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Book Review

Perception and attitude of students towards cyber fraud in Ogun state owned tertiary institutions

-Yinka, O.Adediran , F. Odunola, John, A. Fayemi, Olatunde, O. Ajayi and Salamat, and A. Ajede

ABSTRACT

The study examines the perception of undergraduates on cyber fraud popularly know as yahoo-yahoo which has been on the increase in recent times as a new nomenclature. The breakthrough in technology comes with some negative effects which includes yahoo-yahoo. The theoretical foundation that guided the study was social learning theory. 300 students from Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology (SACOETEC) and Ogun State College of Technology, Ilese (OSCOTECH), were purposively selected for the study. A questionnaire titled Perception and Attitude of Students Towards Cyber Fraud (PASTCF)" with reliability coefficient of 0.78 was developed by the researchers to collect data from the respondents. The study revealed that though the respondents perceived yahoo-yahoo as a form of business for the intelligent and smart students, they also saw it as an online crime. The result also showed that many of the respondents had a negative attitude towards yahoo boys, hence did not want to associate with them because they were perceived to be fraudulent, and live reckless life style. It was also revealed that poverty, poor economic situation of the country, greediness and influence of peer group were the causes of the prevalent of cyber fraud among tertiary institution students. Among others, it was recommended that government should fully implement the existing laws against cybercrime perpetrators Nigeria as these laws will deter undergraduates from involving in cybercrimes. Moreso, government should invest more on youths' empowerment programmes, wealth creation and value reorientation.

Keywords: Internet, Perception, Undergraduates, Yahoo boys, Yahoo-Yahoo.

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Introduction

Technological advances in Nigeria have come with a price, especially the area of information and communication. Technology has provoked striking changes in our socio-cultural milieu, pattern of social interaction and social institutions (Adeniran 2016). The internet has brought an astounding alteration in the behavioural patterns of Nigerian youths. Indeed, internet crime has emerged from the consensual acceptance of the internet technology, especially among the youths in the country. The information and telecommunications revolution are changing the face of crime in fundamental ways. Advances in technology have provided exciting new opportunities and benefits, but they also heighten vulnerability to crime. Criminal activities have gone technological and it constitutes a serious problem for organizations and society in general.

Cybercrime refers to any unlawful behaviour committed by means of, or in relation to, a computer system or network, including such crimes as illegal possession and offering or distributing information by means of a computer system or network. It represents all activities done with criminal intent in cyberspace (Karofi& Mwanza, 2012). Cybercrime has been given local nicknames across West Africa. For instance, in Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria, it is referred to as 'Sakawa', 'Faymania', and Yahoo Yahoo respectively. (Adeniran 2008; Longe &Chimeke 2008). Cyber criminals take advantage of on system weakness, anonymity, ignorance and gullibility on the part of users to commit their wicked crimes.

Cybercrime also known as yahoo-yahoo as it is called in Nigeria is an offshoot of advance fee fraud which became trendy in the early 90s. It is closely linked to early days of internet diffusion in Nigeria when yahoo mail and yahoo Instant Messenger was the most popular means used by these individuals to send unsolicited bulk e-mails to gullible victims."Yahoo-Boys" thus became the derogatory tag given to young boys (sometimes girls) who engage in internet fraud (Asokhia, 2010). They are also known as Guymen. Their operations are usually well structured and organized. As an organized crime network, reciprocal engagement, joint endeavour, and shared repertoire of best practice and techniques are key attributes (Oludayo and Ibrahim 2011).

Indeed, the recognition of this growing acceptance of cybercrime as a way of life among the youths has compelled the Federal Government of Nigeria to formulate measures to contain the trend at different points in time. In October 12, 2017, in a bid to

achieve the feat, National Technology Development Agency was partnering with Malasia and Canada authority on establishment of cyber security center in the country. In February 2014, the Computer Emergency Response Team was established in the office of the National Security Adviser, its mission is to manage the risks of the of the cyber threats in the Nigerian cyberspace and effectively coordinate incident response and mitigation to proactively prevent cyber-attacks against Nigeria, Economic and Financial Crime Commission to fight against cybercrime. The problem has, however, remained pervasive, despite past efforts put in place to curtail it.

Although cybercrime is not an exclusive preserve of Nigeria as it is a global phenomenon, yet the current unprecedented and massive involvement of Nigerians, especially, tertiary institutions' students, makes it a serious problem that requires urgent redress (Ojedokun&Araye 2012). Aghatise (2006), confirms this by affirming that 80% of cybercrime perpetrators in Nigeria are students in various institutions. Indeed, many students in Nigerian universities have embraced internet fraud as a way of life; while many of them have become rich, some others have been caught by the law (Tade & Aliyu 2011). In Nigeria, the varieties of applications offered by the internet such as electronic mailing, chat systems and Internet messaging (IM) often serve as veritable grounds for carrying out fraudulent activities by the youths, and unlike the traditional criminal groups, both gender are functionally involved in it (Adeniran, 2018). The antics of the 'yahoo yahoo boys' has raised a new generation of lazy youths, who spend hours on the internet perfecting their game and literally killing their prey (Ojedokun&Araye 2012).

Cyber fraud (Yayoo Yahoo) is becoming one of the fastest growing-internet (fraudulent) businesses in Nigeria (Aghatise 2016). Numerous crimes are committed on daily basis on the internet with Nigerians at the forefront of sending fraudulent and bogus financial proposals all over the world (Longe &Chiemeke 2018). Similarly, Asokhia (2013) asserts that cybercrime is an off-shoot of advance fee fraud which became popular in the early 90s. Today, it has produced "YAHOO" as its first offspring with mostly young people (most especially the unemployed) as its practitioners. The Internet has thus enabled the creation of a global electronic market place offering the opportunities for merchants around the globe to engage in commerce with anyone in any place. Business transactions including invoicing, payments and goods deliveries are done online mostly in non-face-to-face transactions where only the documentations submitted online are relied upon. Montague (2014) stated that fraud in e-commerce channels

is very common and has become so integral in the conducting of business that it now becomes a major challenge. The impact of electronic commerce expansion may therefore have created new channels for cybercrime, thus exposing customers of electronic commerce to potential frauds (Stringham, 2015; Coyne, 2015), which may increasingly become complicated to prevent (Montague 2014).

According to a 2017 internet crime report released by the Internet Crime Complaint Centre (IC3), Nigeria ranked third among cybercrime committing countries in the world. The report indicates that the "Nigerian fraud letter" (Email Scams) received in the United States, constituted 1.1% and the individuals reporting fraud-type monetary loss in 2007 puts Nigerian letter fraud at 6.4%, amounting to 1,922.99 million US dollars (Odapu, 2008). Yahoo-boys are not only recognized by the Federal Government of Nigeria to be a serious problem, they have also become a major cause for concern for other cyber space users worldwide (Ojedokun&Eraye 2012; This Day 2016). In August 2019, Federal Bureau of Investigation FBI arrested a Nigerian cybercrime syndicate in the United States of America that defrauded his victims of approximately $3 billion through fraudulent wire transfers, business email compromise (BEC) frauds, and dating/romance scams (Oladimeji, 2019; Premium Times 2019). Similarly, the Dubai Police in June 2020 apprehended a suspected cybercriminal gang headed by a Nigerian for allegedly planning and engaging in cyber fraud worth AED 1.6 billion ($435million) on a global scale (Vanguard,july, 3 2020). Furthermore, the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation's (NDIC) (2014) report, stated that frauds on the e-payment platform of the Nigerian banking sector increased by 183% between 2013 and2014 alone (This Day 2016).

Unfortunately, the country's image has suffered as a result of the fraudulent activities of some Nigerians, using the internet as a channel for the perpetation of criminal spamming activities. More so, it has been observed that cybercrime perpetrators in Nigeria have distinctive lifestyles from other youths, they enjoy status of 'big boys', they are socially recognized among friends and lecturers with their flamboyant lifestyle which entices others to desire to belong to the clique. The large-scale involvement of Nigerians in cybercrime is a growing threat that has high involvement of tertiary institution students engaging in it. The lifestyle and activities of these students have been concerns to other members of the university communities, as they can mar or make them. Hence, it is worthy to investigate if other students

are being influenced by the lifestyle and activities of these yahoo boys on our campuses.

Research purposes

The central purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the perception of students towards cyber fraud (yahoo yahoo) and their attitudes towards yahoo boys' lifestyle in Ogun State owned tertiary institution. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out how students in tertiary institutions perceive Cyber fraud activities.

2. To determine the attitudes of tertiary institution students towards Cyber fraud and yahoo boys..

3. To investigate the reasons for the prevalence of Cyber fraud (yahoo-yahoo) among students despite the measures initiated against it.

4. To ascertain the factors that tends to cause young people's involvement in Cyber fraud activities.

Research questions

1. How do students in tertiary institutions perceive Cyber fraud activities?

2. What are the attitudes of students towards Cyber fraud and yahoo boys?

3. What are the causes for the prevalence of Cyber fraud activities among students in tertiary institutions?

4. What are the factors encouraging young people's involvement in Cyber fraud activities?

Research methods

The research design that was used for this study was the descriptive survey research design. This method was considered most appropriate because it was a method involving soliciting for opinions. The population of the study comprised all male and female students of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, (TASUED), Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Omu Ajose (SACESTECH) and Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese Ijebu (OSCOTECH). Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the tertiary institutions. These institutions represent the three major types of tertiary institutions which award Bachelor degrees, NCE certificates,

and Ordinary Diploma Certificate: The three tertiary institutions were Ogun State owned tertiary institutions and located in Ogun East Senatorial District. Accidental sampling technique was used to select 100 students from each school making the total of 300 sample size.

The instrument that was used to collect data from respondents was a questionnaire titled "Perception and Attitude of Students Towards Cyber Fraud (PASTCF)" and it was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two sections of A and B. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as; gender, age, religion, level and marital status. Section B consisted of 40 items which required the respondents to indicate their perceptions towards cyber fraud. The questionnaire was developed using a four point Likert scale format of Strongly Agree [SA], Agree [A], Disagree [D] and Strongly Disagree [D]. The instrument was subjected to both face content validity by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the research instrument was determined by administering it to students from a similar school not selected for the main study. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument with a co-efficient value of 0.78, indicating that the research instrument was reliable; hence it was adopted for getting the desired information for the study. Due to the complexities in retrieving the questionnaires, the distribution process took 2 weeks. The researchers retrieve 100% of the questionnaires that was distributed.

The data collected for the study were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics method was used to analyse the demographic data collected through the questionnaire. Frequency counts, mean scores, and descriptive tables were used for the data analysis.

Results and discussion

Analysis of research questions

Research question one: How do students in tertiary institutions perceive cyber fraud (Yahoo-Yahoo)?

Table 1: Perception of undergraduates towards yahoo-yahoo activities

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD	Status
1.	Yahoo-yahoo is a business	133 (44.3%)	122 (40.7%)	32 (10.7%)	13 (4.3%)	3.19	.628	Accepted
2.	Yahoo-yahoo is	236	54	10	0	3.48	.563	Accepted

	a lucrative business	(78.7%)	(18%)	(3.3%)	(0%)			
3.	Yahoo-yahoo is a very good business that requires intelligence. Only intelligent undergraduates go for it	128 (42.7%)	145 (48.3%)	21 (7%)	6 (2%)	3.58	.593	Accepted
4.	Only the smart youths can go into yahoo-yahoo because it is not met for dullards	90 (30%)	125 (41.7%)	45 (15%)	40 (13.3%)	3.29	.545	Accepted
5	Only hard working youths can go into yahoo-yahoo because it is not a job for the lazy ones	138 (46%)	150 (50%)	12 (4%)	0 (0%)	3.19	.528	Accepted
6	Yahoo-yahoo should not be banned because it creates job for the youths	136 (45.3%)	150 (50%)	10 (3.3%)	4 (1.3%)	3.48	.563	Accepted
7	Advent of yahoo-yahoo causes reduction in cultic activities, hence, youth should not be discouraged in engaging in yahoo-yahoo	130 (43.3%)	143 (47.7%)	19 (6.3%)	8 (2.7%)	3.58	.593	Accepted
8	Yahoo-yahoo is a crime	140 (46.7%)	95 (31.7%)	45 (15%)	20 (6.7%)	3.29	.605	Accepted
9	Yahoo is an online business	113 (37.7%)	142 (47.3%)	32 (10.7%)	13 (4.3%)	3.19	.628	Accepted
10	Yahoo-yahoo contributes to a reduction in unemployment	141 (47%)	72 (24%)	33 (11%)	54 (18%)	3.48	.563	Accepted

The cut-off Value = 2.50, indicating that a mean value above the cut-off implies that the item is accepted while mean values below the cut-off is thereby rejected. The figure in brackets are percentage.

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that Yahoo-Yahoo is a business and a lucrative one (with mean values of 3.19 and 3.48); that Yahoo-Yahoo is a very good business that requires intelligence and that only smart and hardworking students engage in them (with mean values of 3.58, 3.29 and 3.9). The participants also agreed that Yahoo-Yahoo should not be banned because it creates jobs for the youths (3.48); it caused a reduction in cultic activities (with mean value of 3.58) and unemployment (with mean value of 3.48).

Research question two: What are the attitudesof tertiary institution students towards Cyberfraudsters (yahoo-yahoo) and the yahoo boys' lifestyles?

Table 2: Attitudes of undergraduates towards Yahoo boys and their Lifestyles.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Status
11	Yahoo boys are my friends	16 (5.3%)	77 (25.7%)	79 (26.3%)	128 (42.7%)	2.28	.763	Rejected
12	Yahoo boys can be my very good friends	44 (14.7%)	54 (18%)	91 (30.3%)	111 (37%)	2.32	.593	Rejected
13	I always like to be in the midst of yahoo boys	40 (13.3%)	25 (8.3%)	95 (31.7%)	140 (46.7%)	2.42	.605	Rejected
14	I will always relate with yahoo boys	10 (3.3%)	4 (1.3%)	150 (50%)	136 (45.3%)	2.26	.663	Rejected
15	I don't like the life lifestyle of yahoo boys,	130 (43.3%)	143 (47.7%)	19 (6.3%)	8 (2.7%)	3.76	.593	Accepted
16	I am not ashamed of associating with yahoo boys	21 (7%)	8 (2.7%)	130 (43.3%)	141 (47%)	2.64		Rejected
17	Yahoo boys can flaunt their wealth since they worked for	40 (13.3%)	45 (15%)	125 (41.7%)	90 (30%)	2.48		Rejected

	it						
18	I don't mind involving in yahoo-yahoo activities	46 (15.3%)	53 (17.7%)	150 (50%)	51 (17%)	2.48	Rejected
19	I will not protect any yahoo-boy I know	120 (40%)	133 (44.3%)	29 (9.7%)	18 (6%)	3.28	Accepted

The cut-off Value = 2.50, indicating that a mean value above the cut-off implies that the item is accepted while mean values below the cut-off is thereby rejected. The figure in brackets are percentage.

Table 2 shows that many respondents disagreed with the items with a mean response ranging from 2.26 to 3.76. The majority of the respondents are of the opinion that they don't make friends with Yahoo boys, and cannot be their very good friend (with mean values of 2.28 and 2.32 respectively). The respondents disagree that they did not like to be in the midst of Yahoo boys and that would never have anything to do with the yahoo boys and do not like the lifestyle of yahoo boys (with a mean values = 2.42, 2.28 and 3.76). They claimed to be ashamed of associating with yahoo boys (with mean value of 2.64). They disagreed that Yahoo boys could flaunt their wealth since they worked for it (with a mean value = 2.48). Majority of the mean scores of the items were below the cut-off point of 2.50 which indicated that majority of the items were rejected by the respondents.

Research question three: What are the reasons for the prevalence of cyber fraud among undergraduates?

Table 3: Opinion of tertiary institution students on the Reasons for the Prevalence of cyber fraud among undergraduates.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{\overline{X}}$	SD	Status
20	Poverty and poor economic situation of the country	139 (46.3%)	128 (42.7%)	22 (7.3%)	11 (3.7%)	3.17	.763	Accepted
21	The love of spending lavishly and wearing of expensive clothes	32 (10.7%)	45 (15%)	121 (40.3%)	102 (34%)	2.24	.593	Rejected

22	The trends in social media contribute to undergraduates' involvement in yahoo yahoo	120 (40%)	105 (35%)	45 (15%)	30 (10%)	3.11	.605	Accepted
23	Peer group influence	136 (53.1%)	150 (42.9%)	10 (2.9%)	4 (1.1%)	2.00	.663	Accepted
24	Greediness of many undergraduates	130 (37.1%)	193 (55.1%)	19 (5.4%)	8 (2.3%)	3.84	.593	Accepted
25	The feeling of 'get rich quick syndrome'	140 (46.7%)	118 (39.3%)	40 (13.3%)	12 (4%)	3.19	.528	Accepted
26	Poor family background	118 (39.3%)	115 (38.3%)	55 (18.3%)	12 (4%)	3.48	.563	Accepted
27	poverty, unemployment, corruption, peer pressure, greediness, and get rich quick syndrome	130 (43.3%)	143 (47.7%)	19 (6.3%)	8 (2.7%)	3.76	.593	Accepted
28	Poor parental supervision of their children	128 (42.7%)	145 (48.3%)	21 (7%)	6 (2%)	3.58	.593	Accepted
29	Nonchalant attitude of parents to children's needs	90 (30%)	125 (41.7%)	45 (15%)	40 (13.3%)	3.29	.545	Accepted
30	Act of socializing	136 (45.3%)	150 (50%)	10 (3.3%)	4 (1.3%)	3.48	.663	Accepted
31	Indolence on the part of students	133 (44.3%)	122 (40.7%)	32 (10.7%)	13 (4.3%)	3.19	.628	Accepted

The cut-off Value = 2.50, indicating that a mean value above the cut-off indicates that the item is accepted while mean values below the cut-off is thereby rejected. The figure in brackets are percentage.

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that poverty and the poor economic situation of the country lead some undergraduates to involve in cyber fraud activities (3.17);

the sense of spending lavishly and wearing expensive clothes, the trends in social media, peer group influence, greediness of many undergraduates contributes to their engagement in cyber fraud (with mean values of 2.24, 3.11, 2.00 and 3.84 respectively); the feeling of 'get rich quick syndrome' and poor family background (3.19 and 3.48); poor parental supervision of children in schools (with a mean value of 3.58); nonchalant attitude of parents to children's needs wrong socialization (with mean values of 3.29 and 3.48) and indolence on the part of students (with a mean value of 3.19) encourages youth to involve in cyber fraud. Meanwhile, the love/sense of spending lavishly and wearing expensive clothes (with a mean value of 2.24) did not encourage the students to engage in cyber fraud.

Analysis of research question three: What are the factors encouraging young people's involvement cyber fraud?

Table 4.9: Factors encouraging young people's involvement yahoo-yahoo.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD	Status
32	Limited awareness and education about the consequences of cyber fraud.	140 (46.7%)	118 (39.3%)	40 (13.3%)	12 (4%)	3.19	.528	Accepted
33	Financial difficulties or the perception of quick financial gains through cyber fraud	118 (39.3%)	115 (38.3%)	55 (18.3%)	12 (4%)	3.48	.563	Accepted
35	Pressure from friends or peers who are already involved in cyberfraud	151 (50.3%)	112 (37.3%)	31 (10.3%)	6 (2%)	3.58	.593	Accepted
36	The anonymity provided by the internet can embolden individuals to engage in cyber fraud.	156 (52%)	128 (42.7%)	10 (3.3%)	6 (2%)	3.48	.563	Accepted
37	A lack of positive role models or	141 (47%)	122 (40.7%)	31 (10.3%)	6 (2%)	3.58	.593	Accepted

	mentors							
38	Easy access to technology and the internet without proper supervision	138 (46%)	150 (50%)	11 (3.7%)	1 (0.3%)	3.19	.528	Accepted
39	Seeking recognition or notoriety among online communities.	133 (44.3%)	122 (40.7%)	32 (10.7%)	13 (4.3%)	3.19	.628	Accepted
40	Insufficient emphasis on ethical values and the consequences of illegal activities.	136 (45.3%)	150 (50%)	10 (3.3%)	4 (1.3%)	3.48	.663	Accepted

The cut-off Value = 2.50, indicating that a mean value above the cut-off implies that the item is accepted while mean values below the cut-off is thereby rejected. The figure in brackets are percentage.

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents are of the opinion that limited awareness and education about the consequences of cyber fraud can lead some young people to perceive it as a less serious offense or underestimate the legal repercussions as well as financial difficulties or the perception of quick financial gains through cyber fraud does entice young individuals, especially when they face economic challenges or lack opportunities for legitimate income (with mean values of 3.19 and 3.48). Also, pressure from friends or peers who are already involved in cyber fraud can create a sense of belonging or the desire to fit in, lack of positive role models or mentors who guide young people towards lawful and ethical behavior contributed to their susceptibility to engaging in cyber fraud (with mean values of 3.58, and 3.58). Meanwhile, easy access to technology and the internet and insufficient emphasis on ethical values and the consequences of illegal activities may contribute to a mindset where some young people feel justified in participating in cyber fraud (with mean values of 3.19 and 3.48 respectively). The mean scores of the items were all above the cut-off point of 2.50 which indicated that all the items were accepted by the respondents that the above items are factors encouraging young people's involvement cyber fraud.

Discussion of findings

Based on the findings of study, Table 4.6 revealed that cyber fraud (Yahoo-Yahoo) was a business. Yahoo-Yahoo was a lucrative business, Yahoo-Yahoo was a very good business that requires intelligence, only intelligent students go for it, only the smart youths can go into yahoo-yahoo because it is not met for dullards, only hard working students can go into yahoo-yahoo because it is not a job for the lazy ones, Yahoo-Yahoo should not be banned because it creates job for the students, advent of Yahoo-Yahoo causes reduction in cultic activities, hence, youth should not be discouraged in engaging in yahoo-yahoo, Yahoo-Yahoo is not a crime, Yahoo is just an online business, and Yahoo-yahoo contributed to reduction in unemployment. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Ibrahim (2016), Akanle, Adesina, and Akarah (2016), and Akanle and Shadare (2019), who found that cybercrime in Nigeria commonly referred to as Yahoo was the most widely used platform in which students use to enrich themselves. They see it as a business to venture into even after graduating from university as they believe that there are no jobs out there.

Also, the researchers sought to know the attitudes of students towards yahoo boys and their lifestyles. The respondents are of the opinion that they don't make friends with Yahoo boys, and cannot be their very good friend; they disagreed that they like to be amidst Yahoo boys. They also claimed never to have anything against the yahoo boys and don't have anything against the lifestyle of yahoo boys because they worked hard for their money. The claimed never to not to be ashamed of associating with yahoo boys. It is also of the opinion that Yahoo boys can flaunt their wealth since they worked for it. The findings were in line with Ibrahim (2016), Hsieh and Wang (2018), who found that the lifestyles of yahoo boys intimidating to youths whom are hustling legitimately. Students involved in cybercrime know themselves and they usually join all forms of social clubs and move about in groups so as to make them known on campus. They are known as "the clique" and they frequently engage in binge drinking and smoking. This made it difficult for undergraduates whom cannot up to the standard of this lifestyles to mingle with them.

On the reason for prevalence of cyber crime (yahoo-yahoo) among students, the study revealed that poverty and poor economic situation of the country led some students to involve in cyber fraud activities, the trends in social media contribute to students' involvement in cyber fraud, peer group influence is a factor that makes students engage in Yahoo-Yahoo, greediness of many undergraduates

contributes to their engagement in yahoo-yahoo, the feeling of 'get rich quick syndrome' makes students involve in yahoo-yahoo, poor family background contributes to many students involvement in yahoo-yahoo. poverty, unemployment, corruption, peer pressure, greediness, and get rich quick syndrome, poor parental supervision of their children in schools encourages youth to involve in yahoo-yahoo activities, nonchalant attitude of parents to children's needs make some students go into yahoo-yahoo, socialization contributes to the engagement of undergraduates in yahoo-yahoo activities, and indolence on the part of students contributes to the involvement of students in yahoo-yahoo. Igba, Igba, Nwabam, Nnamani, Egbe, and Ogbodo (2018) came to a similar result in a survey of students at Ebonyi State University. They argued that the "get rich quick syndrome" could be linked to the secondary cause of students involvement in cyber fraud because million of students in Nigerian universities have no idea what they will do when they graduate, so they turn to crime to pave the way for the future. Power and fame were also shown to be contributing variables to cybercrime among students. The research also showed that students who engage in Yahoo Yahoo do so to gain popularity and influence in the Students Union Government (SUG). The study of Jegede, Olowookere, and Elegbeleye (2016), who found that there are a variety of variables encouraging youth engagement in fraud, provided more support for this. Peer pressure, expensive marital or adulterous demands on relationships, family breakdown due to role failure, the pervasiveness of corruption, the poor economic environment, and the need to fit in may all work together to strengthen fraud activism.

Furthermore, on the factors encouraging young people's involvement yahoo-yahoo, It was found that financial difficulties or the perception of quick financial gains through cybercrime may entice young individuals, especially when they face economic challenges or lack opportunities for legitimate income, pressure from friends or peers who are already involved in cybercrime can create a sense of belonging or the desire to fit in, making it difficult for young people to resist participating, the anonymity provided by the internet can embolden individuals to engage in cybercrime without the fear of immediate consequences, as they may believe they can avoid detection, a lack of positive role models or mentors who guide young people towards lawful and ethical behavior may contribute to their susceptibility to engaging in cybercrime, easy access to technology and the internet without proper supervision can lead to experimentation with cyber activities, including those that may be illegal, some individuals may seek recognition or notoriety among online communities. Barfi,

Nyagorme and Nash (2018) asserts that undergraduates venture into criminal activities in order to gain community or online recognition. Likewise poor economic environment is found to be a major cause of students engagement in cyber fraud.

Conclusion

The recognition of the growing acceptance of cybercrime as a way of life and current unprecedented and massive involvement ofNigerian youths, especially, tertiary institutions' students, makes it a serious problem that requires urgent redress. The study reveals that poverty and the poor economic situation of the country, the sense of spending lavishly and wearing expensive clothes, the trends in social media, peer group influence, greediness of many undergraduates contributes to their engagement in cyber fraud, the feeling of 'get rich quick syndrome', poor parental supervision of children in schools, limited awareness and education about the consequences of cyber fraud, pressure from friends or peers who are already involved in cyber fraud can create a sense of belonging or the desire to fit in and lack of positive role models or mentors who guide young people towards lawful and ethical behavior were the factors that could encourage youth to involve in cyber fraud.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The School administrations should include in school curriculum courses on entrepreneurship and business management in institutions where students can harness their skills and gain vast knowledge. However, where they are in existence, they should be strengthened and taken more seriously. This could help in alleviating the issue of unemployment resulting in cybercrime and also help undergraduates adopt acceptable means of livelihood.

2. University management should always organize workshop to educate and bring to the awareness of undergraduates the implication of cyber fraud activities.

3. The government should also help to rehabilitate repented cybercrime perpetrators and facilitate public enlightenment programmes on cyber security.

4. Government should make sure that the existing laws against cybercrime perpetrators are fully implemented in Nigeria. These laws will deter undergraduates from involving in cybercrimes.

5. Government and non- governmental organizations (NGOs) should help in providing skill acquisition programmes that students will engage in after graduation.

6. To reduce deviant behavior therefore, there is need for government to be more responsive to the needs of the teeming youth population. Government should invest more on youths' empowerment programmes, wealth creation and value reorientation.

7. Also, Nigerian leaders should lead by examples, what the youths are hearing and reading daily in newspapers and other media platforms are appalling. Many cases of looting and stealing of public funds with high level of impunity. This give the youth justification to also look for ways to survive.

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Climate change and decline in the growth rate of wheat crop: A case study of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the challenges of declining wheat growth and attempts to empirically evaluate the impact of climate change on agricultural sustainability in Himachal Pradesh over the past three decades. The present study was mainly based on secondary information, which was collected from various published and unpublished records of different institutions. District-wise data on area, production, and yield for different crops for 1991–92 to 2022–2023 has been taken from various annual crop and season reports issued by the Directorate of Land Records, the Department of Economics and Statistics, and the Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Himachal Pradesh. In the state, out of the total geographical area, 11.49 percent of the area comes under net sown area and around 24.55 percent under forest coverage. Land put to non-agricultural uses is around 7.98 percent, fallow land is 1.53 percent, and barren and uncultivable land is 16.73 percent. The state presents remarkable heterogeneity and agro-climatic diversity across and within districts. The cropping pattern in the state is dominated by wheat, maize, rice, barley, and millets, which account for 87.43 percent of the gross cropped area during the triennium ending in 2023. The two immediate conclusions emerge from the scrutiny of the results: the majority of the districts intentional growth rates in yield and output during the 30 years under study are statistically significant and positive. But there has been a deceleration in the area under wheat during this period. But the situation is worrying as doubts have been raised about whether the state's wheat production can be sustained because of its increasing dependence on the use of non-renewable resources, which has caused an adverse effect on environmental trends stemming from intensification of land use and widespread use of chemicals, which may adversely affect production in the Himachal Pradesh economy in the near future. To suggest suitable policy measures for making the hill area agriculture and its natural and scarce resources more sustainable.

Keywords: Climate Change, Wheat Crop, Agriculture, Horticulture, Himachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Himachal

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Pradesh and has an important place in the economy of the state. Himachal Pradesh is the only State in the country where 89.96 per cent of the population (Census 2011) lives in rural areas. Agriculture/ Horticulture provide direct employment to about 70 per cent of total workers of the State. The diverse climate in the region, particularly conductive for fruit and vegetable production, has positioned agricultural as a vital economic driver. Agriculture and its allied activities are integral to the livelihoods of most of the people in the state. Besides the fact the sector helps in ensuring food security it also provide livelihood to more that half of the state workforce i.e. 58.71 percent.

Agriculture is an important source of State Income (GSDP). About 13.62 per cent of the total GSDP comes from agriculture and its allied sector. Out of the total geographical area of the state (55.67 lakh hectare) the area of operational holdings is about 9.44 lakh hectares and is operated by 9.97 lakh farmers with an average holding size is about 0.95 hectare. Distribution of land holdings according to 2015-16 Agriculture Census shows that 88.86 per cent of the total holding belongs to small and marginal farmers. About 10.84 per cent of holdings are owned by semi medium and medium farmers and only 0.30 per cent by large farmers.

There is a limited scope of increasing production through expansion of cultivable land. Like rest of the country, Himachal too has almost reached a plateau in so far as cultivable land is concerned. Hence, emphasis has to be on increasing productivity level besides diversification towards high value crops. Due to an increasing shift towards commercial crops, the area under food-grains production is gradually declining. In 1997-98, this area was 853.88 thousand hectares which has declined to 735,04 thousand hectares in 2019-20. Wheat, Maize, Rice, Barley and pulses are major crops grown in the state. Cumulatively, the area under those crops constitutes nearly 82 percent of the total area under cultivation. Currently, cultivated area under Wheat (34.90 percent) and Maize (31.37 percent) constitute 66 percent of the total.

To increase production of food grains, emphasis has been laid on distribution of seed of high yielding varieties to the farmers. Area brought under high yielding varieties Wheat was, 300 hect and 20 Seed Multiplication Farms from where foundation seed is distributed to registered farmers. Wheat forms an important crop in the state and is grown throughout the state. Wheat production accounts for 37.85 per cent of total foodgrains production and 44.37 per cent of total area under foodgrains of the state. In Himachal Pradesh, wheat is the only cereal

crop where the impact of green revolution is visible. Wheat production grew at a much higher rate than rice, in case of wheat high yielding varieties have replaced local varieties even under rain fed conditions due to higher yield. The coverage of high yielding variety seeds in total area under wheat, maize, and paddy increased from 59.67 per cent in 1980-81 to 69.54 per cent in 2022-23 (Statistical Outline 2023-24).

Objective of the study

I.   To analyse the decreasing trends of wheat in the last three decades.

II. To find out the causes behind the decline of wheat production.

Methodology and techniques used to analysis

Sources of data

Study is based upon the time series secondary data collected from various published sources of Himachal Government agencies. The basic data used for the analytical purpose of the study relates to area, output and yield of wheat crops,The information pertaining to these above mentioned variables was obtained from various issues of the Annual Season and Crop Reports published by the Directorate of Land Records and the Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh published by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shimla, Government of Himachal Pradesh, These publications contain statistical information of different economic variables on district level. Data on area under high-yielding varieties, area under irrigation was taken from the office of the Director Agriculture, Shimla, and Himachal Pradesh., The other important sources of data relating to the present study are various Population Census Reports, the Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh 2022-23. The data published by other Government agencies have also been used and have been acknowledge at appropriate Places.

Time period of study

To analyse the growth rate of the wheat crop in Himachal Pradesh, the study broadly covers a period of thirty years, from 1991–92 to 2021–2022. We have further divided the time period into two sub-periods. The first period starts (1991–92 to 2005–2006), and the second period starts (2007–08 to 2021–2022). We divide the period into two sub-periods to examine the extent of wheat growth during each of these sub-periods.

Computing growth rates

Growth rates are usually computed by fitting functions of time, to time series data on variables such as area, production and productivity etc. The growth rates may be simple arithmetic or compound geometric, and they may be expressed in absolute or percentage terms. The simplest method of computing arithmetic growth rate of a variable, say production, is to divide the difference in output in the initial period and the final period by the total number of periods i.e. the growth rate, b, is determined as:

$$b = \frac{Y_t - Y_1}{T}$$

Where Y_1 and Y_T are outputs in the initial period and the final period respectively, and T is the total number of periods. If data are available for all the intervening periods, the percent growth rate (GRp) in the tth period is defined as:

$$GR_{pt} = \frac{Y_t - Y_{t-1}}{Y_{t-1}} \times 100$$

Where $t = 1, 2, ---, T$.

