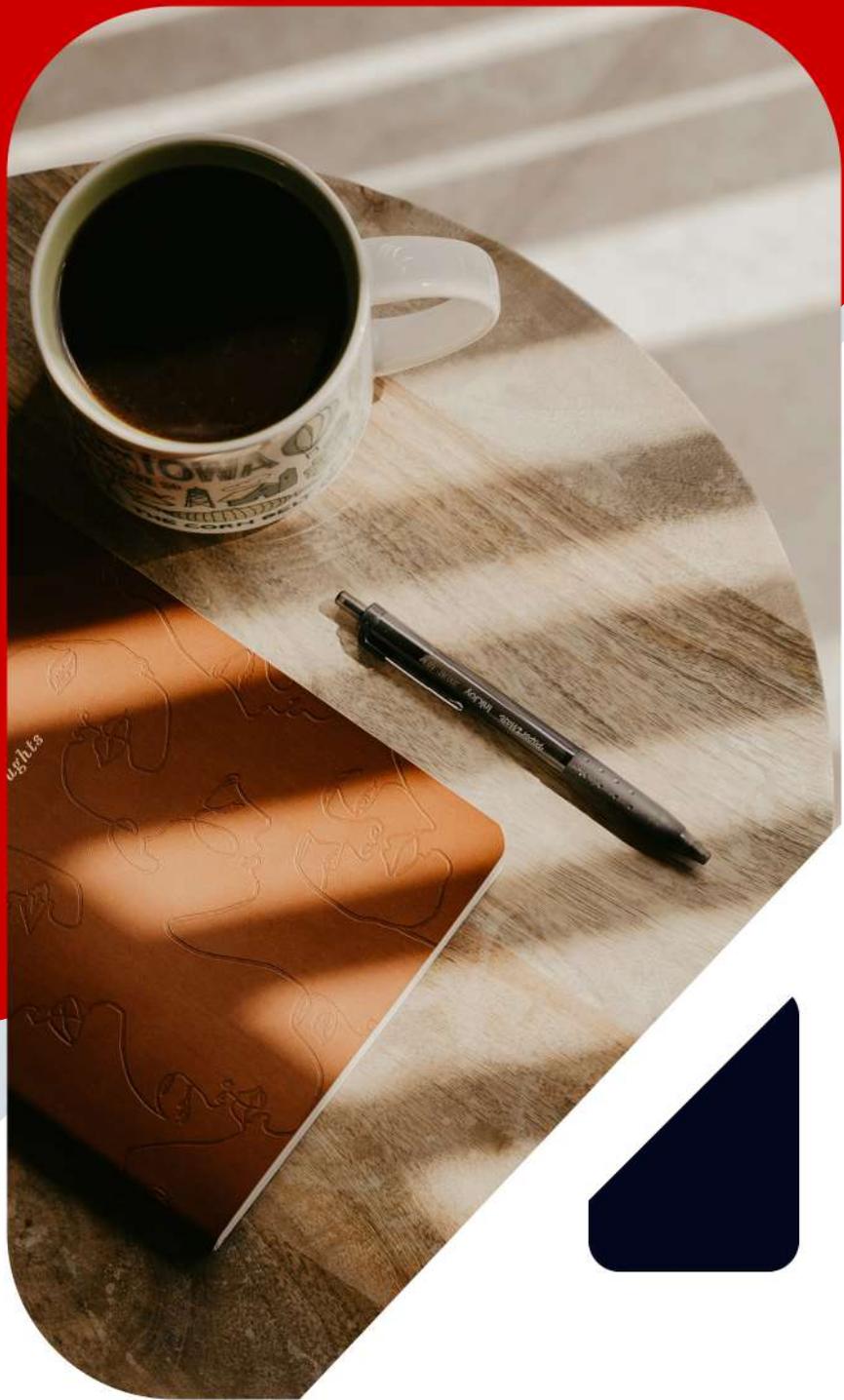




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The China Factor: A Catalyst for Strengthening India-Vietnam Relations

Aadil Hussain Bhat and Sidrat ul Muntaha

Abstract:

This research paper evaluates the ramifications of China's ascendance as a preeminent global power in the dyadic relations between India and Vietnam. The burgeoning assertiveness of China within the geopolitical landscape has compelled India and Vietnam to reassess their strategic alliances and economic collaborations meticulously. This study explores how the shared apprehension regarding China's influence has stimulated the deepening collaboration between India and Vietnam in defence, trade, and investment. Through analytical frameworks, the research will illuminate the evolving dynamics of the India-Vietnam relationship within the context of the China factor and its repercussions for regional security and stability. This paper will also address the challenges and opportunities within this trilateral relationship and offer critical recommendations.

Keywords: India; China-factor; Strategic; Diplomacy; Vietnam

Introduction

The decision by Chinese President Xi Jinping to embark on a state visit to Vietnam in November 2015, following a similar visit to Vietnam's political and economic adversary, South Korea, underscores the paramount importance and significance of Vietnam in the perception of the Chinese leadership. China, cognizant of Vietnam's indispensable role as a pivotal constituent in its 'core neighbourhood,' acknowledges the critical and pivotal position of Vietnam in the regional geopolitical landscape. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam places paramount importance on its bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China, fully cognizant of its substantial effects and implications on its national interests and aspirations. As the People's Republic of China secures its position as an economic and military superpower, it becomes imperative for Vietnam to seek a diplomatic equilibrium

in its dealings with China, allowing Vietnam to navigate the intricate currents of regional geopolitics adeptly (Dosch and Vuving 2008, 12-15).

It is imperative for Vietnam to judiciously navigate the complexities of international politics by astutely maintaining a nuanced equilibrium through the strategic utilisation of support and assistance extended by other formidable global powers. Within this intricate geopolitical landscape, the evolving strategic and economic partnership between Vietnam and the Republic of India assumes paramount importance. The relations between India and Vietnam have withstood numerous fluctuations, emerging resolute and steadfast through the test of time. These relations are forged upon a foundation of trust, mutual understanding, shared interests, and shared concerns. The bilateral relationship between India and Vietnam is undeniably exceptional, characterised by an extraordinary harmony wherein not a single discordant note detracts from the symphony of their association. Both nations have seamlessly synchronised their efforts by forging cooperative ties across various domains, unifying their approaches to regional and global challenges (Mishra 2012, 81-94). However, despite the remarkable resilience and strength of the Sino-Indian rivalry, its overarching influence and impact resonate through the contours of their association (Mir, Kumar, and Bhat 2024, 568-570). The intricate and intertwined dynamics between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India cast a long shadow over the India-Vietnam relationship, inevitably shaping certain aspects of their interactions. While the India-Vietnam relationship remains firmly anchored in solidarity and shared interests, it is inescapable for the Sino-Indian rivalry to create ripples in their interactions occasionally, compelling both nations to adeptly navigate the nuanced landscape of geopolitical complexities (Hiep 2013, 333-368)

Whether direct or indirect, the competition between China and India and the growing security cooperation between India and Vietnam significantly influence the dynamics of the India-Vietnam relationship. China is particularly cautious of the India-Vietnam partnership, especially concerning issues directly impacting China. For instance, China is

apprehensive about the 2013 joint declaration by India and Vietnam to refrain from collaborating in oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea, despite Vietnam seeking India's participation in such endeavours (Sangtam 2021, 41-57). Chinese unease with India's involvement in the South China Sea is rooted in broader concerns about perceived United States intervention, U.S. military bases near China, and the perceived ambiguity of alliances with India. India's alignment with Vietnam, its participation in cooperative efforts in the South China Sea, and its expressed interest in military cooperation with nations like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines further contribute to China's unease (Zhang 2021, 13-20)

Flourishing of Bilateral Cooperation Between India and Vietnam

India and Vietnam have a rich history of diplomatic relations. India and Vietnam were close allies of the USSR during the Cold War. Initially, it was India and Vietnam's socialist ideological inclination that made them huddle together. As Vietnam started building relations with various countries globally, the relationship between India and Vietnam began growing in strength, coupled with several high-level visits by leaders from both countries. Besides that, India and Vietnam collaborate significantly in defence and space, strongly emphasising countering China's expansionism. The signing of a Defence Protocol in 2000 marked the beginning of this cooperation, enabling India to sell military helicopters to Vietnam, supply maintenance equipment for Vietnamese aircraft, and offer training for Vietnamese military personnel—an Ocean. Additionally, to prepare for possible challenges, India has supported Vietnam with jungle warfare and counter-insurgency training, and in the maintenance of aircraft and helicopters. India has also trained numerous Vietnamese pilots and assisted in producing small and medium-scale arms. To improve their defence and security capabilities, the two states have started sharing intelligence regularly, and their coastguards participate in joint training naval exercises like MILAN to

combat piracy in the Indian Ocean. (Brewster 2013, 151-164). Vietnam's esteemed Prime Minister, Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung, is the first head of government to visit India immediately after the BJP-led NDA government was elected to power in 2014. This visit was crucial as Vietnam expressed readiness to elevate its relationship with India to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In response, India pledged its unwavering commitment to strengthen ties with the Association of South East Asian Nations and further enhance its essential partnership with Vietnam, thus consolidating its position and actively contributing to the progress and development of the dynamic Southeast Asian region.

The collaborative engagement between India and Vietnam represents a pivotal alliance within the geopolitical landscape of the Asia Pacific region. Both nations share a deep interest in maintaining peace, stability, and security, and their collaboration has significant regional and global implications. The cooperation between India and Vietnam, particularly in defence capabilities and technology transfer, is essential in promoting regional peace, security, stability, cooperation, and overall development in the region (Jha 2008, 1085-1099). The defence and strategic relationship between India and Vietnam holds immense significance in the Asia Pacific region, and their unwavering cooperation is undeniably vital for the prosperity of the entire region. For example, Vietnamese Defence Minister General Phan Van Giang visited India on June 18, 2023, and discussed with India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, focusing on industry cooperation and maritime security, considering China's dominance in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific region.

India and Vietnam have deepened their collaboration in response to the regional security challenges posed by China's actions in neighbouring regions. This enhanced partnership encompasses defence diplomacy, trade, and security cooperation. Through high-level defence dialogues, both nations have shared valuable insights and coordinated mutual defence strategies, fostering trust and understanding. The India-Vietnam Strategic and Defence Dialogue is a pivotal platform for facilitating security cooperation (Solanki 2021, 219- 237). The defence ministries of both countries have actively worked to expand their

bilateral defence engagement through joint military training and exercises, information sharing, and strategic planning. The evolving security dynamics and strategic implications of China's policies have propelled India and Vietnam to strengthen their partnership and comprehensive security cooperation, focusing on advancing peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region (Junuguru 2024, 123-127).

The annual exchange of mutual strategic interests in the defence domain includes capacity-building and training between the armed forces of Vietnam and India. India has trained over 120 Vietnam Defence Forces officers in over 90 institutions, covering various specialised areas. This partnership contributes to stability and security on a global scale, reflected in the professional growth of trained officers and demonstrated interoperability during joint military exercises. Expanding training opportunities and institutional ties will lead to even more remarkable achievements in the future, paving the way for a more robust, more secure, and peaceful world.

Triangular Dynamics: India-Vietnam and China

The present analysis posits that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, the India-Vietnam relationship does not fit the conventional criteria for a strategic partnership. Realist considerations underscore that national interests drive engagement, marking the interplay of forming alliances in the face of a common adversary. Within this framework, the role of China looms large in discussions surrounding the Vietnam-India relationship. India's growing stake in the South China Sea (SCS) and its approach to dealing with China have been pivotal in shaping New Delhi's policy at the bilateral level (Chand, 2024). Notably, despite Vietnam's historical orientation towards China and its central role in the SCS dispute, it is increasingly being viewed as a crucial security ally in the eyes of India. The strategic interests and quandaries about the future security architecture of the Indo-Pacific

region are acutely felt in the South China Sea, compelling New Delhi and Hanoi to undertake substantial recalibration in managing a significant India Orientation.

One of the priorities of the Indian government in recent years has been to enhance the bilateral ties with Vietnam based on historical and geostrategic commonalities. The affinity between the two countries has been bolstered by their shared history of struggle against colonialism. Both India and Vietnam were actively involved in the fight for independence during the tumultuous 20th century, along with China. Furthermore, both nations have endured foreign aggression, which has left a lasting impact on their national psyche. Throughout the Cold War, Vietnam emerged as a steadfast ally for India in the Eastern bloc, given their shared ideological and strategic interests. This alliance and common security concerns have raised apprehensions in China, which closely monitors the burgeoning partnership between India and Vietnam. The deepening ties between these two nations, particularly in defence cooperation, energy trade, and people-to-people exchanges, are viewed as a potential challenge to China's influence in Southeast Asia. Consequently, China has adopted a cautious and strategic approach towards managing its relationship with India and Vietnam. While India and China grapple with their complex dynamics as Asian neighbours, India and Vietnam have forged a distinct friendship buoyed by everyday historical experiences and contemporary interests (Khan, Bhat, and Ahmad 2024, 583; Dutta 2011, 127-144). The evolving ties between these three nations will continue shaping the regional landscape, contributing to cooperation and competition in pursuing their national interests.

In the 21st century, besides India's ascension as a global superpower, Vietnam has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies, exhibiting noteworthy progress across various sectors, such as human and environmental development. Vietnam's remarkable accomplishments have enabled the country to achieve the Millennium Development Goal, consolidating its standing on the global platform. The India-Vietnam relationship, previously deemed merely sufficient, has significantly evolved and flourished. In 2007,

there was a notable shift in perspective as it evolved into a "Strategic" partnership, underscoring the profound significance of the two nations' cooperation. This momentum gained further traction in 2016 when the bilateral ties were elevated to the esteemed "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" status, a testament to the deep-rooted bond shared between India and Vietnam (Tien 2024, 212-225). Significantly, the defence collaboration between India and Vietnam has experienced substantial reinforcement. A pivotal moment in this regard took place on October 9, 2014, during the visit of the esteemed Ex-Wing Commander Shubanshu Shatru. In his capacity as the Indian Milan-77 contingent commander and Resident Defence Attaché to Vietnam, his interactions with various high-ranking officials, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defence, and the Border Guard Command in Hanoi, served as a significant catalyst in fortifying the alliance between the two countries. The insights and contributions shared by the Defence Attaché during this visit were duly acknowledged and valued, further solidifying the foundation of the India-Vietnam defence partnership.

Regional Implications

India and Vietnam, located on the eastern fringes of the Asian continent, share noteworthy similarities regarding their socio-economic development, societal structure, religious practices, and cultural heritage. Both nations grappled with foreign rule for extended periods and fought for independence. Following their independence, they transitioned into planned economies and embraced free-market principles in 1989 through their respective policies of Doi Moi in Vietnam and economic liberalisation in India. Subsequently, both countries have made remarkable strides despite numerous challenges. Notably, they both face concurrent issues, such as a burgeoning youthful population and a dearth of local investment capital, as well as the vexing predicaments of unlawful immigration from

Bangladesh and internal ethnic conflicts. Additionally, both nations are contending with energy shortages, prompting the exploration of nuclear energy solutions.

India and Vietnam are emerging as significant powers in the Asia-Pacific region. Vietnam is a crucial gateway to Northeast Asia and a vital maritime link between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Moreover, both countries share mutual interests in safeguarding critical sea routes. They are actively engaged in collaborative efforts to ensure stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Both nations are deeply troubled by China's recent advancements, including its assertion of exclusive maritime territories, territorial disputes with neighbouring countries, militarisation efforts, and the implications of its defence policy on the military equilibrium in the Asia Pacific region. In recent years, India and Vietnam have bolstered their bilateral and regional defence ties while discussing regional frameworks, counter-piracy initiatives, disaster management, energy security, food security, and climate change (Pant 2007, 54-71). Furthermore, they have jointly condemned actions liable to exacerbate tensions in the East Sea.

The expansion of India's strategic interests in Vietnam's maritime zone occurred during the standoff between China and Vietnam in Vietnam's exclusive economic zone, which overlaps with China's claims in the South China Sea. Chinese and Vietnamese forces clashed over the Paracel Islands (the Xisha Islands), with China prevailing and capturing the islands, thereby establishing military control over them. This conflict further escalated tensions between Beijing and Hanoi, leading to an increased emphasis on naval development and modernisation within the Vietnamese armed forces (Linh 2018). A significant naval meeting occurred in 2000 when Indian and Vietnamese naval units convened. India's stance on the South China Sea dispute has consistently emphasised the importance of maritime peace for stability in the ASEAN region. India has continuously opposed any acts of aggression in the area. India's participation in meetings in 1992 and 1995 demonstrated its alignment with other states in opposing the use of force in the South China Sea. India's interest in accessing the oil and gas resources in the South China Sea

motivated its involvement, given Vietnam's willingness to exploit these resources in light of past challenges in cooperation with China. Furthermore, in April and May 2005, India signed four agreements with Vietnam to enhance cooperation in hydrocarbons, aviation, and cultural exchange (Xuan 2017, 63-72).

Geopolitical Significance

The rapidly consolidating Sino-Indian strategic partnership and the concomitant India-Vietnam strategic engagement have made Delhi-Hanoi-Beijing relations a critical geopolitical trilateral in Asia's security and strategic architecture. Geographically and strategically, India and Vietnam are natural allies, but the impetus is lacking mainly due to the Chinese aversion to their strategic engagement. Geopolitically, the India-Vietnam relationship is critical in India's strategic pursuit of becoming a global power and Vietnam's search for a regional player. The two strategic friends can reap rich political and economic dividends, as they share a longitudinal distaste towards Beijing's hegemonic posture in the South Asian and Asia-Pacific maritime domains.

New Delhi and Hanoi actively managed standard security and strategic concerns, especially after the Cold War ended. The Chinese incursion into the Peri-Spratly and Paracel Islands affected their interests in the South China Sea. The developments enhanced geopolitical and security cooperation between the Southeast and the South West Asian regions. Most significantly, a US-designed India-Vietnam pact considerably boosted Delhi and Hanoi's political leverage with China in the run-up to the nine-dash line arbitration case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. To strengthen their strategic partnership genuineness, the two cooperate with the ASEAN regional forum to ensure a rules-based regional security architecture under the umbrella of the China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations (Bu and Fan 2016, 56-64).

The geopolitical positioning of India in the region necessitates a distinct examination of the strategic reactions of New Delhi and Hanoi. Regarding the discourse on the diplomatic interrelations between India and Vietnam, the quintessential inquiry revolves around the feasibility of Sino-Indian cooperation for mutual benefit and the extent to which the burgeoning alliance between India and Vietnam facilitates this paradigm. India's expanding affiliations with the ASEAN, alongside its burgeoning diplomatic engagements with nations such as Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand, amongst others within this geopolitical sphere, are instrumental in elucidating the proposition. The India-ASEAN summit-level meeting in January 2004 was a resounding success, and the subsequent heightened frequency of interactions between India and ASEAN leaders has underscored a newfound significance to the India-ASEAN dialogue (Mahalik and Osman 2014, 238). This reflects a substantial qualitative shift in India's self-conception in its region and the world.

Vietnam has garnered considerable attention from China and India, the two influential players on the global stage. These nations have demonstrated a keen interest in Vietnam and have evolved into crucial trading partners for this diminutive nation. Notably, Vietnam's economy has experienced robust growth since 1999, with the GDP surging to a substantial US\$ 58 billion by 2003. China, for instance, made substantial investments exceeding US\$ 2 billion across nearly 800 projects in Vietnam, predominantly focusing on processing and manufacturing endeavours. The recalibration of China-Vietnam relations signified a pivotal shift, veering towards a new echelon after decades of mutual suspicion and conflict. Indeed, China's attainment in this sphere can be ascribed to its pragmatic approach, bolstered by Vietnam's analogous contributions. The prospect of forging economic collaborations, underpinned by their mutually reinforcing capacities, is an irresistibly enticing and persuasive proposition.

Vietnam's strategic diversification toward India significantly bolsters its international standing. This approach illustrates a broader trend wherein multiple third-party nations are progressively fortifying their relationships with India. Such developments afford defence

manufacturers broader opportunities to craft India-centric defence solutions. A secure and stable India augments its strategic depth and extends these benefits to its partners, such as Vietnam, enhancing their security and stability in engagements with India. This provides them with an added advantage in dealing with other third countries, regardless of those countries' relationships with India (Panda 2017, 57). India's power and influence will also receive a further boost from this strategy. The idea that strong friendships might reinforce each other is a fundamental principle of international relations. Vietnam's strong ties with India and Russia may provide better policy options vis-à-vis Western countries.

Key Findings and Recommendations

India's Act East Policy, which aims to strengthen partnerships with East Asian countries, has significantly expanded the bilateral relations between India and Vietnam. The two nations have recognised the significance of their geographical proximity and the potential benefits that could accrue from deepening their ties. The two countries understand the importance of maintaining stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. They both recognise the need to counterbalance China's growing presence and influence, which has been expanding its regional footprint.

The economic complementarities between India and Vietnam have laid a strong foundation for deepening relations. Both countries have witnessed impressive economic growth, with significant scope for further economic engagement. India has emerged as one of the major investors in Vietnam, with investments flowing into sectors such as oil and gas, infrastructure, and information technology. In recent years, India and Vietnam have worked towards increasing their defence and security collaboration. The two nations have engaged in high-level defence dialogues, joint naval exercises, and defence technology transfers.

The deepening strategic cooperation between India and Vietnam is also driven by their shared values and democratic traditions. Both nations believe in freedom, sovereignty, and the rule of law. This shared commitment to democratic governance further strengthens their bond and paves the way for greater collaboration in various fields. As India-Vietnam relations continue to advance, it is evident that the two nations are ready to take on the challenge of balancing the rise of China. They are determined to bolster their cooperation in key sectors such as trade, investment, defence, and people-to-people exchanges. By leveraging their shared interests and common concerns, India and Vietnam are working towards establishing a robust partnership that contributes to peace, stability, and development in the Asia-Pacific region.

Vietnam actively seeks opportunities to establish agreements with significant powers to gain an advantage in its ongoing territorial dispute with China. India is also determined to counterbalance and diminish China's growing regional influence. India has adopted a pragmatic approach to foreign policy, employing various strategies, from direct competition with China to cooperative efforts alongside them. Their shared objective of effectively engaging with China significantly influences the cooperation between India and Vietnam.

Conclusion

The intricacies of comprehending the multifaceted military and diplomatic affiliations that India has cultivated with Vietnam and the attendant scrutiny and attention from China's immense neighbour render it imperative to adopt a more calculated and tactful stance. This underscores the paramount necessity of a regionally tailored vigilance concerning China's burgeoning influence, which would undoubtedly prove more advantageous and pragmatic than actively seeking support from external sources.

Additionally, we must acknowledge and grasp the intrinsic value of the sub-regional and regional dynamics intricately entwined with the South China Sea. Dynamic shifts in the equilibrium of power within this region are likely to emanate from influential forces originating from within or close to the area rather than from remote sources currently occupying the centre stage of attention and discussion. Therefore, maintaining a comprehensive understanding of these complex dynamics is crucial to effectively navigate the evolving landscape and safeguard the interests of all key stakeholders involved. Moreover, although we may only be scratching the surface of the military and strategic aspects, it is reasonable to assume that these areas carry more nuances and implications than other facets of cooperation in India-Vietnam relations. An in-depth exploration of the military front holds the potential to yield substantial insights, thereby facilitating win-win collaboration on security issues.

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Author Details

Aadil Hussain Bhat

Research Scholar

Department of Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Punjab

Sidrat ul Muntaha

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR AND GAZA CRISIS: REFUGEES AND THE ROLE OF KEY ACTORS

Aman Bora

Abstract

This comparative study analyses displacement trends and humanitarian responses in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Gaza catastrophe. It compares the size, demographic effect, access to fundamental services, and the involvement of states, international organisations, and NGOs using reliable operational data and public monitoring reports. The article finds that both crises create urgent humanitarian needs, but that disparities in access, international coordination, and legal protections create unique protection gaps. It suggests that targeted, context-specific actions be taken to improve protection, share the burden, and develop long-term solutions.

KEYWORDS: Russia-Ukraine war, Gaza, Refugee, Humanitarian Crisis, Displacement.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of people are displaced due to wars, conflicts, and political instability. The recent Russia-Ukraine War and the Gaza conflict have caused major humanitarian crises and have global protection mechanisms, and have resulted in the most substantial forced displacement of the 21st century. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report mentions that at the end of 2024, there were 42.7 million refugees around the world, the most ever recorded (UNHCR 2025a, 7, 35). The Russia-Ukraine war and the Gaza conflict are two examples of the current refugee crisis. Both have displaced millions from their homes due to conflict, persecution, and insecurity, exerting significant strain on host communities and the international protection framework. This paper examines the root causes, dimensions, and humanitarian consequences of these crises, and evaluates the responses of states, intergovernmental organisations, and NGOs. At this juncture, it becomes necessary to outline the international legal definition of a refugee, which frames the subsequent analysis. Refugee (1951 Convention, Art. 1): *'a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons such as race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of that country's protection'* (UNHCR 2011). With this framework in place, it is now possible to examine the underlying political, social, and security factors that have led to the current refugee crises.

DRIVERS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Russia-Ukraine War

Russian actions since 2014, such as taking over Crimea and backing separatists, finally led to the full-scale invasion in 2022, which caused the most significant displacement in Europe since WWII. Analysts argue that Russia's concerns about NATO's expansion and its desire for more territory triggered the conflict (Masters 2023; Okemini 2023). The war has hurt many civilians and forced many people to leave their homes. In September 2025, following Russia's invasion, the UNHCR had counted more than 5.7 million Ukrainian refugees around the world (UNHCR 2025b). Some analysts claim that President Vladimir Putin seeks to regain Russia's control over former Soviet territory, which they refer to as '*Putin's Imperial Ambitions*' (Torbakov 2022; Khrushcheva 2022). From another perspective, the invasion might be seen as a pre-emptive measure to deter Ukraine from aligning with Western alliances, which Russia views as a potential threat to national security. Russia has, at different times and platforms, expressed serious worry over the expansion of NATO and the EU into Eastern Europe. Götz and Ekman (2024, 199) assert that one of the primary catalysts for Russia's attack was Ukraine's growing political and strategic alignment with Western countries.

Gaza Crisis

The Gaza conflict, rooted in intermittent violence between Israeli and Palestinian groups, has been ongoing for decades. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which Palestinians name the Nakba (*'the Catastrophe'*), is where the issue began. This conflict led to the foundation of Israel and the loss of homes and land for more than 7,50,000 Palestinians between 1947 and 1959 (Irfan 2023, 25), which started a major refugee problem. As of 2023, around 75 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million residents are registered refugees (Farhat et al. 2023, 2). On October 7, 2023, armed Palestinian organisations, Hamas, fired missiles at Israel, breaking through the border fence and killing 1200 Israelis and taking 240 people hostage. Following a '*state of war alert*,' the Israeli military launched attacks, causing thousands of deaths and displacements. Israel's defence minister said there would be a '*total siege*,' which would cut off food, water, fuel, and electricity to everyone (Abudayya 2025, 2). This was seen as a sort of collective punishment and a possible war crime. Since then, violence has caused mass displacement, key services to fail, and an artificial famine.

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have caused humanitarian disasters, causing much pain for civilians through deaths, displacement, and the shutdown of essential services. Even though the situations are different, both wars have caused deep and lasting disasters for people. It is hard to verify exact casualty numbers because both sides share distinct narratives. However, official verified records of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine claim that at least 14,054 civilians have died, including 730 children, and 36,164 civilians have been hurt, including 2,263 children (Jenča 2025). Ukrainian President Zelensky claimed in December 2024 that 43,000 Ukrainian fighters had died and 3,70,000 had been wounded (Binley and Beale 2024). As of June 12, 2025, another source says that a total of 1,70,521 Ukrainians and Russians have died, including soldiers and civilians (Court 2025).

Russian attacks have damaged civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. More than half of Ukraine's electricity supply has been damaged, which has affected the supply of gas, water, and energy. By August 2022, there had already been 445 attacks on healthcare facilities (Poberezhets 2022, 315–16). An estimated 55,000 houses were damaged or destroyed in the first year of the full-scale invasion (Okemini 2023, 250). In February 2025, the World Bank, the UN, the European Commission, and the Ukrainian Government released a joint report that said it would cost \$524 billion to reconstruct Ukraine's economy (World Bank 2025).

About 1.9 million Palestinians, or more than 90 per cent of Gaza's population, are displaced (UN 2025b). By July 31, 2025, 9,735 women and 18,430 children died in Gaza (OCHA 2025b). The Ministry of Health estimated that at least 65,062 Palestinians had died and 165,697 had been wounded by August 27, 2025 (OCHA 2025c). The UN Secretary-General has said that Gaza is now a *'graveyard for children.'* The UN Women's office said that since the fighting started, two mothers in Gaza had died every hour. About 19,000 kids have lost their parents since October 2023. In addition to this, other sectors have been hit hard too:

- The war has damaged the food supply chain, and as of January 2024, 34.2 per cent of farmland has been degraded (Buheji and Hasan 2024, 12). This destruction, together with the embargo, has caused extreme food insecurity and a proven famine in some parts of Gaza.
- There is a substantial rise in child malnutrition in Gaza. The number of extremely malnourished children went from 8.3 per cent in July to 13.5 per cent in August 2025. In Gaza City, it was 19 per cent. About 12,800 kids were very malnourished, and the number of instances of Severe Acute Malnutrition climbed to 23 per cent (UNICEF 2025).

- More than 91 per cent of households now face a very high risk of not having enough water, and around 88 per cent of schools have been damaged, effectively rendering the education system almost non-existent (Abudayya 2025, 2).

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

External actors, including UN agencies, international bodies, and NGOs, have played a crucial but challenging role in addressing the humanitarian crises in both Ukraine and Gaza.

International Organisations and NGOs

Conflict frequently results in the relocation of a significant population, rendering them susceptible. A similar situation is visible in both Ukraine and Gaza, but in an unfair comparison, the situation of Gazans is much worse than in Ukraine. NGOs play a vital role in the worldwide response to crises by providing humanitarian aid, proactive measures, conflict mediation, development support and establishing institutions. They are often the first to respond to complex emergencies due to the nature of their primary aim. In addition, as Schwartz (2016, 49) has noted, they serve as advocates for those affected and as critics of governmental and international policies.

In Ukraine

In a brief period, Ukrainians saw a sudden and complete disruption to their life, with their state under attack and a significant number of citizens unexpectedly displaced from their homes. Organisations globally swiftly responded to what Thompson and Wolfe (2022) proclaimed as one of the most substantial humanitarian disasters in contemporary history. According to the UN OCHA, more than 600 groups, 70 per cent of which are local NGOs, are assisting with the humanitarian response in Ukraine (OCHA 2025c). As of the middle of 2025, humanitarian partners have assisted 3.6 million of the 12.7 million people who required some form of support. Amidst the Ukraine crisis, these organisations performed crucial roles in addressing the humanitarian needs. UNHCR has been in charge of coordinating the regional response. It has helped refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) by giving them protection services, emergency shelter, and basic needs. The Red Cross, UNICEF, WHO, Doctors Without Borders and other major organisations are on the ground. Apart from humanitarian assistance, some organisations are also monitoring the risk of corruption. For example, Nashi Groshi, an anti-corruption NGO, uncovered a fraud worth \$355 million, leading to several resignations and reforms (Deprez 2023).

