and sale of land of Navi Mumbai has been crucial in generating the housing crisis in the new city.

In 1979 through an official circular the chief administrative officer of CIDCO, directed that for each node being developed by CIDCO, the cost price would be updated from time to time by taking into account the various factors which would affect the total expenditure on development and area available for sale. This kind of cost price was treated as reserve price of the land. This reserve price has been worked out every year by taking into account the compounded value of past net expenditures yearwise and the discounted value of the future year wise estimated cost. The sum total of the two is divided by the available saleable area of land in a node to determine the reserve

price of land. These costs include those relating to on-site, off-site and city level infrastructure as well non-saleable social infrastructure. Later, this was modified to work out the present worth of future estimated expenditure and secondly, to add up the compounded value of all the net yearly past expenditures. From the point of recovery of sale of land this had an advantage that the project can never be loss making, instead it would be break-even. The entire cost of development thus was pushed to the buyers. In such circumstances the higher surpluses would be reinvested in newer nodes leading to more developed land and thus more surpluses would be generated. However, the other circumstance could be that high reserve price and therefore high price of land could be a deterrent factor to buyers and therefore could delay the development of further land. Further, if the reserve price is too high, offering land to low-income group at prices below the reserve price may also be unfordable for the group and the subsidy may be notional.

The price of land and houses for Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low Income group (LIG) had been subsidized from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. However, since the reserve prices have kept on increasing in the last three decades with the rising market prices, the impact of subsidies on affordability of housing of urban poor was negligible. Therefore, this affected the tenements built by CIDCO at subsidized rate. They also became expensive. Research points that during the period 1977-1996 the earnings of factory workers rose two fold while the land prices rose 37 fold.

2.c. Low income housing of Navi Mumbai

CIDCO's housing policy as stated in the Draft Development plan of 1973 mentioned that the new city would provide housing to all economic groups. However, data shows that in nodes like Vashi there has been an increase in the proportion of high income housing since 1987-88. There has been huge increase in high income housing in nodes of Belapur, Nerul. These differences in housing reflect the social character of the nodes as well. For example about 45 per cent of those living in Koparkharaine located near to Vashi were unskilled labourers. Only 26 per cent in Nerul and 18.5 per cent in Belapur were unskilled workers. However, data on the housing stock from 1989 to 2000 shows that there has been a continuing importance of lower income group housing instead of its fall from 53 per cent of CIDCO built housing to 49 per cent. Further, there has also been an increase in high income housing from 17 per cent to 23 per cent in 2000. It is important to point out that the contribution of the private sector to middle and upper income housing has significantly increased post 1995. The net result has been that the proportion of all forms of low-income housing including sites and services to total housing in Navi Mumbai nodes stood at 37 percent in 2000.

Table 3: Housing constructed by CIDCO for various income groups in Navi Mumbai till 2010

Year	EWS/LIG	Percent	MIG	Percent	HIG	Percent	Total
Upto 1980	4789	7.78	203	0.62	1732	6.12	6724
1981-85	15028	24.44	16379	50.42	6263	22.15	37670
1986-90	14601	23.74	2164	6.66	2655	9.39	19420
1991-95	13048	21.22	6516	20.05	8253	29.19	27817
1996-2000	6389	10.39	5290	16.28	5662	20.02	17341
2000-2010	7624	12.4	1931	5.94	3706	13.1	13261
Total	61479	100	32483	100	28271	100	122233

Source: Socio-economic survey 2010, published by CIDCO

Going by the total numbers of dwelling units built for the lower-income group and CIDCO's policy of subsidizing these units, it would appear that CIDCO was successful in its objective of giving priority to the low-income group and to the economically weaker group. However, from the numbers of housing built for the low income group it is difficult to conclude that the urban poor have access to proper living areas for themselves and that they actually reside in the urban tenements built for them. It has been mentioned that the proportion of poor people residing in such housing is low because huge market pressures have forced a quick sell off to higher income groups and a negative down filtering has occurred. However, many see it as upward mobility as having occurred among the poor. Many households categorized as Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low Income Group (LIG) by selling their tenements have improved their economic position. Therefore, sales of these type of tenements have not necessary been distress driven.

The price of the basic site and service structure designed for the urban poor which is the plinth of a room and a water closet was Rs 3597 in 1986 which rose to 12270 in 1995. Going by this data there was an increase in price of site and services structure by 79 per cent between 1986 and 1989. Between 1989 and 1995 there was a 90 per cent increase in the price of the basic site and services structure. For the nine year period from 1989-1995 the price rose 27 per cent a year. In the same nine year period the earnings of the factory workers rose by 1.4 per cent a year. This kind of rise in the most basic structure meant difficulty in terms of affordability in terms of purchase by the lower segment of the population. Further, much of the low cost housing though initially accessible to those working outside the organized sector of the economy could not be retained by them. This is because the rules and norms of entering and surviving in the formal housing market are not so easy for those living and earning outside the formal sector. The prices of sites and services have been such that the most eligible buyers had to take a housing loan and repay it in monthly installments. This assumes a regular job which many in the unorganized sector do not have. In 1986 when the site and services project in Airoli started it was noted that 57 per cent of her sample had been casual workers or self-employed but by 1988 a string buying out process was found in progress. Unsatisfactory location, pressure of the market forces and CIDCO's policies were cited

as reasons for the buying out process. In a later study by the same scholar(1998) proved that market pressures exemplified by the entry of numerous private builders since the late 1980's had in fact worsened the situation of affordability in the decade of 1990s. The main reason behind allowing private sector to enter the housing market was to improve quality and to increase the supply of housing.

CIDCO's early low cost housing units and site and services plots had been criticized for their poor quality and design of structure built without any consideration for privacy and space. The class bias in the architectural design of the early low income units was apparent as the housing designed for the middle and upper classes was sensitive to their needs. Further, it has been noted by CIDCO officials that some kind of monotony had entered due to repetition of design layouts and also the quality of housing did not keep up to the mark for lack of sufficient technical staff. A greater supply of housing was thus possible with construction going on by multiple private agencies. However, the impact was sharp increase in the expenditure of such kind of housing. Though CIDCO had indicated a cost limit of Rs 33000 for Low Income Group housing, actual tenders received were priced at 58000. As a result this fell under the Middle Income Group category. The factor of escalated cost was due to lack of awareness among the practicing architects, engineers and developers on non-conventional and cost reducing technologies. However, many see it as an inevitable outcome of private sector entering the housing industry.

The unplanned areas of Navi Mumbai

If one takes a panoramic view of the city of Navi Mumbai, one would witness that the urban poor do not live in high rise apartments or bungalows like the urban middle class and upper class of Navi Mumbai. There are specific kind of settlements which define the housing of urban poor and Low Income Group/Economically Weaker Section group in Navi Mumbai. Therefore, these settlements reflect their housing situation and adversities around which they exist and live in the city, in spite of actively taking part in the economic growth of the city. The first category of urban settlement of the urban poor in the city can be termed as the urban villages or the *gaonthan* areas. The urban villages of the city emerge from the point of selling of agricultural land by the farmers to the government for the purpose of development of the twin city of Mumbai. Interestingly, many of them retain their house in the old village settlement. These settlements and the areas are termed as *gaonthan* in the city. The money that the farmers receive from selling the land to the government for the purpose of development is used by them to build a mishmash building which is of inferior quality in terms of the material used and the aspects of ventilation or safety are hardly taken care of. This is evident in the case of Kotukbandh gaon of Kharghar in Navi Mumbai. The urban villages of Navi Mumbai typically are characterized as one room tenement with a small cooking place and shared common sanitary areas. These become housing of the service providers like painters, fitters working in the construction industry, auto drivers, bus drivers and so forth. Here the residents pay a rent of monthly rupees 2000 for a small room 13 . It is interesting to understand

that the village turns into a slum with the original residents of the village turning into slum lords providing housing to the new entrants to the city on a high rent basis. The second category of settlement of urban poor in the city is the semi permanent structures, termed as squatter settlement. They are a form of unauthorized settlements in the city. This is a kind of a structure that has been built by the residents over the years and over a period of 15 years. An example of this is the Turbhe stores settlement in Turbhe in Navi Mumbai. The structure has been termed as semi-permanent as the building has not been made of suitable building materials and roof is made of extremely inferior material which most of the time cannot support the vagaries of nature. The people residing in the structures are migrants who have been working in the city for more than 20 years. Although they have been living in the city in extremely difficult conditions, they somehow manage to arrange for some cash to build a semi-permanent structure. The residents of this area who have come new to the city and take a place on rent pay a rent of 2000 for a small room. However, due to their meager income and rising expenses of living in the city they are hardly able to upgrade the settlement and maintain them which renders such structures as vulnerable.

The third category of urban settlement of urban poor in the city is the temporary structures. They are termed as pavement dwellings which are mostly build on footpaths, along road pavements which is usually very close to the work place of the worker. An important example of this is the pavement dwelling in the Sanpada node of Navi Mumbai which is opposite to the Palm Beach road. The residents of the pavement dwellings work as construction workers in the construction projects of the area. Therefore, they are a group of seasonal migrants to the city and have landed to the city because of economic opportunity from construction work. This kind of staying arrangement in the city is completely temporary in nature. The structures resemble that of a tent and are made out of flimsy material. It is important to understand that such structures do not provide protection from vagaries of nature and from anti-social elements. There is no rent on these structures as the residents are new to the city. However, there are illicit payments that have to be paid to the local goons at times for continuing to survive and live in that particular space in the city. The amount varies from 500 to 1000. Further, living conditions in the pavement dwellings is worse than in the *gaonthan* areas and in the *chawls* . The area has severe infrastructural deficits with regard to basic services which are of daily need like water and washrooms. However, in spite of these categories of housing of urban poor in Navi Mumbai, not all urban poor have a roof over their head in the city or have a minimum structure to live, many are homeless in the city ¹⁴.

Although Navi Mumbai is a planned city, certain portions of it are covered by settlements and structures that have risen on their own that is without the planned intervention of the development authority ¹⁵ . These unplanned areas existing within the boundaries of Navi Mumbai and representing in many ways a different world. They constitute an unforeseen dynamic in the making of the new city and the processes that give rise to their existence lie at the root of the slowly evolving dualistic pattern that is coming to characterize the city. To CIDCO officials the making of Navi Mumbai has meant the creation of only the planned nodes and the connecting infrastructure. The making of the new city though has also resulted in the growth of unplanned areas, which are essentially slums and shanties and small clusters of temporary shelters near

construction sites. The villages because they pre-date the making of the city and because they originated and developed on their own are essentially regarded as a part of the unplanned areas. All the different types of unplanned areas and structures including the villages are linked to the planned nodes in various ways. The emergence of the new city has greatly depended on the urban villages as it is through the process of land acquisition of village lands that the new city has been created. Further, right now the urban villages in the new city have taken up the role of providing housing to the labour class. This is because the government policy has failed to provide housing to this class. Through the demand for different kinds of labour a hierarchy of unplanned settlement types reflecting the economic and political position of different segments of the labouring population has been created within the new city.

Conclusion

Therefore what one notices is that the labouring class works outside the framework of government policy for their housing. This is the case when the government is not able to provide housing to this class group. Therefore, the unplanned areas of Navi Mumbai are made up of a diversity of settlement types existing outside the officially planned nodes.

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Leftist Agitation in Nadia: 1947-1957

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Refugees and political discourse in West Bengal, has essentially been studied from the perspective of leftist politics. Prafulla K. Chakrabarti's seminal work pivots around how the refugee discontent regarding rehabilitation helped the Communists to ensure a strong foothold amongst the migrant mass and how it ultimately catapulted them to power. This article is an appraisal of the tremors that shook camp-life in Nadia in the early years, in the form of agitations centring on maladministration and corruption prevalent in the Government-run relief camps as also against the Government's rehabilitation policy and in doing so it brings to the fore the smaller players in the fray, namely, the splintered left groups who were not much visible in the Calcutta scenario. But at the district level, they nevertheless, played a significant role in moulding the political contours. It is the aim of this paper to highlight the modus operandi of these groups and to unravel whether their actions influenced the electoral outcome.

The refugee struggle in Nadia, was carried out at two levels- under the official banner of the left parties and through organisations, associations and individuals, which were often sympathisers of the left and in all cases definitely anti-Congress. It is sad that the camp-refugee struggle has largely been ignored in the existing historiography. In his seminal work on the refugee-left linkage, Prafulla Chakrabarti, focuses more on the left-spearheaded squatter movement in and around Calcutta, rather than on the happenings in locations not sharing borders with Calcutta. Carrying on from where Chakrabarti has left, Abhijit Dasgupta takes a sweeping view of the shifting nature of the political leaning of the refugees in West Bengal, over the years.¹ Electoral success of the leftists has been studied in great detail by Marcus Franda.² However, both his works emphasise the period from 1967, the year that saw the first anti-Congress Government being formed in West Bengal, the subsequent mid-term elections with the fall of the United Front Government in 1967, the return of the Congress to power, the fall of the Congress Government and the subsequent imposition of President's rule in West Bengal in the state. By ignoring the initial years, Franda overlooks the all-important fact that these early elections paved the way for leftist success in 1967. CPI emerged as the single-largest opposition party in the state after 1952 and increased its vote share in the subsequent elections. To fill in the absence of any area-specific study of refugee agitation away from Calcutta, the following narrative concentrates on agitations in the Government-run camps and Government-established colonies of Nadia. The article concludes in 1957 by seeking to answer the question as to whether the efforts bore fruit for the political parties in the general elections of 1951 and 1957 and the Assembly elections in early 1952 and 1957.

With the onset of post-Partition migration, Nadia witnessed a mammoth influx from across the border. To cope with the situation, the Government of West Bengal opened camps to accommodate the bonafide refugees. Nadia harbored the two largest refugee camps in the state- Dhubulia in the

Sadar Subdivision and Cooper's Camp in the Ranaghat Subdivision of the district. The latter was managed by the central Government. Dhubulia Camp was opened on 31 August, 1948, while the Cooper's Camp was opened on 10 March 1949. On 21 March 1950, the Government of India took charge of the Camp. It became the only centrally administered Camp in the state. However, the central government having failed to arrange for rehabilitation of the inmates, the camp reverted to state government control in 1951. These two camps were divided into several wards or 'Groups', each under a superintendent, who was chosen from among the inmates. The Commandant was placed at the top, for overall supervision. He was a government nominee.

Dhubulia was divided into 25 Groups. The area was originally an airfield with a wide runway and rows of barracks on either side of the runway, built during the Second World War. The camp was housed at the erstwhile Dhubulia aerodrome on the RanaghatBhagwangola line. The camp was divided into two segments. The western side was used for housing the Permanent Liabilities (P.L.) while the eastern part housed the families, deemed fit for rehabilitation in the future. The watchtower was used as the administrative office.

At the outset it should be made clear that the leftists at that juncture were a fragmented lot. The Congress Government banned the largest of the left parties, Communist Party of India (CPI), in March 1948. The order was lifted only in 1951 on the eve of the elections. There were several other small players in the scene, namely the Forward Bloc which in turn consisted of two splinter groups- the Forward Bloc (Ruikar) and Forward Bloc (Marxists), the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), the Socialist Republicans, the Subhasist Forward Bloc, the Socialist Party, the Bolshevik Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI).³

As has been pointed out earlier, Government's rehabilitation policy provided the main ground for struggle. In the agitators' psyche the term 'Government' was monolithic. No distinction was made between the state and the centre. Since the Congress was in power in both, the two, for them, became entwined and denoted a common position.

The first plank of agitation was the decision to stop doles to all able-bodied male immigrants, capable of earning their own living, from 13 December 1948. On 25 December a meeting of the local refugees was held at Bethuadahari Public Library Ground under the presidentship of BehariLalBiswas of Nakashipara attended by about 150 men.⁴ Several prominent locals of Nakashipara addressed the crowd criticizing the Government. The Officer-in charge of the Chakdah police station, expressed his apprehension:⁵

With the cessation of cash dole or dry dole more than 200 families are practically going on without any food since yesterday. There is growing discontent amongst the starving families which is gradually driving towards the climax. Complete hartal is being observed here by the refugees over this. Attempt to dissuade persons from taking their legitimate doles this day by the refugees who are not eligible by the Govt. order was made...Suptds .of different group camps are trying to pacify them by giving ration for the day as an emergency measure. But this cannot continue for long. I

apprehend that the situation may go out of control if the state of things goes in this way. Those who are getting doles will most probably join those who are not getting. There are different upstart political organisation-“Communist”, “Socialists”, etc. who are poking for trouble .

These ‘upstart political organisations’ lost no time in cashing in on the refugees’ ire. Although, the struggle was carried out under different party banners, Left strategy more or less followed the same pattern: meetings, processions, slogan shouting, petitions and hunger strikes.

A meeting was organised by the refugees of Chandmari and Goshala No. I camps on 20 December 1948 in the compound of the Kulia Temple in the Chandmari Development Area to devise ways and means to tackle the situation. Satyapriya Banarji of the Forward Bloc convened the meeting. About 500 refugees both male and female attended the meeting. They signalled a warning that if the present Ministry failed to redress their grievances then they would start agitation for the formation of a new Ministry. The air was rife with slogans, ‘Fight against the Government’, ‘Wreck the Congress Ministry and set up a new Ministry’, ‘Down with Congress Government’. ⁶ The party leaders convened another meeting on 25 January 1949 at Fanshitala, Nabadwip with Amrita Lal Chatterji from Calcutta in the chair. With around 400 people attending, the speakers spat venom on the Government for “not paying attention... to East Bengal people... now in great distress.” ⁷ The party succeeded in forming units at Chandmari Camp No. II and Goshala Camp No. I.

The RCPI took up the cudgels of struggle too. Buddheswar Das Roy, an RCPI sympathiser and three others, commenced Satyagraha in the Chandmari camp from 11 January 1949 by sitting in front of the camp office and dissuading the staff from entering. They submitted an ultimatum to the camp authorities for fulfilment of their demands. A small delegation left for Calcutta on the 13th to represent their grievances to the Ministers. The S.P. became anxious that, “Disappointment... likely to intensify movement.” ⁸ His premonition proved to be true as on 14th three more inmates joined the hunger strike taking the total number to six while the condition of the hunger striker, Buddheswar Das Roy started deteriorating. The S.D.O. of Ranaghat was deployed to keep a close watch on the situation. Finally, the district administration had to bow down and grant doles to all the refugees for two days on 18 January. An assurance was given that doles would be granted for another one week. ⁹ The R.C.P.I. in fact left no stone unturned to foment the anti-Government sentiment of the refugees. As the District Intelligence Office noted, one Arun Banarji, an R.C.P.I. member, frequently visited Goshala Refugee Camp to recruit members from amongst the younger section of the refugees, converting them into strong anti-Government critics. The Officer-in-Charge noted with concern, “Law and order... have been set at naught and complete chaos and disorder reigns in the Camp...” ¹⁰ The neighbouring police station of Santipur was not spared from R.C.P.I. onslaught either. At their instigation the East Bengal refugees of Phulia held a meeting under the presidentship of Radha Kanta Ray, (himself a migrant) in the first week of July. After the usual Congress-bashing the speakers exhorted the refugees to remain united and organised. From Ranaghat the R.C.P.I. spread its wings to the neighbouring police station of Santipur. On 18 June 1949 the R.C.P.I. leaders of Ranaghat called a meeting to condemn the Government for its laxity

with regard to relief and rehabilitation. Another meeting on similar lines was held at the same venue on 2 July.

The largest of the left parties, the CPI, consolidated its hold over the refugees of Goshala and Chandmari Camps where 80% of the inmates came to be supporters of the party, by the first half of 1949. Ratikanta Banarji of the CPI regularly started visiting Goshala and Chandmari camps regularly from the end of 1949, requesting them to recruit new members and liberally distributed Communist literature amongst the refugees for the said purpose. The Rehabilitation Department noted with concern the increasing circulation of Communist literature and leaflets within the camps. Six inmates of Goshala Camp were identified by the Intelligence Bureau to be actively involved with the Communist Party.¹¹ One of the hallmarks of the party was the active participation of women inmates, right from the beginning. They envisaged a militant path to take on the Government. Laksmi Datta, a refugee of the Goshala Camp attended a secret meeting of the Party in Beliaghata Camp in Calcutta and came back with the news that the party was planning to launch a Direct Action against the Government from 8 April in case dry doles were withdrawn. Kali Ghosh, a prominent leader of the party was deputed to organise the youths of Chandmari and Goshala Camps to cause sabotage at the Kanchrapara Railway workshop and remove fishplates from the railway lines. Gopal Sarkar of Chandmari Camp and Biswanath Das Ray of Goshala Camp were nominated the custodian of party arms and ammunitions in their respective camps.

The smaller players amongst the left factions, too, did not lag behind in attempting to spread their influence in the camps. Socialist Party President Sarat Chandra Basu's emissary Baidyanath Ghosh, himself a resident of Beliaghata Camp, Calcutta, visited Goshala Refugee Camp to "organise refugees in different camps... for launching movement against the Government in case their demands were not fulfilled."¹² The aim of the party was to organise militant groups with the youths who were trained in dagger play and other weapons at the Goshala Camp. By early 1949 the party was successful in establishing its unchallenged authority over the Haringhata Refugee Camp.

The Government's decision to close down all camps except the P.L. Camps by 31 October 1949 provided further impetus to refugee agitation. Three refugees from Dhubulia Camp, including a woman resorted to hunger strike from 20 May. To give more visibility to their demands, a gathering of about 300 refugees held up two trains at Dhubulia Railway Station. To prevent the situation from spiraling out of control, the DM and the SP had to rush to the spot. The issue was resolved when it was decided to advance money to able-bodied male inmates and to deduct the money subsequently from their salary. On 26 May around 200 refugees from the Dhubulia Camp traveled to Calcutta shouting anti-Government slogans.

For the purpose of rehabilitation, it was decided to segregate the able-bodied male refugees and their families, deemed fit for rehabilitation and the permanent liability. Commotion broke out in Dhubulia over this proposal to shift the able-bodied families to an adjacent new Camp, while only the P.L. would be accommodated in the old Camp. The Government logic was that as the new

camp was larger in size than the old one, the refugees would be able to live in better conditions, till their resettlement. Around 300 families were served notices to shift to the new camp by 15 July. The alarmed refugees started holding secret meetings at the camp and decided to ignore the order. At the instigation of Chandra Kumar Sarkar, Nishi Kanta Singh and Satyendra Kumar Chaudhuri, the refugees of the Camp organised processions and paraded around the premises shouting slogans. The Government noted with concern, ‘No sign of compliance was visible till the evening of that date (15 July).’¹³ Doles and rations were stopped as punishment for disobedience of Government order. It was rumoured that so long this order of shifting was not withdrawn they would remain adamant and might resort to hunger strike. The rumour proved to be true, when five inmates of Dhubulia Camp sat on a hunger-strike under the banner of *UdbastuEkakParibarbhukto O ParibarbargaSamiti* (Association of Single-Unit and Multi-Unit Families). One of the founding members, HaridasChakrabarty recalls, “We were not affiliated to any political organization. We worked independently.”¹⁴

A meeting was held in Krishnagar on 22 July under the presidentship of JanakiNathSanyal. Amongst the speakers, the President of *JelaBastuharaJanakalyanSamiti* and prominent R.C.P.I. leader, PurnanandaDasgupta, demanded an immediate solution to the refugee problem. In a spontaneous show of solidarity, the refugees of Dhubulia Camp, in a gathering on 30 July, decided to file a suit against the Government decision to stop doles. A committee of 21 members was formed at a meeting held at Satyanarayan Colony in Santipur whose main aim was to find ways and means to combat the Government's ‘unjustified move’. Meanwhile, as HaridasChakrabarty recollects, the hunger strike entered its fifth day. The Relief Officer, Refugee Relief Camps visited Dhubulia on 31 July and asked the selected refugees to move to the new camp. He passed an order for the supply of doles for one week. On 7 August camp authorities declared that those who were willing to go to the new transit camp would receive doles for another week. Such a measure found favour with the refugees who started to move out.¹⁵ A secret group, *ParikalpanaParishad*, an anti-Congress organisation, was formed in early October in Goshala Camp No. II, at the instance of Sudhir Das and KhagenMukherji. The object of the group was to organise the refugees of Chandmari, Goshala Nos. I and II under its banner and to keep handy a batch of inmates ready to take resort to violent activities in case of stoppage of amenities from 31 October. Two inmates of Dhubulia Camp, Sudhir Chandra Bhattacharya and BasudevRoychoudhury, were served with externment orders from Nadia on 4 September to prevent them from indulging in ‘subversive acts’. In another meeting convened by JibanGhose of the Chandmari refugee Camp on 9 July, attended by 200 inmates, the convener urged the refugees not to fear the bullets of the police but to organise themselves to launch an agitation to topple the present Government.

Under the presidentship of MonmohanGhosh, a CPI sympathiser, a meeting was held on 7 August 1949 in Chandmari Camp attended by nearly 300 evacuees from Camp No. III. Resolutions passed at the meeting included urging the Government not to stop relief without proper rehabilitation of the refugees, distribution of four cottahs of land to each refugee free of cost, a one-time payment of Rs 1500/- to each family consisting of five members and free supply of house building materials. For betterment of their present condition they demanded the quantity of kerosene oil and coal be

increased and the nefarious practice of diluting milk with water be stopped.¹⁶ A meeting of the *PurbaBangaBastuharaSamiti* was held at Ranaghat on 26 June presided over by Mani Mohan Mukherji, a refugee but now a teacher of a local school at Ranaghat. In a gathering of about 200 migrants the speakers used harsh words against the Government's decision to close down the camps.

The Gayeshpur fiasco proved to be the explosive point in this phase of refugee agitation. The Government decided to resettle the refugees of Goshala Camp No. I and II, in Gayeshpur by setting up a township and allotting four cottahs of land. The proposal incurred the wrath of the camp inmates since they refused to accept the differential treatment meted out to them. The discrepancy in land allotment between the resettlers of Ashoknagar-Kalyangarh Colony and the Gayeshpur Colony was the main bone of contention. The leaders incited the inmates through meetings and demonstrations not to accept rehabilitation at Gayeshpur. The refugees refused to budge while the Government maintained that since there was a shortage of land with thousands still awaiting rehabilitation, it was impossible to increase the share of land. The residents refused to buy this logic. R.C.P.I. jumped on the bandwagon. It deputed ArunBanarji to Goshala and Chandmari camps to instigate the refugees "not to submit to the Government's move for settling them at Gayeshpur."¹⁷ R.C.P.I. supremos from Calcutta, SaumendraNath Tagore and PurnanandaDasgupta visited Chandmari Camp on 27 December and held a meeting in the compound of local school. About 1000 refugees attended the meeting. R.C.P.I. leaders from neighbouringSantipur, too, attended the gathering.