The average annual growth rate may then be obtained by using appropriate method of obtaining mean, e.g., we may find the arithmetic mean, the geometric mean or the harmonic mean of these growth rates.

Alternatively, we may fit a linear regression by the method of Ordinary Least Squares to the given set of data on production for all the periods. The fitted regression is then used to obtain the average annual growth rate for the whole period. In order to discuss this a little more in detail, we regress.

$$Y_t = \alpha + \beta_t + u_t$$

Where Y_t is the production in period 't', t is the trend variable and u_t is the disturbance term in the model; $t = 1, 2, . . ., T$. The coefficient

$$\beta = \frac{\delta Y_t}{\delta t}$$

is, in fact, the marginal rate of change in output with respect to time t, and this may be interpreted as the annual growth rate, or constant absolute change in Y per unit of time. Least squares estimate value of β provides the estimated annual growth rate. In order to calculate the

relative growth rate, we may divide β by the level of Y at any point of time. However, to get the average relative growth rate, we may divide β by Ÿ, which is the arithmetic mean of Y's over the entire period; or we may divide β by some other suitable average.

District wise growth rate of wheat in Himachal Pradesh

Table 1.1 clearly indicates that during the long period under study (1991-92 to 2021-22), wheat production in the state registered a significant positive growth rate of 1.34 per cent per annum, which was primarily due to significant increase in both area as well as yield of the magnitude of 0.28 per cent and 0.96 per cent per annum. Area under wheat recorded positive and significant growth in six districts except Hamirpur, Shimla, Sirmour, Una and two tribal districts, Kinnaur and Lahul-Spiti. Wheat yield showed significant positive growth in Lahual-Spiti (3.78 per cent), Solan (3.66 per cent), Kinnaur (3.02 per cent), Hamirpur (2.55 per cent), Una (1.99 per cent) and Chamba (1.55 per cent), the non-significant negative growth in Sirmour district, and non-significant positive growth in the remaining districts. Output of wheat showed very high negative growth rates of the magnitude of 3.22 per cent, 2.58 per cent, 2.16 per cent and 1.36 per cent in Kinnaur, Shimla, Lahual-Spiti and Sirmour respectively. Among the remaining districts, increase in output of wheat in Bilaspur, Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Solan is observed to have resulted mainly from increase in area and productivity, while only yield has contributed to the growth in output in Hamirpur and Una.

Period-wise analysis depicts that area under the crop grew at positive and significant rate in the five districts during Period I. Eleven districts have shown positive output growth, of them, Chamba, Kangra and Kullu reported a significant increase in wheat production during Period I, the per hectare yield of crop, during the same period was positive and non-significant in nine districts, while in remaining three districts except Chamba, Kangra and Kullu, where yield growth rate was found to be statistically significant.The study indicated that in Period I (1991-92 to 2005-06) overall growth rate of area in Himachal Pradesh was 0.33 per cent, 2.99 per cent in output and 2.70 per cent in yield rate. In Period II (2007- 08 to 2021-22) growth rate of area was 1.40 per cent and in this period output and yield rate was showed negative 0.63 per cent and 1.97 per cent respectively. Shortly, indicated that in Period III growth rate of area was 0.18 per cent, output 1.34 per cent and yield result 0.96 per cent. The F – ratios was 0.69 per cent in area, 1.23 percent in output and 2.23 per cent in yield rate. This was statistically significant.

Table 1.1: District –expontential growth rates in area, output and yield of wheat in Himachal Pradesh.

District	Period I (1991-92 to 2005-2006)			Period 2 (2007-08 to 2021-22)			Period 3 (1991-92 to 2021-22)			Chow Test (F - Ratios)		
	Area	Output	Yield	Area	Output	Yield	Area	Output	Yield	Area	Output	Yield
Bilaspur	0.71***	3.65	3.00	0.41	0.51	0.29	0.32***	2.06*	2.71	2.09	0.20	0.16
Chamba	0.86***	4.44***	3.48**	0.12	-2.23	-2.35	0.40*	1.54***	1.15*	0.40	4.35*	4.45*
Hamirpur	0.16	4.22	4.07	-0.13	0.54	0.67	-0.18***	2.37***	2.55***	6.27*	0.53	0.44
Kangra	1.03**	4.74**	3.69*	4.24	0.62	-3.58	0.32	1.75***	1.42	2.94	2.14	2.30
Kinnaur	-6.74***	-5.69**	1.06	-5.55***	-2.99*	2.55	-6.32***	-3.22***	3.02***	1.06	1.23	0.79
Kullu	1.42***	3.97***	2.54**	0.94	-1.28	-2.24	1.19***	1.64***	0.43	0.18	4.76*	5.52*
Lahul-Spiti	-3.36**	2.40	5.74	-8.36***	-7.97***	0.18	-5.91***	-2.16	3.78*	6.34*	1.03	0.26
Mandi	0.60	1.49	0.91	-0.36**	-1.35	-1.01	0.12	1.04	0.94	3.22	0.97	0.64
Shimla	-2.14***	0.08	2.23	-5.84***	-4.84**	1.04	-3.61***	-2.58***	1.06	16.14*	1.87	0.21
Sirmaur	-0.34	2.73	3.06	-1.18***	-2.33	-1.15	-0.63***	-1.36	-0.74	4.80*	1.32	0.96
Solan	0.87**	5.85	4.99	0.04	2.44	2.44	0.08	3.76**	3.66**	3.96*	0.27	0.08
Una	-0.43	1.61	2.04	-0.13	-1.79	-1.68	-0.06	1.92***	1.99***	0.52	1.96	1.68
Himachal Pradesh	0.3*	2.99	2.70	1.40	-0.63	-1.97	0.48	1.34**	0.96	0.69	1.23	2.23

Note: ***, **, * *indicate statistically significant at the 1, 5 and 10 percent confidence levels respectively.*

Source: Basic data obtained from annual season and crop Reports of Himachal Pradesh, various issues from 1991-92 to 2021-22,Directorate of Land Records, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

Under the impact of high yielding varieties yield and output recorded significant growth in the state during Period I. It is evident from table 1.1 that during Period I changes in yield contributed more than the area in raising the production frontiesrs of the state as well as in the major wheat producing districts. There has been a substantial improvement in absolute yields in all the districts. The highest wheat yield was recorded in Lahaul-Spiti between the two periods. There was a dramatic change in the growth patterns of wheat in Period III. In the state, area under the crop increased at the rate of 1.40 per cent, while output and per hectare yield of the crop witnessed a negative growth rate of 0.63 per cent and 1.97 per cent per annum respectively. The area extension during Period II being less than the yield decline, the output growth obviously turned out to be negative and non –significant. The deceleration in the area was observed in seven districts. Wheat yield displayed significant positive growth in six districts in the range of 0.28 per cent to 2.52 per cent per annum. During Period II, output of wheat showed positive growth rates in four districts varying from 0.48 per cent to 2.45 per cent, which were not significant in all of the case. Eight district experienced negative growth in the wheat output at the annual rate of rangebetween 1.28 percent to 7.97 percent per annum. The district Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla reported the negative output growth of wheat which, statistically significant. The study analysis that Period I indicates the good and significant growth rate in area, production and productivity. The reasons for an increase in output growth rates for wheat are obviously related to the increase in per hectare yield, extension of irrigation and availability of high yielding variety seeds. This has important implications in terms of higher productivity per unit area as well as greater choice of flexibility. Cultivated land, that was once left fallow for a significant part of each year is now being used for crops such as wheat and maize. New technologies have enabled the incidence of multiple cropping to increase. It has been observed that during *rabi* season wheat crop has performed better than its competing crop barley. The new technology in Himachal Pradesh was only confined to wheat and the main beneficiaries were irrigated districts of the state in particular Solan, Kangra, Hamirpur, Una, Chamba and Mandi. The results of the chow-test indicated that at the state level, there had been no structural change in the growth of area, output and yield of wheat between Period I and Period II. The significant F-ratios indicate that growth rates of area in the five districts differed significantly between the two sub-periods under study. Chamba and Kullu districts reported shift in the production and yield growth functions.

Conclusion

The adverse trend in state's area growth for Wheat has 1991-92 to 2021-22 emerged during the overall period was most likely due to the diversion of area from these crops to more remunerative crops like wheat, maize and apple which showed a fairly high growth rates in area during wholes steely period. At the same time an undesirable trend of decline in wheat output during Period III emerged. Though the decrease in output growth had been marginal and statistically non-significant yet it certainly provides a cause of concern. In view of fixity of land resources, the growth in crop output, especially in hill areas would at most solely be dependent on improvements in the yield per hectare in future. Yield growth rates for wheat moved ahead significantly during the overall period under study. Occurrence of good monsoons must have played a supporting role in the emergence of this trend. Yet, the pace of growth in overall yields per hectare for total cereals achieved in the entire study period was fairly moderate at 0.89 per cent. This demonstrates that the task of reaching high growth level and sustaining it would need the introduction of certain corrective policy measures.

The results of district-wise performance brings out that in terms of the overall performance of wheat output during Period II Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kangra, Kullu and Una recorded positive growth (though insignificant), whereas the remaining districts experienced negative growth. Growth performance of wheat was not uniform between different regions of the state. These variations stem mainly from the differences in the physical and climatic conditions. It is interesting to note that in the tribal areas of Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and parts of Chamba, where technology has failed to find a place mainly due to difficult hilly terrain and cold and harsh weather, per hectare yield are contributing towards the decline in output. Reason for this could be decreases poorer infrastructural facilities available in these areas.

The results of chow-test indicated that at the state level, differences in the rates of growth in area of wheat between the two short-periods under study were statistically significant. However, the rates of growth in area, yield and production for wheat was observed statistically non-significant between the two periods.To sum up the performance of Himachal Pradesh's agriculture revealed that it was a downward movement in yield growth in the majority of the crops, which was instrumental in inducting the transition toward unsustainable growth path. From the policy perspective, it is more important to understand the factors that led to the process of unsustainable agricultural development. These

factors operate at different levels viz., growth, stability, efficiency and equity levels and tends to analyze the important factors that facilitated the process of unsustainable agricultural development at the state level as data on some of the indicators is not available at a disaggregated level. Sustainable agriculture essentially involves multiple levels of decision making. Even when the challenge is to change practices at the farm level, and when, therefore, there seems no need for collective decision making at first glance, social learning and collective decision making in, e.g. learning communities farmer field schools or learning groups seem essential, not only because learning ecologically sound farming is an interactive process, but also because the shift not only involves the farm but also the whole network of institutions and agencies in which it is embedded.

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Demographic and socio-economic profile of different social groups in rural Punjab

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the demographic and socio-economic characteristics such as age and sex- wise composition of population, social status, economic status, occupational status and access to computer, internet and newspaper among the 570 sampled households in the rural areas of Punjab. The results highlighted the widespread disparities prevailing in demographic and socio-economic characteristics across the different social groups. The results reveal the deplorable conditions of scheduled caste households in terms of higher incidence of illiteracy, landlessness, low level of education, lower accessibility to mobile, internet and newspaper as compared to OBC whereas GC households are comparatively far better. Thus, special measures are required for the upliftment of SC and OBC households in the Rural Punjab.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Social groups, Education, Occupation, Land Ownership.

Introduction

Socio-economic status of any area is ascertained by education, occupation, day to day life and standard of living etc. All these parameters are determined by the income of the population of that particular area (Hira, 2018). Rural areas are very less developed as compared to urban areas in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects. Life style of a person is widely dependent on his economic status. Hence social position of the person is dominated by his/her income. No society or region can be developed with the exception of any part remaining lag behind. Proper socio-economic development can control the healthy and balanced growth of a region (Islam and Mustaquim, 2014). Inequality in livelihood among socio-economic

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groups are caused by disparities in job availability, type and sector of employment and earnings there from and transcend the boundaries of current generation through their impact on capability formation. Inequality in wages and earnings are responsible for much of disparity that exists in assets, consumption, healthcare, educational attainment etc. (Mukherjee and Majumder, 2011).

Inequality refers to the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities that create deep distinctions. Inequities on the other hand are the differences and disparities that stem from poor services which are usually remediable. Inequality and inequity contribute to poverty and deprivation which further drives the socio-economic exclusion of certain groups. Inequalities and socio-economic inequities intensify to produce a vicious cycle of poverty and deprivations, requiring multi-dimensional framework to investigate the processes at work (Kapoor and Duggal, 2022).

Inequality in wealth and income has risen in almost all countries over the past few decades. In India 77 per cent of nation's wealth is held by 10 per cent of Indians. There is an exceptional income disparity in India (Solanki, 2022). Wealth inequality is an integral aspect of economic inequality among the different socio-economic groups. In rural areas, majority of Indian population is dependent upon agricultural and allied activities where land is the major source of livelihood. But there is unequal distribution of land which is the major determinant of inequality among rural households.

The SCs and STs are lagging behind in terms of any of the development indicators as compared to any other groups. Singh and Singh (2019), in their study on scheduled tribes conducted in Himachal Pradesh, highlighted that the socio-economic conditions of small and semi-medium holdings are far better as compared to that of marginal holdings. The backwardness of Marginal holdings is mainly due to higher illiteracy, uneconomic land holdings, lower income levels and lack of gainful employment etc.

Wealth inequality in India is extremely high to the extent that, as per the Palma ratio the top 10 per cent households own 18 times higher share of wealth as compared to bottom 40 per cent, which is further higher to 35 times in the urban areas and less to 10 times in the rural areas. The wealth ownership is the lowest among SCs, STs and Muslims. Intergroup inequality in the ownership of land, building and private business is substantially high. In rural areas, agriculture land is distributed unequally to the extent that the share of marginal farmers

and landless farmers belongs to SCs and STs (Thorat et.al. 2020). Socio-economic factors such as family income, parents' level of education, race and gender influence the quality and availability of education as well as ability of education to improve life circumstances (Jennifer, 2018).

The Punjab state has the highest percentage of scheduled caste population but a very large majority of them is landless (Singh, Singh and Singh, 2016) whereas some Backward Class households have owned land but majority of them own marginal and small size of holdings. Most of them are engaged in their traditional artisan works and non-agricultural work. The general caste households mainly belonging to *Jatt* community are the land owners. Singh Singh and Singh (2016), in their study on MGNREGS beneficiary households conducted in rural Punjab, highlighted that majority of SC and OBC households have not access to better education, housing and sanitation facilities. Kaur, Ravita and Singh (2020) in their study on socio-economic profile of farm households in cotton belt of rural Punjab highlighted that socio-economic conditions of larger holdings are better-of as compared to smaller holdings. Majority of the SC households are landless and only 8.84 per cent households are having marginal size of land holdings only. Due to disparities in the land ownership and high incidence of landlessness among weaker sections of the society, the general households are better off as compared to the OBC and SC households on socio-economic grounds in Punjab. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to analyse the various socio-economic dynamics across different social groups namely general caste, OBC and SC households in rural Punjab.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the present study are:

1. To present the demographic profile and social status of different social groups;

2. To study the educational and occupational status of different social groups;

3. To examine the economic status of different social groups in Rural Punjab.

Research methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of present study, a sample of 570 households, consisting of 290 general caste, 100 OBC and 180 SC households have been selected from high, moderate and low literate

districts namely Hoshiarpur, Patiala and Mansa respectively with the help of multi-stage random sampling technique. The reference period of the study is 2018-19.

Results and discussion

The results regarding age-wise composition, social status, educational levels, occupational status, economic conditions, and access to mobile, laptop, newspaper among different social groups in rural Punjab are given below.

The data pertaining to the age-wise composition of different social groups in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 1. The table shows that out of total sampled population of 3022 persons, 1567 are males and 1455 are females. The age-wise break-up of the total sample population shows that 97 persons (3.21 per cent) fall in the age group of 0-3 years; 85 persons (2.81 per cent) fall in the age group of 4-5 years; 226 persons (7.48 per cent) belong to the age group of 6-10 years; 182 persons (6.02 per cent) fall in the age group of 11-13 years; 220 persons (7.28 per cent) come in the age group of 14-17 years; 384 persons (12.71 per cent) belong to the age group of 18-24 years; 306 persons (10.13 per cent) represent the age group of 25-29 years; 1109 persons (36.70 per cent) belong to the age group of 30-58 years and the remaining 413 persons (13.67 per cent) fall in the age group of 59 years & above. It is clear from this analysis that about 60 percent of the persons belongs to the age-group of 18-58 years. The analysis makes it clear that a significant proportion of the persons fall in the age group of 30-58 years. Under this category, the percentage of general caste, OBC and SC households is 38.86, 36.23 and 33.61 respectively.

Table1: Demographic composition of different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Age-Groups (In years)	General	OBC	SC	All
1	**Up to 3 Years**				
	Male	28 (1.86)	7 (1.29)	14 (1.44)	49 (1.62)
	Female	18 (1.19)	11 (2.03)	19 (1.95)	48 (1.59)
	Total	46 (3.05)	18 (3.33)	33 (3.39)	97 (3.21)
2	**4- 5 Years**				
	Male	32 (2.12)	10 (1.85)	13 (1.34)	55 (1.82)
	Female	11 (0.73)	7 (1.29)	12 (1.23)	30 (0.99)

	Total	43 (2.85)	17 (3.14)	25 (2.57)	85 (2.81)
3	**6-10 Years**				
	Male	45 (2.98)	24 (4.44)	46 (4.73)	115 (3.81)
	Female	56 (3.71)	11 (2.03)	44 (4.52)	111 (3.67)
	Total	101 (6.70)	35 (6.47)	90 (9.25)	226 (7.48)
4	**11-13 Years**				
	Male	44 (2.92)	13 (2.40)	42 (4.32)	99 (3.28)
	Female	26 (1.72)	22 (4.07)	35 (3.60)	83 (2.75)
	Total	70 (4.64)	35 (6.47)	77 (7.91)	182 (6.02)
5	**14-17 Years**				
	Male	54 (3.58)	27 (4.99)	44 (4.52)	125 (4.14)
	Female	29 (1.92)	16 (2.96)	50 (5.14)	95 (3.14)
	Total	83 (5.50)	43 (7.95)	94 (9.66)	220 (7.28)
6	**18-24Years**				
	Male	97 (6.43)	47 (8.69)	68 (6.99)	212 (7.02)
	Female	69 (4.58)	31 (5.73)	72 (7.40)	172 (5.69)
	Total	166 (11.01)	78 (14.42)	140 (14.39)	384 (12.71)
7	**25-29 Years**				
	Male	83 (5.50)	20 (3.70)	38 (3.91)	141 (4.67)
	Female	97 (6.43)	27 (4.99)	41 (4.21)	165 (5.46)
	Total	180 (11.94)	47 (8.69)	79 (8.12)	306 (10.13)
8	**30-58 Years**				
	Male	295 (19.56)	104 (19.22)	166 (17.06)	565 (18.70)
	Female	291 (19.30)	92 (17.01)	161 (16.55)	544 (18.00)
	Total	586 (38.86)	196 (36.23)	327 (33.61)	1109 (36.70)
9	**59 Years and Above**				
	Male	114 (7.56)	36 (6.65)	56 (5.76)	206 (6.82)
	Female	119 (7.89)	36 (6.65)	52 (5.34)	207 (6.85)
	Total	233	72	108	413

S. No.		(15.45)	(13.31)	(11.10)	(13.67)
10	**Total**				
	Male	792 (52.52)	288 (53.23)	487 (50.05)	1567 (51.85)
	Female	716 (47.48)	253 (46.77)	486 (49.95)	1455 (48.15)
	Total	1508 (100.00)	541 (100.00)	973 (100.00)	3022 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

Out of the total sample population of 3022 persons, the number of general caste, OBC and SC persons is 1508, 541 and 973 respectively. The proportion of males in total persons is 52.52, 53.23 and 50.05 per cent among the general caste, OBC and SC households, whereas the proportion of females is 47.48, 46.77 and 49.95 per cent respectively, which reveals thatthe number of females is less as compared to males among all social groups in the rural areas of Punjab.

The social status of sampled households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 2. The table shows that majority of the heads of the sampled households are males (90.88 per cent), whereas only 9.12 per cent heads of the family are females because of the death of the husband or separation due to divorce. The table further shows that the percentage share of male head is the highest (94.00 per cent) among OBC as compared to general caste (92.07 per cent) and the lowest (87.22 per cent) among the SC households.

Table 2: Social status of different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Items	General	OBC	SC	All
1	**Head of Household**				
	Male	267 (92.07)	94 (94.00)	157 (87.22)	518 (90.88)
	Female	23 (7.93)	6 (6.00)	23 (12.78)	52 (9.12)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
2	**Religion**				
	Sikh	238	43	153	434

		(82.07)	(43.00)	(85.00)	(76.14)
	Hindu	52 (17.93)	47 (47.00)	27 (15.00)	126 (22.11)
	Islam	0 (0.00)	10 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	10 (1.75)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
3	**Family Structure**				
	Joint	44 (15.17)	15 (15.00)	26 (14.44)	85 (14.91)
	Nuclear	246 (84.83)	85 (85.00)	154 (85.56)	485 (85.09)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
4	**Marital Status**				
	Married	840 (55.70)	276 (51.02)	452 (46.45)	1568 (51.89)
	Unmarried	576 (38.20)	242 (44.73)	479 (49.23)	1297 (42.92)
	Widow/Widower/ Divorced and Separated	92 (6.10)	23 (4.25)	42 (4.32)	157 (5.20)
	Total	1508 (100.00)	541 (100.00)	973 (100.00)	3022 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

India is known for its unity in diversity which means the peaceful existence of different communities' despite of diversity in culture, social status and religious beliefs as well as existence of other demographic differences. Punjab is the only state of India where majority of the population belong to Sikh community. The table reveals that among all the sampled households taken together, the percentage of Sikh, Hindu and Muslims is worked out 76.14, 22.11 and 1.75 respectively. Majority of the households among general caste and SC belong to Sikh community, i.e. 82.07 per cent and 85.00 per cent respectively, whereas among OBC, the percentage of Hindu community comes out to be 47.00 per cent.

The marital status of sampled households reveals that 55.70,

51.02 and 46.45 per cent of persons among general caste, OBC and SC respectively are married, whereas the proportion of married persons worked out to be 51.89 per cent for all the sampled households taken together. The proportion of unmarried persons is worked out to be 38.20, 44.73 and 49.23 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas for all the sampled households taken together, this proportion comes out to be 42.92 per cent. The proportion of widow/widowers and separated is 5.20 per cent for among all the sampled households.

The data related to the persons suffering from disability and chronic illness among the sampled households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 3. The percentage share of disabled persons comes out to be 0.66, 0.18 and 0.82 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas among all the sampled households, this ratio comes out to be 0.63 per cent.

Table 3: Disability and chronic-illness among different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Disability & Chronic-Illness	General	OBC	SC	All
1.	Disability	10 (0.66)	1 (0.18)	8 (0.82)	19 (0.63)
2.	Chronic illness	27 (1.79)	15 (2.77)	25 (2.57)	67 (2.22)
3.	Total Population	1508 (100.00)	541 (100.00)	973 (100.00)	3022 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The table further indicates that the proportion of persons suffering from chronic illness is 1.79, 2.77 and 2.57 per cent among general, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas for all the sampled households taken together this proportion is 2.22 per cent. It is clear from this analysis that about 2.85 per cent of total population in the rural areas of Punjab are suffering from disability and chronic illness.

According to Gandhiji, education provides total libration to an individual and equips him/her to participate in social change effectively. It is a process of life-long learning (Pathak, 2010). It is the best media for all round development of human personality. Infact, illiteracy is a curse which downgrades one's personality (Singh &

Sharma, 2005). It is a vital instrument of multidimensional development of one's life. Higher is the education, lower is the probability to be among the poor (Idrees & Shah, 2018).

In India, education is being provided by governmental, non-governmental organisations and community based groups as well as foundations and trusts. Non-state providers in education are being overshadowed by enterprises and individual proprietors and these private providers have been making inroads in education at all levels, making it a lucrative business. Education is being increasing opened up to profit making and trade (Singh, 2015-16). The data pertaining to the educational status of the sampled households is given in Table 4. According to the data presented in the table, 23.33 per cent persons are illiterate while the remaining 76.67 per cent persons are literate. The percentage of illiteracy is the highest among SC households (i.e. 31.30 per cent) followed by OBC households with 19.96 per cent and it is the lowest (19.38 per cent) in case of general households. The percentage of literacy among different social groups shows an increasing tendency with increase in the social status.

Table 4: Educational status of different social-groups in rural Punjab

Education Level	General	OBC	SC	All
Illiterate	270 (19.38)	100 (19.96)	282 (31.30)	652 (23.33)
Up to Primary	267 (19.16)	113 (22.55)	236 (26.19)	616 (22.04)
Middle	172 (12.35)	81 (16.17)	125 (13.87)	378 (13.52)
Secondary	274 (19.67)	96 (19.16)	135 (14.98)	505 (18.07)
Higher Secondary	225 (16.15)	74 (14.77)	87 (9.66)	386 (13.81)
Graduation and Post-Graduation	138 (9.91)	24 (4.79)	23 (2.55)	185 (6.62)
Others*	47 (3.37)	13 (2.59)	13 (1.44)	73 (2.61)
Total	1393 (100.00)	501 (100.00)	901 (100.00)	2795 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19

Note: Figures in parenthesis represent the percentage

*Others include Professional, Technical and Vocational Education.

The table indicates that percentage of persons who have obtained education up to primary level is the highest (26.19 per cent) among SC households as compared to OBC (22.55 per cent) and general caste (19.16 per cent) households, whereas for all the households, this percentage share comes out to be 22.04. The percentage of persons who have obtained middle level of education is the highest (16.17 per cent) among OBC households as compared to SC (13.87 per cent) and general caste (12.35 per cent) households, whereas for all the households this proportion comes out to be 13.52 per cent.

The data further reveals that percentage of persons who have obtained secondary level of education is the highest (19.67 per cent) among general caste households as compared to OBC (19.16 per cent) and SC (14.98 per cent) households, whereas among all the households, this percentage share is 18.07. The proportion of persons, who have obtained higher secondary education level, is also the highest (16.15 per cent) among general caste households as compared to OBC (14.77 per cent) and SC (9.66 per cent) households, whereas among all the households taken together this percentage share is 13.81 per cent. Further, the proportion of persons who have obtained graduation and post-graduation level is again the highest (9.91 per cent) among general cast households as compared to OBC (4.79 per cent) and is the lowest among the SC (2.55 per cent) households, whereas for all the households taken together this proportion comes out to be 6.62 per cent. The percentage of persons who have obtained any other education which includes professional, technical and vocational education, is the lowest which has been worked out to be 3.37, 2.59 and 1.44 among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas among all the households taken together this proportion is 2.61 per cent. Wide level of disparities has been seen among different social groups and classes in accessing education from the primary level to higher level in the rural areas of Punjab.

It has been observed from the field survey that a large majority of the SC households have obtained the lower level of education and their share in the higher educational level is very low as compared to general caste and OBC households. It is because of the reason that large majority of them have low level of income and irregular sources of income due to higher level of landlessness and lack of gainful employment opportunities. Along with this due to lack of awareness

and ignorance, they do not recognise the importance of education and their children started work at very early age for helping their family.

Occupation is an important determining factor of social status. Family's cultural resources as well as social networks are generally influenced by the choice of occupation. It has been observed from the field survey that majority of the households choose the same occupation as chosen by their parents.

The data given in Table 5 reflects the occupational status of sampled households belonging to different social groups in rural Punjab. The data clearly explains that the proportion of self-employed households in agriculture is the highest (80.00 per cent) among general caste households followed by OBC households (8.00 per cent) and is the lowest among SC households (2.78 per cent), whereas for all the households taken together this proportion comes out to be 42.98 per cent. The field survey highlighted that in rural areas of Punjab, majority of general caste households are land owners and very few households among OBC and SC households are having land holdings but majority of them have marginal size of land holding. Therefore, in order to earn their bread and butter, these poor landless households have to work as labourers in agricultural and no-agricultural activities. That is why the proportion of households with agriculture labour as their primary occupation is the highest (40.56 per cent) among SC households followed by OBC households (9.00 per cent) and is the lowest (1.03 per cent) among general caste households, whereas this proportion comes out to be 14.91 per cent in case of all the households taken together.

Table 5: Occupational status of different social-groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Occupational Category	General	OBC	SC	All
1	Self-employed in agriculture	232 (80.00)	8 (8.00)	5 (2.78)	245 (42.98)
2	Agriculture labour	3 (1.03)	9 (9.00)	73 (40.56)	85 (14.91)
3	Non-agriculture labour	8 (2.76)	24 (24.00)	57 (31.67)	89 (15.61)
5	Artisans	1 (0.34)	24 (24.00)	11 (6.11)	36 (6.32)
6	Self-employed in small business	1 (0.58)	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.88)

7	Govt. Employee	18 (6.21)	6 (6.00)	10 (5.56)	34 (5.96)
8	Private employee	11 (3.79)	6 (6.00)	5 (2.78)	22 (3.86)
9	Others*	16 (5.52)	19 (19.00)	19 (10.56)	54 (9.47)
10	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 100.00)	570 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19

Note: 1. Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

2. *Self-employed in very small industrial units, shopkeepers, drivers, RMP Doctor, Milk buyers and sellers and photographers etc.

The percentage share of households whose primary occupation is non-agriculture labour is the highest (31.67 per cent) among SC households followed by OBC households (24.00 per cent) and is the lowest among general caste households (2.76 per cent), whereas for all the households taken together this percentage share is 15.61. The percentage of artisans is worked out to be 0.34, 24.00 and 6.11 among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas this percentage is 6.32 in case of all the sampled households.

The proportion of self-employed in small business comes out to be 0.58 per cent and 4.00 per cent among general caste and OBC households respectively, whereas this proportion is 0.88 per cent in case of all the households taken together. The share of government employees is 6.21, 6.00 and 5.56 per cent among the general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, while this share is 5.96 per cent for the whole sample. The percentage share of private sector employees is 3.79, 6.00 and 2.78 respectively for general caste and SC households, whereas this share is 3.86 per cent among all the sampled households. The proportion of those belonging to the others category is worked out to be 5.52, 19.00 and 10.56 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively, whereas in case of all the households taken together, this proportion is 9.47 per cent.

The data pertaining to the economic conditions of the sampled households is presented in Table 6. The table shows that on the basis of ration cards, 33.33 per cent households fall in the category of below poverty line (BPL) and the remaining 66.66 per cent are in the category of above poverty line (APL). The table further pointed out that the percentage share of BPL families is the highest (58.88 per cent) among SC households as compared to OBC (50.00 per cent) and general caste

households (11.72 per cent).

The table further reveals that 48.95 per cent of the total sampled households are landless, whereas 22.98, 14.04, 8.77, 3.51 and 1.75 per cent are belonging to the category of marginal, small, semi-medium, medium and large size of holdings respectively. The table further reveals that percentage share of landless households is the highest (98.89 per cent) among SC as compared to OBC (78.00 per cent) and is the lowest (7.93 per cent) among general caste households. Among SC households, 1.11 per cent households belong to the marginal holdings only. In case of OBC households, 16.00, 4.00 and 2.00 per cent households have marginal, small and semi-medium size of land holdings respectively. Among general caste households, 7.93 per cent households are landless and as much as 38.97, 26.21, 16.55, 6.90 and 3.44 per cent are belonging to the marginal, small, semi-medium, medium and large size of land holding categories.

Table 6: Economic conditions of different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Items	General	OBC	SC	All
1	**Household Category**				
	BPL	34 (11.72)	50 (50.00)	106 (58.88)	190 (33.33)
	APL	256 (88.28)	50 (50.00)	74 (41.11)	380 (66.66)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
2	**Ownership of Land Holdings**				
	Landless	23 (7.93)	78 (78.00)	178 (98.89)	279 (48.95)
	Marginal Holdings	113 (38.97)	16 (16.00)	2 (1.11)	131 (22.98)
	Small Holdings	76 (26.21)	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	80 (14.04)
	Semi-Medium Holdings	48 (16.55)	2 (2.00)	0 (0.00)	50 (8.77)
	Medium Holdings	20 (6.90)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (3.51)

	Large Holdings	10 (3.44)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	10 (1.75)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
3	**Economic Status**				
	Earning	453 (30.04)	165 (30.50)	269 (27.65)	887 (29.36)
	Earning Dependents	270 (17.90)	123 (22.73)	265 (27.23)	658 (21.77)
	Dependents	785 (52.06)	253 (46.77)	439 (45.12)	1477 (48.87)
	Total	1508 (100.00)	541 (100.00)	973 (100.00)	3022 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19.

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The table reveals that out of total 3022 persons, 29.36 per cent are earners and 21.77 per cent are earning dependents, whereas 48.87 per cent are dependents. The proportion of earners is the highest (30.50 per cent) among OBC households followed by general caste (30.04 per cent) and is the lowest (27.65 per cent) among SC households, whereas the proportion of earning dependent is the highest (27.23 per cent) among SC households followed by OBC (22.73 per cent) and is the lowest (17.90 per cent) among general caste households. The percentage of dependent comes out to be 52.06, 46.77 and 45.12 among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively whereas for all the households taken together, this share is 48.87 per cent.