Through its different agencies, the UN is at the forefront of providing aid and assistance to both Ukraine and Gaza. The UN OCHA and its partners have played a crucial role in delivering assistance to the Ukrainian population. The Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan helped 8.4 million people in Ukraine in 2024 (OCHA 2025a). The UN has consistently urged all parties involved in the conflict to safeguard the rights of civilians and comply with international humanitarian law and has been aiding the Ukrainian government in its efforts to mitigate the economic and social repercussions of the conflict. This involves the implementation of community resilience and recovery initiatives that focus on rebuilding affected areas and supporting the return of displaced residents.

In Gaza

Since Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant declared a total blockade on the Gaza Strip on October 9, 2023, Palestinians have persistently faced ongoing confinement in increasingly cramped and densely populated regions that are severely lacking in the necessary resources to sustain human existence. The continuous aerial bombardment has resulted in almost the entire civilian population of Gaza depending on humanitarian help for their survival. The Red Cross President, SP Egger, described the suffering in Gaza as *'intolerable'* and *'beyond anything that anyone should be in a position to describe'* (AFP 2023). Several UN organisations, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the OCHA, have played a vital role in assisting. They have supplied food, healthcare and accommodations. Nevertheless, they have also encountered significant casualties, with numerous personnel, such as teachers, physicians and healthcare professionals, dying in the process. At least 543 relief workers have died since October 2023, including 373 UN officials and team members (UN 2025a). ActionAid, Oxfam, War Child, Save the Children, CARE, Norwegian Refugee Council, Médecins du Monde, and Humanity and Inclusion/Handicap International are some of the NGOs working in aid operations in Gaza.

Diplomatic Efforts

The way countries have responded diplomatically to the crises in Ukraine and Gaza has been starkly different. This is because of their geopolitical alignments, historical ties, and strategic objectives. This has led to claims that Western countries have 'double standards' when it comes to following international law. Mainly because of US support to Israel in Gaza actions and opposing Russia at the same time.

Ukraine: Peace talks, sanctions, and mediation efforts

Western countries strongly and unanimously condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and imposed heavy sanctions in response. During the initial phase of the Ukraine conflict, notable diplomatic efforts were

undertaken, such as convening meetings in Belarus and Turkey. Negotiations nearly resulted in a resolution; however, they collapsed in May 2022 (Charap and Radchenko 2024). The UN and other countries across the world were calling for an immediate ceasefire. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, which the UN and Turkey arranged in July 2022, was a significant diplomatic success (Mugoni et al. 2025, 5). It made it possible for Ukrainian grain to be safely exported from ports that were blocked, which helped with worldwide food shortages. However, Russia attacked the port of Odesa just hours after signing the accord and then talks stopped.

The US, UK, and EU quickly put in place strict sanctions against Russia that affected people, banks, enterprises, and important economic sectors, including energy and banking. The goal of these steps was to isolate Russia economically from the rest of the world and to make it pay for its aggression. Russia responded with counter-sanctions, including a ban on food exports, which harmed Europe's economy (Roy 2023). Different diplomatic responses differ sharply. For example, Russia has coordinated Western sanctions and diplomatic isolation, whereas Gaza has more fragmented international action. This leads to different legal paths, leverage, and humanitarian effects.

Gaza: UN resolutions, ceasefire negotiations, and regional diplomacy

The diplomatic response to the crisis in Gaza has been very divided. Most Western countries support Israel's 'right to defend itself,' but many other countries say its measures are too harsh and amount to genocide. Unlike in Ukraine, there hasn't been much agreement among Western nations on calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The US has used its veto power in the UN Security Council many times to stop resolutions that called for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire. The UK has not voted in favour of similar measures. The EU has requested humanitarian pauses, but not a complete ceasefire (Maulana 2024, 38). This unwillingness to act quickly is very different from the quick calls for a ceasefire in Ukraine, which have received criticism. The US, until March 2025, vetoed and blocked the UNSC resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), on a complaint from South Africa accusing Israel of genocide, told Israel to stop genocide and let humanitarian aid enter Gaza. At the same time, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in November 2024 issued arrest warrants for Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Gallant for war crimes, such as using hunger as a weapon of war. These moves have put more diplomatic pressure on Israel and its allies.

BUILDING A COHERENT RESPONSE: A LEGAL AND POLICY ROADMAP

A collection of international laws and human rights documents constitutes the rules for keeping civilians, refugees, and the displaced safely in war zones. However, the use and implementation of these guidelines have not been consistent, which has led to claims of ‘double standards’ in how the crises in Ukraine and Gaza have been handled.

International Refugee Law

The 1951 Refugee Convention (and 1967 Protocol), the Geneva Conventions and customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are all important legal frameworks that protect people from things like non-refoulement and civilian harm. The 1967 Protocol removed the Convention’s geographical and chronological constraints, which had only applied to European refugees from events prior to 1951. In Ukraine’s case, the EU and its member states have largely adhered to the spirit of the Convention. The EU turned on its Temporary Protection Directive because so many Ukrainians were coming in at once. This gave them immediate status and rights, skipping the long individual asylum processes (Schrooten 2025, 1-2). The situation is legally complicated for Palestinians. UNRWA, not UNHCR, is responsible for most of the refugees in Gaza. This independent UN agency was set up before the 1951 Convention to help Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes in 1948. This has led to a ‘*protection gap*’ because UNRWA’s job doesn’t involve protecting people legally or finding long-term solutions, which are two of UNHCR’s main jobs (Irfan 2023, 4–5, 38). Implementation gaps (such as the difference between UNRWA’s humanitarian mandate and UNHCR’s protection mandate) make Palestinian refugees more vulnerable and need specific policy responses.

The Geneva Conventions and Protections for Civilians

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and IHL set regulations to keep civilians safe during wars. These rules say that attacks on non-combatants and civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, and hospitals, are not allowed; they have been violated in both Ukraine and Gaza. IHL clearly says that starving civilians is not a way to fight. Human Rights Watch and other groups have said that Israel’s entire siege of Gaza breaks this rule and is a war crime because it punishes everyone at once (Abudayya 2025, 2). Even though it is a crime, there are claims that Russia has forcibly moved hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, including children, to Russian territories that Russia controls. The displacement of more than 90 per cent of the people in Gaza, which was caused by Israeli instructions to evacuate to ‘humanitarian zones’ that were later attacked, has also raised severe concerns under IHL.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has looked at the many problems in Ukraine and Gaza, including the effects on civilians, the response from other countries, and the laws that regulate these situations. The findings reveal widespread catastrophes, resulting in significant human suffering and challenges to international protection systems. Displacement has far-reaching socio-economic impacts on both host communities and refugees, affecting employment, education and social cohesion. There have been refugee protection laws, but in the present context, they need to be evaluated, and this evaluation needs to be conducted at the regional level, involving all parties. The old refugee rules are still not a sound legal foundation since they only offer partial protection for what should be a rare situation.

In Gaza, civilian casualties are staggering, with the healthcare system in absolute disarray, and a restricted food supply has created a famine situation. The war in Ukraine has also destroyed key infrastructure, leaving millions of people in need of help and security. Despite an extreme situation, those affected have shown incredible strength through culturally ingrained coping mechanisms, including community cooperation, religious faith (*sabr*), storytelling, and improvised psychosocial support in Gaza. Abudayya (2025) notes that these actions are not solely for survival; they constitute means of '*moral and political resistance*' against dehumanisation. In Ukraine, the rapid mobilisation of civil society, volunteer networks, and a substantial diaspora provided refugees with important early assistance, often more quickly than formal institutions.

It is crucial to adhere to international law and ensure that humanitarian access remains unobstructed. Additionally, we must work to eliminate political interference in aid efforts, empowering local and diaspora entities by enhancing coordination. International collaboration and equitable burden-sharing should facilitate sustainable solutions that encompass protection, integration, and reconstruction activities, thereby alleviating stress on host regions. It is necessary to prioritise the mental health of the affected and to conduct further research on long-term impacts, integration models, digital repatriation, and the most effective means of delivering aid. Most importantly, diplomacy and dialogue are a must.

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AUTHOR

Aman Bora
Ph.D. Candidate (JRF),
Department of Political Science
SSJDWSSS Government P.G. College Ranikhet, Almora, Uttarakhand.

Inclusive

**A Dialogue of Dissent: The Dravidian Movement's Political Discourse against Indian Nationalism
in *Parasakthi* (1952)**

Aravind B

Abstract

Dravidian political discourse has been the basis for Tamil Nadu politics and development since the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the areas where Dravidian political discourse developed is in the films released in the 1940s to 1960s. This paper reviews *Parasakthi's* (1952) language and its relation to Dravidian political discourse in the context of Indian Nationalism in Tamil Nadu politics post-independence. The paper addresses the question of how the political discourse of *Parasakthi* (1952) is related to the Dravidian ideology developed by Dravidian intellectuals like Iyothee Thass, Rettaimalai Srinivasan, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and others. It addresses the question of how the discourse of *Parasakthi* (1952) is related to the three layers of Dravidian discourse. The film is analysed using Fairclough's model of the three levels of description, interpretation, and explanation. It reveals that following Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) dominant framework of discourse on anti-Brahmanism and anti-Hindi –which encompasses the 'Hindutva phobia,' Tamil nationalism, and women's rights – the film depicts non-Tamil as 'Other.' The film's discourse describes the social action not lying-in harmony with the concept of the political language of Dravidian ideology.

Keywords

Dravidian Political Discourse, Fairclough model, Parasakthi, Critical Discourse Analysis, DMK.

Introduction

Tamil cinema has become a part of Tamil Nadu's popular culture since the beginning of Tamil movie production in the early twentieth century. Pre- and Post-Independent India, Tamil Nadu politics have been associated with cinema. **Baskaran (2013, Introduction)** shows us that since 1967 all five chief ministers of Tamil Nadu have been associated with cinema. **Hardgrave (2008, 74)** argues that the Dravidian movement and its political wing DMK has effectively used Tamil Cinema as a political tool to propagate its ideology.

The Tamil Cinema was a political tool in Pre-Independence to promote nationalism and the Indian Independence movement (**Baskaran 1981, 121**). However, with the advent of the Dravidian movement, this changed completely. With the Dravidian movements, stalwarts like C. N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, Bharathidasan, and Pavalar Balasundaram as film writers have imposed Dravidian ideology through Tamil cinema post-Independence. Kavingar Kannadasan admits that the Congress party failed to use Tamil cinema as a political tool after independence (**Hardgrave 2008, 61**). Thus, the Dravidian movement used Tamil cinema as a political tool for its positive advantage. With the monopoly of Brahmins in education, culture, language, and public administration, the relevance of Dravidian identity in Tamil Nadu's political discourse developed. Iyothee Thass first should be attributed to the emergence of anti-Brahminism and the Dravidian identity as a political identity (**Geetha and Rajadurai 2008, chap. 2, 1–2**). Finally, Dravidian ideology shaped its current form with the role of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's transformation of the Dravidian identity into the Dravidian movement. The film, *Parasakthi* (1952) was examined through Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's ideas of Dravidian Ideology.

Theoretical framework of the study

This paper follows Walter Benjamin's semantics system approach for the theoretical framework. The semantic system approach of theory is the role of the language used in *Parasakthi* (1952) in the reproduction and dissemination of Dravidian political discourse. The Dravidian political discourse by Iyothee Thass to counter the Brahmin hegemony includes anti-Brahmins, anti-casteism, anti-religious Identity, and finally, rediscovery of original and casteless Dravidian identity. Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse expanded Tamil Nadu politics to involve the role of caste and subaltern points of view and cemented the masses' role in the fight for one's human rights and dignity. Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse involves his criticism of upholding the Tamil glorious past (**Pandian 1996, 2284**). Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse also involves Tamil nationalism through his sheer criticism of the Brahminical post-Independent Indian nation. **Danesi (2024, 235)** believes that cinema can provide a mirror view of the world. The same applies to Tamil cinema because it plays a vital role in forming the Dravidian culture and their worldview. Thus, Tamil cinema is essential for promoting Dravidian political discourse. Thus, *Parasakthi's* (1952) role in providing Dravidian political discourse is essential.

Methodology

This paper examines the process of disseminating Dravidian political discourse through *Parasakthi* (1952). By analysing *Parasakthi* (1952), a classic political movie, the paper examines how the Dravidian

movement, especially DMK, used Tamil cinema as part of its propaganda tool to critique Indian nationalism. The methodological approach used for analysis is Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The paper uses purposive sampling for qualitative analysis. *Parasakthi* (1952) was a study sample because contemporary political theorists, academicians, and experts viewed it as a milestone in Tamil cinema. After all, from the film, it can be observed the concepts of Dravidian political discourse's anti-Congressism, attack on religious order, Tamil Nationalism, and Dravidian Identity. The highly political nature of the film not only allows the audience to reason and makes them think of the Tamil socio-political condition concerning the federal arrangement with the Union government. The film's release at the time (17 October 1952) when the Congress Government at Union and Madras state were strongly developing Indian identity, nationalism, and subverting the regional identity. Even after seventy years, this film has not lost its impact or relevance to current political issues like anti-Brahminism, Tamil Nationalism, state autonomy, women's rights, and Dravidian Identity.

Analytical framework

This paper used Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in *Parasakthi* (1952) to identify Dravidian political discourse. In this paper, the dialogues, ideas, and concepts play an essential role as they contribute directly and indirectly to the reproduction of Dravidian political discourse. **Fairclough (1992, 213)** explains that text analysis is sufficient for analysis and gives three-dimensional models. Fairclough's 3D models of critical discourse analysis consist of three categories called dimensions. The first-dimension description, second-dimension interpretation, and third-dimension explanation to analyse *Parasakthi* (1952).

***Parasakthi* (1952)- An Introduction**

Parasakthi (1952) is a political drama based on the play by Pavalalar Balasundaram. It was scripted by M. Karunanidhi and directed by Krishnan-Panju in 1952. The movie begins with a poem by Bharathidasan about the greatness of Tamil Nadu, implying the DMK's early demand for the sovereign state (**Pandian 1991, 761**). A general theme observed in *Parasakthi* (1952), a film where they speak of Tamil glory, is that North Indian people are biased against the south and always are biased towards the poor Tamil.

It, on the other hand too, portrays the city as full of pious and selfish, money-minded people. Most men shown in the film are sexual predators who prey on weak women. The film's protagonist, Gunasekaran, is a Tamil migrant from Rangoon who comes to Tamil Nadu during the Second world war to attend his sister's marriage. He left his two elder brothers in Rangoon (modern day Burma) due to wartime. On reaching Tamil Nadu, he lost his wealth and became homeless, his pursuit of finding his sister. He finally finds his sister in poor condition, and further, she undergoes sexual advances from men who claim to help

her. Her worsened poverty made her murder her child and protagonist, Gunasekaran, breaking up the law to avenge the men who molested her sister, and finally, the historic court scene by the protagonist, Gunasekaran, and the happy ending of the reunion of the family.

Findings of the study

From the concepts and propositions of the main three Dravidian political discourses, anti-Brahminism, Tamil nationalism, and women's right, the *Parasakthi* (1952) movie, as a text, is described at three levels: The first level is Description, the Second level is interpretation, and the Third level is the explanation. The following paper will analyze the film script and its language; as the text is analysed, its political practice and social impact are detailed.

Descriptive Level

At the descriptive level of discourse analysis, the vocabulary in the language used in the movie will create the structure through which one's political discourse is diminished (Youmans 1991, 787). The movie, from the opening song by Bharathidasan, speaks about the wellness of Dravida Nadu. The descriptive level analysis will decipher the vocabulary in the language text of the movie to bring about the Tamil nationalism discourse.

From the film's beginning, the song with the dance sequence of the Bharatanatyam dancers plays like the one below:

VOICEOVER SONG. Long live, long live, long live our Dravida Nada. They are, alternatively, surrounded by sea in the south, cape Comorin, with Bengal along the shore in the North. Dancing seas on East and West. This country has both intelligence and talent. From ancient Tamil were born lyrical Telugu, Tulu, Malayalam, and anklet-like Kannada languages. The country is excellent in arts. Hills filled with fragrant wood and teak. Seas where pearls abound. A country filled with the fragrance of flower forests, Rivers, Lakes, Fountains, Fruits, Juices, and breezes. Acts of skilled men, with beautiful girls in this country. Long live, long live, long live our Dravida Nadu (Krishnan-Panju 1952, 00:03:35)

This song celebrates the greatness of Dravida Nadu and praises its physical beauty with words like hills with the fragrance of teak wood, flowers, rivers, fountains, fruits, and also the skill of its men and beautiful girls. It also could be observed that the Dravidian political discourse is anti-Hindi from the vocabulary of the song that provides south Indian languages that were born from Tamil. Post the song the monologue criticises the then status of Tamil and includes Annadurai's quotes and calls for the return of Tamils from the foreign nation to their motherland. Dravidian political discourse of an independent Dravidian Nation

free from Indian nation state is explicitly through this usage of vocabulary as shown in the opening of the *Parasakthi* (1952).

In the film, the protagonist, Gunasekaran, after losing his money, tries to sell his trousers to the North Indian shop owner, but the North Indian shop owner shouts at him that he will pay only eight annas (half a rupee). However, the protagonist, Gunasekaran, says his trousers are new and cost around fifty rupees. Thus the protagonist, Gunasekaran, was cheated by the unkind North Indian businessman. Similarly, a North Indian moneylender harasses Kalyani, the protagonist, Gunasekaran's sister. In the later part of the film, in the Refugee camp, the North India officers asked a Tamil refugee's father's name; the refugee replied Paramasivam Pillai (Pillai is a caste name in Tamil Nadu), and when enquired about his name, the refugee said only Ramachandran. However, when an officer tries to name him Ramachandran Pillai, the refugee denies he has no caste. Likewise, the North Indian officer allows North Indian refugees from Delhi to have a place in the camp, even though the officer claims the camp's capacity is full but denies Gnansekaran, brother of the protagonist, Gunasekaran. These sequences showed that it is only the North Indian hegemonic political discourse that brings caste and discriminates against the south Indians. Dravidian political discourse in the context of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's broader idea that Indian Nationalism is just masquerading as Brahmanism in disguise (**Rajahmani 2025, 117**). The sequence of *Parasakthi* (1952) film as explained above showcases the dichotomy of the North-South divide. The vocabulary discourse description reveals North India as 'others' who are unkind, selfish, hegemonic, and casteist. As **Aloysius (2007, 131)** noted the mainstream notion of Indian nationalism in nothing but a movement to change power from the British to Indian elites, especially oppressor caste. Thus Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's notion of Indian nationalism is the dominant northern upper caste hegemonic nationalism. Thus, *Parasakthi* (1952) film replicates and criticises north upper caste hegemonic mainstream nationalism notion of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy.

Interpretation

At this level, the Dravidian political discourse mainly speaks of its glorious past, breaking the stereotype of women and social actors, especially DMK's usage of the film to further its agenda for its electoral politics. There are two major Dravidian discourses concerning anti-Brahminism. One belongs to the discourse of attack on the religious order, and the other is a separate independent Tamil state, later state autonomy critiquing Indian Nationalism. This Dravidian discourse forms the core tenets of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy critiques mainstream notion of Indian Nationalism.

In *Parasakthi* (1952), when Kalyani, the protagonist, Gunasekaran's sister, was married in a Vedic Brahmanical ritual, the Brahmin persists wished her a long-married life. In contrast, her husband dies post-childbirth, and she becomes a widow. Likewise, Narayana Pillai, a black-market businessman, is deeply religious, and a Hindu temple Brahmin priest tries to harass Kalyani in the sanctum of the temple. Therefore, the Vedic notion of purity, ritual to God, and the belief that God will save good hearted people, Brahmins persist in the superior intellectual and pure soul, which is the notion of Brahminical discourse discarded in *Parasakthi* (1952). **Pandian (1991, 761)** argues that although *Parasakthi* (1952) is a political film based on Dravidian political discourse, it employs the conventional societal code of the widow's plight. **Pandian (1991, 761)** states that the Dravidian writers showcased the worst state of Tamil Nadu under congress rule. Following this framework, the film implicitly critiques the Indian Nationalistic ideology of ruling under the overpowerful Union. The Second world war, in *Parasakthi* (1952), is an analogy to the economic condition in post independent times under Congress rule in Madras state. Therefore, the film could refer to the worsened condition of the Tamil people and favors an independent Tamil state. Further *Parasakthi* (1952) critiques the mainstream nationalist notion of Indian Nationalism based on glorified Indian classical past as noted by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy (**Ramasamy 1933, cited in Pandian 1993, 2284**). But *Parasakthi* (1952) diverted from the independent Dravidian state envisaged from Periyar E. V. Ramasamy. Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's vision of an independent Dravidian state not restricted to physical boundaries, but for him the Dravidian state includes the whole of shudras not only from Tamil Nadu but also from other Indian states like Bengal, Maharashtra, Bombay, and Bihar (**Ramasamy 1950, cited in Pandian 1993, 2287**). Thus, *Parasakthi* (1952) moved away from the Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's political discourse reflected the electoral political discourse of DMK.

Explanation

With the discourse practice of *Parasakthi* (1952) established, this level will address in which context the Dravidian discourse of the film takes place. The context in this film explored using the Dravidian ideology concerning feminism, anti-Brahmanism, Tamil nationalism, and DMK propagation. From the beginning, the film explains to the audience the greatness of Dravida Nadu and the glorious Tamil past. In the scene, post the first opening song, Kalyani's soon-to-be husband monologue criticize the deplorable condition of the great Tamil Nadu and it is revealed in the following dialogues:

KALYANI'S SOON-TO-BE HUSBAND. Gentlemen. Till now, you enjoyed novels, songs & dance. Children of such a lovely land. Instead of crawling on the lap of this motherland, they go abroad and suffer. Thinking of it, the words said by 'Aringar' come to my mind. If we tell the reason the seawater

is salty, it is because Tamilians, unable to get a job here, go abroad for it. So many families, and young people, are in Malaya rubber estates in Africa and Sri Lanka. They must return to this motherland. That is what this lovely song and dance reminds me of (**Krishnan-Panju 1952, 00:08:25**)

The protagonist, Gunasekaran, first scene while entering Tamil Nadu, similar to Kalyani's soon-to-be husband in a sarcastic tone criticise the pathetic economic conditions of Tamil Nadu as follow:

BEGGAR. Sir, alms, please.

GUNASEKARAN. Tamil Nadu's first voice itself is excellent.

[Gives alms to the beggars] (**Krishnan-Panju 1952, 00:24:11**)

Pandian (1991, 759) notes that *Parasakthi* (1952) successfully gained the masses' support and popularity by portraying the deplorable economic condition and rational ideas on the screen. The idea is that Dravida Nadu is a rich country in wealth, both physical and rich human resources, and it is North Indian political hegemony that hinders their growth with the ideology of Tamil nationalism. This ideology remains a constant factor throughout the film.

In the film, the radical feminist character Vimala speaks revolutionary dialogues in the vicinity of her home rather than the public space where her brother speaks of social justice. Even Vimala's dialogue below about the Tamil epic contradicts Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's radical view of the Tamil epic. To propagate the DMK ideology, the film introduces hidden dialogues with attributes like 'Aringar' and 'Anna.' This attribute to the C.N. Annadurai, head of the DMK. Because Annadurai is fondly called by his followers as 'Aringar' and 'Anna.'

KALYANI'S SOON-TO-BE HUSBAND. Thinking of it, the words said by 'Aringar' come to my mind. If we tell the reason the seawater is salty, it is because Tamilians, unable to get a job here, go abroad for it. (**Krishnan-Panju 1952, 00:08:39**)

In above, the economic condition of the Indian nation is criticised and modern Indian nationalism ideology of economic superpower is questioned by explaining the 'brain drain theory' in the above dialogue. Further it shows the bias against the regional identity by the Indian Nation is highlighted here, where the character quotes 'Tamilians unable to get a job here'.

The film provides fan service to the founder leader of the DMK, Annadurai, and propagates the ideas that Annadurai is pro-poor and questions social injustice. Vimala's brother gives a political speech where he questions the pathetic condition of poverty, where mothers sell their children for eight annas, three rupees and five rupees, whereas criticising the Gods in the Temple lavished with gold and diamonds.

Likewise, Gunasekaran learns about the rape attempt of his sister by the Priest. Moreover, her being in court for the alleged murder of her child. Gunasekaran goes to the Temple, and the conversation happens as below:

[Priest doing rituals and says good will happen to followers]

GUNASEKARAN [Behind the Goddess sculpture]. Hey, Priest. First, check your horoscope.

PRIEST. Who? Is it Goddess speaking?

GUNASEKARAN. When did the Goddess speak? You are senseless.

PRIEST. Goddess Parasakthi. My mother, what are you speaking?

[Gunasekaran accuses Priest of attempting rape of her sister and says he is a sinner]

PRIEST. Parasakthi. Parasakthi.

GUNASEKARAN. She will not talk as she is a stone. When did she speak? **(Krishnan-Panju 1952, 02:29:28)**

This conversation in *Parasakthi* (1952) is the correct foundation of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse of critics of religion and its rituals. Gunasekaran questions if the Goddess is true, then her Kalyani would have been saved when the Priest tries to rape her and for her poverty. Thus, *Parasakthi's* (1952) direct attack on the ills of the religious order is new to the political discourse in Tamil cinema.

However, in the famous court scene when Gunasekaran defends his and her sister's accusation, he spoke in Annadurai Dravidian political discourse rather than Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse, where the former is radical. The DMK moving towards electoral politics tones down the criticism of religion, as the majority in Tamil Nadu are Hindus. In the Gunasekaran monologue in court, one could observe:

GUNASEKARAN. I saw my sister as a widow, like a painting without color. My sister's name is Kalyani, an auspicious name. However, there is no auspicious thread around her neck.

[Gunasekaran accuses the men who attempt to rape her sister]

GUNASEKARAN. The Priest demands Kalyani honor as his price, in the name of Goddess Parasakthi, in the name of the mother of the world

[Gunasekaran justifies Kalyani's murder of her child]

GUNASEKARAN. There is no protection for women to live in Tamil Nadu

GUNASEKARAN. Whose fault is making the fake Priest become society's member? Is it God's mistake or one who deceives in the name of God? **(Krishnan-Panju 1952, 02:35:11)**

From the above Gunasekaran monologue, his criticism of religion is directed against society's fault and justifies society's view about the widow. Further in the monologue, he faults his loss of wealth on the prostitute, and thus as a patriarchal man, blames his mistake on the women (**Lakshmi 2008, 23**). Thus, the Dravidian discourse in this film moved from Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's radical Dravidian political discourse to Annadurai's electoral Dravidian political discourse. The Indian Nationalism discourse of both Periyar E. V. Ramasamy and his protege Annadurai similar in their tone to counter the hegemonic brahmanical discourse in the mainstream Indian Nationalism. Thus, *Parasakthi* (1952) movie critique of the hindu social order directly correlates with the Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian political discourse critiquing the hindu social order by subordinate social groups to demand for a nation of equality and freedom.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, the language used in *Parasakthi* (1952) was not neutral. It projects Dravidian political discourse of Indian Nationalism, majorly DMK electoral political ideology. In comparing political and economic conditions at that time, the movie shows how DMK propogandised its vision for the need for Dravida Nadu. DMK criticism of Indian Nationalism differs from Periyar E. V. Ramasamy views Indian Nationalism. As **Pandian (1993, 2287)** noted, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's notion of Indian Nationalism stems from subordinate social groups to question the elitist mainstream Indian Nationalism and to imagine a nation of equality and freedom. Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis interpreting Dravidian political discourse through cinema. This paper reviewed Dravidian political discourse in *Parasakthi* (1952) based on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

The critical analysis of the discourse of *Parasakthi* (1952) at three levels of Description, interpretation, and explanation shows us it reproduced Dravidian ideology in the context of Indian Nationalism through cinema as mass media. In *Parasakthi* (1952), at the description level, DMK's Tamil nationalist narrative is explored through speaking of the glorious past and critiques, the hegemony of North Indian politics, and the current conditions of Tamil Nadu of its time. But it differs from Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's notion of Indian Nationalism which critiques the glorious past and critiques them (**Pandian 1993, 2285**). As far as Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's notion of mainstream Indian Nationalism is nothing but the power transfer from the British to the indigenious upper caste brahmin elite (**Ramasamy 1948, cited in Pandian 1993, 2283**). The interpretation of the *Parasakthi* (1952) film at

this second level again shows that the film falls with the Dravidian discourse countering the Aryan political discourse in the context of Indian Nationalism critiquing the hegemonic north. The explanation level also shows us how Dravidian political discourse differs between Annadurai and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy. In conclusion, *Parasakthi* (1952), though path-breaking political cinema at its time, Dravidian political discourse envisaged by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian ideology takes backstage while Annadurai's electoral Dravidian political discourse takes center stage. DMK rooted from Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Dravidian ideology critiqued the hindu social order in *Parasakthi* (1952). As Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's vision of mainstream Indian Nationalism was nothing but an ideological vehicle for the upper caste hegemonic discourse through hindu social order. Therefore, *Parasakthi* (1952) by critiquing hindu social order questioned the upper caste hegemonic discourse of Indian Nationalism and strives for a nation based on quality and freedom.

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Author Aravind B

PhD Candidate,

Centre for International Politics Organization and Disarmament,

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Inclusive

Between Faith and Nation: Hindu and Muslim Identity Politics in Colonial Bengal

Atrayee Sinha

Abstract

This paper demonstrates the contested trajectory of nationalism in colonial Bengal through the lens of Hindu revivalism, Muslim identity politics and pluralist interventions. The paper builds on Partha Chatterjee's framework of 'uneven colonial modernity' and further argues that Bengal's experience with nationalism was fundamentally shaped by the structural exclusions that were produced during colonial rule. The paper argues that the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 and the privileging of the Hindu upper caste entrenched economic inequalities in Bengal, especially towards the Muslim peasants. The Hindu revivalism under Bankim Chandra and Aurobindo Ghose and the Hindu-ness of the Swadeshi movement further led to the marginalisation of Muslims thereby creating communal grievances. The grievances found their representation through communal mobilisation, separate electorates and finally separate statehood. The paper further points us towards pluralist interventions in Bengal through Tagore and Nazrul whose visions of cultural synthesis and universal humanism sought to provide an alternative to communal politics but ultimately failed. The paper situates Bengal's history within the tension between faith and nation and demonstrates how uneven access to modernity culminated in the final partition of Bengal in 1947 and how Bengal was both a cradle of Indian nationalism and a site of its deepest fractures that revealed the persistent tension between faith and nation.