While this tug of war continued between the two warring parties, the inmates from Burdwan were allotted land in the same area, which further complicated the situation since the feeling of 'outsiders infringing on our lands' fanned the fire. On the evening of 5 January 1950 some 3000 refugees assembled before the quarter of the Commandant with the demand to continue the supply of doles that had been stopped from 1 January. The Commandant had to bow down and was forced to grant rations for three and a half days. He was also forced to write a letter to the Government according to the agitators' dictation. On the evening of 5 January, a meeting was convened in the primary school within Camp No. III of the Chandmari Refugee Camp, which the representatives of various left factions namely R.C.P.I. and C.P.I. attended. The R.C.P.I party's President, SaumendraNath Tagore, addressed the gathering of about 5000 inmates of various camps like Goshala and Dhubulia. Among other things he demanded free rations for three months and urged the refugees not to leave the camp, for Gayeshpur until provision was made for water supply, privy, electricity, hospitals and schools. The speakers indicated that they would start a movement soon if their demands were not conceded and that Tagore would meet the Premier as also the Relief Commissioner for a solution of the matter. The speakers warned the Government of dire consequences as the refugees would initiate a combined struggle to topple the Government, in case their demands were not met. The following day, the Circle Inspector reported that the residents of Chandmari Camp were holding secret meetings to organise themselves and dissuading the willing parties from not moving to Gayeshpur.¹⁸ A settlement was finally reached at. The leaders accepted the Government logic of being unable to increase the quota of individual share. But at the same

time they extracted the promise from the Government to provide certain additional facilities. In general the Government provided for one tube well for thirty families while the settlers themselves arranged for sanitary toilets. But in case of Gayeshpur, to compensate for the loss of land the Government accepted the demand to construct one sanitary toilet for every ten families. The refugees finally started moving from 11 January. The Intelligence Branch reported on 15 January, "The situation in Chandmari Camp is peaceful." 19 The pace of dispersal was slow but that was due to want of sufficient transport and not due to any internal disturbances.

The next big issue, on which the agitators capitalized, was the tragic death of a refugee youth in Dhubulia Camp in September 1950. In between, the agitations continued as usual mainly in the form of protests against the Government decision to rehabilitate the refugees against their wishes and to deport them outside the state with a view to closing the camps, and stopping of doles as punishment. Miserable living conditions in the camps were another vital issue of protest. On 1 June about 1000 residents of the Chandmari Camp surrounded the office of the Commandant and demanded payment of doles. The situation could be brought under control only after the arrival of the police.²⁰

Another leftist faction, the RSP, so long absent from the scene, now made its presence felt. Its leaders from Calcutta started visiting Chandmari Camp from the middle of June 1950, distributing leaflets among the refugees and urging for the formation of Panchayets of their own to fight the Government. They succeeded in forming units at Chandmari Camp No. III and Goshala Camp No. II.

The older players continued their propaganda. Three refugees of Payradanga Camp sat on a hunger strike from 8 July as a mark of protest against the non-receipt of doles. Their other demand was allotment of plots of land, abandoned by the Muslims, in the vicinity. Although the majority of the inmates were cultivators by profession in their erstwhile homeland, the Government had allocated these plots to 'outsiders', i.e. non-residents of the Camp. On top of that, the district administration arranged for the rehabilitation of the Camp residents to 'far-off' Karimpur. In support of the hunger strikers, about 80 refugees, including some women, marched from Payradanga to Ranaghat on 13 July to place their demands before the S.D.O. The local supporters of the R.C.P.I. and the C.P.I. accompanied them carrying their respective party flags. The hunger strike was called off on 17 July at the initiative of the C.P.I.

Amongst the two, R.C.P.I. emerged as the principal player at this stage. Prabhat Mukherjee and Amalendu Neogi, both residents of Chandmari Camp, organised members of the Camp around the R.C.P.I. ideology. The R.C.P.I. District Committee issued a Bengali leaflet captioned, "To the naked and famished evacuees of Nadia district", condemning the Government for the suffering of the refugees. Agitations were organised at Chandmari and Kanchrapara against the corruption, high-handedness and the allegedly farcical rehabilitation schemes of the Government. Another R.C.P.I. bigwig Himangshu Dasgupta started organizing women refugees of the Chandmari Camp by forming a study circle with 'intelligent' women refugees to indoctrinate them with the party

ideology. The party formed the *Bangiya Dal SebaSangathan* in the Chandmari Camp for the purpose of recruiting women into its fold.

Their efforts bore fruit, as by mid-1950 the party was successful in establishing a unit at Chandmari Camp and two units at Gayeshpur Refugee Colony. The IB noted with concern, "This party is reported to be wielding the greatest influence. As a camouflage the R.C.P.I. members amongst the refugees have enlisted themselves as Congress members and captured the Panchayet." ²¹

Alarmed at the growing unrest fomented by R.C.P.I, the Government served externment orders on the major R.C.P.I. activists of the area. Biswanath Das Ray, Tapan Gupta and Kalipada Biswas of Chandmari Camp were served with externment orders on 8 July while Prabhat Mukherjee, the most notable of the R.C.P.I. leaders of the Chandmari-Gayeshpur-Goshala area was externed on 17 August for his anti-Government activities. These sparked off widespread protests among the R.C.P.I. followers. A series of meetings took place, the main features being the usual anti-Government and anti-Congress bashing. Resolutions were passed for the immediate withdrawal of the order. A meeting of the refugees was held on 18 August at Kanchrapara Gole Bazar Colony under the auspices of the *Bastuhara Jana Hitaishi Samiti* to protest against the externment order. The President, Nagendra Nath Mazumdar, and the other speakers spat venom against the Government's high-handedness. Tension subsided to some extent when Prabhat Mukherjee complied with the order by shifting base to Kanchrapara, in the neighbourhood of Chandmari Camp and Gayeshpur Colony. From there he kept in constant touch with the refugees of the area and organized meetings and protest demonstrations. Mukherji organised two Samitis named *Udbastu Gana Mangal Samiti* and *Bastuhara Jana Hitoishi Samiti* to carry out his struggle. The latter held a meeting at Kanchrapara Gole Bazar Colony to protest against the externment. The Samitis also issued pamphlets entitled, 'Udbastu Gana Mangal Samiti Sabhapati Srijukta Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyer Mahasahaeruporhoiteabilambeybahishkaradeshpratyaharkartey hobey'. ²² On 2 August at Chandmari Camp a meeting was held under the presidentship of Suresh Mukherji of the Gayeshpur Colony to criticize the externment of prominent leaders who took initiative in "weeding out corruption and high handedness of the Camp Commandant." ²³ In another meeting held on 9 August and presided over by Jiban Ghose of Gayeshpur Colony at Group No. I of Chandmari Camp, he assured the refugees not to lose heart over such orders since "there are several refugees who would be able to represent them (the externed leaders)." ²⁴

To unite the disparate groups and parties in Dhubulia at this critical juncture, *Dhubulia Bastuhara Kendriya Samiti* was formed in mid-September with Suresh Chakrabarti as the Chairman. The Samiti consisted of two representatives of each of the 24 groups of the Camp. The refugees decided to express their dissatisfaction by taking out processions, stopping trains and commencing hunger strike. The Government identified five inmates as ringleaders. ²⁵ Of these Nishi Kanta Singh and Kanai Lal Dey sat on hunger strike from 20 May. The leaders held several meetings whereupon they impressed upon the refugees to be united. Processions were also taken out. Local shopkeepers shut down their shutters for two consecutive days on 20 and 21 May, in solidarity with the Camp inmates. On 21 May, a gang of 300-400

refugees at Dhubulia Station held up three trains. Top district officials rushed to the spot and held meetings with the agitators. The DM suggested the alternate method of giving help to able-bodied refugees by way of giving them money as wages for doing physical works. The leaders appeared satisfied and the hunger strike was withdrawn. Although on surface the situation appeared to be peaceful, the Officer-in Charge of Kotwali police station interpreted it as the lull before storm, “I apprehend breach of peace at any moment.”²⁶

The refugees of Chandmari Camp organised a meeting on 2 August at Group No. II. The gathering numbered around 300. The main grievance aired at the meeting hinged on the commandant's failure to comply with the Government's decision to rehabilitate the refugees to nearby Chakdah. Around 429 families of the said camp had been shortlisted for rehabilitation. As such their doles were stopped as per Government directive. But due to the negligence of the Commandant the order was not carried out

Government's decision to celebrate Independence Day on 15 August in a bid to forge unity did not find favour with the refugees of Gayeshpur Colony. They held a protest rally on the same day egged on by Suresh Mukherjee, a refugee and a resident of the Camp. About 400 people attended. The speakers condemned the celebration of Independence Day-a false independence- when they should be concentrating on the plight of the hapless souls. It was resolved to petition the Government to distribute fallow lands within the state, failing which the refugees themselves would forcibly cultivate the lands. Protests were also registered against the externment orders against some prominent leaders. After the meeting was over a procession was taken out at the instance of PrabhatMukherji, which paraded the main thoroughfare shouting the usual anti Government slogans²⁷

The Left-led refugee struggle reached a crescendo in September 1950 with the tragic death of a refugee youth, Anukul Brahma, in Dhubulia Camp on 19 September 1950. The incident owed its genesis to the outbreak of cholera in eight wards of Dhubulia. Between early June and July 1950 the number of deaths was 685.²⁸ To protest against the unhealthy living conditions, a meeting was convened in the camp on 19 September 1950. The administration lost no time in clamping 144 Cr. P.C. and declaring the meeting illegal. Defying the order, the refugees went ahead with the meeting. Four were arrested. News spread like wildfire and in no time a thousand strong mob gathered outside the Camp Commandant's office demanding the release of the arrested men. Two more were arrested, which further complicated the situation. As per Government report one of the two constables was surrounded by the mob, “trying to snatch away his rifle, and in this scuffle a round went off killing a refugee and injuring another.”²⁹ The deceased was identified as Anukul Brahma. There was an injury on his left wrist and a gaping wound about 5 inches across his belly through which his intestine came out. He expired as a result of the injury. The refugees maintained that the Commandant took a kukri from one of the Nepali guards and inflicted the wound on the chest and belly of the deceased and snatched away a rifle from a policeman and fired a shot causing the injury on the left wrist.

There was great furor in the Parliament also. After a preliminary enquiry, the Government tabled a report in the House, which stated: ³⁰

Brahma had sustained a gun-shot injury on the dorsal aspect of his left palm, the bullet having grazed across his dorsum. It was also discovered that he had sustained an injury on his left chin... which had penetrated into his thorax tearing through his lungs, spleen, diaphragm and even touching the liver... As to how the second injury which was mainly responsible for the death had been caused, no definite conclusion has so far been possible. The matter is under police investigation.

None of the factions lost time in condemning the sad incident. To keep the situation from spiraling out of control the Government lost no time in promulgating Section 144 Cr. P.C. Amongst the left parties, Forward Bloc emerged as the most vocal. On 21 September leading Forward Bloc leaders Anil Ray and Leela Ray visited the Camp to hold a meeting, protesting against the death and “to enlist the sympathy of the refugees and thereby to capture the field after starting an agitation over the incident. ³¹ Although the proposed meeting could not be held due to the said order, the two leaders visited Camp Nos. VIII and XVIII and recorded the statement of some of the eyewitnesses and left instructions with Suresh Chandra Chakrabarti and Satya Saran Majumdar, inmates

and Forward Bloc members, to hold a meeting, once the order was lifted, in order to impress on the refugees to unite against the high-handedness of the Government. Accordingly, a meeting was held on the evening on 22 September. Forward Bloc leaders from neighbouring Bethuadahari attended the gathering of around 500 inmates. Party leader Jyotish Joardar addressed a gathering of about 125 inmates of Payradanga Refugee Colony, condemning the incident. It was resolved to observe strikes in the huts and bazaars adjacent to the Camp as a mark of protest.

On the same day a secret meeting attended by Tapan Gupta and Biswanath Das R was held in the house of Arun Banarji of Chandmari Camp, where it was decided to protest against the Dhubulia incident by holding an open meeting on 24 September in Chandmari. Posters written by Buddheswar Das Ray, condemning the Dhubulia incident, were pasted on the walls of Camp No. I of Chandmari Camp and Gayeshpur Colony. Accordingly, on 24 September, a meeting of about 250 refugees was held in the Chandmari Camp. The speakers included the local R.C.P.I. bigwigs who protested against the alleged atrocities of the Dhubulia Camp Commandant and characterized both Nehru and Patel as ‘goondas’ and the Congress Government as the ‘goonda raj’. On 26 September a secret meeting was held in the house of the CPI leader Sitangshu Mukherji where Ambica Chakrabarti urged the refugees to overthrow the present Government. On 28 September another meeting was held at Gayeshpur with the externed R.C.P.I. leader Prabhat Mukherji in the chair. About 150 people attended. The Government noted with concern: ³²

The attitude of the refugees of the Dhubulia Camp towards the Commandant and some group Superintendents who are said to be favourite of the Commandant is ... very furious. Some refugees

of the Camp attacked on 20 th September afternoon two of these group Superintendents, assaulted one of them and robbed him of his purse, fountain pen, etc.

In fact the firing brought the disparate left groups together in a rare show of unity. On 30 September a meeting was convened by United Central Refugee Council (UCRC) at Krishnagar Town Hall. ³³ It was attended by leading men of all the left parties working amongst the refugees in the district: AmbicaChakrabarti and SitangshuBanarji of CPI, JibanLalChatterji and SatyaPriyaBanarji of Forward Bloc, Moked Ali of R.C.P.I, Anil Kumar Mitra of R.S.P.I, Chandra KantaSarkar of S.P.I. All of them unequivocally criticized the 'atrocities' of the Commandant. The resolutions moved in the meeting included the demand for the removal of the Commandant and setting up of an enquiry committee composed of non-officials and a deputation to the Premier of the state. What was more significant was that they all stressed the necessity of left consolidation to overthrow the Congress Government and adopted a resolution to that effect.

Complete hartal was observed at the Dhubulia Camp on 1 October. A condolence meeting was held on that evening, attended by around 5000 refugees. Resolutions were adopted to collect funds for erecting a memorial, an impartial enquiry by DrRadhabinode Pal and punishment for the Commandant. PurusottamdasTandon, President All India Congress Committee visited Chandmari Camp on 2 October immediately after the Dhubulia firing. Tempers were already high and a black flag demonstration was organised by the refugees under the leadership of a few residents of Gayeshpur Colony. When Tandon arrived at the Camp he was 'greeted' with anti-Congress slogans. Two meetings of the refugees of Camp Nos. IX and X were held on 3 and 4 October under the presidentship of DurgadasBhadra and SasankaSekharMajumdar. At the latter meeting, a Refugee Committee was formed with RathindraNathBhattacharji Kali PrasannaBagchi and five others as members to look after the welfare of the refugees.

To diffuse the tension prevalent in the area, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, Government of West Bengal, Hiranmoy Banerjee visited Dhubulia Camp. He met the family of the deceased and expressed his heartfelt condolences at the unfortunate incident. He conducted a detailed enquiry; whereupon it was found that the youth was killed when during the scuffle the bayonet attached to the .303 rifle of one of the constables hit him on the stomach accidentally. The rifle, along with the bayonet was sent for forensic tests, which found human blood. Hence the Commandant was exonerated. However, an enquiry conducted by the Inspector, Intelligence Bureau revealed the unpopularity and highhandedness of Commandant Mukherjee: ³⁴

Sri B.M. Mukherjee, the Commandant, became extremely unpopular among the refugees for his rough dealings with them. The refugees alleged that he often called a number of refugees in his office room insulted assaulted and put them to various sorts of humiliation on the slightest pretext... From what I have seen and heard I am convinced that there is no chance of stopping recurrence of similar incident unless the commdt. & his staff be replaced forthwith. Complying with the Report, the Commandant was summarily removed and replaced by Sri JitendranathKushari. Tension over the issue subsided for the moment.

However, issues for agitations were not lacking. From October onwards Government of India decided to concentrate on rehabilitation of the camp inmates with a view to close down camps by April 1951. For this, the refugees would be first moved to transit camps and subsequently to the site of rehabilitation within or outside the state. Non-compliance would entail the stoppage of doles. Understandably the decision did not find favour with the concerned parties and set in motion another cycle of protest. The main demand was that the refugees should be consulted regarding the site of rehabilitation and only after their approval should they be removed from the camps. Dismissing the Government scheme, the refugees decided to formulate their own 'scheme of rehabilitation'. Two secret meetings were held at Gayeshpur Colony in the houses of Suresh Chandra Mukharji and Biswanath Das Ray on 22 and 23 October under the leadership of the former. The refugees were urged to occupy the fallow lands acquired by the Government for building up a township. Prominent R.C.P.I. leaders masterminded the forcible occupation of around 175 bighas of Government acquired land, situated in front of plots of 1009 and 1020 of Gayeshpur Colony, for distribution amongst 350 families at the rate of 10 cottahs each.³⁵

Amongst the left parties, the Forward Bloc emerged as the front-runner at this stage. Under the leadership of Arabinda Basu a huge meeting of about 1000 refugees, was held on 1 November at Dhubulia playground. Demands were made to rehabilitate the refugees in the fallow lands of West Bengal and to allot each inmate 2-3 bighas of land. Satya Saran Majumdar of Forward Bloc organised a massive gathering of 10,000 people on 9 December inciting the refugees of Dhubulia Camp to loot Government Store in case of stoppage of doles. The next day he assembled his followers and threatened the superintendents of Camp. Nos. VIII, IX and XVI with assault, if they failed to supply doles to the refugees. Majumdar founded an organisation named *Kendriya Bastuhara Juba Sangha* which had its office in Camp No. VII. Although the professed aim of the Sangha was to do philanthropic work among the refugees the Government suspected this Forward Bloc leader to be involved in poisoning the minds of the inmates against the Government. The apprehension was vindicated when on 11 November under the instigation of the Sangha, the refugees demanded prior information regarding their destination and sufficient fund to meet the expenses for food and other necessities for at least six months. Influenced by Majumdar, the inmates of Dhubulia Transit Camp, (where the able-bodied male refugees together with their families were shifted prior to their rehabilitation) bullied the Camp staffs and the Commandant, under pressure, agreed to restore the doles. Majumdar organised a meeting of about 1000 refugees where he delivered fiery speeches regarding the plight of refugees who were transferred to the transit camps.

In spite of the externment of some of its top local leaders, the R.C.P.I. carried on its usual propaganda. The party president, Saumendra Tagore visited Krishnagar and addressed a public meeting at the Town Hall on the afternoon of 19 November. It was followed by a procession of 500-600 people who marched on to the DM's office. Externed leader Prabhat Mukherjee still exerted a kind of remote control. Throughout December, meetings were organised at Gayeshpur Colony, under his instigation, protesting against the Government order. In one such meeting held, on 28 November, attended by 500 people prominent refugee leaders like Arun Banarji, Biswanath

Das Ray demanded that the refugees be given free rations, fallow lands and bullocks; they also demanded that mills and factories should be started in the colonies to solve the unemployment problem. Arun Banarji went a step further by advising the refugees to collect paddy forcibly from the houses of rich men, Government godowns and the fields of Marwaris.³⁶ To translate this into action Biswanath Das Ray and Amalendu Neogi founded an association *Kanchrapara Agrani Sangha* which forcibly occupied Government-requisitioned lands. In fact the R.C.P.I. was successful in establishing full control over the Chandmari Camp.

Emboldened by their success the R.C.P.I. decided to shift its venue to new locations like the Majherchar Colony in Chakdah and Nasra Camp in Ranaghat. In the former, a meeting was presided over by Purnananda Dasgupta, the Secretary of West Bengal Provincial R.C.P.I. Around 350 people attended. The speakers included the top local leaders like Biswanath Das Ray and Kanai Pal. The refugees were asked to unite under the R.C.P.I banner to redress their grievances.

On 16 December Tapan Gupta and Buddheswar Das Ray visited the Nasra Camp and held meetings with the refugees. Paresh Nath Mukharji and Dakshina Ray of the said camp were entrusted with the task of spreading the R.C.P.I. ideology among the residents. Local leaders from Ranaghat, too, frequently visited the Camp.

There was a proliferation of pro-left committees and societies in this belt. Local unit of the Communist Party formed the *South Krishnagar Bastuhara Committee* to organise the refugees. Sudhir Kumar Biswas of Sambhu Nagar founded an association, “so as to... agitate in the light of the local situation in the district.”³⁷ Another district committee that came up during this period was *United Bastuhara Parishad* with Radha Kanta Ray of R.C.P.I. as the President.

Surprisingly, the second largest Camp of the state – Cooper's Camp remained more or less immune from political unrest. Although the Camp, too, had its share of problems, resistance under any political banner was remarkably missing, “There is no political party working amongst them (refugees). The refugees of this Camp are not affiliated with any refugee organisation.”³⁸ Individual efforts by the refugees continued. Misbehaviour and corruption of the Camp Commandant, together with sub-human living condition, rocked Cooper's Camp also. The enraged refugees found in Santosh Pal of erstwhile Noakhali an able leader to lead their propaganda.

Decision to cartload the refugees outside the state to Amardah in Orissa led to spontaneous demonstration by the inmates of Cooper's Camp. Notices were served on 10 September at 13.00 hours and they were expected to leave the Camp in the evening. The inmates prayed for time, which was refused by the administration. Moreover the Camp Commandant abused them and threw their belongings out of the Camp. Some refugees were roughly handled and assaulted. Situation was further complicated by the corruption of the camp authority. About 1400 refugees of the camp, destined to be rehabilitated in Orissa, were entitled to cash doles and rations for a week in advance. But the camp administration supplied them rations in lesser quantity and no cash

doles, although their signatures or thumb impression were taken as proof of payment. A deputation was send to the DM for necessary action. On 11 September 1950, under the instigation of HiralalBanarji and DharendraNathBanarji, the inmates obstructed the car of the Honourable Rehabilitation Minister, Ajit Prasad Jain, during his visit to the Camp. The

protesters shouted slogans against the decision to dispatch the refugees outside the state. The police had to intervene and finally 30 families could be persuaded to leave for Orissa. The CPI, seeing a golden opportunity, tried to capitalize on the situation by distributing leaflets among the refugees, 'Oh brothers and sisters of East Bengal, organise yourselves for resistance instead of rehabilitation.
39

The Congress party did not remain a mute spectator to this growing anti-Government feeling. The party, too, on its behalf organised meetings to explain the ulterior motive of the left and to counter the left propaganda. On 24 January 1949 a meeting of the refugees was held at Bethuahari under the presidentship of TarakdasBanarji, President of the Nadia unit of the Congress Party. In another meeting held on 5 February, the same leader criticized the Socialist Party for preaching against the prevalent policy of the Government and explained why it was necessary. The refugees of Chandmari Camp called a meeting in the camp on 31 May 1949, presided over by AtulyaGhosh, Secretary of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. Under the aegis of the Congress Sevalal, a meeting was held on 15 November at the Chandmari Refugee Camp with Narayan Chandra Basu in the chair. About 200 refugees attended. Members of the Sevalal addressed the meeting, "urging the refugees not to be misguided by so-called leaders of the Leftist Groups who were out to exploit them for their own ends." ⁴⁰ On 2 September, under the banner of the Dhubulia Karma Sansad, a meeting was held at Dhubulia attended by, among others, Hemanta Kumar Basu, Congress MLA, who requested the refugees, "not to listen to any designing political leaders who shed crocodile tears for the refugees to secure votes." ⁴¹ In another meeting, held on 2 September, on the western side of the Dhubulia station, attended by about 4000 people, Basu explained to the gathering, "The refugee problem is a very complicated one and it cannot be settled in a day or two." ⁴² He instructed them not to do anything unconstitutional. He warned them about the influence of 'bad people' in the refugee camps, who are likely to do mischief "... to further their own interest." ⁴³ Under the presidentship of Congress leader Bikash Roy, a meeting of the refugees was held at Hanskhali on 3 September 1950 where he, too, impressed upon the refugees not to be swayed by left ideas. But such efforts were not pursued as vigorously as the left parties.

Hence the question that needs to be answered at this juncture is: Did this pro-left sentiment in this predominantly refugee belt get translated into voting at the ballot box? The first Lok Sabha elections were held in 1951 followed by the Assembly elections in early 1952. An analysis of the left performance in the district would help to answer the question.

The left camp remained a fractured lot. The CPI tried to unite all the left parties for a joint anti-Congress front. The party passed a resolution at a public meeting in Calcutta in early 1951, affirming that it would do everything in its power to unite all the left factions. With a view to this

end, in October, the CPI arrived at a sort of understanding with some other left parties. However questions of ideology and strategy came in the way of a united front and ultimately the left camp was polarized into two groups. The parties assembled under two umbrellas-United Socialist Organisation of India (USOI), comprising of the CPI, the Forward Bloc and the Socialist Republican on one hand and the People's United Socialist Front (PUSF) consisting of Subhasist Forward Bloc, the Socialist Party and the RCPI on the other.

In the first Lok Sabha, West Bengal's share in the Parliament of 401 seats was 25. ⁴⁴ The state recorded a polling of 40.49%. ⁴⁵ Nadia had two Lok Sabha seats- Nabadwip and Santipur. In both these seats Congress candidates, Lakshmi Kanta Maitra and Arun Chandra Guha won comfortably. ⁴⁶

Nadia had nine Assembly seats in the Legislature of 187 seats- Karimpur, Tehatta, Ranaghat, Kaliaganj, Chapra, Santipur, Krishnagar, Nabadwip and Nakasipara. ⁴⁷ The total number of electors entitled to vote was 17628239 out of which 7443903 or 42.23% exercised their franchise. ⁴⁸ The CPI contested in 86 seats winning in 28 of them and polling a total of 10.76% of the votes. ⁴⁹ The Forward Bloc (Marxist), won 11 out of the 48 seats they contested, accounting for 5.29% of the votes. The other splinter group of the Party, the Ruikar Group, could manage a paltry 2 out of 32 seats that they contested, polling a dismal 1.25% of the votes. RSP, SP and RCPI failed to win a single seat. The former put up 16 candidates out of whom 10 had to forfeit their deposits. SP candidates contested in 63 seats, forfeiting deposits in 51 of them, while RCPI had 10 candidates in the fray out of which 8 had to part with their deposits. ⁵⁰

In Nadia, Congress won 8 out of the nine seats whereas 1 went to KMPP (KrishakPrajaMazdoor Party). The best that the pro-refugee left parties could master was in Santipur and Nabadwip where Kanai Pal of R.C.P.I. and Amiya Kumar Roy of CPI managed to grab the second position in the field behind the winning Congress candidate. In Ranaghat constituency where the left was so vociferous in organizing the refugees, the SP candidate Ashim Mazumdar came third. SP nominees also stood third at Tehatta and Chapra while fourth in Krishnagar. Hence, at the outset, left performance was nothing to write home about in the two elections.

Overall the CPI dominated USOI captured 43 seats in the Assembly, out of which CPI share was 28. It emerged as the single largest opposition party in the state. The PUSF secured only two seats. ⁵¹ Its two constituent parties the Socialist Party and RCPI merged together in the subsequent elections while the third the Subhasist Forward Bloc became defunct.