The data related to accessibility to computer and internet facility among different social groups in the rural areas of Punjab is given in Table 7. The data reveals that a majority (99.12 per cent) of the households have owned mobile phones. The proportion of households having mobile phones is the highest (99.66 per cent) among general caste households as compared to OBC households (99.00 per cent) and the lowest (98.33 per cent) among SC households. The table further reveals the fact that a large number of households (96.49 per cent) are having pre-paid mobile connection, while only 2.63 per cent have post-paid connection. The percentage of households having pre-paid connection is worked out to be 95.52, 97.00 and 97.77 among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively.

Table 7: Accessibility to mobile, computer/laptop and internet among different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No	Items	General	OBC	SC	All
1.	**Mobile**				
	Yes	289 (99.66)	99 (99.00)	177 (98.33)	565 (99.12)
	No	1 (0.34)	1 (1.00)	3 (1.67)	5 (0.88)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
2.	**Type of Connection**				
	Pre-paid	277 (95.52)	97 (97.00)	176 (97.77)	550 (96.49)
	Post-paid	12 (4.14)	2 (2.00)	1 (0.56)	15 (2.63)
	Total	289 (99.66)	99 (99.00)	177 (98.33)	565 (99.12)
3.	**Mobile Set**				
	Smart Phone	148 (51.04)	35 (35.00)	52 (28.89)	235 (41.23)
	Ordinary Mobile	25 (8.62)	33 (33.00)	102 (56.67)	160 (28.07)
	Smart and Ordinary mobile	116 (40.00)	31 (31.00)	23 (12.77)	170 (29.82)
	Total	289 (99.66)	99 (99.00)	177 (98.33)	565 (99.12)
4.	**Computer/Laptop**				
	Yes	24 (8.27)	8 (8.00)	4 (2.22)	36 (6.32)
	No	266 (91.72)	92 (92.00)	176 (97.78)	534 (93.68)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
5.	**Internet facility**				
	Yes	256 (88.27)	72 (72.00)	68 (37.78)	396 (69.47)
	No	34 (11.73)	28 (28.00)	112 (62.22)	174 (30.53)
	Total	290 (100.00	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)

		)			

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The data highlights that 41.23 per cent of the sampled households are having smart phones, 28.07 per cent with ordinary mobiles, while 29.82 per cent of the sampled households have both smart and ordinary mobiles. The percentage of households having smart phones is the highest (51.04 per cent) among general caste households followed by OBC households (35.00 per cent) and the lowest (28.89 per cent) among SC households, while the proportion of households having ordinary mobiles is the highest (56.67 per cent) among SC households followed by OBC households (33.00 per cent) and the lowest (8.62 per cent) among general caste households. The proportion of households having both smart and ordinary mobiles comes out to be 40.00, 31.00 and 12.77 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively.

The data further reveals that among all the sampled households, only 6.32 per cent households have computer/ laptop. The proportion of households having computer/laptop is the highest (8.27 per cent) among general caste households followed by OBC households (8.00 per cent) and the lowest (2.22 per cent) among SC households. The table further reveals that a majority (69.47 per cent) of the sampled households have access to internet facility, while 30.53 per cent are unable to access internet facility. Among general caste households, a majority (88.27 per cent) of the households have access to internet facility, while among OBC and SC households 72.00 and 37.78 per cent respectively have access to internet facility. The table further highlights the fact that a majority (62.22 per cent) of SC households is unable to use internet facility because majority of them have ordinary phones.

The data pertaining to the accessibility to newspaper among different social groups in Punjab is given in Table 8. The data highlights that only 11.75 per cent among the sampled households are purchasing newspaper. The proportion of households, who are purchasing newspaper, is the highest (18.28 per cent) among general caste household followed by OBC households (8.00 per cent) and is the lowest (3.33 per cent) among SC households.

Table 8: Accessibility to newspaper among different social groups in rural Punjab

S. No.	Items	General	OBC	SC	All
1.	**Purchase Newspaper**				
	Yes	53 (18.28)	8 (8.00)	6 (3.33)	67 (11.75)
	No	237 (81.72)	92 (92.00)	174 (96.67)	503 (88.25)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)
2.	**Read Newspaper**				
	Yes	88 (30.34)	23 (23.00)	19 (10.56)	130 (22.81)
	Read Daily	51 (17.59)	9 (9.00)	7 (3.89)	67 (11.75)
	Read Occasionally	37 (12.75)	14 (14.00)	12 (6.67)	63 (11.05)
	No	202 (69.66)	77 (77.00)	161 (89.44)	440 (77.19)
	Total	290 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	180 (100.00)	570 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2018-19

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The data further highlights the fact that only 22.81 per cent amongst all the sampled households read newspaper daily, while remaining 77.19 per cent households do not read any newspaper. The proportion of households, who read newspaper, comes out to be 30.34, 23.00 and 10.56 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively. The data pointed out that among all the sampled households, 11.75 per cent read newspaper daily, and while11.05 per cent of the sampled households read newspaper occasionally. The proportion of households who read newspaper daily is the highest (17.59 per cent) among general caste followed by OBC (9.00 percent)

and the lowest among SC households (3.89 per cent). Further, the percentage of households who read newspaper occasionally comes out to be 12.75, 14.00 and 6.67 per cent among general caste, OBC and SC households respectively.

Concluding remarks

In nutshell, the demographic profile reveals that majority of the population falls in the age group of 18 to 58 years. The number of females is lower than that of males among general caste, OBC and SC households. A majority of the household among general caste and SC households belong to Sikh community, whereas among OBC households, the majority of the households belong to Hindu community. The analysis highlighted that a large majority of the SC households have attained the lower levels of education and their share in the higher educational level is very low as compared to general caste and OBC households. The proportion of landless households is higher in case of scheduled caste households as compared to general caste and OBC households. The occupational status highlighted that majority of general caste households are self-employed in agriculture whereas SC households are labourers engaged in agricultural as well as in non-agricultural activities. The OBC households are engaged in artisan work and non-agricultural activities. Further, a majority of the households among SC households have purchased old and ordinary mobiles whereas general caste households are having smart phones and more access to communication technology. Hence, the analysis revealed the plight of SC households in terms of various socio-economic dynamics.

Therefore, the government should take appropriate measures such as free education along with financial support, proper implementation of land reforms in favour of landless and marginal farmers, generation of gainful employment opportunities at the native place, proper implementation of MGNREGS as well as spreading awareness among these poor households regarding various government policies and programmes initiated for the betterment for SC and OBC households in particular and overall in general.

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Coastal life and the impact of COVID -19 pandemic on seaweed farming in Tamil Nadu

-K. Ramesh Kumar

ABSTRACT

The discussion and debates on people's life and economy has been going since 2020 in India. The effects of COVID-19, followed by the policy of the governments and households response to the pandemic has been generated a new concern in relation to work and life in seaweed farming. Many evidence shows that large heterogeneous sectors of the society, those with unskilled or less skilled works with modest earnings in the sectors s gave faced adverse effects of the pandemic across the society's life and work has also becoming complex and challenge during the different phases of pandemic lockdown. The recent World Bank report on Global Seaweed New and Emerging Markets 2023 pointed that many facets of seaweed have rich potential and offering solutions to economic challenges. Seaweed farming is burgeoning the food demands of a growing population in the future. Asia has seven of the top ten seaweed-producing countries, and Asian countries supply 99.1 percent of all seaweeds cultivated for food. This study was looking forward, to build a better future of work carried out among seaweed cultivators and need to pay on sustainable economic life, growth of costal households. This study examines the long run implications on work and employment during the pandemic period, changing narrative of the farming in pandemic period. We highlight the economic viability of seaweed farming, employment, and income opportunities for rural households, as well as the issues encountered by COVID-19 in seaweed-dependent households in the coastal village of Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Seaweed farming, COVID-19, Tamil Nadu, Pandemic

JEL Classification A10 · A10 · Q22 · Q28

1 Introduction

The coastal economy of India is regarded as the primary source of food and livelihood for millions of people in India, notably in the portions of west, middle, east, and south India encompassed by the

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7,516.6 km long coastal line. Asia and South Asia are being overrun by seaweed development, with about 80% of the commitment made by China, Indonesia, and various European nations bringing in ocean growth from East Asian nations such as the Philippines and Indonesia. This demonstrates that South and East Asian countries have enormous potential for growing or creating kelp in the future.According to the United Nations Population Project (2019) data, by the end of 2050, India will have surpassed China and will be the world's most populous country, with over 1.75 billion people.With a growing population and labour force, India must balance demand and consumption of food and other resources while maintaining sustainable economic growth. In recent years, traditional agricultural practices have changed their face, particularly after the 1966 green revolution, as Indian farming has modernised technologically, and as a result, the gap between production and demand has decreased, as has the reliance on agricultural activities, namely small farmers and landless agricultural labourers, and farmers' attitudes towards commercial establishments, as a result the agricultural land has decreased.Furthermore, climate change and global warming, contamination of water bodies, and the cost of farming conditions are less likely to aid in the expansion of agricultural and associated dependencies. As a result, employment and income fell, and people migrated and shifted to non-farm activities. To solve these concerns, undiscovered enormous ocean resources must be explored for food and other benefits. As a result, farming in the waters remains the preferred option for coastal populations.

COVID-19 and economies

There is a lot of ongoing research that focuses on measuring the macro impacts of COVID-19 in both developing and developed countries. According to a field bank report, 11 million people in East Asia and the Pacific may be forced to live in poverty (World Bank 2020). Examining the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups across four mainlands, (Buheji et al. 2020) estimate that 49 million people may face extreme poverty in 2020 (living on less than $1.90 in comparison to today). During the year 2020-21, the GDP of India has declined to negative 8 per cent and it is the worst economic performance since independence.

Related literature

According to the World Resource Institute, the world's population is rapidly expanding, and each country is looking for alternative food and production sources to meet the demand (Hunter et

al., 2017). In terms of unit value, seaweeds are similar to aquaculture commodities, with unit values comparable to those of aquatic animals and their products, which have substantial trading prices. Nonetheless, throughout the previous five decades, a wide range of seaweeds have been produced systematically, becoming the second largest aquaculture product in terms of quantity (FAO, 2018). In 2016, red algal species produced the majority of the seaweed produced globally (FAO, 2018).The *algae* genera *Eucheuma species and Kappaphycus species* were known as *eucheumatoids and carrageenophytes.* It provided around 42% of total seaweed production (FAO, 2018).Seaweeds have the potential to be employed in a wide range of goods, including food, biofuels, chemicals, cosmetics, and medications (India's National Biofuel Policy, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, human enjoyment is that it is the first time that the world has collectively experienced such a mass disease transmission under modern-day technology, during which age has vastly improved over the last 100 years. With the rapid spread of the lethal COVID-19 disease and thus the slow attainment of vaccination, inflation of meals and deterioration of various related livelihoods would push many citizens towards famine and starvation, unless corruption, crime, and terrorist strength expansion are predicted.

This has the potential to beautify absolute and relative poverty all around the world, particularly initiatives to end illiteracy and low schooling (Ahmed and Buheji, 2018).With the availability of the internet and social media, one can witness a troubling tendency in which people from lower backgrounds are held responsible and reviled by more wealthy members of society for problems they do not have the ability to solve during India's statewide lockdown. There are various approaches to identify different types of poverty based on Social, Health, Economic, and Social elements.First, there is financial poverty, which occurs when the poor require the asset but not the income. The second type of poverty is physical poverty, in which people appear impoverished or have a health problem that manifests as malnutrition (Buheji, 2019).

To understand the effects of revenue loss on lower-income people, a household well-being formulation based on the work of (Hallegatte et al. 2016) is used. The first household well-being model was created for the devastating impact of an earthquake and was applied to the Bay Area of California (Markhvida et al. 2020). Furthermore, in Fiji, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, the household model has been used to evaluate household-level resilience to natural disasters (Walsh and

Hallegatte 2018; 2019; 2020).While natural disasters primarily affect an economy's capital stock (e.g., buildings, infrastructure), but the effects of pandemic is differ from the physical damages made by the nature. According to the few studies the COVID – 19 is made by the human error and some studies says it was caused by the nature, the economic impact of COVID-19 is represented here as an income shock, with income loss distributed by industry sector, during a pre-defined crisis period representing the shelter-in-place order. This study's brief plan is to understand the status of seaweed resources and their potential, as well as the economic viability of seaweed farming, employment, and income opportunities for rural households, and it highlights the issues encountered by the COVID-19 on seaweed dependent households of Ramanathapuram district's coastal villages.

Data and methodology

Ramanathapuram district was identified as the study region for assessing the COVID-19 impacts on monoline seaweed farming, before and during the lockdown period. Personal interviews using a pre-tested routine were used to determine the socioeconomic condition of seaweed producers cultivating *Kappaphycusalvarezii*.The primary data were collected from Morpanni village and the sample respondents (n = 57), out of 57 households with 60 percent male and 40 percent female The district has 271 kilometers of coastline, 130 kilometers of which are in Palk Bay and 140 km in the Gulf of Mannar the coastal line shows rich in its pearl fishing, for better understand of our study we used conventional tabular, percentage and rank methods to examine the socioeconomic conditions of seaweed farming in the research region.

Further, our analysis of the economic performance ofseaweed farming was assessed by working out the annualfixed cost, operating cost, gross revenue and net operatingincome(Jonson. et al. 2017)through tabular analysis. Operating cost ratiorelates variable costs to gross income with the formula of operating ratio = total operating costs/gross returns

Results and discussion

Seaweed showing a strong economic potential in southern parts of costal Tamil Nadu, it is more benefits to the farmers, especially women it terms of employment, income and profit.

Table 1 Gender of the respondents

Sr. No	Gender	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	25	44
2.	Female	32	56
	Total	57	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

According to Table 1, (56 percent) of monoline seaweed farmers are women, while (44% are men). Women dominate the seaweed farming industry worldwide, not only in India. Flower E. Msuya (2006) discovered that seaweed farming began in Unguja in 1989, when both men and women entered the field, but that today, over 90 percent of farmers are women. Men began to leave the business in favour of women and moved into fishing and tourism-related enterprises such as road construction, lime production for whitewash, house construction, and dealing in guesthouses. According to the study, men want money on a daily basis, whereas women are much more patient in completing the cycle of planting, weeding, harvesting, and selling.

Table 2 Ages of the respondents

Sr. No	Ages	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 30	5	9
2.	30-40	27	48
3.	40-50	16	28
4.	50 & above	9	15
	Total	57	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

The age of an individual has a significant impact on his or her decisions, and the investigation asked about the ages of the responders from the monoline seaweed cultivators. Then, on top of table 2, the 30-40 year age group accounted for 48 percent of seaweed cultivators, followed by the 40-50 year age group at 28 percent and the 50& above year age group at 15 percent, according to the table. Finally, 9 Percent of those polled are under the age of 30.

Table 3 Educational qualifications of the respondents

Sr. No	Qualification	Cultivators	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	9	15.78
2.	Primary	15	26.32
3.	Secondary	10	17.55
4.	Higher secondary	19	33.33
5.	Degree and above	4	7.02
	Total	57	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

The educational background of the respondents was also important to the study's skills and earning, and as shown in the table above, the majority of seaweed cultivators have 33.33 percent secondary education and 26.32 percent primary education. According to the report, 17.55 percent of people have a higher education, 15.78 percent have no education, and 7.02 percent have gone to college. As a result, the majority of seaweed cultivators aren't well educated, and those who are in educational pursuits are emotionally attached to nonfarm sectors.

The survey analysed the respondents' occupational status, and the results were as follows: Monoline Seaweed Cultivators are the most important occupations in the area. The majority of the 57 respondents involved in seaweed growing worked as seaweed. This shows that seaweed farming has become the first living activity of the study's rural households.

Table 4 Production cost for single monoline installation

Sr. No	Particulars	Units/ m	Cost (in Rs.)
	Cost of one line 1.25 mm thickness	20	200
	Cost of installation and planting	20	0
	Seeds	20	480
	Cost of management and supervising per unit family labour	20	0
	Total		680

Source: Author's calculation

Note: m : Meters

Table 4 shows that the production cost for a single Monoline is Rs. 200 per individual row, installation and planting costs for 20m is zero, and seeds to 20m is Rs. 480 per every season, and administration and supervision costs for seaweed production is zero. Finally, the overall cost to single Monoline seaweed farming is comes around Rs 680 per season.

Table 5   Gender wise total cost and total monoline units

Sr. No	Particulars	Respondents	Monoline units	Cost (in Rs.)
1.	Male	25	38	25840
2.	Female	32	40	27200
	Total	57	78	53040

Source: Author's calculation

The cost of farming in per season of Monoline culture is indicated in table 5, which is Rs. 27200 for 40 units for 32 female to farm seaweed at the same time and Rs. 25840 for 38 units for 25 male to farm seaweed at the same time. The researchers calculated Rs. 53040 for 78 units each season, including both sexes and the maximum female units produced in this culture.

Table 6   Gender wise seaweed production (in Kg)

Sr. No	Particulars	Respondents	Units	Production
1.	Male	25	38	6840
2.	Female	32	40	7200
	Total	57	78	14040

Source: Author's calculation

Table 6 illustrates the seaweed production by gender, single season of seaweed farming yields 7200 kg for 40 units for 32 female seaweed growers and 6840 kg for 38 units for 25 male seaweed cultivators. In *Kappaphycusalvarezii*, both sexes produce 78 units of 14040 kg raw weight per season.

Table 7 Gender wise seaweed price (in Rs.)

Sr. No	Particulars	Respondents	Units in kg (raw)	Units in kg (dry)
1.	Male	25	6840	760
2.	Female	32	7200	800
	Total	57	14040	1560

Source: Author's calculation

Table 7 displays the cost of seaweed: Every season, 32 females receive 7200 kg of monoline seaweed harvesting, drying, and collection weight, and 25 males receive 6840 kg of fresh weight and 760 kg of dried weight.

Table 8 Gender wise seaweed revenue (in Rs.)

Sr. No	Particulars	Respondents	Units (in Kg raw)	Revenue
1.	Male	25	760	41800
2.	Female	32	800	44000
	Total	57	1560	85800

Source: Author's calculation

As indicated in table 8, the revenue of one season of Morpannai village in Thiruvadanai taluk produces seaweed by a monoline, earning Rs. 85800 for every 800 kg of dried seaweed produced by 32 women per season, while males get Rs. 41800 for 760 kg of dried seaweed produced by 25 persons.

Table 9 Gender wise seaweed profit (in Rs.)

Sr. No	Particulars	Units in kg (dried)	Cost	Revenue	Profit
1.	Male	760	25840	41800	15960
2.	Female	800	27200	44000	16800
	Total	1560	53040	85800	32760

Source: Author's calculation

Women dried 800 kg of seaweed using a mono line per season, investing 27200 rupees and earning 44000 rupees. They made a profit of Rs. 16800. Men, on the other hand, spent 25840 rupees for 760 kg and made 41800 rupees. They made a profit of 15960 rupees per season. For both genders, seaweed growing yields more income than spending. Table 9 shows that if the government better subsidies and develops this industry, its revenue will treble.

Before the coronavirus arrived, we used to make a lot of seaweed, but no one went to the sea since no one was allowed to get into the water, so the fish came and ate the seeds in the boat. Due to a lack of transportation infrastructure, seaweed growers report a lack of abundant output and financial gain, as well as a lack of emphasis on production.

Table 10 Experienced in the lockdown days due to lack of money or resources

S. No	Particulars	Cultivators	Rank
1.	You were worried you would run out of food?	3 (5.26)	3
2.	You ate less than you wanted to?	3 (5.26)	3
3.	Did you eat different food because of cost considerations?	41 (71.93)	1
4.	Did you go without eating for a whole day?	6 (10.53)	2
5.	You could not eat what you usually have, because of unavailability?	4 (7.02)	4
	Total	57 (100)	

Source: This source collected from field survey, Note: Figure in brackets is Rank.

In Table 10, seaweed cultivators managed money and resources at the time of the emergence of those COVID-19 eras, 71.93 percent of respondents stated that they'd take completely different food due to price concern. 10.53 percent of respondents stated that they do not eat during the day. And 7% of respondents are concerned that they may run out of food and less than food. 5.26 percent do not eat on a regular basis due to food insecurity. According to the survey, the rating of COVID-19 internment days shows old owing to a lack of money or resources. The first rank is to consume completely different food due to a value concern, the second rank is to go a whole day without eating, and the third rank aforementioned that not up to food and upset would run out food. The fourth level is to seek out food that is generally not consumed due to scarcity.

Table 11 COVID – 19 and elderly people

S. No	Particulars	Cultivators	Rank
1.	Not able to perform needed or usual household work	33 (57.89)	1
2.	Not able to volunteer in the community	11(19.29)	2
3.	Not able to provide care to others	8 (14.04)	3
4.	Not able to provide care to grandchildren	4 (7.02)	4
5.	Not able to receive care from others	1 (1.76)	5
	Total	40 (100)	

Source: This source collected from field survey, Note: Figure in brackets is Rank.

Older people, especially those with chronic health diseases such as hypertension, disorder, and diabetes, are most sensitive to COVID-19 infection. Older people face not just greater health risks, but they are also less likely to be capable of supporting themselves in isolation. Although social isolation is crucial in slowing disease spread, if not handled effectively, such interventions might lead to increased social isolation of elderly people at a time when they may be most in need of assistance. Table 11 revealed how the elderly (aged 50 and up) in their family had been affected. 57.89% of the associates were seaweed cultivators who were unable to undertake essential or normal household duties for an equivalent period. 1.76 percent of seaweed cultivators and wage laborers respond that they are unable to accept care from others. Once we confirm the initial rating, seaweed cultivators will respond. The government advised the elderly not to go outside during the COVID-19 period because nobody wanted to be in an environment where the risk of infection was high, and as a result, they might not be able to do their daily duties.

Table 12   Pandemic lockdown and food arrangements

Sr. No	Particulars	Before Lockdown		During the Lockdown	
		Cultivators	Percentage	Cultivators	Percentage
1.	Local market/ vendors	43	75.43	8	14.04
2.	Supermarket/ large store	2	3.50	1	1.75
3.	Government source/PDS/Ration shop	7	12.29	45	78.94
4.	Mobile Peddlers	5	8.78	3	5.27
	Total	57	100	57	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

Table 12 outlined the most common food sources before and during lockdowns.Before the lockout, the majority of seaweed producers (75.43 percent) relied on local markets/vendors, while 3.50 percent borrowed vegetables and tableware from supermarkets/giant stores. During the lockdown time, 46.6 percent of seaweed cultivators relied on government sources/ PDS/ Ration shops, whereas 1.75 percent only purchased food from the supermarket.Before the

coronavirus, people used to get and use food items from the local market, but during the corona, people couldn't buy anything anywhere because the government closed all the shops, and because of a lack of financial gain, the government gave the people the rice, pulses, and vegetable oil they needed at a reasonable price, which is what everyone buys and uses.

Table 13   COVID -19 and employment

S. No	Particular	Cultivators	Rank
1.	Jobless	2 (3.50)	4
2.	Household members jobless	3 (5.27)	3
3.	Reducing working hours	9 (15.79)	2
4.	Reduced income/ wages	43 (75.44)	1
	Total	57 (100)	

Source: This source collected from field survey, Note: Figure in brackets is Rank

Table 13 reveals that COVID-19 had an impact on their job and thus the work of other members of the household. 75.44 percent of seaweed cultivators responded strongly to reduced income/wages. The unemployed accounted for 3.50 percent of seaweed cultivators. There may be a loss of income as a result of seaweed cultivators being unable to go to sea owing to COVID-19, resulting in a situation in which operating personnel cannot be compensated. This leads to job loss, downtime, wage, and income loss.

Table 14 Labour movements and COVID -19

S. No	Particular	Cultivators	Percentage
1.	Yes, they have returned	1	1.76
2.	Yes, they are still trying to come home	4	7.02
3.	No	52	91.22
	Total	57 (100)	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

The table described household members who had migrated for work and are attempting to return home owing to COVID -19 pandemic phases. When migrant workers were asked if anyone had returned home owing to coronary heart disease, 91.22 percent of seaweed cultivators said no one had. 1.76 percent of people said they were seaweed cultivators. As a result, every respondent lives near the

water. They are not moving, no one is leaving, and none of them move as if they need to be educated.

Table 15   Benefits from governments

Sr. No	Particular	Cultivators	Percentage
1.	Yes	53	92.98
2.	No	4	7.02
	Total	57	100

Source: This source collected from field survey

Table 15 found that 92.98 percent of seaweed cultivators said they received Rs. 2,000 a month from the government through the Fishermen's Association during the COVID-19 period, while the remaining 7.02 percent said they did not receive any assistance from the government because they did not have a ration card. This question was asked by the researcher on Tamil Nadu government intervention of COVID-19, majority of respondents says they received cash and kind supports from the state government.

On March 26, 2020, India's government unveiled a nearly US$23 billion economic package to help the poor, including grain and pulse rations, free gas cooking cylinders for 83 million families, and cash transfers of US$6.65 per month to about 200 million women over the next three months. While the stimulus package was considerable by international standards, questions remain over whether the extra food allocations through the general public distribution system, and hence the cash transfers, would reach the needy at the same time (Kunal Sen 2020).

Because of India's federal structure, some state governments have also announced plans to assist the poor and vulnerable in the aftermath of the pandemic. For example, the Kerala government launched a US$2.7 billion financial package that includes a health package, loan help, welfare, pensions, free food grains, subsidized meals, and tax relief.

Table 16   Covid-19 pandemic and family life

S. No	Particular	Cultivators	Rank
1.	Major impact	47 (82.45)	1
2.	Moderate impact	6 (10.52)	2
3.	Minor impact	4 (7.03)	3
4.	No impact	0 (0)	4
	Total	57 (100)	-

Source: This source collected from field survey, Note: Figure in brackets is Rank

The epidemic has had a direct impact on seaweed producers, as raw material demand has declined and prices have fallen. As a result, farmers have been unable to harvest during this epidemic session (Steffen Kaeser, UNIDO 2020). The survey discovered that seaweed growers and seaweed wage workers had an impact on their family life, with 82.45 percent of seaweed cultivators stating that it has a significant impact. Nobody answeredthey did not faced any effect on COVID-19. It had a moderate influence on 10.52 percent of seaweed cultivators, whereas it had a slight impact on 7.03 percent of seaweed cultivators. From the table results we can understand that majority of respondents (87.42 per cent) are severely affected.

Table 17   Major challenges faced in COVID 19 period

Sr. No	Particular	Cultivators	Rank
1.	Unemployment	10 (17.54)	1
2.	Income reduced	33 (57.89)	2
3.	Marketing problem	7 (12.28)	3
4.	Transport not available	4 (7.02)	4
5.	Union did not help	3 (5.27)	5
	Total	57 (100)	100

Source: This source collected from field survey, Note: Figure in brackets is Rank

Seaweed farming is not going away. It provides a solution for the non-availability of the specified amount of seaweeds for diverse uses. It creates jobs, particularly for individuals living along the coast who would otherwise be marginalised by the loss of the coastline. It offers plant-based alternatives to animal-based recipes for the biological, pharmaceutical, and food industries, as well as quality consistency, which is critical for all user industries. Table 13 detailed the key challenges encountered in seaweed production during this corona time. When asked what the major problems encountered in seaweed farming during this corona period, 57.89 percent of seaweed producers responded as income reduction. Following that, 17.54 percent of seaweed cultivators experienced reportable unemployment.Seaweed cultivators reported a 12.28 percent marketing problem and a 7.02 percent transportation problem. 5.27 percent of respondents indicated that the union provided no support. What is thought to be the major problem for seaweed cultivators as a result of

the corona effect is that income is reduced in the first rank, followed by state in the second rank, promoting disadvantage in the third rank, transport not available in the fourth rank, and union failed to help in the last rank. Throughout the COVID-19 period, the government did not provide adequate assistance to seaweed producers and seaweed wage labourers, all of whom relied on the sea for a living.

Behavioral perception on seaweed farming

From the results of figure 1, Mono line seaweed farmers were asked psychologically based two-scale questions, to which most of them (95 percent of them) responded positively, namely pricing, production, profit, marketing, cost, and proper marketing after harvesting. Because of the strong impact of waves and the difficulty of farming, 5 percent of those polled said they are unable to farm with modern equipment.
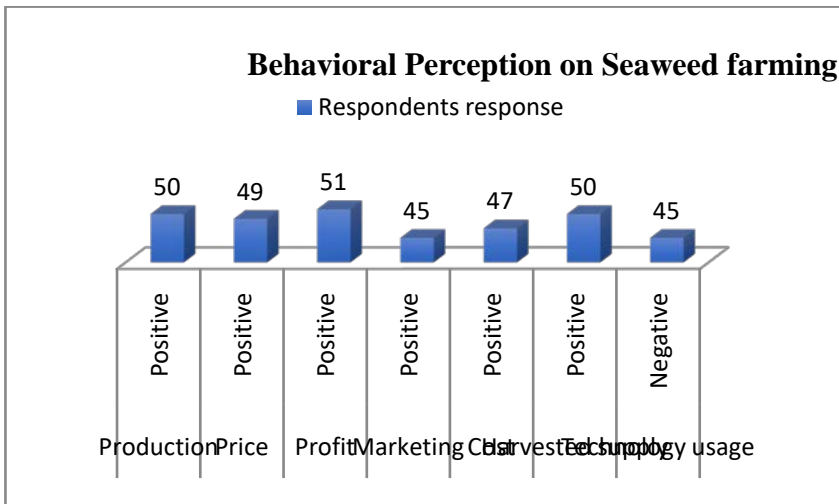

Fig. 1 Behavioral Perception on Seaweed farming, Source: Author's calculation

Policy implications for better future

Based on the logical interpretation of the findings, it is frequently argued that seaweed farming is viewed as a viable alternative source of income for coastal communities. This societal acceptability implies the possibility of spreading seaweed farming as a billboard enterprise to other suitable areas. The biggest restraint observed by seaweed growers was the bad weather pattern. To market the current system, the government should establish a weather damage assistance programme, an early warning system for rapid

environmental changes, and commercial level seaweed nurseries. Additionally, joint effort among key stakeholders is emphasised as a must for marketing the seaweed business.

Suggestions

The following suggestions should be adopted to improve the economic life of the people and ensure the protection from the effects of COVID – 19 pandemic.

1. The economic bell out package is required to emerge out of this economic calamity.

2. India spends billions of dollars on building statues of the political and community leaders that money should be transferred to building Hospitals for the community.

3. India currently spends around 2 percent of GDP on Health. As advised by the WHO that 6 percent of the GDP money should be invested in the health sector that should be followed.

4. There should be a separate fund created by every organization to tackle the corona like viruses in the future.

5. People should be made aware of basic and personal hygiene and cleanliness.

6. The government should give financial packages to small scale sectors and should include those not necessarily directly employed in SMEs such as farmers.

7. Loan payments of citizens to be rescheduled for 3-6 months, so default does not happen.

8. Enhance cash transfer programs for farmers and also introduces for poor consumers these could be done through below poverty line (BPL) ration cards to start.

9. Ensure greater supplies of basic food items through fair prize shops.

10. Provide tax relief to affected sectors and provide income support to poor peoples.

7 Conclusions

The study provides a household-level model to evaluate the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 on seaweed farming, production, cost, income, employment, elderly support, and the benefits received from the governments.The different phases of lockdowns forced the poverty into the people. People have been suffered because of threatening of virus, followed by the lockdown, income and

employment losses without any economical security. A study shows that COVID-19 would be a massive economic shock to the system. In simulations of a three-month lockdown, the Bay Area's poverty rate rises from 17.1 percent to 25.9 percent during the crisis. Household savings and spending fall precipitously, and the average recovery time for people is nearly a year and still the impacts continue in few houses. The extended recovery period following the crisis will be aggravated by a broad fall in demand, changes in consumer behaviour, and a general slowdown in economic activity. these effects are especially important when considering the prospect of multiple shocks: where the COVID-19 crisis is forcing most families to use their savings and mortgage of gold and other assets (primarily in countries with vulnerable social safety system), the population will become a lot more vulnerable to another shock, along with other natural disasters (e.g., tropical storms, with the hurricane season beginning within the Caribbean on June 1st, earthquakes, a five magnitude eagle etc.,). The initial cash and kind support of state government supported the basic life of the households during the COVID – 19 time lockdown, each family got Rs. 5000 with one month grocery items.

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Understanding Thoreau's civil disobedience through the lens of Gandhi

-Abha Chauhan Khimta

ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the profound influence of Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" on Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of satyagraha. While both thinkers shared similar ideals, Gandhi's adaptation of civil disobedience was unique and contextually tailored to the Indian struggle for independence. It traces Gandhi's acknowledgment of Thoreau's work and his application of these principles during his campaigns in South Africa and India. Although Gandhi initially denied that his concept of civil disobedience was directly derived from Thoreau, he later recognized the significant impact Thoreau's writings had on him. The essay highlights how Gandhi, familiar with Western philosophical thought, integrated ideas from Thoreau, Tolstoy, and other Western philosophers into his own framework of nonviolent resistance. Gandhi's satyagraha was broader and more inclusive than Thoreau's civil disobedience, focusing on mass mobilization and nonviolent protest against unjust laws. Thoreau's philosophy emphasized the moral duty of individuals to resist governmental injustice, a concept Gandhi expanded to a collective scale in his fight against British colonial rule. Paper also underscores the enduring relevance of Thoreau's and Gandhi's ideas on civil disobedience and their impact on contemporary social and political movements, illustrating how their thoughts continue to inspire resistance against injustice and the pursuit of truth and conscience.

Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi shared much in common. The most, Gandhi had the influence of Thoreau's civil disobedience on his mind. In an article titled ''For Passive Resistance, published in Indian Opinion, Gandhi gave an extract from Thoreau's famed essay on civil disobedience. It was prefaced with the quotation from Tolstoy, '' The principle of state necessity can bind only those men who disobey God's law, who for the sake of worldly advantage try to reconcile the irreconcilable; but a Christian who sincerely believes

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that the fulfilment of Jesus's teaching shall bring him salvation cannot attach any importance to this principle'' (Bhattachary 1977, p. 60).

David Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, and poet, and withal a most practical man; that is, he taught nothing he was not prepared to practice in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced. Campaigning for the abolition of Negro slavery, he wrote his famous essay 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience.' He went to prison for the sake of his principles, and his essay is sanctified by his suffering. It is written for all time. Its incisive logic is unanswerable (60). Many years later, Gandhi wrote about him, '' Thoreau furnished me through his essay on civil disobedience with scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa'' (60). The same thought kept on repeating in his mind, and in 1942, he wrote a letter to President Roosevelt, '' I have profited greatly by the writings of Thoreau and Emerson'' (60). Thoreau used the title 'The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Civil Government' when he delivered it as a lecture and published it with the title 'Resistance to Civil Government.' The title 'civil disobedience appeared in a collection of essays entitled *A Yankee Canada (1866),* four years after the death of Thoreau, from some anonymous editor at Ticknor and Fields, the Boston publishing firm (Hunt1989, p. 287).

It has often been said that Gandhi borrowed the idea of civil disobedience from Thoreau. However, Gandhi denied this in a letter addressed to P. Kodanda Rao of the Servants of India Society on September 10, 1935:

The statement that I had derived my idea of civil disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I read Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete, I coined the word satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began to use his phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers. But I found that even civil disobedience failed to convey the full meaning of the struggle. I therefore adopted the phrase civil resistance'' (Fischer 1951, p. 104).

Nevertheless, Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' essay influenced Gandhi, and Gandhi himself affirmed this fact many times. While writing a letter to Henry Salt, Gandhi mentioned his encounter with Thoreau:

Dear friend, I was agreeably surprised to receive your letter. Yes, indeed, your book, which was the first English book I came across on vegetarianism, was of immense help to me in steadying my faith in vegetarianism. My first introduction to Thoreau's writings was, I think, in 1907 or later, when I was in the thick of the passive resistance struggle. A friend sent me Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. It left a deep impression on me. I translated a portion of that essay for the readers of Indian Opinion in South Africa, which I was then editing, and I made copious extracts from that essay for that paper. That essay seemed to be so convincing and truthful that I felt the need to know more of Thoreau, and I came across your life of him, his 'Walden, and other short essays, all of which I need with great pleasure and equal profit (Iyer 1991, p. 71).

Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was Thoreau's friend, read the *Bhagavad Gita* and some of the sacred Hindu *Upanishads*. Thoreau borrowed from India and repaid the debt by throwing ideas into the world's pool of thought; ripples reached the Indian lawyer-politician in South Africa (Fisher 1951, p. 104). One source of Thoreau's attraction for Gandhi lay in the fact that Thoreau, like other New England Transcendentalists, was interested in Indian thought. The Indian religious texts were just becoming available in English in his lifetime, and he borrowed copies from Ralph Waldo Emerson and from the Harvard College Library. In the journal *The Dial,* Thoreau, along with Emerson and Alcott, published a series of ethical scriptures, largely passages from Oriental classics. Thoreau discussed the Laws of Manu in *Walden,* while in A Week *on the Concord* and *Merrimac Rivers* is an essay on the Bhagavad Gita (Hunt 1989, p. 287).

Gandhi had a western influence on his thoughts, and he was familiar with the best that Europe and America had produced. Gandhi had translated Ruskin and Plato. He quoted Thoreau and admired and read Mazzini and Edward Carpenter. The impact of Carpenter's Civilization: Its Cause and Cure, Ruskin's Unto This Last, and Thoreau's essay on Civil Disobedience on Gandhi's social philosophy is well known. Gandhi himself admitted, '' I have but endeavoured humbly to follow Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson, and other writers besides the masters of Indian philosophy (Verma 1970, p. 127). The life and mission of Socrates also profoundly influenced Gandhi. Both of them were truth-intoxicated souls and believed in the obedience of the laws of the state so long as they did not conflict with individual's freedom, rights, and responsibilities.

It can be claimed that LokamanyaTilak left a legacy of struggle for Gandhi. As Mackenzie Brown asserted, long before Gandhi launched his satyagraha programs in South Africa and India, Tilak had proposed civil disobedience as India's natural method for regeneration and freedom (Bari 1971, p. 134). Sri Aurobindo was probably the first to suggest passive resistance and non-cooperation as weapons to attain Swaraj (self-rule) in India. He advocated agitation, non-cooperation, and passive resistance as effective tools for Swaraj (135). In the middle ages, the problem of private resistance to political authority was an important subject of political thought. According to Aquinas, ''action against a tyrant should not be taken by the private presumption of individuals but rather by public authority'' (141). Similarly, Laski stated, 'Our duty is to be true to our conscience, and we are more likely to press the state into the service of right the more we fulfil that duty' (141).

About the role of state and government and the sphere of their control over the individual life Thoreau unequivocally expressed his views. He was critical of the state excess and increased activities vis a vis individual. Thoreau started his essay with the motto:

"That government is best that governs least," and I would like to see it acted upon more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe: "That government is best that governs not at all," and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government that they will have. Government is at best an expedient, but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections that have been brought against a standing army, which are many and weighty and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode in which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican War, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, at the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure (Bari 1971, p. 134). Thoreau believed in the government that governs the least. The best form of government leaves its people alone, or the people are capable of governing themselves. He regarded government as expedient if it respected its subjects and left them alone or didn't interfere in their lives.

The best government creates conditions for individuals to be at their best. Thoreau believed that one should be aware of what kind of

government is best for them, and if they are aware of this, they will be close to achieving it. Gandhi also believed in a democratic state governed and regulated by the people themselves. In such a democratic state, the use of state machinery and police remains minimal. Gandhi asserted that true democracy lies not in the number of persons who vote and govern, but in the extent to which the masses assimilate the spirit of nonviolence and social service (Singh 1994, p. 155). Gandhi further observed, A nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much state interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic in name'' (p. 156). Gandhi was aware of Thoreau's writing during the formative period of the first satyagraha movement. During ten years, he wrote, "that is, until 1914, there was hardly an issue of Indian Opinion without an article from me" (Hendrick 1970, p. 179). Gandhi recognized what Thoreau had said:

After all, the practical reason why, when power is once in the hands of the people, a majority is permitted, and for a long period, continues to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rules in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? - In which cases do majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever, for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislation? Why does every man have a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first and subjects afterward. The only obligation that I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think is right (Thoreau, p. 5).

Gandhi equated such a position with British Indians in the Transvaal. Gandhi said that it was possible to carry the doctrine of passive resistance too far, but it was equally so with reference to the doctrine of obedience to the law. Speaking about the American government, Gandhi quoted Thoreau: ''If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have friction, and possibly this is enough to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, Let us not have such a machine any longer'' (Thoreau, p. 8). Gandhi further explained, In the Asiatic Registration Act, British Indians have not only

a law that has some evil in it, that is to say, using Thoreau's words, a machine with friction in it, but it is evil legalized, or it represents friction with machinery provided for it. Resistance to such an evil is divine duty (Hendrick 1970, p. 179).

Gandhi considered civil resistance a wider and more comprehensive term than civil disobedience. Civil resistance was a part of satyagraha. Gandhi elaborated, Civil disobedience is a branch of Satyagraha, but all Satyagraha is not civil disobedience'' (Bari 1971, p. 145). Thus, civil disobedience is a civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments. Gandhi organized three major civil disobedience movements in India (1920–22, 1930–34, and 1942). These movements were non-cooperation movements too. In Gandhi's opinion, civil disobedience excluded non-cooperation of the fiercest type. Gandhi stated, '' Non-cooperation in itself is more harmful than civil disobedience, but in its effect it is far more dangerous for the government than civil disobedience (p. 161), but he also believed that civil disobedience was a necessary part of non-cooperation. It implies nonviolent resistance and nonviolent cooperation. Civil disobedience needs discipline, self-suffering, and self-purification, and the condition for a civil resister is that he must pay willing respect to the laws. As Gandhi explained, ''It is only when a person has...obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just and which are unjust and iniquitous. Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances'' (p. 162). Similar to Gandhi, Thoreau's justification is, "It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience to the state than it would be to obey" (p. 162). If civil disobedience leads to anarchy, it may be regarded as criminal disobedience. However, it is difficult to distinguish between civil disobedience, civil resistance, and non-cooperation. All terms are interrelated and closely linked with each other and parts of satyagraha.

In "Resistance to Civil Government," Thoreau emphasized the moral aspects of individualism and conscientiousness. Thoreau, regarding government as a mere 'expedient, insists that there would never be a really free and enlightened state until the state came to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are drawn. Thoreau would have people sometimes serve the state with their consciences as well and so necessarily resist it, especially when the state demanded the perpetration of a wrong. Still, in his statement that "there must be some absolute goodness some place," Thoreau suggested that his apparently

radical outlook was actually consistent with long-established religious values (Source, 1987, p. 220). The idea of civil disobedience had occurred to Gandhi prior to reading Thoreau's essay. However, Gandhi used Thoreau's phrase to describe his struggle against The African authorities to English readers. Gandhi denied the fact that he derived the idea of civil disobedience from Thoreau. In due course, Gandhi substituted the phrase civil resistance in place of civil disobedience. He believed that the phrase civil resistance conveyed the notion of non violence better. However, he kept on regarding civil disobedience as a part of Satyagraha. The same view was applied to non cooperation, '' Non cooperation and civil disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called Satyagraha'' (Richards 1982, p.51).

Thoreau appeared to have seen ethical commitment as the greatest glory of the active mind. He made use of the Unitarian conception of conscience as the God-given spark of divinity in man. Oddly consistent with this conception is the ethical framework of 'A Plea for Captain John Brown,' in which Thoreau presented a radically autonomous individual whose conscientious motives still coincide with established humanitarian and religious values. He commented "When I think of him proceeding reverently, humanely to work, without expecting any reward but a good conscience, it affects me as a sublime spectacle" (p. 220). Thoreau linked "reverently" and "humanely" and later compared Brown to a crucified Christ. He, in some measure, evoked the prescriptive ethics of his Unitarian predecessors while spurning the gradualist approach to the problem of slavery espoused by some (p. 220).

Gandhi also believed that individual dignity was higher than any unmoral law. A truthful man is always happy to follow his conscience. Thus, truth and conscience are the basic features of Satyagraha. Conscience means the ability of a man to perceive and decide about the use of his senses in different circumstances. Gandhi believed that those who have faith in God and soul must admit that their bodies belong to the state to be imprisoned and deported, but their minds, their wills, and their souls must ever remain free like the birds of air and are beyond the reach of the swiftest arrow'' (Bari 1971, p. 145). Thoreau must have felt likewise, "suppose the Government passed a law saying that colored persons shall wear yellow caps. It is for us to make it clear to the Government that we would not obey such a law" (p. 145). He further added "The only obligation which I have a right to assume, Thoreau declared in civil disobedience, is to do at any time what I think right'' (Fischer, p.104). To be right, he insisted, is more honourable than to be law-abiding. Thoreau's democracy was the cult of the minority. ''Why does [the government] not cherish its wise

minority? He cried. ''Why does it always crucify Christ?" (p. 104). Fischer further mentioned that in 1849, Thoreau was thinking of Negro slavery and the invasion of Mexico. He considered all those in the majority who tolerated these measures wrong and regarded himself as right. Could he obey a government that committed such sins? He held that dissent without disobedience was consent and therefore culpable (p. 104). It can be stated that Thoreau described civil disobedience in similar words, as Gandhi understood it. Thoreau wrote:

I know this well, that if one honest men only-ay, if one Honest man, in the State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the country jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission, Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbour, the State's ambassador, who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being threatened with the prison of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister- though at present she can discover only an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her-the Legislature would not wholly waive the subject the following winter (Thoreau, p.16). When Thoreau wrote this paragraph, he propounded the potentiality of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, which Gandhi enlarged upon afterwards as a means to destroy a corrupt state. His single-handed fight against slavery in the United States imbued Gandhi with the faith that number of resisters are not important in the struggle of satyagraha, one the other side, it is purity of intension or spirit of sacrifice. ''Writs are impossible'' Gandhi declared, '' when they are confined to a few recalcitrants. They are troublesome when they have to be executed against many high souled persons who have done no wrong and who refuse payment to vindicate a principle. They may not attract much notice when isolated individuals resort to this method of protest. But clean examples have a curious method of multiplying themselves. They bear publicity and the sufferers instead of incurring odium receive congratulations. Men like Thoreau brought about the abolition of slavery by their personal example'' (Shridharani 1939, pp.167-68).

For Thoreau the final stage in the evolution of the state should be its disappearance, when conditions became such that this would be the

most expedient and the most "proper or suitable'' course of action. He believed that since the State, as a mechanism, can have no purpose in its own right, its end can be none other than the good of its individual citizens, the establishment and preservation of conditions conducive to their self-perfection. This purpose, for Thoreau, had two aspects. 'First, the State exists to protect the individual's freedom? His right to live in the manner he chooses without interference from others. So long as people threatened to interfere with one another's manner of living, an external restraint, unwelcome as it sometimes may be, was needed to protect men and women from the social disorder which might limit their freedom even more if there were no government' (Herr1975, p.473).

Thoreau was arrested for not paying poll-tax. He decided not to accept the wrong which he condemned. As he mentioned in the essay:

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night; and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stones between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confine, and the walls seem a great waste of stone and mortar (Thoreau, p.21).

Gandhi believed that it was good fortune to be in jail and suffer for interests and good name of one's country. He said, '' ...Those who think this way are sure to be convinced that even jail life can be attended with blessings. It solely rests with individuals and their mental attitude to make it one of blessing or otherwise. I trust, however, that the readers of this my second experience of life in the Transvaal jail will be convinced that the real road to ultimate happiness lies in going to jail and undergoing sufferings and privations there in the interest of one's country and religion'' (Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 227).

Gandhi further mentioned that Thoreau could be placed in the similar position for refusing to pay his poll- tax and he expressed this in 1849. Gandhi quoted Thoreau's words in Speeches and Writings, Thoreau said to himself:

I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not feel for a moment confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are under bred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of the stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were nearly all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys if they cannot come to some person against whom they have spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the state was half witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends its foes and I lost all my remaining respect for it and pitied it (p.228).

Gandhian civil disobedience was much more mass oriented and all inclusive than Thoreau's. Thoreau's revolt was a one man affair. As Sushila Nayar in *Salt Satyagrha the Watershed*, mentioned that ''on the morning of 6 April Gandiji and his party, accompanied by some 2000 persons, proceeded to the sea shore, where they bathed. Gandhiji then picked up some salt deposit and announced that the Salt Law was now broken'' (Nayar 1995, p.259). Speaking to a Press representative afterwards, Gandhi said:

Now that a technical or ceremonial breach of the Salt Law has been committed, it is now open to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and whenever it is convenient. My advice is that a worker should everywhere manufacture salt....and instruct villagers to do likewise...Thus the war against salt tax should be continued during the National Week up to the 13th instant. Those who are now engaged in this sacred work should devote themselves to vigorous propaganda for boycott of foreign cloth and use of khaddar.... (260). The Salt Acts were chosen by Gandhi for contravention in general Civil Disobedience Movement because they not only appeared to be basically unjust in themselves, but also because they symbolised an 'unpopular, unrepresentative and alien government' (Tewari 1995, p.94).

To sum up, it can be argued that Thoreau stood at the first milestone of satyagraha. Thoreau focused more on individual civil disobedience, while Gandhi took it from the individual to the masses.

Thoreau's much-cherished dream of black emancipation became reality shortly after his death. While Gandhi translated the idea of civil disobedience into a famous technique of satyagraha over a period of time, step by step.

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Gandhi's unwavering stand: Combating communalism with unity

-Narinder Pal

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi, a pivotal figure in India's independence movement and a staunch advocate for peace and unity, vehemently opposed communalism, recognizing it as a profound threat to the nation's fabric. For Gandhi, communalism was not merely a political challenge but a deep-rooted moral and ethical issue that demanded holistic solutions. He viewed communalism, which divides communities along religious, ethnic, or caste lines, as fundamentally at odds with the principles of truth, non-violence, and mutual respect that he tirelessly promoted throughout his life. Gandhi believed in the universal essence of religious teachings, asserting that all religions, at their core, advocate for love, compassion, and tolerance. He saw communalism as a distortion or misinterpretation of these universal principles, stemming from human ignorance, prejudice, and a lack of understanding. To combat communalism, Gandhi actively engaged in promoting interfaith dialogue, organizing prayer meetings involving members of different religious communities, and advocating for the equal treatment and respect of all religions. His approach was deeply rooted in his commitment to non-violence, persuasion, and moral suasion, believing that individuals and communities could overcome their differences through introspection, empathy, and a genuine commitment to mutual understanding and respect. In conclusion, Mahatma Gandhi's perspective on communalism was shaped by his unwavering dedication to truth, non-violence, and human dignity, emphasizing the importance of unity, tolerance, and mutual respect as foundational to building a harmonious and inclusive society.

Keywords- Mahatma Gandhi, Communalism, Jihad, Non-Violence, Hindu, Muslim, Conversion, Mosque.

Research methodology: The research methodology used for this paper involved document analysis and a comprehensive literature review of primary and secondary sources related to Mahatma Gandhi's views on communalism. Primary sources included Gandhi's writings, speeches,

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letters, and interviews addressing communalism, while secondary sources comprised scholarly articles, books, and biographies providing insights into Gandhi's perspectives on the topic. Qualitative analysis was employed, utilizing thematic analysis to identify and synthesize key themes, arguments, and perspectives presented by Gandhi on communalism. A comparative analysis contextualized Gandhi's views within India's historical and socio-political landscape, examining the influences and distinctions in his stance compared to other contemporary leaders. Lastly, an interpretative approach was used to understand Gandhi's statements and actions in light of his principles of truth, non-violence, and human dignity, exploring how these shaped his strategies for combating communalism and promoting religious harmony.

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi devoted his life to solve the problem of Communalism and foster harmony among communities. When India was celebrating Independence from foreign shackles, there was only one leader Gandhi, working in the villages of Bengal barefoot to promote communal harmony as riots had broken out. Despite gaining independence Gandhi was sad about the partition. This had been formed on the divisive basis of religion.

In 1915, Gandhi had come back to India from South Africa after 20 years of struggle against British government. His political guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale advised him to extensively tour India for better understanding of ground situation. During his travels he understood socio-economic conditions of India and recognized that the Nation was full of diversity with different religions and languages. He wanted to foster unity among them. He observed that disputes often occurred between Hindus and Muslims. Riots took place when Muslims slaughtered cows and Hindus played music near the mosque. The relations between these two communities were continuously embittered by prejudice, mutual fear and suspicion. The British took advantage. Gandhiji thought that the British were responsible for this disharmony (Majumdar 2003).

Mahatma Gandhi selected Communalism as an issue in his Constructive Programme. He wrote and spoke extensively on the communalism subject. Gandhi was a Hindu by religion, but this never reflected in his work or his sincerity. Even his opponents do not doubt it. Gandhi and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad both showed convincingly that being religious does not mean being communal. Both of them were profoundly religious and yet as much secular. Mahatma Gandhi and

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad rooted secularism in indigenous religio-cultural practices. For them it was not an alien and western concept. Mahatma Gandhi proudly described himself as being a Sanatani Hindu and yet he remained secular (Gandhi 2013).

"If we look at India's past, one would realise that before the British came Hindus and Muslims lived together peacefully and harmoniously. They were good neighbours celebrating their festivals together and supporting each other during critical circumstances. Hindu rulers appointed Muslims to high posts and Muslim princes honoured and gave responsible positions to Hindus" (Majumdar 2003).

Politics divided these communities, Gandhiji tried hard to create communal harmony throughout his life. He emphasised on practice of universal brother and religion. He conducted prayer meetings and promoted tolerance. Respect all religions was his message. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Jews should live as one nation and not as followers of different religions.

Gandhi got disturbed whenever he heard about communal riots and violence. He immediately started to normalize the situation by putting moral pressure on the rioters and converting their heart by methods such as fasting, satyagraha, walking barefoot, speeches etc. "Be it Noakhali, be it great killings of Calcutta or killings in Delhi, the Mahatma rushed to the scene to save the situation and did save it" (Gandhi 2013).

Gandhiji was blamed for his inability to stop partition of the country but it would be unfair to blame only Gandhiji for this. The forces leading to partition were too complex and no one individual can be blamed for it. The failure had to be shared by entire leadership of the Congress. No single individual could have stopped the partition (Gandhi 2013). It was only Mahatma who was not in the race for Power, while the other leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru of congress and Jinnah of Muslim League were desperate for power hence the blame inflicted on Gandhi was unjustified.

Gandhi tried to understand the phenomenon of communalism. He said, "WHILST…. I can make room in my mind for various schools of thought, for me there is only one way, I have no faith in communalism even as a stage; or perhaps better still, I have no fitness for work on that stage" (Gandhi 2013). He further added, "It would be wrong always to think in communal terms. I know that we may not shut our eyes to hard facts. But to attribute everything to the communal spirit is a sign of

inferiority complex. It may well perpetuate what is yet a temporary distemper in the national life" (Gandhi 2013).

Gandhi was of the view that this hatred of communalism will destroy the Nation. He said, "Communalism of the virulent type is a recent growth. The lawlessness is a monster with many faces. It hurts all, in the end, including those who are primarily responsible for it". Gandhi knew the importance of bringing these communities with separated interests together. The animosity of Islam and Hinduism will grow at the cost of national unity. Divisive thoughts were meaningless and foolish in the eyes of Gandhi which served no purpose. "The Hindu thinks that in quarrelling with the Mussalman he is benefiting Hinduism; and the Mussalman thinks that in fighting a Hindu, he is benefiting Islam. But each is ruining his faith". Gandhi worked to educate the people about this fact, because he was sure that as soon as people realize the futility of fighting in the name of religion the communal violence will be vanished (Rao 1994).

For a better understanding of Gandhi's view on communalism, we need to understand his theory of Religion, because in India communal division was based on Religion. Gandhi's religion was something which gave strength to humanity, which guided one in every walk of life. It promoted Truth, Love, Compassion, Humanity, Peace, Morality, Selfless service, Universal Brotherhood. No true religion in the world could promote and teach hate and violence. In India, people despite being deeply religious in nature tended to be still sparked by communal tensions among the communities. Gandhi clarified that, "Religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind them, it is a misfortune that, today, they are so distorted that they have become a potent cause of strife and mutual slaughter". (Gandhi 1940) Religion without ethics and morality was not a religion for Gandhi. He said, "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiments when it is not immoral" (Gandhi 1920). "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other.

"There is no religion higher than truth and righteousness' (Bose 1996). Gandhi laid emphasis on Love, Truth, innocence, moral values and compassion. If Religion lose its moral base, it will no longer be religion. "To revile one another's religion, to make reckless statements, to utter untruth, to break the heads of innocent men, to desecrate temples or mosques, is a denial of God" (Rao 1994). Religion is means for spiritual upliftment not a tool to promote sectarianism and division among men. He added, "By religion, I do not mean formal religion or

customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions which brings us face to face with our maker". Religion was tool for Gandhi to purify one's soul (Kumarappa 2002).

Gandhi's conception of religion is focused on self-purification. Practices like going to temples, performing rituals, chanting mantras, performing yajnas, reading religious scriptures etc. meant nothing in Gandhi's religion.Gandhi added rationality to everything he preached during his lifetime. He said "if any action of mine, claimed to be spiritual is proved to be unpractical, it must be pronounced to be a failure. I do believe that the most spiritual act is the most practical in the true sense of the term" (Gandhi 1939).

Gandhi's religion was based on spirituality, morality, universal brotherhood, service to humanity, believe in truth and unity. He not only preached these values but he also practiced them in his day-to-day life. Infact his politics was not separate from his religion. Even though Gandhi called himself *Sanatanic* Hindu and believed in scriptures he never had any faith in superstitions and in the customs without logic. He worked for eradication of evils from Hinduism throughout his life. Gandhi's interpretation of religion and his study of scriptures made him understand the real problem and issues behind communal tensions.The essence of true religion is Love and every religion of world promotes harmony and peace. "It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends, but to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business" (Rao 1994).

Religion according to Gandhi was a personal matter which should have no place in politics. He said, 'If there is only one God, should there not be only one religion? This is a strange question. Just as a tree has a million leaves, similarly, though, God is one, there are as many religions as there are men and women though they are rooted in one God. We do not see this plain truth because we are followers of different prophets and claim as many religions as there are prophets. As a matter of fact, whilst I believe myself to be a Hindu know that I do not worship God in the same manner as any one or all of them" (Gandhi 2013).

Gandhi was tolerant towards all religions. He said, "I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For, my father and mother would visit the haveli as also Shiva's and Ram's temples, and would take or send us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father, and would even go out of their way to accept food from us non-Jains. They

would have talks with my father on subjects' religion and mundane". He further added he had Mussalman and Parsi friends, would talk to him about their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect and interest (Gandhi 2013).

Gandhi put forth that the need of the moment was not one's religion, but tolerance and mutual respect of the followers of the different religions. "We want to reach not the dead level, but unity in diversity. Any attempt to root out traditions, effect of heredity, climate and other surroundings is not only bound to fail, but is a sacrilege. The soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. The latter will persist to the end of time. Wise men will ignore the outward crust and see the same soul living under a variety of crusts" (Gandhi 1927).

Gandhi said, "I plead for the broadest toleration and I am working to that end. I ask people to examine every religion from the point of view of the religionists themselves. I do not expect the India of my dream to develop one religion, i.e., to be wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian, or wholly Mussalman, but I want to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another". Differences are important for better world but it should not make you enemy of humanity (Gandhi 1927).

Major issues of conflict between Hindus and Muslims

Cow slaughter

Cow slaughter has been considered as a major issue of conflict between the two communities. The Hindus considered cow as sacred while Muslims slaughtered it for beef for their festivals. Communities had no clear understanding on the issue. It has been considered as dead-knot by writers. Gandhi came forward with a rational approach and proposed settlement between both the communities on peaceful terms.

Hindus considered it as their prime duty to protect cows. Being a Hindu Gandhi also considered it as his responsibility but he rejected any sought of violence. For Gandhi, "cow protection is the dearest possession of the Hindu heart. It is the one concrete belief common to all Hindus. No one who does not believe in cow-protection can possibly be a Hindu…. Cow worship means to me worship of innocence. Cow protection means the protection of weak and helpless… cow protection means brotherhood between man and beast". The cow protection is the protection of the dump and the deaf (Gandhi 2013).

From ancient times cow was the symbol of wealth, prosperity and worshipped. People were dependent on cows for milk and dairy products and for sustaining life, moreover Hindu scriptures have made

cow as Sacro scent. On the other hand, Muslims slaughter cow as a part of their religious observances, while the Hindus considers it as attack on their religion and they react violently. This became an important issue among both communities. Gandhi wanted to solve the issue so he asked Hindus to be patient and peaceful while dealing with the matter. He warned Hindus, "it is futile to expect that our violence will ever compel Mohammedens to refrain from cow killing" (Gandhi 1921).

At times it was observed that Muslims were beaten and forced to dispose the cows and goats in their custody because of religion. These kinds of violent acts were the causes of clashes between the communities. The Hindus engaged in violence, Gandhi considered as enemy of Hinduism and cows. "To attempt cow protection by violence is to reduce Hinduism to Satanism and to prostitute to a base end, the grand significance of cow protection" (Rao 1994). Gandhi preached that it was not Hinduism which killed our brothers the Muslims in the name of cow protection. He also emphasised on changing the heart of Muslims in this regard. As far as Muslims are concerned, they could not be blamed or forced to stop this practice of cow protection if they did not consider it a sin by themselves.

Gandhi focused on the idea of *satyagraha* for cow protection. He asked Hindus to sacrifice themselves in place of cows but not to harm any Muslim in the act of saving a cow. This would change the heart of Muslims and they would stop cow slaughter. Gandhi said, "If he would not listen to me, I should let the cow go for the simple reason that the matter is beyond my ability. If I were overfull of pity for the cow, I should sacrifice my life to save her but not to take my brother's. This I hold is the law of our religion" (CWMG 1996).

The societies for cow protection like *GaurakshiniSabhas*of Punjab, Bombay, Bengal, Bihar had also complicated the situation. "In the name of the so-called societies, fanatics began to forcefully object to the Muslims from killing the cows. The action resulted in counter reactions and more killing of cows. In these circumstances Gandhi blamed the cow protection societies as cow killing societies" (Gandhi 1921).

Gandhi was of the view, any movement started by Hindus for protecting the cows, without whole hearted Mussalman co-operation is doomed to failure (Afaque 1986). He said, "The very Hindus who quarrel with Muslims because they slaughter the cow for the beef, she gives are not ashamed to accept the mastery of the English who are known to be beef-eaters in a sense in which the Muslims never are". He asked Hindus to take care of the *Gaushalas*, which were in

deteriorated condition because of lack of care. In this situation if you are blaming your fellow brothers for hurting your religious sentiments that's not Hinduism (Ben 2014).

For cow protection Gandhi also requested Muslims to voluntarily abstain from cow killing. He wanted Muslims of India who were living in India from centuries to make a gift to Hindus by leaving this tradition of cow slaughter. He questioned Muslims that Islam had never compelled people to kill cows and hurt feeling of their immediate neighbours. Gandhi's strategy was if he can convince any one of two communities from their practices, he could save the clashes.

Conversion

Religion is a personal issue one can opt for any religion one likes. But conversion from one religion to another became a serious cause for communalism, as the communities felt weakened through conversion. Hindus and Muslims had lived peacefully through centuries, both adopted and assimilated each other's customs, traditions, rituals, superstitions, faiths, beliefs. With the advent of British and with the beginning of revivalist movements in the name of Nationalism disturbances emerged as a matter of dispute between two communities.

The conversion was normally described as "as formal or ritualistic affiliation of a person to a different faith by one means or another, say by preaching merely or even by force or fraud or material inducement" (Ben 2014). The movements like *Shuddhi, Sangathan* and *Tablighi, Tanzim* etc. both by Hindus and Muslims created hatred for each other. The Arya Samajist movement to bring back Hindus converted to Islam and the Muslims attempt to stop them through the *Tablighi* movement further created polarization in society.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted to control the situation on this matter and asked both the communities to abstain from the practice of conversion. He said, "it is impossible for me to reconcile myself to the idea of conversion after the style that goes on in India and elsewhere today" (Rao 1994). He added, "I am against conversion, whether it is known as *Shuddhi* by Hindus, '*Tablighi*' by Mussalman or proselytizing by Christians". For Gandhi conversion was a heart process, conversions in the name of religion was irreligious (Gupta 2000).

Gandhi stated, "I am then not against conversions. But I am against the modern methods of it. Conversion nowadays has become a matter of business like any other. I remember having read a missionary report saying how much it cost per head to convert and then presenting a budget for 'the next harvest" (Gandhi 1937). Gandhi emphasised on purity of

one's means in the matter of conversion. If one genuinely wanted to change his life and means and only way left was conversion it should not be denied. Gandhi wrote… "those who believe in it have a perfect right to follow their own course without let or hindrance, so long as it is kept within limits i.e., so long as there is no force no fraud nor material inducement and so long as the parties are free agents and of mature age and understanding" (Kher 2003). "Cases of real honest conversion are quite possible. If some people for their inward satisfaction and growth change their religion let them do so". (Gandhi 2004)

For Gandhi conversion was a mere transfer of heart from sin to God, it can only be possible with the will of God. Use of force, riches and other means of conversion were untruthful for him. For Gandhi…

- all religions are true

- all religions have some error in them

- all religions were almost as dear to him as his own Hinduism in as much as all human begins should be as dear to one as one's own close relatives. His own veneration for other faiths was the same as that for his own faith; therefore, no thought of conversion was possible (Gandhi 2004).

Gandhi considered conversion propagandas as fake. Gandhi proclaimed that Hinduism did not have any concept of conversion. God would not promote bloodshed and hatred in the name of conversion. Gandhi saw *Shuddhi* movement as, "The real *Shuddhi* movement should consist in each one trying to arrive at perfection in his or her own faith" (Gandhi 1928). For Gandhi *Shuddhi* movement was not the concept of Hinduism because Hindu religious scriptures don't sanction any such re-conversions. Gandhi maintained that there was no need to reconvert a person who had gone over to some other religion and who now repented his having done so. He came to belong to his original faith by the very act of repentance (Kripalani 2002). The communalists who were spreading hatred in the name of religion on the basis that their religion is in danger were hiding malpractices prevalent in their faith. For Gandhi real issues which needed to be addressed were caste discrimination, untouchability, false rituals, superstitions etc.

Islam for Gandhi did not support any forceful conversion to the faith. On various occasions he quoted from *Quran* which said use of force is inhuman for conversion. The Holy book in the clearest language possible said that: There was no compulsion in religion. According to Gandhi no Mussalman had ever approved of compulsion (Kripalani

2002). Islam would cease to be a world religion, if it were to rely up on force for its propagation.In connection with the compulsion used in reciting *'Kalma'*, Gandhi said that forcible repetition of a formula could not make a non-Muslim into a Muslim. It only shamed Islam (Gupta 2000). In Gandhi's views same was for Christianity, "The influences exerted in our times are far more subtle than that of the sword" (Gandhi 1921). Gandhi claimed that none of religious books sanctions use of force for conversion.