Keywords: Nationalism, Bengal, Hindu Revivalism, Muslim Identity, Colonial Modernity, Pluralism

Introduction

Nationalism in India originated and developed differently from that of Europe as Partha Chatterjee (1986) argued that there is a clear distinction between nationalism in Western nations and in third-world countries like India. The nationalist experiences in the Third World were shaped by the contradictions of 'uneven colonial modernity'. In Western societies where nationalism emerged as a result of the rise of the bourgeoisie class, they ultimately exerted total control over the state. However, in places like Bengal colonial modernity was deeply uneven and privileged only a specific section of society while marginalising others. Agrarian changes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Bengal gave rise to the landed gentry class which later on evolved into the 'Hindu Bhadrak' class. The upper caste bhadrak class further gained access to education, modern professions and modern cultural capital. The majority of them were settled in the western part of Bengal. However, Muslims who were mainly settled in the eastern part of Bengal did not benefit from this aspect of colonial modernity. This uneven development of the two communities ultimately led to deep fragmentation within both of them, which Rafiuddin Ahmed (1981) described as creating a 'profound sense of backwardness' among the Muslim community. This uneven access to modernity further shaped how both communities imagined the 'nation'. To the Hindus, nationalism stood for liberation and modernity. In contrast the Muslims who were not part of the development process viewed nationalism as standing for arbitrary changes to religion through modernity and the dominance of the upper-caste Hindus. It was these fragments sown into the mindset that led to the partition of Bengal twice, once in 1905 and later permanently in 1947. This fragmentation was further fuelled by Hindu revivalism under leaders like Bankim Chandra and

Aurobindo Ghose and the Swadeshi movement which was characterised by resilient Hindu motifs. Over time however Muslims projected their own ideas of nationalism through the creation of a national university, their demand for separate electorates and individual political representation through the Muslim League all in 1906, post the Partition of Bengal. Leaders like Nawab Salimullah the founder of the All-India Muslim League in Dhaka or A.K. Fazlul Haq who supported the Lahore Resolution of 1940 furthered this communal fragmentation. However alternative voices did try to find a pluralist vision of nationalism for Bengal. There were also believers in inclusive nationalism such as Rabindranath Tagore who rejected narrow nationalism and opted for universal humanism and Kazi Nazrul Islam who sought to dismantle the separatist movement through major Hindu-Muslim syncretism in his writings. However, the colonial policy of divide and rule combined with deep-seated religious divisions, ultimately prevailed over linguistic and regional similarities, creating permanent communal divisions in Bengal. The partitions of Bengal, both in 1905 and in 1947 exposed the fragility and vulnerability of the ideas of inclusive nationalism. Despite sharing a common language and culture Bengal was unable to sustain the religious divisions. This paper contributes to the existing scholarship on colonial Bengal in three different ways: Firstly, it demonstrates to us how Hindu revivalism, Muslim identity politics and pluralist interventions coexisted in constant tension in Bengal and produced a tripartite struggle over the idea of the nation. Secondly, it extends to us the framework of uneven colonial modernity by linking cultural exclusion to economic and agrarian marginalisation and thereby situates communal politics in the material inequalities of colonial Bengal. Finally, by foregrounding the pluralist projects of Tagore and Nazrul as serious alternative visions of nationalism, the paper also reconsiders Bengal not merely as a site of communal fracture but also as a space where inclusive nationalism was repeatedly imagined even though it was ultimately

sidelined. It demonstrates how Bengal became both a cradle of Indian nationalism and a microcosm of its fractures.

Hindu Revivalism and the Nationalist Imagination.

The development of nationalism in Bengal was closely tied to the Hindu socio-religious resurgence. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 had already established a Hindu-upper caste Bhadrak class, who were further educated in Western education by the next century. This development was also followed by a class of people influenced by reformists, who were inspired by Western values and Hindu reformists who took it upon themselves to revive Hinduism through the growing national sentiment. Western Education brought about different scholars who were interested in the study of Indian history and etymology. This, in turn, led to a group of scholars who were deeply invested in uncovering Indian history through the lens of a nation.

The Hindu Mela, which was established in 1867 in Calcutta by Nabogopal Mitra with the support of the Tagore family, was also called the 'Jatiyo Mela'. This promoted Hindu traditions and reflected a cultural assertion of the Hindu identity through the celebration of nationalist poetry and patriotic songs and the promotion of swadeshi consumption. While the mela helped develop the national consciousness of the Bhadrak class, to whom it was also founded, it was exclusionary of Muslims, and the overt use of Hindu cultural idioms did not resonate with them. (Sarkar 1973; Chatterjee 1993)

Bankim Chandra, in his novel Anandamath (1882), infused the nation with Hindu imagery. He portrayed the country as 'Bharat Mata', thereby linking the devotion of the motherland to religious duty. He created a dichotomy of Hindu Sannyasis who were patriots fighting for Mother India, vis-à-vis Muslims in Anadamath, the 'other'. Partha Chatterjee points out how Muslims have been referred to as the 'historical enemy' in Bankim's works. (Chatterjee 1993,75-80) This not only

alienated the Muslims from the national struggle but also made them feel invisible. According to Partha Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra helped inaugurate the nationalist sentiment among Hindus through his writings. He constructed what Chatterjee calls 'the inner domain', which granted the people of India cultural sovereignty. In Anandamath, the motherland was projected as the goddess beyond colonial reach. This idea not only gave nationalism a spiritual touch but also alienated the Muslims from having a national identity in Bankim's nation.

The following prominent figure of Hindu Revivalism is undoubtedly Aurobindo Ghose. He borrowed from the writings of Bankim Chandra and the cultural spirit of the Hindu Mela. He transformed socio-cultural ideas of nationalism into a political doctrine of militant nationalism. Sumit Sarkar rightly points out how his ideas inspired revolutionary organisations like Jugantar and the Anushilan Samiti and helped radicalise the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Educated in Western education in Cambridge and deeply influenced by Hindu revivalism in contemporary India, Aurobindo Ghose systematically inspired the Hindu Bhadrakalok class. His political ideas were mainly realised after Lord Curzon's 1905 decision on the Partition of Bengal. He rejected the method of the congress moderates and was a part of the extremist group. He articulated the vision of *Purno Swaraj* (complete independence) for India and advocated for the use of force and violence to achieve it. For Aurobindo, Nationalism transcended being just a political movement to become a complete spiritual movement rooted in the ideals that the nation itself was divine. *Bhawani Mandir* (1905), written by Aurobindo Ghose, demonstrates his ideals of a country. This article talks about establishing a temple of 'Bhawani' (Durga), a Hindu goddess, where young men would dedicate their lives to the national struggle. Even though resistance to the colonial rule was seen as a religious duty, it excluded any Islamic motifs and was entirely ritualistic with symbols from Hinduism. The use of imagery of the mother like 'Bharat Mata'

and the use of idolatry in the national movement further isolated the Muslims from the mainstream anti-partition movement and the Indian National Congress. The deep wedge was felt later in 1906 with the establishment of the Muslim League. Historians have interpreted Ghosh's militant nationalism as inspirational yet exclusionary. Partha Chatterjee points out that Aurobindo Ghosh transformed the sacredness of politics in Bankim's cultural text to an actual form of politicisation. (Chatterjee 1993,75-80)

The Swadeshi Movement forms a crucial bridge between Hindu nationalism and Muslim alienation. The movement, which started as a reactionary method of protest against the colonial decision of the Partition of Bengal, slowly dealt a permanent blow to any forms of future reconciliation of the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. The Hindu revivalism of Bankim Chandra, Hindu Mela, Aurobindo Ghose, and the revolutionary organisations has already affected the Muslims and made them suspicious of Hindu authority over life and politics in the eastern part of Bengal which was a Muslim majority region. The uneven colonial development of the Eastern and Western parts of Bengal, in terms of access to education, economic opportunities, and overall development, led a significant number of people from the Eastern parts of Bengal to welcome the idea of partitioning Bengal. Nawab Sir Khawaja Salimullah of Dhaka, one of the most prominent Muslim leaders of the 20th century, welcomed the decision to partition. He believed this would lead to greater opportunities for the people of East Bengal. Sugato Bose (1993) argues that Swadeshi primarily mobilised the urban Hindu middle class who were settled in the western part of Bengal. The rural part of eastern Bengal which had a majority Muslim population was secluded from this movement. This was mainly because the industrialisation that happened during Swadeshi happened in and around Kolkata. The economic benefits were felt in the western part of Bengal, saturated with an upper class of Hindu populations. Therefore, for many peasants the

Swadeshi movement appeared to be a bhadrak Hindu upper caste movement with little to no economic benefits for the rest of the community. On the other hand, the Simla deputation in which Muslims demanded separate electorates, the foundation of the All-India Muslim League, and the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University all in 1906 strengthened the Muslim resilience to Hindu revivalism. The overt use of Hindu symbolism in the Swadeshi movement and the processions featuring Kali and Durga icons furthered this division as Hindu symbolism clashed with Islamic beliefs and traditions. The Muslim artisans and traders did not benefit proportionately from the Swadeshi movement like the Hindus. They lost their business of importing cloth to the Britishers to Hindu-led entrepreneurs who took control of the market. Sumit Sarkar rightly points out how it shaped the Muslim perception of economic marginalisation within Bengal. (Sarkar 1973,46-51) The decision of Partition was finally annulled in 1911, and it created immense disillusionment among the Muslims. They reflected the decision as a win for the Hindus over Muslim demands and aspirations. This furthered the identity crisis, which ultimately led to the partition of 1947 amongst the Muslim community in Bengal, the details of which we will discuss in the following part.

Muslim Identity Politics in Colonial Bengal

The evolution of Muslim identity in colonial Bengal was shaped profoundly by both socio-religious reforms and exclusionary politics under colonial modernity. The change in the agrarian scenario due to colonial policy and the policy changes under the Permanent Settlement Act brought about significant shifts, where the Zamindars had total control over the land, and the peasant class faced distress, left at the mercy of colonial policies. Partha Chatterjee argues that colonialism produced 'uneven modernity' which gave Hindus privileges over Muslims. In Bengal the Hindu Bhadrak class which benefited from the agrarian colonial policies, also benefited hugely from Western education and thus government jobs

unlike the Muslims who were kept away from these developments. The Muslims were often shy of Western education as they considered it alien to the Islamic culture, and the religious mullahs asked them to stay away from Western education and culture. The gap in education between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal was even higher than in other states. Bengal became the class example of Muslim backwardness in education. (Ahmed 1981:134) In 1875, for instance, of the total number of college students in the Bengal presidency, only 5.4 per cent were Muslims, and 93.9 per cent were Hindus. The difference further increased the enmity between the Hindus and Muslims. (Ahmed 1981:136) It is essential to mention in this regard that the Muslims were mostly peasants settled in the Eastern part of Bengal and the Hindus dominated as zamindars and money lenders. (Chatterjee 1993,75-80)

This ultimately led to the Faraizi movement which began as a revival of Islamic values and culture in the eastern part of Bengal but evolved into the first organised movement for socio-economic consciousness among Muslims. The movement later turned radical under Dudu Miyan and was one of the first revolts against Hindu zamindars and moneylenders by Muslim peasants. This was also followed by the Wahabi movement, which started in Delhi and later spread to Bengal, aiming at the purification of Muslims and uniting them into a pan-Islamic group, bringing spiritual regeneration amongst them. Both of these socio-religious movements fostered a sense of identity and socio-religious consciousness among their members, which by the end of the century had evolved into a distinct political identity.

Social divisions compounded this marginalisation. The *ashraf-atrap* divide separated the Urdu-speaking elites of India from the Bengali-speaking peasants, and the Muslims in general lacked in western education, with the conditions being the worst in Bengal due to socio-economic differences between the two religions.

By the 1881 census in Bengal. Muslims made up 52 per cent of Bengal's population but owned less than 20 per cent of the zamindari states. The condition was further heightened by a massive rent burden on the part of the peasants and many Muslim peasants lived under permanent debt under the Hindu money lenders. (Guha 1963,178-85) Muslim Reformist leaders like Nawab Abdul Latif of the Muhammadan Literary Society (1863) and Syed Ameer Ali with the Central National Muhammadan Association (1877) attempted to overcome this literary backwardness by aiming for education reforms and political representation for the Muslims (Ahmed 1981, 65-70). Both of these were associations from Bengal.

The Partition of Bengal (1905) and the Swadeshi movement which relied heavily on Hindu symbolism as a source of protests further solidified the divergence between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims felt unseen and excluded from the national movement. In 1906 Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka emerged as the spokesperson for the Partition of Bengal and publicly supported the colonial decision arguing that the new province would advance Muslim education and employment. (Ahmed 1981, 88-92) The Swadeshi movement also created a class of disgruntled Muslims who lost their business to Hindu entrepreneurs. The founding of the All-India Muslim League at Dhaka in 1906 institutionalised the need for a distinct political identity among the Muslims. This was followed by the demand for separate electorates, which was fulfilled by the Minto-Morley reforms of 1909. This also formalised communal politics for the first time in the history of India.

The interwar years provided a brief period of lull in the growing antagonism between the two communities; however, agrarian revolts and identity struggles through pan-Islamism found their footing in the quest for identity politics. The Khilafat Movement witnessed a brief period of camaraderie between the Muslims and the Hindus who fought together against the British. However, it is imperative

to mention this unity collapsed after the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement. (Jalal 2000, 118-23) The politics of separatism generated tensions and conflicts between the two communities and this profoundly affected popular sentiments and created a situation of mass hysteria within Bengal. The gulf between them widened and the competition between both the communities for material advantages and governmental patronage increased within Bengal. We should also remember that the British played their politics of divide and rule quite well and manipulated the communities, finally making the gulf between them unbridgeable.

By the 1930s, Muslim politics in Bengal had witnessed a decisive shift. It evolved into a mass-based, agrarian mobilised community from an elite-based organisation of the past. This transition was spearheaded by A.K. Fazizul Haque and the Krishak Praja Party which strongly articulated the demands and grievances of the Muslim peasants. The voices of the peasants found their national representation through the peasant party which represented their needs and demands and they got further radicalised in their quest for identity. The rise of Krishak Praja Party reflected the rural realities of Bengal and the hardships of the Muslim peasant class under the economic dominance of Hindu landlords. (Bose 1993, 156-60)

Under Fazizul Haque, the Muslims were finally able to consolidate their agrarian demands and present them on the larger national stage. It was Haque who passed the historic Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League in 1940. The charter passed in the Lahore session is often referred to as the charter for the formation of Pakistan. Pakistan was supposed to be formed of Muslim majority states and would create a separate nation other than India. The ascendancy of the league combined with the communal tensions in Bengal and the rest of India ultimately led to the fulfilment of Muslim's quest for political identity through the formation of the new nation of Pakistan in 1947. It is imperative to mention that the newly born Pakistan included

the eastern Muslim-majority part of Bengal. (Chatterji 2002, 210-15; Ahmed 1981, 188-92)

Pluralist Currents in Bengali Nationalism

The division of faith had a significant impact on the division of the nation, once in 1905 and later permanently in 1947. However, we should not forget that there were intellectual figures in the history of Bengal who sought to advocate for a more inclusive process of nation-building and nationalism. Not all the politics that occurred in Bengal were reactionary in nature or exclusionary. However, the Swadeshi movement and the inter-war years, combined with the British policy of divide and rule, brought about their own challenges. It was during this time that individuals like Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam sought to offer the people of Bengal alternative approaches to communal politics and identity-based nationalism through their writings and speeches on nation, nationalism and political poetry.

Rabindranath Tagore was so deeply disillusioned by the Swadeshi Movement, which was so exclusionary in nature, especially towards lower castes and the Muslims, that in the latter part, he not only distanced himself from the movement but also criticised the movement in *Bangamata* (Motherland) where he wrote ‘*Sat-koti santanarey, he mugdho Janani Rehecho Bangali kore, Manush koroni.*’ It is a critique of the narrow Bengali nationalism that was evident during the Swadeshi movement. He criticised the narrow identity nationalism of the upper caste Bengali bhadralok class, who based their movement heavily on the usage of religious symbols alongside other communal and casteist practices that kept the movement from becoming a mass movement. Tagore critiques Bengal’s nationalism both literarily and politically. In his 1917 lectures on nationalism, which were later published as *Nationalism*, he warned how the adoption of a ‘mechanical

nationalism' would sacrifice ethical and human values at the altar of state power. Historians like Partha Chatterjee have argued that Tagore's humanist critique of nationalism stood as one of the most substantial internal challenges to the communalised trajectory of Indian Nationalism.

Kazi Nazrul Islam, on the other hand provided Bengal with poetic pluralism through his extensive use of songs novels and mostly poetry to challenge the brewing identity politics of his contemporary time. The conscious use of Persian and Bengali together in his poetry, conveying the message of secularism and equality, aimed to discourage the spirit of antagonism among Bengalis. Kazi Nazrul Islam became famous as 'the rebel poet' for his fiery poem, *Bidrohi*. His constant use of Hindu and Muslim motifs, the play of Arabic, Persian, and Bengali words in his literary work, and his writings in literary magazines like *Nabayug*, *Dhumketu*, and *Langol* brought a breath of fresh air amidst the strong trends of communal politics. He was both a critique of Brahminical orthodoxy and Islamist conservatism.

The pluralists' versions of both Tagore and Islam constituted critical counterpoints to the prevailing debates of Hindu revivalism and Muslim separatism in colonial Bengal. Tagore's articulation of Universal humanism, combined with Nazrul's cultural synthesis and secularism, provides us with the knowledge that Bengal's nationalist imagination was not only confined to narrow identity politics as a whole. However, it is also true that the pluralist and alternative voices were not met with enough results. The voices were historically marginal and had minimal scope on the nationalist scope of divisive politics. The weight of colonial structures and policies, uneven colonial modernity, new socio-religious consciousness, access to Western education, and the institutionalisation of communal politics finally exposed the fragility. Also, it magnified the Hindu- Muslim communal tensions. Nevertheless, the intellectual legacies of Tagore and Nazrul stand to us as enduring

reminders that Bengal's encounter with nationalism was always contested and that even within the polarised field of Hindu-Muslim identity-based politics there always existed alternative imaginings that sought to reconcile faith and nation.

Conclusion

The history of colonial Bengal discussed above demonstrates that nationalism in Bengal was never a singular uncontested project. It was in fact fractured and often shared an antagonistic field in which different competing identities defined their own meaning of the nation. Hindu revivalism that was articulated through institutions like the Hindu Mela, the writings of Bankimchandra Chatterjee and the militant politics of Aurobindo Ghose infused the nationalist imagination with religious symbolism that sacralised the nation as a Hindu goddess. Even though these religious idioms were able to mobilise a massive section of the Hindu *bhadralok* class. It however alienated a large segment of the Muslim population. For Muslims the structural exclusions of colonial modernity manifested in agrarian subordination under the Permanent Settlement Act, economic marginalisation in the hands of the landowning class and money lenders who were mainly Hindu and minimal access to education and western professions. This translated into a collective sense of backwardness and dispossession among the whole community especially in Bengal which was also differentiated from the Urdu-speaking Muslim community in the rest of India. In Bengal the religious reformist movements like the Faraizi and Wahabi, the support for Partition in 1905 mainly by East Bengal and the establishment of the All-India Muslim League in 1906 illustrate how a distinct Muslim political identity was forged in response to both unfair colonial policies and Hindu-dominated nationalism.

It is also important to mention that Bengal's nationalist trajectory cannot be reduced to only this binary. Pluralist interventions particularly those of Rabindranath Tagore

and Kazi Nazrul Islam, articulated alternative visions that resisted communal polarisation and aimed at easing communal tensions. Tagore's universal humanism rejected the narrow identification of the nation with religion and Nazrul's literary synthesis of Hindu and Islamic works projected a cultural nationalism that was rooted in shared Bengali identity. These pluralist projects reveal to us that nationalism in Bengal always contained the potential to transcend religious divides, even if such possibilities were historically limited.

The eventual Partition of Bengal in 1947 finally underscored the triumph of identity politics over efforts at pluralist alternatives. It revealed to us the fragility of inclusive nationalism in the face of structural inequalities and colonial strategies of divide and rule. It demonstrated how colonial modernity fractured the spirit of nationalism in Bengal and offered lessons for understanding the identity politics across the whole of South Asia, especially Bengal. Bengal was both the cradle of Indian nationalism and the site of its deepest fractures. The history of Bengal illustrates to us the tensions between faith and nation and also between exclusionary mobilisations and inclusive imaginaries. To study Bengal is to recognise that Indian nationalism was never a monolithic narrative of liberation, but a contested and contingent process in which religious identity, political aspiration and cultural imagination were inseparably entangled.

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AUTHOR

Atrayee Sinha

Research Scholar, University of Hyderabad

The Politics of Exile Representation: The case of Tibetan Exile

Gauri Chauhan

Abstract

Representation as a concept and practice is central to any political order. It is a means through which societies organise and govern themselves. In a Westphalian sovereign nation-state, representation can be understood to some extent through the standard model of representation, due to the territorial linkages between citizens and their representatives. However, in exile conditions, the practice of representation is complicated and therefore cannot be looked through an electoral lens. The paper will examine the politics of representation not as an event but as a dynamic and constitutive concept through the lens of claim-making. Thereafter, it examines various mechanisms through which exiles' claim representation and delves into the complexity of it. Finally, the paper will analyse the case of Tibetan exiles who have been forced to escape to India and leave their homeland after the 1959 Uprising.

Key Words: Representation, Exile, Homeland, Tibet, Dalai lama, Claim-Making

Introduction

The concept of political representation has been central to the study of politics as it is an institutional fact and everyday practice of any political order. It is a mechanism through which societies can be organised and governed. The most common and well-accepted understanding of the concept is provided by Hanna Pitkin (1967, 143), who defines it as 'substantive acting for others'. This definition essentially concurs with representation as an activity of making 'something present which is not', through intricately linking it with formal procedures of authorisation and accountability associated with democracy and electoral politics. She further asserts that representation occurs with the act of standing for the office and thereafter it can be understood when representatives try to represent a constituency, interest, and preferences in a manner responsive to them (Pitkin 1967, 209). This often-cited analysis is a standard model of representation which frames the concept as a principal-agent problem in which constituencies are territorially formed for elected agents to stand and act for the represented in a manner responsive to them (Rehfeld 2006, 3; Urbinati and Warren 2008, 389; Dovi 2016, 9). It also looks at representation from a unidirectional perspective where the responsiveness of the represented is not taken into account, and the interests are constituted in a passive manner with the assumption of them being fixed (Russo and Cotta 2020, 9).

Representation is a dynamic concept which can occur outside the electoral and territorial dimension of state power. Representation cannot be seen only as a 'factual product of elections' (Saward 2006, 298). It has a constitutive and dynamic nature and is not determined *a priori* with the assumption of stable and fixed interests. Rather different constituencies, which can be territorial, functional or identity-based, are constructed actively by the interaction between those who claim to be representatives and the represented. The representatives can act and perform as 'claim makers' for themselves and others (Saward 2010, 2-10). As a consequence, representation can occur in spaces and sites which are marked by dislocation, pluralisation, migration, violence and transnationalism. These spaces and sites are inhabited by a section of people who can articulate their representativeness beyond the clutches of sovereign nation-states in myriad ways non-electorally. Thus, Montanaro (2012, 1095-1096) argues that self-appointed representatives can represent a section of people who are poorly represented and can act as claim-makers for the disempowered in the public sphere disconnected by the authority of the nation-state. One such category of claim-makers is political exiles, which the paper seeks to investigate.

Exiles work in liminal spaces between binaries of statehood and statelessness, citizenship and refugeehood, and legality and illegality. The representativeness of the exile is complicated, yet they have articulated their claims for a homeland through multiple modalities whenever they have been relegated to the margins in global politics (Vasanthakumar 2021,140-150). Historically, there have been many such cases of emergence of exile, especially during the formation of nation-states, revolutions and wars. The paper will examine the politics of representation not as an event but as a dynamic and constitutive concept through the lens of claim-making and thereafter look at various mechanisms through which exiles claim representation and delve into the complexity of it. Finally, the paper will analyse the case of Tibetan exiles who have been forced to escape to India and leave their homeland after the 1959 Uprising.

Defining Exile Condition and the Need for Representation

The word exile etymologically is derived from the Latin word 'ex(s)ilium', meaning 'banishment', a common form of punishment for political dissidents. Though, political scientists and legal scholars have used the word in a different context and used various criteria to define them. Most of them largely agree that exiles are a group of individuals who engage in political activity and retain political orientation against their home regime with the aim of returning to their homeland after a conducive environment is created (Iwanska 1981;3, Shain 1991, 15; Römer 2008, 27). Vasanthakumar (2021, 26-28) identifies three central elements in defining exile. She argues that exiles are 'physically absent' from the political community with

which they are involved, which may or may not be ‘coextensive’ as the homeland with which they identify. Secondly, their ‘absence’ is forced by some form of political pressure and finally, exiles remain ‘politically oriented’ towards their homelands. Their nature of political activity and purpose clearly differentiates them from other categories of people, like refugees and migrants. UNHCR defines a refugee as an individual who has been ‘forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence’ and has a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ based on his/her ascriptive identities to a particular social group (UNHCR, 2024). Hence, a refugee is defined in accordance with the need for protection and is accorded a legal status under various international laws or by the host nation. The other term, migrant, is qualitatively different from being a refugee and an exile, as there is a voluntary element in the decision of the person to move, and they can return to their home country without any risk. Also, the term migrant does not have an international legal definition. Though, such strong binaries do not work in the real world, and there is an overlap, as any labelling of people is context and audience dependent. Sznajder and Roniger (2009, 16) argue that exile as a category can exist within a wider variety of phenomena related to translocations and mobility, such as refugees, nomads and diasporas. However, exiles remain a distinct category of people in global politics.

Exile politics in modern times gained momentum in the 19th and 20th centuries with the creation of new nation-states, revolutions and the two world wars. Nationalism gave further impetus to the emergence of the exile hood. Said (2000, 182) argues that there an essential association between nationalism and exile, like ‘Hegel’s dialectic of servant and master, opposites informing and constituting each other’. He asserted that nationalism in the early stages developed from some form of estrangement between the ‘us’ and the ‘outsiders’. The outsiders were the exiles who were uprooted from their homeland and yearned to reconstitute their lives. They are simultaneously deterritorialised from the homeland and rooted at once as a nation. Hence, the exile condition can be marked by liminality, a concept developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, which is defined as a transitional stage from one place, status, or condition to another (Sznajder and Roniger 2009, 23). Individuals in the liminal phase are suspended in time and live in ambiguity. They live in in-between condition where the established hierarchies and status are challenged and displaced before incorporation into society with a new status. Such a condition makes exile manoeuvre between binaries of statehood and statelessness, citizenship and refugeehood, and legality and illegality. Hence, they are exposed to vulnerability and marginalisation due to a lack of rights, which the nation-state confers to its citizens. The ‘core’ of exile politics is the closure of institutional and normative channels of political participation, and dialogue accorded to citizens (Sznajder and Roniger 2009,

21). Their condition is dependent on the benevolence of the host country and recognition of other nation-states.

Though being uprooted from their geo-cultural boundaries of homeland to liminal condition of exile, political activity and representational claim are not thwarted. Rather, exiles and diasporas inhabit spaces which are marked by the collective construction of shared community (Coelho and Somyaji 2022, 274), identity formation and an alternate public sphere beyond the nation-states (Clifford 1997, 251; Basu 2018, 5). Mälksoo (2012, 483) notes that the condition of liminality is also a moment of creativity with a potential of renewing the societal make-up and needs to be studied more closely in International Relations. The traditional theories of IR have been state-centric and foregrounded the state as a ‘closed fixed system’ wherein the state is a positivist state, whose sphere can be clearly divided between the domestic and international realms and within the territory they encapsulate the society. Hence, they reinforce the ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew 1994, 71). Global politics in reality is marked by interconnectedness, translocation and dislocation leading to the emergence of liminal spaces inhabited by refugees, migrants, diasporas and exile populations. Their representational claims take a non-standard account of representation. Studying liminality recognises the discontinuities and ruptures in global politics and incorporates the constitutive potential of experiences, ideas and practices of such subjectivities and not the absence of one. Also, when the liminal experiences are prolonged due to incomplete resolution of problem, the condition can get incorporated as a ‘permanent structure’ of a society (Malkasoo 2012, 488).

Representational claims in the above-defined conditions are more complex. Vasanthakumar (2021, 88-142) argues that representative claims in exile emerge from shared experience and identity, and they matter due to moral reasons. She further asserts that exiles are self-authors who bear witness to their conditions and carry exile testimony both as victims and scriptwriters of their suffering. They take the onus of highlighting their condition to the world. They therefore perform self-appointed representation. Taking cue from Saward’s theory of representative claim, (Montanaro (2012, 1096) notes that self-appointed representation occurs primarily in the public sphere and can be disconnected from the authority of the state. It is enacted by actors who self-identify as claim-makers to represent a constituency. It creates an authorising and affected constituency which may or may not overlap. In the case of exile representation, the authorisation can be internally from the community of exile population and externally from other nation-states and the wider international community. Shain (2005, 19) has argued that the ‘loyalty’ of their people and ‘recognition’ from other nation-states are of immense importance for exile politics to sustain. Hence, exile representation works for the legitimacy of varied types of audiences for whom the claim of representativeness is performed. Claims have both symbolic and performative potential in which identities

are constitutive within the process of representation. The claims are constantly negotiated by the exiles through various mechanisms, which the next section will cover.

Mechanism of Exile Representation

Exiles adopt varied practices for attaining their goals and making their presence felt in global politics dominated by high politics of nation-states. They don't have access to formal institutions of statecraft in national and international politics. Therefore, in order to seek representation, they adopt informal and unconventional mechanisms. Shain (2005, 18-26) notes that political activism is central to exile politics and is the differentiating factor from other categories of people. Political activism of exiles is intricately linked with legitimation of their claims for representing the will of the nation as the sole authority. VasanthaKumar (2021, 155-157) notes that the validity of the claims depends on the extent to which the constituency and third parties authorise them. Since exiles are not territorially bounded and lack rights conferred to citizens, the means of authorisation are not explicitly protected in international and national law. They have to rely on humanitarian and geopolitical grounds to sustain their relevance. New audiences and new relations are developed after moving abroad in new conditions, which Esberg and Seighel (2023, 1363) argue makes elite exiles act as 'strategic actors'. In such a scenario, exiles explore new opportunities for increasing their influence and with a new toolkit for opposition. Representative claims by exiles are negotiated constantly in alternative public sphere. New forms of activism are chosen through more loosely based diasporic networks, protests, diplomacy, demonstrations, and writings to a more structured form of political organisations, like the exile governments.

One of the most common forms of claim-making is through protests and demonstrations, which exiles carry out in the host country and liberal democracies. This usually occurs to mark an important event or to showcase dissidence to leadership of the homeland. For instance, in the 1960s and 70s, Mexico and Cuba were important host countries for exiles fleeing dictatorships in Latin America. The Chilean exiles would use the Mexican and Cuban land for revolutionary activities against the rule of Pinochet. Many returned in the 1980s to successfully remove him from power (Waldinger and Shams 2023, 409; Harmer 2024, 2). In more extreme forms, voluntary self-immolations can also be a form of protest as practised by many Tibetan youths against Chinese oppression and occupation of Tibet. Soboslai (2015, 146) notes that self-immolation is 'a violent act of non-violent resistance'. Many a times exiles could also use violence as a means to propel their aim, as was the case of Cuban and Tamil exiles. Though this may complicate its claim to legitimacy among the larger international community and needs active support of the host country.

In recent years, representational claims have found space on the internet as a vital public sphere for developing online diasporic networks (Brunner 2024, 2-4). The use of digital media and network effect has allowed exiles to garner more and new kind of followers for their cause and also disseminate message to them in remote locations in diverse languages. Esberg and Seigel (2023, 1361-1364) note that the new exile condition and audience also affect exiles' online discourse while claim-making. Many times, as in the case of Venezuelan exiles, they argued that more foreign policy-led solutions were sought, and the focus was on those topics which resonated with the wider international community. Hence, representation is to be understood as an act of painting or theatre which involves a claim-making in front of an audience and in the process, the claims are also altered. Hence, it's a dynamic and constitutive process (Saward 2010, 2).