Emboldened by its electoral success, the CPI emerged as the frontrunner in the post-1952 agitations. The flagship organization of refugee struggle came to be dominated by CPI leaders. In Nadia the venue of agitation changed. The so long peaceful Coopers' Camp now came to hog the limelight. The phase between the two elections saw Coopers' rather than Dhubulia, becoming the focal point of refugee agitations, headed by the CPI.

The issue that the CPI top-brass capitalized immediately after the elections was the outbreak of chicken-pox in Coopers' Camp area, around early February 1952. Around 955 inmates were quarantined in a dingy tin-roofed godown to prevent its spread.⁵² Demanding proper medical treatment for the afflicted, CPI leader BenoyChowdhury and UCRC top-notch Anil Sinha met Renuka Ray, Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of West Bengal. The move incurred the wrath of the camp administration, who beat up JatinSaha, Secretary of the BastuharaSamiti and Subala Debi of MahilaKalyanSamiti. Arrest warrants were issued against nine inmates of the camp.⁵³ In compliance with the order RatishMallik, President of Coopers' Camp BastuharaParishad, was arrested from Krishnagar station.⁵⁴ JatinSaha was arrested on 12 April.⁵⁵ In protest, a 24- mile strong procession was taken out by CPI leaders like GourKundu, SushilChatterjee and AmritenduMukhopadhyay.

The next most significant year in terms of agitation was 1956. Arun Chandra Guha, the M.P. from Nabadwip, was deputed by Government of India to assess the ground reality. Accordingly, he paid a visit to the Coopers' Camp on 6 July 1956. The inmates planned to place a charter of demands and a deputation listing their grievances, to him. When the camp commandant got a whiff of the plan, he instructed the police force, stationed at the camp, to 'unleash a reign of terror.' As a protest, a huge rally was organized in the railway grounds at Ranaghat, attended by prominent UCRC and CPI leaders. GourKundu was arrested and implicated in a 'false' case by the police. On the night of 16 July, police forces from Barrackpore, combed the Camp and arrested 44 inmates, including seven women.⁵⁶

The left parties refused to accept such high-handed action of the Commandant. Leaders of the various left factions, namely, ManikuntalaSen (CPI), PrabhatMukherji and Kanai Pal ((RCPI) addressed a huge gathering of around 5,000 people organised in Ranaghat on 18 July, 1956.⁵⁷

Side by side, efforts to incorporate the inmates of P.L. Camps of the district within the fold of agitation was undertaken by the CPI. On 3 July 1956, a meeting of the inmates of the P.L. Camps and Homes of Nadia was organized in RupasriPalli Camp in Ranaghat. Local UCRC leaders addressed the women, demanding among other things, opportunities for vocational training and employment opportunities for able-bodied P.L. women.⁵⁸

However, the main plank of agitation at this stage was the Government's decision to deport the refugees to Dandakaranya and stoppage of doles in the event of non-compliance. BinodiniHalder, erstwhile resident of RupasriPalli Camp (Ranaghat) and a present inmate of Chamta P.L. Camp (located a few kilometers away from the district headquarter of Krishnagar in the Sadar Subdivision), recalls those days of struggle:⁵⁹

During my stay there, I joined in the meetings and processions of the UCRC and was jailed thrice. Our first agitation was against Congress government's decision of deportation to Dandakaranya. We demonstrated in front of the district court. Section 144 was imposed and we were arrested for violating the order. At around four in the afternoon, barring eight of us, the rest were released. We

were put in jail custody, where we stayed for a week. But we were undeterred. When the next agitation began, the police cordoned off our procession and started firing. I started running, my sari got torn in the process but I did not stop. I took refuge in a shop at the back of the court. The Dandakaranya issue was the main agenda of our agitation. The government had ordered the male inmates of the camps to be transported to Dandakaranya. We resisted. As a result, cash doles of eight families were stopped arbitrarily. We registered a case against this highhanded action, and voluntarily courted arrest. This time we were detained for little less than a month. The UCRC leaders informed us that a month's absence would result in our names being struck off from the camp's list. Hence they arranged for our bail before the one-month deadline. The case dragged on for a year and two months. Meanwhile, my transfer to Chamta Camp was ordered. But in view of the ongoing case, the order was revoked. We won the case. Doles were reinstated, though the backlog was not cleared.

Did these heightened CPI activities bear fruit in the next set of elections? In the 1957 Assembly elections CPI won 46 seats, the Forward Bloc 8, the Forward Bloc (Marxists) 2, while the rest failed to win any. In case of Nadia, there was no change in the situation as with the exception of Chakdah, the INC won all the rest.⁶⁰ Thus of all the fragmented Left blocs only the CPI could capitalise on the refugee discontent. In the parliamentary elections, the same disappointing result was replicated. However, The CPI maintained its position as the single largest opposition party in the state. It recorded steady progress in the subsequent elections and the CPI-led left coalition, the United Front, captured power in 1967, to form the first anti-Congress government in the state. Although the RCPI, seemed to be more active in Nadia in the early years it failed to strike roots and ultimately became obsolete. So did the other smaller factions, who rose like meteors but then faded. Although these smaller parties failed to make much headway at the state-level and faded into oblivion, nevertheless their role in coalescing the refugee movement in Nadia and mobilising them for the mass struggle cannot be belittled. Unfortunately, existing historiography glosses over their contribution.

ENDNOTES

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2 Marcus Franda, *Political Development and Political Decay in Bengal* Firma K.L.M., Calcutta, 1971, Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971

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- 5 Ibid. Copy of report dated 17.12.48 submitted by O.C. Chakdah P.S. Dt. Nadia
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- 26 *GB IB File no. 1809-48, Report on the Activities* . Copy of Report dated 22.5.50 from O/C Kotwali P.S. Dt. Nadia
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- 31 *GB IB File no. 1809-48, Report on the Activities*. Copy of Report of S.P. of Nadia dt. 22.9.50.
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- 33 United Central Refugee Council (UCRC) was founded in 1950 to protect the interests of the refugees. It is still active in West Bengal and is closely associated with the Left movement.
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Interviews with the inmates of Chamta P.L. Camp and Dhubulia Camp and Infirmary, Nadia in November 2002

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What to Eat and How to Treat: Myth and Reality in Contemporary India

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Globalization, liberalization and intensive privatization of health care in India began simultaneously in the early 1990s. The post-colonial Indian state, never a big spender of money on education and health, began a significant retreat from the provision of public health care to the Indian people in the early 1990s. From this time onwards its objective shifted to 'affordable' health care in place of modern, scientific and purpose oriented public health care. This shift in state health discourse was also influenced by the intractable health problems posed by globalized modernity to a new generation of Indians and rising popularity of indigenous medicine as a growing reaction to the limitations of allopathic medicine across the world. In sum medical postmodernism has paralleled academic postmodernism! Both romanticize the pre-modern and create spaces for political and cultural reaction. In India, I suspect, the encouragement of 'indigenous' medicine by the Indian state sought to kill two birds with a single stone. It was designed to distract public attention from its retreat from public health and at the same time present itself as a guardian of safe and affordable medical treatment. The Department of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy and Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (Ayush) was set up by the Government of India in 1995. Initially organized as the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) it was rechristened AYUSH in 2003 during the NDA I regime and functioned under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In November, 2014 it was elevated to a full ministry status by the Modi Government. Inter alia this ministry is supposed to promote *Yoga* and *Sowarigpa* (Tibetan Medicine). The Ayush ministry funds several councils of research and national institutes related to these indigenous systems of medicine. It is expected that this ministry will promote *Yoga* more seriously and an international *Yoga* Award Scheme is all set to begin in 2017. The idea of the *Ayush* Ministry germinated in the mid 1990s but since then this government plan seems to have morphed into a medical equivalent of Hindu nationalism which, without much sound historical basis, is trying to annex *Yoga* to its cause.

In many countries, like Austria for instance, Homeopathy is equated with quackery and Homeopathic practice is forbidden; in contrast homeopaths abound in every Indian street and are as good or bad as your ubiquitous neighborhood 'Bangali Doctor'. It is widely held that there is little clinical evidence in support of Homeopathy and most of its claims are based on anecdotal evidence; there is no dearth of patients who land up in a hospital OPD after experimenting with homeopathy. Severe reactions to Homeopathic medicines are not unknown and this belies the assertion that Homeopathic medicines and little or no side effects. Nonetheless the popular

fascination with it continues and the sale of homeopathic medicine remains immensely profitable. These medicines are sold widely across the counter in India along with free consultations offered to the gullible customers by the dispensers. Over the years the criticism of homeopathy has grown across the world but in India the Ministry of *Ayush* does not take this criticism of Homeopathy seriously. However, it is a different matter that Indian ministers take recourse to an allopath at the drop of a hat and many get admitted to *allopathic* hospitals at the first sign of impending serious illness. Politicians and industrialists also do not shirk a trip abroad in search of better allopathic treatment. Similarly evidence in favor of the claims of *Ayurveda*, *Yoga* or *Sowarigpa* is thin. In the case of diabetes, hypertension, heart problems, arthritis, cancer, tuberculosis, tetanus, rabies, cholera and a host of other diseases these systems of 'cure' are proven failures. These indigenous systems also prove hopeless in the case of eye ailments, gynecological and dental problems and, of course, malaria which is endemic in the tropics; in fact the extent of uncertainty of causation and side effects associated with *allopathy* are not absent from these systems of medicines as well. Many of the assumptions underlining these so called systems are unscientific and their practitioners often rely on inculcating a highly subjective *feel good* feeling in their patients. An important reason why people gravitate towards some of these 'indigenous' systems is often their affordability although, of late, being treated for an illness in reputed centers of *Ayurveda*, *Naturopathy* or *Yoga* offering 'customized' treatment can prove not inexpensive. As far as Yoga is concerned, surgeons and physicians periodically warn its practitioners against serious joint damage which often occurs if the *asanas* are improperly or inappropriately performed. Yoga is now a multi-million dollar industry with entrenched interests including a massive advertisement and audio visual business feeding off it. In recent times, this author believes, the system of *Hath Yoga* rooted in *Tantrik Yoga* has been made to take precedence over other kinds of Yoga for reasons which are more ideological than scientific.

The promotion of vegetarianism and AYUSH, have gone hand in hand in India with identifiable ideological and *orientalist* connotations difficult to miss. The *self-image* of Hindus in India and the general impression of Hindus abroad is one of a people who are non-violent, spiritual and, above all, *vegetarian*. This image is so deeply ingrained in the psyche of the Arabic countries, America and Europe that an Indian visitor to these parts of the world is automatically guided to the vegetarian corner of the meal by the host. Indians [read Hindus] are supposed to be vegetarian by default whereas Muslims and Christians (beef eaters all!) are considered non-vegetarian by instinct. Actually the Jains, and not the various communities which began calling themselves Hindu over time, are vegetarian. But thanks to the untiring labors of Hindu gurus, godmen, yogis and sanyasis of the twentieth century the assumption generated abroad, and also in India, is that if you are a *practicing* Indian Hindu you must be vegetarian, be able to recite the Gayatri Mantra five times a day if not more and perform a daily routine of *suryanamaskar*. This is a result of a long term *semitification* of a system of pagan faith. The airlines sometimes express profound regret in not making a vegetarian meal available to the Indian traveler. Unless you indicate to the contrary, a vegetarian meal is served to you by the air hostess on cue. Hotels, upon receiving a

booking by an Indian with a non-Muslim or non-Christian sounding name, make sure that they tell him or her that vegetarian food is served in their restaurants. Special arrangements are made for groups of Gujarati, Jain or Marwari tourists in India and abroad to ensure that their food taboos are not broken during their sight-seeing tours or pilgrimages. Needless to add, that these visitors double up as ambassadors of Indian (read Hindu) vegetarianism abroad. The vegetarian *Vaishnava* Hindu image is often reinforced by the various practices associated with Hinduism exported to countries where people rarely have a first-hand experience of what Hindu society in India is actually like. Speaking of *Vaishnavism* the vegetarianism propagated by Gandhi, one of the great brand ambassadors of India in the 20th century, should not be forgotten. It is not unusual to find foreigners and expatriate Indians quite taken up with the chanting of Sanskrit mantras, the various kinds of physical and mental discipline regimes associated with *Hath Yoga* and a belief in the *chakra-dosha* system of Ayurvedic medicine. There is increasing talk of *karma* these days as well.

Couples practicing extreme forms of vegetarianism and chosen schools of yoga together and in groups are not that uncommon in the West. Practitioners of Ayurveda medicine in India, including gurus like Baba Ramdeva who ostensibly represent the *Patanjali Yoga* in contemporary India, urge vegetarianism upon their patients and followers. Ramdeva has claimed that his version of *Patanjali* medicine can cure diseases ranging from cancer to Ebola fever. He has also offered homosexual individuals the option of getting cured of their 'illness' at his ashram in Haridwar. All this happens while, on the other hand, super-speciality hospitals mushroom in the country and are promoted as 'affordable' medical tourist destinations for foreigners from the first world. The medical system being constructed in the country follows the model of duality characteristic of third world societies. Super-speciality five star type hospitals tied to medical insurance work for the rich whereas AYUSH is being promoted for the poor and the lower middle classes. In between these two are the poorly funded, overcrowded and neglected government hospitals with their long queues, dust and dirty toilets. Thus it may be assumed that the political economy of globalization and the culture of promoting the supposedly more affordable native medicine have come together in the name of cultural nationalism. These developments taken together will reinforce the self image of Indians in general, and Indian Hindus in particular, and is supposed to magnify the vegetarian-yoga-spiritual image of the country abroad. The cultivation of this image is necessary for Hindu nationalism but, as the following shows, the myth does not square with the historical and social reality of India.

In this context, and to begin with, it is important to remember that Yoga is a philosophy which eschews excess of any kind. The Yogi, we are told by the gurus of yoga, is a person who neither eats too much nor too less. He or she neither sleeps too much nor too less. He or she neither exercises too much nor too less. He or she neither fornicates too much nor too less. The yogi neither

renounces the world nor embraces it in totality. The yogi drinks the solids and eats the liquids. The yogi is disciplined but not austere in the practice of that discipline. The essence of yoga is not *sanyaas* but moderation expressed in the term 'madhyam marga' and some would argue that vegetarianism is a graft on yoga and not intrinsic to it. Yoga does not fear cholesterol and, in fact, extols the virtues of dairy produce and especially *ghee* ; the notion of cholesterol is alien to Yoga. Gautum Buddha was perhaps the greatest yogi produced by India - he extolled the middle path and without being a vegetarian lived a long and healthy life centuries before Christ was born. The last dish he ate before succumbing to an illness was made of pork. It is claimed that Indian *rishis* of antiquity also practiced yoga to remain disciplined, healthy and happy and some of them, like Yagyavalkya for instance, were confirmed meat eaters. The nomadic *aryans* of the early Vedic period, to whom the modern upper caste Hindus gladly trace their origins, were pastoralist meat eaters. Elaborate animal sacrifice in the *yajnas* and consumption of meat in great quantities was common to the Vedic and later Vedic times. This aspect of the Vedic life and diet were either downplayed in or expunged from the Hindu revivalism developed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But the Hindu philosophical position on meat eating was not only defined by the Arya Samaj which was dedicated to cow protection. While the Arya Samaj movement gained social salience in large parts of West and North West India other opinions on cow protection and beef eating emerged in other parts of the country. In the nineteenth century the favorite disciple of Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda urged his fellow countrymen to eat meat and develop a *rajasik* mentality necessary for national virility, masculinity, progress and greatness. He also stressed the purity of heart over food habits which he considered peripheral or even irrelevant to human goodness. In his view eating or not eating meat was irrelevant to a person's being good or even healthy. Indeed this view on beef eating found resonance in the idea of *Hindutva* coined by Savarkar a few years after Vivekananda died. Nonetheless the issue of cow protection, cow slaughter and beef eating was used as an essential part of the strategy of Hindu political consolidation primarily against Muslims increasingly from the 1880s at least and had become a regular source communal rioting in the years which led up to the partition of the country in 1947.

Beef is eaten by a number of communities, not necessarily Muslim or Christian, in large parts of India today. It has historically been a cheap source of protein for the *Dalit* castes and cash for the usually cash strapped Indian peasants. Further, it is well known that the Brahmans, the so called custodians of Hinduism, are themselves divided on the question of meat eating. Tamil Brahmans do not eat meat. *Maithil* brahmans eat fish and meat. Maharashtrian Brahmans, *Deshastha* and *Chitpavan* , are not supposed to eat meat. In the Konkan area around Goa meat and fish eating Brahmans are found. The Kashmiri Brahmans eat meat and so do several Brahmans in the Himalayas but Brahmans in Haryana and Punjab, areas greatly influenced by the Arya Samaj, are not supposed to eat meat. Bengali and Assamese Brahmans practically cannot live without eating eggs, meat and fish. So leave alone Hindus even the endogamous Brahmans as a caste are divided into the meat eating and vegetarian groups. Across India several schools of yoga

are practiced and the great majority of people consume meat and fish, and a large number cannot because of economic reasons, but the fact that a small minority of the Hindu population has successfully managed to cultivate a vegetarian image of India in India and abroad is an amazing feat which merits serious academic attention in future. The media has been complicit in this; most diet columns written by self-styled lifestyle experts usually advocate a vegetarian diet which is supposed to be superior to the non-vegetarian diet. These popular columns, often improperly researched, propagate the adage “you are what you eat and drink” which derives its legitimacy from the division of food into the *satvik*, *rajsik* and *tamsik* kinds.

It is generally believed that *Ayurveda* prescribes vegetarianism. Even Indian doctors, who train as allopaths, subscribe to this notion whereas *Ayurveda* doctors also derive benefit from this myth possibly to be heard in tune with the prevalent moods. I have not come across a single *Ayurveda* doctor who does not subscribe to vegetarianism. While it is true that *Ayurveda* texts extoll the dietary virtues of milk, honey, ghee and gruels prepared with a variety of food grains they also prescribe non-vegetarian fare for a number of illnesses and as a therapy. For instance the *Caraka Samhita*, in laying down an elaborate regime for the management of a mother after delivery, prescribes to the weakened female "Ghee, oil, *vasaa* (muscle fat) and *majja* (bone-marrow)" among other things.¹ This physician's advice makes sense because women need more iron and protein after a delivery which may cause excessive loss of blood in some cases. The *Susruta Samhita* Volume I, Chapter XLVI, contains the description of food and drinks². This text describes the "group of meat."³ Meats are classified into six groups which range from various kinds of venison to a variety of fresh water and sea fish. Clear injunctions have been laid down by the author(s) of these texts that the meat of sick animals, poisoned animals, putrifying dead animals, old and emaciated animals and too young animals is harmful; this fact is scientifically proven. Apart from these, the text is unambiguous. We are told that meat of other dead animals than these is edible. Let us now mention some examples of prescribed meats for *specific health conditions*. The meat of black deer is supposed to promote “relish and strength” and remove fever. Deer meat also "checks intrinsic haemorrhage and alleviates *sannipaata*, wasting, dyspnoea, cough, hiccough and anorexia." The meat of partridge, much loved by hunters in general, "promotes intellect and digestive power" whereas peacock flesh, banned in India today, promotes "voice, intellect, digestive power, vision and hearing." (There is no mention of the value of peacock tears!) Even very small birds are not spared the dietary regime. For instance, the sparrow "is sweet, unctuous, increases *kapha* and semen. House sparrow checks haemorrhage and increases semen excessively." The flesh of cave dwellers like the lions and the crow (*kaaka*) is supposed to be "beneficial for one suffering from consumption." The flesh of tree dwellers including monkeys, squirrels and civet cats among others is considered "sweet, heavy, aphrodisiac, wholesome for eyes, beneficial in consumption, diuretic, laxative, alleviate cough, piles and dyspnoea." The flesh of animals which live in holes and burrows like snakes and porcupines "pacify *vaata*, increase *kapha* and *pitta*, alleviate cough, dyspnoea and emaciation." The flesh of *godhaa* (iguana - monitor lizard) "promotes *dhaatus* and increases strength" while that of the snakes "alleviates piles" besides increasing intellect and digestive power. The meat of domestic animals like horses, donkeys, cows, camels, goat, sheep and rams is "sweet in taste and *vipaaka*, pacify *vaata*,

increase *kapha* and *pitta* , promote *dhaatus* , strength and digestive power." The meat of cows and bulls is mentioned as beneficial "in fatigue and excessive digestive power, purifying and *vaat* pacifying." The list of meats is actually quite long and includes even the flesh of elephants, *nilgai* , wild boar, rhinoceros and *yak* (*camara*) and red deer (*rohita*) with their well defined qualities. Those who poke fun at the Chinese, tribal or North Eastern food habits should read these texts. The fact that the Yak, an animal found in the upper Himalayas, Ladakh and Tibet is mentioned in the text, suggests that the author(s) of these seminal Ayurvedic texts were geographically and socially well informed. The beast of burden *Yak* remains a supplier of meat, milk, butter, fat, skin and wool to the long lived people of the higher Himalayas even today.

The ancient foundational texts of *Ayurveda* , like the *Charaka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita* , comprise the "intimate part of *Atharva-Veda* " ⁴ and were produced in a society which was agrarian, meat eating and which had developed in close proximity to the forests. The *Atharva-Veda* must be read beside the other *Vedas* and *Brahmanas* which contain rich descriptions of meat eating and animal sacrifices practiced by the ancient Indians. Much of India was covered by thick forests in those days and the transition from pastoralism to sedentary farming had not happened. The near complete *sedentization* of Indians is a phenomenon of comparatively recent origin going back to the establishment of colonial rule in the 19 th Century. Ancient Indians seemed to have eaten and experimented with the meat of almost all the animals which were found in abundance in India in those days and archeological evidence supports this contention. The non sectarian mentioned in this article did not stop at food. They extended their reach to numerous intoxicants found naturally and produced manually in ancient India. The *Ayurvedic* texts went on to define the qualities of various kinds of intoxicants and prescribe them for specific illnesses. A different paper can be written on this lost aspect of *Ayurveda* . The pre-modern Indian sub-continent had large forests and forest dwelling people whose knowledge of medicine, liquor and diet permeated the making of the *Ayurveda* several centuries before Christ and the colonial period in which Hinduism, as we know it today, became 'semitized' into the 'other' of Islam and Christianity. The phenomenal knowledge of flora and fauna presented by the texts of *Ayurveda* suggests that this system of dietary medicine developed as a synthesis of *aryan* and pre-*aryan* practices of medicines which thrived in Ancient India. The forests of ancient India, with many of their resident animals mentioned, vanished in the modern period and the food and medical habits of the people living either inside or on the fringes of these forests changed for better or worse. Given the precarious condition of Indian forests and wildlife perhaps it is just as well that *Ayurveda* has been reduced to vegetarianism although it is not so rare to find the home grown Ayurvedic *vaidya* hawking the oil of the *saandaa* (Indian monitor lizard) as a cure for male impotence on the streets and *maidans* of Indian cities even today! The purveyors of native medicine promising a cure for piles, impotence, boils, eczema, premature ejaculation, old cough and urinary disorders are still found in the Indian small towns. *They also lay a claim on Ayurvedic jadi bootis sourced from the forests and mountains of the country* . Over time *Ayurveda* , like much else, has changed in tune with a society unsure of embracing modernity. The media has played a special role in aligning *Ayurveda* with modern fads like the 'lipid hypothesis' and even 'veganism' touted by diet experts, some allopathic practitioners and the pharmaceutical companies. This has enhanced the

market value of *Ayurveda* as a system of medicine which is ostensibly vegetable-based, safe and affordable. This is not the place to examine whether *Ayurveda* or allopathic systems or Tibetan medicines work or not in the ultimate analysis; that is a different question. Hopefully this intervention has succeeded in making the natural looking affinity between *Ayurveda* and vegetarianism a problematic of history and politics. The question is when, how and why did a system of medicine produced by a community (or communities) of meat eaters and intoxicant consumers turn into a prescription of vegetarianism and temperance?

¹*Caraka Samhita* , Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Volume II, 1977, p. 502.

²*Sushruta Samhita* , Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Varanasi, 2004

³*Ibid* , pp. 474-491.

⁴*Ibid* , p.7.

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Public Politics in End Times in West Bengal

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“To the question “If capitalism is really so much better than socialism, why are our lives still miserable?” it provides a simple answer: it is because we are not yet really in capitalism, for the Communists are still ruling, only now wearing the masks of new owners and managers...”¹

Slavoj Zizek begins one of his books titled *Living in the End Times* identifying the above mentioned problem in contemporary society to target the ‘wicked’ as against the ‘good’. The context of contemporary West Bengal politics is nicely poised by this answer that the West usually gave to the surmounting criticism against its ideological promise to deliver the best in the age of globalization, democracy and neo-liberal market economy. West Bengal has been an important state in Indian federation because of its constant ‘passive revolutionary’ tendencies to resist the ‘ongoing’ to make the ‘present’ more serene, pious and passionate about the people with which it engages. The first tenure of the Trinamool Congress government was put before the verdict of the people in the electoral space in West Bengal in 2016. Trinamool Congress shrugged off all its administrative failures during the tenure by falling back on the safe haven of anti-communist and anti-CPM feeling that still remained present in the state. This article identifies the continuity of TMC administrative features in West Bengal since 2016. The article concludes by way of highlighting some possible trends that may emerge within and beyond Trinamool Congress politics in the coming days.

‘End of History’ in 2016

The Assembly elections of 2011 were held amidst widespread discontent about the management of social and economic issues by the Left Front government particularly since its coming to power in 2006. In 2011 the moment before election were tensed, trimmed by the sense of a possible defeat of the Left but the electoral results of 2011 made the assembly elections truly historic for the extent in which the Left were almost shattered from power and the electoral map of the state turned mostly green, the colour of Trinamool Congress. Coming to power the Trinamool Congress government, swearing always by the name of the commoners, the 3Ms – *Ma*, *Mati* and *Manush*, slowly but gradually uphold the social and cultural (through various innovative programmes and policies aimed at economic relief of the commoners and downtrodden) while following the same political path of the previous government with more efficacy so to say. The ascendancy of emotional attachment of the electorate with the new government received the first jolt with the alleged rape of a Christian woman in Park Street which even in 2016 remains to be dealt with properly in legal terms as the main accused remains absconding and the victim died of illness in 2015. This incident was shrugged off by the Chief Minister as a small incident with strong anti-feminine undercurrent that met strong reactions from all quarters of the society. Interesting to note is the fact that while

an incident related to minority community (Rizwanur Rahman case in 2006) raised the popularity index of Mamata's leadership, this time around incident related to another minority community began the decadence in Mamata's political clout. Soon followed the incident of equating a questioning person with a Maoist (Siladitya Chowdhury), putting behind bars academician for forwarding caricatured post in facebook (Ambikesh Mahapatra), the massive chit-fund scam of Saradha which made some sitting MP's and MLAs of Trinamool Congress to rest behind bars till date, the silence of the Chief Minister over the tragic death of a SFI activist, Sudipta, and several incidents of atrocities against women receiving half hearted reactions from the Chief Minister, prominent being the Kamduni incident, and last but not the least the latest 2016 pre-poll revelations of sting operations of Narada television exposing several MPs, MLAs and leaders of Trinamool Congress allegedly accepting bribes. So as West Bengal went to polls in 2016, history was being recreated – rainbow coalition against the Left in 2011 changed into a rainbow coalition against the Trinamool Congress in 2016. This is for the first time in 2016 that pre-poll alliances have been initiated between the Congress and the Left in West Bengal and the public reflected, under strict vigilance of central security forces deployed by the Election Commission, in their mandate that they are satisfied with their last historical mandate in 2011.