Gandhi enunciated that anyone wanted to propagate one's religion should do by their life not by force and influence. The task for every religious man should be to convert a Hindu to a better Hindu, Muslim to a better Muslim, Christian to a better Christian. The proselytization efforts of Christian missionaries by means of monetary and other favours were also a wrong method of conversion. He was fundamentally opposed to proselytization particularly with a view to raising the numerical strength of a community. (Gandhi 1946) Even if a Christian was impressed by the reading of *Bhagavat Gita* and he wanted to adopt Hinduism, Gandhi said he would say no to him as what the *Bhagwat Gita* offered the Bible also offered (Gandhi 1920).

Gandhi praised the services of Christion Missionaries to the society but he was also critical of their methods. They provided educational, medical and humanitarian services to convert people to their faith which was a sin. This could be equaled to use of force by Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi wrote in Young India-

"If instead of continuing themselves purely to humanitarian work such as education, medical services to the poor and the like, they would use these activities of them for the purpose of proselytizing, I would certainly like them to withdraw. Every nation considers its own faith to be as good as that of any other. Certainly, the great faiths held by the people of India are adequate for her people. India stands in no need of conversion from one faith to another" (Chakravarthi 1986).

Gandhi even criticized his son for conversion because it lacked change of heart and truth. But he hoped that his son will understand what true spirituality was. For Gandhi if you truly understand the meaning of religion then there was no need for these kinds of conversions. Truth, selfless service to society and harmony was the only way to solve the conversion problem.

Noise before mosques

This has always been a major cause of communal tensions between the two communities. The Muslims blamed Hindus for playing music

before mosque and they tried to stop them with force causing communal riots. The act had been generated by some fundamentalists to create hatred among the communities. The main issue was when Hindus started there Arti while Muslims commenced their prayers. Gandhi blamed both communities for the above problem. He admitted that no Hindu ritual was performed without music but he felt this was not necessary if the Muslims were being affected. For Muslims also use of force for such an act was also not appreciable. Gandhi considered it unnecessary to use music before passing a mosque. "A Hindu may not insist on playing music whilst passing a mosque. He may not even quote precedents in his own or any other place for the sake of playing the music. It is not a matter of vital importance for him to play music whilst passing a mosque" (Tendulkar 1951). "As a Hindu I will certainly advice the Hindus without any bargaining spirit to consult the sentiments of their Mussalman neighbours and wherever they can, accommodate them" (Kher 2002).

Gandhi suggested Culture and good breeding required that they should observe silence when others saying their prayers. There should be mutual respect. All worship the same God whatever their religion (Gandhi 1921). Only by mutual understanding and by discussion we could solve the issue, if Muslims need silence while praying is the duty of every Hindu to provide them. "Every semblance of irritation must be avoided" (Prabhu 2004).

Muslims also need to follow the path of co-existence. This was possible if they follow self-retrain and made efforts to befriend Hindus. Islam is a religion which preach unity and brotherhood. The Muslims therefore if able to win confidence of their Hindu brothers they would stop playing music before mosques. Use of violence will only make matters worse, "And just as the Hindus cannot compel the Mussalmans to refrain from killing cows, so can the Mussalmans compel the Hindus to stop music or 'arti' at the point of the sword. They must trust to the good sense of the Hindus" (Gandhi 1946).

Religious misconceptions

The Hindus and Muslims could not co-exist was propagated by the some of the leaders for selfish political interest. The people of the time being illiterate were given false interpretations of the religious theories and notions, according to political and conservative needs. The fundamentalists of all the communities tried to compartmentalize the minority and majority question.

Kafir

Gandhi defined *kafir* as, "*kafir* means a non-believer – Hindus are not *Kafirs* because they believe in one God" (Afaque 1986). The misconception of killing the *Kafirs* was not promoted by Islam this is the work of fundamentalists. Gandhi throughout his life remained in the midst of Mussalmans. He said, "I had been in the midst of *moulavis* in Noakhali. Learned Muslims have told me that the meaning of the particular verse of the Quran is that, God will take into account the non-believer who can also be a Mussalman" (Rao 1994). Gandhi rejected the theories about Muslims that they are intolerant, violent, fundamentalists, fanatics etc., these were just the misconceptions spread by Hindus for their interests. Gandhi interpreted Islam as, "Islam means peace. That peace cannot be confined to the Muslims. It must mean peace for the whole world" (Rao 1994).

In Islam there was only one God that is *Allah,* in Hindus there are many Gods like *Ram, Rahim, Shiv, Krishan, Vishnu* etc. This remained a matter of dispute between both the communities. He stated that Hinduism is essentially a monotheistic religion. Gandhi made *Upanishadic* message as base of his theory, '*Ekamsat,VipraVahudaVadanti',* which means supreme god is only one which may have different manifestations according to his thought. Gandhi felt Islam believed in oneness of God but Hinduism also focused on the same. However, names could be different but eternal power will remain same. For Gandhi, "All religions enjoin the worship one God who is all pervasive. He is present even in a droplet of water or in a tiny speck of dust" (Rao 1994). Gandhi being a Hindu was never ashamed of his traditions he wrote,"A Muslim friend told me that Hindus and Muslims cannot be one, for whereas the Muslims believe in one God only, the Hindus worship trees stones and animals. If this is so, it is still a better argument in favour of unity. For all these have been created by God and hence we worship them all" (Gandhi 1940).

Idol worship

Idol worshipping was another issue of conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Islam rejects this practice of Hindus, Gandhi being a *Sanatan*Hindu declared that it cannot be separated from his faith. Gandhi did not consider it as uncivilized practice. Gandhi explained, "But it is not the stone image which they worship but the God within, without whom not a particle of matter exists. If a devotee sees God in an image, it is not a thing for anyone to cavil at". (Rao 1978) "The idol worshipers see God in the stone image. God is omnipresent. If it is wrong to seek God in a stone, how is it right to seek him in a book

called the *Gita,* the *GranthSaheb* or the Koran? Is not that idol worship? By cultivating tolerance and respect, they will be able to learn from all" (M. Behn 1959). Gandhi defended the practice of Idol worship that it was in no way against Islam. Gandhi questioned Muslims and Christians, "Are not*Masjid* or Churches in reality the same as '*Mandirs*'?" (Gandhi 1947).

According to Gandhi, "An idol worshipper sees God's existence (in everything) and even in a stone and, therefore takes the help of a stone to establish his union with God…. This play of imagination is permissible and healthy…." (Gandhi 1948). He differentiated between idolatry and idol worshipping, according to Gandhi there is only one eternal power so, finding sacredness in objects and places is common in humans.

Jihad

'Jihad' is another concept which is interpreted in both the communities- Hindus and Muslims. The term is wrongly interpreted and propagated by some communalists for their selfish interests. They often create fearful stories about the term *Jihad*, resulting in antagonism among Hindus. Gandhi was well versed in Quran, he revealed that Quran only permitted violence to protect Mosques, women and children. Gandhi stated, "The Koran says that there can be no heaven for one who sheds the blood of an innocent neighbour" (Rao 1994). According to saying of the prophet, the most excellent *Jihad* is that for the conquest of the self.

Hindu scriptures

Gandhi criticized those who wrongly interpreted Hindu religious scriptures like *Mahabharata*, he said, "it is contented that the *Mahabharata* advocated the way of retaliation. I do not agree with this interpretation. The lesson of *Mahabharata* is that the victory of sword is no victory. The great book teaches that the victory of *Pandavas* was an empty nothing" (Rao 1994). For Gandhi *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are not wars which promote violence and bloodshed rather they promote good over evil. Gandhi criticized those who use scriptures to promote violence and hatred in society just for their benefits. Hinduism only knew love and tolerance, so many religions like Christianity, Muslims, Zoroastrians etc. reached India and Hinduism absorbed them all. Gandhi was staunch follower of Non-Violence, so he found it in every religion. He was of the view Islam also promoted non-violence, "My associations with the noblest of Mussalmans has trust me to see that Islam has spread not by the power of the sword, but by the prayerful love of an unbroken line of its saints and *fakirs*" (Rao 1994).

Slogans

The Muslim slogan '*Allah-hu-Akbar*' in the areas where Hindus are in minority was seen with fear, in counter to this Hindus also shouted '*Vandematram*' and '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*'. Gandhi finds nothing offensive and provocative in all these slogans. Gandhi described all the slogans according to his understanding, '*Allah-hu-Akbar*' means 'God only is great'. He explained '*Vandematram*' and '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*' as a respect and gratitude to mother India. He explained, Hindu should not object to the shouting of *Allah-O-Akbar*, nor should the Muslims object to '*Vandematram*'. The two slogans were however, somewhat different. One of them was political and other was religious. He suggested that Muslim should be free to worship mother *Kali* and Hindus should go to the *Masjid* with equal freedom (Gandhi 1946). Regarding slogan of '*Vandematram*' he suggested, "I plead that it should be sung together by all on due occasion. It should never be a chant to insult or offend the Muslims. It is to be remembered that, it is the cry that had fired political Bengal. Many Bengalis have given up their lives for political freedom with that cry on their lips" (Rao 1990).

Gandhi focused on the need for communal harmony which could only be attained by reading one's religious scriptures and not by criticizing others. One should adopt all the good habits of Muslims instead of fighting."No propaganda can be allowed which reviles others religion… The best way to dealing with such propaganda is to publicly condemn it" (M. Behn 1959).

Majority-minority issue

Majority-Minority issue has been always a big issue of dispute between communities in India. This card was played by Politicians to increase their vote banks. They simply instigate minorities for their support against majorities. They use fear as tool to promote hatred. Gandhi opines this problem was only because of insecurity among Muslims and Hindus distrust in Muslim's Patriotism. Gandhi states, "many Hindus distrust Mussalmans honesty. They believe that *swaraj* means Mussalman raj…Mussalman on the other hand fear that the Hindus, being an over whelming majority will smother them" (Rao 1994).

Gandhi was against separate electorates to minorities, as this promoted separatism. "The Mussalmans fear the Hindu majority, because the Hindus, they say have not always treated them with Justice, have not respected their religious prejudices and because, they say, the Hindus are superior to them in education and wealth" (Gandhi 1924). This resulted in fear and insecurities for minorities creating polarization in society. Hindus

also believe that the Muslims did not participate in their national movements and protests against Britishers but this conception is wrong. However, Gandhi felt they are your neighbours not outsiders, sticking to past will only make present worst.

Mutual trust and co-operation could help to remove fear among minorities. Gandhi said, "The majority must therefore, make the beginning and thus inspire the minorities with confidence in their bonafides. Adjustment is possible only when the more powerful take the initiative without waiting for response from the weaker" (CWMG 1996). If both wants to live in peace Gandhi suggested, "that voluntary surrender on the part of either community – preferably by the majority community – of all rights and privileges would immediately effect this unity" (Afaque 1986). Mahatma insisted on Non-Violence to bring peace and trust to make a better society.

Gandhi on secularism

Gandhi was firm believer in the idea of religious tolerance – "*sarvadharmasamabhavana*". Gandhi respected all religions and he wanted a secular government of Independent India. Despite partition and riots Gandhi's determination for a secular Nation did not waver. Bapu said, "a nation does not belong to any particular religion or sect. It should be absolutely independent of either religion or sect. Every person should be free to follow the religion of his choice" (Gandhi 1924). "India will be a secular state and it will have nothing to do with a particular religion… Even if India had been inhabited by members of one community only, even then India should be a secular state" (Gandhi 1931).

Gandhi had a clear picture of secularism. The state should separate public matters from religious matters and treat all religion on the basis of equality without any bias. Gandhi opined, "the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Christians, the Paris and the Jews should be Indians first and Indians last. Religion is the personal affair of each individual. It must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs" (M. Behn 1959). According to Gandhi. "I swear my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it" (Radhakrishnan 1992).

Gandhi was firmly against the religious educational institutions funded by state. "The state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrances… so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of the land. There should be no missionary effort, but no mission could enjoy the patronage of the state as it did during the foreign regime" (Gandhi 1947). Gandhi was of the opinion that those religious institutions who were dependent on state for funds did not pursue true religion. (Gandhi 2004)

Gandhi's solution to the problem of communalism was mutual trust, cooperation, voluntary self-suffering, self-surrender, ignoring the misinterpretations, respect for other people etc. Gandhi was against those who promoted hatred and polarization in society for their selfish political ends. He was a '*Sanatan*' Hindu but he looked objectively at his own religion and took into consideration positive aspects of other religions. Mishra in his work has praised Gandhi as a, "a true Hindu, a true Indian, and a truly secular person. For Gandhi, public life without spirituality, without religious faith, and without truth, non- violence, compassion and sacrifice was barren: It would only generate '*Adharma*'. He was spiritual and secular at the same time" (Mishra 1996).

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's unwavering stand against communalism serves as a timeless beacon of inspiration, emphasizing the paramount importance of unity, tolerance, and mutual respect in fostering a harmonious society. Gandhi perceived communalism not merely as a political challenge but as a profound moral and ethical dilemma, rooted in human ignorance, prejudice, and a distortion of universal religious principles advocating for love, compassion, and tolerance. His strategy for combating communalism was multifaceted, grounded in his unwavering commitment to truth, non-violence, and human dignity. Gandhi actively championed interfaith dialogue and understanding, organizing prayer meetings involving diverse religious communities to foster mutual respect and bridge divides. He advocated for the equal treatment of all religions, emphasizing the shared essence of their teachings. Central to Gandhi's approach was his belief in the transformative power of non-violence, persuasion, and moral suasion, asserting that individuals and communities could transcend their differences through introspection, empathy, and a genuine commitment to mutual understanding. Gandhi's legacy continues to resonate today, urging us to uphold these principles as we navigate the complexities of our diverse and interconnected world, striving for peace, solidarity, and the realization of a more inclusive and compassionate future

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Lok Sabha election 2024: Understanding the voting pattern and electoral issues in Himachal Pradesh

-Ayush Ranta

ABSTRACT

This article attempts to understand why Himachal Pradesh was the State in North India to have bucked the overall positive mood of the region in favour of the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Explaining the Parliamentary Verdict in Mountainous State in 2024 Lok Sabha elections and 2024 Assembly Bye-elections, this article tries to ascertain the possible reasons for the Congress Parties Dismal showing in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the state. The article also tries to explain how the voters managed to defy the tradition that the party ruling in Shimla has almost always had an advantage in the Lok Sabha elections that have followed. Himachal's Politics has been characterized by the bipolar competition between the Congress and the BJP and factionalism between these two parties is another factor that influences the electoral outcome that led to the Assembly By-elections on 6 seats in the state. This paper examines the verdict of the Lok Sabha elections by providing a clear reading of the vote share and seats and their statistical significance, and to go into, and works towards answering questions like, what kind of voting choices are getting reflected in the way people have given expression to their political preferences in this election of hill state?

Key Words: Lok Sabha Elections, 2024, Congress, BJP, Factionalism, Bye-Elections, Himachal Pradesh.

Introduction

The 18th Lok Sabha elections marked a return to coalition government, with no party reaching the 272-seat majority. The BJP, led by Narendra Modi, secured 240 seats, a notable decrease from its 2019 count of 303. Despite this, the NDA won over 290 seats, with key partners JD(U) and TDP securing 12 and 16 seats respectively. The Congress nearly doubled its 2019 tally, reaching 99 seats and re-establishing itself as a significant force in Indian politics, though still a distant second (Gupta 2024). A decade after Modi's party reinstated single-party dominance, India now faces a coalition on both sides of the government-opposition divide. Mehta (2024) notes that the elections have restored a finer balance

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of power, creating a deeply competitive political system that enhances checks, balances, and accountability. Previously, BJP victories were attributed to consolidating Hindutva identity and broadening its social base to include OBCs and Dalits while rendering the minority vote irrelevant. However, these strategies have waned in this election, with evidence suggesting Dalits are shifting towards the INDIA alliance, and minorities are resolute in supporting Congress and SP, while the BJP's appeal in the Hindi Heartland has diminished. Yadav (2024) analyzes the outcome by distinguishing between the "*formal logic of numbers*" and the "*political logic of mandate*." According to Yadav, while the formal logic confirms the BJP as the largest party and entitled to form government, the political logic suggests the BJP has lost the mandate in three respects: securing fewer than 300 seats constitutes a moral defeat, fewer than 272 seats a political defeat, and fewer than 250 seats a personal defeat for Modi. Palshikar (2024) notes that after two terms with an unfettered majority, the BJP may need support to secure a third term, presenting three challenges: a reduced strength in Lok Sabha unless it increases its seat tally through financial means, a robust vote share around 38 percent making it unrealistic to view this as a defeat, and the necessity for internal and external compromises to govern effectively for five years—something its leadership struggles with. Pai (2024) describes this as the victory of "*Mandal over Mandir*," noting that for the first time since 2014, the BJP couldn't leverage communal rhetoric to overshadow social and economic discontent. Key factors include the formation of the INDIA bloc by the resurgent SP, Rahul Gandhi's improved image, growing dissatisfaction with Yogi Adityanath's government, especially among Dalits and OBCs, and the poor state of UP's economy disproportionately affecting the disadvantaged. Varshney (2024) identifies three critical imperatives from the 2024 election results: a significant disapproval of the prime minister's hubris, notably his claim of being divinely chosen; curtailment of Hindu Nationalism, evidenced by the BJP's loss in Faizabad and an 8 percent vote loss in its ideological stronghold, Uttar Pradesh; and a desire to defend constitutional values, particularly affirmative actions and citizens' dignity. Madhav (2024) highlighted the positives for NDA and BJP in the 2024 elections, noting significant gains in the east and south. The BJP's vote share in Kerala Increased by over 3 percent to 16 percent. In Telangana, its seats doubled with a vote share rising from 19 percent to 35 percent, and in Tamil Nadu, the vote share grew from 3 percent to 12 percent. The BJP's most significant achievement was winning the Odisha assembly elections and forming a government there for the first time. Additionally, the party's performance in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Gujarat was formidable.

The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections in Himachal Pradesh present a paradox. While the electoral support base of the BJP saw a decline at the national level in India, it has been re-enforced and consolidated in Himachal Pradesh. The voters of Himachal Pradesh have usually, moved with the political mood of India in the past few trends as elections to the Lok Sabah are concerned (in 2014 and 2019). However, the year 2024 by no means fits this pattern. Going against the national trends Himachal Pradesh came out strongly for BJP. Bhartiya Janata party won 4 out of the 4 Lok Sabha Seats in the state that too with a huge victory margin on almost all the seats. The previous two elections to the Lok Sabha in the state followed a similar pattern of BJP winning all 4 seats in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections as well. The trends indicated the BJPs party ascendance in the hill state for the Lok Sabha elections. The other contender to gain power was the state's ambitious and aggressive Congress, driven by the national ambition or prospects of eventually emerging as the ruling party in the country has been spurred on by its recent success and launching an anti-BJP campaign at the national level and able to revive itself with the 99 seats, almost double to its previous victory of 52 seats in the 2019 elections. However, the Congress party was not able to win a single seat in Himachal Pradesh, though saw an increase in its vote share. In the 2019 election congress party polled 27.52 percent of votes in its favour, which rose to about 41.67 percent in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which shows an improvement but the party was not able to improve its seats tally in the state.The election results turned out as a nightmare to the ruling congress party in the state with the electoral humiliation, being a party in power in the state. The electoral politics in Himachal Pradesh witnessed a reversal of the past trend and this indicates that there was a wave for change and alongside the national trend the people of Himachal Pradesh also cast their choice in favour of the BJP. Thus, consolidating the "second dominant party system" in the Lok Sabha elections of state after 2009.

Political and social landscape of Himachal Pradesh

Before getting into the numbers game, it is important to look at some of the key features of Himachal Pradesh which have in some ways shaped its electoral politics over the last four decades. The mainly Hindi-speaking state has 0.6 percent of the total population of India (Census of India 2011). In demographic terms, 58 percent of the state forms the non-tribal belt and consists of 97 percent of the total population. The rest of the area (42 percent) in the state belongs to the tribal belt and accounts for only 3 percent of Himachal's population. To begin with,Himachal Pradesh represents a society that needs hope and is

trying hard to speed up the process of economic growth and has shown some great results over the years. As a political region, Himachal Pradesh has a rather short history. It was only during the post-independence period that it acquired a unified political character. As an administrative region, it was born in 1948 when 30 erstwhile princely states were integrated into a single "centrally administered territory" (Jodhka 2015, pp. 60-61). In the starting phase after independence, Himachal Pradesh was caught in all sorts of contradictions, both structural and behavioral. With a total area of 55,673 sq. Km. Population of around 68,56,773 lakh forms 0.57 percent of India's Population, with a density of 123 persons per sq. km. given the fact that over 40 percent of the landed area in Himachal Pradesh is forested. Males are 50.74 percent. Himachal Pradesh has a high concentration of upper caste consisting of 33 percent Rajputs and 18 percent Brahmans, and not so sizeable but still a good number of SC and ST populations 25 and 5 percent respectively. Other Backward Caste (OBC) also makes up 13 percent of the state's population, mainly residing in the Kangra district of the state. Close to 90 percent (89.97%) of the population live in rural areas, and 10.04 percent of Himachali's live in urban areas, the lowest of all states of India. Further more than two-thirds of the main workers in Himachal Pradesh are employed in the primary sector of the economy. People are agricultural labourers who work on the cultivable land used for food production. In terms of literacy, 82.80 percent of the population of the state is literate, of that, male literacy stands at 89.53 percent while female literacy is at 75.93 percent (Census 2011).

Reversal of the past trend (2024 election, a comparative view)

The state which has four parliamentary seats—Shimla (SC reserved), Mandi, Kangra, and Hamirpur—saw a direct face-off yet again between the BJP and the Congress in 2024, with the former winning three Lok Sabha seats (it retained Hamirpur, Shimla, Kangra and Mandi in comparison to 2019 elections).While the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) also contested all the seats, it was unable to make any inroads (despite a significant presence of Dalits in the state) in the solid two-party competition that has now come to be associated with Himachal, especially during the Lok Sabha elections and even State assembly elections (Chauhan & Ghosh 2004, pp. 5505-5507). In terms of vote share, the BJP and Congress accounted for over 95 percent of the valid votes polled and the difference in the vote share between the two was about fourteen percentage points in BJP's favour.

The 2024 Lok Sabha election result in Himachal Pradesh was a clear continual of the verdict that was delivered by the voters five years

earlier in 2019. Then it was the Same BJP, which had won four seats and the Congress none, but with a higher vote gap of 42.2 percentage in 2019 and 14.77 percentage points in 2024, separating the two. As compared to the 2019 election, the BJP vote share fell by over -13.26 percentage points, in comparison to 69.7 % vote received in 2019 it got 56.44 % vote share in 2024. On the other hand, there was a swing of over +14.37 percentage points in favour of the Congress Party, which was at 27.5% in 2019, received 41.67 % votes this time (refer to Table 1), provides the clear vote swing between the two major parties in comparison to the previous election.

Table 1.

Seats contested, won, and votes secured by major parties in 2024, compared to Lok Sabha elections 2019 and Vidhan Sabha elections 2022

Party	Seats Won 2024	Gain/Loss of Seats Since 2019	Vote Share % 2019	Vote Share %2024	Vote Swing % Since 2019	Vote-Share % 2022 Assembly Polls
INC	-	0	27.5 %	41.67%	+14.17%	43.90%
BJP	4	0	69.7 %	56.44%	-13.26%	43.00%
BSP	-	0	0.9 %	0.52%	-0.38%	0.35%

Source: Election Commission of India website. http://www.eci.nic.in.

It is important to note that the BJP victory in 2019 followed closely on the heels of its assembly election victory in 2017. Similarly, the BJP victory in 2009 came just a year and a half after it had emerged victorious in the assembly elections held in the state in December 2007 (Sardesai, 2014, p. 3). In fact, over the last three decades till 2014, Lok Sabha elections in the state have, by and large, an advantage in the national elections, and the same seems to have worked for the BJP in the 2009 and 2019 elections, though Congress party was not able to make full use of this trend, in 2014 and 2024 elections, it lost the national elections, being a ruling party in the state.

Departing from the well-established trends in the previous Lok Sabha elections (1991-2009) in the state, this time a party in power (Congress) lost all the seats. While getting into the history of this trend, it goes back to 1993 when the Congress Party won 52 seats out of 68 in Assembly elections and later in 1996 won 4 out of 4 Lok Sabha seats. in

1998 BJP won 31 seats and formed the government with the help of Himachal Vikas Congress and won 3 out of 4 Lok Sabha seats in 1998 and 4 out of 4 in 1999 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2003 Assembly elections again Congress Party won 43 seats and later on in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections won 3 out of 4 seats, in the 2007 Assembly elections BJP won 41 seats and later 3 seats out of 4 in Lok Sabha. But after this election the trend was not followed by the electors, in 2012 Congress party won the assembly elections with 36 seats in its favor but lost the 2014 Lok Sabha elections 4-0, but the trend continued with BJP winning the 2017 assembly elections with 44 seats and 2019 Lok Sabha election with 4-0, again the anti-incumbency played its role in 2024 elections, congress winning assembly election with 40 seats in 2022 but lost again with clean sweep of 4-0 in 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Thus, identifying that the trend of Pro-Incumbency for the state government has ended in the hill state. One major factor that led to the change in these trends is the rise of the BJP at the national level and also Modi wave played a crucial role in this after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

Voter turnout

After such instances unfolded on the national level, the state election of Himachal Pradesh brought out an interesting picture in itself both in terms of voter participation and election outcome. Female voter turnout once again surpassed that of male voters, continuing the trend observed in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The overall voter turnout for this election was recorded at 70.90 %, marking the second highest turnout in the state's history.

For the four Lok Sabha seats, 72.64 percent of women cast their vote as compared to 69.19percentof male voters and a total of 70.90 percent valid votes polled in the state (ECI). In the recent six Assembly by-elections, the percentage of women voters was significantly higher than that of men. Specifically, 77.4 percent of women participated in the voting process compared to 70.4 percent of men. In the Lok Sabha elections, women outvoted men in all constituencies except for the Shimla parliamentary seat, where male voter turnout was slightly higher at 72.54 percent compared to 69.92 percent for women (refer to Table 2). Overall, the voter turnout for the Assembly by-elections was 74.79 percent, totaling 340,267 votes, including service votes. Notably, in all six Assembly constituencies, the percentage of female voters surpassed that of male voters, with the Barsar Assembly constituency exhibiting a gap exceeding 10 percent.The Polling of the Lok Sabha election in Himachal held on 1 June 2024, recorded 70.90 % of the valid votes which is the second highest from the state's point of view, which in

2019 was 72.42%. Simultaneous bye-elections for six Assembly seats were also held in Himachal, which saw a voter turnout of 73% in terms of valid votes and a total of 74.79 percent votes polled.The tables given below give the constituency-wise data of the male and female voter's participation (See Table 2 and 3).

Constituency	Male	Female	Total
Kangra	64.64	71.18	67.89%
Mandi	72.13	74.19	73.15%
Hamirpur	67.95	75.16	71.56%
Shimla	72.54	69.92	71.26%

Table 2. Constituency wise voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections (2024)

Source: Election Commission of India

Table 3. Voterturnout in assembly by-elections (2024)

Constituency	Total Electorate	Total Votes Polled	Voting %
Dharamshala	86603	62417	72.07%
Sujanpur	77742	57961	74.55%
Kutlehar	89307	69436	77.74%
Gagret	85950	65041	75.67%
Barsar	89357	65262	73.03%
Lahaul &Spiti	25967	20150	77.59%
Total	**454926**	**340267**	**74.79%**

Source: Data Collected from the Election Commissions Form 20.

Note: The above data includes the total numbers of electors in the assembly constituency (including service electors), and also it consists of the all-polled votes including the votes polled to Nota. So, this is an early estimated data compiled by the researcher. More precise data is still awaited.

All four candidates Anand Sharma, Satpal Raizada, Vikramaditya Singh, and Vinod Sultanpuri suffered defeats with huge margins of 251895, 182357, 74755, and 91451 from Dr. Rajeev Bhardwaj, Anurag Singh Thakur, Kangana Ranaut and Suresh Kashyap respectively (refer to Table 4). 'Others' who had secured 2.75% votes in the 2019 elections

have been almost expunged from state with a meager vote share of
0.80%, registering a loss of –1.9 %. 0.57 % votes (27321) went in
NOTA way. BSP also Managed to win a meager 0.52 % of votes in this
election.

Table 4. Constituency wise voter turnout and final results 2024

Constituency	Voters Turnout/%	BJP	Congress	Margin
Kangra	1036868 (67.89%)	Dr. Rajeev Bhardwaj 632793 (61.03%)	Anand Sharma 380898 (36.74%)	251895
Hamirpur	1047263 (71.56%)	Anurag Singh Thakur 607068 (57.97%)	Satpal Raizada 424711 (40.55%)	182357
Mandi	1015810 (73.15%)	Kangana Ranaut 537022 (52.87%)	Vikramaditya Singh 462267 (45.51%)	74755
Shimla	969965 (71.26%)	Suresh Kashyap 519748 (53.58%)	Vinod Sultanpuri 428297 (44.16%)	91451

Source: Election Commission of India website http://www.eci.nic.in

Each of the four Lok Sabha constituencies in Himachal Pradesh
has seventeen, Assembly segments. BJP secured a lead in the Majority of
assembly segments of all four parliamentary constituencies in 2024. The
Congress party Managed to lead only 7 assembly segments out of 68
which indicates the poor plight of the party in Lok Sabha elections 2024.

Parliamentary Constituency wise analysis of the election results
indicates that in Kangra PC, BJP led in all the 17 assembly segments, and
even the Army of 11 seating MLAs could not Save Anand Sharma from a
humiliating defeat who lacking the image of a mass leader. If we look at
the spectacular victory of Rajeev Bharadwaj, there were many reasons
behind it, which secretly influenced the voters. The Name, work, and
personality of Prime Minister Modi can be considered at the forefront of
these. BJP fought the entire election keeping this at center. The

organization's activism in months advances and the strength of the Broder party cadre worked at the grassroots level. By raising the issue of Dhartiputra and outsider in the campaign he was also successful in connecting the local sentiments with the BJP. Dr. Bhardwaj May contested the election for the first time but he had a lot of experience in fighting election. Another reason for Anand Sharma's defeat was the lack of his mass leader image, he never contested any election from the state.

Whereas in Hamirpur BJP succeeded in 16 out of 17 assembly segments, in this parliamentary constituency the impact of the "one vote for PM and one Vote for CM" Slogan was visible, delay in deciding the candidate was also the reason for Congress's defeat. Anurag Thakur was trailing only in the Haroli segment (1535 votes) which is the home constituency of Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri except that all the 16 segments had a clear lead to the BJP candidate even though, CM Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu also belongs to this parliamentary Constituency, his assembly constituency Nadaun gave 2143 votes lead to Anurag Thakur, which also shows that he has not been able to emerge as a Mass leader right now and due to his national-level political image and organization Anurag Thakur has once again strengthened the political stronghold of Hamirpur.

From Shimla, BJP led in 15 segments except for the 2 assembly segmentswhere the Congress party managed to takethe lead; Jubbal-Kotkhai (5937 votes) and Rohru assembly segment (9045 votes) (Election Commission of India). Despite the support of the CPI(M) and the cooperation of the gardeners associated with the United Kisan Manch, the Congress had to face defeat in apple-dominated areas. Weak organization and inability to establish direct contact with the voters became the major reasons for the defeat of the Congress. Even in publicity, Congress and its allied organizations remained weak compared to the Modi government. Delay in the announcement of candidates was also a reason.From Shimla's (SC) seat the BJP's sitting MP Suresh Kashyap, successfully maintained his lead on 14 out of the 17 assembly segments a clear reflection of the fact that the BJP made a clear-cut inroads into the congress bastion.

Whereas from Mandi Lok Sabha the BJP led in 13 assembly segments and INC managed to lead only 4 assembly segments with a vote margin of (Anni-8328 votes, Lahaul & Spiti-6876 votes, Rampur-21437 votes, and Kinnaur- 8562 votes). With the help of Modi's magic and the efficient leadership of Jairam Thakur, the BJP was successful in capturing this seat from the ruling Congress. Ignoring Mandi during the 15-month tenure of the government proved costly for Congress. Despite

presenting an experienced and big face, Congress had to face defeat from Mandi's seat. The experience of Jairam, who had previously been a candidate from here in the Lok Sabha elections, also came in handy for the BJP. The strong organization of the BJP also worked in favor of the candidate despite internal opposition. Big rallies of PM Narendra Modi, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, and UP CM Yogi Adityanath also created an atmosphere.The hot seat for the electoral contest in the Mandi Parliamentary Constituency, although BJP fielded a first-time Candidate with a Bollywood twist Kangana Ranaut, having no past electoral experience, against sitting Congress MLA from Shimla Rural and royal scion Vikramaditya Singh the son of Virbhadra Singh and Pratibha Singh who was the sitting MP form the same seat, was confident of winning the seat. It was a clear-cut battle between the Royal family and the former CM Jai Ram Thakur on this seat who is a popular face in the Mandi district.