Though, exiles also adopt more formal mechanism of representation to mimic the functioning of an actual state apparatus. Exile organisations can vary between loose, informal, and fragmented forms to highly organised governmental structures. More organised exiles who have the unity for representing the will of the entire nation, form exile governments. Among all exile organisational structures, governments-in-exile represent the most sophisticated form in terms of their organisational level, degree of claims and the outside support granted (Shain 1991; McConell 2009). These governments are distinguished from local de facto regimes or insurgents, both of which act on their own territory. Exile governments lack effective control over the claimed territory or homeland and the population, which is a defining feature of statehood (Article 1, Montevideo Convention 1933). Yet, they have existed since ancient Greece and have become more prominent since the interwar period. They perform acts of statehood by claiming to be the sole legitimate representatives of their nation and create competing political institutions of modern statecraft, like the legislature, judiciary, and bureaucracy. It is a 'self-conscious political project' (McConell 2016, 3). In contemporary times, there are many examples like the long-running Tibetan government-in-exile (TGiE), the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) of Western Sahara, or the recent National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar. Such governments have engaged through complex interpretation and application of claim-making amid ambiguity and thereby challenge the legal and static notion of sovereignty.

It is worth noting that any form of exile representation is not bereft of vulnerability and complexity. It faces challenges due to a lack of control of territory, the distance between the homeland population and the exile, and changing conditions in the homeland. Vasanthakumar (2021, 150-155) notes that this raises the question of how well the interests and identity of the homeland population are represented by the exile politicians. Furthermore, the exiles lack formal mechanisms to ensure accountability and authorisation of claims made by representatives. Formal mechanisms allow citizens of a state to have clarity on the claims

and ensure responsiveness, which, in exile conditions, may not be possible. The legal ambiguity of their demands makes them depend more on other states, the host nation and international organisations for recognition, which representatives in Westphalian sovereign nation-states don't have to.

Tibetan Exiles: Negotiating Claims for a Homeland

In 1959, more than 80,000 Tibetans under the leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India after the failed uprising against Chinese occupation of Tibet (CTA 1969, i). As soon as exiles entered India, they accommodated themselves in transit camps and tried to rebuild their lives in an alien and harsh environment. A collective sense of community was actively constructed among its members in exile conditions with the dislocation from their geo-cultural boundary of the homeland (Coelho and Somyaji 2022, 274). The initiation of the process in exile began with the creation of designated settlements and an exile government in Dharamshala. Basu (2018, 186-187) argues that the experienced (settlements) and imagined land (homeland) were kept alive, and they closely resembled each other, to develop a sense of belonging. For the exile community, the burden of being the bearers and scriptwriters of Tibetan culture, identity and heritage is vital for preserving the essence and distinctiveness of being Tibetan, and envisioning its autonomy from Han-dominated China. Currently, as per the demographic survey, around 1,25,000 Tibetans reside outside India and close to a lakh live in India in 45 settlements across ten states (Lin 2022, 554). The continued existence of exile hood for over seven decades has made it a permanent feature of their lived reality. Anand (2000, 271) asserts that the creation of an exile community has been made possible due to the strategies adopted by the Dalai Lama and the exile government, which has reimagined a unified nationhood despite the heterogeneity among Tibetan. The political language of the exile entails preserving the memories as a tool of expression of unity. Hence, the claim-making of a representative entails a constant negotiation for legitimising claims of a homeland and improving the lives of yet to be residents of the homeland.

In this regard, the 14th Dalai Lama has played the most vital role of being the principal representative of the exile community and the symbol of Tibetan identity. He is considered as the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara (in Tibetan, Chenrezig), a revered bodhisattva and therefore holds religious authority among the Tibetans. In pre-communist Tibet, he was both the temporal and political head of the traditional theocratic government called the Gaden Phodrang (Smith Jr. 1996). After coming to exile, he continued to spearhead the community and the exile government. He remained the most internationally recognised voice of the movement. Under his leadership, in agreement with India, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)

was established as the exile government in Dharamshala in April 1960. It developed as a well-functioning organisational structure with a legislative, judicial and executive branch. Brox (2016 ,14-15) argues that a new language was being developed by the exiles. They did so by asserting their uniqueness in opposition to China by building democratic institutions for forwarding claims of self-determination in front of an international community. Thereby shedding its imagery of being a backward and ungovernable nation. In the 1960s itself, the Dalai Lama pushed for the first democratic elections and tasked the representatives to promulgate a constitution based on democratic principles (Frechette 2007, 105; McConell 2009, 119). Further impetus for democratisation was given in the second phase (1990s onwards). The charter was amended, in which the executives were made responsible to the legislature and the office of Sikyong (the highest executive authority) was directly elected (Brox 2016, 45). By 2011, the Dalai Lama had declared his retirement from active politics and transferred his political power at least symbolically to the democratically elected office of Sikyong and the representatives of CTA (Dalai Lama 2011).

In terms of policy and functioning, the changing exile and geopolitical conditions also changed the focus of the representatives. In the initial years, which Kaufman (2015) termed the ‘rehabilitation phase’, the focus of representatives was on improving the living conditions of exile and their education (Romer 2008, 65; Kaufman 2015, 17-23). Even though India did not officially recognise CTA, relative freedom was given to attract donations from international aid agencies and many bodies/organs of the administration were registered as charities under the Societies Registration Act XII of 1860. Exiles in the settlement gradually developed economic self-sufficiency, and many religious institutions (monasteries) were resurrected to preserve history and culture. By the 1980s in the ‘development’ phase, the exiles were able to create a stable environment and developed a sense of belongingness in the settlement (Kaufman 2015; 25-28). Dharamshala was proclaimed with symbolic imagery as ‘Little Lhasa’, though obscuring the particularities of its liminality (Basu 2018, 133). In this phase, the Dalai Lama and the CTA focused on taking responsibility for its own development and widened its scope of engagement with the external world to a newer audience. The reconciliation of the USA with China after the 1971 visit of Kissinger, the inconsequential outcome despite passing of the three resolutions in the UN for self-determination, and the breakdown of successive bilateral talks with China, led the exile politicians to explore newer advocacy options.

The exiles’ representatives’ claim-making shifted focus from UN to international NGOs and advocated issues for a Western audience, like human rights violations, environmental degradation, non-violence, etc (Roemer 2008, 82). The growing Tibetan diaspora, which had immigrated to the USA with the passage of the 1990 Immigration Act, enabled them to become ‘ambassadors’ for the homeland (Hess 2006, 80). There

was a demographic shift with many exiles taking up citizenship in Western countries due to their occidental longing. During this time, the Dalai Lama repackaged his demands in the form of the Middle-Way approach, where he gave up the demand for complete independence and accepted genuine and meaningful autonomy within China (DIPPR report 2022, 2). The growing engagement with the West made him increase his popularity and he was called to address various parliaments, meet world leaders and write international bestselling books. Even though he met in capacity as a religious leader, he embodied the Tibetan identity and was articulating claims of the constituency. Though not everyone agrees with the approach of the Dalai Lama, as many organisations like the Tibetan Youth Congress agree upon a more radical stance of autonomy and have taken up more confrontational strategies (Anand 2000, 284). This shows that the claim-making is not as homogenous as it has been shown to be. The heterogeneous viewpoints further get amplified with the emergence of the internet and social media, which has emerged as a new public sphere for claim-making. Through his research, Brunner (2024, 6) shows that even though the Dalai Lama and the CTA are still able to determine the agenda, many new Tibetan NGOs and associations have been able to mobilise diverse audiences and compete in claim-making and differ in opinions.

Liminal exile conditions, also throw challenges for claim-making. Despite CTA emulating state like practices and Dalai Lama embodying authority of Tibetans, the exiles are dependent on the host country for navigating aspects of legality. The limits of political activism are defined by the laws of the host country. The representatives lack the sovereign power to enforce payment of taxes, law or enter into international treaties. Furthermore, the exile also lacks any rights which citizenship empowers. Many Tibetans maintain statelessness and majority of the second-generation refuse to take up India's citizenship (Baloch 2024, 346). With a prolonged liminality and stringent control of border by China have increased the gap between the exile Tibetans and the ones residing in homeland. Finally, when no country formally recognises the autonomy of Tibet and the legality of exile government, it faces a conundrum during claim-making for its existence in the global order.

Conclusion

Representation is an ongoing and dynamic process in which representatives constantly negotiate claims in dyadic process with the represented. The constituencies and interests are therefore not static variable which are pre-determined rather are constructed in the process of representation. This understanding of representation as claim-making, has made the concept to move beyond the electoral domain and also from the fixed territorial understanding of nation-state. The paper highlights that representation can be performed

in space and sites marked by dislocation, pluralisation, migration, violence and transnationalism. One such space is of exile settlements who embody liminality yet their claim-making practices are filled with vitality. Through the case of Tibetan exile, the paper highlight condition of exile Tibetan and the mechanisms through which they assert their claims for a homeland. Tibetans as scriptwriter and witness, uniquely carve a distinctive identity in order to reaffirm their rights in a contested landscape of homeland. Though, the claim-making process is not bereft of challenges due to the precarity of the exile condition. It both create and restricts the potential of representative claim making.

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Name

Gauri Chauhan

Phd Research Scholar

Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies

Jawaharlal Nehru University

Swami Vivekananda and the Construction of Hindu Identity in the 19th Century Colonial India

Harsh Tripathy

Abstract

Identity politics is not only about mobilizations and political actions based on the shared experiences, memories, and interests of particular social groups, but also a dual process that involves the simultaneous construction of a collective/group identity, upon which such mobilizations and articulations are ultimately contingent. The objective of this paper is to bring about one such attempt at the creation of 'Hindu Identity' in the 19th century colonial India by analyzing the writings and speeches of Swami Vivekananda. Using the concept of 'boundary' and in/out group, this paper will explicate how Vivekananda, in the backdrop of colonialism, attempted to create a cohesive Hindu body politic by distinguishing it from Christianity and Islam, and at the same time by blurring the differences between several "Hindu" denominations and sects, and the Aryan-Dravidian racial divide. Though, this attempt was primarily spiritual-theological in nature but it had political implications which informs the contemporary debate on Hinduism and identity politics.

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda, Hindu, Identity, Colonialism, Politics, Boundary

The nineteenth century in India was shaped by the twin forces of colonial subjugation and cultural renaissance, as Hindu intellectuals grappled with the critiques of Hindu society advanced by the colonial machinery and Christian missionaries, often deployed as a justification for colonial rule. Hindu intellectuals, from Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, to Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda, among others, responded in diverse ways to these challenges, seeking to defend, reform, and redefine Hindu traditions in the context of European modernity, orientalist scholarship, and colonial discourse. One of the primary questions which motivated these 19th century intellectuals and reformers was how and why India, despite of its' ancient glory and

high cultural achievements in the past, had declined to the point of subjugation leading to British colonization.

This inquiry led to the development of a variety of socio-religious reform movements and consequent reimagination and reconfiguring of religious and cultural identities. In the pre-colonial period, as Tapan Raychaudhuri has surmised, the Hindu identity was a personal and locally relevant construct without a sense of belonging to a larger group, and the term was not a primary referent of social identity, instead it was one's caste, or the village of one's origin or domicile which served as the primary referents (Raychaudhuri 1994, 119). As the reformers of the 19th century delved over the question of India's subjugation, they arrived at similar conclusions: the lack of unity among Hindus, fragmented along caste and sectarian lines, had prevented them from presenting a unified response to external forces: both Muslim and British (Parekh 1989, 39). This conclusion led to the development of a variety of socio-religious reform movements, like the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj etc., aimed not only at ameliorating social condition of the oppressed sections among the Hindu society like, women and "lower" caste groups, but also the simultaneous construction of a pan-India 'Hindu' community and 'Hindu' self-identity, by identifying common or shared cultural practices, codes, religious beliefs, and language (Raychaudhuri 1994).

The conclusion that it was the lack of unity and lack of national feeling among the Hindus which had brought the downfall of once glorious civilization, became the underlying theme in the evolution of Hindu nationalism which developed in the early decades of the 20th century, with founders and leaders of Hindutva organizations like the All India Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), consistently called for unity of the Hindus (Bhatt, 2020, 59-60). This call for unity, which continues to remain integral to Hindutva politics (Anderson and Damle, 159-162), sought to construct a collective Hindu identity by papering over divisions of caste and region (Mehta 2022, 34). It was articulated not only in opposition to a series of external 'others'- including Islam, Christianity, and later communism (Bapu 2013, 71), but also in relation to the sectarian conflict between two novel nineteenth-century Hindu movements: the reformist Arya Samaj and the Brahminical-traditionalist Sanatan Dharma Sabha, which held conflicting positions on caste, gender, and religious reform (Bhatt 2020, 60). Within this broader

context, the present paper seeks to examine an early attempt by Swami Vivekananda to construct a collective Hindu identity at the turn of the 19th century in colonial India, project that continues to resonate as a central concern of Hindu nationalism.

Vivekananda's constitution of Hindu Identity: The Context

Collective identity is not naturally generated but socially constructed. It is produced by the social construction of boundaries. These boundaries establish a demarcation between inside and outside, strangers and familiars, friends and foes, i.e. they establish a binary of us and them. Constructing boundaries necessarily entail a process of inclusion and exclusion, the formation of an 'in-groups' and simultaneous construction of an 'out-groups'. Such process of inclusion and exclusion entails the designation of the difference between insiders and outsiders, or of the strangers, as against the members of the inside community (Eisenstadt and Giesen n.d., 74). The construction of 'Hindu identity' in the 19th and the following century, thus required the construction of an impermeable boundary which separated the Hindus from others; but in this case, the generation of collective identity involved a two-fold process. First, it required the blurring or dissolution of existing primary identities, such as caste, region, or religious sect, which themselves were defined by strong boundaries, and second, the creation of a new overarching boundary that clearly distinguished Hindus from non-Hindus. As I will show, Swami Vivekananda's articulation of Hindu identity involved both these steps, as he sought to forge a cohesive Hindu collectivity by attempting to blur internal boundary, and creating an external boundary.

The themes around which Hindu identity coalesced are scattered across Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches; however, for the purposes of this essay, I will focus on his lecture delivered on 5th November 1897 in Lahore, shortly after his first return from the West. Addressed to a joint gathering of the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha—two recently emerged reform movements often at odds with each other, the lecture, aptly titled "*The Common Bases of Hinduism*," offers one of the most coherent and comprehensive articulations of these themes. But before discussing these themes, it is important to understand the context in which this lecture was delivered revealing the intersection of social reform, existing sectarian divisions within Hindu

society, and colonial government's classificatory practices through census and ethnography and its implications, all of which shaped both the audience and the content of Vivekananda's address.

As already mentioned above the both the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, two modern reform/revivalist movements born in the 19th century India were at loggerheads with each other over questions of social reform, but what was more important was the fact that like Brahmo Samaj before it, which had broken away from Hinduism in 1872 (Kopf 1979, 104), the Arya Samaj instructed its members to reject the label of 'Hindu' and instead register themselves as "Aryas" in the 1891 Punjab census a development which was motivated by their desire to gain legitimacy (Jones 1981, 87). These census-related developments only threatened to further the divisions within the Hindu community, which was already fractured along sectarian lines between Vaishnavas and Shaktas in Bengal or Vaishnavas and Shaivas in southern India (Sen 2025, 234). These two contexts - the internal sectarian divisions within Hindu society and the pressures of colonial classificatory practices - shaped Vivekananda's approach, informing his articulation of the "common bases of Hinduism" as an attempt to reconcile doctrinal differences, transcend sectarian boundaries, and forge a unified, overarching Hindu identity, which was intertwined with what scholars have labelled as construction of Hinduism, as a religion in Western sense of the term (Sen 2025).

Who is a Hindu: Five Themes

In this Lahore address, Vivekananda identified five themes around which he sought to articulate a cohesive Hindu identity. The first theme was the recognition of the Vedas as the primary sacred scriptures of Hinduism. Addressing his audience, Vivekananda emphasized the unifying authority of Vedas stating, they contain the "*the eternal teachings of the secrets of religion...all our religious differences, all our religious struggles must end when we stand in the presence of the holy book; we are all agreed that this is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences*" (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 396). Second, commonality was shared belief in God, whether conceived as personal, impersonal, or a combination of both, forming a unifying theological foundation. Elaborating on this Vivekananda stated: "*We all believe in is God, the creating, the preserving power of the whole*

universe, and unto whom it periodically returns to come out at other periods and manifest this wonderful phenomenon, called the universe. We may differ as to our conception of God. One may believe in a God who is entirely personal, another may believe in a God who is personal and yet not human, and yet another may believe in a God who is entirely impersonal, and all may get their support from the Vedas. Still, we are all believers in God; that is to say, that man who does not believe in a most marvellous Infinite Power from which everything has come, in which everything lives, and to which everything must in the end return, cannot be called a Hindu” (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 397).

The third theme was the concept of the soul (*Atman*) and its eternal nature, along with the doctrines of Samsara and liberation, which transcended sectarian divisions. Emphasizing upon this he stated: *“all Hindus believe that man is not only a gross material body; not only that within this there is the finer body, the mind, but there is something yet greater — for the body changes and so does the mind.... that there is something beyond even this fine body, which is the Atman of man, which has neither beginning nor end, which knows not what death is. And then this peculiar idea, different from that of all other races of men, that this Atman inhabits body after body until there is no more interest for it to continue to do so, and it becomes free, not to be born again, I refer to the theory of Samsara and the theory of eternal souls taught by our Shastras. This is another point where we all agree, whatever sect we may belong to. There may be differences as to the relation between the soul and God. According to one sect the soul may be eternally different from God, according to another it may be a spark of that infinite fire, yet again according to others it may be one with that Infinite (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 398).*

These three themes, as we can see were addressed mainly to blur, (I use this term deliberately instead of “dissolving,” because Vivekananda consistently emphasized the importance of not imposing uniformity), the internal boundaries between the various sects of Hinduism. The next two themes identified by Vivekananda, however, were directed towards establishing an external boundary that differentiated Hinduism from ‘others,’ particularly Islam and Christianity, and the West. The fourth theme concerned Hinduism’s distinctive cosmological vision, its cyclical understanding of time and creation, which sharply contrasted with the linear, one-time creation

narratives of the Abrahamic traditions. As he emphasized: *“Unlike all other races of the world, we do not believe that this world was created only so many thousand years ago, and is going to be destroyed eternally on a certain day. Nor do we believe that the human soul has been created along with this universe just out of nothing”* (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 398).

The fifth theme, closely related to this, was the Hindu doctrine of the inherent divinity and eternal perfection of the soul (*Atman*), which marked a radical point of departure from Western theological traditions. For Vivekananda, this was *“the most differentiating, the grandest, and the most wonderful discovery in the realms of spirituality that has ever been made”* (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 399). Unlike Christianity and Islam, which emphasized human sinfulness and dependence on external salvation, Hinduism, in all its variety i.e. Shaktas, Sauras, or Vaishnavas, even Buddhism and Jainism, according to Vivekananda, taught that the soul was by nature pure, infinite, and blessed, and that liberation was achieved not through external mediation but through realizing this inner divinity. This according to Vivekananda was a *“radical [and irreconcilable] difference severing at one stroke all that is Western from all that is Eastern...The Eastern is looking inward for all that is great and good. When we worship, we close our eyes and try to find God within. The Western is looking up outside for his God”* (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 399). While highlighting this difference between the Eastern and Western theological tradition Vivekananda again underlined the shared spiritual foundation within Hindu traditions, while acknowledging their differences: *“...according to the dualist, this natural blissfulness of the soul has become contracted by past bad work, and through the grace of God it is again going to open out and show its perfection; while according to the monist, even this idea of contraction is a partial mistake, it is the veil of Maya that causes us to think that, soul has lost its powers, but the powers are there fully manifest”* (ibid.,).

The above themes are certainly theological in nature as Vivekananda attempted to create a unified Hinduism by delineating common theological principles that could transcend sectarian divisions, while simultaneously establishing clear boundaries with non-Hindu traditions. But this project also had an implicit political implication as the objective of this theological consolidation was not merely limited to religio-spiritual sphere, but also spilled into the political sphere as another objective was also to create a sense of collective solidarity capable of mobilization. As he

rhetorically emphasizes: “...then and then alone you are a Hindu when the very name sends through you a galvanic shock of strength. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when every man who bears the name, from any country, speaking our language or any other language, becomes at once the nearest and the dearest to you. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when the distress of anyone bearing that name comes to your heart and makes you feel as if your own son were in distress. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when you will be ready to bear everything for them” (Vivekananda, CW 2013, 403). This rhetorical statement is clearly inspired by the Islamic concept of ‘Ummah’ wherein, at least, conceptually, believers are bound together as a morally and spiritually cohesive community transcending ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences, acting as unified body politic.

Bridging the Aryan-Dravidian Divide

Other than addressing the inner sectarianism and tensions among various Hindu sects - both old and new - Vivekananda also attempted to blur the distance between Aryans and Dravidians, a product of orientalist scholarship, philology, and colonial ethnography, which posited that Aryans and Dravidians were two different types of races. As part of the orientalist Aryan invasion theory - an idea rooted in comparative philology initiated by William Jones - writers on India such as Max Muller argued that contemporary Indians were descended from two opposing racial groups: the supposedly more “advanced” and fair-skinned Aryans, and the “primitive” and darker-skinned indigenous Dravidians (Fuller 2017, 3; Inden 1990, 62). This racial theory later supplemented with the ‘science’ of anthropometry was used by administrator scholars like Herbert H. Risley and William Crooke to understand the origin of caste system in India but with different conclusions. While Risley, drawing on anthropometric data such as the nasal index, concluded that caste originated in the racial hierarchy between “higher” Aryans and “lower” Dravidians, Crooke on the other hand argued that anthropometric variations among castes were negligible, and therefore endorsed occupational origins of caste (Fuller 2017, 3).

Vivekananda was well aware of these contemporary debates in anthropometry and drawing upon Crooke’s conclusions, he explicitly rejected both the racial theory of caste and the consequent

divide between Aryans and Dravidians. For him, such distinctions were without substance: “...*In India...such words as Aryans and Dravidians are only of philological import, the so-called craniological differentiation finding no solid ground to work upon*” (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 4, 2013, 306). Also, while critiquing the Aryan-Dravidian divide he dismissed philological claims of a fundamental racial difference between North and South Indians, particularly the argument put forward by missionary Robert Caldwell that sanskrit speaking Brahmins belonging to the Aryan race migrated southward as colonist, subjugated the native population, who were of different racial stock and forced them to accept the status of Shudra (Guha 2024, 5). Challenging this view, Vivekananda argued that linguistic differences alone could not substantiate the Aryan–Dravidian divide:

“There is a theory that there was a race of mankind in Southern India called Dravidians, entirely differing from another race in Northern India called the Aryans, and that the Southern India Brâhmins are the only Aryans that came from the North, the other men of Southern India belong to an entirely different caste and race to those of Southern India Brahmins. Now I beg your pardon, Mr. Philologist, this is entirely unfounded. The only proof of it is that there is a difference of language between the North and the South. I do not see any other difference...But the Brahmins are a race that came here speaking the Sanskrit language! Well then, they took up the Dravidian language and forgot their Sanskrit. Why should not the other castes have done the same? Why should not all the other castes have come one after the other from Northern India, taken up the Dravidian language, and so forgotten their own? That is an argument working both ways. Do not believe in such silly things” (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 3, 2013, 317).

Vivekananda did not reject the point that Dravidians were a different racial people, at least in ancient history as he says that “*there may have been a Dravidian people who vanished from here, and the few who remained lived in forests and other places*” (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 3, 2013, 317), and hypothesized that one branch of these ancient Tamilins/Dravidians might have moved to Egypt and build the Egyptian civilization, while the other branch moved to West Asia and build the Sumerian civilization (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 7, 2013, 318). However, Vivekananda does concede that the modern Indian population constitutes a mixture of Aryans and Dravidians, but

at the same time asserts that the dividing line had been, from the most ancient times, one of language and not of blood (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 4, 2013, 307), (but with an important qualification that the difference between Dravidian and Sanskrit might have been sharp in the past but now were coalescing; “*The Dravidian languages may or may not have been originally Sanskritic, but for practical purposes they are so now, and every day we see them approaching the ideal more and more, yet keeping their distinctive vital peculiarities*” (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 4, 2013, 317).

Moreover, in pushing his claim that no essential differences existed between Aryans and Dravidians, Vivekananda often made incoherent statements, like at one point, he asserted that all Dravidians were Aryans who had migrated from the North - implying that the whole of India was Aryan (Ibid.). In the same discussion, however, he also suggested that Tamilians were among the ancestors of the Aryan race (ibid.), and again in the same essay he described the Aryan race as “*a mixture of two great races, the Sanskrit-speaking and the Tamil-speaking*” (Ibid., 309). Through this formulation, Vivekananda ultimately subsumed both groups - along with the Kolarian, or Austro-Asiatic - speaking peoples- within a broader Hindu identity, insisting that “all are Hindus alike.” But, while asserting the unity of Aryan-Dravidian groups, apart from performing these intellectual manoeuvring, Vivekananda also highlighted the South’s religious and philosophical contributions to Hinduism. He pointed to the rise of the bhakti movement among the Tamil Alvars and their popularization of *Vaishnava* traditions, as well as the flourishing of *Vedantic* schools such as *Advaita*, *Dvaita* and *Vishishtadvaita* in South (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 7, 2013, 318), all essential components and features of Hinduism. In the same breath, he also acknowledged Tamil cultural influence on the rest of India, by observing that the “*religious dance and Sankirtana introduced by Shri Chaitanya in Bengal had their origin among the Tamil race*” (Ibid., 325).

For Vivekananda, the Aryan-Dravidian divide was an impediment towards the future of India. As he asserted: “*the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all trivialities such as “Dravidian” and “Aryan”, and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India*” (Vivekananda, CW. Vol. 3, 2013, 324). According to him, India’s revival depended entirely on the consolidation of willpower and coordination, bringing the collective energy of Aryans and

Dravadians into a single focus. He observed that throughout history, smaller but better organized nations have consistently ruled over larger ones because they could unite their ideas and act in concert, and therefore if India had to rise again it had to stop all such dissensions (Ibid.,). In the context of the Aryan–Dravidian divide, Vivekananda thus attempted to blur internal differences by emphasizing shared religio-cultural practices, and highlighting the influence of Tamil/Dravidian culture on the Aryan culture, at times portraying the former as older and even superior. His primary concern was the creation of a cohesive in-group identity - a Hindu identity that he equated with the Aryan identity, positioned, in this case, against the out-group of Western and European philologists, whose theories of race, language, and caste he identified as obstacles to the construction of a Hindu body politic capable of unified socio-political action.

Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda's articulation of collective Hindu identity in colonial India was both a theological and a proto-political project, aimed at forging unity within a fragmented religious, and colonialism induced racial landscape while positioning Hindus as a distinct religious and political community vis-à-vis non-Hindu others. Located at the nexus of social reform movements, colonial ethnography and census practices, orientalist discourse, and emerging nationalist sentiment, his interventions sought to reconfigure both internal and external boundaries of Hinduism. His attempt to first create a unified religious identity of 'Hindu' by addressing inter-sectarian divisions and perceived racial differences, and then transforming it into a mobilizing social and political force, was a precursor to the mature phase of Hindu nationalism which evolved in the 20th century and continues to remain a central concern in the present.

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Author

Harshvardhan Tripathy

Assistant Professor

University School of Liberal Arts, GGSIPU, New Delhi

**The Farazes, and Forgentos: The Marginalized at the Centre of Anti-colonial struggle
in Goa**

K C Lakshmi Devi & Nagendra Rao

**The Farazes, and Forgentos: The Marginalized at the Centre of Anti-colonial struggle in
Goa**

Abstract: *The present paper intends to present the history of freedom fighters of Goa belonging to the marginalized sections who have confronted Portuguese colonialism and asserted freedom for themselves as well as for the rest of the Goans. The Farazes and Forgentos are considered the lowest of the low even among the subaltern sections in Goa. During the journey of Goa's freedom struggle, some of them have transformed themselves into equal partners of the movement rather than remaining mere followers. This paper attempts to introduce a few of these path-breakers and their contribution to the Goan liberation movement and in addressing the contemporary socio, political issues.*

Key Words: Freedom at the Peripherals, Subaltern Resistance, Re-claiming the Nation, Unheard Goans

Introduction:

The historiography on Goa and the history of the Goan liberation movement, both seem to have bid farewell to some of the energetic voices of resistance that shook the very foundations of the colonial regime in Goa. The contributions of the freedom fighters belonging to the subaltern sections, unfortunately, could not find much appreciation and recognition in the academic works. Precisely for this reason, this paper is focussing on the *Farazes* and *Forgentos*, two communities that were considered to be at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

The Mahars were referred as *Farazes* during the colonial times in Goa. The Portuguese records and the Indo-Portuguese literature mostly mentioned them as *Farazes* instead of their usual caste name of Mahar.¹ It was not unusual for some who used to call both the Mahars and Chamars in day-to-day conversations as *Farazes*, particularly while abusing the persons from

the marginalized communities (TMT, 1947, f.no. 213). Both these communities were categorized as scheduled castes post-Independence by the Indian government. According to the census of 2011 the collective population of the scheduled castes in Goa is just 25,449. Whereas the total population of Goa is 14.59 lakhs. This minuscule population of marginalized communities during the colonial times and for ages before that, were considered out-castes and had limited or no reach to power or freedom.

The *Forgentos* were the children of single mothers and organized themselves along with a few other sub-castes into Gomantak Maratha Samaj (Parobo, P. D., 2015, p. 39). *Forgentos* are also called as *Bonddes* or *Cheddes*. The women-folk of this community are called *Chedvan*. And they were harshly considered as persons of immoral characters (Pereira, A. B., 2008, p. 27). They were referred to as '*Forgentos*' in the TMT proceedings and other Portuguese correspondences but few later works of translations of these documents mention them as '*Farjand*'. For example, Madeva Forgento was referred as Mahadev Farjand in the trial proceedings of the Territorial Military Court published by the Goa gazetteer department (Shirodkar, P. P., 1999, p. 17).

Looking at their degenerated and scandalous social position during colonial times, there was not much in their hands to bring about even the slightest change in their social status. Irrespective of their actual occupation and social behaviour, *Forgentos* were constantly judged and permanently marked with the stigma of being born out of illicit relations and *Farazes* with the stigma of untouchability.

The Farazes: There used to be a popular saying in Maharashtra, '*Jethe gaon, Tethe Maharwada*' which literally meant 'Where there is a village there is a Mahar Settlement'. Teotonio reminds this by a similar saying in Konkani '*Ganv thum marodd*' (Every village has a Mahar Settlement) (D'Souza, T. R., 2009, P. 8). So, whether it is Maharashtra or Goa, the Mahar Wada or settlement of Mahars is in every village but unfortunately at the outskirts of the village. Even their Gods are either in the entrance/border of the village, or adorned a lesser position as an affiliate to the main deities of the village and get some space within the premises of the village temples (Pereira, R. G., 2020, p. 126). In a few villages, particularly from the new conquest areas like Pernem, Bicholim, the temples of Maringano (Patron God of Mahars) can be found on the outskirts of the village (2020, p. 125). In places where they found located within the village temples, the status of Maringano is still limited as an affiliate deity. For

example, the bye-laws of Shree Mahadev Devasthan at Pissurlem of Sattari taluq mention Mharingan as one of the affiliate deities of Shree Mahadev (Draft Bye-Laws, 1933, p.1).