Detailing on the context of West Bengal's Assembly electoral environment one finds a closure in the form of a 'party society' where men's creative potential is indeed enmeshed within the party political scene. Thus it was the battle between people's party (TMC) and the people's front (Congress and Left) in West Bengal in 2011. While TMC before and during the election loudly proclaimed its victory against the triad of media, oppositional alliance and the Centre by seeking forgiveness in front of public for not choosing the clean candidates (as prominent sitting MLAs have been stung through Narada sting operation) and by reposing faith on the TMC styled development of the roads and freight corridors in the urban areas and cheap distribution of basic necessities like rice and cereals in the rural areas. However some critical questions are been raised against the TMC during the election like lack of clear industrial, land and education policy; growing power of the local hooligans reflected in atrocities and criminalities against commoners particularly in the rural belt; intolerance of critical comments against the government; failure to properly conduct the chit fund scam; the growing nexus between the bureaucracy and the government as reflected in the latest act of the chief secretary of sending reply on behalf of the Chief Minister who was show-caused as a political leader by the Election Commission. On the other side a whisper campaign was going on across the state that the front of Congress and Left are coming to power in 2016 defeating the present incumbent as the opposition votes will be accumulated in one common opposition candidate mostly in all constituencies. This campaign is being strengthened by the media; by the stringent measures of the Election Commission by monitoring on the election day the moves of one of the most daredevil yet dear to the TMC leadership, Anubrata Mondol in Birbhum district, by shuffling top police and administrative officers from their home posted districts to new ones prior to election days to nullify any influential moves; and obviously by the spontaneous presence of public in rallies of the oppositions which was now bigger than any time in last five years. However the leadership of these new frontal partners remained unchanged in last five years and they are yet to come up with any alternative

vision of development and administration. Thus the choice before the public was that between the chaotic vision of the Left-Congress and organised vision of the TMC.

Contemporary history in West Bengal is a tale of frustrations for the public – violent phase of the Congress regime, politicisation of the Left, shallow promises of the Trinamool Congress, forcible situation to choose between two tested failed outfits – and for this the situation in 2016 Assembly elections was that of end times, either the party (TMC) wins or the politics (Left) but in both cases it will be no new beginning for the public. In end times people makes tricky and adventurous decisions – but the question that looms large in West Bengal – is the public able to act really as the public in the electoral space? Hannah Arendt closed her magnum opus, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, on a surprisingly positive reflection: “But there remains also the truth that every end of history necessarily contains a new beginning. . . . Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the capacity of man; politically it is identical with man's freedom. . . . This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man.”

The massive tilt in the verdict in favour of Trinamool Congress giving it 212 seats out of 294 clearly showed that the public really played as creative men by reposing faith on “committed chaos” (the Trinamool Congress specially Mamata Banerjee's commitment against the Left is phenomenal and rigid yet her administrative team made some silly cases of proven corruption [the real estate syndicate is a pointer] and also hasty decisions and comments) as against “chaotic commitment” (the Left-Congress alliance committed to bring change to the 2011 change but the alliance itself was chaotic half-hearted and forcibly done to face serious singular white wash in the election).

After 2016: Trinamool Congress Relieved?

A decade back in 2006 Left Front Chief Minister after a massive win claimed that the opposition voice particularly that of Trinamool Congress is of insignificant as “we are 236, they are 36”, in terms of assembly seats won. In 2016 more or less the scenario got reversed but Trinamool Congress still now has not come out with such harsh snob statements as the 2016 elections have also brought some worries for the TMC leadership as reflected in the scenario that eight of its sitting MLAs got defeated. More or less one can identify five worries for the TMC government in post 2016 period: - its brand of politics; its administrative niceties; its approach to opposition; its internal tensions; its visionary promises. Addressing the five worries the TMC leadership will do well to take recourse to the following five transformations:-

- From ‘unpolitical’ to ‘repoliticizing’:- Pierre Rosanvallon in the book ‘Counter Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust’ argues that “social distrust can encourage a salutary civic vigilance and thus oblige government to pay greater heed to social demands, yet it can also encourage destructive forms of denigration and negativity”² The experience of Trinamool Congress from its days of opposition clearly reflects that the trust deficit on Left Front government erupted a desire for civic vigilance and the Trinamool Congress created a shared world vision through the *Ma Mati*

Manush symbolisation. The TMC government promised to pay heed to social demands but the kind of anti-incumbency aired during the 2016 election and the inner-party factions that cost some seats of TMC MLA's as revealed in the post electoral investigation of TMC showed that TMC government had some problems in management style what can be called in the words of Rosanvallon – 'unpolitical' or a "failure to develop a comprehensive understanding of problems associated with the organization of a shared world." ³ In day to day term it can be said that TMC government tried to be 'unpolitical' vis-a-vis the politicization of the Left Front government but the TMC government also nearly toed the very systematic line of the LF government to hold power for its first term. Thus in its second term TMC needs to be very cautious about building a true shared community or being 'repolitical' as argued by Rosanvallon in the following way – "The resymbolization of the political is thus part of a permanent questioning of social differences. The goal is to define a community in terms of rules of redistributive justice, principles for expanding the limits of possibility, and clearly delineated norms governing the relation between the individual and the community" ⁴ .

(b) From 'Governance' to 'Performance':- Thomas J. Catlaw in an exciting book titled 'Fabricating the People: Politics and Administration in a Biopolitical State' observes that "Governing might concern itself with the processes by which and through which truth, objectivities, and subjectivities are contextually produced, imposed, and sustained, rather than with the mechanisms that purport to represent a posited extant truth and its sovereign origin" ⁵ . The experience of TMC government in its first phase clearly shows a commitment towards governance by building networks amongst the government institutions, bureaucracy and the public. However the TMC government presented that the epitome of wisdom lies in the leader Mamata Banerjee and Truth can be attained only by following her judgements. This resulted in distancing the public from the Politics of policy-making. Catlaw in this book also argues that "Governing is *the conduct of conduct*, the production of mechanisms that constitute and sustain subjectivities and relationships among those subjects and their objects, and create the bounded contexts or contained spaces within which these appear." ⁶ TMC government in its second phase needs to do precisely this, to bring more people to policy making and to rely on a shared understanding of the situation, by performing through completion of projects that was inaugurated during the first tenure and bringing more uniqueness to management. This only could solve the land problem at Singur or sound policies for education and industrialization could be achieved. The beginning is seen in the kind of negotiations the Chief Minister is arriving at in various administrative meets across the State and the committees formed to redress grievances related to health and education.

(c) From 'Populism' to 'Patience':- Trinamool Congress in its first phase of government declared a large number of programmes that was aimed to provide economic relief to a large section like *kanyasree* for young girl students, *jubasree* for the youths, *khadyasree* for the poor and the starved, providing cereals and wheat for two rupees in all poverty stricken area of junglemahal in Purulia and Midnapore districts. Several other steps like holding administrative meetings in various districts and shifting administrative setup separately for the North Bengal in Siliguri are seen as exemplary to give relief to the people. However rather than seeing these steps as

innovation, political analysts and opposition leaders along with media brand these as populism to divert attention from the concrete issues like unemployment, lack of industrialisation, law and order problem particularly the security of women and tensed milieu in educational institutions. On top of these the lack of patience to soak negative remarks within itself in rebuffing the opposition on the part of TMC leaders particularly the Chief Minister has cut a very sorry figure for TMC. Thus in the second phase of TMC management needs to be much more patient in accepting opposite views and remarks. With more mature and patient management technique (devoid of number of unnecessary *mela's* taking a heavy toll on state exchequer) the unique policies and programmes will soon be seen as innovations rather than a figment of populism. The recognition from the United Nations of the welfare programme may provide the basis for such a beginning.

(d) From 'Rag-tag' party to 'Regularised' party:- Ranabir Samaddar in his book on *Passive Revolution in West Bengal, 1977-2011* designates Trinamool Congress as a "rag-tag party"⁷ that successfully made the "multitude based on social majorities to make its presence felt"⁸. Trinamool Congress since its emergence and even after coming to power continued to exemplify its oppositional tendencies of temporality in its dialogue with the opposition and so the long claims on the part of TMC that the Left has to wait for another 34 years to come to power once again can be seen as claims that have been made too early. The TMC have to develop itself as a party-in-government from a party-in-opposition by creating more meaningful policies for the qualitative development of the state in all sectors than relying on statistics quantifying the number of inaugurated policies and by learning to avoid temporal comments on daily basis against criticisms. The way the recent agitation in the North Bengal surrounding Gorkhaland demand have been handled in a rough-tough manner demonstrates that TMC can now manage emotions through law like any regularised party-in-government sure about is support.

(e) From 'Global Bengal' to 'Eternal Bengal':- The TMC government in its first phase tried to internationalize West Bengal by its tendencies to go for foreign tour in London and Singapore to understand the ways to rebuild and rejuvenate the state aesthetically. It also celebrated festivals of Bengali culture and in *Biswa-banga* meets and hosted Global Bengal Summit in the state to attract investments. The result has not been much. Taking the spirit of Qazi Abdul Wadud's *Saswata Banga* (Eternal Bengal) Ranbir Samaddar in his book *Passive Revolution in West Bengal, 1977-2011* argues that "Politics can acquire mass legitimacy in Bengal only by aestheticizing itself. It must not appear as course or vulgar."⁹ Before the assembly elections it was reported that some of sitting MLA's have increased their property during the tenure by manifold; the art exhibition of TMC was put under investigative scanner of CBI in relation to the chit fund scam. The strong grassroots personalities that was the mainstay of TMC slowly slides on the path of the glitters of power. Rather than going global TMC government in its new term must focus on reinventing the traditional culture, ethics and values of Bengali lineage which is the simultaneous presence of the political and the aesthetic. TMC needs to learn the art of building a beautiful, peaceful and decent political milieu in the state which only could cement its place in the government corridor in days to come.

Thus it can be said that in West Bengal post 2016 assembly election is a scenario of electoral satisfaction for TMC but fine and thin political dissatisfaction for TMC which needs to be corrected, particularly the rise of BJP-wave in the state politics. Thus far from being relieved TMC needs to re-arrange itself organisationally and politically in the next five year years.

Oppositional Politics in post 2016: Dange Line to be Decoded

If there is any problem in West Bengal today, it's not the wayward management of the TMC government but the figureless opposition. After 2011 the Left remained the main opposition and slowly they picked their support from the disillusioned public of the state who expected less political management and more of ethical management from the TMC. The first big outburst of Left oppositional role was the August 2015 march to the state secretariat(*nabanna*) recarnated again in May 2017 where police lathi-charged resulting in injury to several leaders and supporters of Left Front. As the Left Front lead by CPI(M) slowly mounted their presence felt suddenly just before the election the Left Front and the state unit of the Indian National Congress decided to jointly face the election to resist the ascendance of TMC. The expected result was to be victorious as oppositional votes will be dumped on one common oppositional candidate rather than being divided between candidates from the opposition. The result of 2016 election however showed the travesty of this dream. This showed the massive hatred among the public against the decision of the Left Front state unit going against the natural anti-Congress tide across the country and also going beyond the decisions of the last Party Congress of CPI(M). Even the front partners like CPI and RSP came out with caustic remarks post election verdict against this sudden alliance. During elections the party cadres were also disillusioned at the grassroots level. The Congress is now the main opposition party in the assembly and even the BJP secured three seats. Party-swaps in favour of TMC have caused worries for the opposition. The alliance formation was so sudden that joint organisational moves could not be conducted at the ground level. Mohan Kumarmangalam's dream that 'CPI will be the *mahut* (the driver) on the elephant named Congress' in post emergency situation of Indian politics in 1970s have been reversed. As West Bengal state election result showed today the Congress in Bengal assembly will be the main opposition and the Left Front have to accept whatever rank Congress gives to their MLA's in the state assembly oppositional force!

However the concerted joint effort of the CPI(M) led Left Front and the Indian National Congress is going to continue in the state of West Bengal as revealed after the jointly held meeting of the party leaders of the Left and the Congress. Whenever we talk of Left-Congress alliance one political figure is sure to be remembered that of S. A. Dange. At a time when BJP government entering low ebb after two year tenure at the Centre Left-Congress alliance need to be circulated and practiced widely across the country in all states and only then there will not be any question of deviation from usual practice of opposing the Congress. The Left leaders brand this hot and cold relation with the Congress in different states as strategy according to the actual situation of the concerned states. This is absolutely wrong strategy in the context of Indian situation and this will raise eyebrows about following double standards. What happened suddenly before the West

Bengal Assembly election is a dramatisation of Dange-line but what needs to be done is correct de-coding of Dange line. The present strategy of the Left-Congress leadership of continuous joint oppositional moves is the beginning of such de-coding as reflected in the latest municipal polls. Maybe win remained a far cry but the attempt was practically and theoretically rooted.

Public Politics in West Bengal: From Passive Revolution to Active Engagement

Charles Tilly in the book *Trust and Rule* argues that “the quality of public politics in one regime or another depends significantly on relations between people's basic trust networks and rulers' strategies of rule. *Public politics*, in this sense, includes all externally visible interactions among constituted political actors and agents of government”¹⁰ (Tilly, 2005: 4). Given the contemporary history of West Bengal a politicised management of the society is in vogue in the state that could lead to scholars like Partha Chatterjee to come up with the idea of Political Society and Dwaipayan Bhattacharyay with the idea of Party Society. The Left Front regime in its last phase and the first tenure of TMC government manifested this politicization to a large extent with a difference, while the Left regime depended more on the intelligentsia the TMC regime depended on the masses at the fringe of society, culture, politics and economy. TMC regime witnessed some sort of a counter upsurge of the left out of the Left regime. The externally visible interaction during the Left regime was that of distance between the leaders and the ruled (both being satisfied with their dignified position) and thereby the public were always in a passive revolution mode (passive because the party was there to lead with a revolutionary zeal). Jump cut to TMC regime one can see a free flow of activities on the part of the public leading sometime to rain soaked frenzy mass rallies and at other times to lawless acts. Every section of the society seemed to cut loose freely engaging with the society and politics of the state. Particularly the large voter turnout in the last assembly election keeping faith on the freeness of the TMC reveals that public politics in West Bengal underwent a transformation – from passive revolution to active engagement. However when the public is more active they are also more vigilant and demanding and hence it would lead to more worries for the TMC government to bring a better administrative state.

Conclusion

Some kind of a history started in 2011 in West Bengal with the victory of the Trinamool Congress. That was the history of change. Five years down the line in 2016 dissatisfaction with the Trinamool Congress administration scored more than the satisfaction with the intention of Trinamool Congress. Everyone was expecting an end of history in 2016 assembly elections. The opposition got united, media anticipated a win for the opposition or a win for the TMC with a minor edge, public were disillusioned about the outcome of the election. The result was unprecedented and there was no new history but the old history escalating to new heights with TMC emerging as the first political party in the state history to single headedly win 212 seats out of 294 seats. The public individually acted as a rational fool anticipating the other to bring the revolution by putting the regime down and collectively gave the TMC more than expected result. Presently West Bengal politics is surely a politics of end times – experience of TMC governmental management of five

years gives nothing to be cheerful about, opposition politics is in the astray, civil society activities remains shallow and media turned out to be the game-plotter than the game-changer, the new tenure of TMC has also not yet evolved fully and there is the hyper-nationalist BJP wave. Is there any ray of light for a new politics in West Bengal? The answer is short and simple – new Left politics based on ideology of strategy as against the old Left politics based on ideology of ideas together with the genetic feature of public politics of West Bengal rooted in tolerance and secularism can somehow steer clear the end times.

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Re-contextualizing the Medieval Indian Past: Vernacular Narrative Traditions

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I

Narratives, the ways of telling stories, change according to time, space and the inclinations and preoccupations of the narrator. These changing narratives, when seen historically, reveal the conditions of the time, politically, socially, and within the prevailing literary culture. Vernacular traditions may assume the existence of a dominant literary tradition that sets the norms of literary production. Thus, at the outset, when defined, vernacular appears as deviations from a standard, as corruptions, alternative renderings, as external to a norm, or viewed as a 'derivative' discourse that vulgarizes the canon. Vernacular narrations feature as part of the 'low' traditions vis-à-vis an established, dominant 'high' tradition. Alternatively, it is these very vernacular traditions that ruffle the ostensibly smooth narrative of the dominant, and in some cases, politically assert a resistance against the norm. As a response to changing political rule, social setting and cultural traditions, this form of resistance from within competing literary cultures takes the form of a political movement of vernacularism. In the case of the emergence of the colonial state and its assertions of historicity within the subcontinent, proliferation of vernacular traditions can be seen as one such way of resisting the oppressive nature of the structure of colonial rule.

It is at this juncture that one needs to see the political potential and the reach of vernacular traditions and the role played by competing narrative traditions in imagining, conceptualizing and representing voices of self-assertion and dissent that allow us to reconstruct multiple voices and perspectives of past(s). To begin with, vernacular narrative traditions require definition. In the case of the subcontinent, one finds that regional literary cultures emerged alongside the political reordering of the subcontinent into regional polities. Arguing for the protracted process of vernacularization, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam came to be symbols of political assertions and regional movements. From the twelfth century onwards, Bhakti literature utilized the vernacular as a symbol of resistance by breaking conventions set by the dominant Sanskrit tradition. Tracing the interrelated developments of colonialism, the changing cultural milieu and the resistance to the effort to forcefully break open traditions exposed to the Western gaze, the proliferation of vernacular literary traditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its utilization as a tool of resistance, according to K N Panikkar, can be located as part of the resistance against the assertions of colonial power. Thus, this forces us to acknowledge the political and ideological motivations of denigrating the existing narrative traditions as ahistorical and irrational by colonial historiography up till the twentieth century. These traditions seen from the perspective of the colonizer sees the inferiority of the subject, the colonized, thus, colonizing the mind. Indian lack of 'historical sense' seen from within the prism of Western rationality allowed for the

legitimation of the political colonization of the subcontinent. Thus, there is a need to see vernacular traditions not merely as alternative voices from within a brahmanical culture but also as contending against claims of political colonization.

Marking a distinction between the *embedded* forms of history and those accounts that are visibly historical, Romila Thapar draws our attention to evidence that reveals historical consciousness within literary forms over time. Between embedded forms of historical consciousness and externalized history, she finds that, “the degree to which forms change or overlap has a bearing on dominant social formation. Similarly, major social and political changes influence the form of historical consciousness even though there is no mechanical correlation between the two”¹. Thus, changing forms of expression can be seen as responding to changing political forms in society, revealing changing historical consciousness, and symbolizing historical change. Keeping this in mind, vernacular narrative traditions can be read as reflecting an expanding vocabulary and increasing political distinctiveness across regions.

II

An assessment of vernacular narrative traditions requires sensitivity towards the impact of literary traditions on the political, social, and cultural milieu of the time. As in the case of medieval historiography for the subcontinent, the Sanskrit *puranas*, Persian literary culture of the courts, and literary traditions in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and other languages allow us to imagine a proliferation of literature that spoke to each other as well as developing an audience within. Thus, forms of knowledge spoke many languages while the content of these varied across languages. Arguing for a *vernacular millennium* across regions as in the case of Europe and the Indian subcontinent revealing a kind of cosmopolitanism, Sheldon Pollock found that these traditions were produced to reveal a distinctive kind of modernity in India. He finds that,

*“Vernacular literary cultures were initiated by the conscious decisions of writers to reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe by renouncing the larger world for the smaller place, and they did so in full awareness of the significance of their decision. New, local ways of making culture - with their wholly historical and factitious local identities - and, concomitantly, new ways of ordering society and polity came into being, replacing the older translocalism. These developments in culture and power are historically linked, at the very least by the fact that using a new language for communicating literarily to a community of readers and listeners can consolidate if not create that very community, as both a sociotextual and a political formation.”*²

An assessment of these traditions requires comparative study of literary practices as part of historical assessment that takes into account cosmopolitan and vernacular conflicts visible in the literary records. The vernacular has its own forms of historical consciousness that contend for space within conceptualizations. When looking at medieval literature and the development of literary culture in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the Peninsula, it becomes important to take into account the lived experience of the time and the intended audience of the texts. Tamil

texts like *Tirukkural* find resonance even in the present context and can be seen as having undergone continuous change over centuries preceding the sixteenth century. These become part of the living traditions of a time and impact the ways in which we see the social, class, caste and cultural context from within which they emerge. The impact of this text dated earliest to the fifth century CE can be seen in the development of Tamil as a language and as part of the 'received histories of Tamil language and literature'³. The secular nature of this text is asserted even to this day revealing a particularity to vernacular traditions that appear to deal with works on moral questions yet without remaining preoccupied with spiritual or religious roots. Keeping this in mind, Rao and Subrahmanyam force us to look at the history of certain ideas and conceptualizations, affected by political considerations, shaping narrative traditions in various vernacular languages. As in the case of medieval South India, the shifting political climate of fragmentation and regional consolidation brought to fore the need for texts on the idea of morals and *dharma*. Here, *niti* texts came to be written keeping in mind regional and linguistic specificities. In historiography, these texts were only marginally acknowledged even as they continued to change form, reflect on the political realities of the time, and provided a sense of the moral considerations linked to a specific rule. This can be clearly seen in the Telugu *niti* texts from the Kakatiya rule and later the normative texts on kingship and statecraft from the Vijayanagara period. The changing nature of rule becomes visible in the *niti* texts as, 'the emergence of the Nayakas from the flexible and uncertain political conditions in the post-Krishnadevaraya period is reflected in the *niti* texts of the time'⁴. The ways in which the medieval past saw itself can be seen even more clearly in the importance given to those professionally associated with the literary world as scribes and officials. With the emergence of 'a new group of people who made writing their profession, ... as a politically and culturally important group'⁵, *karanams* in the Andhra region, one finds the shifts within societal structures and political spaces to accommodate and elevate those belonging to a literary culture that was gaining visibility and power through networks of patronage and legitimacy.

III

Notion of power attached to these considerations between vernacular and dominant traditions, as the concept of secularism remains attached to texts of historical worth. Negotiation of power within and between texts needs to be seen. Was social and political power only embedded in Sanskrit texts? Literature from medieval South India force us to come to terms with texts contesting expressions of power over patronage, popularity, reach and recognition in contestation with Sanskrit literature from the Gangetic plains, Persian literature and Anglican works. Notions associated with vernacular literature like that of being seen as without structure and open, as not belonging to the public space available in the regional courts, lacking historical consciousness and a sense of the past were regularly broken down as the vernacular literary narrative took shape as part of the popular culture of the time. The function of vernacular literature expanded alongside its expanding vocabulary as it began to come to terms with defining the cultural and geographic space is occupied within the subcontinent and its contending literary traditions. Thus, an assessment of vernacular traditions would allow us a sense of how geographical spaces were

imagined and articulated reflecting an understanding of the political climate of the time. Here, Janaki Nair looks at two texts as part of the history of Mysore as,

“Developing a sensitivity to the many forms taken by history in the period before colonialism (which set the standard for professional historical practice to follow) is more important than dismissing the mythic, fantastic, or poetic elements of such writing.”⁶

She marks late-eighteenth century Mysore as a period of transition towards colonial modernity that reveals literature that remained historical aware of the impact of the colonizing powers to varying degrees in its treatment of the rule and military achievements of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. Remarking on the impact of historiographical traditions on the ways in which we see the past,

“By the nineteenth century then, colonial historiographical efforts to discredit the achievements of the implacable enemy, Tipu Sultan, were matched by a revived demand for genealogies and hagiographies that followed the installation of the Wodeyars on the throne of Mysore and which set the tone for a wide range of histories written by professional historians well into the twentieth century. A new nationalist history, in some accounts, emerged fully formed only in the twentieth century in response to the impetus of linguistic nationalism, though this too was marked by its ‘laudatory’ qualities.”⁷

She forces us to see the production of the text in its time and also attempts to view the text in the way it viewed the future. This effort to historicize the text in its present and the changing ways in which it has been seen since allows for us to recognize the impact of political conditions in our perspectives of the past. Here, the text, written in Kannada at a time of political flux in the Peninsula between the Marathas, the colonial powers, the remnants of the regional Nayakas of the Vijayanagara rule, and local high caste families with political ambitions like the Wodeyars, were seen as part of the political powers of the time with varying intentions and interests across the subcontinent. These texts spoke to this medieval theater of political contestation and military confrontation in the language of political legitimacy to rule, as reflections of the prevailing ideals of kingship and statecraft, and finally as part of the geographical limits it could imagine in the Peninsula and thus needs to be seen in its time and location.

IV

Moving towards Marathi literature in the medieval period, the utilization of *bakhar* literature to assess sense of regional and community Marathi identity on the basis of a linguistic affiliation reveals how a regional political rule under Shivaji integrated and brought together the collective imagining of the Marathi people as belonging to a unified community. The medieval origins of the Maratha identity as one community have now been extended to profess a much longer past that inherits the legacy of Shivaji as the martial ideologue and ruler of a linguistic community collapsing social, cultural, linguistic and political identities as part of the larger history of the

region. An assessment of *bakhar* literature as a vernacular source for the history of the Marathas reveals the socio-political structures of rule that shaped the content and function of the narrative tradition and the ways in which it has been seen, its claims to historicity, and its historical validity as a source of Maratha's "own history". Sumit Guha recognizes the impact of the regional traditions as well as the impact of the Persian courtly literary tradition in the narrative tradition embodied by *bakhar* texts. Warning against the total claims of narratives taken as historical fact, as in the case of the epic tradition and the later puranic literature leading to controversies over sites like Ayodhya in the last decades of the twentieth century, Guha reveals the distinctiveness of *bakhars* as they speak of competing claims in the legal sphere while continuing to remain within the same literary and cultural milieu. These texts produced within the social and public setting of the time, allowed for the creation of a Maratha identity. He finds that,

*"Perhaps the history of the Marathi bakhars suggests an answer. These narratives emerged in settings where the historian did not stand forth as a judge: rather, he (rarely, she) spoke as a plaintiff, a defendant, and sometimes a witness. Narratives were often produced in judicial disputes over heritable property. So they contested alternative stories and sought to ground themselves in witness testimony, documentary evidence, and the "common knowledge" of the local community. That community itself was usually religiously, culturally, and linguistically diverse.... I propose that the larger setting for these discourses was the interaction of expanding royal power and resilient local society in the early modern era. This setting led peasant proprietors and great nobles alike to develop coherent narratives of local pasts."*⁸

This identity remained tied to a community identity as well as a regional identity. Thus, a space came to be defined culturally, politically, symbolically and in the mind. Prachi Deshpande reminds us that these texts validate its own sense of history. Here, the significance of memory and history and the ways in which it is constructed and imagined in the mind, reveals different ways of locating the self and different kinds of common sense as part of our cultural perspective of the world around us. Locating vernacular literature within the domain of the popular and accessible, Deshpande examines these traditions and the ways in which it entered the colonial archive while revealing a lack of historical consciousness. By looking not merely at the literary tradition in isolation but also the ways in which it shaped a sense of history for a community, *bakhar* invoked common knowledge and social norms already established within the local communities. By the nineteenth century, she finds that this narrative tradition remained conscious of the historiographical tradition from within which it came, it accepted the conventions that authenticated the narratives, and made claims to a political and legal legitimacy that emerged from the society and its moral norms from within which it emerged.