'Second dominant party system' continued in state Lok Sabha elections (2009-2024)

The term "one-party dominant system," also known as the "Congress System," was first coined by renowned political analyst Rajni Kothari in 1964 to describe a unique aspect of India's electoral politics, particularly in relation to the Congress party. In his 1970 writings, Kothari asserted that India's electoral system did not fit neatly into the conventional models of two-party, multi-party, or one-party systems. For nearly twenty years following independence, the Congress party, which had spearheaded the country's freedom struggle, maintained control over both the central and state governments. The second dominant party system is the term coined by Suhas Palshikar, in his article "India's Second Dominant Party System" (2017),which elaborates the rise of BJP as the single majority party and creating its ideological hegemony among the masses. In tune with the true implication of the idea of a dominant party system, the rise of BJP as the dominant force also underscores the emergence of new politics. This new hegemony of the BJP is based on both the idea of Hindutva and the idea of development which was propounded in the 2014 general election for the first time. For further understanding of the concept also see; "India 2014: Return of the one-party Dominant System" by Neera Chandhoke and "The Rise of the Second Dominant Party System in India: BJP's New Social Coalition in 2019" by Pradeep Chhibber & Rahul Verma Also.

The state of Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a consolidation of the second dominant party system in the Lok Sabha election after the result of the 2024 election, this system started in the state after the

BJP's comprehensive victory in the 2009 elections winning 3 seats out of 4 Lok Sabha seats in the state. BJP was able to win the four Lok Sabha seats with a good number of votes as well.

In the initial phase, the General Election in Himachal Pradesh was a novel and remarkable experience for many citizens. Traditional loyalties and individual personalities played a significant role; the Congress Party secured its victory by selecting candidates based on these factors. Despite minimal efforts to prepare new voters for polling day, 34.7 percent of the eligible voters participated in the first general and assembly elections. This figure rose to 54 percent in the 1957 elections, decreased to 35.5 percent in the 1962 elections, increased again to 51.2 percent in the 1967 elections, and was 41.2 percent in the 1971 elections. During this period, voters were still acclimating to the democratic process. The performance of the Congress party in the post-independence phase was dominating both at the national and state level. Himachal Pradesh also witnessed similar dominance in the starting phase until the growth of Congress was halted by the Janta party government in 1977. Congress party managed to win 3, 4, 4, 6, and 4 number of seats with a clean sweep in the starting elections of 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967, and 1971 respectively. The vote share was also in a healthy position with 52.4 percent in 1952, 47.3 percent in 1957, 68.6 percent in 1962, 48.4 percent in 1967, and 78.8 percent largest in the history of Himachal Pradesh Lok Sabha elections in 1971 (See Figure 1).
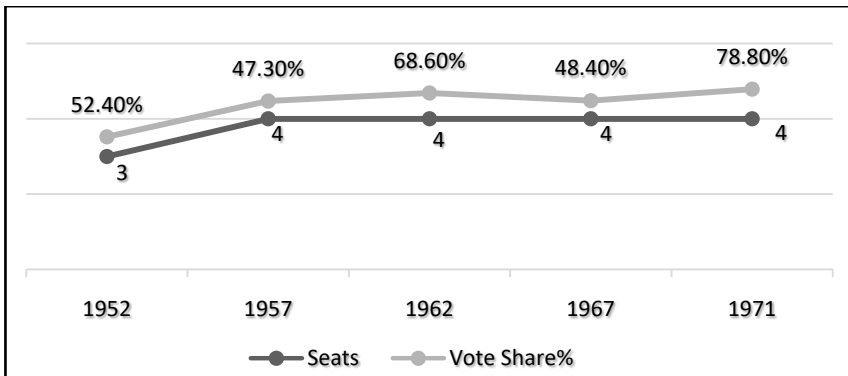

Figure 1: INCs vote and Seat Share in Lok Sabha (1952-1971)

Source: Election Commission of India website http://www.eci.nic.in

The second dominant party system in the state, started even before the rise of Narendra Modi at the national level, elections in this phase witnessed the good number of voters turnout as compare to the first phase of dominance after independence, in 2009 turnout was 58.4

percent, in 2014, 2019 and 2024 it was 64.4 %, 80.1% and 70.90 %. In terms of seat and vote share, second dominant party phase started in 2009 general elections in the state where BJP won 3 out of 4 Lok Sabha seats. after that, in all three general elections of 2014, 2019, and 2024 the BJP managed to sweep the seats tally with a good number of votes share as well. This phase also witnessed a good vote share for BJP, in 2009 (49.6%), in 2014 (53.9%), in 2019 (69.7%) and in 2024 (56.44%), which clearly shows the dominance of this party in the state Lok Sabha elections (See Figure 2). How long this phase will last in Lok Sabha elections, will be a question that awaits the answer.
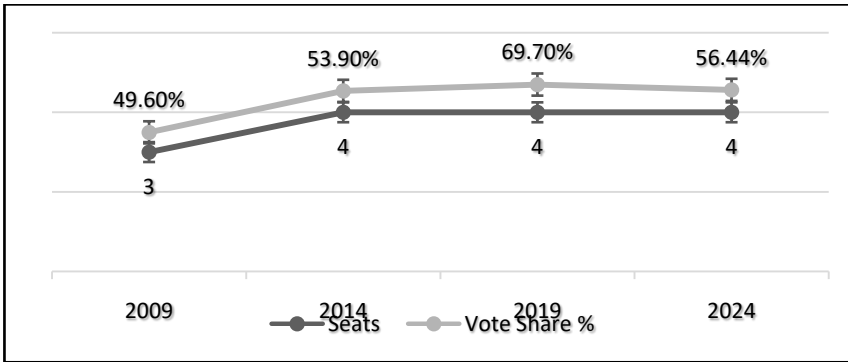

Figure 2: BJPs Vote and Seat Share in Lok Sabha (2009-2014)

Source: Election Commission of India website http://www.eci.nic.in

Opposite trends in bye-elections

The by-elections were necessitated following the disqualification of the Congress MLAs from the Assembly for defying a party whip in February this year.Six Congress rebels who supported BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha elections were disqualified by the speaker for going against the party's whip, leaving these six assembly constituencies (Dharamshala, Gagret, Barsar, Lahaul & Spiti, Sujanpur, and Kutlehar vacant. In terms of results, the BJP won from Dharamshala and Barsar, while the Congress Party won the seats in Sujanpur, Gagret, Kutlehar, and Lahaul-Spiti. Himachal's "Turncoats" faced resentment from the Peoples Court for their defection.

In the Sujanpur assembly by-election, BJP Candidate Rajinder Rana was defeated by his longstanding adversary, Captain Ranjit Singh of the Congress party, with a margin of 2440 votes. Rana Secured a total of 27,089 votes, while Singh emerged victorious with 29,529 votes. In Dharamshala Constituency By-election, BJP's Sudhir Sharma, a former Minister described as the "Kingpin" of rebels by Chief

Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, secured victory with the margin of 5,526 votes. Sharma garnered a total of 28,066 votes, surpassing his opponent from the INC, Davinder Singh (Jaggi), who received 22,510 votes. Meanwhile BJP dissident Rakesh Chawdhary, running as an independent, obtained 10,770 votes.

In Gagret, BJP defector Rakesh Kalia, running on a Congress ticket, defeated Congress dissident Chetanya Sharma by a margin of 8,487 votes. Kalia accumulated 35,768 votes whereas Sharma secured 27,281 votes. From the Barsar Assembly seat, BJP candidate Inder Dutt Lakhanpal won by a margin of 2,125 votes. Overcoming Subash Chand of the Congress Party. Lakhanpal received 33,086 votes, while Chand obtained 30,961 votes.

In a three-way contest in the Lahaul-Spiti by-elections, Congress Candidate Anuradha Rana defeated her closest competitor, independent candidate Ram Lal Markanda, by a margin of 1960 votes. Rana secured 9,414 votes, compared to Markanda's 7,454 votes. Congress rebel candidate, Ravi Thakur, running on a BJP ticket, suffered a embarrassing defeat with only 3,049 votes. In the Kutlehar Assembly seat, BJP candidate Davinder Bhutto, one of six congress rebels, was defeated by his congress opponent Vivek Sharma by a margin of 5,356 votes. Sharma Received 36,853 votes, while Bhutto managed to secure 31,497 votes, according to the election Commission data.

Table 5. Constituency-wise voter turnout and results of by-elections 2024 in Himachal Pradesh

Constituency	Voters Turnout (Total)	BJP	Congress	Margin
Dharamshala	62280	Sudhir Sharma 28066 (45.06%)	Devinder Singh (JAGGI) 22540 (36.19%	5526
Lahaul &Spiti	19993	Ravi Thakur 3049 (15.25%)	Anuradha Rana 9414 (47.09%)	6365
Sujanpur	57444	Rajinder Rana 27089 (47.16%)	Captain Ranjit Singh 29529 (51.4%)	2440

Barsar	64822	Inder Dutt Lakhanpal 33086 (51.04%)	Subhash Chand 30961 (47.76%)	2125
Gagret	64836	Chaitanya Sharma 27281 (42.08%)	Rakesh Kalia 35768 (55.17%)	8487
Kutlehar	69225	Davinder Kumar (Bhutto) 31497 (45.5%)	Vivek Sharma (Vicku) 36853 (53.24%)	5356

Source: Election Commission of India website http://www.eci.nic.in

Note: The runner-up in Lahaul- Spiti seat was the independent candidate, Ram Lal Markanda with 7454 votes and lost bya margin of 1960 votes.

While the BJP's narrative around nationalism by giving a "strong and resilient" government to the country appeared to have helped the party to regain its majority in parliamentary polls of the state, the Congress campaign led by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who sought votes on the "performance" of his government and targeted the BJP for its alleged attempt to topple the democratically elected Congress government in the State, besides Centre's indifferent attitude towards Himachal Pradesh during the last year's 'natural calamity', seems to have resonated with the voters, giving the Congress a clear edge in the Assembly by-polls.

The big question that arises here is how people's choices differ so much that in a simultaneous election, people made Congress win at the state assembly by-polls, on the other side BJP won the Parliamentary elections that too with All seats in its tally. How practical do you term the voting choices of the people of Hill State? The next part of the paper deals with the issues on which the voters of the state voted in this election.

Bases of voting

What then accounts for the good performance of the BJP in the parliamentary elections even though the party did not do as well in the rest of the country?

The Congress's win in 2022 assembly elections can be attributed to a series of factors such as the promise of old pension scheme for about 1, 50,000 employees, anti-incumbency linked to poor performance of the Jai Ram Thakur government, and intra-party factionalism in Bhartiya Janata Party (Thakur et. al. 2022, pp. 55-60).Being the ruling party in the state Congress had an added advantage, having governed for one and a half years, signs of anti-incumbency were not yet visible in the assembly Bye-polls where it managed to win 4 out of 6 seats, but when we see the Lok Sabha results in the anti-incumbency factor played a crucial role, earlier it was a pro-incumbency factor that use to play a major role in Himachal, but this time anti-incumbency against state government was in the minds of the voters.

One reason for this can be stated that it is also the satisfaction of the state's Voter with the Modi-led NDA government at the Centre and this satisfaction level was much higher in Himachal Pradesh than at the national level where trends came out differently. It also goes contrastingly that the satisfaction with the Congress-led Government in the state was not up to the mark.

Besides it was a trend that the voters in national elections previously used to vote based on local issues but this time it didn't happen and the national issues prevailed in contrast to local issues. National issues like Ram Mandir, Hindutva, and the other major schemes of the government played crucial roles. It can be said that in recent Lok Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh, the dominance of national issues over local concerns significantly influenced voter behaviour, diverging from traditional patterns. The Prevalence of Hindutva politics in this predominantly Hindu State played a crucial role, with constituencies like Kangra and Hamirpur consistently supporting the BJP, while Shimla and Mandi also shifted towards religion-centric voting in parliamentary elections.

Leadership dynamics further impacted outcomes, with the "*Modi Wave*" and strong regional figures like Jai Ram Thakur enhancing BJP's Appeal. The BJP's National campaign strategy, emphasizing "*Abki Baar 400 Paar*", managed to put a clear impact psychologically on the mindset of voters, contrasted with Congress's focus on state-by-elections, leading to differing voter properties. Additionally, there was a notable shift in regional voting patterns, with traditional congress strongholds, Shimla and Mandi increasingly favouring the BJP, reflecting a broader trend in national elections. It is the clear result of Modi's popularity in the Hindi heartland states, where he is most popular as compared to the other national or regional leaders.

Other big names like Home Minister Amit Shah, Yogi Aditya Nath, and Nitin Gadkari also played crucial parts thorough their major rallies in the state. Even in terms of the local leadership after the death of Virbhadra Singh, the popularity of local BJP leadership in the state like Jai Ram Thakur, JP Nadda, and Anurag Thakur, at the time of the Lok Sabha election 2024 was far greater than that of the local Congress leadership driven by the factions. This combination of the high rating enjoyed by both its national and state leadership seems to have worked in the BJP's favour during the elections.

Factional fighting within the Congress ranks and the party's inability to unitedly fight the BJP was another reason for its poor performance in the Lok Sabha elections. Though central leadership of the Congress party like National President Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tried to make an impact. The Congress Party led by state leadership like current CM Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, Party president Pratibha Singh, and Young Vikramaditya Singh, Anand Sharma, Kaul Singh Thakur, was a divided house, whereas the BJP succeeded in managing factionalism and fought united in the state under the leadership of their recently elected leader of opposition and former CM Jai Ram Thakur, Former Union Minster Anurag Thakur, JP Nadda. This blend of BJP's national and state leadership fighting unitedly cost the Congress party all 4 seats in the State.

While talking in terms of social bases of voting the state has voted quite differently in national and state assembly by-elections. When we talk about the state assembly elections issues like religion do not play a crucial role, but in Parliamentary elections this has played a crucial role this time, being a Hindu majority state consisting of more than 90 percent Hindu Population BJP managed to polarize the voter in its favor on the issues of Ram Mandir and Uniform Civil Code. In the CSDS Post-Poll Survey data question asked about the "most approved work of BJP led NDA government" 22 % mentioned the Construction of Ram Mandir, making it the most liked work of BJP government (Kulkarni 2024). Thus, it clearly got reflected in the voting preferences of Hindu majority state of Himachal Pradesh as well. In terms of different castes and communities, the BJP's vote share declined in comparison to previous Lok Sabha elections in the state but the party still managed to win all seats. The decline in the BJP's vote share based on the earlier predictions can also be predicted in the section of women voters, educated voters, and also the middle class which has been a constant partner of the BJP since the last two Lok Sabha elections.

Congress party managed to increase its vote share among all these classes but failed to win any seat as compared to previous elections.

In the State assembly by-election of Himachal Pradesh, voters' behaviour reflected significant dissatisfaction with the betrayal of the party and people, with the internal factionalism within the Congress Party. The electorate expressed their discontent through the ballot, particularly targeting the rebel MLA's most of whom failed to secure their seats, indicating a clear rejection of defection from the party mandate. Additionally, the state leadership of the Congress party, although unsuccessful against the BJP's national leadership in the Lok Sabha elections, managed to leverage this discontent effectively in the state by-elections. This shift underscores the importance of party unity and local leadership in influencing electoral outcomes at the state level, contrasting with the dominance of national issues in parliamentary elections.

Conclusion

Despite fluctuations, the bipolar competition between Congress and BJP has remained stable in Himachal Pradesh. Factors such as early phase of incumbency, leadership, party unity, and broad social support contributed to the BJP's success in the 2024 elections. The Congress party lost the Lok Sabha elections miserably due to anti-incumbency sentiment, the Hindutva movement, and the Modi Wave. In this small state, public representatives are closely scrutinized by the electorate. A small shift in votes from one party to another can significantly alter the power structure. Therefore, both representatives and governments must perform effectively to retain power in Himachal Pradesh. Mistakes by representatives influenced the outcome of by-elections in the state.

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Bhūṇḍhā yajñā in *pahāḍī tradition*

-Pankaj Negi and B. K. Shivram

ABSTRACT

The *pahāḍī* are known for their distinct and robust cultural identity intertwined with indigenous social and religious traditions. One of the most notable cultural characteristics of *pahāḍī* is its preservation of age-old rituals.Having grown up in the study region, we have had the chance to participate in various rituals organized to appease the deities. The most peculiar to the study region that fascinated or appalled the non-natives, especially Europeans, is *bhūṇḍhā.* The *pahāḍī* consider it a crucial aspect of their beliefs despite its being equated with human sacrifice by many—*narmedh*. It consists of stretching a gigantic oil-soaked rope from the top of a hill to the foot of an opposite hill and a ritually prepared lower caste *jeḍī* (*beda* caste*)* man slides down in a sitting posture. Historically, it is said the *jeḍī* would often fall to his death or would even be killed by townspeople if he performed the ritual unsatisfactorily. This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of *bhūṇḍhā yajñā* and to contextualise it in *pahāḍī* culture which is increasingly under threat in the face of rapid social changes in the region.

Keywords: *Bhūṇḍhā, Beda/Jeḍī,barut,* rope sliding

Introduction

The hilly or mountainous (Indo-European-speaking) people of Himachal Pradesh, known as the *pahāḍī* (Grierson 1916, p.1) are recognised for their distinct and robust cultural identity intertwined with indigenous social and religious traditions.Its geographical conditions heavily influence its socio-cultural life, focusing on deities, shrines, and temple complexes. One of the most notable cultural characteristics of *pahāḍī* is its preservation of age-old rituals and traditions.The various types of *yajñās*, fairs, and festivals are organised and celebrated throughout the year. Having grown up in the study region, we have had the opportunity to partake in various intriguing

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rituals, including but not limited to *Jāgarā, Tānā, Rakshi, Bhoj, Hoom, Bhadoji, Shānt,* and *Bhūṇḍhā* (*Bihundha* or *Bhoonda*).

The *pahāḍī* people traditionally focus on the anxiety caused by difficulties assumed to result from supernatural forces. The most potent beings among supernaturals are deities believed to wield great destructive power and must be appeased to prevent their wrath. This is seen as a necessary precaution and is often accompanied by various rituals and offerings. It is believed that failing to appease these deities, especially by making multiple offerings, can lead to disastrous consequences. Therefore, taking these beliefs seriously and approaching them with respect and caution is essential. It has been believed that bad harvests, drought, barren land or cattle, destruction by rats and other pests, and other agricultural misfortunes are caused by the displeasure of local gods. To appease their gods, they would perform perilous tasks such as *bhūṇḍhā* (Oakley 1905,p.233).

Bhūṇḍhā Yajñā

Among the intriguing rituals mentioned above, the most peculiar to the study region that fascinated or appalled the non-natives, especially Europeans, is *Bhūṇḍhā*. The *pahāḍī* term *bhūṇḍhā* refers to y*ajñā* (skt.sacrificial rite, lit. religious congression). The existing reading of the word *bhūṇḍhā* as *bhandār* (temple treasury house), *bhandārā* (free kitchen), to please the deity and tothe slaying of a demon named *Bhandasur* is less persuasive. This is commonly known as the 'rope-sliding ceremony' in both Indian and Western literature after its highly pivotal event of the third day. Those who still practice the controversial religious ritual consider it a crucial aspect of their beliefs despite its being equated with the human sacrifice by many— *narmedh*. It consists of stretching a gigantic oil-soaked rope from the top of a hill to the foot of an opposite hill and a ritually prepared lower caste (*beda/*or *jeḍī,* henceforth *jeḍī*) man slides down in a sitting posture. Historically, it is said the *jeḍī* would often fall to his death or would even be killed by towns people if he performed the ritual unsatisfactorily. British bureaucrats, army officers, and travellers visited the study region and dubbed it—'weirdest ritual'. Amazingly, the *munji grass* (*saccharum munja,* which grows in hard-to-reach *ghāsnis,* grasslands, in the hills of the western Himalayas)used to plait *bhūṇḍhā'*s rope is preserved in the British Museum. Based on preliminary ethnographic data corroborated with *Temple Archival Records,* Pujarali (in *Takri / Ta (n) kri* script, henceforth *Temple Records*), the researchers observed that local communities of the study area often engage in elaborate rituals such as *bhūṇḍhā, shant, bhadoji,*

tānā, etc. to appease their deities. 'Drought, want of fertility, in the soil, murrain in cattle and other calamities incident to husbandry, are here invariably ascribed to the wrath of a particular god'(Atkinson, 1874, p.834). Moorcraft, while travelling in the central Himalayas in February 1820, recorded that when cholera was raging in Almora, people organised a rope sliding event (*bhūṇḍhā*), in which a lower-caste man named Banchu crossed the 'rope sliding' successfully sixteenth times (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841, pp. 17-19). Mr Langton, the then-British official at Shimla, shared the fascinating story of *Rānā* of Majholi (Shimla), who invited about 50 deities and hosted a *Bhūṇḍhā* to cure his paralytic syndrome in the 1890s (Tantum Religio 1923, pp. 1-27).

The four days *Bhūṇḍhā* comprises many rituals including the invoking deities, *saghera* (convergence of divine and human agency), *shikha-pher* (god's triumph over evils), *jeḍī,* (rope sliding), *uchar-pachar* (departing), etc. It is often confused by both European and Indian scholars with the *narmedh yajñā* (human sacrifice)after its major deadly ritual of the third day —'rope sliding'. The present researchers did not find any reference to such rituals in local or classical literature including *Aitareya* and *Satapatha Brahmans* that abounds in *narmedh* stories. Neither do we have any archaeological evidence. The dramatic wearing of a white *kafan*, containing *panchratan* and anacting of his spouse as a widow shouldn't be confused with *naramedha yajñā*. Furthermore, the tradition of rope sliding is widely practised devoid of sacrifice in neighbouring regions of Garhwal, Lahaul, Ladakh, and Tibet, with remarkable similarities. Linking *Bhūṇḍhā* with *Narmedh* thus becomes less persuasive. It is interesting to note that *Bhūṇḍhā* is performed without rope sliding in many other places in the Shimla hills, such as Theog and Chopal. There is not a single iota of human sacrifice.There are no specific hymns in *Bhūṇḍhā Hoom Padhati* (the only known Sanskrit manuscript of *bhūṇḍhā*) dedicated to human sacrifice. It wasn't difficult to read and collate texts which is a compilation of Hindu Sanskrit consecration hymns seldom recited in *bhūṇḍhā*. Even some sacrificial priests of *bhūṇḍhā* are not aware of this work to date. It is significant to note that hymns recited in *bhūṇḍhā yajna* are mostly non-Sanskritic (*shābar mantra*) and are often chanted in the local language. The sacrificial priests of *bhūṇḍhā*from three locations,Keshva Nand—*Devta Palthan* (Sholi), Parveen Jhingta—*Devta Maheshar* (Pujarali) and Ravi Sharma—*Devta Bakralu* (Spail) confirmed that non-Sanskritic hymns are chanted in the local language (Personal communicatios).Thus, it can be deduced that the Brahmin priests more learned in plains Hinduism may have introduced

Sanskritic *Bhūṇḍhā Padhati* to inject an element of the great tradition (e.g., *Narmedh)* into the performance.

Legend of Parshuram and *Bhūṇḍhā's* locations

The *bhūṇḍhā* in the study area is entrenched with the legend of Parshuramor the cult of *Kali*, the Goddess (Punjab States Gazetteer, 1910, p.28). The legend goes that *devi* Renuka (incarnation of virtue) was happily married to Jamadagni. Once, whilst in the river, her attention was caught by Chitrangad, a Gandharva passer-by, and his beauty lingered in her mind. This lapse enraged her husband, who ordered his sons to cut off her head. While Rumanvan, Sushan and others refused, Parasuram carried out the order. Pleased at this display of filial devotion, Jamadagni granted him two boons. Parashuram asked for his mother's life and for her loss of memory to forget the incident in return for two boons granted by Jamadagni. However, being regarded with universal detestation for slaying her, who had given him birth, he got upset and wanted to expiate for matricide. To indemnify his sins, Parshuram gave lands to the Brahmans at Nirmand, who in return agreed to spend one-tenth of the produce on this *bhūṇḍhā yajñā* (Rose1911-1919, p.345). Interestingly the statue of Parshuram is shown only in *bhūṇḍhā*, and three years before it is exhibited, spices are perpetually burnt in honour of Ambika near Parshuram's temple at Nirmand (Harcourt 1871, p.97).It is only on this occasion the cell within Parshurama's temple is opened, and his triple silver mask is displayed (Shuttleworth 1922, pp. 221-228). However, the present researchers failed to trace the Parshuram/ *bhūṇḍhā* link with *Narmedhyajñā* in classical literature, including *Aitareya* and *Satapatha Brahmans* that abounds *narmedh* stories.

It is believed that all *pānj-sthāns*(five places) of *bhūṇḍhā* were dwelled by Parshuram during his itinerary along the Sutlej river. These include the present places of Kao, Mamel (Mandi); Nirmand in Kullu; Nirath and Dattnagar, Shimla (Harcourt, p. 96). Afterwards, *Brahmin* devotees of Parsuramare believed to have established more such seats in the region known popularly as *thāris*: Shinglā,Shaneri, Lālsā and Dansā, all in Rampur Bushahr (Punjab States Gazetteer, p.30).Over the period, *yajñā* spread in and around more regions of Sutlej-Pabbar, mainly where Parsuramibrahmins took up their abodes. We could trace to date about three dozen locations of *bhūṇḍhā* in Himachal region comprising three districts—Shimla, Mandi, and Kullu. Important locations in Sutlej Valley are Nirmand, Nithar, Dalash and certain other places—all on the slopes running down to the Sutlej (Rose, p.347). It has been suspended since the 18th century in almost all places in the

Mandi district. However, in the districts of Kullu and Shimla, it is still performed with utmost fervour. The *bhūṇḍhā* of Nirmand (Kullu) is very famous and well-recorded by many, including Europeans.

Periodicity of the *Bhūṇḍhā*

In the past, the event used to occur every 15-20 years, but now it happens after 50-60 years. Often lengthened or shortened according to circumstances. W.H. Emerson (colonial administrator and civil servant in British India) puts it aptly,

If the crops have been good and the countryside fairly immune from sickness, the worshippers of the god, at whose temple the ceremonies are performed, may make no special effort to collect the grain and money required for the due performance of the sacrifice, and the interval will be prolonged. If, on the other hand, harvests have been continuously poor and disease has been widespread either amongst men or cattle, the necessary funds will be obtained somehow or other, and the festival held before the [schedule] period (1920, pp.185-197).

It was held every 12 years at Nirmand in the 19th century—the same year as the *Kumbh* fair. Three years after *Bhūṇḍhā,* the *Bharoji yajñā*; three years after that, the *Bhatpur yajñā*; and again, three years later of that, the *Shānd yajñā* used to be conducted at Nirmand. Though performed in the presence of several *deotas*, these rituals are less significant than *Bhūṇḍhā*.

Community participation

To arrange and manage the *bhūṇḍhā yajñā* is an arduous task. It involves huge sums of public money and gigantic resources. That may be the reason that in areas such as Kao and Mamel, it has been discontinued perpetually. It takes several years of preparation. The people, regardless of caste distinction, actively participate to ensure *bhūṇḍhā*'s success. Works are assigned according to the ability of the folks. These include cooking in the common kitchen, washing utensils, maintaining discipline, collecting wood from the forests and attending guests. It appears to be a typical community venture. In the study area, irrespective of caste, all are supposed to ensure compulsory contribution (*fānt*) to organise *bhūṇḍhā* that could be in cash and kind. The temple *pujāris* and *dhākis/turis* are exempted as they remain in the deity's service throughout the year. As *bhūṇḍhā* shall draw near, people will start contributing generously as well in cash and kind—nevertheless voluntarily. Even outsider (out of *ghoṛī,* thedeity's jurisdiction) also contributes open-handedly but not as enthusiastically as insiders.

Barut (Rope)

The rope has a significant role in *bhūṇḍhāyajñā*used for the most vital ritual, the rope sliding. It is made of *munj* grass collected at an auspicious time. Preparation and making of this rope from *munj* grass can be understood from an extract of the Pujarli*bhūṇḍhā* (1898) available at Temple records in *Tankri*at Pujarli:

A meeting is convened about a year beforehand of the *yajñā*. One member of each family from *Ghorī* shall compulsorily attend. It would be announced that the time of *yajñā* has arrived—hence, be ready. The chief priestwould propose a few days to be endorsed by the deity through an oracle (*gur* or *māli*) to cut and collect the *munj* grass (*saccharummunja*). On the designated day, members from each household depart ritualistically from the temple courtyard to cut and collect the *munj* grass. Essentially, iron sickles are used for cutting. They shall depart with the echo of musical instruments. They shall begin the work with formal worship of the presiding deity. Goats are sacrificed as a mark of the beginning. Afterwards, on the auspicious day chosen by the deity, the *jeḍī* would be invited from his native place through a special messenger to the courtyard of the presiding deity to initiate the process of plaiting the rope. (Translation from original)

The *jeḍī* from the *beda* caste himself is supposed to complete the rope-making process. Almost six months before *bhūṇḍhā*, the *jeḍī*is invited by the temple functionaries to perform rope sliding. At first, he is purified by sprinkling cow's urine and river Ganga's water as being from the lower caste. Afterwards, he is expected to follow the *brahmacharya* (celibacy) till the completion of *bhūṇḍhā yajñā*. His status will be elevated and not thenceforth considered as an ordinary low caste man. He becomes almost supernatural and is closely identified with the Goddess, to whom he is destined to be devoted (Shuttleworth, p.226).According to George Weston Briggs (1953, pp.449-450):

The rope on which a *jeḍī* is to slide is generally made or twisted by himself for two reasons. To sure that the rope is strong enough and take great care to watch it day and night, for it is believed the moment a rope (or *barut*) is left unwatched, it turns into a huge snake and creeps off into the earth's interior.

It takes about a day to make 7-9 feet. Meanwhile, if a person crosses the *barut*, a goat is sacrificed as a punishment to purify it. Even *jeḍī* will have to be punished if he crosses it. The rakes would be provided to *jeḍī*to clean the grass before he hatchets munj in pieces to

smooth the progress of weaving rope. He will have all lodging facilities, including utensils and a sleeping bed. A cat would also be given to protect the *barut* from rats. He will be expected to finish the work by the event of the rope sliding ceremony. When it is made up of the right length, it is placed in the temple, and if anyone steps over it, he is fined with a goat, and sometimes the rope is re-made (Emerson, p. 187). During the night, the rope is kept for safety in a hut meant for said purpose, and extreme care has to be taken to prevent an impure animal from touching it (*Bhūṇḍhā* documents; Rose, p. 346). If any polluting element is involved in this process it is believed that the rope could turn into a snake and slither away (Fiol 2010, p.146).

Span of *barut*

The length of the *barut* is often lengthened or shortened according to the distance between the two poles. It varies from place to place. It is said that the length of the *barut* was about 800-900 meters in the former time. Briggs gives us valuable information about the length and width of *barut*:

The length and inclination necessarily vary with the nature of the cliff, but as the *jeḍī* is remunerated at the rate of a rupee for every hundred cubits, hence termed a tola, a correct measurement always takes place; the longest bast which has fallen within my observation has been twenty-one tolas, or 2,100 cubits in length. From the precautions taken as above mentioned the only danger to be apprehended by the Badi is from breaking of the rope, to provide against which the latter, commonly from one and a half to two inches in diameter, is made wholly by his hands (p.451).

Emerson and Alexander Gerard also give us valuable information about the length of rope used in the rope-sliding ceremony (Emerson, p. 186; Gerard 1840, p.320). There were instances when *jeḍī* fell and died while stretching the rope. At Nirmand *Bhūṇḍhā* in 1856 rope broke (Harcourt, p.97). Thereupon British government intervened owing to the risk to human life. At present the length of the rope ranges from 200 to 300 meters. Sitting on the saddle (*Kāthi, Ghoḍī*), *jeḍī* crosses the rope. It is made from wood. It is decorated with beautiful carvings, and a deep groove is dug at the bottom so that it can survive on the *barut*.

Rope Sliding

The actual rope sliding is conducted on the third day. With the sound of the trumpets and drums, *jeḍī* has to be taken to one corner of

the courtyard to complete the sacrificial rituals. A service of dedication takes place. Main *kārdārs* will ritually offer *jeḍī* to be sacrificed while he remains in a seated position on the stone slate. Holy water will be sprinkled on his head (accompaniment all sacrifices in the hills) so that the spirit of the god descends on the victim and assumes possession. Divine acceptance is intimated by the trembling of the victim, which then becomes the property of the deity. The offer is irrecoverable. *Jeḍī* will be donned in muslin *chogā* (robe) over the corpse's shroud. One rupee coin (*shanāshā*) form of *panchratan* is to be fastened in his turban so that the death rite can be performed instantly if he dies(Temple Record, Basta No.2, 1961).

Once the *barut* has been consecrated it remains above the grounds and not to be touched by the lower caste. It will be lifted and carried on the shoulders by the folks to be soaked in a nearby rivulet. Then it will be carried to the chosen point to be fastened between the upper and lower posts. In case the ceremonial point is the same as that of the previous *Bhūṇḍhā,* the poles essentially have to be stiffed at the earlier points. The *barut* will be steadily tightened between these two poles. Interestingly to cut, carry and erect the poles at chosen places it used to be the duty of the lower caste (*koli*) (Temple Record, Basta No.2, 1961).