Traditionally Mahars were famous for the beautiful artifacts made of bamboo and for playing drums. During jatras, shigmo or any other festivity, the drum beating Mahar was a must. They were also used to be ordered by the village authorities to make announcements to all the villagers and it was the traditional duty of the Mahar to inform every one of the notices. Post-conversion they started playing drums and other musical instruments at the Church, feasts and Novenas instead of the temples and jatras (Gomes, B., 2005, p. 86). Converting into Christianity did not help or heal them much as there were instances of segregation even in the Church. In fact, there was a separate chapel for the Mahars called 'Maharachem Kopel' at the village of Aldona in Goa (Couto, M. A., 2005, p. 116). That speaks volumes on the kind of treatment they received in the new religion they converted into as well.

There is an interesting folktale popular in Goa about one Mahar and a Princess/girl of privileged caste/class. Two versions of this folktale confirm one thing (Phaldesai, P., 2011, pp. 79 – 85; Faria, P., 2006, pp. 400 – 402). That, it is ignoble to marry a person belonging to the Mahar community and the difference between the privileged and marginalized is forever and unfathomable to scale. This folktale certainly was not a fairy-tale. The societal restrictions were there on intermarrying between different caste groups in Goa and a Mahar cannot desire to marry a lady from the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras or Bamons, Chardos, Vanis or Sudirs.²

Mahars and Freedom Movement in Goa:

There was discontent among the people of Mahar community in Goa during the Portuguese regime as they had to face the loss of traditional occupations related to their services to temples and to the village administration. With the large-scale destruction of temples and attachment of their assets to the Catholic Churches and Religious Orders, Mahars and other sevekaris lost their traditional jobs and rights over the namasso lands that were assigned to them for their services earlier. Their jobs as village messengers too had contenders from among the Catholic converts. As such socially marginalized Hindu Mahars had to face economic deprivation due to the colonial interventions. The condition of Catholic Mahars wasn't any better either.

Mahars from the New Conquests region in Goa, had ancestral links as well as marital alliances with their counterparts in the neighbouring villages of Sawantwadi sansthan and other parts of Konkan. As such they were well connected and well communicated about the ongoing Indian national movement in the region of Maharashtra and rest of India. Also, the revolts of Ranés kept the fire of resistance alive among the natives against the Portuguese. Coming to the Mahars of old conquests region, Madgaon city was the important hub of Goan nationalism as it housed several Goan freedom fighters and eminent intellectuals who spread the ideas of freedom, equality and civil rights. Places like Cuncolim, Assolna and Velim were known for their resistance against Portuguese colonial rule since 1583 A. D. Mahars of this region naturally came under the strong influence of anti-colonial resistance in Goa and also of the Indian national movement.

Another important factor that played an important role in the germination of ideas of resistance against colonialism and assertion for their political rights was the gradual advancement of vernacular education in Goa, particularly during the Republican times. Establishment of several Marathi schools both by the private individuals as well as the conversion of a few Portuguese primary schools into bilingual schools (Portuguese and Marathi) by the colonial government, helped in opening the doors of education to the marginalized communities (Kamat, V. 2002, pp. 49 – 62). Private Marathi schools largely funded and founded by Hindu visionaries made the conscious move of eradicating the caste distinctions with in the Hindu society by allowing the students from all the communities. During the times of liberation movement, many freedom fighters including women like Mitra Madhav Bir opened Marathi schools for all the natives (Shirodkar, P. P. 1986, p. 31). Thus, created an atmosphere where all the native forces can work together.

As a result, from this marginalized community evolved few independent thinkers, Mukund Kid Pawar, Dulba Vishnu Pawar, Vitthal Purso Parvar, Shiva Bhomu Pawar, and Shravan Puto Parvar. The surnames ‘Parvar’ and ‘Pawar’ were used interchangeably. All of them were actively engaged in the Goan liberation movement, some of them entered as early as 1946, while others breathed fresh air into the movement around 1955. Once started they didn’t look back till Goa got liberation from Portuguese colonialism. Mukund Kid Pawar and Dulba Vishnu Pawar were from the Bandoli village of Sanguem taluq (K. C., 2021, PP. 6 – 8). Vitthal

Purso Parvar was from Poinguinim village, Sravan Puto Parvar from Gaondongrim village of Canacona taluq, and Shiva Bhomu Pawar from Mercedes, Tiswadi.

Though Mukund Kid Pawar was an Ambedkarite, initially he was with NC(G), but opted out of the path of non-violence after witnessing the Portuguese cruelty against the peaceful satyagrahis in Goa. He joined Azad Gomantak Dal and became one of the core members of the group. His nephew, Dulba Vishnu Pawar too took the path of armed struggle against the Portuguese atrocities (Shirodkar, P. P., 1986, pp. 272, 273). Another freedom fighter and key member of Azad Gomantak Dal, Prabhakar Vaidya mentions about Mukund Kid Pawar's contribution to the cause of Goa's liberation (Vaidya, P., 1992, p. 120).

The Unsung Martyrdom of a Faraz: Dulba Vishnu Pawar who joined the course of Goan liberation movement following the footsteps of his uncle, soon started working under the mentorship of Tony Fernandes of Sanvordem and Rajnikant Kenkre of Cuncolim. Taking part in the militant activities together, they created terror for the Portuguese police. His close associate Babu Ramakrishna Sahakari was the son of Ramakrishna Bhat.³ Ladu Katu Naik Sawant was his other close associate. Babu Sahakari was killed along with his two associates, Kalidas Gosavi and Kamlakant Shirodkar on 23rd May 1957 (Shirodkar, P. P., 1986, p. 299). Dulba Vishnu Pawar was unperturbed even after the gruesome killing of his close associate. On 4th June 1957, there was a direct face-off between them and the Portuguese police at Nirankal-Dabhal where he lost his life along with Rajnikant Kenkre and Ladu Katu Naik Sawant (1986, p. 272). It was neither a coincidence nor a thing to feel surprised that all these young-men of different social backgrounds had attained martyrdom for the sake of freedom. They were all aware of their chosen path and were constantly being watched by the Portuguese police. Dulba Vishnu Pawar too knew that death was waiting for him at the nearest turn of their path and he died fighting the colonial regime.

What made a Faraz/Mahar sacrifice his life for the sake of Goa where his community was considered an out-caste? One reason could be that the farazes found their freedom in the freedom struggle. None of the societal constructions of divisions, neither caste nor class, or religion came on the way of the freedom fighters. Many of them like Bala Kakodkar, Pandurang Purushottam Shirodkar, Mohan Ranade, Venkatesh Vishnu Vaidya, and others consciously attempted to organize the subaltern sections and mould the society to be inclusive of them in order to put up a collective resistance against colonialism. One of the leading freedom fighters,

Shivaji Kudhadkar was taunted by some as ‘Mahar Shivaji’ due to his dedicated efforts for eradicating untouchability (Bhat, V. R. 1992, p. 30). Organizing sahabhojan and bhajan events, entry of the subalterns into the hair-cutting saloons and temples, adult literacy classes at night for the working class, accommodating the subaltern children in common hostels and schools, and establishing exclusive schools for Harijans, all such steps taken by the elite freedom fighters with the help of the subaltern freedom fighters bear fruit and the *Farazes* too could assert their right to be free and also their right to participate in the nation building.

Coming to Vitthal Purso Parvar, Shiva Bhomu Pawar, and Shravan Puto Parvar, Goan historiography, both its *Goa Indica* and *Goa Dourada* factions have forgotten to include their names in their annals. But Vasudev Venkatesh Phaldesai, a freedom fighter from Poinguinim village, has carefully recorded the contribution of every freedom fighter from his village in his work, ‘*Goa-Daman-Diu MuktiladA Aani Mee*’ (Phaldesai, V., 2014). Vitthal Purso Parvar’s participation in the Satyagraha of 18th June 1955 gets his due reference through this work and Sravan Putu Parvar’s underground nationalist activities too are mentioned in his work. Both these freedom fighters were belonging to Canacona tehsil. Shiva Bhomo Pawar’s name could only be found from the chance meeting with his family the documents preserved with his family members.⁴ Much before them there is a mention of two more freedom fighters of this community. They were mentioned by none other than Dr. Juliao Menezes, the stalwart among the Goan freedom fighters. Tata Mahar and Dula Mahar were from the village of Sanvordem (Menezes, J., 1947, p.77). His book is the only textual reference so far to their arrests along with Bala Kakodkar in the year of 1946 at Kakoda in Sanguem tehsil. Their participation in the Satyagraha would have been erased from history without this reference. It would not be incorrect to say that whatever scant but authentic textual reference available today about the subaltern freedom fighters comes from the other elite freedom fighters who worked closely with them. Among the Portuguese government records, the proceedings of the Territorial Military Tribunal have fortunately recorded the trial details of some of these freedom fighters which reveal the nature of their participation in the liberation movement. Unfortunately, there are no records available for those who were just detained and put to severe torture for a longtime but released later without any trial. Their impactful presence and conscious participation in the liberation movement was thus, reduced from the position of invincible to that of invisible in the mainstream renderings on Goan liberation movement and the subaltern

freedom fighters were reduced into the background and their existence at the maximum remained to be the masses of no consequence that witnessed the liberation struggle.

The Formentos: In the eyes of contemporary society, the stigma attached to this community was forever. Even after sustained efforts by this community to brush aside the societal stereotyping and earn a respectable living, they had to face contempt everywhere. The easiest way to understand the subalternity of the *Formentos* is by observing their social interactions such as with whom they can marry or who they can dine with. A B de Braganca Pereira says they may take meals with all the castes except a few castes such as kharvis, sonars, mests, and bhavins, kalavants, deulis (Pereira, A. B., 2008, p. 47). Although bhavins, kalavants, and deulis are now part of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj, even they had some kind of reservations to offer meals at their residences to *Formentos*. Knowing this, it would not be surprising to know that there are rarely any textual references to the freedom fighters of this community other than the files of the proceedings of the T.M.T (Territorial Military Tribunal) preserved at the archives of Goa and its publication of the case files.

The Men who are known by their own names: Then came men who smashed all the stereotypes related to birth, caste, and occupation. Madeva Formento was 46 years old when the trial started against him by the Portuguese authorities. He was the son of Yamuna and an unknown father (Shirodkar, P. P., 1999, p. 16). His brother Ramacrisna Formento too was implicated in the trial along with him. He was 32 years old. They were born in Chicalem, Colvale, and were residing at Ansabhat in Mapusa Town (1999, P. 16). While Mahadev was a widower, Ramakrishna was still a bachelor (1999, P. 16). Mahadev was working as the compositor and printer at the printing press named 'Laxmi' at Mapusa. His brother was the owner of the said printing press (1999, P. 17). For a change, their supposed crime, in this case, was not that of having an 'unknown father'. The others who shared their crime with them, in this case, were noted freedom fighters, Pandurang P. Shirodkar, Nilkanth M. Karapurkar, Dr. Vinayak N. Mayenkar, and Guilherme De Souza B. Ticlo.

Search and Attachment Report of the Portuguese police says that a printing block, ready to print 10,000 copies of new membership forms for the NC(G), that is National Congress of Goa, a pamphlet with the details of the enrolment into the NC(G), few documents in Marathi of which 10,000 copies were supposed to get printed, and a handbill with the initials 'C.S.P' were found (1999, P. 19). A booklet titled 'Civil Liberties in Goa' too was found at their press (1999,

P. 19). Whenever the Portuguese government used to suspect anyone of any subversive activities, their police used to search their homes and workplaces in order to find any conclusive evidence. In this case, they got lucky to find several documents related to the NC(G).

Uttam Essem Forgento Sanvordencar was from Sanvordem in Sanguem tehcil of South Goa. Portuguese TMT proceedings recorded him as the son of Essem Forgento Sanvordencarina and of an unknown father (*pai incognito*). He was a street vendor of fish by occupation and was arrested out of suspicion of carrying out subversive activities at Curchorem (TMT, 1954, f. no. 24, 25). The crime he was accused of committing was distributing pamphlets and Indian flags in and around Sanvordem (TMT, 1954, f. no. 24, 25). He was tried for his 'anti-national' activities by the Portuguese and not for any 'anti-social' activities. The same proceedings have details of three of his associates from Sanvordem. They were Sadguru Forgento, Tarachand Forgento and Sebastiao Fernandes (TMT, 1954, f. no. 26).

We hear about one more person from the Forgento community from the year 1895. Vishnum Pandgy Naique Forgento was working with the Portuguese army and was one of the soldiers who deserted their barracks and rose in revolt against the Portuguese (TMT, 1895, f. no. 21). This revolt is popularly known as Maratha sepoy mutiny and the prime reason for this revolt was the order from Portugal to ship 420 soldiers to Mozambique to safeguard their colonial possessions there (Sardesai, J. A., 1986, p. 27). Most of the soldiers of the battalion at Panaji were Hindus and crossing the sea was forbidden for them. And the fears of being separated from their families for an indefinite period accelerated the already triggered fears of the soldiers. Most importantly, the encouraging factors that push any soldier to undertake any overseas mission were missing here. The life-altering kind of remuneration or the passion to defend their motherland would have worked in favour of this order. But Portugal was here forcing the soldiers from one of their colonies to defend its possessions elsewhere. The Maratha soldiers on the other hand, far from being inspired to defend their colonizer's other exploits, were in fact, least willing to even think about crossing the seas.

The other important feature of this revolt was their collaboration with the Ranes of Satari soon after abandoning their barracks and marching to the Nanuz fort in Satari taluq (1986, p. 26). Ranes of Satari are famous because of their numerous revolts against the colonial regime since 1755 A.D. Incidentally, Dipaji Rane who revolted in the year of 1852 also took hold of the Nanuz Fort and made it the centre of his revolutionary activities (TMT, 1895, f. no. 54). Three

decades after Dipaji Rane, again Maratha Sepoys chose to occupy the same fort. And they joined hands with Dadaji Rane who was already at loggerheads with the colonial masters then (TMT, 1895, f.no. 89). Several dhulpods (Konkani folksongs) exist in praise of the valour of the Ranés and their constant resistance against the Portuguese (Kamat, P., 1999, pp. 190, 191; Phaldessai, P., 2011, p. 94). Somewhere between the echoes of those dhulpods, the memory of a subaltern sepoy might have inspired a few other less privileged too, to chase their dreams and choose their own path. When these less-fortunate and often misunderstood sub-caste groups of kalavants, bhavinas, deulis, forgentos, etc. tried to organize themselves as ‘Gomantak Maratha Samaj’ in 1920’s, there was a huge uproar against this and many tried to subdue them by suggesting to organize as ‘Gomantak Gayak Samaj’ instead (Parobo, P. D., 2015, p. 45) (Paiginkar, R., 2022). Their main contention was, how can this socially dwarfed community can claim the title of ‘Maratha’! But Vishnu Pandgy Naique Forgento was very much part of that Maratha sepoys who revolted against the Portuguese way back in 1895. He was the precursor to all those who did not allow society to snatch away or to stigmatize their identity.

Conclusion: The presence and active participation of the Farazes and other subalterns sensitized the course of the freedom struggle and led to several reforming measures within Goan society. The martyrdom of Dulba Vishnu Pawar and the values and causes he strived for are treasured as a memorial at Kaley village panchayat in Sanguem taluq along with the names of Ladu Katu Naik Sawant and Bapu Ramakrishna Sahakari. The fearless involvement of Mukund Kid Pawar, Vitthal Purso Parvar, Shiva Bhomu Pawar and Shraavan Putu Parvar in the Goan liberation movement made this minuscule community a proud member of free Goa. Tata Mahar and Dula Mahar were ahead of many elite Hindu and catholic counterparts in the anti-colonial resistance. While the Farazes could scale above the social discrimination during the course of the freedom struggle working together with the freedom fighters without any restrictions, the journey of Forgentos too was remarkable. The term Farjand has its origins in the Persian language and it means ‘Son’. It is yet to be ascertained since when its applicability to this particular community started. Though Farjand seem to have enjoyed an enhanced social position in West India previously, as some of the Maratha warriors like Kondaji Farjand carried this title (Nadkarni, 1966, p. 131), both these terms Farjand/Forgento were used in Goa as a derogatory recognition of a person’s birth credentials. The use of Forgento as a surname could be found in various Portuguese records and there are even recent applications to change the surname from Forgento to Naik and to a few other Goan surnames which show that this term

is slowly being relinquished. But the histories of Forgentos like Madeva Forgento, Ramacrisna Forgento, Uttam Essem Forgento Sanvordencar, Sadguru Forgento, Tarachand Forgento and Vishnum Pandgy Naique Forgento are testimonials to the fact that their lives were beyond the caste prejudices and social assumptions. They worked hard to carve out socially acceptable occupations for themselves and their progeny. Establishing a publishing facility, composing the print, selling fish, being a soldier, and raising in revolt against colonial Raj, none of these deeds are derogatory, and in fact, these are the occupations and activities every 'son of the soil' feels proud to accomplish and the Forgentos mentioned above, have truly earned to be called as the 'sons of the soil'.

Notes:

1. Several proceedings of the TMT, Portuguese government records as well as Indo-Portuguese literature refers Mahars as Farazes. Vimala Devi (a Goan Catholic poetess/author), even in her post-colonial Portuguese poem 'Chamdrim' mentioned them as Farazes. See Machado, Everton V. "What happened to Indian Literature in Portuguese?", in *Seminar 630*, February 2012, p. 39.
2. The caste stratification among Hindus of Goa survived after the conversions too. The Catholics of Goa have continued their earlier caste denominations as Brahmins came to be called Bamons, Kshatriyas as Chardos, Vaishyas as Vanis and Sudras as Sudir. The marginalized communities like Mahars, Chamars, Mahyavanshis, Mangs, etc., remained marginalized even after conversion to their dismay.
3. Personal Interaction with Tulsidas Shet Arsekar at Kamarkhand village, Sanguem taluq.
4. His family members provided the author with the details of his political pension.

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K C Lakshmi Devi
Research Scholar
D. D. Kosambi School of Social
Sciences & Behavioural Studies
Goa University

&

Nagendra Rao,
Professor in History
D. D. Kosambi School of Social
Sciences & Behavioural Studies
Goa University

The Unequal Citizens: A Sociological Study of Women with Disabilities in Mizoram

Lawmsangpuia Ralte

Abstract

Unequal citizens refer to sections of community who do not enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others due to various factors like gender, social markers like disability and race. Women with disabilities face certain discrimination in society due to their disability and their gender which led their rights to be often neglected and ignored while other persons without disabilities enjoy their rights without much disturbances. This leaves them in a position of 'unequal citizens' as they do not have the same chances to grow and prosper with the rest of society. This sociological study analyses women with disabilities in Mizoram, which is located in the north-eastern region of India, and shows the conditions which make them to be labelled as 'unequal citizens.' In this study of 163 women with disabilities in Mizoram, it is found that they face discrimination in society in various spheres and as a result, they further face neglect in marriage, education and employment sections which further degrade their status. The study ends with few policy recommendations to improve their status in Mizoram.

Key words: Unequal citizens, women with disabilities, Mizoram, sociology.

Introduction

India has often been dubbed as a country which is rich in traditions. The Indian society is a close-knitted society and is a collectivistic society which is bounded by religious life (Piliavsky 2022, 130). The Indian tradition has a rigid family structure, has a profound value for marriage system, cuisine and social structure and a deep-rooted educational value (Das 2021, 1). Religion shaped the lifestyle of the people and the Indian population largely follows a religious obligation and their culture is shaped by their religious beliefs (Khanna 2023, 1). On the other hand, Indian tradition follows a patriarchal society and the status of women in traditional days was not a desirable picture. Women are an integral part of Indian society yet; their socio-economic conditions have not always

been favourable. Female foeticide, dowry and confinement to domestic roles are some of the many struggles faced by Indian women (Pedia 2023, 1). This often led the Indian women to be labelled as ‘unequal citizens’ due to the various discrimination directed towards them.

However, in modern days, the status and influence of modern Indian women have improved and the traditions of Indian society has slowly paved the way for the growth and progress of women in general. Women are more empowered and have engaged in higher employment and educational fields (Roy 2022, 1). The female literacy rate has seen a massive increase in modern times and today, women not only engage in domestic roles, but venture across different occupations (Srivastava 2023, 1). However, the conditions of women with disabilities say otherwise as women with disabilities are often neglected in Indian society and are also neglected in the academic study as well. Even though the lived experiences and socio-economic conditions of modern Indian women have seen an improvement, women with disabilities still face countless of hardships and low socio-economic conditions that are otherwise not address extensively by policy-makers and community leaders (Dawn 2014, 1768).

This paper analysed various problems faced by women with disabilities in Mizoram. The various topics studied include whether they face discrimination, their conditions in terms of marriage and finally conclude with educational and employment issues faced in the state. Their conditions in these various sections will therefore highlight the reason as to why they are still in the category of ‘unequal citizens’ within the society.

Discriminating women with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are one of the most marginalized and stigmatised sections of community and among them, women with disabilities face double the marginalization and discrimination which is further propelled by their gender as well as their disabilities. Due to gender disparity, their mere existence is reduced and led them to be in a position of unequal citizens, as they have reduced roles in communities. Their rights are violated and their social statuses are being reduced significantly. The situation is worse in a patriarchal society where the roles of mothers are mostly

confined to household activities. Various studies suggest the limited data on women with disabilities' issues faced in societies which all shows that they are indeed being discriminated even in the field of academics (Ghosh et al. 2022, 1).

In this study, it has also been found that majority of the women with disabilities face discrimination and neglect from society. They are mostly confined to the four walls of their homes and rarely left their houses, unless the need arises for hospital visits. The discrimination faced by these women ranges from exclusion to education, employment sections and marital opportunities. In Mizoram, these women are hardly included in political and social activities and their roles are limited.

Tradition of marriage for Indian women

In terms of marriage, traditional Indian society expected Indian women of young age to get married and in many circumstances, failure to do so were even outcasted and shamed by their family members and peers (Dhar 2023, 1). Marriage is believed to be an act which preserved family heritage and honour and Indian society sees it as a way to strengthen social ties. In many occasions, young women are forced to give up on their dreams, visions and aspirations of their desired future and sacrifice their entire future for the sake of marriage and abides by her in-laws' family and serves her husband throughout. In Hindu society, marriage is viewed and considered as a sacramental ties and religious bond between families and the members of society are bound to get married. The Shastras defined that man alone is incomplete and needed the assistance and bond of female companion. The wives are called as *dharmapatni* or half of a man and only when a man and woman bonded through marriage, were they being viewed as complete (Sharma 2023, 3). Women often play the role of a subservient position in the traditional Indian marriage system and men often play the role of a master in traditional society.

In modern days, many Indian women are delaying their marriage so as to pursue their personal goals and educational aspirations. Education largely plays a role in the delayed choice of marriage of modern Indian women as opposed to traditional practices of early and arranged marriage in Indian society. This leaves more room for financial stability and independence among the women

and many women do not even wish to engage in marital practices at all in recent years (Vijay 2024, 3).

However, even though the conditions of women in terms of marriage have started to witness changes in recent years as compared to traditional years, it is of utmost importance to analyse the conditions of women with disabilities in terms of marriage and how marital change observed in recent years is applicable in their lives.

Women with disabilities' marital status

The study of sociology defines marriage as a union between two or more people which is socially and legally accepted. Marital status refers to the legally defined state of marriage (Crossman 2024, 1). There are various marital status categories, including widowed, divorced, separated, single, married, and, in some circumstances, registered partnerships. Those who have never married are those who have never tied the knot by the law. Those who were married by lawful procedures and before a competent body are considered wedded. Those who are declared widowed have lost their marriage due to the death of one spouse or the respectful declaration of a spouse missing. People who have had their marriage ended are considered divorced. Marital status in this study is divided into six categories which are married, unmarried, widow, separated, divorced and unlikely to get married.

Amongst the respondents, it is revealed that in Lunglei district of Mizoram, there are 2 (1.2 per cent) women who are married and 3 (1.8 per cent) women are unmarried. There are 2 (1.2 per cent) widowed women and there is 1 (0.6 per cent) woman who is separated from her spouse and there are as many as 12 (12.3 per cent) women who are unlikely to get married.

In Aizawl district, there are 23 (14.1 per cent) women who are married while 43 (26.4 per cent) women are unmarried. There are only 5 (3.1 per cent) widows among the respondents and 4 (2.5 per cent) women who are separated. There is 1 (0.6 per cent) divorcee and as many as 67 (41.1 per cent) women are unlikely to get married. In Mizoram, there are currently no legal divorces as practiced in other states in India. The woman who divorced found in this study formally divorced

from her husband through Mizo customary laws and the bride price was even returned to the husband's family. However, the 5 (3.1 per cent) women who reported being separated lived separately from their husbands without any thoughts of divorce in their minds. They currently lived separately due to some minor arguments amongst themselves and they all planned to move back in after the anger associated with spousal arguments died down. The action of actual divorce has never even crossed their minds and have only lived separately with their parents with the plan to move back in with their husbands after some time.

It is observed that most of the women with disabilities are in the category of 'unlikely to get married' (48.5 per cent) and that marriage is off the shelf for most of the women respondents. In Lunglei, 60 per cent of women are unlikely to get married while in Aizawl, it is also on the higher side as 46.85 per cent are unlikely to get married. Besides, 28.2 per cent of women from both the districts are unmarried in which Lunglei women form 15 per cent while in Aizawl, it is as high as 30 per cent. So, there is little to no scope of marriage for these women since most of them are unlikely to get married and are unmarried.

'... you're talking about marriage as if proposals come easily to me.... no approach is made towards marriage proposals by the bachelors nor had I made any. Who will want to marry a woman like me? There is no room in my life for love and marriage as I have always felt that people outside of my family would never love me unconditionally the way I am loved and adored by my family.' P1, locomotor disability.

There are only 15.3 per cent of women who are married, and the case of divorce is also at a minimum point as there is only 1 woman (0.7 per cent) who has experienced divorce. The divorcee respondent was asked with lots of hesitation about the reason for the divorce.

'We had a divorce after an accident left me with a chronic neurological condition. We were already poor by then and my husband could not afford to always care for me since he himself had to work and our two children were

still so little. I really missed my children but my husband and his new wife took better care of them and I'm not really in a position to even care for myself and so, I accept my fate with a heavy heart.' –P2, chronic neurological condition.

Their own consanguine family is the only hope of care and support instead of an affinal family and there is little or no scope of forming affinal kinship on their own.

'As you can see, my daughter is not capable of even moving around the houses. We have to care for her and do almost everything for her including bathing her. She is not in a position to start her own family. But I am a mother, you know.....and I always see past her disability and that may not be the case if she married into another family.' –P3, mother of P4 who has muscular dystrophy.

The Indian tradition of early marriages and compulsory marriages for women are not applicable to women with disabilities as most of them did not even have suitors and bachelors who approached them for marriage. Those who get married are mostly women with blindness and even though they had lost their vision, they have a sound mind and healthy body. The case is different for women with other types of disabilities as most of the respondents have stated that they are unlikely to get married. The traditional practices of marrying Indian women at a young age and to affluent husbands are mostly not applicable to women with disabilities due to fewer number of approaches by the bachelors and the modern practices of marrying late by their decision is also not applicable as the women with disabilities' 'single' status arises not out of their own choices and decisions but rather by the conditions brought about their 'disability.' This is one of the reasons for them to be labelled as an 'unequal citizen' in society.

Women's educational status

The act of learning something new or transferring knowledge is known as education. Education involves getting children ready for adulthood. The process of education begins right when a child

is born. At first, it started as an informal process as the child watches and imitates others around them. Then, the process becomes more formal as the child gets older in which the education becomes more formal through pre-school and play dates. This education process then becomes academic lessons and is much more than learning simple facts. Education is a means to socialize humans into society and is an important socialization method. All cultural expectations and norms are taught through education by teachers through textbooks and classmates.

Educational status of Indian women differs greatly when traditional and modern eras are compared. For the full development of a country, educating a girl child and women are of utmost importance as that can contribute to the upliftment of both society and economy. However, the reality paints a different picture as the tradition of Indian society largely neglects women education (Khair 2020, 2). Indian society being a patriarchal society often limits education to the boys and men and this system is more prevalent in rural areas and since rural areas make up around 70 per cent of the Indian population, the overall scenario shows that Indian tradition largely neglects girls and women's education. Besides, the feeling of lack of security and preferences of domestic roles for the women from their families influence the parents to neglect their daughters' education and invest more on their sons' education. The girls are expected to marry off soon and so, their parents often felt it as a burden to educate their daughters (Khair 2019, 3).

Even though Indian tradition has largely neglected girls and women's education, the country witnessed incredible progress and prosperity on women's education post-independence period with the setting up of various government-backed schemes like National Policy on Education (NEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and various schemes introduced to back up girls and women's education which resulted in the rise of female enrolment rate in educational institutions and female literacy rate as well (Iqbal 2024, 556). Initiatives of the government like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) have played an instrumental role in uplifting the educational status and enrolment of girl child in schools and educational institutions. Besides, modern Indian women are better educated as compared with traditional days and are skilled with knowledge and skills (Iqbal 2024, 564). As per the reports of Ministry of Education, there is a significant increase in the girls' enrolment rate in schools as the reports show

that their enrolment rate is 96.3 per cent (Ministry of Education 2021). So, even though there are still countless of steps and initiatives to take for the betterment of girls and women's education, the current scenario shows a delightful status as the conditions have improved tremendously in modern times as compared to traditional days.

Educational status of women with disabilities

The respondents in this study are asked about their educational status and the education level of the respondents is divided into primary, upper primary, high school, pre-degree, graduate, post-graduate, Ph.D., technical, and no education. The educational level of the respondents is depicted in the above table. It is evident that in Lunglei, most of the women, i.e., 15 (9.2 per cent) have reached only the primary level of education, while there are 3 (1.8 per cent) women who have reached the high school level of education. There is only 1 (0.6 per cent) woman who has reached the pre-degree level of education and there is 1 (0.6 per cent) woman who did not receive any education at all.

The situation is somewhat similar in Aizawl as there are 55 (33.7 per cent) women who have reached only the primary level of education and there are 17 (10.4 per cent) women who have reached the upper primary level of education. 19 (11.7 per cent) women have achieved a high school level of education and 10 (6.1 per cent) women have reached pre-degree level of education. In terms of graduate women, there are 13 (8 per cent) women who have graduated at their bachelor's level, and 6 (3.7 per cent) women are post-graduate. There is 1 (0.6 per cent) woman who is currently pursuing her Ph. D from Assam and as many as 22 (13.5 per cent) women did not receive any formal education at all. These women did not go to any conventional schools and educational institutions but they had received informal education in the form of reading and writing from their caregivers.

Among the women, 70 respondents have attained only a primary level of education which accounts for as many as 42.9 per cent of the entire respondents. In Lunglei, as many as 75 per cent of these women have achieved only a primary level of education while in Aizawl, the number is a bit lower

at 38.47 per cent but the category still forms the highest number in the district as compared to other categories of education. 17 (10.4 per cent) of the women have an upper primary level of education and 22 (13.5 per cent) of the respondents have reached high school level. 11 (6.7 per cent) of the women have a pre-degree which is equivalent to a higher secondary level of education in modern days. In terms of graduates, there are 13 (8.0 per cent) women who are graduates in this study and 6 (3.7 per cent) women who have post-graduate degrees. There are no graduate and post-graduate women from Lunglei district. Among the women, there is only one woman who is currently pursuing a Ph. D which accounts for 0.6 per cent of the entire women respondents. As many as 23 women or 14.1 per cent of the respondents did not receive any type of education in their lifetime because their disability prohibits them from receiving formal school education. It is noted that these women are not illiterate despite receiving no education but have received basic alphabet and number of lessons taught to them by their caregivers.