V

Returning to the far south of the subcontinent, the literary traditions within medieval Kerala reveal a distinct form of political and social formation. The seventeenth century text *Keralolpatti* seen as a text revealing historical consciousness needs to be seen despite the colonial claims of ahistoricity.

Utilizing RomilaThapar's definition of a sense of history, KesavanVeluthat argues for the embedded nature of historical consciousness that needs to be teased out through historical investigation sensitive to the cultural particularities of the narrative tradition in hand. Keeping in mind the lack of *prasastis* as source of history in Kerala where inscriptional records are largely absent, this text reveals the hegemony of the Brahmins in an ostensibly matrilineal society. The late political consolidation of the region is revealed in the literature that attempts to imagine a unified geographical identity shaped by the migrations of Brahmins from the north over centuries. This history of migrations is traced through the text that speaks of three stages of history and symbolisms of resistance and negotiations between those within and those entering these lands over time. Thus, these narratives cannot be seen as reflecting a homogenous tradition but as a product of a vigorous kind of social formation and interaction based on regional considerations. As in the case of Bengal, these historical narratives were seen as significance to create a sense of regional identity, to validate a sense of the past, for an ownership over a past, and give a community a sense of purpose.

Vernacular traditions, across regions, from Kashmir, Punjab, Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the disparate parts of this subcontinent contests the view projects homogeneity as well as disturbs the binary of regional as opposed to national history visible in the discursive framework available to us. The subjectivity of the tradition, the author, the political condition, the audience and the ways in which we understand it today, are shaped in the volatile political setting of this subcontinent and shape the ways in which vernacular narrative traditions are seen. Existing competing traditions exasperate the conflicts and provide fertile ground for the creation and development of literary traditions even today. These continue to provide exciting ways of looking at the past within academia and reflect the diversity of the political climate that shapes our past. As students of history, it becomes our responsibility to see how these different traditions are shaped and negotiate a sense of collective understanding. Thus, it becomes significant for us to keep in mind that,

*“Even falsehood has the nature of truth,
if it confer a benefit that is free from fault.”⁹*

Notes

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Post Independence Portrayal of Women in the Short Stories of Mannu Bhandari-Tradition and Modernity

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Post-independence many women writers started writing with the aim of representing themselves in a style challenging the stereotyping of women in fiction and the patriarchal depiction of womanhood. Instead they do come out of confinement and address the world from their perspective. Among Hindi women writers the name of Mannu Bhandari can be considered in this regard. Mannu Bhandari has successfully depicted her microscopic observations on Indian social values in her short fiction. She has contributed to the genre of Hindi short story by intimate portrayals of man-woman relationship. Bhandari's women characters are depicted performing different gender roles as daughter, young college girl, unmarried woman, wife and mother. Some of them rise above this traditionally assigned role while some of them belong to the traditional roles. As pointed out by Anita Myles, a woman's experiences of life as a member of a gender based society formulate her psyche. Moreover, she is bound by certain other factors such as her individual circumstances, society's expectation related to age, class, race etc. ¹ Thus each woman's experience of life is different and therefore, unique. It is well known that the Indian society is today passing through a phase of transition. The changes that we witness in contemporary Indian society have been brought about by a gradual process of modernisation as a result of the reform movements in India from nineteenth century onwards and the development programmes launched in India in the post-independence era. Women education has had a deep impact on their outlook and a radical transformation has set in. In fact, a new concept of womanhood is gradually emerging in India which is at loggerheads with the traditional concept of domesticity. Thus in modern age people are accepting the importance of education for girls. She is even encouraged to study further as her higher education would make her an economically independent person.

Mannu Bhandari has given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the family and society. The discriminating socio-cultural values, attitudes and practice which cripple the personalities of the female psyche are highlighted in her stories. In her shorter fiction women seem to work within social restrictions. Mannu Bhandari portrays a wide range of feminine characters from conventional to the rebellious. In other words the portrayal of woman in her shorter fiction is characterized by contradictions. There is a conventional image and at the same time a protesting voice. Since its commencement, along with the archetypal images, there are images of protesting woman also.

The aim of the present study is to highlight the values which are shaping the outlook of women who have received the benefit of education and who have been exposed to modern influence in the urban setting. They not only share social responsibilities with men but also contribute financially. It therefore appears imperative to make an assessment of the impact the changing time has left on Indian society with special reference to the portrayal of woman in the short-stories of Mannu Bhandari. Despite such changes, the ideal of Sita, Savitry, the Pativrata Stri, is the ideal she strives to achieve. This stereotyped image of wife has been very well portrayed in some of the stories of Mannu Bhandari. The stories suggest through these characters that there is a greater chance of happiness for women if they learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves. In these stories, the women protagonists bring about a concrete change in woman's life.

Mannu Bhandari is very conscious of the unfair situation prevailing in society with regard to women. There are several incidents in this collection which subtly prove that woman has always been playing the role of a perfect wife in order to keep her husband and his family happy. Since childhood they have been nurtured in traditional patterns which sharply define the male/female pattern of behaviour. The woman protagonists in some of the stories of Mannu Bhandari achieve 'personhood'. They go beyond what Elaine Showalter calls the 'Female Phase' which is a phase of self-discovery and identity formation.²

Adolescence and Turmoil

Bhandari explores the girl's sufferings as well as her efforts to harmonize the native and the acquired ideas as well as her problem after education. Bhandari is aware of the different yardsticks for men and women in Indian society. She has presented some glaring examples of gender sensitivity prevailing in our society. Restrictions on a girl's movements are enforced as soon as she reaches puberty and is snubbed time and again. The moment girl reaches adolescence; she is reminded of her femininity. She has highlighted the plight of a girl in the following story who becomes the victim not only of cruel patriarchy but also of blind judicial system. The story 'Saza' reflects the pathetic life of a promising young girl Asha. Her father is falsely caught under the charge of embezzlement of rupees twenty five thousands. Asha has left the school bus and she walks three miles to reach the school.³

[I have also left school bus. Three miles I walked. Whether it was summer or monsoon; not a single wrinkle of dislike came on my face.]

The situation in her home becomes very miserable as the court has announced two years punishment to her father. Her grandfather has to work hard to fulfill the family of his son. Meanwhile Asha's younger brother Munna is sent to her uncle's home in the village for study and Asha is also sent to village to help her aunt and care for her brother. Asha has to leave her study

and work hard at her uncle's house in village. As she becomes an expert in house hold chores he thinks :

[Father and mother always thought me as a child so I couldn't grow up. Here how much grown up I am. I can cook food for seven people twice a day. Not only food but total house hold chores are being done. The girls who studied with me, let them tell to any house hold work! But why should they do all this? May God never show them such bad days!] ⁴

[In village sometimes, when my mother forced me to do household work, my father angrily told: I will make Asha a doctor, send her to foreign, do I spoil my daughter's life?]

Cruel destiny and social system took a toll on the life of a girl whose dreams never come true. Though in the end court announced its judgment and makes Asha's father free from accusation, Asha's life remains scattered and off the track. Mannu Bhandari through this story highlighted the ageold patriarchal norms where there is a strict code of conduct to be followed by girls regarding their dress, speech and behavior because of the gender. She is made conscious of her gender since childhood. The traditional feminine virtues and graces are instilled in her so that she could be an attractive 'commodity' in the marriage market. The story presents a meek, docile picture of a young girl who is forced to undergo maximum hardship and forego her own life's dreams for the sake of her brother's education.

In the story 'Ek Kamjor Ladki ki Kahani', a young girl is made weak enough not to put her brave thoughts into action just because from her childhood she is treated under the strict control of parents on the name of tradition. In a typical Indian set-up, daughter is considered a burden to be eased, a problem to be solved, a responsibility to be dispensed with and a person who has no right to any choice in life. And as Veena Das puts it, "... Once a daughter is properly married and goes to her own house it is like a debt that has been paid." ⁵

Roop's mother died of heart attack when she was in the school. Her father Ramesh babu marries again and under the supervision of step mother Tara Devi, Roop is maturing. Once her step mother tells her father that there is nothing sensible in school teaching, so her father decides to discontinue her schooling and arranges a teacher to teach Roop at home. Roop silently accepts her father's decision though in her mind she objects a lot. Slowly instead of learning she has to work hard in the home. Roop's father observes that,

'Dhire Dhire ghar ka saara kaam ek ke baad ek Tara devi ke kandho se sarakkar Roop par aata gay aaur Vah bhi bina virodh kie chupchap sab ku chodhati chaligayi. Chand dino me hi vah vidyarthi se guruhasthin ban gai.' ,sup>6

[Slowly, one after the other, all household responsibilities are sliding from the shoulders of Tara Devi to Roop and she is also accepting all these silently without any oppose. Within few days she has been changed from student to house holder.]

Thus instead of studying at home she has to do house hold work at home. The entire purpose of shifting Roop from school to home is to make Roop psychologically weak by the restrictions of her step mother. So her father decides to send her at her maternal uncle's home for further study. When Roop comes to know about her father's decision she says to herself,

'Apana ghar kyon chhodu, school bhi chhudva diya, itna kaam bhi karti hun, phirbhi ye log muje apne ghar nahi rakhna chahte.' ⁷

[Why should I leave my own home, they forced to leave me school also, I also do this much household chore, though they don't want to keep me here.]

Whatever be the age, the girl has to follow the decisions and orders of patriarchy. Here Roop also protests in her mind but she has to accept her father's decisions silently and has to go to her maternal uncle's home. She feels that as if their parents have displaced her from her home. Roop is sent to her maternal uncle, who is a doctor, where an orphan boy Lalit is also living with them. Within a short time she mixes with the atmosphere and gets first class in metric with the help of Lalit. Lalit expresses his love towards Roop and goes abroad for higher education. Roop's marriage has been decided by her father with Vakil Saheb who is generous by nature but workaholic enough to engage in his work. Here she also thinks to oppose the proposal of marriage but she submits to the will of elders. One day, after her marriage, Lalit comes to meet her and decides to run away with Roop. First Roop opposes Lalit's proposal but later she accepts it and they plan to run away. On that night, Vakil Saheb tells Roop about an incident in which his friend's educated wife has run away with her lover and also expresses his feelings on his wife Roop's nobility that she is noble enough not to be with other men. Thus, Roop gives up the idea of running away with Lalit. Thus the writer has projected Roop as a weak, docile character who is ready to submit to other's will which is the outcome of tradition and sanskaras. As a girl she is told to mold herself according to her gender roles. Thus, since childhood she is exposed to traditional patterns which presumably supposed that the daughter will have to lead a sacrificing and submissive life. It is indoctrinated in the girl-child to play the role of a disciplined daughter, a meek and submissive wife on which restrictions are forced upon.

Invariably in Indian society parents and especially mother restricts her girl child and makes her conscious of her gender and instills the ideas of what's permissible and what's not. But the story Trishanku is a different kind of story portraying the picture of young girl Tanu. She is encouraged to be friendly with boys by her parents. Mannu Bhandari has tactfully juxtaposed the two mindsets in one mother, as if she is the victim of split personality due to which the daughter gets confused. Trishanku is the story about modernized couple and their teenager girl, Tanu. They believe that they are free from traditional belief system. Tanu's parents had a love marriage and for that Tanu's mother had to revolt against her father which she openly discusses dramatically.

Tanu's mother boasts about her modernized and open-minded outlook which seems to be a cut out role for Tanu as well. One day Tanu feels that she has become matured she thinks:

Palte-palte ek din achanak badi ho gayi. Bade hone ka yah ahesaas mere apne bhitari se itna nahi foota jitna baharse. ⁸

[By being brought up, one day suddenly I become matured. The feeling of being younger is not sprung from inside as it is from outside.]

One day the young boys, living in opposite house pass remark on Tanu, when she is standing in her Verandah. Having felt awkward Tanu tells her mother about this and to her surprise the mother invited the boys over tea as she is an ultra-modern lady.

One of the boys, Shekhar gets interested in Tanu, regularly comes home and their friendship slowly turns into love affair. Soon her parents become conscious of their closeness and one day Tanu's mother doesn't permit her to go with Shekhar in cinema. Tanu cannot understand her mother's behaviour. Her mother angrily scolds Tanu about her relations with Shekhar. Bhandari eloquently portrays the picture of a teenager girl who neither understands social moral values properly nor can she comprehend what modernity means. She only follows the emotions she feels in this age of transition in the presence of opposite sex. Bhandari also presents here the so called hypocrisy and generation gap. Instead of understanding her daughter's need, the mother behaves under the illusion of fake modernity and pseudo broad mindedness. This dual standard of her mother confuses Tanu who does not understand her mother's contradictory behavior. 'Nana puri tarah nana the - shat- pratishat- aur isi se mummy ke liye ladna kitna aasan ho gaya hoga. Par in mummy se lada bhi kaise jaye jo ek pal nana ho kar jiti hai to ek pal mummy ho kar.' ⁹

[Maternal grandfather was totally what he was- hundred percent- and that is how it was easy for mummy to fight with him. But how will I fight with this mother who lives one moment as maternal grandfather and lives as mummy for another moment.]

Mannu Bhandari authentically presents this inner conflict of a teenager girl who like the society at large is undergoing postmodern dilemma .

Premarital Anxiety of Young Woman

The conditions of modern life in the national and international contexts have unleashed rootlessness of a very complex nature. The individual often feels alienated and regards himself /herself as a stranger in the material world. It has rightly been called 'The Age of Alienation'. Edmund Fuller rightly proclaims that 'Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem a conviction, of isolation, randomness, [and] meaninglessness in his way of existence.' ¹⁰

Mannu Bhandari, having experienced different phases of women in different roles, has reflected the same in her fiction through her female characters. Women occupy a central place in Bhandari's short stories. She has poignantly portrayed the urge to find one self, to create space for oneself, to

grow on one's own. While dealing with such unconventional type of role played by her women characters, Bhandari was conscious of the change that is going on in the world which also has an impact on the role and status of Indian women.

Social reforms influenced by pioneers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchand Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi and the colonial social reform policy and education policy had its great impact on the status of women in Indian society. Besides, the Western influence, coming through liberal education, forced new values and norms of life upon women. This change is very well noticed in some of her characters when they try to voice their problems and protest against injustice done to them. Such women overthrow all the taboos ordained by male-dominated society. Sometimes they are projected as turbulent images of modernity. They refuse to let themselves be overshadowed by any consideration, social, cultural or gender and move in the direction of freedom.

Bhandari portrays the emotional state of women through the story Ghutan, which presents the suffocation of a young girl Mona who loves a young man and wants to marry him against her widow mother's desire. Mannu Bhandari presents two women in this story, one is Pratima who is married and feels suffocation due to her married life and other is Mona who is also suffocated due to her unfulfilled desire to marry a man of her choice. Thus Bhandari appropriately juxtaposes two different women suffering in same suffocation due to different reasons. Mona, the elder daughter is the only earning member of her family. Her sister and brother are still learning. Mona is the neighbor of Pratima who is a teacher in school whose husband is in navy and comes once in a year for a month. Mona is in love with Aroop and both decide to marry but Mona's mother disapproves this due to her selfish interest.

'Par Mona ki ma nahi chahati ki Mona use byah kare. Mona byah karlegi to uske chote bhai-baheno ko kaun palega, buddhi ki bimari ka kharcha kaha se aayega?'¹¹

[But Mona's mother does not want that Mona marries him. If Mona marries then who will bring up her younger siblings from where will the expense of aged's sickness come?]

Thus Mona is considered as an instrument to earn income in the house so much so that even her mother doesn't care for her emotions and desires. Pratima on the other hand can't stand her husband's drinking and other bad habits and is suffocated by the thought that she has to live with her husband for one month. Thus, both the protagonists in the story Ghutan suffocate due to different reasons. Pratima is feeling free without her husband and Mona is feeling free by the idea of marrying with Aroop.

In the story 'JitiBazikiHaa'r Bhandari presents three female friends Nalini, Asha and Murala are living in their separate world of literary idealism and intellectual discussions, believe in individuality and think that marriage kills individuality. Nalini during vacation comes into contact with a professor of university and her family members decide her marriage with him. Asha also

marries a poet, but Murala firmly believes in her idealistic attitude and develops her carrier and becomes a lecturer. When she prepares her third chapter of thesis she meets Asha in hospital with her new born daughter. When Asha asks her when will you marry? she answers :

‘Vah sab tum logo ko hi mubarak ho. Shaadi karke mein apneVyaktitva ko nahi bechsakti.’

[It all belongs to you. I cannot sell my personality by marrying.]

Asha replies her that this is not a business of loss and profit. ¹²

[At one time I also thought this but not now. The price at which we are selling our personality is good enough that deal is not in loss. Perhaps without children life is incomplete.]

Murala argues with Asha and Asha insists that she will have to marry, whatever her thinking is and whatever her ideologies were. She challenges Murala's decision by saying that ‘woman needs one companion, one support and needs children. Higher then higher education ...’ Murala replies that though people understand me as a weak but I am strong enough to live life without any support. They bet that winner will get whatever she wants form looser.

After fifteen years when they both meet, Asha takes Murala at her home where she is enjoying company of her children. Murala was unmarried and since she had won the bet, Asha insists on fulfilling Murala's wish. Murala asks for Asha's five year daughter which shows that though she had won the bet she had actually lost it. Despite Murala's higher education degree, desired profession, respect and financial independence there existed an emptiness in her emotional world which could be filled by the presence of a child

Thus Mannu Bhandari depicts the picture of strong willed career oriented woman whose essence requires emotional satisfaction. Here Bhandari opens one more layer of woman’s psyche that if it is not only others who are responsible for woman’s suffering. She herself sometimes, is responsible for suffering which is indicative of her vulnerable personality.

Predicament and pain are generated due to the traditional social attitudes. Women have started recognizing the need for change, but at the same time they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them. The society presented in these stories is undergoing transitions where economically independent woman could have choices in life as Murala in ‘Jeeti Bazi ki Haar’ but economic independence does not mean emotional independence so she has to ask for Asha's daughter as she feels incomplete without her own biological child. However in some of her stories she has exposed their passivity, anxiety and confusion. In Ghutan the woman is economical independent but due to confusion and her mother's attitude she cannot put her thoughts into reality. Kunti in ‘Ek Kamjor Ladki ki Kahani’ has to be passive against her father's physical sickness. Mannu Bhandari very skillfully delineates both the kinds of women. Some of them

consciously or unconsciously allow themselves to be marginalized by the traditional pattern while some of them oppose them.

Thus, Mannu Bhandari has convincingly portrayed two kinds of women: women with the awareness and women without the awareness of their 'self'. The former category of women follow the path decided by the parents and continue the tradition, while the women with the awareness of the self, defy the age old convention and do not succumb to the diktat of their family. They are self-assertive, determined and believe that there should be 'a place of their own'. Such girls seem to deconstruct the age-old idea of gender roles. In other words some of the women characters of everyday life try to assert themselves in their desire for a career. If Bhandari has portrayed the meek and submissive woman in some short stories, she has also projected bold and sometimes radical women. But the tragedy continues to plague even those who aspire freedom, as they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them and yearn to dutifully play the role as the wife, mother, daughter etc. Bhandari has succeeded in her endeavor of creating an awareness about the existing inequalities in society.

A Working Woman's Predicament

While traditionally, woman was confined to the household work but the pressing economic needs, the education of the woman and the changing concept of work-values have enabled the woman to seek employment opportunity outside home. Career is the sphere in which a person's individuality is expressed and rewarded. The career not only accords her a new status in the family but also demands new adjustments in her personal and social life. This aspect of working woman is delineated in different ways by Mannu Bhandari in some of her short stories.

'Kamre, Kamara, Kamare' is the story of a woman whose life is restricted to rooms. Here room is symbolized as an unseen system of controls and restrictions which is silently imposed on the protagonist Nilu. She shoulders all the responsibilities of her family because of ill health of her mother. Her house has five rooms but none of them is in order. The five rooms are used for all kind of activities. In this disorder Nilu feels,

= 'Jab tak vah ghar mein rahati hai, vah panch kamaro aur chathi raso me banti-bikhari rahati hai.'¹³

Nilu passes her master degree exam with first class and gets job as a lecturer in Delhi College, where she is given one room in ladies hostel which she is sharing with Mira Patel. Within short period Mira becomes Nilu's fast friend. Now Nilu lives in one room. Mira goes to United States and again Nilu feels loneliness in this one room of college hostel. After marriage to Srinivas she shifts to his four rooms flat .of Srinivas. On his insistence she also leaves her job and joins his office in which she moves among seven rooms of office. Thus in office and at home she slowly

losses her individuality and identity. Her degree of Ph.D., her papers in conferences and so many other creative activities are ended under the work pressure of her husband's office. Thus an academician becomes a business woman. One day she comes across an article by Mira Patel in newspaper on the subject which was her favorite topic and she feels quite helpless that she cannot do any more academic work as a her individual identity is slowly broken and merged. Mannu Bhandari beautifully portrays a picture of a woman who hardly finds room for her at her father's home where there were five rooms. Her creativity and individuality flourishes when she has a room of her own in hostel but after marriage, with individuality she also loses her creativity as well as desire to write articles on different subjects, under the responsibilities assigned by her husband. This presents an image of a wife who becomes a mere puppet in the hands of patriarchal authority and make her servile.

The self-sacrificing image of woman is very well depicted in the story 'Nayi Naukari'. The protagonist, Rama leaves not only her job for her husband's transferred job but she has to forgo her promotion also. Rama has been working as a lecturer of history in college since ten years but has to resign to satisfy her husband's wishes. Kundan insists that she entertain higher officials from abroad at her home by serving Indian food and hospitality and taking care of house and it is in her husband's promotion that she should find her satisfaction.

Rama has to erase her individuality for enriching her husband's personality in his new aristocratic circle. The individual in her is in a state of turmoil as a mother, wife and above all as an Indian woman. The writer's analysis of her character brings out the real problem to our view. She is in search of her 'being' which is lost in the artificial life of her husband. She fails to find her real self in the life she is living. The story very clearly presents the male counterpart as a typical Indian who considers himself the lord and master with dominating nature and wife as a submissive one, not independent to take decisions.

Traditionally, education of women was not at all considered important. But these stories indicate that the trend is towards modernity and a dear departure from tradition. Regarding educating their daughter, the families in these stories are in favour of giving higher education to their daughters, to enable them to stand on their own feet at the time of emergency. These educated women no longer want to remain confined to household duties but are keen on entering public life. The majority of them are interested in taking up a career. They do not consider themselves inferior to men.

These women characters stand for a feminist affirmation of woman's strength. The society presented in these stories is certainly one going through transitions where at least economically independent woman could have choices in life. They are dignified, self-reliant women leading a meaningful life of conviction. However in some of her stories she has exposed their passivity, anxiety and confusion. Somewhere she has tried to make her womencharacters stronger than they are in real life. They have started recognizing the need for change, but at the same time they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them. In short, Mannu

Bhandari very skilfully tries to delineate both the kinds of women. Some of them consciously or unconsciously allow themselves to be marginalized by the traditional pattern while some of them oppose them openly. Mannu Bhandari has portrayed a traditional image of wife who has been subordinated by the patriarchal culture which forces woman to internalise these concepts in the process of their socialization. As Simone de Beauvoir observes,

‘One is not born woman, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature..... which is described as feminine.’¹⁴

If all these stories are taken together, it appears that women in Mannu Bhandari's stories are initially conventional, but emerge as non-conformist through the course of the story. She has tried to depict Indian woman in the domestic sphere who has no voice even in the decision related to important events of her life. Marginalization of woman as daughter, wife, mother, is clearly indicated in her stories. Some of them even challenge the institution of marriage which proves to be a hindrance in her self-respect and individually. They do not compromise with the situation. They find self-fulfillment more important than anything else. It is also observed that when these women are in search of self-fulfillment, they become stronger and are ready to fight obstacles. Most of her stories do not end up glorifying the stereotypical virtues of Indian woman, like patience, devotion and submission, and they explode the myth of man's unquestionable superiority and the myth of woman being a martyr and pure. Mannu Bhandari has given convincing portrayals of women from middle class families. She is sexually stereotyped by the conservative attitude. She is psychologically accustomed by the norms laid down by the traditional culture.

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A Brutal Act of Terror: Rereading the Mahabharata's Sauptikaparvan

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The *Mahabharata* is a long narrative text in Sanskrit which tells the story of the war at Kuruksetra (Kuru's Field or the Field of the Kurus, near present-day Delhi and the Yamuna-Ganges doab) between the Pandava brothers (and their allies) and their hundred paternal cousins, the Kauravas (and their allies) over the kingship of their ancestral realm of Hastinapura. The 'Maha' in the title indicates the text's size and importance, and the 'bharata' indicates that these two sets of cousins, descendants of King Kuru, are also descendants of King Bharata, whose name is now interchangeable with that of India itself. As this suggests, the *Mahabharata*, is somewhat like a national text and is considered to be the quintessence of everything that is Indian.

Broadly speaking, the *Mahabharata's* most obvious principal concerns are the problems and possibilities of government, most explicitly at the level of society, but also ranging beyond the human into the cosmic level involving the interventions of various gods. However, this does not mean that its focus on household troubles and individual dilemmas is any less. Social government pivots around the figure of the king, who should be of the Kshatriya *varna*, the class of warrior-aristocrats. The necessity for a king is stated very clearly by the *Mahabharata* at various junctures and the question of who is to be the king of the Kuru capital, Hastinapura, brings out issues of primogenitive birth-right and behavioural fitness. The *Mahabharata* is to all intents and purposes a text about violence and war. The narration of the text mainly comprises of descriptions of the daily happenings on the battle field and the details are usually gory.

The *Sauptikaparvan* is one of the shortest yet one of the most vital episodes of the *Mahabharata*. The whole of the *Mahabharata* is filled with acts of violence but this is an episode which would top the list because of its immense ruthlessness. This meaningless and senseless act of violence is performed by Asvatthaman, son of Drona. Interestingly the act is not well-known by the act of killing but by the passivity or slumber of the massacred or victims. This further increases the cruelty associated with the whole episode.