After service of dedication*, jeḍī*, being deified, remains either on the shoulders of the pure *Brahmin* or on the palanquin of the host deity (in a seated position, on poles) to be carried to the chosen site. The *jeḍī,* although being from a lower caste, enjoyed utmost standing. Only human agency whose status is elevated equivalent to the deity itself—shall sit next to the deity. All deities and *kārdārs* shall move along with a large retinue of attendants and devotees on their journey to the head of rope accompanied by a band playing funeral music, and his family wait below, lamenting and beating their breasts. The deities stay at the lower end (cessation point). The fastening of the *jeḍī* with *barut* is to be done by high-up *Rajput*. At Pujarli in the years 1936, 1961 and 1995, it was performed by Thakur of the Bajreth-Koti (a nearby village). To balance the *jeḍī* on the *barut*, bags made of goat skin on both sides of the wooden saddle are filled with clay (Temple Record, Basta No.2 1961).While jeḍī is placed on the saddle to slide, a ram has to be sacrificed. On the successful arrival of the *jeḍī* at the lower pole, music turned to be that of jubilation and merry-making— from mourning, music played at the start. We also get this detail From the Census of India, 1961, as follows:

This is the most interesting and inspiring part of the whole festival. *Bhunda* is witnessed by fifteen to twenty thousand persons. *Jeḍī* drinks before he is tide on the *grari*. Great care is taken to secure the balance of the body of *jeḍī* by tying sand bags with his legs. The man, who sets the *jeḍī* down on the rope belongs to a big family of the area and his job is hereditary. Mourning music is played on the start but on successful arrival of the *jeḍī* at the lower pole music turned to be that of jubilation and merry-making. The *jeḍī* is taken on shoulders by the people side by side by the deity. Customarily the jeḍī gets whatever garments or valuables of the *kardars*, he touches (Census of India 1961, p.230).

After crossing successfully, *jeḍī* is lifted on the deity's palanquin and shall stride back to the starting point amid the sounding of the trumpets '*Devta Ki Jay Ho*' and drums. Customarily he will be awarded valuable gifts including cash and jewellery to *jeḍī*and his spouse. He shall lead a two-and-half whirling dance at the temple courtyard before parting (Rose, p.347). Temple records at Pujarli testify that *jeḍī* will be given gold and silver jewellery, utensils, turban, *toga*, *pajamas*, shirt, bed, cash etc. (Temple Record, Basta No.2 1961). In some sense, it can be termed as a profitable venture.

Historically, it is said the *jeḍī* would often fall to his death or would even be killed by townspeople if he performed the ritual unsatisfactorily. The present work has analysed about three dozen such events from different locations dating back to the 1800s. It was found that *jeḍī* did not die (unless in an accident) in any of the events, nor was he killed. Any accident in performing rope-sliding rituals is considered an unlucky omen, leading to sacrificial Brahmins being considered outcasts until a successful ritual is completed. The *jeḍī*, although from a lower caste, achieved high standing after successfully crossing it. He will be awarded valuable gifts, including cash and jewellery. Only human agency whose status is elevated equivalent to the deity itself—shall sit next to the deity. Also elevated to the honourable position of *dhuré* (the leader of the dancing party who dances ahead of others holding a *chamvar (*'fly-whis'). According to the legend, *jeḍī* becomes a Brahmin after successfully crossing the rope nine times. While having a conversation with a *jeḍī* Surat Ram (who will perform *bhūṇḍhā* ritual record 9 times in December 2024 at Spail) when asked about the probability of becoming a *dvija* (twice-born) after the ninth bids, he reacted,

It was true in the past, but nowadays, *bhūṇḍhā* rituals have changed. He is deified after the ceremony and is carried in a palanquin of the presiding deity—a rare honour bestowed upon any human being. Despite this, his temple entry after the closing of *bhūṇḍhā* even is

denied by ultra-conservative folks (*Jeḍī* Surat Ram, personal communication, 10 May 2023).

Conclusion

The *bhūṇḍhā* ritual is a significant representation of *pahāḍī* cultural traditions. This majestic rite is designed to appease the presiding deity and mitigate regional calamities. It weaves together an intricate tapestry of subsidiary sacrifices and elaborate supplications performed by an array of priests, *shamans*, and specialists before throngs of reverent participants and spectators. While there are hazy references to human sacrifices, it is crucial to distinguish *bhūṇḍhā* from such practices, as the ritual primarily focuses on non-lethal forms of appeasement and entertainment. The tragic incident in 1856, where the breaking of a rope during the Nirmand *bhūṇḍhā* led to the death of a *jeḍī* and subsequently resulted in the ritual's ban by the British administration, underscores the ritual's inherent dangers but does not define its overall essence. Notably, the *jeḍī* caste, renowned for their expertise in rope tricks across the western-central Himalayas, including Kashmir, Ladakh, and Garhwal, played a pivotal role in integrating rope slides into the *bhūṇḍhā* ritual. This integration, however, occurred much later than the ritual's inception, adding a dynamic and visually captivating element to an already rich cultural tradition. By preserving the core elements of the ritual while adapting to contemporary contexts, the *Bhūṇḍhā* continues to reflect the cultural and spiritual vitality of the region, transcending mere historical recounting to become a living testament to the adaptability and resilience of cultural practices. It can be deduced that traditional indigenous beliefs have primarily shaped the *pahāḍī* culture and religion.

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Tradition and transformation: The life of Gujjars in contemporary Himachal Pradesh

-Ved Prakash

ABSTRACT

The paper explores the historical origins and contemporary circumstances of the Gujjar tribe in Himachal Pradesh, India. It delves into the intricate tapestry of their ancestry, tracing their roots through ancient migrations and cultural amalgamations. Drawing upon historical records, ethnographic studies, and oral traditions, it elucidates the dynamic evolution of the Gujjar identity over centuries. Furthermore, the paper meticulously examines the socio-economic and political landscape shaping the present condition of the Gujjar community in Himachal Pradesh. It scrutinizes the challenges they confront, ranging from land disputes to marginalization, and investigates the impact of modernization and globalization on their traditional way of life. Additionally, the paper highlights initiatives and interventions aimed at ameliorating their situation, including educational programs, healthcare initiatives, and advocacy efforts for socio-economic empowerment. Through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing historical analysis, anthropological insights, and contemporary socio-political discourse, this paper offers a comprehensive understanding of the Gujjar tribe's journey from antiquity to the complexities of the present day. By shedding light on their struggles, resilience, and aspirations, it underscores the significance of preserving their cultural heritage while addressing the pressing issues they face in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords- Gujjars, Community, Migration, Articulation and Rehabilitation.

Research methodology

The research methodology employed in this study combines historical analysis, ethnographic research, and contemporary data collection techniques to comprehensively explore the origin and current situation of the Gujjar tribe in Himachal Pradesh. Historical analysis involves the examination of archival records, ancient texts, and scholarly literature to trace the lineage and migratory patterns of the Gujjar community over time. Ethnographic research involves fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation to gain firsthand

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insights into the cultural practices, social structures, and lived experiences of the Gujjar tribe in the region. Additionally, contemporary data collection methods such as surveys, census data analysis, and government reports are utilized to assess the socio-economic and political status of the Gujjar community in present-day Himachal Pradesh. By triangulating these diverse sources of information, this research methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Gujjar tribe's history, identity, and contemporary challenges in the region.

Introduction

Wedded to herding buffaloes and migrating from summer to winter pastures and vice-versa, year after year, the Muslim Gujars in Himachal Pradesh lead a nomadic life. From time immemorial they have been living in this fashion, far distant from the so called modern civilization, nurturing a distinct social and cultural mosaic of their own. Unlike their Hindu brethren in the plains as also in Himachal Pradesh, who, over ages have taken up cultivation as their main source of livlihood and given up nomadism in favour of a sedentary life, they are exclusively a pastoral tribe evincing little interest in a settled life and any vocation other than dairy farming. They have no living tradition of their origin in the distant past. What they, however, do recall is that their forefathers migrated to this area from the adjoining territory of Kishtwar in Jammu and Kashmir. Though differing in their pet theories and varying approaches, the historians are united on one point. All of them hold that the present-day Gujars belong to Gurjara race, which rode high in the political firmament of the country from about sixth century to the end of the thirteenth century.

Very little material is available to construct a reliable history of second half of the sixth century A.D. This much, however, is beyond doubt that after the golden age of the Gupta empire, which had lasted from 370 to 455 A.D., the Hunas poured into India in successive waves. These white Hunas, however, held a comparatively short-lived supremacy over Northern India. Between 563 arid 567 A.D. the Turkish tribes in alliance with the Persian King destroyed them and extended their dominion over all the countries once included in the Huna Empire (Smith 1908).

Soon after the Hunas, historians hold, came the Gurjjaras, who may indeed have come along with them, though they are not heard of until near the end of the sixth century when they shine into prominence. Apparently taking advantage of the waning Gupta empire, they

succeeded in establishing their political dominance. So powerful did these Gurjjaras, or Gujars became that no fewer than four tracts of the country received their name after them. In modern geography these are the districts of Gujrat and Gujranwala in Pakistarl, and the State of Gujrat in India. In addition to these three tracts Al-Biruni (971-1,039 A.D.) mentions Gujarat situated somewhere in northern Rajputana. The district of Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh) was also called Gujarat in the eighteenth century and one of the northern districts of Gwalior is still called Gujargarh. These name-places indicate that the Gurjjaras had quite a large number of settlements spread over the length and breadth of the country. This inference is further corroborated by the present distribution of the Gujjars. They are fairly numerous in the Western Himalaya, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, the Punjab, the Uttar Pradesh and the Western Rajputana and are also found in the hill country beyond the Sindhu.

This tribe also takes its name from the Sanskrit term Gurjjara, the original name of the country now called Gujrat. The traditions of the tribe give little information about their- origin and history. But by one legand, they claim descent from a certain Nand Mihr, who is perhaps Nanda, the foster father of Lord Krishana. He was raised to distinction because he slaked the thirst of Alexander the Great with a draught of buffallow milk. Before the end of the third century, it is believed, a section of the Gujjars had begun to move south-ward down the Indus, and were shortly afterwards separated from their northern brethren by another Indo-Scythian wave from the north. In the middle of the fifth century there existed a Gujjar Kingdom in South-Western Rajputana (Crooker 1974).

Some historians believe that in the earlier part of the 6th Century A.D. a great invasion by central Asiatic people called Huns and Gujjars took place. This invasion was checked by the emperor of Kannouj, Skand Gupta, but a large number of these foreign lords settled in Rajputana and Punjab. In these regions the invaders soon fused with the nature of the country. But about 750 A.D. the Parihars emerged as an offshoot of these settlers followed by the Parmars, Chauhans and imperial Gujjars. About 840 A.D. a Gujjar empire with its capital at Kannouj was established by Raja Bhoja I (Smith 1967).

Sir Alexander Cunningham observed a hundred years ago: "The Gujjars are found in great number in every part of the north-west of India, from the Indus to the Ganges, and from the Hazara mountains to the Peninsula of Gujrat. To the east they occupy the petty state of Samptar in Bundelkhand, and one of the northern districts of Gwalior,

which is still called Gujargarh. They are found only in small bodies and are much scattered throughout eastern Rajputana and Gwalior; but they are numerous in western states and specially towards Gujrat. The Rajas of Rewari to the south of Delhi are Gujjars. In the southern Punjab they are thinly scattered but their number increases rapidly towards the north. In north Punjab even they have given their names to several important places such as Gujaranwala in Rachna Doabs, Gujrat in the Chaj-Doab and Gujarkhan in the Sindh Sagar Doab, In the Peshwar district almost any hurdsman is called a Gujjar. But throughout the hill country of Jammu Chibal and Hazara and away in the territory of Peshwar as far as the Swat River, Gujjars are found in great numbers, all possessing a common speech, which is a Hindi dialect quite different from the Punjabi or Pashto. Here they are a purely pastoral and almost nomadic race, taking their herds into the higher ranges in summer and descending down with them into the valleys during the winter" (Cunningham 1891).

Regarding their ethnic affinities Denzil Ibbetson (1974) writes that Jats, Gujars and Ahirs are all of one ethnic stock because of a close relationship between them. It may be that they are the same in their distant origin. But they must have entered India at different times and settled in separate parts.Frederic Drew (1976) writes that the race is Aryan though their countenance cannot be called high Aryan: their forehead is narrow and they lack the well-formed brow of the finer races. The lower part of the face is narrow but the nose has always something of the curve as is often seen in Aryan races. But at the same time those who have become Muhammadans appear to be very much of mixed blood.

The Gujjars pretend to have eighty-four exogamous gotras or sections. However, it is difficult to identify with any certainty these eighty-four sections. The most important among them are the Gujjars of upper Doab who are almost entirely Hindus and the other ones are the Mohammadan Gujjars of Sultanpur. The upper Doab Gujjars are the Bhattis, who claim descent from Bhatti Rajputs and date their settlement from the time of Prithvi Raja.

Various origins are claimed to be authentic by different Gujjar clans. In Gujrat the Chauhans claim descent from Rai pithora of Delhi. The Chhokars of Karnal say they are Chandra Vanshi and an offshoot of the JaduRajputs of Muzzaffarnagar. Descent from the Panwars it claimed to be true by the Bahlots. It is obvious that all these names differ from each other. Most of these names are said to be derived from

the titles of tribal leaders or from the villages where their early settlements were founded.

Further as W. Crooke (1974) observes, "It is generally asserted that sectionally Gujjars are two and a half times from the Gorsi,Kasana and half from the tribe Burgat. They are so called because of their descendance from a slave mother. Originally they were Hindu Rajputs though they later embraced Islam in the era of Aurangzeb. They still observe the Hindu rites, on the birth of a male child as the women make an idol of Cowdun for worship. But these rites are now facing away among Mohammadan Gujjars. They are mostly from the Sunni sect of Islam."

Crooke (1974) has also noted: "The Gujjars of the hills are quite addicted to pastoral habits. In the hills the Gujjars are exclusively a pastoral tribe. They scarcely go for cultivation. These people live in the outskirts of the forests and maintain their existence exclusively by the sale of milk and ghi. During the summers the Gujjars usually drive their herts to the upper ranges of the Himalayas, where the buffaloes rejoice in the rich grass and in the winter period due to snow and severe cold they come down and drive their herds to plains."

In the opinion of V. Smith, (1908) Gujars or Gurjaras formed a branch of the White Hunas, who invaded India in the fifth and sixth centuries. According to him:

> The earliest foreign, immigration within the limits of the historical period which can be verified is that of the Sakas in the second century B.C.; and the next is that of the Yueh-chi and the Kushanas in the first century A.D……The third recorded great irruption of foreign barbarians occurred during the fifth century and the early part of the sixth. There are indications that the immigration from Central Asia continued during the third century, but, if it did, no distinct record of the event has been preserved, and, so far as positive knowledge goes, only three certain irruptions of foreigners on a large scale through the northern and north-western passes can be proved to have taken place within the historical period anterior to the Muhammadan invasions of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The third irruption of the Hunas or White Hunas, of which, according to him, Gurjaras was an important element, made their principal permanent settlements in the Punjab and Rajputana tracts. And in early mediaeval times the Guijara kingdoms acquired a prominent position on the political map of India. Of the GuijaraEmpire,

king Bhoja (840-890 A.D.), his predecessors and successors belonged to the well-known clan Pratihara (Parihar), a Rajput branch of the Guijara or Gujar stock.

Late Sir J. Campbell, (1974) on his part, has identified the Gujars with the Khazar tribe of Central Asia. According to him "the Gujaras seem to have formed part of the great horde of which the Juan-Juan or Avars, and the Ephthalites, Yetas or White Hunas were leading elements."

Proceeding further he asks the question and provides the answer thus:

> The question remains: How far does the arrival of the Gurjara in India, during the early sixth century, agree with what is known of the history of Khazar? The name Khazar appears under the following forms: Among Chinese as Kosa, among Russians as Khwalisses, among Byzantines as Chozars or Chazars, among Armenians as Khazirs and among Arabs as Khozar. Other variations come closer to Gujara. These are Gazar, the form Kazar takes to the north of the sea of Asof; Ghysar, the name for Khazars who have become Jews; and Ghusar, the form of Khazar in use among the Lesghians of the Caucasus. Howarth and the writer in the Encyclopedia Britannica follow Klaproth in holding that the Khazars are the same as the white Hunas.

Relating the origin of the Gujjars, the Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and NWFP(Ross 1914) (Vol. II) records:

According to Rudolf Hoernle the Tomaras (the modem TunwarRajputs) were a clan of the Gurjjaras, and indeed their imperial or ruling clan. The Pehowa (Pehoa in the Kamal district) inscription records of a Tomara family that it was descended from a raja, Jaula, whose name recalls that of the Shahi Javavla or Jahula and of the maharaja, Toranmana Shahi Jauvla of the Kura inscription. Hoernla thinks it probable that the Kachhwahas and Parihars, like the Tomaras, were all clans or division of a Javula tribe claiming descent from Toramana, king of the white Huns or Ephthalites.

According to yet another school of thought they migrated (Suraj 1976) from Georgia, a country situated between the Black sea and the Caspian Sea in Russia. In Persian it is called Gurjarstan, from which the term Gujjar is said to have been derived. It would be interesting to refer to the ethnological study of Gujjars by Prof. Georgi Chogoshrill of the Georgian Academy of Sciences (1967) which has

highlighted 'remarkable similarities' between the Georgians and the Gujjars. In the view of Prof. Levan Maruashill of the Georgian Institute of Geography, 'there is enough evidence to sustain a case for a thorough study to find out when the Georgians first started moving to India.'In the opinion of Arab geographers, Gujjars were the inhabitants of Juzr, (Majid 1985) which Al-Idisi quoting Ibn Khordadbeh mentions as the hereditary title of the king as also the name of a country.

Legend is that the Gujjars are descendants Shashi (1995) of Prophet Ishaque, to be precise, the progeny and followers of his elder son, Hazrat Ash, who was superseded to the khilafat (prophet-hood) by his younger brother, Hazrat Yakub. The story goes that on being denied the right of succession, Ash overcome by despair left his home and went into the forest. There Allah came to him in a vision, consoled him and told him to have faith in His Word and lead a simple and sinless life. Ever since his descendants and followers, the present- day Gujars, lead a simple life wandering in the forests in the belief that they are thus nearer to God. It is a myth: historically it has no substance. Yet another fanciful version is that their name comes from gua-charana meaning 'to graze cattle'. An equally imaginative origin is the Hindi word, gajar (carrot) from the mistaken belief that the Gujars fed their cattle on carrots.

The Scythian (Hermann 1969) origin of the Gurjjaras, accepted as an historical fact has been maintained on three main grounds, namely,

  (i)   the custom of the Karao;

  (ii)   the worship of snakes; and

  (iii) the identification of proper names.

The first argument has no legs to stand on because the marriage of the elder brother's widow was a Hindu custom legalised by Manu's code, and though it was prohibited to the higher castes by the code of Parasara, it is still practised by all the lower castes, and is not, nor ever has been, confined to the Gujjars only. The second ground is like-wise worth nothing, because snakes are worshipped all over India by all castes alike. The third argument (identification of proper names) is ingenious, but far from convincing. The term Gujar is merely a variant of gochar or cattle-grazer. Again, as this so-called Scythian tribe is in physical characteristics precisely similar to the rest of the Indian population, it is vain to expect one to believe that the Gujjars are of an alien ethnical stock. 'Moreover, the pastoral castes are the necessary intermediate link between the hunting and the agricultural; and this fact

alone, unless we are to discredit the analogies of history and the conclusions of science, is sufficient to prove that they are not of foreign but of indigenous blood' (Nashfield 1969).

The theory of foreign origin of the Gurjjaras is contested strenuously by many distinguished men of learning. Krishnaswami Iyengar (1969), one of the many historians of the same view, states:

> I do believe that the immigration of the Gurjjaras is not such a settled fact of history for deductive applications. I did my best to examine the materials on which the theory of immigration was based and I submit that in view of all the evidence that has been forthcoming of recent years, the theory of immigration is unsustainable.

Therefore, it can be submitted that there is no determinative piece of evidence to prove that the word 'Gurjjara' was used to indicate the race of the person denominated; or that the person denominated was of foreign origin.

Conversion to Islam

It is impossible, without further investigation, to say exactly when the great mass of the Hindu Gujjars were converted to Islam. Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars and their Muslim brethren in Himachal Pradesh date their conversion from the time of Mughal king Aurangzeb, which is probably true though not conclusive. According to another unverified account, most of the Gujjars converted to Islam under the influence of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, a renowned Muslim saint of Rajasthan. Fearing the wrath of the Hindus, they fled from the plains of Rajasthan and in course of time found refuge in Jammu and Kashmir, where the abounding pastures and lush green valleys enabled them to start a new life. Islam came to Kashmir in the fourteenth century. The possibility of Gujjars embracing Islam along with other Hindus during that period cannot be ruled out. In any case when Babar invaded India in 1525, he found that in the Salt Range, the Gujjars had been subdued and converted to Islam. (Bingley: 1899) That they retain some of the Hindu customs to this day than do the majority of their converted neighbours certainly speaks of the recency of the change of faith.

Sociology of nomads

For thousand of years, the primitive tribes in India have wandered in the forests and hills in search of livelihood, without more than a casual contact with the population of the open plains and the centres of civilization. Derived from the Greek root 'nemo' meaning 'to

pasture', the term nomad generally applies to 'a person who lives completely from his flock and does not domicile himself to plant' (Edwin 1953)

Nomadism, in essence, involves the repeated shifting of the habitat of a people in search for subsistence. It is a regular, seasonal or cyclical movement, which is neither unrestricted nor undirected wandering but is focussed around temporary centres of operation, the stability of which is dependent upon the availability of food supply and the technology to exploit it. Nomadic movement is distinguishable from migration, which conversely is non-cyclic and involves a total change of habitat. Nomadism assumes different forms mostly depending on topography and climate. For instance, there are nomads who hunt and gather, others who tinker and trade. Besides, there are pastoral and agricultural nomads. Ban (forest) Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are primarily a pastoral tribe. Like all other pastoral nomads, they periodically return to particular areas, which phenomenon is more systematic than among hunting nomads. Such territories as they regularly exploit, they claim as their property. Almost the entire population of Hindu Gujjars, who now live in permanent houses and own fields, once used to exploit the pastures of the territory they now inhabit though presently they combine agricultural activity with their past primary occupation of herding buffaloes in the adjoining wastes. The Mohammadan Gujjars or the Ban-Gujjars, on the other hand, possess neither a permanent home nor cultivate land. It is exclusively from, their wandering herds of buffaloes that they continue to derive their livelihood. Their claim of inheritance or warisi in grazing rights of certain pastures and forests, which is as strong as that of land-holders over their fields, is nothing but a refined form of this trait.

Pastoral nomads retain their herds as wealth, while they live on milk or some of the young animals or on food derived through exchange. The hill Gujjars 'wealth consists of buffaloes, as that of the Gaddis consists chiefly of sheep and goats.' (Punjab Gazzate 1883-84)

When large groups of nomad herdsmen seeking land for grazing purposes come into contact with the agricultural land-holders, generally peaceful relations are maintained unless the later feel threatened of their grazing resources. Interestingly there is no contradiction over a Gujjar and a Gaddi waris possessing a concurrent claim over the same tract of forests (George 1855)

Since their livestock thrive on different kinds of vegetation there is little scope for conflict. Only when another Gaddi or Gujjar

brings in his animals or their herds intrude upon farm-owners pastures there could be ground for resentment. Normally the pastoralist Gujjars and the agriculturists co-exist peacefully inter-acting with each other in a spirit of co-operation and bartering surpluses.

The economic power acquired by families of nomadic herdsmen has very often led them to adopt a more or less sedentary existence. They have in such cases become attached to and even dependent on the agriculturists, with whom initially they had no exogamous relationship. When later inter-marriages became frequent, ethnical stratification turned into social stratification. This is precisely how the Hindu Gujjars have assimilated into the local agricultural community and are now hard to recognise apart from them.

'At the present day' described Sir Alexander Cunnigham in his monumental work Ancient Geography of India, the Gujjars are found in great numbers in every part of the North-West of India, from the Indus to the Ganges, and from the Hazara mountains to the Peninsula of Gujarat. They are especially numerous along the banks of the Upper Jamna, near Jagadhri and Buriya, and in the Saharanpur district, which during the last century was actually called Gujarat. To the east they occupy the petty State of Samptar in Bundelkhand, and one of the northern districts of Gwalior, which is still called Gujargar. They are found only in small bodies and much scattered throughout Eastern Rajputana and Gwalior; but they are more numerous in the Western States, and especially towards Gujarat, where they form a large part of the population.

In the Punjab they essentially belonged to the lower ranges and sub-montane tracts; in the Jamuna valley they were almost confined to the riverain low-lands. Early in the nineteenth century they were found in great number throughout the hill country of Jammu. Here they were a purely pastoral and almost nomad race, taking their herds up into the higher ranges in summer and descending with them into the valleys during the cold weather.

Gujjar migration and settlement in Himachal Pradesh

Gujjars, a great historical caste, which fills some golden pages of the Indian medieval history, constitutes a significant segment of the Scheduled tribes of Himachal Pradesh (Census 1911-1991). Gujjars being nomadic tribe, it is extremely difficult to trace their migration route. But one motive and only one drove or drew the Gujjars to Himachal Pradesh. To motive has been the pastures for their life stocks. T.S. Negi argues that, the Hindu Gujjars entered Himachal Pradesh

from the neighbouring areas of the plains in isolated and stray migrations. The Muslim Gujjars seem mainly to have first set foot in the then princely states of Chamba and Sirmour and thence spread out gradually to other localities outside these States. Some of them found their way to the Kangra district and erstwhile Bilaspur State from the adjoining plains of British India. To the Chamba State the Muslim Gujjars were driven by the growing inadequacy of grazing resources in the neighbouring parts of the Jammu and Kashmir State.

The traditional version of how the Mohammedan Gujjars were drawn to Sirmour is rather romantic. His highness Raja Shamsher Prakash of Sirmour visited Punchh for matrimonial purposes. The profuse availability of excellent milk that he noticed at Punchh led him to the discovery of Gujjar tribe and their buffalo herds. He requested the Rural of Punchh for the migration of some Gujjar families to Sirmour and promised liberal grazing facilities. Apart from the matrimonial courtesies, on the part of the ruling family of Punchh towards that of Sirmour, the lush prospects of pasturage in Sirmour drew the Gujjars strongly to Maharaja Shamsher Prakash's domains and some nineteen families migrated to Sirmour in the wake of the royal matrimonial ties between Punchh and Sirmour. From Sirmour the Gujjars spread out into many of what were in those times knows as the Shimla Hills States. So there are three main directions and sources of Gujjar induction in Himachal Pradesh, namely, Chamba from Jammu and Kashmir, through Sirmour from Punchh and through Kangra and Bilaspur from the neighbouring districts of British India, numerous stray infiltrations went over the generations. At present Gujjar population is scattered almost in every district of Himachal Pradesh.

The Gujjar tribes of Himachal Pradesh have both the sects Hindu as well Muslim. It is noticeable point that almost all the Hindu Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh are settled in their permanent habitats and have taken to agriculture and other professions, whereas, the Muslims Gujjars are still stick to their nomadic pastoral life and now some of them settled and semi settled. Hindu Gujjars lead a settled life generally found in Mandi, Bilaspur, Solan and Una. In contrary, Muslim Gujjars lead a nomadic pastoral life mainly found in Chamba, Kangra and Sirmour. They generally found in moving with the herd of buffaloes from high hills during winter and from low lands to uplands during summer months. They have grazing rights in forest for which they require a permit. Since some of them have also been rehabilitated in colonies, they have taken to other pursuit namely agriculture, business and service. However, majority of them still subsist through the sale of milk and milk products

in the nearby towns. Changes are taking place in their community but the pace of change is slow among the nomadic Gujjars.

According to census report 2001, the total population of Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh was 35538. It increased to 92,547 according to 2011 Census report. In terms of total percentage they constitute 23.60 of the total scheduled tribe of Himachal Pradesh which is 3,92,126. Following table shows district wise Gujjars population and their percent of tribal population in Himachal Pradesh.

Table 1.1

Distribution of Gujjars as percent of tribal population in Himachal Pradesh

District	Total S.T. Population 2001	Total S.T. Population 2011	Gujjars Population 2001	Gujjar Populaiton 2011	Column 4 to Column 2	Column 5 to Column 3
Chamba	117569	135500	8302	9784	7.06	7.22
Kangra	1597	84564	Nil	11390	Nil	13.47
Mandi	10564	12787	9395	11278	88.94	88.19
Kullu	11351	16822	Nil	1246	Nil	7.40
Bilaspur	9180	10693	9108	10278	99.22	96.11
Hamirpur	155	3044	Nil	2736	Nil	89.88
Solan	3542	25645	2891	23728	81.62	92.52
Una	51	8601	Nil	8379	Nil	97.41
Sirmour	5960	11262	5837	10545	97.93	93.64
Shimla	4112	8755	Nil	3157	Nil	36.05
Lahaul& Spiti	24238	25707	Nil	9	0.037	0.035
Kinnaur	56268	48746	5	17	0.030	0.034
H.P.	244587	392126	35538	92547	14.52	23.60

Source :- Data analysed by the Census Report 2001 & 2011.

According to census report 2001, the total population of Gujjars was 35,538. It increased to 92,547 in 2011. The main reason is that, in January 2003, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India has notified Gaddis and Gujjars residing in merged areas (1966) of the state as Scheduled Tribes. The population of Gujjars in these areas was not included in the Census report 2001, but in 2011 Census report, these to communities were also included by the Ministry.

Moreover, it is also noticed that the Gujjars, especially the Muslim Gujjars, do not seem to have been given correctly even in the census data. It is usually during the month of September that they start migrating to the plains and stay there up to the month of March. Census operations are carried out in the month of February when the migratory and nomadic Gujjars are away in the plains. Therefore, inadvertently they escape enumeration. It is possible that they are enumerated at their respective places of stay in the plains of other states, and are thus counted to be Gujjars of those states.

According to Census report 2011, the majority of Gujjars live in rural areas and very few, rather a negligible section of their population, live in urban areas as shown in the following table.
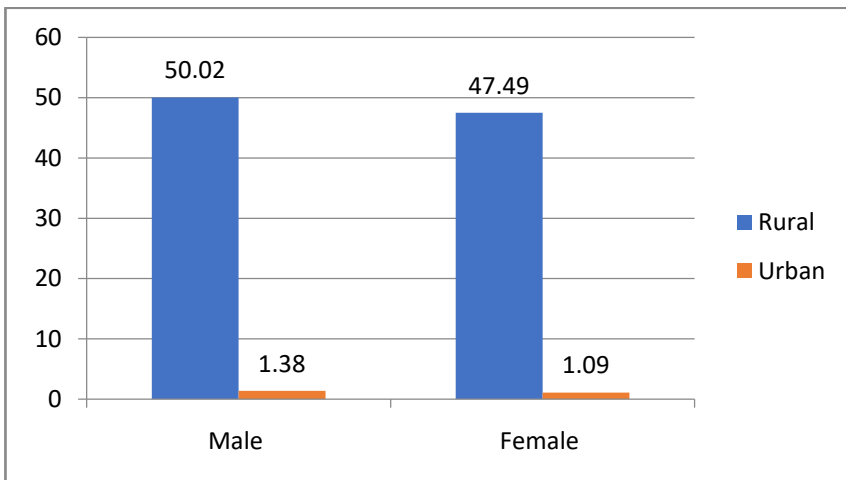
Table 3.2

Gujjars in rural and urban areas

Gujjar Population	Total	Males	Females
Rural	90,247 (97.51)	46,293 (50.02)	43,954 (47.49)
Urban	2,300 (2.49)	1,283 (1.38)	1,107 (1.09)
Total	92,547 (100.00)	47,576 (51.41)	44,971 (48.59)

Source: Census Report 2011.

Note: Figure in parentheses indicate percentage.

Figure 3.2

The table 3.2 shows 97.51 percent to the total population of the Gujjars are living in rural areas and only 2.48 percent are living in urban areas. Furthermore, out of the 97.51 percent of the rural population of the Gujjars, 50.02 percent are males and 47.49 are females, whereas, out of 2.48 percent of the urban population, 1.38 percent are males and 1.09 percent are females.

In Himachal Pradesh, the major percentage of Gujjars is that of Hindus, whereas the second major population is that of the Muslims, and negligible section of the Gujjar population belongs to some other religions. Following table infer about the religion wise Gujjars population of the Himachal Pradesh.

Table 3.3

Distribution of Gujjars by religion

Religion	Males	Females	Total
Hindus	27,788	27,208	55,996 (60.50)
Muslims	18,626	17,604	36,230 (39.15)
Christians	35	41	76(0.09)
Sikhs	88	85	173(0.19)
Buddihists	7	3	10(0.011)
Jains	4	2	6(0.006)
Other religions	1	2	3(0.003)
Religion not stated	27	26	53(0.05)
All Religion	47,576	44,971	92,547

Source: Census Report 2011.

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

According to table 3.3, out of the total population of 92,547 of the Gujjar tribes, 55,996 are Hindus, while 36,230 are Muslims, 76 are Christians, 173 are Sikhs, 10 are Buddhists, 6 are Jains, 3 from other religions and 53 are those, whose religion is not stated. Thus in the total Gujjars population of Himachal Pradesh, 60.50 percent are Hindus, 39.15 percent are Muslims, 0.09 percent are Christians, 0.19 percent are Sikhs and very negligible 0.011 percent are Buddhists, 0.006 are

Jains, 0.003 related to other religion and 0.05 percent are those whose religion is not stated. Thought, different religions beliefs are prevalent among the members of Gujjars tribe of Himachal Pradesh. Originally, they were all Hindus and with the passage of time some of the Gujjars embraced Islam and now some of them are even embracing other religions. But the number of these last is almost negligible. Their different religious beliefs may also affect their social structure as well as their intra-tribal social set-up, interaction, integration and identity. Their inhabiting rural and backward areas, which are generally remote areas of the jungle, keeps these people aloof from the modern and urban values. Their nomadic habitat has become a hindrance in the process of their overall development and advancement as they have not been able to utilize the opportunities provided by the Government for their welfare and for protecting their interests.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper illuminates the multifaceted journey of the Gujjar tribe in Himachal Pradesh, India, from their ancient origins to their present-day realities. Through a meticulous examination of historical records, ethnographic research, and contemporary data, it becomes evident that the Gujjar community has traversed a complex path marked by resilience, adaptation, and challenges. The Gujjar identity has been shaped by centuries of migration, cultural assimilation, and socio-political dynamics, leading to a rich tapestry of traditions and customs.