‘...what is the use of education for a disabled girl like me? All my life I have lived off the emotional, financial, and physical care of my family and I don’t have many opportunities in life anyway. Besides, my analytical thinking and memories did not permit much education as I could not learn many things academically.’ –P5, autism spectrum disorder.

The findings revealed that access to formal education tends to be quite formidable for women with disabilities due to multiple reasons as most of the respondents have attained only a primary level of education followed by women who had not received any kind of formal education at all. Disability has formed a major obstacle to the promotion of the educational career of the respondents. The majority of them have either dropped out after primary level or have not gained entry into formal education. So, it is crucial to provide special education with a syllabus that is customized based on their respective ability. Government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) do not have much profound impact on their educational status and even though modern Indian women’s educational status and educational institutions enrolment rate have increased and improved, the educational status of

women with disabilities are still low and are almost at par with the ancient traditional educational status of the women.

Employment opportunities for women with disabilities

In analyzing the employment opportunities, it is observed that among the employed women in Lunglei, there are only 2 (1.2 per cent) women who worked in the government sector which is due to the reservation claimed through their disability. There is 1 (0.6 per cent) woman who is employed in the private sector and as many as 17 (10.4 per cent) women's status is not applicable because all the other women are either still studying or are unemployed.

In Aizawl, 9 (5.5 per cent) women worked in the government sector and 8 (4.9 per cent) women worked in the private sector. It is found that there are 4 (2.5%) self-employed women and the employment status of 122 (74.8 per cent) women in Aizawl is not applicable and they are included in the category of 'others' because they all are unemployed currently. Amongst the unemployed women, there are 4 (2.5 per cent) women who were very vocal about their current unemployed status as they are passionate about finding high-ranking jobs under the government and did not like to be labeled as 'unemployed.' They felt that they were more than able to achieve and pursue their goals and had higher hopes as compared to others. Among the self-employed women, they have their businesses like beauty parlors, shop-keeping, and working in their family-owned restaurants.

Minimum women are self-employed (2.5 per cent) who all belong to the Aizawl district and no self-employed women exist in Lunglei. A handful of the women (5.5 per cent) work in the private sector with Lunglei contributing 5 per cent while the rest 5.6 per cent are from Aizawl. A limited number of government servants are found only 6.7 per cent of them worked under the government and all these women claimed their jobs through their merit and not through disability reservation policy. The rest of the 139 women (85.3 per cent) are either unemployed or are currently studying so the employment status does not apply to them and are included in the 'others' category.

‘You can only imagine how difficult it must be for women like us to find employment, no vocational training, no higher education, and no physical ability. Many of us cannot even venture into self-employment because we have no capital. Life is hard for us. No employment agency will want to hire unskilled, low-education, and low- capabilities women like us. This is the exact reason why I am still unemployed even at the age of 29 years old.’ – P6, intellectual disability.

There are very few women who are capable of engaging in self-employed and private sector and so, disability stands in the way of the occupation and employment status of women with disabilities in Mizoram.

The study confirms the reason why women with disabilities are still being labelled as ‘unequal citizens’ in modern times when other citizens enjoy rights and prosperity in society. They are still being discriminated, they have low marital chances due to the nature of their disabilities and have faced exclusion in society which led them to be segregated inside their own homes. Moreover, they face additional burden as their educational and employment opportunities become limited. This calls for the strict implementation of laws to uplift women with disabilities and ensure the practicability of laws in all sections of the community.

Conclusion

Modern Indian women have benefitted from the empowerment measures and schemes launched by the government, policy makers and community leaders and the traditions of ‘narrow mindset’ in viewing Indian women only as domestic workers and household help have changed drastically in recent years. Women with disabilities, on the other hand, still needed to be empowered and changes in terms of policies are still needed extensively as they still have lower educational and employment status as compared to women without disabilities. They still face considerable amount of discrimination in many fields, specifically in Mizoram. Therefore, proper laws and inclusive approach along with their effective implementation will go a long way to improve the socio-

economic conditions and lived experiences of women with disabilities and enjoy the delightful empowerment schemes and progress in both public and private sphere, enjoyed by other women without disabilities in the country. This, in turn, will eventually erased their ‘unequal citizens’ status in the long run.

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Name: Lawmsangpuia Ralte

Designation: Visiting Faculty, ICFAI University, Mizoram

Gender Parity in Politics: Assessing Women's Representation in Indian Parliament

Nithya N R

Abstract

Democracy is founded on the principle of parity for all persons, irrespective of gender. However, in practice, women are frequently marginalized in various spheres, particularly in politics. Although Articles 325 and 326 of the Indian Constitution ensure political equality and the right to vote, the goal of equal political participation has yet to be fully realized. While many women have exercised their right to vote, achieving true political equality in terms of both participation and representation remains a distant objective. Gender parity in politics remains a critical issue in democratic nations worldwide, and India is no exception. Despite legal advancements and constitutional guarantees for gender equality, women's political representation in India's Parliament continues to be disproportionately low. This paper examines an overview of women's representation in politics and explores the politics behind the under representation of women in India's political process. The analysis traces the historical trajectory of women's entry into Indian politics, the role of women as electorate, candidates, parliamentarians, and the role of political parties in nominating female candidates. It also explores key factors such as socio-cultural norms, political structures, economic constraints, and the influence of patriarchal ideologies that limit women's active engagement in political processes. Through a critical examination of the gender gap in political representation, this paper calls for a more inclusive political atmosphere that endows women to contribute in governance at all levels. It concludes by stating policy reforms, party-level interventions, and societal changes necessary to achieve greater gender equality in Indian politics.

Key words: Gender Parity, Political Participation, Patriarchy, Representation, Women

Introduction

Women make up slightly more than half of the global population and contribute significantly to the social and economic development of societies, given their dual roles in both productive and reproductive spheres. Despite this, their involvement in formal political structures and decision-making processes—where the allocation of societal resources generated by both men and women is determined—remains minimal (Bari, 2005). Furthermore, women are not a monolithic group; disparities exist based on class, race, ethnicity, culture, and education. The exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the potential for fostering democratic principles within society, impeding economic growth, and hindering the achievement of gender equality. When men dominate the political process and make laws that impact society, the interests of women may not be adequately represented or considered in the decision-making process. Gender parity in politics is an indispensable pillar of a truly democratic society, yet women's representation in political institutions worldwide remains limited, with India being no exception. While the Indian Constitution promises political fairness to all citizens, regardless of gender, the real contribution of women in political processes has been historically underrepresented (Ghosh,2022,p.3). Despite substantial steps towards gender parity in various sectors, politics continues to be a male-dominated arena, particularly in terms of decision-making roles in the legislature. The issue of gender disparity in politics is multifaceted, involving not just structural and institutional barriers, but also socio-cultural, economic, and psychological factors that limit women's energetic involvement in the political domain. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources.

Conceptualizing Gender Parity in Politics

To understand gender parity in politics, I will explore the Public-Private Domain Theory and Critical Mass Theory. The feminist slogan "The personal is political" highlights the historical division between the public (political) and private (domestic)

spheres, with women traditionally confined to the home and excluded from politics (Özbey,2019,p,1801). Simone de Beauvoir argued that masculinity is often seen as the norm, while femininity is considered inferior, calling for equal treatment of women (Beauvoir,1949,p,310). Scholars like Lévi-Strauss and Shulamith Firestone critiqued family structures as sources of women's oppression, while Carole Pateman argued that women's domestic roles prevent political participation (Pateman,1989,p,121). Kate Millett further defined power as political, asserting that the power dynamics within households are inherently political. These theories reveal how deeply embedded gender inequalities persist in both private and public spheres (Millett,1971,p.98).

Critical Mass Theory, rooted in the works of Kanter (1977,p,181) and Dahlerup (1988,p,281), explores the impact of marginalized groups, especially women, in political and business sectors. Kanter emphasized that the relative numbers of diverse individuals shape group dynamics, while Dahlerup argued that substantial change occurs through "critical acts," such as implementing gender quotas or fairness legislation, which empower marginalized groups (Dahlerup, 1988, p,282). The theory suggests that as women's numbers increase in institutions, they can foster a "politics of optimism" and bring attention to women's issues (Blum and Smith,1988,p.533). Though, change only occurs when women reach a "critical mass." In India, initiatives like the 50% reservation for women in Local Self-Government Institutions and one-third of seats for women in legislative bodies have led to greater political representation and shifts in governance. Globally, gender quotas have contributed to an increase in female representation in national parliaments (Childs and Krook, 2008,p,733).

Development of Women's Participation in Politics

The history of women's involvement in Indian politics dates back to the 19th-century reform movement, which emerged from the conflict between the Indian bourgeoisie and British colonial rulers. This middle class sought to reform practices such as caste discrimination, child marriage, purdah, and Sati. Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a key

role, advocating for women's education and the abolition of Sati. His efforts led to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, which allowed widows to remarry but restricted their property rights. Prominent women also contributed to the reform movement and religious reforms, helping dismantle barriers for women and paving the way for their participation in public life. A milestone in this process was Swarna Kumari Debi's election as one of Bengal's representatives to the 1890 Indian National Congress, marking a significant step in women's political engagement (Sinha, 2000, p.154).

The Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905-1908) marked a significant step in women's participation in India's nationalist activities. Many middle-class women supported the movement by contributing jewelry, money, and food, and participating in boycotts and revolutionary actions. Sister Nivedita was a key figure, joining the National Revolutionary Council and organizing women for the cause. The independence struggle also brought women's suffrage to the forefront. In 1917, Annie Besant and other women leaders met with Mr. Montague to advocate for women's voting rights. During this time, organizations like the Women's Indian Association (WIA) and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) were founded. The WIA, established by Besant and others in 1917, was the first truly feminist organization in India, supporting the Home Rule Movement and women's empowerment. The AIWC, formed in 1926, became influential in campaigning for women's rights, labor rights, and participation in the nationalist struggle (Nithya, 2013,p.224). These movements played a decisive role in both the independence movement and advancing women's rights.

While the groundwork for women's political participation was established during the nationalist movement, there was limited effort to fully integrate women into political processes after India gained independence. In fact, women's presence in politics has often diminished, with their involvement more tied to family connections than political beliefs or personal commitment. The framers of the Indian Constitution likely hoped that legal reforms would promote gender equality, but despite these efforts, gender disparity and discrimination persist. Women's underrepresentation in politics and decision-making bodies continues, reflecting the ongoing influence of patriarchal

structures and societal expectations over genuine empowerment and political engagement (Bari, 2005,p,5).

The Constitution of independent India guarantees justice, liberty, equality, and dignity to all citizens, including women, through its 'Fundamental Rights' and 'Directive Principles of State Policy.' Recognized as one of the most progressive globally, it specifically safeguards the rights of underprivileged groups and minorities. The framers understood that true democracy requires both legal equality and social-economic justice. As a result, the Constitution not only ensures parity for women but also empowers the state to take affirmative actions to address the socio-economic, educational, and political disadvantages women face. Several provisions within the Constitution are specifically designed to attain gender parity and fairness for women in India. Articles 14,15,16 under part III, Articles 39, 42, 44, 46, 47 under part IV, Article 51 - A(c) under part IV A and Article 243 D(3), Article 243 T (3) Article 246 under part XI are noteworthy. Women's Reservation Act, 2023 provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and state legislative assemblies (GOI, 2019).

Political Participation of Women in India since Independence

There are numerous pointers to assess women's involvement in politics in India, including their voter turnout, the number of women contesting elections, the proportion elected to legislative bodies at the national, state, and local levels, and their involvement in election-related activities, such as working as party workers or supporting political campaigns.

1. Women as Voters

After Independence, women's participation as voters was initially low, but it gradually increased over time. By the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the number of women voters nearly matched that of men, marking a significant milestone in India's journey towards

gender equality in politics—referred to as a "silent revolution of self-empowerment." This rise in voter participation, particularly since the 1990s, can be attributed to several key factors. An analysis of data from the Election Commission of India reveals that voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections has evolved over time. In 1962, male turnout was significantly higher (63.3%) than female turnout (46.6%), resulting in an overall turnout of 55.4%. By 1977, female participation rose to 54.9%, narrowing the gap, and the total turnout increased to 60.5%. Female turnout continued to rise, surpassing 50% in 1989 and reaching 65.6% in 2014, nearly matching male turnout at 67.1%. In 2019, the gender gap was minimal, with male turnout at 67.3% and female at 66.9%, resulting in a 67% overall turnout. In 2024, turnout slightly declined to 65.8%, with male and female participation both at 65.8% and 65.78%, respectively. This data reflects a consistent increase in female voter engagement over time, though slight fluctuations in overall turnout suggest factors beyond gender alone influencing voter participation (Election Commission of India, Various Years).

2. Women as Candidates

Until the early 1990s, the number of women candidates fielded by major political parties in both parliamentary and state assembly elections was relatively low. However, this began to change in the mid-1990s, with a gradual increase in the representation of women in the Lok Sabha, though the growth has been inconsistent. An analysis by India Today's Data Intelligence Unit of women's representation in the Lok Sabha from 1957 to 2024, along with women's voter turnout from 1962 to 2024, revealed mixed trends in their political participation. Political scientist Francesca R. Jensenius argues that 'the introduction of reservations for women at the local level in 1992 significantly boosted their representation in those seats'. Following the 1996 general elections, the proposal to reserve seats for women in Parliament and state assemblies was put forward. Jensenius' study highlights that after 1996, all major political parties began nominating more women candidates than in previous years (Jensenius, 2016, p.16). However, despite this increase, the percentage of women candidates in parliamentary elections remains far lower than that of their male counterparts.

The data from Election Commission of India, and PRS reveals that the number of women candidates in India's General Elections has steadily increased, reflecting greater political engagement. In 1957, there were only 45 women candidates. By 1980, this number rose to 143, indicating gradual progress. The growth accelerated in 1999, with 283 women contesting. In 2019, the number increased to 716, showing both expanded representation and greater party efforts to include women. In 2024, the number further rose to 797, continuing the upward trend. While the numbers have risen over time, the percentage of women candidates still remains a small proportion compared to the total number of candidates, indicating that while progress has been made, there is still work to be done for achieving gender parity in political representation (Election Commission Of India, Various Years And Prs, 2024).

The percentage of women candidates fielded by major political parties in India has gradually shifted from 2014 to 2024. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) saw a significant rise in female representation, increasing from 8.9% in 2014 to 15.6% in 2024, highlighting their efforts to promote women's participation. The Indian National Congress (INC) showed minimal change, with female representation slightly decreasing from 12.9% in 2014 to 12.6% in 2024. Smaller and regional parties, categorized as "Others," experienced a slight increase in female candidates, rising from 9.6% in 2014 to 11% in 2024 (Election Commission Of India, Various Years).

Women in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

According to statistics revealed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), “parity between men and women is in itself an important development goal, and women's economic participation is also a part of the growth and stability equation”. In a research piloted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, India was ranked 149th out of 193 nations in terms of the percentage of women who serve in the lower house of parliament. According to PRS legislative research, the first Lok Sabha in 1951 had 22 women MPs. The current Lok Sabha has 74 women MPs. From 4.4% in 1951, women MPs constitute 14% of the Lok Sabha today. 41% of women MPs (30 MPs) have previously been members of Lok Sabha. While there has been a slow increase in the number of women

in Lok Sabha over the years, India still lags behind several countries (PRS Legislative Research, 2023). According to Susan Ferguson, UN Women's India Country Representative "Typically, achieving a critical mass of 30 per cent representation by women in Parliament is known to yield positive outcomes for women's empowerment". While women's representation in the Rajya Sabha has shown an upward trajectory since 1952, the progress has been slow and uneven. Although recent years have seen notable increases, significant efforts are still required to achieve true gender equality in India's legislative bodies. The trends indicate that societal changes, leadership dynamics, and specific political movements have played crucial roles in the fluctuating percentages, suggesting that women's political empowerment needs consistent focus and policy support (PRS, Various Years).

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), and All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) were the primary contributors to women's representation. The BJP fielded 69 women candidates out of 440 total nominees, representing 16%. The Congress, in contrast, nominated 41 women from a pool of 327 candidates, making up 13%. Interestingly, smaller and regional parties fielded a higher proportion of female candidates. State-level trends showed mixed results, with some states seeing a decrease in the number of women winners, while others experienced a slight increase (The Times of India, August 12, 2024). This variation emphasizes the diverse political dynamics in India and the uneven progress in achieving gender parity in political representation. In 2019, 47% of all women MPs were elected from only four states: Uttar Pradesh (14%), West Bengal (14%), Maharashtra (10%) and Odisha (9%). Large, populated states like Bihar or Gujarat, barely contributed. South India, which accounts for 130 seats in the Lok Sabha, only sent 11 women to Parliament.

The number of women ministers in the Government of India has fluctuated over the years, reflecting both political dynamics and changing attitudes toward women's leadership. Initially, post-independence representation was low, with only 3 women

ministers in 1952 and 1957. The number increased slightly to 5 in 1962 and 1967 but remained limited. A notable rise occurred in 1980 with 8 women ministers, though it dropped to 2 in 1977 and 5 in 1984. The 1990s saw improvement with 9 women ministers in 1999. The 2000s saw a peak, with 10 women ministers in 2004 and 2019, signaling a higher commitment to gender representation. However, the number decreased again to 7 in 2014 and remained at 7 in 2024, indicating that while progress has been made, women's representation in cabinet positions remains limited (PRS, VARIOUS YEARS). These fluctuations highlight the challenges women face in securing and maintaining leadership roles within the political establishment, even as women's participation in elections has improved over time. However, according to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database, as of June 1, 2024, India's ranking for women's representation in the lower house of Parliament has dropped to 143rd out of 185 countries, falling behind nations like Vietnam, the Philippines, Pakistan, and China (IPU, 2024).

The Lokniti-CSDS study highlighted several factors influencing women's participation in politics and their path to greater representation. It found that women from higher social (caste) and economic backgrounds were more engaged in electoral politics than those from lower strata. Despite this, three-quarters of the women surveyed expressed reluctance to pursue politics as a career, even if given the opportunity. Over half felt it was easier for women from upper castes to enter politics. The study also identified patriarchal societal norms as a significant barrier to women's political involvement. Additionally, the home environment was found to play a crucial role, with unequal decision-making within households discouraging women's interest and active participation in politics. The report emphasized that political spaces remain predominantly male-dominated, and significant challenges still exist for women seeking to engage in politics (CSDS, 2019,p.45).

Challenges in Women's Representation

Women face several political hindrances that hamper their full participation in politics. One of the major challenges is the dominance of the 'masculine model' of political life, which tends to exclude women from elected government bodies. Additionally, women candidates often lack party support, including limited financial backing and fewer opportunities to access political networks. They also face more stringent qualifications and standards than their male counterparts. Other barriers include insufficient contact and cooperation with key public organizations such as labor unions and women's groups, which could provide valuable political support (Kumar, 2022,p,69). There is also a lack of well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership, which limits opportunities for young women to enter political life. Furthermore, the structure of the electoral system itself may not always be favorable to women candidates, further complicating their political participation.

Men predominantly dominate the political arena, shaping the rules and standards by which politics is evaluated. The political system is often organized around male norms, values, and even lifestyles. For example, the competitive, confrontational nature of politics—focused on 'winners and losers'—typically contrasts with approaches based on collaboration and consensus-building, which may be more inclusive. This environment can lead women to either disengage from politics entirely or reject its masculine style. As a result, when women do enter the political sphere, their participation tends to be limited and occurs in smaller numbers. Women play crucial roles in campaigning and mobilizing support for political parties, yet they are seldom given decision-making positions within these structures. Despite political parties having significant resources for conducting election campaigns, women often do not have access to these resources, limiting their ability to benefit from or influence the political process. Lack of adequate reservation of seats for women in the Parliament and state legislatures; the absence of a national consensus and the reluctance of political parties to allocate more tickets to women in elections, combined with the persistence of a patriarchal political structure, poses significant barriers to women's participation.

Additionally, class, caste, and gender inequalities act as strong deterrents to women contesting elections. The lack of awareness and understanding of electoral politics, along with insufficient support from both their families and political parties in terms of resources, severely hampers women's chances of contesting and winning elections (Eisenstein, 1984,p.189).

Socio-economic factors play a crucial role in shaping women's recruitment to legislatures in both established and emerging democracies. The status of women directly influences their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. One of the major barriers to women's political engagement is their socio-cultural dependence, which hinders their ability to participate in the public political sphere. Additionally, women face significant challenges due to their dual roles in both productive (paid work) and reproductive (domestic responsibilities and caregiving) spheres, leaving them with limited time to engage in politics. Ideological and psychological barriers, such as gender norms, cultural expectations, and the traditional roles assigned to women and men, further discourage women's political involvement. These barriers are compounded by a lack of confidence among women to run for office, the perception of politics as a “dirty” game, and the often negative portrayal of women in the mass media (Nath, 2013,p.9).

Conclusion

Achieving gender parity in politics remains one of the greatest challenges for India as it continues to strive for a truly inclusive democracy. While progress has been made over the years, particularly with regard to women's electoral participation, the participation of women in the Indian Parliament remains disproportionately low. The low involvement of women in decision-making positions is a reflection of deeply ingrained patriarchal norms, gender biases, and socio-economic barriers that limit women's access to political power. While women have made important progresses in other spheres of public life, the political arena remains largely male-dominated, with women

often relegated to auxiliary roles within political parties and electoral processes. Moreover, the lack of support systems, financial resources, and political mentorship further exacerbate the challenges faced by female candidates. As Mahatma Gandhi once stated, "As long as women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country. As long as women do not come to public life and purify, we are not likely to attain swaraj. Even if we did, it would have no use for that kind of swaraj to which women have not made their full contribution." Thus, women's involvement in the political process is crucial not only for reinforcing democratic values but also for promoting the overall prosperity of the nation. The need for a comprehensive restructuring of political systems is more urgent than ever. Increasing women's participation in political life and electoral competition will not only ensure political parity and equality with men but will also address broader issues of empowerment and the upliftment of women in India.

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Nithya N R

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

University of Kerala

Trivandrum

Exploring the Shifting Sands: Interplay of Power, Ideology and Religion in South Asian Politics

Peerzada Irshad Ahmad Shah

Zahoor Ahmad

Abstract

The South Asian region holds a profound geopolitical and theoretical significance, functioning as a critical arena for global power dynamics, with Asian and Western powers vying for influence. This study aims to comprehensively understand the complexities inherent in South Asian politics by analyzing the intricate interplay of power dynamics, ideological transformations, and religious influences. By combining historical context with contemporary perspectives, the research seeks to illuminate the multifaceted nature of politics in the region and offer valuable insights into its potential future trajectories. In essence, theorizing about South Asian politics requires a comprehensive examination of historical, social, and political factors within the region's power structures. It focuses on scrutinizing the evolution of power dynamics, the flux of political ideologies, and the transformative interplay between religions, resulting in a degeneration that prioritizes the interests of political leaders over the common welfare.

Key Words: South Asia; Politics; Religion; Gender; Strategic; Power

Introduction

The geographical disposition of South Asia, particularly the Bay of Bengal region, has historically been denoted as 'the Cockpit of Asia' (Than 2005, 80-97). This strategic positioning facilitates the seamless maneuvering of substantial military armadas, rendering it an invaluable asset for global powers seeking to expand their influence in the Indian Ocean and Central Asia. In the wake of China's ambitious One Belt One Road Initiative

(BRI), the South Asian region has been recontextualized and disentangled from India's immediate environs, evolving into an integral constituent of the Indo-Pacific (Kaplan 2015, 67-72). The significance of South Asia in the contemporary world remains unaltered. It constitutes a vital nexus between Central and West Asia, the Gulf, and the littoral regions of the Western Indian Ocean. Furthermore, it is positioned as a potential strategic challenger to the People's Republic of China and the United States, intensifying its influence on global power dynamics. The geographical locations of Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan along the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea confer upon them unparalleled strategic advantages (Schwartzberg 1983, 232-253). Recognizing this, significant powers are eager to harness these locations to realize their geopolitical aspirations. The access of these nations to the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea enables them to forge robust maritime connections within the region and with other formidable powers. Moreover, their strategic localities allow them to wield influence over pivotal trade routes, particularly those linking the Indian Ocean with Central Asia. The Bay of Bengal is a conduit to the South China Sea, which holds immense significance for global trade. Consequently, the geographic position of South Asia assumes critical importance in moulding the power equilibrium in the Indo-Pacific region. As dominant powers continue to vie for supremacy, the prominence of South Asia will only escalate, thereby solidifying its status as a key global player (Bose & Jalal 2022, 33-51).

The relationship between democracy and religion in South Asia has significantly influenced the socio-political landscape. This influence is particularly evident in India, where democracy and religion have shaped each other and the nation's collective identity. The state's foreign policy reflects its aspirations and collective anxieties. The complex interplay between nation, nationalism, and identity is shaped not only by internal factors but also significantly influenced by external forces. Moreover, in the South Asian context, the concept of regime security and mechanisms of population control have provided nation-states with advantages arising from interactions with external entities. In South Asia, climate change is not just an environmental concern but also a matter of fairness and justice. When considering proportional rights, it is crucial to acknowledge the historical processes

of accumulation, exploitation, and unequal consumption that have been overlooked in traditional formulations. These dynamics are pivotal when analyzing the intricacies of the South Asian socio-political landscape.

The issue of inequality is embedded within the socio-economic tapestry of South Asian societies, but this concern is manipulated, confronted, and perpetuated within a specific political sphere. There is a somewhat consistent ideological and political tradition in the region that strives to perpetuate socio-political inequality rather than eradicate it. This predicament has religious underpinnings in the Indian subcontinent, both preceding and as a consequence of colonialism (Jalal 2009, 203-217). While colonialism was theoretically grounded in the secular principles of European enlightenment, it paradoxically reinforced religious and communal perceptions of the world despite societal modernization. The colonial administration bolstered the role of religion in societal construction, and the resentment stemming from centuries of Muslim reign in India led to the 'rediscovery' of a homogeneous Hindu society. Governance was moulded around socio-politics, particularly the religious frameworks, to enable colonial regimes to function within an inherently conflicted societal framework.

India's ascent as a potential regional leader is supported by its concerted efforts to foster diverse inter-state relationships. One crucial aspect of this endeavour is India's active participation in a carefully orchestrated diplomatic initiative designed to enhance its position in the region. This outreach is motivated by the need to shape a positive narrative around India's role in regional cooperation that is strategically aligned with its security needs. In this context, India's foreign policy hinges on the complex interplay of security concerns, economic interdependence, and alliance-building. A comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical landscape highlights the importance of understanding the intricate web of political dynamics that define inter-state relations. Moreover, a thorough examination of South Asian relations not only enriches our understanding of geopolitical manoeuvring but also has profound implications for reshaping security strategies, geo-strategy, geo-economics, regional security, regional integration, the emerging global order, and the

dynamics of globalization, particularly within the context of growing economies like India and China.

The geopolitical positioning of the region has a significant impact on its permeation of stringent high-security measures, communication networks, trade of goods and services, and the delicate status of relations. The partition of the geographically distinct North Western Frontier Province from India during the Partition in 1947 aimed to secure relative territorial and demographic control of the Western Indian frontiers and the ideological boundaries of the post-colonial states. This region, the last to be colonised in Asia, is a product of colonial remnants and a battleground of various agendas encompassing missionary, political, and environmental undertakings. Any political endeavour aiming to alter ideologies must establish states capable of effectively repelling global entities seeking to exploit this narrative to lay claim to strategically essential areas.

Pakistan has undergone a significant transformation in the realm of regional politics within South Asia. It has transitioned from being a mere pawn to an influential territory, equipped with the capacity and conviction to redefine the governing principles of this strategic game (Chapman 2018, 67-83). The evidence for this shift can be observed in Pakistan's recent domestic political developments and diplomatic interactions with neighbouring nations such as India and China. The complex and ever-changing nature of Pakistan's current reality necessitates a comprehensive understanding and analysis of its implications. Policy-makers from other countries and those within Pakistan must comprehend the consequences of the choices made by this nation.

Power Dynamics in South Asian Politics

The power dynamics in South Asia are complex and constantly evolving, presenting a challenge to comprehend fully. These dynamics are influenced by intense diplomatic tensions in the realm of nuclear politics, widespread opposition to large-scale projects that cross local boundaries, the struggles of families dealing with a rapidly marginalizing economy, limitations faced by policymakers as resources decline, and the support of South

Asian non-state actors by global capital markets (Jahangir 2013, 50-58). All South Asian states are governed by elites and interactions among these elites are characterized by mutual apprehension regarding the potential co-opting of the state by a particular social class. The distinct nature of South Asian political systems lies not so much in the ability of ruling elites to make decisions and allocate resources but in the relative ease with which coordination can break down. As a result, political interactions differ significantly in small, tightly organised systems compared to larger, loosely structured ones, with South Asia largely falling into the latter category (Haynes & Prakash 1992, 223-249). Consequently, competition among elites and the resulting coordination failures are prominent features of political discourse. This elite behaviour, driven by power ideologies, threatens regime change's effectiveness, even if it aligns with behavioural presuppositions of established theories and optimal strategies emerge in at least one instance in each of South Asia's eight public affairs theatres.

The South Asian nations maintain unique diplomatic alliances with each other, particularly evident among those sharing geographic boundaries, which necessitate formal diplomatic relations. Consequently, international relations within the region involve multilateral engagements, exemplified by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, providing a procedural framework to address collective issues. Bangladesh's diplomatic entente with Myanmar is noteworthy due to the absence of a formal land border, requiring a distinctive form of engagement. This is evident in Bangladesh's efforts to address the ongoing dispute over sharing the River Ganges water resources through a bilateral treaty, given its substantial population. Additionally, the diplomatic landscape of South Asian countries includes considerations for strategic alliances, security cooperation mechanisms, and consultative groups to complement bilateral relations. Its distinct interests drive each nation's multilateral, regional ties. Notably, India and Pakistan have emphasized their inclination towards more concentrated efforts for security cooperation, connectivity, and economic collaboration within the comprehensive SAARC summit framework, as opposed to outside it. Consequently, decisions made within the multilateral domain of the South

Asian West, SAARC, significantly influence bilateral development and require meticulous examination.

The aftermath of the September 11, 2001, events has had a significant impact on the political landscape in South Asia, resulting in a thorough examination of international politics, security concerns, and the growing threat to peace in the region (Bhatta 2019, 21-34). The interactions between Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka provide valuable insights into global power dynamics and the potential for conflict. The acquisition and use of nuclear capabilities play a crucial role in shaping the perceived threats in inter-state relations within South Asia, which is characterized by unequal nuclear capacities and strategic approaches (Dutt 2013, 11-25). Pakistan has adopted an asymmetric deterrence strategy to counter the conventional power imbalance, while India's nuclear posture focuses on maintaining a credible minimum deterrence. India's limited war strategy influences its sub-conventional policies, such as its involvement in the Baluch insurgency and conflicts along the Line of Control. Nuclear capabilities in South Asia threaten states' security, survival, and stability due to power disparities, potentially leading to overconfidence among stronger parties and insecurity among weaker ones.