In the *Sauptikaparvan*, Asvatthaman and his two allies, Krpa and Krtavarman, enter a forest near the camp of the Pandavas and as night sets in, Asvatthaman alone remains awake. Inspired by a bird of prey which he sees massacre a flock of sleeping crows, he forms the plan to kill all the Pandavas and Pancalas while they are sleeping. Hearing of this scheme, Krpa and Krtavarman are filled with shame, but in a series of exchanges they are persuaded. Of special significance is Asvatthaman's first response: 'The Pancalas are roaring out, shouting, and laughing; filled with joy, they are blowing their conches in a hundred ways, and beating their drums. The tumultuous sound of their musical instruments, mingled with the blare of their conches, is frightful, and, borne

by the wind, it fills up, as it were, all the points of the compass. Very great is the sound heard from the neighing horses and the grunting elephants, and the lion-roar of the heroes'.¹ Thus, the festivities of the Pandavas increase the pain of the defeated and embittered opponents. Reflecting on their state of dejection, Asvatthaman states to his fellows: 'King Duryodhana, that one hero of great might, for whose sake we were waging hostilities with the Pandavas, hath been slain!...I regard this to be an instance of the reverses brought about by Time!'.² The decision of the night raid is therefore based on a pattern of antitheses or reaction, which begins only when the cycle of action started by the Pandavas has completed a full turn with their glorious victory. Thoroughly defeated in the battle, the leaderless and directionless Kurushave nothing more to lose and hence fear nothing. Asvatthaman wants to give some structure to the disorganized state of the Kurus and realizes that 'the structuring is in the ontologizing of terror as the transcendental answer to the pragmatic moves of Krishna, the archenemy of the Kauravas'.³ By this time, Asvatthaman has already understood that it is almost impossible to defeat Krishna and the Pandavas through fair means: 'If I were to fight fairly with them, I shall, without doubt, have to lay down my life! By an act of guile, however, success may yet be mine and a greater destruction may overtake my foes!'⁴ Thus the unfair attack is thought-out and well-reasoned.

Asvatthaman's feeling of hatred towards Dhrstadyumna is in a way quite natural as his main aim is to take revenge of his father's murder. This is reminiscent of Asvatthaman's various vows to avenge his father's death by slaying Dhrstadyumna. Therefore Anirban Das appropriately asserts in his essay 'Reading *Sauptikaparvan* in Times of Terror': 'The origin of war lies elsewhere, in an earlier violence... War has to posit its own past, produce a temporality of reactions, to legitimate its presence'.⁵ The next two episodes depict the most brutal pictures of the night raid. Asvatthaman's activities occur in two neatly demarcated phases: in the first, ignoring the sword that Siva has given him, he kills his foe Dhrstadyumna brutally; in the second, using the sword, he kills the progeny of the Pandavas by performing symbolic mutilations.

This first phase begins with the divulging of his plan to Krpa and Krtavarman, to whom Asvatthaman boastfully predicts: 'Having slain the Pancalas, I shall obtain peace of mind, O best of men! While engaged in the act of slaughter, I shall career in their midst like the wielder of Pinaka, Rudra himself, in rage among living creatures'.⁶ Having entered the camp, he goes first to Dhrstadyumna's tent and finds him sleeping in a luxurious bed. He kicks him to wake him, seizes him by the hair (as Dhrstadyumna had done to Asvatthaman's father, Drona), and presses him down to the ground. Striking him with his foot on both his throat and chest even while he is roaring and writhing with pain, he makes him die the death of an animal.

Purposefully Asvatthaman does not use a weapon to kill Dhrstadyumna, least he might go to heaven. Seeing Asvatthaman tearing at him with nails, Dhrstadyumna, makes a last request to him: 'O preceptor's son, slay me with a weapon, do not tarry! O best of men, let me, through thy act, repair to the regions of the righteous!'⁷ Having heard this request Asvatthaman's reply is: 'O wretch of thy race, there is no region for those that slay their preceptors. For this, O thou of wicked understanding, thou deservest not to be slain with any weapon!'⁸ Saying this, angry Asvatthaman

strikes him in the vital parts with violent kicks of his heels. Therefore in his anger Asvatthaman does not understand or respect Dhrstadyumna's last wish or death-wish. Thus by perpetrating the crime of killing Dhrstadyumna first and the sons of the Pandavas later, Asvatthaman indulges in what Spivak would call 'caricatures of responses' in her famous essay 'Terror: A Speech after 9-11'.⁹ According to Spivak, war is a situation that gives a person the voluntary licence to destroy the thing he fears or hates. Spivak mentions in the essay, as an example, that 'suicide bombing undoes the difference between the bomber and his or her enemy'.¹⁰ Similarly Asvatthaman's act of killing Dhrstadyumna to take revenge, reduces him or brings him down to the same level as that of his enemy.

Having completed the first phase of the night raid, Asvatthaman takes up his sword which he uses with precision. First, he attacks the Draupadeyas, Draupadi's five sons by the Pandavas. Yudhisthira's son Prativindhya falls when struck 'in the region of the abdomen'; Bhima's son Sutasoma's arm is cut off and then he is slain when pierced through the heart presumably from his unprotected side; Satanika, Nakula's son, has his head cut off; Srutakarman, son of Sahadeva, is struck by the sword on his mouth and falls, his 'face disfigured'; and last, having let loose a brief volley of arrows to remind us of his father, Arjuna's son Srutakirti is decapitated, whereupon 'his radiant head, adorned with earrings, fell from his body'.¹¹ This scene is somewhat 'sublime' in the sense that it depicts mindless cruelty on the part of Asvatthaman. Here the act of killing almost becomes an art where a design is followed akin to the style of a serial-killer. Spivak opines that such extreme, 'mindless', 'too big to grasp' acts of terror force us to witness the impossible and bring us closer to what Kant terms as the 'sublime'.¹²

Asked later about how Asvatthaman could have carried out his night raid, Krishna tells Yudhisthira that it was through the grace of Siva. However the epic tells us surprisingly little, about the episode previous to the night raid when Krishna, his kinsman Satyaki, and the five Pandavas conveniently remove themselves from the victory camp during the evening of the same day. In fact during the day, after plundering the Kuru camps for goods, servants, and other royal spoils the victorious Pandavastake rest until Krishna interrupts them saying: ' We should, as an initiatory act of blessedness, remain out of the camp for this night'.¹³ Hearing this all the Pandavas, along with Satyaki and Vasudeva leave the camp for the sake of acting auspiciously. While Krishna's words are mysterious and refer only to some unexplained 'blessedness' (*mangala*), the truth is exactly the opposite.

Again just after Krishna suggests that the night be spent outside the camp, the Pandavas send him off to Hastinapura to inform Dhrtarastra and Gandhari, as gently as possible, of their sons' deaths. There, having comforted them, Krishna gets up suddenly and begs their leave, explaining: ' I take my leave, O foremost one of Kuru's race! Do not set thy heart on grief! The son of Drona bears an evil purpose. It is for this that I rise so suddenly! It seems that he has formed a plan of destroying the Pandavas during the night!' ¹⁴ Thus it is clear that Krishna does have a foreknowledge of what will happen. But when he rejoins the Pandavas that very night, presumably not only to rescue them but to indirectly assist Asvatthaman's plan, he doesn't mention his

apprehensions and merely sits down to relate what had happened at the Kuru court. Krishna's silence here is troubling to a great extent as his truth might have saved the lives of the Pandava children. On one hand Krishna is silent, on the other hand Siva seems to be assisting Asvatthaman. Therefore readers of the *Mahabharata* may often wonder if these Gods operate like 'under-cover agents organizing the slaughter of innocents like wanton boys who kill flies for sport'.¹⁵ As readers, it is important to understand that there is no strict code of ethics operating here. Das is correct in arguing that 'Reading the *Sautikaparvan* ...can be an exercise in the hearing of the unexpected murmurs of the ethical as the terrible'.¹⁶ For a moment as readers we seem to understand the helplessness and frustration of Asvatthaman against whom is pitted an extremely strong and clever god like Krishna.

As we move on with the *Sauptikaparvan*, the question of ethics becomes more complicated. As the three warriors approached the camps of the Pandavas, they encounter the dreadful apparition of Shiva. Initially Shiva had tried to protect the Pandavas by fighting against Asvatthaman. Asvatthaman's weapons, starting from arrows to fiery maces proved to be futile. Once Asvatthaman stopped attacking and surrendered to Siva, worshipping and offering his life to him, Siva was pleased. Following this Siva is said to have entered Asvatthaman's body after giving him an excellent and polished sword. Thus it is difficult to decide whether it was Asvatthaman or Siva himself in the body of the great warrior who started the carnage. If it was a deed done by the Mahadeva himself then probably it was meant to be. Then comes the question: who then is responsible for this 'terror'? I agree with Das that an uncomplicated answer to this is not possible as he rightly argues, 'Terror is not an object of knowledge. It is beyond the structure of epistemology. As such, it can only be touched by the eruption of the ethical'.¹⁷ If 'terror' truly emanates from some 'unexpected quarter' as Sibaji Bandyopadhyay suggests in his essay 'Defining Terror: A Freudian Exercise', then this is an instance of terror unexpected at two levels.¹⁸ One is the 'terror' associated with Asvatthaman's slaughtering of the children of the Pandavas in the camp who were clueless about this kind of attack. Another is the 'terror' associated with Siva assisting Asvatthaman in the slaughtering process, which is again totally unexpected of a god like him.

The significance of the *Sauptikaparvan*, then, comes back to the Pandavas and the continuity of their bloodline. With Abhimanyu slain and the pregnancy of his wife still unknown (Krishna has not divulged this information yet), the deaths of the Draupadeyas and the extermination of the Kuru brothers during the war, symbolize the apparent extinction of the dynasty. Draupadi then demands revenge against Asvatthaman, and Bhima sets out after him. He is soon followed by his brothers and Krishna when the latter worries that Bhima will be unable to deal with Asvatthaman's weapons. Draupadi's lament for her dead sons in the *Sauptikaparvan* is quite vehement in its reproaching of Asvatthaman. She states: 'O son of Pritha, hearing of the slaughter of those sleeping heroes by Drona's son of sinful deeds, grief burns me as if I were in the midst of a fire. If Drona's son be not made to reap the fruit of that sinful deed of his, if, putting forth your prowess in battle, thou dost not take the life of that wretch of sinful deeds, along with the lives of all his followers, then listen to me, ye Pandavas, I shall sit here in *praya* (fast until death) !'¹⁹ Not only does she censure Asvatthaman for the way in which he has killed her sons and other relatives but

also demands vengeance. Arindam Chakrabarti in his essay, written at length on 'the moral psychology of revenge', questions the idea of getting even with the one who has perpetrated the 'first injustice', the notion of retributive justice implicit in revenge, and also the idea of 'teaching a lesson'.²⁰ Thus we see that the spinning circle of violence goes on ad infinitum within the context of the *Mahabharata*. In such a situation Draupadi too, being a mother, all of whose children have been brutally slaughtered cannot help but act in this manner. Therefore both in the case of Asvatthaman and Draupadi, one has to agree with what Sibaji Bandopadhyay writes in his essay 'A Return to Now': 'the intentions of the actor are unavoidably marked by the structures of being within which s/he is inserted...this is not to absolve the subject who takes revenge from the responsibility of his/her action, but to think of the mechanism of interpellation of that very subjectivity'.²¹

Taking off after Bhima and Nakula, who is acting as Bhima's charioteer, Krishna and the rest of the Pandavas catch up with them to face Asvatthaman in battle. Meanwhile, Asvatthaman is sitting among a group of *rishis* surrounding Vyasa beside the Ganges. Seeing them, Asvatthaman picks a blade of grass, converts it into a *Brahmasiras* (Head of Brahma) weapon capable of world destruction. Immediately, Krishna urges Arjuna, who alone can match Asvatthaman, to counteract this weapon; and Arjuna releases his *Brahmasiras* from his bow, wishing only to 'neutralize' or 'appease' that of his opponent. At this impasse, desiring the welfare of all creatures as well as of the world, the two *munis* Narbada and Vyasa take position between the two weapons to neutralize their energy. From this station they rebuke the heroes for their rash act of releasing the deadly arms. To Arjuna is dedicated a long passage praising his extraordinary ability to withdraw the weapon, possibly due to his *brahmacarya*, truthfulness, and observation of vows. Asvatthaman, however, having released his weapon out of wrath and fear of Bhima, is unable to withdraw it. Unable to withdraw his weapon, Asvatthaman can only alter its course and pass it through the wombs of the Pandava's wives. The Pandavas will thus be slain symbolically, with no hope of 'rebirth'. To console them, Krishna then tells them of Uttara's pregnancy: being the wife of Abhimanyu and not of the Pandavas, she will escape the situation. But Asvatthaman overhears and extends the weapon's effect to her, mentioning that the child will be still-born once it comes out of the womb. At this point Krishna intercedes promising to renew the life of the child, once it is still-born.²²

In addition to his promise, Krishna curses the child-slaying Asvatthaman to reap the fruit of his acts in a terrible destiny: 'For 3,000 years thou shalt wander over this earth, without a companion and without being able to talk with anyone. Alone and without anybody by thy side, thou shalt wander through diverse countries, O wretch, thou shalt have no place in the midst of men. The stench of pus and blood shall emanate from thee, and inaccessible forests and dreary moors shall be thy abode! Thou shalt wander over the Earth, O thou of sinful soul, with the weight of all diseases on thee'.²³ Thus at the end of the *Sauptikaparvan* we as readers feel the futility, banality and pointlessness of this series of revengeful acts. The releasing of the *Brahmasiras* (which in today's world would be equal to the use of atomic weapons) by both Asvatthaman and Arjun were one of the many acts highly condemned by the scholars of the epic including Buddhadeb Bose,

who in his book *Mahabharater Katha* criticizes this act of extreme senselessness. Yet one must remember that an intricate texture of reasoning backed this madness, and the loss of rationality was finally followed by a certain establishment of reason or *dharma* .

Overcome by grief and confusion that unjustified suffering always arouses, Yudhisthira, the kingly Pandava hero, turns to god Krishna seeking an explanation as to how all the valiant sons of the Pandavas could be slain by the wretched, miserable, and evil-minded Asvatthaman. Krishna's answer incorporates the Sthanu myth which depicts how destruction begets creation. This is somewhat similar to the anti-foundational philosophy of 'Nihilism', proposed by Friedrich Nietzsche and existentialists who believed in the nihilistic impulse of destruction. Nietzsche had argued that the corrosive effects of nihilism would ultimately destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical realities leading to the greatest crisis in human history. Initially it was thought to be a philosophy advocating terrorism and assassination. Later when it was looked at optimistically, it revealed certain positive implications such as liberty, freedom, and creative possibilities.

Asvatthaman, we are told, had taken refuge in Siva, and the latter had given him the power to kill. The myth talks about Daksa taking up the orders of Brahma to make an imperfect earth before Siva could come out of the water in his Sthanu incarnation. Thus began the contestation between the ascetic and sexual modes of reproduction in the created world. Siva became Sthanu simply by virtue of his act of rejecting to participate in the creative process as he foresaw the sorry mortal state of human beings. However, this did not discourage Daksa and soon Sthanu's deathless, perfect world was replaced by Daksa's tragic, eternally hungry, breathing reality. Finally Visnu, Brahma, the various Daksa-Prajapatis had to perform the task of creating humans. ²⁴

Brahma first created fiery beings who never died, and the universe became unbearably crowded, with no space left to breathe. He then became angry, and a fire shot forth from his body and began to burn all living beings. Then Siva, the Pillar, begged Brahma not to destroy his creatures in anger. The point to be noted here is the irony implied in the request. Sthanu's drive to create deathless beings ends in his compassionate plea for mortality as he realizes that the alternative would simply call for a total destruction. And this, one should note, is not Sthanu's aim – his ascetic withdrawal, his angry rejection of the world, are all ultimately creative or positive in effect. The essential vision that Krishna wants to project through this myth is that often one has to reach the positive pole through negation. ²⁵ Thus Chakrabarti in his essay 'On the moral psychology of revenge' argues against the dominant forms of morality surrounding the psychology of revenge. He professes not 'forgiveness and forgetting but a positive resistance to violence in remembrance'. ²⁶ Therefore just as in the myth a positive pole is reached through a negative process, similarly in the *Mahabharata* , *dharma* would be established at last through a dreadful and negative act of violence performed by Asvatthaman, which would evidently lead to his downfall and punishment.

The actions of Asvatthaman go totally against the norms mentioned in the *Laws of Manu* , which is considered to be one of the primary *sastras* followed by kings:

90. When he is engaged in battle, he must never slay his enemies with weapons that are treacherous, barbed, or laced with poison, or whose tips are ablaze with fire.
91. He must never slay a man standing on the ground, an effeminate man, a man with joined palms, a man with loose hair, a seated man, and a man declaring 'I am yours'.
92. A sleeping man, a man without his armour, a naked man, a man without his weapons, a non-fighting spectator, a man engaging someone else.
93. A man with damaged weapons, a man in distress, a badly wounded man, a frightened man, or a man who has turned tail—recalling the Law followed by good people.²⁷

Asvatthaman's massacre of the sleeping junior Pandavas has a strong resemblance with the Indo-European tradition of night attacks, especially with the famous Trojan War. It is interesting to find that some other epics also relate such stories. Perhaps one should also take into account the attack of Grendel on Hrothgar and his men as they sleep, in the ancient epic of *Beowulf*. Under Indian analysis, the Trojan night incident would always be considered unheroic and unworthy. Similarly, as discussed above, as an epic, the *Mahabharata* also maintains a number of exceptions to the *Laws of Manu* which further creates a level of ambivalence surrounding the religiosity of the work. In Greece, the sentiments that underlie the Indian analysis are not wholly absent. There is something wrong with the slaughter of numerous brave warriors and kings during the Trojan War, if finally Priam must be placed, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, at an altar to await murder at the hands of Achilles's son, Neoptolemus. Thus one must understand that in a war like situation morality and ethics are compromised to a large extent, not only in India, but all around the world.

One can question the relevance of analysing a forgotten episode like *Sauptikaparvan* from *Mahabharata* in the recent times. However, what I hope to achieve here is not a mere summarization of the episode but to underscore the indiscriminate use of violence in the whole event. One must note that there is not much difference between this vicious act of terror and revenge that was perpetrated in a pre-historic age and the modern world terrorism. Both have a political and ideological aim backing them; both are equally violent; both are conceived to have far-reaching repercussions beyond the immediate victim; and finally both are conducted by a group or body of individuals sticking together to achieve a goal. Several incidents have taken place in the last few years based on the psychology of revenge. For instance, when their friend Maulana Masood Azar was not released, an Air India plane which was going to Delhi from Kathmandu was hijacked by the terrorists and flown into the Kandahar region of Afghanistan. Assassination of Indira Gandhi took place due to the Operation Blue star that was conducted by Indira Gandhi in order to locate military activities of the Khalistani Terrorist movement within the premises of the Golden Temple. Rajiv Gandhi was also similarly killed when he had helped the Srilankan Army to control the (LTTE) terrorist activities. The destruction of the World Trade Centre is considered to be one of the most devastating terrorist activities till date. However in retaliation, America did find out and kill Osama, the head behind this incident in Abbottabad on the Pakistani soils. If one

goes by Spivak's definition of terrorism who refuses to view terrorism as a full-blown frontal war but as the irrational, unseen response to the so-called 'legitimate' reasons of the state, then one of the best examples is that of the Maoist group which is highly active in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. For instance if one takes a look at the data of the Maoist activities that took place in these two states, in the last few years, then one would have a clear picture of the spiralling of violence that went on ad infinitum between the police and the Maoists. Suicide bombing is another instance of terrorism, a purposive self-annihilation, where the destruction of others becomes indistinguishable from the destruction of the self. What I mean to represent here is that, be it the ancient times or the modern world, nothing positive or fruitful can emanate out of violence and revenge. It can only lead to a never-ending vicious circle of destruction that destroys both the perpetrator and the victim equally. A way out of this circle is suggested by Spivak who asserts that, 'the violence of terrorism cannot be ended by "extermination"...we must be able to imagine our opponent as a human being, and so understand the signification of his or her action'.²⁸ In fact there are exceptional instances where Maoist leaders like JagoriBaksi has surrendered to the Police in order to be rehabilitated and lead a normal life. One can only say that if such instances occur in larger numbers the world would definitely be a better place to live in.

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“Gandhiji, I have no homeland.”: Untouchables and Contested History

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Abstract

“Untouchables” are the people born in specific castes which according to the Hindu customary law are supposed to occupy the lowest place in the caste hierarchy. Caste system has been prevalent in amorphous forms for at least the last two thousand years of Indian history. As a system of graded inequality, it perpetuates itself through cultural mechanisms of oppression wherein each caste down the ladder has the opportunity to oppress other castes below itself. It was on the background of denial of human dignity to the so-called untouchables that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of these oppressed people waged a lifelong war against the essentialist strategies of nation-building practiced by the Indian National Congress in colonial India. On August 14th, 1931, Ambedkar met Gandhi and argued that the independent nation that Gandhi and the Congress were dreaming up had little meaning for him and his people who could not stake a claim to any homeland. Nationalist historians have since tended to look at the Untouchables and their leadership with suspicion. In spite of the fact that Untouchability was eventually outlawed by the Indian Constitution of 1950, (No wonder considering the fact that Ambedkar wrote it.) the lived experiences of the former untouchables till date testify that their history and their very citizenship is a site of contestation.

The paper reviews specific examples as case studies to show that the field of History has been used and abused as a battlefield by the untouchables as well as the high castes. Both sides have used history to gain legitimacy for their own brand of the historical narrative. This has resulted in numerous battles of identity politics. However, it has also led to an alternative narrative of history that has a therapeutic use for the former untouchables. Inspired by this history, an entire alternative culture in fact, has emerged, which has economic, political and cultural implications for the millions of Untouchables of India.

One day the man demands of the beast: “Why do you not talk to me about your happiness and only gaze at me?” The beast wants to answer, too, and say: “That comes about because I always immediately forget what I wanted to say.” But by then the beast has already forgotten this reply and remains silent, so that the man wonders on once more. But he also wonders about himself, that he is not able to learn to forget and that he always hangs onto past things. No matter how far or how fast he runs, this chain runs with him.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 1874. ¹

Historical consciousness is one of the things that distinguish humans from other animals- if one adheres to Nietzsche. It might even be a thing that distinguishes one human from another as historical memory leaves a distinct imprint on each mind. The need to legitimise one's own memory as an authentic version of history is felt by everyone; it may be closely related to the emotional need of self-assertion. The very process of selecting, arranging, recording and interpreting a slice of the memories about a past is indicative that the author wishes to share her version of the truth with an audience that may even go beyond the present time and space. This sharing is not an apolitical act. It expects legitimacy in return- recognition to the validity of this particular rendering of the past. For any given version of the narrative, there is bound to be a variety of reactions rooted in the respective memories and narratives of the audience. What is contested today may be accorded acceptance in a different time and space and yet again may come to be contested on a different ground. Like all branches of knowledge, History is self- critical by nature.

If one accepts that no version of history can be accorded the final and definitive status, and also that every narrative is constructed with an intention to use it for some goal, then one is faced with the challenge of understanding the meaning of the phrase 'abuse of history'. That the phrase is value ridden cannot be denied, and yet one is aware that there could be none that is value-free. It may be pragmatic to restrict the meanings of the word 'abuse' to those defined in the theme statement, viz. Irresponsible or negligent use of history written with an intent to deceive or to violate the norms of professional history writing.

On this background, when one looks for case studies of use and abuse of history, not surprisingly, there is no dearth of them. James Loewen's books *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*²(1995) and *Sundown Towns*³(2005) show how history books can intentionally deceive the readers to believe counterfactual narratives. Aurolyn Luykx's *The Citizen Factory*⁴ (1999) is a case study of Bolivia where history and education are used for forging a national identity. Veronique Benei's book *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India* (2008) shows how institutionalized education is a political process where Nationalism is inculcated through education in general and history in particular. Krishna Kumar has extensively written about the role of history textbooks in shaping up the "common sense" view of a society. His *Prejudice and Pride*⁵ (2001) compares the textbooks of India and Pakistan and shows how 'representations of the past, dispersed by schools and the state media, ultimately serve as mental maps which guide large multitudes of people in shaping their response to present-day situations.'

However, History, as everyone experiences, is a subject that extends much beyond the realm of textbooks and state media. In addition to the usual suspects, viz. the various regimes and state actors, there are a lot of non-state actors- if they may be so named- involved in constructing, distributing and consumption of history. In the last session of the CISH held in Amsterdam (2010), the present researcher had read a paper entitled "*Do Textbooks of History Help Fight Fundamentalism ?*"⁶. The research paper was a result of a state funded major research project that evaluated if religious fundamentalist attitudes among teenage high-school students were co-related

to the values that the history textbooks were supposed to inculcate among them. The results showed that in addition to or irrespective of the school textbooks, a significant impact on the students' attitudes came from caste identities, family values, electronic media and social organisations in which the youth participated. The students who would “strongly agree” with the statement “It is necessary to remove inequalities based on caste and religion in order to build up National unity ” would do a *volte face* while reacting to the subsequent statements in the questionnaire such as “Inter-caste marriages should be acceptable.” A discrepancy between what the state prescribed history textbooks preached and what the students practiced was evidenced by the study. Clearly, there are other forces at work in shaping how history is constructed and consumed.

As far as the Indian scene is concerned, the other forces that influence the field of history primarily consist of caste, class, religion and gender. The present paper is an attempt to understand how historical narratives are constructed and consumed differently by Indians belonging to different castes. Specific case studies, it is hoped, will show that the field of History has been used and abused as a battlefield by the Indians from all strata of the vertical hierarchy of castes. They have used history to gain legitimacy for their own brand of the historical narrative, which in turn firmly establishes their place in the present social hierarchy. This has resulted in numerous battles of identity politics. However, it is argued, that the selective use of history has also led to an alternative narrative of history that has a therapeutic use for the former untouchables who occupy the lowest stratum of the caste pyramid. Inspired by this history, an entire alternative culture in fact, has emerged, which has economic, political and cultural implications and uses for the millions of Untouchables of India.

“Untouchables” are the people born in specific castes which according to the Hindu ⁷ customary law are supposed to occupy the lowest place in the caste hierarchy. Caste system has been prevalent in amorphous forms for at least the last two thousand years of Indian history. It brands everyone according to the family in which he is born, leaving no space for individual choice. As a system of graded inequality, it perpetuates itself through cultural mechanisms of oppression wherein each caste down the ladder has the opportunity to oppress other castes below. The caste system has evolved from the more flexible and occupation based Varna System which has been mentioned in the Sanskrit Vedic literature from the 15 th Century B. C. E. Nicholas Dirks ⁸ has shown that caste system as we see it today in India is the product of a concrete historical encounter between India and British colonial rule. He does not contend that caste was invented by the British colonisers, but argues that as a result of the Orientalist project of knowledge creation, caste became an umbrella term capable of straight jacketing diverse forms of social identity and organization prevalent in India.

Just to give a sense of the deep fault-lines of castes in the contemporary Indian society, here is some data as per the National Crime Records Bureau, in other words- the official figures. In the year 2013, there were a total of 39408 crimes committed against the so-called Untouchables. For these, the rate of conviction was 19.57 % that translates as four out of five criminals going

unpunished.⁹ The latest Human Rights Watch Report has this to say about the crimes against so-called Untouchables.

Dalits (so-called Untouchables) and tribal groups continued to face discrimination and violence. The difficulties the Dalit community has in obtaining justice were highlighted by recent court verdicts in four cases in Bihar and one in Andhra Pradesh states. In each of the cases, the courts overturned convictions in high-profile incidents that took place between 1991 and 2000 involving killings of Dalits due to lack of evidence, highlighting the failure of prosecutorial authorities.¹⁰

Though the reports above are recent, the lived experiences of the former untouchables throughout Indian History testify that their history and their very citizenship is a site of contestation. Since the days of the *Ramayana*, a Sanskrit epic composed in the first few centuries of the Common Era, untouchables have faced injustice under the garb of 'larger social good'. *Shambuka*, an untouchable who lived a saintly life was beheaded by *Rama* the Hero of *Ramayana* because an Untouchable was supposed to follow the social norm of service and nothing else.

It was on the background of denial of human dignity to the so-called untouchables¹¹ that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) waged a lifelong war, eventually converting *en masse* to Buddhism. Having earned a doctorate in Economics from Columbia and called to the Bar by Gray's Inn, this exceptionally brilliant and compassionate leader could easily see through the essentialist strategies of nation-building practiced by the Indian National Congress in colonial India. In the anti-colonial struggle against the British, Gandhi wanted to put up a united front of all Indians. He was claiming to represent all castes and religions of the Indian society while in reality, the Congress was always a predominantly high caste Hindu congregation. On August 14th, 1931, Ambedkar met Gandhi and argued that the independent nation that Gandhi and the Congress were dreaming up had little meaning for him. He is supposed to have said, "Gandhiji, I have no homeland... How can I call this land my own homeland and this religion my own, wherein we are treated worse than cats and dogs, wherein we cannot get water to drink?"¹² Political alienation was a result of the social alienation.

With this background one may look at the following case studies of historical narratives about caste. The first case study it is hoped, will exhibit how history is used as a legitimising tool that firmly establishes one's place in the social hierarchy.

The book under scrutiny purports to be a 'reference-book' prepared for scholars and is entitled *Amhi Chitpavan*¹³ (*We the Chitpavans*) and published in 2003 in the Marathi language. It contains 30 smaller articles contributed by various authors belonging to the *Chitpavan* caste. The earliest article is from 1913 and the latest written in 2003. Claiming lineage from obscure Sanskrit sources¹⁴ and gleefully advertising the acknowledgement of their various qualities by the British colonial administrators, the book exhibits a *laissez faire* liberal attitude towards the Indian social structure claiming the best berth for the *Chitpavans* but exonerating them from the guilt of caste-based oppression. It is notable that all the sources that the book gives in support of the claims

of greatness of the Chitpavans are authored by the Chitpavans themselves. Even the part of the 1885 Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency waxing eloquent about the Chitpavans being 'beyond doubt one of the ablest classes in India', is in fact authored and duly acknowledged by one Narso Ramchandra Godbole ¹⁵, a *Chitpavan comprador* ¹⁶.

Why should this book be considered and studied as a 'case' of Use and Abuse of History – especially when there are numerous others in the market? First and foremost, it exemplifies bad history writing though it claims to be a reference book. The articles in the book are authored by some of the most luminous and widely accepted historians, intellectuals and political leaders of Western India in the twentieth century such as V. K. Rajwade, C. V. Vaidya and Lokmanya Tilak. As Ibn Khaldun warned in the Fourteenth century -

...if the soul is infected with partisanship for a particular opinion or sect, it accepts without a moment's hesitation the information that is agreeable to it. Prejudice and partisanship obscure the critical faculty and preclude critical investigation. The result is that falsehoods are accepted and transmitted. ¹⁷

Secondly, the book serves as a Trojan Horse or a Wolf in the Sheep's guise. Written in the most refined Marathi and without any evidence of the traditional caste-based aggression associated with the higher castes, it could be mistaken as a harmless collection of narratives about a community. It is not. Just like the *Laissez Faire* doctrine of the liberal ideology, it claims for the *Chitpavans* a place they claim to have rightfully earned- without saying a word about the privileged head start they have had at the expense of other castes. It not only goes to justify the caste based discrimination because the *Chitpavans* "by nature" are shown to be worthy of privileged treatment- but also justifies pseudo-scientific attributes given to castes by virtue of their supposed nature- such as the Martial Race Theory and the Theory of Aryan Invasion- both now proven to be absolute nonsense.

The second case study is not a book of history, nor does it claim to be so. It merits attention because of the polemical use of history it undertakes. Ranajit Guha, the pioneer of Subaltern school of history writing noted that 'the Historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by elitism - colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism... Both these varieties of elitism share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness – nationalism – which informed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements' ¹⁸. The book under scrutiny goes against the grain as it is an attempt to give agency and voice to the non-elites.

The book is called *Amhihi Itihas Ghadavla* ¹⁹ (We too made history). It is a collection of oral testimonies of *Dalit* women about their involvement in Dr. Ambedkar's movement for social emancipation. Countless histories of modern India have been written giving centre stage to Gandhi and the Indian National Congress as the real arbiters of India's transition from colonial to post-colonial times ²⁰. Dalits, however, have a very different view of the transition. Much more than

the political change of guard (1947), they value the human rights and freedoms that the Constitution of Independent India (1950) has introduced in their lives. It is in sharp contrast to the humiliating existence of Untouchability in the pre-independence days.

The women interviewed for the book are all from the Dalit castes. They lived a life of poverty and humiliation, before being mobilised by Dr. Ambedkar to fight out of it. Caste discrimination was not just a social problem, it had very real economic implications. A lady narrates how she invested a few hundred rupees to train the Dalit women to make disposable bowls, but thousands of bowls had to be thrown away because nobody would buy the bowls touched by *Dalit* women ²¹.

This lady once visited and spoke to Gandhi. Here is the dialogue in her words.

I asked Gandhiji courageously, “Why are the funds collected for the Harijan Seva Sangh (League for Service of The People of God- a Gandhian euphemism for Untouchables) not in the control of the Harijans?

Gandhiji answered, “The sin of distancing the Harijans as Untouchables has been committed by the Higher Caste Hindus. Hence, the effort is that the sin should be washed off at the hands of the Higher Castes themselves.”

No standard books of national history of India thus highlight the fact that caste inequality is responsible for denial of economic opportunities, nor that the idols of Indian National movement were reluctant to trust the untouchables. If a book like the present one, makes use of historical narratives and claims to have a different perspective of history, would it amount to a Use of history or Abuse? Going by the doctrine of democratization of knowledge, one can say that more the historical narratives available for readers, better for their understanding of the past.

The story does not end here. The authors of this book are two women, *dalits* themselves. They requested a leading Marathi language historian to write a preface to this book ²². He expressed his view in the Introduction that the book has a very limited scope as the authors have interviewed a sample of women from a small and unrepresentative area. Women from higher castes who also participated in the movement were not interviewed. Finally, he opined that women were underrepresented in all political parties, including those of the *Dalits*. As academic battles go, there was a negative reaction to the Introduction from the *Dalit* quarters. To add insult to injury, the author of the preface was a *Chitpavan Brahmin* by birth.

The world of *Marathi* language speakers is not as small as it may seem. There are more than 73 million native speakers of Marathi according to the 2001 Census of India. There are dozens of Marathi newspapers and television channels. Thousands of periodicals and books are published in *Marathi* every year that include scores of *Dalit* autobiographies- even Google offers it as a browsing language in India. The controversy about Dalit women's writing being negatively

criticised by a high caste man was furiously discussed in the Marathi world of the 1990s. The subsequent edition included a refutation of the arguments made by the scholar.

One can raise the question of Use of history, yet again. In the first Case of the book about the *Chitpavan Brahmins*, it is evident that it does not follow professional norms of history writing. Still, one can say that it is an attempt at creation of an identity, with an intention to claim a higher lineage. The second case is the book about Dalit women's participation in Dr. Ambedkar's movement. This is also not a book written by professional historians. One can term it as an attempt to document historical sources and to propose an alternative history.

This brings us to the discussion about alternative history. The struggle between people belonging to different social strata with contesting claims regarding their status, necessitates creation of alternative history. It may be defined as a narration and interpretation of the past where the facts and events are presented to propose an interpretation that runs either parallel or completely opposite to the mainstream history. While studying the question of Untouchability and caste identities in India, one comes across numerous examples of alternative histories being created and consumed. Several Scholars have in fact argued²³, that alternative cultures of the non-*brahmin* castes of various hues and colours have begun to emerge since the nineteenth century, culminating in Dr. Ambedkar's *en masse* conversion to Buddhism in 1956. Alternative history has been used to break away from the caste hierarchy of Hinduism and also to give sanctity to invented traditions that define their identity today. Commemoration and history-writing of events and places useful for creating the alternative culture is quite evident in India today²⁴. Just to give an illustration, Marathi speaking Hindus in the pre and post independence period would greet each other with a "Ram Ram"- a form of saying hallo with the name of the God Rama. Followers of Dr. Ambedkar began to greet each other with a "Jai Bheem" - Victory to Bheemrao-the first name of Dr. Ambedkar²⁵. Instead of being identified with the Hindu God Rama, they preferred an identity associated with Dr. Ambedkar's name. To this date, *Jai Bheem* is a salutation popular among the Neo-Buddhist followers of Ambedkar's ideology. Traditional dress, food, occupations and even village residences were given up for newer alternatives by the *Dalits* to rid themselves from the Untouchable identity. Rejection of mainstream history and creation of an alternative history was a logical outcome of the process of alienation.

Alternative history entails alternative methods of creation, dissemination and consumption of history. With a phenomenal increase in the digital penetration of the Indian society, the new electronic social media are used for creation and communication of history. In addition to photos, films and radio, social networks, blogs, micro-blogging and short text messages, memes and flexboard hoardings on the roadside are used for creation and dissemination of history. It is a common site to see a group of students on the University campus glued to a Smartphone screen playing somebody's speech about a historical event. Identity battles are fought in the cyber space over this or that event in history. The Human Rights Watch report mentioned above also laments a murder of a Muslim youth in broad daylight in my city of Pune last year²⁶. The young software engineer was killed by a mob on the suspicion that he was responsible for posting an insulting

meme about a historical personality on social network. History being used to establish who is one of “Us” and who is the “Other” can be a dangerous business.

One can neither completely denounce the Use of history, nor can one completely support it. As far as the movement for *Dalit* Emancipation goes, Use of History has yielded some remarkable results. Dr. Ambedkar told his followers to “Educate, Unite and Agitate” for their rights. History has been used in Uniting the *Dalits* together. Just like the Holocaust survivors, *Dalit* autobiographies do not want to forget their past. They are not stagnant, but want the future generations to know their roots. The past, however, shameful and degrading is recorded by the *Dalit* authors. Numerous autobiographies by *Dalit* authors outline a life of deprivation-physical and emotional. In fact *Dalit* autobiographies are a well-known and popular genre in Marathi literature, with multiple editions and literary awards being bestowed upon them at national and international level. Many have been translated in European languages, too.

To conclude, a review of caste related literature in the Marathi language suggests that history has been powerfully used by the authors. It is used to show the ancestors in good light, it is used to historicise the various current traditions into a distant past. Based on the ancestry, History is also used to define what one's present identity is. This activity has some therapeutic uses, as groups feel pride in the knowledge that they have had a glorious past or a great leader. The pride helps them overcome the difficulties of present existence. The use of history turns into an abuse of history whenever the consequences can be dangerous for a society. A benign looking text can actually work for justification of the caste inequality. Pride in a historical idol can make people unmindful of present realities. Availability of pseudo-historical materials can actually harm the cause of academic history.

One may be mindful of what Richard Bone ²⁷, the epitaph writer from the Spoon River Anthology has to say.

Richard Bone

When I first came to Spoon River
I did not know whether what they told me
Was true or false.
They would bring me the epitaph
And stand around the shop while I worked
And say "He was so kind," "He was so wonderful,"
"She was the sweetest woman," "He was a consistent Christian."
And I chiseled for them whatever they wished,
All in ignorance of the truth.
But later, as I lived among the people here,
I knew how near to the life
Were the epitaphs that were ordered for them as they died.

But still I chiseled whatever they paid me to chisel
And made myself party to the false chronicles
Of the stones,
Even as the historian does who writes
Without knowing the truth,
Or because he is influenced to hide it.

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6. ⁶ Shraddha Kumbhojkar, *Do Textbooks of History Help Fight Fundamentalism ?*,
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being brutally murdered for marrying a high caste
woman. <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/08/opinion/1-pakistan-certainly-has-a-caste-system-224690.html> See also <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/punjab-protests-austria-s-deadly-sikh-clash-sparks-unrest-in-india-a-626647.html> for an account of caste
based murder of a religious leader of the Sikhs in Vienna in 2009. See
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society and in church'.
8. ⁸Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Princeton University Press, 2001.
9. ⁹www.ncrb.gov.in Table–7.1 Incidence & Rate Of Crimes Committed Against Scheduled
Castes During 2013. Accessed on 10-07-2016.

10. ¹⁰http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2015_web.pdf p. 278 . Emphasis mine. Accessed on 15-07-2016.
11. ¹¹In spite of the fact that Untouchability was eventually outlawed by the Indian Constitution of 1950, mainstream historians of India have tended to look at the Untouchables and their leadership with suspicion. The various castes of former Untouchables have been named in a schedule of the Constitution for affirmative action and now given the more neutral nomenclature of Scheduled Castes, abbreviated commonly as SCs. They prefer to be called *Dalits* or the downtrodden people where the culpability is clearly externalised.
12. ¹²<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/timeline/graphics/gandhi1931.html> accessed 02-06-2016.while the content of the account can be accepted, one doubts about the address “Gandhiji” as Ambedkar refused to address him as anything other than Mr. Gandhi. Probably it is a commission by a follower of Gandhi who would take down the transcripts.
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21. ²¹Pawar and Moon, *Op. Cit .*, Interview with Mukta Sarvagoud, p. 153.
22. ²²*Ibid .*, Introduction by Y. D. Phadke, v-viii.
23. ²³ See for Example these Marathi books- Umesh Bagade, *Mahatma Phule- the creator of Alternative Culture* , Sugawa Publications , Pune, 2007. Raja Dixit , *19 th Century Maharashtra – Rise of the Middle Classes* , Diamond Publications , Pune, 2012. and an unpublished paper by A. M. Deshpande, *Mahatma Phule and Alternative Culture* , 1998.

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Interface between Children's Perceptions of Self and Social Class

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Abstract

Learning to differentiate is one of the key tasks in cognitive development. In social settings, differentiating from the 'other' plays a fundamental role in the development of a sense of 'I'. Childhood experiences play a central role in developing a sense of self. The paper explores how children's perceptions of 'other', with reference to social class, manifest themselves in free play. Insights drawn from detailed analysis of play episodes of children in the middle childhood developmental stage have been discussed. The study is located in a suburban middle class neighbourhood. The play group studied comprises of six children from middle and lower socio economic class backgrounds. The study reveals awareness of social class in children and is seen to influence their sense of 'self' and 'others', and interrelationships with each other.

Children's Understanding of Self in the Context of Others

Recent times have been marked by incidences of violence stemming out of intolerance for 'other' cultures, lifestyles, and practices. These incidences are also indicative of the development of a sense of 'self' juxtaposed against the 'other'. Gupta¹ studied Hindu and Muslim children in the four to eight years age group, in the walled city of Delhi. Children identified objects, stories, places and ideas, as belonging to 'them' and 'us'. This indicated that even young children developed a sense of self in the relation to 'others'. This in consonance with Jenkins² work on social identity wherein he emphasises that 'individuals' and 'collectivities' become obvious in social interactions with 'others'. Further, identity includes perceptions of self in the context of identification with collectivity and history. One's knowledge of history and collectivities is used to form perceptions about others. Grotevant³ emphasised that identity must be understood in the context of interpersonal and institutional influences. In addition, he highlighted that 'assigned' components of self such as ethnicity, and adoptive status of children, would form the fulcrum around which individuals must construct meaning. Thus, children develop a sense of self within the social context in which they grow.

Middle childhood (six to twelve years) is characterised by a widening of social exposure. School going children attempt to develop a sense of self by understanding themselves as subjects in relation to the objects around them. This period is also characterised by a concerted effort at understanding how the social world around them works. Children move beyond simple categorisation as they cognitively transition into the Piagetian concrete operational stage. They

begin to understand the rules of social appropriateness. 'In acquiring a better understanding of the relationships among people, children begin to appreciate more fully the concepts of fairness, power, equality, and status and to further differentiate their early notions of friendship and trust. Their social understanding is very often facilitated by a best friend, typically a same-sex peer with whom the child creates a private social world. This private world can be critical for self-concept development because it serves as a training ground for social, emotional, and moral development'⁴. Bissoli⁵ writes that this developmental stage is characterised by a change in personality that is marked by the realisation of self as distinct from adult caregivers around them. They are in greater control over their activities and are able to perform, at least some tasks, independently of others around them. They learn to imitate adults to master social roles. This makes this life stage particularly significant in forming perceptions about self and others.

Design of the Study

In this study, the notion of others is studied in the context of social class. The central question that the paper addresses is: how are social class based perceptions of 'others' evinced in interactions of children during play? The study was undertaken in a middle class neighbourhood in a suburban area. The neighbourhood is tucked away from the hustle bustle of the city. Comprising of a little more than hundred duplex houses, the neighbourhood has ample greenery. Traffic noise, that is characteristic of the city, is replaced by rustle of trees, chirping of birds and crickets and other insects at night. The neighbourhood has four entrances, three of which remain closed through the day, making it a relatively safe place. Most families have resided in this neighbourhood for over two decade and there are a number of households that chiefly comprise of senior citizens, who have retired from senior position in the defence or various government departments. With most parents away for work during the day, grandparents play significant roles are caregivers. Some families are homes for grandchildren during the day, with parents picking them up at night. Children in the colony are in the age range of one to fifteen years. In this study, a smaller cohort of those in their middle childhood, was selected. The colony hosts a community park which is used by adults in early morning for yoga and by adolescents to play in the evening. Families of two class four employees of the local government's water works department also live in the vicinity. The two families have five children, three of whom have been included in the study.

The neighbourhood shows a relaxed pace of life. When children come out to play in the evening, one or more grandparents sit outside to keep an eye on the children. The neighbourhood is predominantly Hindu in terms of religious backgrounds of families, with only one Muslim, one Sikh, and one Buddhist family. Most families are middle class in their incomes and lifestyles. The two families of the water works employees are from the lower socio-economic class. The wives of the two employees work as domestic help and cooks in households of neighbouring colonies.

The children of this colony play in different groups that are by and large defined by age. Adolescents tend to play in gender segregated age groups. Younger children play in mixed gender groups. The youngest, in early childhood age group, tend to play with their siblings or engage in

individual activities such as bicycling, skating etc. The sample for the study was chosen on the basis of the biggest cohort of children in the middle childhood stage. The group took some time to stabilise as two children from different families were told to not play with children of employees of water works department, referred to as '*gande bachhe*' (dirty children in referring to their clothes, although this was not evident in the clothes or personal hygiene of the children in question). When families of other children in the cohort did not relent to the request of adults, the two children stopped stepping out to play. The perceptions that these two may have developed about 'other' remains beyond the purview of this study. In the end, a group of five girls and one boy was observed. A brief description of the children follows:

- Latika (ten years) and her sister Divya (seven years) who stay with their grandparents during the day and return to their parental home when their parents return from work at night.
- Harpreet (eight years) who is Divya's classmate in school. She stays with her maternal grandparents and her mother. Her father visits occasionally.
- Rajni (twelve years) is the eldest in the group. She is the younger daughter of one of the employees of the water works department.
- Payal (seven years) and Sandeep (six years) are children of the other employee of the water works department. They have an elder sister as well, who does not come out to play.

Latika, Divya and Harpreet study in a reputed, private school in the neighbourhood. Rajni, Payal, and Sandeep study in a state run school.

Lareau's⁶ work emphasised 'concerted cultivation' by adults in scheduling children's activities, and 'hovering over them' in and outside homes. The purpose was to ensure that those perceptions that children are internalising are studied rather than parents' perceptions. Those free play episodes were chosen for analysis that displayed least interaction with adults. In other words, where adults only acted as distant observers, ensuring safety of children during the play activity. Non-participant observations were undertaken in naturalised settings. As a resident of the same colony, the participants were comfortable with the researcher. Careful distance was maintained to ensure that children do not involve the observer in the play and yet feel comfortable in being observed. The researcher maintained a silent stance and did not interact with the participants after the play episodes unless initiated by the children themselves. Each observation lasted about one hour but was largely dependent on how long children wished to play. Detailed notes were recorded on the same day as the observations so that details are not missed. Recording was undertaken only when the children volunteered to be recorded. All names have been changed in the study, and personal identifications removed. In the end, fifteen episodes of free play were recorded over a period of three months. Out of these, five episodes were selected for analysis. Since all children did not come out to play every day, those episodes were selected in which social class heterogeneity was present in the play group. A summary of the play episodes has been presented below.

Episode 1: *Rajni had been asked to babysit Harpreet while her mother had gone to the local market. Harpreet's grandparents were at home. Her grandmother was resting inside, while her grandfather sat outside their home. They were watching television when Divya called upon them to play outside. After discussing different games, some difference in opinion between Harpreet and Divya, they agreed upon racing each other. All three of them ran from start to finish with one of them calling out 'Ready, Steady, Go' at the beginning. They agreed on the winner through consensus each time. They raced each other ten times, sometimes falling over each other. Divya and Harpreet soon realised that they cannot outperform Rajni who is much older. While all three continued to race, it was basically a race between Divya and Harpreet. Between the two of them, Harpreet won 4 races and Divya won 6. Meanwhile, Harpreet's mother returned from the market. She saw what the children were playing, smiled and went inside. Rajni went and spoke to Harpreet's mother and went home, after saying bye to the two children. The other two decided to take a walk and started talking. Harpreet was a little upset that Rajni had won and complained about how it was unfair since Rajni was taller and stronger. She also indicated that since Rajni spent so much time in her house, she was obligated to lose the race and Harpreet's mother will definitely tell Rajni to lose next time.*

Episode 2: *Latika, Divya and Harpreet were playing. They wanted to play 'gallery' which required two teams. They called out to Rajni. She came out, bringing Payal along. Once again in odd numbers, the children decided to leave out Payal. Latika quickly chose Rajni for her team. Divya and Harpreet happily chose to be in the same team. Payal was left to observe quietly. After the first round, the children realised that Divya and Harpreet will never win as both the older children were in the same team. It was decided to redistribute the teams. A visibly disappointed Payal was left out once again and left for home, unnoticed by the other children. Latika and Harpreet decided to be in the same team as the two sisters did not want to play together. Rajni and Divya were in the same team. Twice, Rajni let go of Harpreet when she could have easily caught her. Divya noticed and started crying that this was cheating. Rajni started laughing but didn't say anything. Harpreet and Latika started objecting to Divya's allegations. Rajni just stood at a distance and laughed. Harpreet finally decided that she will always be in Rajni's team. Latika and Divya both objected as Rajni was obviously the strongest amongst them. Noticing that the argument will not end, Harpreet's grandmother said that both the sisters were fighting too much and that the children should no longer play team games. Latika and Divya were upset at being accused. They left complaining to each other about Rajni blindly following Harpreet's family's instructions. The group did not play for several days after that. Rajni and Harpreet were seen playing together. She started spending more time at Harpreet's place. But this was also short lived. After a week or so, Harpreet came back to call Divya and Latika to play. She told them that Rajni had stolen her pencil as she had really liked it. Her mother then decided to stop Rajni from coming to their place. Rajni never played with the girls again.*

Episode 3: *Divya and Harpreet came rushing out of Harpreet's house. Talking hurriedly, in hushed tones, and visibly excited. A while later, Sandeep walked out, looking surprised and dejected. Divya and Harpreet started looking accusingly at him. Their grandparents asked them what had*

happened. They told them that Sandeep must have been scolded by Harpreet's mother for scolding and told to go home. On further probing by the grandparents, they narrated the whole story. Sandeep and Payal were playing at Harpreet's place. Divya and Latika also joined them. They were all playing with clay, modelling imaginary characters and constructing stories around them. There was insufficient clay for all of them. Payal was soon bullied into giving up the clay. Latika got bored of the stories that she felt were too childish and left for home. Payal rejoined them. Sandeep was fascinated by not just the clay but all the other toys that were kept in Harpreet's room. Payal told him to not take anything without asking. Both of them got into an argument after which Payal said she is going home. Divya and Harpreet tolerated him for a while but after some time they saw him picking up a small figurine of Chhota Bheem and putting it in his pocket. Divya asked him to put it back. Meanwhile Harpreet ran to tell her mother that he was taking her toys. The two girls were told to go outside and play and Sandeep was called to interact with Harpreet's mother. Since then, Sandeep and Payal have not been allowed inside Harpreet's house. Harpreet often tells Divya to not allowed them to come to her place as well as they are both thieves. Divya argues that Harpreet also sometimes picks up her things without asking her. But Harpreet says that 'That is different.'

Episode 4: The researcher regularly undertakes art and craft based activities with children of the colony. In one such activity, all the six children had participated. The activity involved making hand and finger puppets out of plastic bottles, old socks, and papers. Children were informed one day in advance to bring the material required. Additional materials were provided at the time of the workshop. Children were open to sharing resources with each other during the activity. Each of them made four puppets. They helped each other in tasks and worked together with ease. At the end of the task, each of them decided to introduce the characters that they had made. They asked the researcher to record videos in her phone so that they can show it to their parents later. They took turns to talk about the character's name, favourite food, colours, clothes and the schools and classes that they study in. Rajni insisted that Latika speak first and then repeated everything that Latika had said with minor changes. Latika said this was cheating but then both of them decided to make their characters good friends and were cheerful again. Payal was reluctant in saying anything. Everyone else had spoken so she was encouraged to speak as well. After a lot of coaxing by the researcher, she agreed to speak. Harpreet immediately said that Payal will speak in Hindi. Everyone else had spoken in English and Payal again decided to not say anything. She was then told that it was okay to speak in Hindi and was encouraged to speak. Her video was recorded in which she can be repeatedly seen looking at Harpreet. Harpreet's voice is audible in the background: 'See, I knew she would speak in Hindi.'