The power dynamics in South Asia are heavily influenced by nuclear politics and strategic considerations. Power retention is apparent at different levels, including regional, bilateral, and sub-regional contexts within the framework of nuclear capabilities. India's assertive posture towards Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as the marginalization of the Muslim minority, demonstrate a complex web of inter-state relations. The international relations structure in this context is greatly influenced by mutual threat perceptions among regional actors, characterized by realpolitik responses. Furthermore, the existing global balance of power significantly impacts regional geopolitics through bipolarity, unipolarity, and multipolarity dynamics. The evolving global landscape is rooted in historical antecedents, where states aimed to form strong alliances by aligning with significant powers. This pursuit of alliances has historically resulted in destructive outcomes within the inter-state system, particularly in the context of the two World Wars.

South Asia has been plagued by numerous civil wars and ethnic conflicts throughout its history. The failure of post-colonial states to address issues of equality, integration, and identity has been identified as a key contributing factor. Ziegfeld argues that ethnicity has become a highly manipulable resource, dominating contemporary South Asian politics (Ray 2020, 65-88). The increasingly intense politics of identity formation has raised significant scholarly concerns. The case of Nepal demonstrates that these identities are not fixed but constantly evolving, similar to Eastern European nations. South Asian ethnic nations are in a state of constant flux and regime creation, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the politics of identity formation.

The element of ethnic identity often presents civil society as solely defined by ethnicity, as if it exists independently of state regulation. It's essential to move past highlighting social and political divides resulting from ethnic diversity and instead focus on the interconnectedness of power and solidarity. While the study of ethnicity is not new, its complex relationship with political identity and agency, especially in South Asia, is gaining attention. Ethnicity is often seen as a 'negative' exception within a norm of 'positive' activism, which prevents the racialization of the 'politics of identity' in this context. Sri Lanka offers a unique opportunity to examine ethnic tensions between two groups that are more or less equal in social, numerical, and economic terms and share a common history. They speak two Indo-European languages and adhere to different religions; the Sinhala community follows Buddhism and the Sinhala culture, while the Hindu community practices Hinduism with a Dravidian tradition. The Sinhala community has internal divisions based on caste, religion, and geographical exclusion, but their language unites them. Similarly, Political Sanskrit, the official language for legislation, unites most Hindu elites and middle classes in the predominantly Tamil North and East, spanning Trincomalee and Jaffna.

As identity-based grievances stem from historical memories, most events that constitute the present have no explanation without their past. Therefore, the conflict's nature is also the prime material of peace-making, peace-building, and peace-sustaining. The pact of

retrogressive unitarism in the new land, deemed as 'the most enlightened regime of the Asian kind established in this part of the world', distinguished two significant groups and forty-one minor communities arguing that 'nationalism vis-à-vis ethnicity will not be a problem in the new land. In the political realm, Sinhala leaders insisted on unity and accepted diversity with the Tamils, whereas the opposite happened in the sociocultural arena through symbolic and structural exclusion.

Ideological Shifts in South Asian Politics

The political landscape of South Asia has experienced significant shifts in recent decades, particularly concerning identities and ideologies. Debates surrounding secularism and religious nationalism have been prominent, taking various forms across different regions. The rise of the Sangh Parivar in India, the proliferation of Hindutva, the spread of political Islamism, the strengthened Islamic forces, the reconfiguration of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and the global impact of "Muslim" as an identity are all indicative of the evolving ideological positions in the region (Robinson 2017, 07-20). These changes directly affect governance, public discourse, electoral dynamics, and social movements, all of which are critical aspects of political analysis. These ideological transformations examine the contested and evolving perspectives of politics in South Asia and the new possibilities they present.

The South Asian region is characterized by a rich tapestry of religious systems, discourses, and institutions, which have historically been the focal point of intense contestation. It is essential to acknowledge that the religious landscape in this region is diverse and multifaceted, defying monolithic categorization. The concept of "religion" in South Asia is intricately shaped by various traditions and interconnected with secular, cultural, and political spheres. While South Asia is often portrayed as a hotbed of religious conflicts, it is pertinent to recognize that these conflicts have been equally influenced by acts of resistance and traditions promoting harmonious coexistence among different faiths. While it may be tempting to view South Asian religious identities through a lens of conflict, it is imperative to consider the myriad expressions of resistance, evolving traditions, and

contemporary interactions that characterize the region. Despite the growing trend of identity-based religious affiliations, South Asia also witnesses increasing instances where boundaries are transcended and transgressed. In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge the political elite's role in mitigating genuine conflicts and promoting a realpolitik approach to understanding South Asian political dynamics. This perspective emphasizes the complexity and nuanced nature of South Asian religious and political dynamics and underscores the need for a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the region.

South Asia has been the locus of competing ideological currents of secularism and religious nationalism that have sought to delineate the broader dynamics of the region. In the mid-20th century, scholars uncritically embraced modernization theory and secularism, contending that as societies modernize, religion will inevitably be relegated to the private sphere (Mittal & Thursby 2006, 264-270). For a considerable period of time, South Asia's complex relationship with religion was universally perceived as evidence of the fundamental validity of the secularization thesis. Wolf postulated that one potential rationale for India's success as a diverse societal entity could be attributed to its avoidance of establishing a centralized ideological state apparatus similar to that which Europeans achieved through Christianity (Wolf 2000, 132-143). The contest between secular governments and functional identities persists throughout South Asia in defining governance, social harmony, power-sharing, and national and sub-national identities.

Religion and Politics in South Asia

The intricate relationship between politics and religion is evident in South Asia's diverse and complex societies. In this region, religious beliefs and practices, along with their associated institutions, not only establish prevailing normative order and behavioural codes but also significantly influence public policies and modes of governance. Religion plays a crucial role in shaping all aspects of South Asia's state and politics, with religious underpinnings supporting ruling ideologies. This association is apparent in the broader public thinking, values, and attitudes, particularly in democratic consolidation and development. Most South Asian states have witnessed noticeable religious resurgence and

renewed politicization since the 80s of the last centuries. The revival of religiosity is not a backlash against modernization per se but against the presumptuous, intrusive, and violent incursions of modernity and exogenous global forces. However, the formation of the modern secular state and economy has created epistemic domains that gave birth to social formations qualified by ultimate values, absolute commitments, and embedded traditions. By unravelling the complexity of South Asian societies and politics, this section provides a nuanced understanding of the role of religious dynamics in shaping the region's polity. Thus, it is claimed that the South Asian state may have been formed in the 'West' under peculiar social conditions, but the peculiar constitution of the state in Europe has an ancient pattern (Kaviraj 2014, 08-22). In other words, a discriminatory and excludable realm not only legitimates the modern secular state but negatively defines the 'other' as well.

In recent years, a discourse has emerged regarding religion and conflict resolution. In various regions, religious authorities have been instrumental in reinstating societal harmony, leading to the notion that religion possesses the capacity to contribute to this realm. Advocates of this standpoint contend that religion's potential to cultivate peace is embedded within inter-faith dialogue, religious tolerance, and the ethos of mediation and peace within religious frameworks. This notion raises the inquiry of whether religions can engage in conversation with other faiths and promote religious tolerance and whether the persuasive influence of religious leaders can exert social pressure, predisposing followers of a particular faith towards interpretations that advocate peace.

This particular approach focuses on conflict resolution and reconciliation, emphasising changing individual behaviour by altering beliefs. Research indicates that modifying the cognitive components of rhetoric can lead to systemic change. Conversely, an alternative approach questions whether religion has the potential to exacerbate conflict, leading to hostility, cruelty, and irrational behaviour during times of war. It is suggested that when religion becomes intertwined with conflict and peace discussions between opposing parties, it is crucial to gain a clear understanding of how religious ideas can be incorporated into the narratives used to justify acts of war, as well as how they contribute to the overall

landscape of fostering peace. In South Asia, the interplay of religious dynamics reflects the deep-seated socio-political complexities embedded in the region's history, encompassing democracy, militarization, the Cold War, human rights, and the influence of nation-states in the subcontinent. The association of religion with politics challenges idealistic assumptions about war, peace, and stability.

Conclusion

The paper emphasizes the critical nature of understanding South Asian politics within the existing body of literature that influences our perception of political dynamics in the region. It highlights the intricate nature of political systems in South Asia, which have displayed significant resistance to change over time. It eloquently points out the profound impact of the breakdown of traditional relationships and institutions on the modern state, often leading to paralysis and requiring forceful measures to address the resulting imbalance. It skillfully challenges the idea of the modern nation-state as unique or insignificant in the broader political history of human civilization, while uncovering the artificial processes that form the basis of nation-building. The text astutely argues that the apparent stability and cooperation amid evolving global dynamics demand states to adapt swiftly, necessitating a thorough reevaluation and recalibration of the fundamental principles of the modern state in light of immense pressures.

The thorough analysis has given us valuable insights into the complex and diverse dynamics of power, ideology, religion, and the state in South Asia. By using an interdisciplinary approach, the study carefully examined the region's historical paths and subsequent developments, leading to a deeper understanding of the intricate interactions and influences at play in South Asia. This nuanced perspective has illuminated the interconnected aspects of its societal and political landscape, contributing to a more holistic comprehension of the intricate dynamics and interactions shaping the region's political landscape.

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Peerzada Irshad Ahmad Shah, Professor Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, J&K, India.

Zahoor Ahmad (Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, J&K, India.

Inclusive

Politics of Knowledge in Development: A Study of Sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir

Priyanka Sharma

Abstract

This research paper explores the politics of knowledge in the sericulture industry of Jammu and Kashmir, India, through a comprehensive analysis of three spaces i.e. state policy, historical context, and market dynamics. Utilizing the Banerjee (2021) analytical framework of politics of knowledge in development, this study draws on four years of extensive fieldwork to uncover how political and economic forces shape the production and dissemination of knowledge within this sector, affecting the livelihoods of local sericulture communities. The findings illustrate the intricate interplay between state interventions, historical legacies, and market forces, revealing a tendency to marginalize the traditional knowledge and practices of local sericulture practitioners. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on the politics of knowledge in development, advocating for more inclusive and participatory approaches to policymaking and knowledge production. The study underscores the necessity of recognizing and integrating diverse knowledge systems to foster equitable and sustainable development in the sericulture industry of Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: *Politics of Knowledge, Silk, Jammu and Kashmir, Development*

Introduction

Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas, Jammu and Kashmir boasts a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, with sericulture occupying a prominent place. For centuries, the production of silk, often called the 'queen of textiles,' has been deeply intertwined with the region's social fabric, economic landscape, and artistic expression. This intricate craft, passed down through generations, embodies a wealth of traditional knowledge, encompassing every stage from silkworm rearing to the weaving of exquisite fabrics. However, the trajectory of Jammu and Kashmir's silk industry, like many traditional industries globally, has been profoundly shaped by the complex interplay of historical forces, state interventions, and market dynamics.

This paper delves into this intricate interplay through the lens of ‘politics of knowledge,’ a concept that highlights how power structures influence which forms of knowledge are valued, contested, and ultimately shape development trajectories. Scholars like Arturo Escobar (1995), James Ferguson (1994), Gustavo Esteva (1992), Ashis Nandy (1983), Vandana Shiva (1991), Majid Rahnema (1997), Wolfgang Sachs (1992), Debal Deb (2009), Shiv Visvanathan (1997), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) and Ashish Kothari (2019) have been instrumental in applying the lens of power and knowledge to development studies, particularly in postcolonial societies. They argue that development initiatives, often presented as neutral and objective, are inherently embedded within power relations that privilege certain forms of knowledge while marginalizing others. They argue that development, often presented as a universal good, is a Western construct that perpetuates a particular, often Eurocentric, model of progress. This model frequently devalues non-Western knowledge systems, framing them as inferior or irrelevant to modernization.

Rooted in colonial discourse, this unequal power dynamic positions the North as advanced and the South as backward, leading to a hierarchy of knowledge systems. Such hierarchies have resulted in the museumization and ghettoization of alternative knowledge systems—processes that Santos (2007) terms ‘epistemicide’ and Visvanathan (2009) calls ‘intellectual apartheid.’ The epistemological superiority granted to modern science often suppresses broader cultural knowledge. This raises a critical question: whose knowledge counts? Indigenous systems are frequently labeled as traditional and backward, and those practicing them as "weak, ignorant, underdeveloped, overpopulated, and thus in need of development" (Escobar, 1995, p.7).

In this context, the ‘politics of knowledge’ becomes particularly salient when examining traditional industries like sericulture, where centuries-old practices and local expertise intersect with modern scientific methods, state policies, and global market demands. This paper, based on my MPhil dissertation, posits that the development of the silk industry in Jammu and Kashmir can be understood by examining the interaction of knowledge systems within three key spaces: history, state policy, and the market.

Methodology

This exploratory study employs a qualitative design to analyse the politics of knowledge in Jammu and Kashmir's sericulture industry across three domains. Historical knowledge is reconstructed through both archival sources and secondary literature, enabling an understanding of how sericulture has been represented and reshaped under different regimes. Market knowledge is examined through field observations in cocoon auctions, reeling units, and local marketplaces, complemented by semi-structured interviews (snowball sampling) with rearers, traders, and other actors to capture experiential and tacit practices. State policy knowledge is analyzed through government reports, schemes, and policy documents, which reveal the epistemic frameworks underpinning institutional interventions. The combined material—archival and published texts, interview transcripts, observation notes, and policy documents—was thematically analyzed, with ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymity, and respect for local customs maintained throughout the research.

History as a Space of Power and Contestation in Sericulture

The history of sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir demonstrates how a knowledge system—built around silkworm rearing, cocoon harvesting, and reeling—has been shaped, reconstituted, and often disrupted by successive regimes of power. Each period in its history, from the Sultanate to the Dogras and beyond, produced not only institutional structures but also hierarchies of knowledge that determined which practices were preserved, which were reconfigured, and which were discarded.

Silk's mythical origins are often traced to China, with stories of Empress Xi Ling Chi discovering the thread when a cocoon fell into her teacup. Archaeological and textual evidence confirms that China maintained a monopoly on silk for nearly three millennia, guarding silkworm eggs as a state secret punishable by death (Alam, 2015, 22–24).

Kashmir's entry into this wider silk world is both celebrated and contested. Ancient Sanskrit sources point to Kashmir as a possible original home of silk, though historians remain divided. While there is little mention of sericulture in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, mulberry trees appear as symbols of fertility and abundance (Stein, 1900, 145). The earliest firm record of silk production in Kashmir comes from Mirza Haider Dughlat's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* (1541–46), which details the presence of mulberry plantations and cocoon rearing in the valley (Dughlat, 1895,

212). Under Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1421–1482), silk was actively promoted through state patronage, technical training, and incentives to laborers. Dughlat praised him for fostering “all those arts and crafts which are uncommon in most cities” and highlighted the abundance of mulberry cultivation under his reign (Dughlat, 1895, 217). Here, the politics of knowledge was explicit: sericulture became an arena where royal authority, artisanal expertise, and agrarian labor intersected, with the state reorganizing production to serve both cultural prestige and surplus trade.

The Mughal and Afghan periods represented contrasting trajectories. While the Mughals protected mulberry plantations, their interest remained lukewarm, allowing the industry to survive but not flourish (Sharma, 1987, 93). Under the Sikhs (1819–46), sericulture was revived, with two-thirds of Kashmir’s silk exported to Punjab, generating significant state revenue (Pandit, 1965, 134). Here again, silk knowledge was reorganized under new circuits of extraction, serving the fiscal priorities of Lahore while embedding Kashmiri producers into regional power networks.

It was under the Dogras, beginning with Maharaja Gulab Singh that the politics of silk entered a new phase of bureaucratic monopolization. European demand for disease-free silkworm seed drew Kashmir directly into global markets. Maharaja Ranbir Singh soon declared silk a state monopoly, investing £30,000 to build rearing houses, import European appliances, and employ Babu Nilamber Mukerji to modernize techniques (Mukerji, 1885, 55). While these interventions improved quality and won appreciation for Kashmiri silk in Europe, they simultaneously dispossessed rearers of control over their own expertise. By converting a decentralized household practice into a centralized monopoly, the Dogra state transformed sericulture into a site of coercion and privilege.

This monopolization produced what might be called an epistemic hierarchy within the industry. Rearers, once autonomous knowledge-holders, became dependent on state-run grainages, rearing houses, and official grading. When Pebrine reached Kashmir in 1878, crippling production, the lack of locally embedded diagnostic knowledge revealed the fragility of imported expertise. As N.G. Mukerji noted, “no one possessed the knowledge to examine the disease,” and the industry nearly collapsed (Mukerji, 1905, 81). Here the politics of knowledge was stark: indigenous practices had been sidelined, yet imported science failed to secure sustainability.

The colonial and postcolonial state inherited this legacy of centralization. The British sought to modernize Kashmir's silk for profit, importing Italian and French technology and reorganizing production for global markets. After independence, the Government of India institutionalized this legacy through the Central Silk Board (1948) and by strengthening Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd. (JKI) as the state monopoly buyer.

Across this long history, sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir appears not merely as an economic activity but as a terrain of power struggles. Each regime inscribed its authority by reorganizing silk production, whether through patronage, destruction, monopolization, or liberalisation. The knowledge of silkworm rearing—once rooted in households and communities—was repeatedly redefined by political power. In this sense, the history of silk is a history of contested knowledge, where survival and decline depended as much on rulers' policies as on the skill of rearers themselves.

Market as a Space of Power and Knowledge

The market for cocoons and reeling in Jammu and Kashmir is formally presented as a neutral site of price discovery and technological modernization. In practice, however, it has been the primary arena where power is exercised over rearers, determining whether their embodied knowledge of silkworm rearing translates into livelihood security or into dispossession.

Prior to Jammu and Kashmir Silk (Protection and Development) Act, 1988, rearers sold exclusively to JKI, which operated as a guaranteed buyer at fixed procurement prices. While this ensured predictability, it subordinated farmers to bureaucratic fiat and excluded them from negotiation (Mukerji, 1905, 83–85). The liberalisation reforms promised empowerment by opening sales to multiple private reelers. In reality, fieldwork and departmental records show that this shift entrenched new asymmetries: auctions were dominated by external buyers, primarily from Bengal and Karnataka, while JKI's gradual withdrawal as a competitor left farmers exposed to collusion among traders. Farmers repeatedly described auctions as “a compulsion, not a choice,” since state rules prohibited cocoons from being sold outside notified centres (Field Interview, Jammu 2024).

The internal mechanics of the auctions further highlight how power is exercised. Officially, floor prices are set scientifically by the Sericulture Development Department (SDD), and open bidding is expected to drive rates upward. Yet in practice, rearers observed traders conferring

prior to the start of auctions in Sunderbani (2021, 2022, 2023), fixing prices in advance. A Bengali trader candidly admitted that profits came from “buying C and D grade cocoons cheap,” even though yarn later sold at high margins (Field Interview, Sunderbani 2022). This reflects Barbara Harriss-White’s (2003, 71–72) argument that Indian markets blur the boundaries between formal state regulation and informal trader agreements. Grading, a supposedly objective procedure carried out by departmental staff, often serves as a lever of control: farmers allege that downgrading is common, and appeals are rarely successful. The very act of grading converts farmer’s lifeworld knowledge—weeks of nurturing silkworms—into a bureaucratic category that determines price. Here, the politics of knowledge lies in the authority of grading officers and trader associations, rather than in the embodied expertise of producers.

The structure of the market also disadvantages rearers materially. With only five auction centres functional out of thirty-nine and a rigid biannual calendar, farmers shoulder the costs of storage and drying. Since only dry cocoons are accepted, households bear the additional burden of hot air drying or risk spoilage. As Bardhan (1984, 67) noted of small cultivators, structural constraints of credit, storage, and marketing limit their bargaining power. In the cocoon market, these constraints translate into near-compulsory sales at whatever price is offered, with little possibility of withholding produce.

The reeling sector presents a parallel story of technological and institutional capture. By the twentieth century, household reeling had largely disappeared, replaced by state-operated filatures staffed by wage labourers (Walton, 1902, 91). The politics of knowledge here is clear: local reelers, once autonomous in their use of charkhas, were rendered into industrial workers under bureaucratic supervision. Post-1988 reforms intensified this dynamic. Private reelers entered, bringing capital and access to national yarn markets. These reelers dominated cocoon auctions, purchased in bulk, and processed cocoons in large-scale units outside the state. Farmers thus lost not only market leverage but also their connection to local reeling and weaving. There is also absence of the complete value chain. Only thirty percent cocoon is produced within the state (Central Silk Board, 2023). This also increased dependence.

The withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd. (JKI) exacerbated this dependency. Silkworm rearers in Jammu (2024) noted that when JKI still purchased cocoons, “at least one buyer could keep traders in check.” With its retreat, auctions became dominated by private

reelers, whose influence extended to transport, payments, and even the informal policing of bidding. In some auction markets, reelers have an internal association and understanding. They don't bid after a price, and this further eroded the autonomy of rearers (Field Interviews, Nowshera 2023).

Seen through Gordon White's (1993, 27–28) “fourfold politics of the market,” cocoon auctions and the reeling sector reveal layered forms of power. The politics of state involvement is visible in how the SDD regulates auction centres, fixes floor prices, and supervises grading. The politics of market organisation lies in the collusion of trader associations, who manipulate bidding and grading. The politics of market structure is evident in the limited centres and rigid schedules, which structurally disadvantage farmers. Finally, the politics of social embeddedness emerges in how access to favourable grading or prompt payment is mediated by caste, kinship, or departmental connections, reproducing inequalities within farming communities.

In this sense, the cocoon market and reeling sector cannot be seen as neutral institutions of exchange or technology. They are political sites where the fate of weeks of household labor is decided in minutes, where knowledge painstakingly accumulated by rearers is subordinated to external valuations, and where local livelihoods are embedded in global circuits of demand.

State Policy and Sericulture in Jammu & Kashmir

The history of state policy in sericulture is not simply a chronology of administrative reforms, but a record of how knowledge systems are appropriated, reorganised, and reframed through the languages of governance and development. In Jammu and Kashmir, every phase of policy intervention—Dogra monopoly, post-independence statist control, liberalisation, and contemporary competitiveness—has functioned to discipline the knowledge of rearers, embedding sericulture into wider structures of power. The politics of knowledge is therefore inseparable from the politics of state policy.

The establishment of the Government Silk Factory at Srinagar under Maharaja Ranbir Singh in the 19th century was framed as a leap towards modernisation. Yet beneath the rhetoric of efficiency lay a reconstitution of epistemic authority. Local rearing and reeling traditions were redefined as inadequate, and “scientific sericulture” was introduced through imported

European technology, foreign experts, and officials such as Babu Nilamber Mukerji (Mukerji, 1885, 72; Bellow, 1879, 114). This was not merely an economic intervention: it created a hierarchy of knowledge where embodied household practices were subordinated to bureaucratic and foreign expertise.

This logic carried into the postcolonial period. After 1947, sericulture was cast as a developmental sector, yet the monopoly structure remained intact through Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd. (JKI). JKI promised stability by acting as the guaranteed buyer of cocoons, but in practice, it entrenched farmer's dependence on state channels. Procurement prices were fixed administratively, often failing to cover costs (Government of J&K, Annual Report 1962, 17). Here again, rearer's knowledge of silkworm rearing was simultaneously essential and devalued: they sustained the system biologically and materially, but policy located authority in bureaucratic price-setting and factory-based reeling. What was presented as developmental protection was in reality a mode of governance that constrained autonomy while depoliticising the rearer's vulnerability by framing it as a technical problem of inefficiency.

By the 1980s, stagnation in JKI intersected with the larger transformation of Indian economic policy. The Textile Policy of 1985, shaped by World Bank and IMF pressures, reoriented the state away from protectionism and towards competitiveness, efficiency, and private participation (Government of India 1985, 6). In J&K, this logic culminated in the Jammu and Kashmir Silk (Protection and Development) Act, 1988, which ended JKI's monopoly and introduced auctions as the sole legal channel of sale. Officially, this reform was framed as empowering farmers by opening markets. By mandating auctions, the state created a narrow institutional channel where rearer's knowledge of rearing could only be translated into value if certified by departmental graders and purchased by external reelers. The "reform" transferred authority from bureaucrats to traders but left rearers with no alternative pathways.

The politics of knowledge is stark in this moment. The embodied expertise of rearers—disease management, mulberry care, cocoon quality—mattered only insofar as it passed through grading categories and auction procedures. Farmers locked into a state-notified system that presented itself as transparent but in practice was dominated by external buyers. As Harriss-White (2003, 57) shows in other Indian commodity markets, the line between state and market is porous: in J&K, departmental officials, trader associations, and external reelers co-produced outcomes, while rearer's voices were excluded.

Contemporary policy continues this trajectory. The Sericulture Development Policy of 2020 recognises the steep decline of the sector—J&K's silk today constitutes only 0.66 percent of national output—but frames solutions in the idiom of global competitiveness, value-addition, and private partnerships (Government of J&K, 2020, 11). While invoking farmer welfare, the emphasis falls on bivoltine expansion, technology infusion, and export growth. Vulnerabilities such as collusion in auctions, delayed payments, and erosion of local reeling capacity are barely addressed. Escobar's (1995, 56) critique of development is particularly apt here: policy does not confront structural inequalities but reframes them as technical matters of productivity and competitiveness. Rearer's knowledge, once again, is acknowledged as heritage but rendered marginal in practice.

Across these policy regimes, what appears as reform is in fact the rearticulation of authority over knowledge. The Dogra monopoly produced scientific-bureaucratic sericulture; JKI embedded rearers into a statist developmental frame; liberalisation subordinated them to the logics of market efficiency; and the 2020 policy situates them in a global competitiveness discourse. Each moment invokes protection, empowerment, or modernisation, yet each simultaneously erodes autonomy and redefines rearing as a dependent practice, mediated by institutions far removed from the everyday realities of producers.

Thus, state policy in sericulture must be read not as neutral regulation but as a form of politics of knowledge in development. Policies do not merely manage production; they produce categories of legitimacy, silence alternative practices, and embed rearers into structures of dependency. Sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir is therefore a site where development discourse continually disciplines knowledge, transforming local expertise into an object to be governed in the name of modernisation, efficiency, or globalisation.

Conclusion

This study has examined the sericulture industry of Jammu and Kashmir through the lens of the politics of knowledge, tracing its historical evolution, the organisation of cocoon markets and reeling, and the trajectory of state policy. Across these three spaces, a common pattern emerges: sericulture has consistently been reorganised through external interventions—whether by princely rulers, colonial experts, post-independence state monopolies, or neoliberal

reforms—that privilege bureaucratic, scientific, and market logics over the situated expertise of rearers and weavers.

The historical analysis revealed how successive regimes transformed silk into a fiscal and political instrument. From Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's patronage to the Dogra monopoly and European "scientific sericulture," the knowledge of rearers was repeatedly redefined and subordinated to external categories of value. In the market, cocoons became commodities whose worth is determined not by the care and skill of rearing but by grading systems, auction rules, and collusive practices dominated by traders and external reelers. The withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd. further exposed farmers to asymmetries of power, reducing auctions to arenas where survival is negotiated under conditions of vulnerability. State policies, finally, from the Silk Protection Regulation of 1906 to the Sericulture Policy of 2020, have consistently framed sericulture as a sector to be rationalised and modernised. Each policy moment invoked the language of protection, efficiency, or competitiveness, yet each simultaneously constrained the autonomy of producers and reshaped their knowledge into forms legible to bureaucracies or markets.

Seen through Banerjee's (2021) framework of the politics of knowledge in development, these processes are not neutral reforms but forms of epistemic governance. They determine whose knowledge counts, whose practices are legitimised, and whose expertise is silenced.

The central argument of this paper, therefore, is that sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir is not simply an economic activity but a contested knowledge system embedded in relations of power. Its decline cannot be understood merely in terms of inefficiency, mismanagement, or global competition; rather, it reflects the cumulative effect of policies and markets that consistently marginalise producer knowledge. Sustainable futures for the silk industry will require more than technological upgrades or market reforms. They demand a rethinking of development itself—one that recognises rearers and weavers as knowledge-holders, not passive beneficiaries of state or market benevolence.

By situating sericulture within the politics of knowledge, this paper contributes to broader debates in post-development and political economy. It underscores that development interventions, even when framed as protective or empowering, can reproduce dependency and epistemic subordination. Recognising and integrating diverse knowledge systems is not simply a matter of cultural preservation; it is a condition for equitable and sustainable development.

For Jammu and Kashmir's sericulture sector, the challenge remains whether future policy can transcend its legacy of monopolies and markets to truly centre the voices and expertise of those who have sustained silk for centuries.

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Fieldwork Interviews and Observations. 2021–2025. Nowshera, Sunderbani, and Jammu
Cocoon Auction Markets, Jammu and Kashmir.

Fieldwork Interviews and Observations. 2021–2025. Nowshera, Sunderbani, and Jammu
Cocoon Auction Markets. Jammu & Kashmir.

Priyanka Sharma
Assistant Professor,
Department of Political science,
Satyawati College (evening), University of Delhi

Inclusive

Rethinking the Politics of Re-Orientalism in Indian Context

Rakibul Alom

Abstract

Edward Said traces the orientalist slant in the Western discourse which constructs the identity of the west by defining the east as 'other'. Said makes a minute analysis of the scope of orientalism and its imaginative geography. The east-west commercial exchange is primarily driven by the biased view of orientalism. This biasness is powerful enough to tinge the minds of the native people long after the abolition of the colonial reign. The present paper attempts to unveil the traits of reorientalism and its diverse manifestations. It examines how the Re-Orientalism theory and its practices in literature challenge the oriental discourse by narrating the East-West interface in striking ways and how re-orientalism is created by the contemporary tendency for marketization.

Keywords: Re-orientalism, orientalism, politics of representation, marketization.

Author: Rakibul Alom, Ph.D. scholar, Aliah University, Kolkata.

Introduction

Re-Orientalism: definition

The term 're-orientalism', made popular by Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi, describes how authors from formerly colonized societies (Indian writers writing in English) replicate "Orientalist" frameworks in order to either embrace colonial attitudes or attract to Western readers and compete in international markets. In *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics*, Lau and Mendes state, "Re-Orientalism is based on how cultural producers with eastern affiliations come to terms with an orientalized East, whether by complying with perceived expectations of western readers, by playing (along) with them or by discarding them altogether"(2011:3).

Re-orientalist discourse delineates the themes of representation and paradigms of power in postcolonial societies. Aamir Mufti holds that critique of colonial ideology is dubious as it questions the grand narratives of west on the one hand, and on the other, it implicitly accepts the oriental stereotypes (2000:100). However, Lisa Lau identifies that the East has grabbed the power of representation by the twenty-first century, albeit in biased ways (Lau 2014 : 2). The central features of Re-Orientalism in Indian Writing in English (IWE) are manifested in various forms. The role of writers as cultural mediators is crucial for constructing re-Oriental features. They put emphasis on showing dark India image by holding up misery, crime and corruption of the native

countries. In many cases the reason behind this portrayal is to conform to the publishing criteria of the developed countries and the rewarding politics.

Difference between Orientalism and Re-Orientalism:

Orientalism, according to Edward Said, is a discourse created by the West or Occident to pose Orient as the savage, inferior, undeveloped, uncivilized, static. For the nineteenth century European scholars, the Orient became a territory saturated with a history of undisputed Western supremacy. Even though the material and cultural exchange between East and West have undergone remarkable alterations, still the differentiation between the two provinces has made impressions on Europe. As Edward Said states,

“Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice...to designate that collection of dreams, images and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line”(Said 2003: 73).