Episode 5: In a subsequent activity, children wanted to make paper jewellery. Sandeep was not called as the children felt that a boy won't be interested in making jewellery! Rajni was not in town. The arrangement was made in Latika and Divya's home. Harpreet was called and told to bring old newspapers, scissors, colours and glue. She was also asked to bring Payal along. The children were excited. Divya asked Payal why she had not brought anything. Payal replied that she had not been asked to bring anything. Divya asked Latika if she had not told Harpreet to

communicate to Payal about the materials. Everyone turned to Harpreet to ask if she had forgotten to tell Payal. Harpreet replied that she didn't think Payal would have 'expensive things' like 'Fevicol' at home. She also said that nobody in Payal's home would be reading a newspaper so she can't be expected to have old newspapers. Payal said she will go home and bring everything now. Latika then told her to just share the surplus that she has. The activity began with all the children participating in learning and making things together. They made beads and circles with which they prepared strings and anklets. They were also told about the variations that could be made. Payal was very keen on learning all the different kinds of jewellery that could be made with paper and also discussed how it could be protected from water. The children discussed how the same beads could be used to make jewellery that would be appropriate for a queen and one that would be appropriate for a common girl (aam ladki) . They felt that they could use these in school projects involving 'show and tell' and plays. When all of them shared about the various activities that they had participated in, in school. Payal and Harpreet left when it started growing dark. Latika and Divya were packing up with the researcher. They were discussing if Payal was lying about participating in school activities as she studied in a government school. When they were told that government schools also have activities, they were surprised. Latika mentioned that one of her aunts had told her son that if he misbehaved, he would be put in a government school. Government schools were meant for children who were disobedient and who belonged to poor families. Also, poverty was a result of the unwillingness of their parents to work hard.

While these episodes form the basis of analysis, some insights were also drawn on the basis of observations undertaken over a period of three months. These have also been shared in the discussion that follows.

Discussion

Perceptions of social class were evidenced in children's verbal as well as non-verbal engagement. Children repeated ideas that they had heard at home. This was evident in Episode 5 where Latika narrated her experience with her aunt. It was also evident in Episode 1 where Harpreet was confident that her mother would talk to Rajni about beating Harpreet at a simple game. Perceptions of social class were also revealed in conversations of children from middle class families with each other (Episodes 1, and 5) and, behavioural expectations from children of lower class families (Episodes 2, and 3) and casual remarks passed on a child/children from underprivileged economic backgrounds (Episodes 4 and 5).

The non-verbal of children was also equally significant. In most decision making activities such as choice of game to be played and picking up teams, children from lower class remained on the periphery, maintaining a silent stance until asked for an opinion. This was true also for the oldest member of the group (Rajni) who could have been dominating on account of age and physical stature. However, she was guarded in her conversation, restricting it to the bare minimum. When the younger children fought amongst each other, she waited for them to sort it out. Latika would sometimes take on a lead role in conflict resolution. However, Rajni would choose to stay quiet in

such situations. The youngest of the group, Sandeep, Payal, Divya, and Harpreet, turned to Latika, rather than Rajni for conflict resolution. This silence also permeated any non-play related interaction. While Latika, Divya, and Harpreet chatted about school, movies and songs, the others remained quiet. Three of them shared the context of a common school. But this was also true for the Payal and Rajni. However, they rarely engaged in conversations during play. On separate occasions, when they were not playing with the middle class children, they were seen to engage in cheerful banter about school, and cinema. This indicated that class heterogeneity in the play group led them to be more cautious in their behaviour when with children of a different class. This may be due to class consciousness or a sense of inadequacy in engaging with children from middle class homes.

Quite conspicuously, children's awareness of social class ensured that children from middle class families spoke about class based perceptions only in the absence of 'others'. This indicates that not only are children aware of social class backgrounds, there is an understanding of 'otherness' that is based on class. This was evident even in the younger children in the play group (7 and 8 year olds). This sense of 'us' and 'them' created a sense of togetherness within the young children from the middle class families. In addition, there was an awareness that belonging to a lower than middle class background was something that put them in a situation that was to be pitied or looked down upon. An awareness that was evident in the hushed tones of children from middle class families when talking about anyone from the 'other' group. In children from the lower class families, this sense of awareness was manifested through an aversion to maintain eye contact, in their lack of participation in decision making and accepting being included or side lined at the behest of children from middle class families. In subtle ways, the demarcation between 'haves' and 'have nots' was clear to each child. The study is in consonance with Gupta's⁷ work cited above. Just as perceptions of religion, perceptions of social class also begin from an early age. Children identify with each other in clear distinctions with notions of 'others'.

The relationship of children amongst each other was also based on the relationship of families. Parents of middle class families commanded respect from those of lower class families. This was evident in subtle ways, such as, adults from lower class families were expected to initiate greeting when crossing paths with those from middle class households, but never vice versa; parents from middle class households played *holi* with each other but not with those in the lower class, who played with each other; and the like. Children also noticed that those from lower class families were often wearing clothes given by their families which they had stopped wearing because they were old, or ragged. When they changed pencil boxes at the start of the year, or had a box of broken crayons, they offered to give it to the 'poor children who could not afford to buy for themselves'. This was not a barter but an offer made out of sympathy and a feeling of helping others out. All of this percolated into play amongst children. Children recognised their clothes, shoes, and accessories but were socialised from home to not voice their thoughts about what were earlier their possessions. This one way exchange was sufficient to set hierarchies in the relationships. Children from middle class families were not allowed to visit homes of those in the lower class families. Games were always played either in middle class homes or outside these homes but never in the

vicinity of adults from lower class families. Without giving a rationale of security, children from middle class homes were expressly told to not visit lower class homes or venture into their vicinity. These different created hierarchies amongst children as was evident in the need to underperform so that a middle class child could win (Episodes 1 and 2). Basing it on Lareau's⁸ work, it may be said that children from middle class families may be seen as growing up with a 'sense of entitlement' and children from underprivileged families growing up with a 'sense of constraint'.

The relationships of families is significant here. When Rajni was asked to baby sit Harpreet, her family was told that Rajni would get help in academics from their household. Rajni and her elder sister thus would not need to take tuitions for passing their examinations. Thus Rajni's allegiance rested with the child who was from a family that provided immediate support. It is also noteworthy that if it were not for this family, Rajni would not have been playing with other middle class children as she was older and thus not part of a play group by default. Here, Grotevant's⁹ work referred to earlier, is significant. Children negotiated with the world around them in the context of the social class in which they were born. The social class that they were born in acted as an 'assigned' component till the time they grew up and changed this status.

Power hierarchies were also evident while making choices. Children from lower class families remained silent as the others chose games. When asked to suggest games, they often drew a blank. Children from middle class households were seen to have a greater repertoire of games and constantly innovated in designing new games. 'Others' would watch silently till the time all rules were finalised and the 'designers' felt that they could now teach the game. In indoor games requiring maintaining written scores or reading such as 'Business', 'Cluedo', or 'Name, Place, Animal, Thing'¹⁰, children presumed that those from lower class families would need help, particularly with understanding instructions in English. This was also evident in Episode 5 where the presumption was that nobody from Payal's family would be a newspaper reader. Here again, help, even when unsought, was always provided by those from middle class homes. Even when Rajni was quietly asked to not win, the win was attributed to her age and physical strength and not to aspects valued by the middle class, such as literacy, problem solving, vocabulary building, strategy and general awareness. The idea of speaking in Hindi was also class based. Although all children frequently conversed in Hindi, interspersed with English words, proficiency in English was seen as a classed phenomenon. It was presumed that Payal will not be able to speak in English when others had been able to speak in English (Episode 4). The reaffirmation of this belief by Payal's oratory in Hindi, strengthened the classed notion of language proficiency. While Rajni had been able to smartly evade confronting her lack of skill in English, the casual remark by Harpreet was probably enough to create a class divide that is likely to have an impact on the self-concept of all children present.

Children's perceptions of social class were rooted in their everyday experiences. Middle class children believed that they were more proficient in English; able to afford better toys, clothes and books; and in a position to exercise choices. In direct opposition, they believed that children from lower class were conversant only in Hindi, and broken English if at all; were dependent on others

for hand me down clothes, toys, stationery and books; and either did not have an opinion or that their opinions were not important. In a society that clearly values proficiency in English, children from lower class quite naturally appeared to be conscious of their linguistic abilities; were aware of greater choices of clothes and toys available in middle class homes through frequent visits; and had learnt to accept that their opinions were not sought. They also demonstrated a sense of obligation towards children from middle class homes who were 'helping' them to grow and learn better. Whether this sense was perceived by them or forced in their behaviour by their parents is unclear. Nevertheless, a sense of 'I' in relation to the 'other' was evident in the everyday context of each of these children.

The play episodes of children reveal that social experiences of children are not insulated by realities of social class. This is in contradiction to classical notions of middle childhood. Markus and Nurius¹¹ cite Rosenberg (1979) who found no association between social class and self-esteem among 8 to 11 years old in Baltimore and Chicago. They further cite Kohn (1969) in explaining the lack of relationship between social class and self-esteem as experienced by children in middle childhood. They write that children at this age are not 'exposed to class-related social experiences, such as occupational discrimination'. A somewhat different finding was reported by Iqbal, Neal & Vincent¹². Studying 'super-diverse' classrooms in London, they found that cross-class friendships were evident in eight to nine year old children, but were far fewer than cross-ethnic friendships. Children reported having close friends (top five friends) who were from a different social background as themselves, but a little over a quarter of the children studied reported 'best friend friendships' that transcended class boundaries. It is significant that the children in the study were bound by a common, structured space of school that contributed to shared experiences across children from different social backgrounds. This was not true in the present study where the neighbourhood provided a relatively unstructured space with limited shared experience. However, the two studies are in consonance in understanding that children's friendships are 'not independent of the adult world surrounding them'.

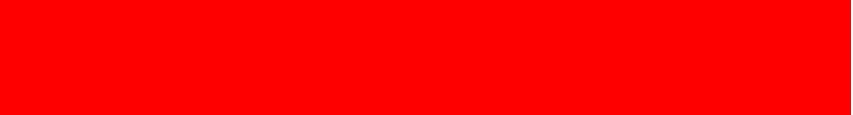
Concluding Remarks

The study raises important questions on developing an understanding of social class perceptions of children in middle childhood. The negotiation patterns of children as they engage with 'others' in unstructured settings need further studying. The influence of early experiences coloured by social class backgrounds on identities in adolescence and youth also need further exploration. In addition, the role of adults, particularly those of the middle class, in influencing social class perceptions is significant and needs further reflection. While there were no indications in the conversations of children, but the role of school in formation of class based perceptions also warrants exploration.

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9. Harold D. Grotevant, op. cit.
10. 'Business' is a board game that can be played between two and four players. It involves the players starting with a common seed money through which they can buy places, build houses, pay taxes and the like.
'Cluedo' is a detective based board game that involves six suspects of murder in a house. The players have to take turns at guessing the room of murder and the weapon used.
'Name, Place, Animal, Thing' is a pen and paper game which asks players to fill the four columns that start with a predecided alphabet as quickly as possible.
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Perspective Section

Unveiling of The CBFC

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Ever since the movie Lipstick under my Burkha (hence forth mentioned as LUMB) was denied certification by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), there has been a pouring of outrage over the lack of expertise in certifying films that the board is expected to possess. Instead of some intellectual jargon citing the cause for banning the film, the CBFC has come up with a misogynistic 'lady-oriented' excuse for doing so.

But we have much to be thankful for, in its brutal honesty that is loathsome as much as laughable, we have an answer to what is obscene, finally! For decades together there have been legal debates over what constitutes as obscene, vulgar, offensive or indecent for public consumption, each type facing varied levels of protection under freedom of speech. The Indian law lays down tight measures of control over speech or any form of expression to ensure certain moral standards in society. IPC sections 292, 293, 294 deal with printing, publication, selling of obscene material. Article 19a outlines the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 (IRWA) deals with the prevention of derogatory, denigrating imaging of the woman in all forms of media.

In 1964, Ranjit Udheshi vs. State of Maharashtra case, the Supreme Court took pains to define the terrain of the obscene. The judgment states that the obscene according to the IPC section 292, clearly falls within the 'reasonable restriction' of decency and morality in free speech as outlined in Article 19 a clause 2. The court modified the Hicklin test¹ of obscenity by co-opting other measures like community standards, social value in the offensive material, society taken in terms of the average man, artistic value etc.²

Section 292 came under the scanner once again over a story by Samaresh Bose. In this case the court while distinguishing between vulgarity and obscenity held that "'vulgarity' may arouse a feeling of revulsion, disgust and even boredom but unlike 'pornography' or 'obscenity' do not have the tendency to corrupt or deprave the minds of a person".³ In 1996 the Supreme Court held that the scenes of nudity in Bandit Queen were not to deprave or sexually arouse the viewer. The social message of the movie was held to preponderate over the objectionable scenes. Similarly in the ad featuring Boris Becker and his wife in the nude the decision taken by the court was that, the social message of anti apartheid prevailed over the supposed 'indecent' portrayal of the woman. Thus we see that the law has implemented a case to case based method of judging the obscene where one of the most important criteria is that of the social message of the impugned material.

Clearly LUMB does not deserve to be seen as there is no message of consequence in the film. The film is about four women exploring their sexuality in their own way. The film decidedly looks at

the body, sexuality, intimacy through the lens of the female. The burkha is supposed to be a metaphor holds for all of these women who “seek personal and sexual liberation from domineering husbands, overbearing boyfriends and a claustrophobic society”.⁴ LUMB steers clear off the mainstream depiction of sexuality and is also loaded with stark scenes. An adult certificate was understandable, given that mere kissing scenes still make news in our society.

Private lives, public outrage

The closed society of India is one where talking of sex and related matters lies strictly within the private sphere. In this environment advertising condoms is a tough deal to break. The moral codes of the middle class are still caught in the hangover of colonial rule (Victorian morality). It is easy for such ‘delicate’ matters to slip into the terrain of the obscene or vile. But condoms and their ads come with a grave message for the masses; that of safe sex, preventing unwanted pregnancies and bringing out the taboo topic of sex in the open. The Kamasutra condom ads of 1991 advertised condoms in a way that made sex desirable, and less predictable. The ad featuring Pooja Bedi and Marc Robinson had a shock value which sent the sales of condoms shooting up.⁵

Two years back and then very recently Manforce condom advertisement came under a lot of criticism for the manner in which they advertised the product. The advertisement shows a seductively dressed Sunny Leone on a bed of strawberries or at times going around a vineyard fantasising about sex. A CPI leader Atul Anjan suggested that such ads were responsible for increasing incidents of rape. A much flustered former DCW chairperson Barkha Shukla Singh too came out very strongly in favour of banning the commercial. She goes on to say "...The shabby, ugly or immoral way the actress seduces or sexually provokes a man in the advertisement to use condoms is nothing but serving immorality and bad practice to the audience of the country which is not acceptable in a country of moral values, ethics, religious values and spiritualism renowned as abode of gods around the globe,".⁶ Last week, Ranaragini, a small wing of the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti in Goa asked the government to take off posters of the actress as well as remove the ads which are promoting birth control. The protest petition also requested the government to remove pictures of women in contraceptive advertisements “to save embarrassment for women and protect their dignity.”⁷ The Goan state commission has asked buses and other public places not to be freely endorsing such products as they cause embarrassment to women.

While it is only Leone ads that seem to offend the general public becoming the cause of embarrassment and rape, other condom ads do not provoke similar shame/disgust. Why have Leone's ads faced so much criticism? Is it because of her porn-star background that denies her legitimacy in main stream media? Is she too ‘impure’ for the moral middle-class household? There is nothing remarkably vulgar, offensive, or obscene in the ad, by the standards that have been set by other stars. In fact she is shown to be much more aware of a sense of self than most heroines who do not seem to be able to tell apart harmless flirting from eve teasing, stalking, molestation.

But this is where the difference lies between the usual depiction of woman in media and the Leone ones.

The tagline of Manforce condom ads indicates that the man here is of less consequence, 'Excitement. She can't hide'. This ad unlike most, is an overt attempt at talking about a woman and her desire, it almost reverts the male gaze even though in a dubious way. The ad does objectify the body but also shows a woman has control of it too, in her authoritative tone and the obsolete role of male performer. The ad is clearly about her sexuality, her desire for sex or the man. She objectifies the man even while she herself gets objectified in the ad. It is probably the female gaze or the 'lady-orientedness' (as per the words of the law) that troubles the likes of Anjan, the general public and including women themselves. The easiest way to crush this is to declare that it will lead to more rapes. Once again women become the reason why men rape. It is the oldest trick in the book. This ad has been mired in controversy since its release and it has been proposed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that it should be aired (if at all) between eleven in the night and five in the morning, when the target audience would probably be fast asleep and children wide awake. The ad was heavily trimmed and made fit for TV viewership.

Why is it that Ranveer Singh's Durex ads do not face such condescension? Is it because he was not ever a porn-star? Is it because men do not look vulgar with no shirt on? Is it because being a man he automatically lays legitimate command over matters of sex, sexuality and sensuousness? And because 'boys will be boys' the man can rightfully and publically claim his enjoyment of sex or lust for a female on national TV? His sexiness is almost passé, while Leone's would only lead to increasing rates of crime? Why is the male gaze so neatly woven into society that women too look at other women condescendingly if they are under/over dressed?

Moralising the nation

The reason for this lies in the nation building process under colonial rule. In 'awakening' national consciousness against the colonial rulers, much of the battle was fought on the turf of cultural superiority of the East as opposed to the depravity of the West. The framing of the idea of the nation came about in its distinction or as opposed to the West. The nationalists saw themselves as spiritually superior to their rulers and blamed their material degradation on the country's medieval past. The reformers perceived themselves through the lens of Victorian morality, which they could not outrightly reject nor completely embrace. The English woman was demure, modest, more in control of her body than the loosely principled, scantily clad, unaware of her rights, Indian woman.⁸ The vital role of image creation, the Indian as the Oriental, the naked fakir, inferior, presented as a lack not only by the British but by the Indian subjects themselves. Morality became one of the many tools the British used to gain control over India by imposing customs alien to Indian society. One can see that the call for widow remarriage itself was an attempt to control the potentially dangerous sexuality of the upper caste widow. Similarly, the Devadasis were relegated

to the status of prostitutes given their communitarian family set-up unlike the western concept of private households.⁹ In the new language for women, given to women, she emerges as the quintessential godly figure of the Bharat Mata, pious, untouched, virtuous, sacrificing and needing paternalistic protection. The cultural duty of the woman in the process of nation building was one that was steeped in patriarchy.

The molestation, rape, harassment of the Bharat Mata however continues unabated. But this is shrugged off as often being the woman's fault or is romanticized in bollywood and given legitimacy in real life. Women continue to be for men's enjoyment and their sexuality is only visible through the drooling camera lens that focus narrowly on the navel or bust line. While the demure Bharat Mata amicably doubles up as a cheap tool for voyeurism, the burden of the great Indian Vedic culture continues to be borne by the woman only. It is this deeply ingrained imagining of the woman as the godly figure, distinct from the immoral influences of the West that makes women themselves unable to question the burden of patriarchy, and of being told how to be the perfect Indian woman. These patriarchal moral codes of society are reflected in the law. These codes become the reason why the chairman of the CBFC Pahlaj Nihalani can get away with banning LUMB on grounds of protecting India's culture and saving the dignity of women.¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that the movie Lipstick under my Burkha has been selected for an opening night screening in the International Film Festival of Los Angeles giving it a direct pass for screening at the Golden Globes Awards. The movie paradoxically enough has garnered international recognition and national shame at the same time.

So, what is lawfully obscene?

The law has to tread the fine balance of tradition and modernity, keeping in mind, the contemporary standards of society. One understands the pressure that the court, the other judicial boards must be working under while pronouncing judgments on such matters. What is clear through the Bandit Queen, Ranjit Udeshi and similar cases is that the court does not equate nudity with obscenity, vulgarity is not obscene, contemporary standards are to be kept in mind and well as that there should be a social message to be made through the display of nudity or otherwise derogatory imaging of the woman. Dirt for dirt's sake 11 will be regarded as obscene and be banned.

While this measure is admirable, its application makes one wonder what message the law making bodies seem to send to the general public by allowing misogynistic portrayals of women in Mastizaade, Kya Kool Hai Hum, Axe perfume ads. The blanket ban on movies like LUMB, Ka Bodyscapes and otherwise bleeping the word lesbian sends a very strong message from the censor board. The message is this – that the only legitimate sexuality in India is that of the aggressive male heterosexual type, where the role of the women is only secondary. Any other depiction of sexuality is obscene, depraving, causing lascivious intentions in the average man, puerile, morally harmful for the Bharat Mata. Moral codes of demure and godly figure are to be imposed on women

only to keep their sensuousness in check even as they are objectified by men. The gaze must remain male denying women agency or authority over their body. Any other interpretation or expression of sexuality is condemnable/obscene. Sunny Leone ads and LUMB are lady-oriented which lies squarely within this definition of the obscene. The recent pronouncement of the CBFC on LUMB as being lady-oriented-obscene clarifies the decades old confusion of skewed implementation of the laws on obscenity. While we have thankfully now recognized the hidden misogyny that lies in the law, we can now move on to questioning it. The battle has just begun.

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Review Section

Rights of Passage: Sidewalks and the Regulation of Public Flow

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NICHOLAS BLOMLEY, *Rights of Passage: Sidewalks and the Regulation of Public Flow*. New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 129. Paperback (Amazon.in): Rs. 2,016.00

Nicholas Blomley's book, *Rights of Passage: Sidewalks and the Regulation of Public Flow*, in some places, reminds one of Satyajit Ray's political satire 'HirakRajarDeshe'. There is a scene from the acclaimed film where the region's poor are bundled off and kept in captivity so that the king could show off a reign free of poverty just before New Year celebrations. This analogy has been drawn in this review in an attempt to see how the author envisions the treatment meted out to the urban ordinary.

Blomley's work is an important contribution in the field of urban studies in general and an alternative notion of a 'public space' in particular. He has chosen the city of Vancouver as a case study. Blomley is a Professor with a keen interest in critical geography, and is passionate about political economy and concerned with the materiality of processes. Blomley here creates a fascinating example of a nifty blend of academics and activism. This book is as much about theorizing the pedestrian and tracing its genealogies as it is about comprehending the politics involved in it.

Blomley coined the term 'pedestrianism' to understand the rationale behind the engineers who constructed sidewalks from the point of utility. He says, "Pedestrianism understands the sidewalk as a finite public resource that is always threatened by multiple, competing interests and uses". (p.3). According to the administrators and engineers of the city, the pedestrians should not huddle together at a spot and act as a visual clutter. And as long as they keep on moving, they pose no problem. However, the moment they 'block' the way they are seen as encroachers of private property because according to the urban logic, it is the city that owns the streets. Whose sidewalk is it anyway? For the city engineers and the law makers at least, the sidewalks are built to ensure smooth traffic flow, even at the cost of marginalizing the pedestrians, who are simply 'peds' to them. The sidewalks are then not meant to be more than mediating structures between one destination and another.

The law wants everybody to fall in line and conform to the logic of the urban sphere. It, in a way, cannot understand halting for a prolonged period of time. Just like the traffic on the streets and on the roads must keep on moving, so should the pedestrians- who should not use the sidewalks to display their political consciousness. This is a new take on the otherwise conventional argument of the scholars in general who envision the sidewalks as 'public space' which incorporate 'certain people and voices' within the purview of the public sphere. To them, that space is about social

justice, democracy, and citizenship. Blomley strives to show through his work how his understanding of pedestrianism is different from those scholars who take it as a kind of ‘civic humanism’, which embodies certain ‘political and ethical ends, such as expression and democracy’ (p.7), thus concerning itself chiefly with people.

After interviewing engineers, studying laws, and observing activism on the streets however, Blomley notes that pedestrianism is an extension of police power, and is not an ideology to those interviewed. It does not differentiate between humans and non-humans as such, and views both as materials, as objects which if not in motion, then are seen as obstructions to pedestrian flow.

At 129 pages, this short but important book is divided into nine sections. As the work unfolds, the reader gets acquainted with Blomley’s ways of unraveling his ideas about pedestrianism gradually. As pedestrianism is linked with the ideas of police power, law, justice, and the correct order of things, Blomley terms it as ‘legal geography’ as well.

In ‘Pedestrianism’, it can be said that an act of defamiliarization has been identified by Blomley while studying an anti-poverty remonstrance called ‘Woodsquat’ at the heart of the Vancouver city during 2002. There, as a mark of protest the poor and the homeless dotted the sidewalk with articles of daily use like furniture that are normally seen adorning the bedrooms and halls of homes. It seems that HIRAK RAJ or the reign of the king in ‘HIRAK RAJAR DESHE’ is replaced in reality here with the new liberal state and its various institutions so that they can discipline those who are acting against the progress of urban life.

To showcase how his understanding is different from other scholars, Blomley at first reviews the existing literatures which treat sidewalk as a space for the people. In chapter 2 (Civic Humanism and Sidewalk), he mentions Jacobs (1961), for whom sidewalks are a ‘matter of life and death’ in the city (p.19). To Jan Gehl and William Whyte, sidewalk is a civic space which gives the opportunity to observe others and enjoy each other’s company. Chapter 3 (Thinking like an engineer) shows how pedestrianism for the city engineers and judges is starkly different from the civic humanists. For them pedestrian flow and ‘proper’ positioning of things, so as not to disrupt that flow, is what ultimately matters.

Chapter 4 (Producing and policing the sidewalk) comprises some interesting charts and illustrations of how engineers envision pedestrianism. It then moves on to discuss how pedestrianism comes across as police power, which regulates and ensures that laws are not broken.

Chapter 5 (History of pedestrianism) traces the genealogy of pedestrianism. Blomley utilizes the archives to showcase how mid-century European cities like Paris and London started demarcating areas for walkers, or ‘peds’, although those were not always in an elevated position but instead segregating them with bollards, and posts so as to keep them at a safe distance from the then carriages drawn by horses, moving through the centre of the road.

Chapter 6 (Judicial pedestrianism) sees its argument from the perspective of property. It argues how sidewalk is actually a space owned by the state which should be free from all kinds of obstructions.

chapter 7 (Obstructions of justice?), Blomley discusses in detail about those things that appear as obstructions: like people- especially beggars, and objects, when static and in inappropriate places.

Chapter 8 (Taking a constitutional: circulation, begging and the mobile self) touches upon the mobility of the pedestrians, which is the primary aim of the city law-givers and engineers.

Chapter 9 (Hidden in plain view) ends with a higher understanding of pedestrianism- an important subject worthy of more discussion. In its bid to arrange the urban public properly, pedestrianism as governance can be ultimately seen as following its own set of aesthetics, and blurring the binaries of utility and the exquisite in its own way.

An objection that one may have with this book is that the author finds circulation as coterminous with flow. He sees the former as 'smooth and unobstructed pedestrian traffic flow. However, flow signifies a degree of linearity while circulation embodies the larger picture of movement- of people, of history. But, overall this book has indeed opened up new vistas of research hitherto unexplored.

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