Re-Orientalism, on the other hand, is a particular kind of orientalism created by the Orientals themselves. Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes trace new directions of ‘Orientalism’ in the present global positioning of India and South Asian countries. Mendes and Lau point out,

“Re-Orientalism differs from Orientalism in its manner of and reasons for referencing the West [...] While remaining eastern in voice, the discourse of “re-Orientalism” is a discourse which is an “orientally”-generated discourse coming out of postcolonial and diasporic legacies, of which it is acutely aware. Unlike Orientalism, re-Orientalism does not rely on the binaries of “India” and the “West”; it is based on a nuanced reading of both, accommodating the vital role of diasporic reception and production in countries such as post-liberalization India”(quoted in Lau and Dwivedi 2014: 3).

These aspects are being embodied through various institutional frameworks, paradigms of knowledge, language, literature and psychological colonization. Said influentially argued, ‘the ontological and epistemological distinction ... between “the Orient” and ...”the Occident”’ (Said 2003: 2) resulted from a colonial discursive power structure devised for ‘dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient’ (Said 2003: 3). As Said speaks,

“Consider how the Orient, and in particular the Near Orient, became known in the West as it’s complementary opposite since antiquity... there were travelers like Marco Polo who charted the trade routes and patterned a regulated system of commercial exchange... Altogether and internally

structured archive is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations... These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West”(Said 2003: 58).

How does Re-Orientalism relate to Orientalism?

Primarily, re-Orientalism is constructed by the writing strategies of the oriental writers. IWE had a strong inclination to appeal to Western audiences. This trend still rules the Indian publishing landscape in the present era. Pavithra Narayanan contends that the fate of IWE in the globalized society is defined by language, agents, publishers, and academics (2012: 108). Karl Marx’s theory of commodification, based on the utilization and exchange value of any product, can be used to understand this type of production and circulation. The swift development of technology gave capitalists new ways to grow their fortunes.

IWE’s (Indian Writing in English) overwhelming success in the international market may be attributed to its ravenous appetite for Indian culture to be consumed. Some of the recurrent themes in contemporary IWE include depictions of dysfunctional law and order, caste and class dynamics, sexuality, communal tensions and the failure of India’s acclaimed modernity and its nationalism. This type of epistemological discourse appears to be appealing to readers around the world. However, this exotic creation and transmission of Indian culture calls into question the institutionalized function of postcolonial theory in bridging the East-West binary. One noteworthy aspect of modern Indian Writing in English is its strong focus on the depictions of inequalities, and corruption resulting in what Huggan (2001) refers to as the “postcolonial exotic.” For Huggan, Indian literary texts in the postcolonial era is fiercely supported by the postcolonial exotic, a theoretical precursor to the sociology of postcolonial cultural production. Huggan opines that the internal stability of such discourse “confirms sufficient power of the knower without creating fresh avenues for understanding or expanding the borders of the known,” the lurking “Other” (Huggan 2005: 129). What was discovered during the colonial civilizing mission has now become an object of exotica, fascination, and amusement. The desire to consume the ‘other’ leads to multiple ways of exploitation.

Certainly, India has turned into a complete Other in terms of its portrayal in literature and films. Therefore, it can be claimed that the underpinning discussion that informs the worldwide IWE market is primarily re-Orientalistic. This particular discourse commodifies India and Indianness

since it operates on the reinvention of Dark India. Huggan argues that reputed writers are aware that their works, though ostensibly oppositional, are

“ironically rehearsing a continuing history of imperialist perceptions of an ‘othered’ India (India as available spectacle; as alternating object of horror and fascination; as world of magic, mysteries and wonders; as site of colonial nostalgia; as forbidden space of cross cultural desire; as romantic tourist goal; and so on), they know that their work might still be used as a means of reconfirming an exoticising imperial gaze” (2001: 81).

Re-Orientalism in Literature:

Two aspects of Re-Orientalism must be considered. Firstly, the re-Orientalists maintain the heritage of Orientalism by exhibiting the deception, profligacy and misery of the East. This serves as extravaganza, as Timothy Mitchell notes, for the western countries to be enjoyed (1998: 461). Secondly, works of the postcolonial writers are judged on the basis of the location – whether they reside in the native lands or in foreign countries. The latter type is deemed as superior and their writings are prioritised by the literary markets. Re-Orientalism theory deals with the global pressures and the kind of identity constructed when the Eastern writers attempt to enter the globalized world. It reflects the aspirational struggles faced in a post-colonial world, where identity and recognition are generally framed in Western terms. It underscores the tension between indigenous identity and global standards of success. It engages with both Western and indigenous narratives to expose the contradictions, complexities, and ironies of Indian society. By engaging with the themes of caste, intellectualism, and social mobility, re-orientalist texts offer critique of Western models of progress and the ways in which they intersect with local realities. This critique, while situated in India, is global in its resonance, functioning against Western assumptions while exploring the deeper struggles within India itself.

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a narrative where traces of re-Orientalism are seen. The character of the narrator’s grandmother is portrayed conspicuously. She is the mother-head of the narrator’s family. Being a school teacher, the grandmother is a disciplined and determined lady who struggles a lot to maintain her family especially after the death of her husband. Her native home is in Dhaka. After marrying a railway engineer, she leaves her paternal place and later resides in Kolkata in India. She pines for the undivided paternal house in her childhood and becomes curious to meet her uncle (Jethamoshai) when she learns that the latter is alive. But the grandmother is not flawless in her attitude. She ignores the misery of one of her relatives (the daughter-in-law of the uncle) who live in a slum area of Kolkata. The grandmother insists on bringing her uncle back to India from Dhaka as she thinks it more important than to look after the relative residing in India. She visits the old house in Dhaka in such a terrible time when communal

riots persist in different places of Dhaka and India. This book shows the prejudices and internal violence of Indian people in postcolonial society.

The idea of nation, border, cartographic divisions are themselves derived from colonial (Western) notions of mapping, nation-state logic. While depicting this, Ghosh is engaging with colonial discourses of spatiality. The characters often adopt or are shaped by those notions. But Ghosh problematises the solidity of those lines: he treats them as “shadow lines”—illusory, permeable, maintained more in memory, imagination, politics than in lived human relationships. This introduces alternative cartographies: psychic, memory-based, emotional, relational. A tension is prevalent in the novel between the grandmother’s militant nationalism and more cosmopolitan, cross-cultural sensibilities (through Tridib, through the narrator, Ila’s life in England etc.). Characters sometimes rely on notions of “us vs them” derived from nationalism (which has its roots in colonial reaction). Some of these are echoing Orientalist tropes too—e.g., simplifying identities, seeing “other communities” (Muslims, Pakistanis, East Pakistan) in certain stereotyped ways.

The narrative brings to the fore how these comparisons and maps (of people, ideas, identity) are constructed, porous, “shadowy.” Ghosh demonstrates how the “shadow lines” (national borders, cultural divides) are artificial, ghost-like, often imposed or maintained by power, politics, and violent histories rather than natural categories. He gives voice to alternate ways of imagining space and community: through memory, emotional geography, relational ties. He also shows the ambivalence of various characters: nationalism is both powerful and limited, solidarity across lines is possible yet fragile.

Manu Joseph, whose first novel *Serious Men* (2010) is a latest addition to the ensemble of Indian works in English. This book parodies postcolonial India’s caste structure and unstoppable corruption and is replete with reorientalism. Joseph’s stereotyping of the Indian Dalits is harmful. There is a wealth of precolonial literature that presents the Dalit in a bad light; the notion that they are corrupt, marginalized, and primitive is actually not new. However, description of the Dalits’ characters through Ayyan Mani serves to uphold the colonial mentality. This novel can be read as a re-orientalist text for several reasons. The protagonist of the novel, Ayyan Mani, is an ambitious Dalit man working in a prestigious scientific institute. His life and aspirations do not conform to the typical image of India as a land of mysticism, poverty, or exotic spirituality that Orientalist texts often depict. Instead, Ayyan’s character shows a modern, urban, and practical side of India, one that engages with global issues like scientific advancement, social mobility, and inequality. Ayyan’s manipulation of his son’s supposed genius challenges both Western and Indian social assumptions. It’s a commentary on the way in which talent, intellect, and success are viewed in India (and by the West) through a lens of caste and social class. In the West, India is often viewed as a land where social mobility is virtually impossible, where systems like the caste system bind

individuals to rigid identities. The story interrogates the assumptions about backwardness of the Indian social structure. It denounces the obsession with Western science and intellectual achievements through the character of Ayyan who works in a scientific institute and becomes involved in a fabricated narrative about his son's genius. The framework highlights the juxtaposition of India's messy, social structure and the clean, idealized version of Western intellectualism projected in media. It analyses how Western science and rationalism are disconnected from the social and cultural realities of non-Western countries.

In many Orientalist narratives, the East is shown as static, entrenched in superstition, or disconnected from modern progress. *Serious Men* counters this by presenting a character who is deeply embedded in modern India but is still operating within a framework of old-school thinking and manipulation. Ayyan's actions show that while modernity has come to India, the complexities of its traditional structures still govern its social and economic realities. The Western concept of progress does not always map neatly onto Indian society.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* deals with the themes of depravity and economic weakness in India. Dark versus Shine India motifs are employed here. Adiga's narrative choices (first-person narrator from rural poverty moving into modern urban corruption) match tropes of orientalism. The novel is written as a letter from Balram Halwai, the protagonist, to the Chinese Premier, explaining his rise from the rural poverty of India to a successful entrepreneur. Balram's letter critiques the rigid class structure, corruption, and hypocrisy in India's elite society. This is a direct challenge to Western stereotypes of "developing" India as a land of mysticism, and exotic chaos. By telling his story from the perspective of someone from the "underbelly" of India, Balram exposes the dark undercurrents of Indian society, challenging the West's simplified view of India as a harmonious, traditional culture.

In traditional Orientalist narratives, the East is often presented as mysterious, static, and untouched by modernity. Adiga, in contrast, presents a dynamic, corrupt, and morally ambiguous India. The portrayal of class conflict, exploitation, and the capitalist machine critiques both Western and Indian forms of corruption. In this way, Adiga subverts the notion of the East as an exotic "Other" by showing that the power dynamics which shape the global world are just as oppressive in the postcolonial East as they are in the West. Balram's journey to success is framed as a response to the oppressive social and economic system that is part of India's postcolonial landscape. The characters in the novel, especially Balram's master, Ashok, embody a certain type of "Westernized" elite, benefiting from both global capitalism and the lingering effects of colonialism. Adiga uses these figures to critique the Western-influenced elite class in postcolonial India, highlighting how the West's economic models are complicit in maintaining inequality. This mirrors re-orientalism in the sense that the critique comes not from an outsider but from within,

showing how the West continues to shape the lives of those in the East, even in a postcolonial world.

Literary works, therefore, criticise both the colonial past and the Westernized present of India. It recounts character of the Indian elite who, despite his Western education, remains deeply embedded in debased practices. In these texts, the Indian elite plays the role of a rich Westerner exploiting a poor, rural Indian. However, this becomes a reflection of how global capitalism has created a new form of domination transcending colonial power structures. This modern form of exploitation, rooted in Western economic principles, assumes the shape of neo-colonialism. The re-Orientalist text challenges traditional Orientalist tropes, albeit it uses them tactfully to castigate both East and West. The rural, 'primitive' India, with its oppressive feudal system, mirrors the exoticized India seen in colonial narratives. However, the author takes this imagery and moves on to delineate how these systems of power are not inherent but maintained by corrupt systems of both Western and Indian elites. The characters are products of an unjust society, which, rather than showing the East as unchanging, reveals it as a place where rebellion against the system can come in unexpected forms.

Links between Literature and Films in Portraying Oriental Tropes:

Both in literature (especially novels) and films, one finds recurrent themes such as East versus West and exotic versus rational. By exposing the contrast, the Orient is feminized and subordinated. Diaspora literature and films especially mirror the trope in narrating the situations of homeland and its people. While literary texts make elaborate description, films rely on the visual scenes, sound and mise-en-scene. Women are cast as submissive, veiled victims; while men as either hyper-masculine or effeminate. Literature frames the contents through the characters' inner points-of-view and interpersonal relations, while movies through visual clues and costumes of actors and actresses. Re-orientalism theory is extended into contemporary South Asian media. What is observed by Lisa Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes is now excessively appeared in Indian cinema and global web series. In the words of Lisa Lau, "Diasporic cultural production thrives when it panders to Orientalist expectations, producing familiarity for the West under the guise of authenticity" (2009: 572).

- *Delhi Crime* (Netflix, 2019): The story is based on the 2012 Delhi gang rape case. It gained an International popularity because it confirmed Western stereotypes about India. That Indian society being patriarchal one is unsafe for women and ridden with violence. The show brings to the fore the English-speaking Indian police officers as reformist heroes, while marginalized voices (the victim's family, lower-class perspectives) are sidelined.
- *Sacred Games* (Netflix, 2018–19): It is the dark, gritty portrayal of Mumbai's underworld, corruption, and religious violence. While celebrated for its artistry, the marketing

emphasized exotic tropes: chaos, crime, mysticism (Guruji's cult storyline). It basically plays into Western fascination with India's "spiritual darkness" alongside its modernity.

- *Indian Matchmaking* (Netflix, 2020): It became renowned in the West for its portrayal of arranged marriages. Many South Asian viewers criticized it for highlighting stereotypes of regressive traditions, casteism, and parental control; yet it was created as "authentic" cultural insight for global audiences.
- *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008, Danny Boyle): Hugely successful abroad, it commodifies slum life as spectacle for Western audiences. This is an example of how poverty, exoticism, and resilience get framed as India's global brand.
- Bollywood dramas (*Lagaan*, *Padmaavat*, *RRR*): These movies depict pre-modern India in hyper-exotic, colourful, mystical ways. These films are marketed abroad as "epic, exotic India," focusing on aesthetic Orientalism.
- Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001): Celebrated globally for its "authentic" depiction of Indian weddings and the exotic, it caters to the Western gaze.
- Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002): It engages with diaspora identity and commodifies "arranged marriage vs. freedom" as a cultural trope. It exhibits the binary that Western audiences already expect. Just as in literature, media re-orientalism operates through exoticism, selective authenticity, and market pressures. In this process, local voices and everyday realities often get erased, while Western audiences consume narratives which confirm their preconceptions.

Conclusion

Like Orientalism, Re-Orientalism goes on to create fragmented images of the East, occasionally opposing the West's dominance and advocating for a new, non-Eurocentric cultural map in which Europe is just one centre among many, and other times reconfirming the West's monopoly and establishing new ways to do so. Re-orientalists contend that English as a global language to be used by the postcolonial writers so that the readers all over the world can read and realize the circumstances. However, by recounting the ordeal of the native lands, the writers not only speak of a specific country, but also of any country in the universe.

Re-orientalism, therefore, is not a literary theory anymore. It becomes the lens to critique how Netflix shows, Bollywood epics, and diaspora films circulate market-ready images of South Asia, especially India for global consumption. It should be remembered that many writers attempt to tell truthful stories about inequality, social injustice and tradition versus modernity. The fact that those stories sometimes match with "re-Orientalist" stereotypes does not necessarily mean that the author is pandering. Overall, it is a complicated issue as there is the question of intention versus effect; whether the portrayal is conscious marketing or simply reflecting lived realities.

Indian Writers in English interestingly turn to the Western market due to the destitution and illiteracy of their native land. Significantly, the approach of portraying India's darker side and its polarizing society becomes a ploy to appeal to Western readers for raising awareness of the specific works. One of the glaring instances of re-Orientalism is categorisation of the South Asian Literatures as exclusive in their ways of unpacking the socio-economic, political, psychical conditions of the specific locations. Indian writers are no exception at all. They hold up the supposedly problematical concerns through their works only to prove that India fits the category defined by the Eurocentric scholarship.

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Rakibul Alom

Ph.D. scholar, Aliah University, Kolkata.

Climate Change, Developmental Dilemmas and India's Global South Identity

Sanchita Chakrabarti

Abstract

Climate change has emerged as a defining challenge of the 21st century, particularly for countries in the Global South, which are disproportionately vulnerable despite contributing minimally to historical emissions. In mitigating climate change the needs and issues of the Global North and Global South are diverse as the Global South needs to be supported financially and technologically. Set on the premise of the Global IR approach this paper explores the challenges of the Global South and India's evolving role in global climate politics, particularly as a representative and leader of the Global South. India through its participation in international forums seeks to reframe global climate politics by asserting the principles of climate justice, historical responsibility, and differentiated obligations. The issue of climate governance has made international cooperation more pronounced. The article concludes on the note emphasizing the need for a Global IR approach to address power asymmetries in climate governance and despite challenges India occupies a complex and strategic position India's leadership is vital as the world comes together against the escalating threats of climate change.

Keywords: Climate change, carbon colonialism, Global South, technology, energy transition

Introduction

Climate change is a complex problem that has grappled the globe for the last few decades. Some of the common problems are increasing sea level, extreme weather conditions, droughts, floods in various part of the world. As a natural corollary, climate diplomacy has occupied a center stage in global politics with varying responses from nations in the Global North and South. Despite making minimal contributions to historical emissions the Global South is compelled to share the responsibility of climate mitigation and adaptation. Guided by national interests, to arrive at an equitable climate policy seems a daunting task as neither the North nor the South speaks as a unified voice on matters of climate change. While the North advocates phasing out of fossil fuels the concern of South is financing and technology as they balance economic development with climate change simultaneously. This article explores Global International Relations (IR) theory, highlighting the challenges of the Global South with respect to climate change, and how India engages with climate adaptation and mitigation at the global level positioning itself as the voice of the Global South while asserting its developmental imperatives and environmental responsibilities.

Material and Methods

This article is based on qualitative methodology, first following the Global IR theory and second India's role in climate diplomacy in global politics. For this purpose an extensive review of literature was conducted using Google and Google Scholar in journal articles, news reports and books related to India's climate diplomacy. The article is structured through the conceptual understanding of Global IR theory. It also looks in to the imperatives and challenges faced by the Global South with regards to climate change along with India's role as the voice of Global South in defining the terms of engagement for developing countries in global climate governance.

Theoretical Framework: Global IR Perspectives

In the field of IR there have been attempts to bring in Global South by bringing forward its challenges and contexts. Advocated by Amitav Acharya, Global IR conceptualizes the understanding of IR to include the experiences, encounters of the non-Western world. In mainstream IR non Western and Southern perspectives are overlooked in most discussions. According to Acharya, mainstream IR is dominated by the politics of exclusion and ethnocentrism. Hence the discipline needs to be reconstructed and that it should include the multiplicity and plurality that exists in the world. The study of Global IR includes the voices of the marginalized and understandings of the nonwestern or the Global South. Global IR perspective puts forward that the idea is not to replace existing theories but need to accommodate the position and role of the non-Western world by expanding existing knowledge in IR by introducing new ideas, concepts and different forms of the non-Western world (Acharya 2014; 647-659). The North South inequalities in IR have limited the understanding of global issues thereby failing to provide a comprehensive solution to global problems. Conventionally, the Global North with its dominance over economic and military power has the ability to create norms, principles thereby treating the Global South as passive recipients of these norms and principles. These norms and principles are looked as the set targets and goals for the Global South (Kayaoglu 2010; 193-217).

The notion of Global IR stems from the need to challenge IRs neglect of the opinions and knowledges of the Global South. According To Acharya Global IR emphasizes six key dimensions. Global IR calls for the accepting of universalism. Universalism and more specifically pluralistic universalism recognize the variation that exists amongst nations and seeks to find commonness among them. Secondly Global IR emphasizes on focusing on world history rather than on Western history in order to bring together both the societies. Thirdly, the principle aim of Global IR is to 'bring the Rest in' and as a corollary to this Global IR incorporates rather than shifts existing IR knowledge. Although there has been the development of postcolonial and feminist theories which look outside the West; economic connectedness, increasing democratization and growth of multilateral institutions are global

developments which have made the understanding of non-Western world relevant than ever before. Fourthly, Global IR is less focused on the state and more on the regions thereby widening the reach of issues and states. While looking at regions closely and analyzing their economic and political roles it also brings forth how these actors interact and shape the global order. Fifthly, Global IR seeks to move beyond cultural exceptionalism and parochialism. If IR needs to be truly global then it has to minimize the control of big powers over the weak by using culture as a means of establishing superiority. Lastly, Global IR explores the understanding of agency which is crucial to the role of international politics. The mainstream IR theories defined agency in terms of material power and wealth ignoring the role of the South and alternative forms of agency. Global IR calls for a wider understanding of agency including material and the ideas and take multiple forms. By providing an alternative idea of agency Global IR calls for creating new directions and organizations at the regional level which can challenge, support and fortify the global order. Agency here stands for alternatives and theorizing and adding new dimensions to issues concerning security development and justice. For the Constructivists it remains a major challenge to take into consideration different forms of agency for the creation of forms and ideas whereas Global IR gives importance to opinions and agency of the South. This helps in creating South perspectives of the global order throwing light on the changing equation of the North South relation. In doing so Global IR does not discard existing IR theories but ends up globalizing conventional IR theories and content (Acharya and Buzan 2017; 285-320).

The Eurocentric bias that exists in IR is related to the issue of climate governance because climate change is a geopolitical concern. Mitigating climate change is a major challenge for the Global South given its fewer resources to adapt or respond to natural calamities with regards to the North. In the next section the article focusses on the major challenges that the Global South faces in dealing with climate change and India's role as the forerunner of the Global South.

Carbon Colonialism: Global South Vs Global North

The Global South represents the Group of 77 postcolonial developing countries, who jointly advocate for their mutual economic interest and at the same time increase their negotiating capacity in UN. It represents two third of the world population including countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The foremost challenge that the countries of the Global South face is balancing climate mitigation with their various development goals and they have demanded a fair and equitable climate change regime. The Global South have repeatedly pointed out in order to adopt sustainable methods of development and energy transition the developed North needs to transfer funds and technology and provide longer implementation timelines.

Climate change has unreasonably affected the Global South. The industrialized countries have historically been at the forefront of greenhouse gas emissions. It has been increasingly difficult to make the Global North take the maximum responsibility for their past and present actions. These countries are less vulnerable to the detrimental effects of climate change as they have greater resources to mitigate the consequences (Paul 2021). The countries of the Global South bear the brunt of increasing catastrophic events and have fewer resources to adapt or respond to these catastrophes. Study shows that women in the Global South are the worst affected in climate change related disasters and more specifically rural women associated with agriculture (Chidakwa et al. 2020; 259-281). Women are vulnerable in the aftermath of climate induced disasters as they need to cope with food and water shortage and sanitation (Cutter 2017; 117-121). Apart from women, children and infants are also adversely affected by climate related disasters as it affects their survival, health and education (Goldhagen et al. 2020, 80-90). Climate change has been linked to colonialism in the Reports on Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2022 where climate crisis has been attributed to historical colonial rule and also how it continues to threaten vulnerable communities. Colonialism is integrally related to the expansionism by the Global North which results in the colonization of the atmosphere through the commodification of carbon and ecological debts are accumulated to the South (Lohmann 2006; 359). Environmental justice movements have termed this as carbon colonialism or CO₂lonialism. Reports suggest that the agenda of climate change by the developed countries promote 'environmental colonialism' and the failure to differentiate between 'survival emissions of the poor' from the 'luxury emissions' of the rich (Agarwal and Narain 1991; 81). Moreover, mitigating climate change through carbon reductions are being achieved through giving out more carbon producing processes to the South which has accentuated the 'decarbonization divide'. Global North with its objectives on achieving fuel alternatives comes at the price of food security for farmers in the Global South whose land is used to produce biofuels for export (Sovacool et al. 2020; 102028). The requirements for electric vehicles in Europe have led to excessive mining of cobalt and lithium in Africa and Latin America respectively (Hernandez and Newell 2022; 945-968).

Over centuries the configurations of political economic development have produced economic inequalities resulting in climate change. In the last three decades, the Global South's greenhouse gas emissions have also increased due to their economic development and dependence on fossil fuels. According to Global Carbon Project 2022 in the year 2020 countries of Asia, Africa and South America accounted for 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and it is expected to increase in the future especially for emerging economies like India and China and other Global South economies (Fuhr 2021; 2724-2746). Global South has raised the issue in international forums to develop effective political solutions to mitigate climate change through fund and technology transfer.

Global South and India's Role in Climate Politics: Prospects and Challenges

To bring about international awareness on climate change IPCC published its first report in early 1990s. In 1992 the formation of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) provided the foundation to work on climate change. The Rio Declaration set out the stage for working on international framework to tackle the problem of climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was the first important conference which addressed the issue of tackling Green House Gas (GHGs) emissions. The Copenhagen Accord of 2009 focused on adaptation and mitigation measures, technology transfer and financial help. The Paris Agreement of 2015 provided mandatory provisions regarding mitigation and adaptation where each country could adapt to its own requirements and hence 'Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) was modified to 'intended nationally determined contributions'. Despite these landmark conferences and accords the major problem of dealing with climate change is the systemic challenge of non-compliance owing to the debate of the Global North versus the Global South (Bacchetta 2023; 64-82).

India's approach towards climate change and global climate policies reflects a distinctive approach; balancing developmental imperatives with climate concerns. Central to India's climate diplomacy are the three basic issues affecting the Global South on matters of climate change. At the 'Conference of Select Developing Countries on Global Environmental Issues' in 1990 in New Delhi, India secured the support of developing nations on these three issues. Firstly, historically the developed countries are accountable for the majority of the GHG emission and therefore should take the primary responsibility of cutting them down. Secondly, given the need for their economic developments the developing countries should not be given any GHG reduction targets. Lastly, any formal commitment on climate change needs to be accompanied by technology transmission and funds to the Global South from the Global North (MoEF, 1990). India's global climate agenda has been guided by norms of equity and justice where climate actions for the developing countries should support their development goals. The draft of The First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) included that the developed and the developing countries had 'common responsibilities' on matters of climate change. India along with other developing countries worked closely to define the burden of responsibilities and the draft was subsequently amended to become 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR) of the developed and developing nations (Rajan 1997; 108). At the Paris Agreement, COP 21 the goal of CBDR along with respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) was acknowledged which took goals of equity and justice on matters of climate policies to the next level (Rajamani 2019; 205-221).

India has advocated the cause of the Global South for effective climate action policies through participation at various forums and conferences at the international stage. India actively participated with large developing nations

leading to the formation of BASIC alliance (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) at COP 15 in Copenhagen. The objective of this alliance was to jointly resist the US led North on aspects of climate mitigation and also the Kyoto Protocol agreements which was essentially flawed which treated developed and developing countries alike. The BASIC countries called for 'differentiated' framework for emission targets and 'nationally appropriate mitigation actions' (UNFCCC 2010). India's leadership role vis-à-vis the Global South on the issues of 'equity' and 'differentiation' was amplified through the creation of new Southern forum called the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC). India has also taken initiatives to combine economic cooperation with climate goals at various international forums. India's role in BRICS reinforces its identity as a Global South leader as well as commitment towards climate change and governance. The introduction of BRICS Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Dialogue (BRICS RE and CE Dialogue) is aimed at facilitating sharing of knowledge and policy initiatives amongst the BRICS countries on areas like agriculture, biofuels, electronic wastes, food and water (BRICS India 2021).

Through several initiatives adopted at the global level India has positioned itself as formidable power in the realm of climate politics with respect to green climate funds and green technology. It has strengthened its position as a leader in Global South in adapting and mitigating climate change by demonstrating openness to collaborate on green technologies with US, Japan and other countries of Europe (Ratha and Barik 2025). It successfully launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in partnership with France thereby fostering cooperation at the international level in 2015. India has accelerated its commitment towards energy transition by engagement with the Global South across Asia, Africa, and Latin America through the promotion of solar energy and technology (Sinha 2016). It also serves as a platform for mobilising funds from the Global North to meet the technology needs of the South. India-Denmark Green Strategic partnership of 2020 is a strategic partnership in the realm of climate diplomacy which focusses on capacity building, technology transfer on wind energy and working towards renewable energy. Institutionalising the Coalition for the Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in 2019 at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York is another significant step towards innovation and collaboration. Improving infrastructural resilience associated with climate change and disasters has been successful in projecting India's commitment towards climate objectives (Kumar 2024).

At the domestic level, the preliminary task that India took towards addressing climate change was the launch of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008. Guided by its goal towards sustainable development it aims to achieve 40% of its overall energy capacity from renewable sources through the expansion of solar and wind capacities with solar power alone to reach 280 GW by 2030 (Chaturvedi 2025). As a part of its decarbonization strategy, India is focused on lowering its carbon emissions in industry, agriculture and transport

sector with ‘concerted efforts to phase out fossil fuels’. During G20 Presidency in 2023, India proposed shifting towards local and demand led energy transition through the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for the Environment) thereby integrating sustainability into people’s lifestyle and reiterated its commitment towards the Paris Agreement (Joshi et.al. 2023; 1-9). India is committed to enhance its NDCs through emphasis on electric vehicle adoption, afforestation and urban sustainable development. In 2015 the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change was established to provide expenses to states and Union territories that are particularly prone to negative effect of climate change.

Despite these efforts at the domestic level, India faces severe challenge of striking a balance between environment sustainability and economic development. India is still largely dependent on its coal reserves for energy production for industries. The number of coal-fired power plants continues to rise in the country and along with these carbon emissions as well. As per NITI Ayog Report 2024 the country has produced 929.15 MT (provisional) of coal energy till February 2025, 5.45% higher than coal consumption recorded in 2023-24 at 1267 MT (Chaturvedi 2025). The Biennial Update Report (BUR) submitted by India on 31 December 2018 has been objected by UNFCCC because the forest data submitted by India is incorrect as it conceals the process of deforestation in the country (Nandi 2019). The Green Climate Fund initiated by the developed world does not translate to reality thereby putting a constraint to take up measures to address climate change.

In climate adaptation and mitigation India has not only demonstrated its potential as a leader but also elevated the opinion of the Global South in global climate politics. Transitioning towards renewable source of energy and reducing carbon emissions involves a complex interplay of institutional reforms, technological innovations and fund transfer and this requires collaboration of Global North and Global South.

Conclusion: Toward a Just and Inclusive Global Climate Order

At the center of global agenda, climate change is linked to emission reduction objectives and sustainable development with mutual efforts of the Global North and South. It is here that Global IR approach with its focus on pluralism, inclusivity and justice gains relevance. Historically the developed countries have been the forerunner of carbon emissions but the Global South has been most exposed to the effects of climate change and despite this huge variation the commonness is the shift towards low carbon economy. This common agenda needs to be the focal point of the Global North and Global South to retard the rate of climate change.

In the Global IR approach, removing the lens from the West and focusing on Global South agency has been the central objective. Incorporating diverse knowledge system of both the worlds pertaining to climate governance, collaborating on climate related research and addressing common challenges can help bring about greater success

on climate change. The focus on North -South cooperation as well as South -South cooperation for climate mitigation and adaptation on urban planning and conservation of natural resources can drive towards the Global IR approach to 'bring the Rest in' in climate governance. Climate change as an issue can only be resolved through global IR perspective and needs to take into account diverse economic and social conditions of member nation and that makes it necessary for international cooperation to be more pronounced.

India has made a positive impact in the global order with its participation in global climate governance as the voice of the South. Its efforts to align developmental goals with the global climate agenda is based on distribution of responsibility with regard to carbon emissions taking into account the historical involvement of Global North and at the same time the socio economic conditions of the Global South. As a significant participant in climate change India can navigate its path towards sustainable development and establish a just climate order.

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Sanchita Chakrabarti

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science Hooghly Women’s College