However, the present situation of the Gujjar tribe in Himachal Pradesh is marked by various challenges, including land disputes, marginalization, and the impact of modernization and globalization on their traditional way of life. Despite these obstacles, there are initiatives and interventions aimed at ameliorating their situation, such as educational programs, healthcare initiatives, and advocacy efforts for socio-economic empowerment. These endeavors signify a recognition of the importance of preserving the Gujjar cultural heritage while addressing the pressing issues they face.

Moving forward, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that acknowledges the complexity of the Gujjar tribe's history and current circumstances. This includes ensuring their participation in decision-making processes, promoting policies that safeguard their rights and interests, and fostering dialogue and understanding between the Gujjar community and broader society. Moreover, there is a need for continued research and documentation to capture the nuances of the Gujjar experience and inform evidence-based interventions.

Ultimately, the preservation of the Gujjar cultural heritage and the improvement of their socio-economic well-being are not only matters of social justice but also crucial for the overall development and diversity of Himachal Pradesh. By embracing their struggles, resilience, and aspirations, society can move towards a more inclusive and equitable future where every community, including the Gujjar tribe, can thrive and contribute to the tapestry of the region's cultural landscape.

Notes

1. The various data relating to the 1911, 1921, 1931, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census cited here before has been reproduced from the relevant Census documents published under the authority of the Government of India. Special Table for Scheduled Tribes for Himachal Pradesh, 2011.

2. Also endorsed by Geotz Hermann (Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya; Germany, 1969). In his words (appearing as a footnote on p. 24)

3. Indian nationalist historians have denied the foreign origin of the invaders because they later claimed orthodox Hindu descent. However, this claim is worth no more than the Roman pedigrees of certain early Teutonic conquerors or the Chinese clan names of certain Tatar dynasties. The early Gurjaras had names of Scythian character as proved by Sankalia, and the present Gujjars, Jats. etc., have many Iranian of Central Asian Customs. Likewise the folk art of medieval and modern North-western India reveals quite a number of non-Indian features. On the other hand, most of the Rajputs have been either indigenous in the area between the Indus and the Aravallis, or are Indian immigrants from Eastern Afghanistan or originally strongly infected by heterodox local or Sasanian culture.

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Empowerment of women: An analysis through the selected partition fiction

-Sumi Bora

ABSTRACT

The current paper will interrogate if women were only the victims during the Indian Partition or if there were cases where women also got empowered through an analysis of selected Partition fiction. The paper will provide a brief background on how the Partition is viewed by historians from India and Pakistan and argue for the necessity to study Partition literature to gain knowledge about unperceived happenings unnoticed by historical texts. The paper will specifically engage with the four women characters from three fictional texts through the aspect of money, violence and family honour and find how they negotiated the issue of empowerment and disempowerment. Finally, the paper will point out that though women were victimised during Partition there were also a considerable number of cases where women were also empowered and could exercise their choice.

Keywords: disempowerment, empowerment, honour, money, violence.

Introduction

When in 1947 the Indian sub-continent was partitioned, the two nation-states, India and Pakistan came into being. "Partition literature" will refer to the literary works that dealt with this significant event in the current paper. Different historians opine divergent viewpoints concerning the prime cause for this partition. For example, G. D Khosla has categorically stated in *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up to and Following the Partition of India* (1943), about the extremely uncooperative nature of the Muslim League throughout different stages of consultations that predated Independence and is held accountable for the partition of India. Khosla stated: "He [Jinnah] maintained an arrogant and unbending attitude towards all attempts at settlement. He refused even to formulate concrete demands, as the giving of a definite shape would have deprived Pakistan of its emotional appeal" (Khosla 1943, p. 29).

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Ayesha Jalal, the Pakistani historian, contrarily mentioned in her pioneering book on Jinnah, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim and the demand for Pakistan* (1994) that it was the Congress High Command that forced Partition upon Jinnah though he attempted every possible mode to keep India united. He publicly rejected the proposed partition of the Punjab and Bengal and called for a transfer of power to the provinces as they were then constituted. It was a 'mistake,' he argued, 'to compare the basic principle of the demand for Pakistan for cutting up the provinces throughout India in fragmentation', and urged the Viceroy and H.M.G not to fall into the 'trap' set up by the Congress and 'commit a grave error.' (Jalal 1994, pp. 267-268)

Literature and partition studies

Conflicting opinions propounded by the historians, cannot negate the fact that Partition literature needs continual involvement as it shifts away from the larger historical narratives and examines individual and local narratives that tend to get overlooked because of their disciplinary boundaries. Indisputably, Partition is a historical reality and cannot be disconnected from the literature dealing with it; simultaneously, literature is *not* history, and should not be taken unquestionably, though it has a historical underpinning. With such an interactive method, a newer discourse emerges when history and literature are studied in tandem, which the current paper has attempted. The paper subscribes to the statement by Jasbir Jain (2007) that literature "goes beyond the empirical reality, beyond treaties and wars and probes the silence of the human mind . . . literature is "writing" about what cannot be written about" (Jain2007, p.5).

The necessity of the study

An often-quoted figure regarding violence faced by women during Partition is offered by Urvashi Butalia where about 75,000 women (Butalia 1998, p. 3) are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their religion). No doubt women had to face extreme violence which has large-scale ramifications and has newer ways of reading but a topic that demands attention is whether there were women who became empowered during Partition. The paper proclaims that certain acts were going on at a subterranean level which destabilises this grand narrative of violence faced by women.

Objectives of the study

The four women characters Bhoori and Sushila in *Bhoori* by Sundri Uttamchandani, Kusum in *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Harpreet in *The Unsafe Asylum* by Anirudh Kala will be discussed in this paper to find how far these women were only victims of Partition or if they had any agency in deciding their fate. Towards this end, the paper will deal with three vital issues:

   i.   If Partition was always disempowering for women

  ii.   How women negotiated with their space during Partition

 iii.   What happened to women's identity during Partition

Money as empowerment/disempowerment – the status of Bhoori and Sushila:

The aspect that Partition acted towards disempowering women has been documented and discussed in fictional texts like *Khol Do*, *Thanda Ghost* by Saadat Hasan Manto, *The River Churning* by Jyotirmoyee Devi, *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar.In their pioneering work *Borders and Boundaries,* Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin have unearthed that Partition also enabled some women to learn to survive. They stated:

Very large numbers of women who had never before stepped out of their homes joined the workforce after Partition. Force of circumstances, economic necessity and the urgency to rebuild homes and futures pushed many women of all classes into earning and supplementing family incomes. (Menon and Bhasin 2017, p. 205)

It needs no iteration that Partition engendered the displacement of people from their place of birth which had terrible consequences in their lives like death, losing near-ones, homes, property, and financial means to sustain their lives.

Conventionally men were considered to be the bread-earners of a family but if one looks at the story *Bhoori* by Sundri Uttamchandani, a peculiar case comes to the forefront. Here, Bhoori, left her place of birth, Sind during Partition along with her family. In the new place, her husband could earn a little and instead of having any grievance against him, she ventured out to sell *papads* breaking the traditional constraints where women are restricted to the inner precincts of their homes. Thus, her husband's incapacity to sustain the family on the financial front as was expected by society from a man enabled her to become economically independent. She acquired self-reliance, great self-

respect, dignity and immeasurable satisfaction of asking no one for charity. She did not get restricted to any rigid identity but transformed into "a proud, hardworking and confident woman replacing her carefree nature of the pre-Partition years"(Uttamchandani 2009, p. 20). Such peripheral cases merit consideration as it can be easily discerned what she had made of her life to what her life may have made of her, had Partition not intervened.

An opposite case is presented through Sushila, Nenu's wife, the house Bhoori visited to sell *papads* who is completely dependent on her husband's income. She belongs to a wealthy class and finds it difficult to run the house with her 'husband's salary of three hundred rupees' (Uttamchandani, 2009, p. 17). The discussion between her and Bhoori regarding money and looking after their respective families speaks about how money is invaluable for Bhoori who must move outside her home and is unable to look after her family and children, to the extent that she could not have the time to search for her son who disappeared for two days. On the other hand, Sushila could stay within the comforting zone of her home relying on the money earned by her husband and could afford to take care of her family:

'It's better not to be out of house then. As it is, you earn a measly amount, not millions.'

'That measly amount is enough for us. At least we don't depend on anybody.' (Uttamchandani 2009, p. 17)

Thus, dislocation brought independence to women like Bhoori who destabilised the structure of depending upon their husbands liberating themselves from the embarrassment of approaching people to sell their stuff, by advertising them, scrupulously considering profit and loss when customers haggled to reduce the prices of their items. Bhoori needed money for her independence which she earned by working hard; poverty could not restrain Bhoori from being independent, rather, it became a medium that uplifted her; whereas Shusila with all her money is paradoxically dependent, unlike Bhoori. Money in this regard becomes an empowering agency for Bhoori and the means to disempower Sushila.

Violence and family honour – The case of Kusum and Harpreet:

The responses of Kusum in *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Harpreet in *The Unsafe Asylum* by Anirudh Kala can be two pertinent cases to scrutinise the issue of violence and family honour, that squeezed women during Partition to find if they exercised choice while taking decisions that would decide the course of

their lives or if decisions are taken for them which they must comply with and the concealed conditions in the society that directed them. Both women prioritised their families and were ready to do anything to save their families and the community's purity of identity and honour.

During Partition to retain the sanctity of identity and the place where people belonged, women who became the repository of the community honour were murdered by their kinsmen or forced into taking their own lives before an alien community polluted or defiled them. Bhasin and Menon have demonstrated in *Borders and Boundaries – Women in India's Partition*, (2017) that such violent acts invariably pointed to two critical and distinctive features – "it sanctions the violent "resolution" (so to speak) of the troublesome question of women's sexuality and sexual status – chaste, polluted, impure – and *simultaneously insists on women's silence regarding it* through the attachment of shame and stigma to this very profound violation of self" (Bhasin and Menon 2017, p. 58).

Kusum in *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin is decapitated by her father-in-law Bachan Singh as she is of childbearing age to save the honour of his family and the clan before she can be defiled by someone from a foreign religion. For Bachan Singh, it is not Kusum, the woman who matters but her womb which is a potential ground where "seeds of a foreign religion" can be planted. He says with a deep sense of concern to Roop, his daughter whom he meets after some years:

Kusum was entrusted to me by Jeevan, she is young, still of childbearing age. I cannot endure even the possibility that some Muslim might put his hands upon her. Every day I had been hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women's wombs. No, I said: I must do my duty. (Baldwin 2011, p. 586)

No force is required to be exerted on Kusum as she subscribes to the patriarchal notion of honour, submits herself on the altar of sacrifice and takes the responsibility of saving her clan's honour whose codes are determined by the society for the women. In this way, she too becomes indirectly complicit in the crime committed by her father-in-law when he takes her to his sitting room and says he must do, what he must do. Bachan Singh says with a proud voice to Roop, "She understood. Always she made no trouble. She said I should take her into the front room, your mama's room, so her sons, on the terrace with Revati Bhua, should hear no cry from her lips" (Baldwin 2011, p. 587). Kusum accepts her horrific death which she presumed to be dignified

for her, when the welfare of the family and community took precedence over the welfare of her, as an individual. What needs to be noted in this regard is not to finalise how Kusum as a woman should have responded, but predetermination of choices for her or rather whenever she could choose, she could hardly exercise a choice of her own.

In her study, *The Other Side of Silence – Voices from the Partition of India* (1998) Urvashi Butalia also gives an ample number of cases to debunk the myth that violence during Partition is only male and "women as symbols of the honour of the family, community and nation" (Butalia 1998, p. 216) can never be violent beings. Citing an incident in Thoa Khalsa, where women 'chose' mass drowning, she makes a pertinent comment:

…this incident and many others like it, are important for they shed light on much more than the question of choice or coercion, of whether the women were victims or agents of their fate. I am struck by the fact that nowhere in the different discourses on Partition, do such incidents count as violent incidents, that somehow when we speak of the violence of Partition, we do not touch upon the violence within ourselves, within families, within communities. (Butalia 1998, p. 214)

At this juncture, it is appropriate to bring the case of Harpreet Cheema in *The Unsafe Asylum* by Anirudh Kala who initially gave all her effort to save her family's honour without paying attention to her honour as a woman. Her case is noteworthy in terms of her marriage to two persons and the interesting trajectories that they assume finally leading to the realisation of her status as a woman and how different methods are circulated to restrict that consciousness in her.

Harpreet Cheema is married to Manjeet Cheema, a Sikh, who gets abductedduring Partition from her house in Sialkot and gets married to Aslam Cheema, a Muslim, from Sialkot itself. According, to Murtaza Cheema, her abductor and elder brother of Aslam, he rescued her from her house that was set ablaze, and 'saw her husband and mother-in-law run out of the house' (Kala 2018, p. 80). When she demands, she is also taken to the nearby police station by Aslam where the sub-inspector writes down her account and tells her, 'You can stay here, if you want, till we find another place for you' (Kala 2018, p. 81). Subsequently, she goes back to her house, to have a look and surprisingly finds that 'Of the house, only a charred shell was left, and some of it had already collapsed ... She was alone and had nothing of her own…It felt strange to think that she had been abandoned' (Kala 2018, p. 82). After a month of her marriage, she consents gets converted to Islam becomes Firdaus Cheema and leads a happy family

life, re-joining her old job as a physical training instructor at the Convent of Jesus and Mary.

Troubles started to brew when "Abducted Persons' Recovery and Restoration Act 1949" was brought into force by both the governments of India and Pakistan, where the two countries took the whole issue of recovering abducted women 'as a matter of their country's honour' (p. 85). Harpreet/Firdaus is forcefully "recovered" from her house in Sialkot the day she returns with her husband Aslam when they run away to spend a month and a half in a cramped hotel room in hot and dusty Bhimber, which then was in 'Azad Kashmir,' where the Act technically would not operate, waiting for situations to cool down at Sialkot.

According to the "Abducted Persons' Recovery and Restoration Act 1949," a woman "who was seen to be living with, in the company of, or in a relationship with a man of the other religion, after March 1, 1947, would be presumed to have been abducted, taken by force"(Butalia1998, p. 144). The case of Harpreet comes within the purview of this act and her recovery is legally recognised making her second marriage and conversion invalid. She is forcefully recovered by women social workers and police though she resists by clinging to Aslam and refusing to let him go. Ironically the women social workers are employed by the state during the recovery operations as it claims that being women, they know women's true preferences best and they can never be 'really' happy with their abductor. It is a paradoxical situation where the authority and voice of the woman social worker are pressed into service to silence the voice of the woman, who is a victim as Veena Das has rightfully pointed out in *Critical Events* (Das 2018, p. 72).

The state takes control of Harpreet/Firdaus's life and she is taken in a bus along with other recovered women from Sialkot to Jullunder and Mridula Sarabhai, the Congress leader informs that her child was aborted without her knowledge as she was a few weeks pregnant. The complicity of the state and the families who want women for repatriation become evident through what Sarabhai articulates 'when families ask for repatriation, the protocol includes consent for abortion. Because this is the way the families want it to be . . . Nobody ever wanted to have a woman back who was pregnant . . . So, the state is doing what the families want. They have allocated a special fund just for this' (Kala 2018, p. 90). This makes Harpreet shout, in between sobs with a voice of protest, which undoubtedly questions her very existence as a woman and her freedom to exercise choice regarding her life: 'Let them not have me back! Am I a possession which can be

dragged anywhere and then cut up to throw away parts of me which they don't like?'(Kala 2018, p. 90). She uncovers the status of the abducted women whose voices are unheeded regarding the place where they prefer to stay to realise the lofty goals of recovering back the honour of the family and the state.

Harpreet along with the recovered women is given some briefing and a list is read out that those women who are going to be received by their 'family were to go to the waiting hall and the rest would go to a blue bus, that would take them to a specially set up reception center in Delhi (Kala 2018, p. 91). This becomes a pivotal moment for Harpreet towards her self-realisation and she acts what she believes to be just. She does not go to the waiting hall when her name is read out from the list; she on the contrary goes to the bathroom, 'carefully took off from her neck and wrists the religious amulets that she had collected over time, from both sides. Without any qualms, she flushed these down the lavatory and strode out of the building' (Kala, 2018, 91). Then she boards the blue bus with a new sense of identity that is scripted by her; when the conductor with his clipboard asks her name, she replies, 'Harpreet.' The conductor asks, "'Just Harpreet? Agge picchekuchnahi? Nothing before or after?' She smiled at him and said, 'Agge picchekuchhnahi'" (Kala 2018, p. 92).

By this act, Harpreet disrupts the very idea of identity that the state sought to determine for her through dispensable objects associated with religion and nationality. Like Kusum in *What the Body Remembers,* Harpreet also endures multiple acts of violence that shrivel her but unlike Kusum, she uses violence as a tool to assert what she believes to be true. Kusum's identity as a woman acts as a constraint and disempowers her, but Harpreet stops being a woman to be shaped by her family and the state and metamorphoses into an independent woman demanding a distinctive place of her own. With her unconventional act, she subverts the violence committed on her by *her* family and the state in the garb of recovering her and deciding her well-being, by not allowing them to determine who she *has* to be, but choosing who she *wants* to be. Harpreet overturns that very notion of fixing identity for women and no longer juggles between herself and her family.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that the victimisation of women is a dominant trend in Partition discourse that cannot be avoided. Still, the world of women in terms of their identity also takes some interesting routes that move beyond the realm of women being

victimisedcontinually as the above analysis has demonstrated. There is also an emergent realm where women like Bhoori become economically independent and move out of the narrow domestic realm and some others like Harpreet chart a path of their own breaking the shackles that debar women from asserting their identity and the place, they want to identify themselves with. To be precise, a continuous re-reading of Partition can bring newer aspects and show that it is a never-ending project.

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Gendered society and social ethics: A socio-historical analysis of Shakuntala-Dushyanta *Saang*

-Karan Singh and Jyoti Yadav

ABSTRACT

Saangs are intermeshed within the moral, religious, and cultural structures of the rural society of North India, particularly of Haryana and Western U.P. They are reflective of the dominant ideas, patterns of feelings, and moral ethos of a society that has prided itself on its conservatism in the areas of marriages and love affairs through a cultivation of overriding patriarchal norms towards gender. Instances of honour killings, eve-teasing, and female infanticide have been quite rampant in the geographical region where *saangs* are played, thus necessitating an investigation into the socio-cultural peculiarities of this region and the role of *saangs* in perpetuating and consolidating ethical norms related to gender. The present paper will study prevalent socio-cultural ethics in this region, primarily related to gender relations, through insights provided by *saangs*, which play a dominant role in shaping ideational patterns and motifs related to them. The proposed investigation will examine the portrayal of three major characters, viz., Shakuntla, Menaka, and Dushyanta, in *saangs* by Pandit Mangeram and Chanderlal Badi, and compare them to their portrayals in the *Mahabharata* by Ved Vyasa and *Abhijnansakuntalam* by Kalidas. Through a critical scrutiny of these characters in their different versions encompassing diverse historical periods, it is hoped this research will be able to shed light on how socio-political and cultural forces shape gender relations at a particular historical time, thus reflecting the dominant concerns and compulsions of that society.

Key words: Saang, gender, patriarchy, folk theatre.

I

Saangs and their allied forms of folk theatres such as Nautanki, Tamasha, Khayal etc. have been part of the rural landscape of North

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India stretching from Eastern Rajasthan to Bengal, with their recorded evidences available from 18th century onwards. Although *saangs* share many performative and structural similarities with other congruous forms of folk theatres like Nautanki, Kariyala, BhandPather, Tamasha, Khayal, Mach and Jatra; in their particular *ragni* form, thematic uniqueness and social ambience, *saangs* are strictly part of Haryana and Western U.P. It has been a usual oversight in scholars of North Indian folk theatres to mix diverse forms of these folk theatres within one overarching category such as Nautanki[1] and amalgamate their particular features. A more discerning approach would be to locate these regional forms in their own unique local society and discuss relationship between a particular folk theatrical form and the society in which it has germinated and flourished. Furthermore, there are palpable differences in terms of emphasis, thematic drive, audience composition, and presentation format in various folk theatrical forms. For instance, the dominant ethical content, frequent use of myths and stories from Puranas and epics, and their declared goal of establishing a moral standard for rural audiences set *saangs* apart from other North Indian folk theatrical forms.

Saangs frequently modify stories from diverse ancient Indian sources and align them with present-day social concerns. Thus, *Saang* performances are not only a reiteration of universal values enshrined in Indian religio-cultural traditions but also a reflection on contemporary society, which has adapted and modified these values, particularly in relation to gender. Romila Thapar's insistence that "an understanding of the play is furthered if one is familiar with what existed before" and that "each new treatment provides an aspect which either illuminates the text or is a reflection of the historical moment when its particular perspective came into being" (Thapar 2010, p. 6) is relevant in understanding how *saangs* give a new orientation to gender relations in the text, thus reflecting influences of regional socio-cultural and religious factors in shaping them.

The performative arena of *saangs* encompassing Haryana and Western U.P. along with a peripheral contiguous area of Punjab, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh, is marked by a strong sense of gendered spaces. Ethical injunctions about women's position and behaviour in family and society hold a dominant position in this region's social and moral ethics. There is an abundance of proverbs, songs, stories, and folk performances popular in this area that prescribe a typical behavioural pattern for women, and any violation of it leads to social censure, excommunication of the erring member, and even

murders. This over-consciousness of female morality and an obsessive desire to control her can be traced to the operation of multiple factors, such as the typical history of this region as the cradle of Aryan civilization[2], its geographical position on the route of foreign invaders throughout centuries, its vicinity to Delhi as the capital of diverse kingdoms, the mingling of various ethnicities in the region, and its climatic conditions. All these factors have collectively contributed to the control of the female—her body, and her movement—serving as an instrument to ensure the stability of the family and, by extension, the rural community. Karan Singh in 'Images, Fantasy and Violence: Women in North Indian Folk Theatre Svang' traces motives for control over the female body, and their imaginative justification on the stage of *saangs* within the social ethics of this gendered society, which are largely influenced by the historical and environmental peculiarities of this region.

The popular performance traditions such as svang reveal a cultural understanding of the female body in North Indian culture through intervening images saturated with fantasy and violence. These images control the collective psyche of people on the level of popular culture while simultaneously being produced by it. Floating on the level of popular culture and flitting from male-dominated stage due to North Indian culture's encounter with hard climate, insistent flow of foreign invaders and conservative sects like Arya Samaj, the culture of violence and acquisition towards female has become naturalised in this society. (Singh 2020b, p. 123)

As an integral part of this rural community, *saangs* offer a valuable perspective on the construction and maintenance of patriarchal ideology in this region. They facilitate the propagation of an ethical worldview through its transmission and validation to the next generation. This value system based on gendered spaces is normalized through the performance of selected ancient moral tales related to idealized versions of gender relations in *saangs*, on which are superimposed the moral precepts and axioms from the local milieu, thus making them perfect vehicles of moral conditioning.[3] Kathryn Hansen, while using the generic term Nautanki for all North Indian folk theatres, agrees that in folk theatres "representations of the female body, womanly conduct, and other aspects of gender difference occur at several levels of the performance. In the dramatic texts of the genre, gender roles and relations are contained within narrative structures" (Hansen 1992, p. 7).

The tale of Shakuntala and Dushyanta is one of the most celebrated Indian tales, and it has attracted the attention of dramatists, storytellers, and critics over the centuries. Over time, this tale has undergone multiple mutations, transforming into various retellings in religious literature, secular writings, folk theatres, movie scripts, and paintings. The tale's focus on basic human instincts and how social institutions thwart them has led to its adoption in various variants and the creation of remarkable imaginative artefacts. The tale's enduring popularity and its presence across various genres bear witness to its adaptability and its capacity to comment on social norms, both in their universality and their transformations. In a way, the dramatized version of the story of Shakuntala and Dushyanta by Kalidas in *Abhijnanasakuntalam* first made the West take notice of the Indian dramaturgy, which became the epitome of celebrated Indian emotional abundance and poetic extravagance. The popular and scholarly examination of the tale of Shakuntala revolves around three major retellings—the *Mahabharata* version, the *Padam Purana* version, and the Kalidas version, with the *Padam Purana* version closely following the Kalidas version.[4] The folk theatrical version of the story in *saangs* selectively uses portions from both these two tellings, aligning it with the socio-cultural ethos of the region in which *saangs* are played.[5]

II

Analysis:

Shakuntala

The *saangs* by Chanderlal Badi and Mangeram make some perceptible transformations in the character of Shakuntala, thus giving her a different orientation from her epical or courtly delineation. In the *saang* by Mangeram, Shakuntala asks three vows from Dushyanta before surrendering herself to him. It is pertinent to mention here that while the *Mahabharata* version mentions only one vow demanded by Shakuntala, viz., that the son born to her will be the future king of Hastinapur, the Kalidas version makes another promise explicit, i.e., Shakuntala will be the chief queen without referring to the position of the son born to them. The choice of vows in both the *Mahabharata* and *Abhijnanasakuntalam* plays an important role in giving Shakuntala unique traits in these versions. While Shakuntala's demand for kingship for her son in the *Mahabharata* bestows upon her attributes of assertiveness and pragmatism, along with accusations of manipulation, her silence in the Kalidas[6] conveys an impression of a self-sacrificing, humble woman, a trait that aligns with the romanticized image of the

heroine the poet aims to portray in his drama. The *saangs*, instead, prefer to cojoin these two conditions and put them directly through Shakuntala:

> *Teen bachanbharliyepiyabachna ta nahiphirega,*
> *Jo meri kukh ta ho ladka, hastnapur ka raj karega...*
> *Tere Hastnapur ma aaungikadedhakkemaranlage*
> *Ibdekhmanneraji ho rhya, tupachche dosh dharega*
> *Tere aur bhi rani bahut sisakadeijjattaranlage.* (Sharma 2021, p. 279)
> Take three vows, O husband, and don't falsify them,
> If a son is born to me, he will rule over Hastnapur…
> I'll come to your Hastnapur, don't throw me out,
> Now happy to see me, you'll blame me later,
> You have many queens already, don't dishonour me then.[7]

This direct assertion of rights by the heroine in the *saang* can be interpreted through a two-layered structure. On the one hand, it aligns with the real-life persona of assertive and demanding rural females in the region; on the other hand, it closely relates to the stereotypical image of lustful women in *saangs* through a suggestion of manipulation and opportunism. The motif of lustful females is a recurring device in the repertoire of this region's folklore, found abundantly in female songs, tales, and jokes. Kathryn Hansen, while referring to the presence of this strong undercurrent in folk theatres like Nautanki, notices that the playwrights of these folk performances "delight in describing women as murderers, lustful vamps, warring goddesses, and potent sorceresses. Yet they expound an ideology of female chastity and subservience that belies the powerful posture of so many of the women in their stories" (Hansen 1992, p. 171). While castigating the motif of lustful women in *saangs*, Prem Chaudhry aptly comments that assignment of lustful nature to females acts as a warning to them against the pitfalls of their sexual nature: "The male repertoire of songs is bawdy, comical, and entertaining on one level, yet deeply conservative and 'idealistic' in the messages and images it conveys, warning of the dangers of female sexuality. Such depictions not only engender male titillation but also act as cautionary tales that warn and teach" (Choudhry 2001, p. 26). That is why *saangs* recreate Shakuntala, as part of the wayward nature of all females, as a possible *daayan* (witch) who seeks to tempt Dushyanta, thus laying blame for sexual lapse entirely on her and absolving Dushyanta of his responsibility. The lustful nature of females as a dominant part of their nature becomes apparent in Shakuntala-Dushyant *saang* through an exclusive emphasis given to the act of sexual transgression by

Shakuntala. The recurring moral precepts and castigation of female nature, both general and specific, in the *saang* make it apparent that the reason for mishaps in the life of Shakuntala lies in the surrender of her virginity before marriage, thus making her a fallen woman. Shakuntala is aware of this fact when she muses soon after Dushyanta leaves:

> *Anand le gyagaat ka, gyakonsikuuth*
> *Kuch din me is karam ka, bhanda ja gya foot.* (Sharma 2021, p. 281)
> Taking pleasures of the flesh, he left,
> In a few days, the consequences will be there.

The overriding guilt in Shakuntala about her complicity in this transgression of moral norms makes her ask for forgiveness from the Kanva sage in a language that is reminiscent of a transgressing girl seeking forgiveness from the elders in rural society:

> *Maafkro, maafkro, mujhmarti ka khot*
> *Me hath jod ka gyi, tharepayanke ma lot*
> *Tharebaag ki charli, Hiran ne kesar kyari.* (p. 281)
> Forgive me, forgive me, the faults of wretched me
> With enfolded hands, I fall on your feet
> A deer has grazed the saffron of your garden.

The intensity of this sexual guilt in Shakuntala is absent both from the epic and the Kalidas' versions of the story. When Shakuntala in the *Mahabharata* asks forgiveness from the sage, she does it primarily for contracting marriage to Dushyanta without the permission of her adopted father, thus violating the rule of dharma, which advocated the right of a father to give his daughter away in marriage. There is no mention of sexual guilt here, and even the version of Kalidas makes it more of a violation of tradition and custom than a question on the right of a woman to give herself sexually to any man. The *saang* versions, in contrast, regard a woman's right to own her sexuality as a kind of deviance. The ropes of sexual morality for daughters are tighter in *saang* versions, reflecting their inviolability in Haryana's rural society. The concept of 'sin' has shifted markedly from the obligation of *kanyadan* to the immorality of sexual freedom in a movement from the epical society to the contemporary one.

It appears that the genesis of the acute feelings of shame connected with sexual transgressions by unmarried females lies in north Indian society's attempts to control female reproductive powers due to the danger it poses to inheritance rights in an agricultural setting.[8] The condemnation of female sexuality stems from its potential

to pose a threat when linked to maternity and progeny. As the progeny is related to land rights and property rights and produces fear of a stranger taking over, the choices available to females were hedges with tight strictures, and any violation of them invited censure from the collective social body. The 'sin' of Shakuntala develops, one suspects, not from her physical liaison with Dushyanta but due to the birth of Bharta as a result of it. Outside the sanction of familial and social structures validating this union, the birth of Bharata becomes a threat, an act of wilfulness that must garner sanction from higher supernatural adjudicators to become a part of the family of Dushyanta.

Furthermore, *saangs* take great pleasure in their own unique fantasies of females, where a lustful and unreliable female nature coexists harmoniously with an assertive and demanding one. Shakuntala's lustful nature, for which *saangs* censure her and subject her to indignities, coincides with her bold and assertive demeanour. This trait of hers is absent largely in the Kalidas and reveals itself in the *Mahabharata* only during her encounter with Duhsanta in his palace. Chanderlal Badi's *saang* opens with a deer wounded by Dushyanta during his hunt. Seeing the condition of the deer, Shakuntala seethes with anger and declaims[9]:

> *Pale huye Hiran kekisnechotkasutimari*
> *Ma dekh lungi bedardieisakonsasikari*
> *Oche kul ka ocha manas lajsaramke jane*
> *Bhalegharan ka bhalaaadmiburakaramke jane*
> *Papi dayadharamke jane pet ka pujari.* (Badgujar 2017, p. 544)
> Who has wounded severely my domestic deer?
> I'll teach a lesson to this cruel man who considers himself a great hunter,
> Contemptible person from a contemptible family, you don't have any shame,
> A good person from a good family won't commit evil,
> A sinner knows no mercy, a slave of appetites.

Dushyanta remains unperturbed by the angry invectives let loosed by Shakuntala and even retains a kind of appreciation for her, as is visible in the following speech:

> *Dekhanbhalan me suthari per ladanbhidan me khoti*
> *Beeran ka singartyagkekarmarad ki otti...*
> *Nagan ki tariyankamar pe chotilataktiphiresa*
> *Ban kamankamar pa bandhya sera tepharisa.* (Badgujar 2017, p. 545)
> Beautiful to view but baddas in quarrel,

Discarding ornaments of females, fierce as males.
Plait like serpents moves on her back,
With arrows and bows on the waist, she challenges lions.

Along with this presentation of Shakuntala as a strong and fierce woman in the opening scenes, the livid declamation by her before Dushyanta when he approaches her to take her back to his palace, sets her apart from her meek, *pativrata* avatar in Kalidas. She accuses Dushyanta of being a villain and refuses to calm down. She vehemently reminds him of his role in the seduction scene, and where the real blame lies. She further accuses him of eschewing his familial responsibilities by betraying her and his child:

> *Nau mahinediyaraakh pet mai sat barastakpalasa*
> *Pehle din se janusu, tubhiterle ka kala sa*
> *Maine sau bar chanliyapehle, matnahatkachane*
> *Kuti me natigandharvbyah ta gal me ghalgyadhingtane…*
> *Saas assure lad krakre, nai bahu kebyahchale ma*
> *Sajan lad krepatni ka valiptiphiredusale me*. (Sharma 2021, p. 292)
> For nine months gestated and for seven years nurtured him,
> From the day first I knew you were a blackguard,
> Assessed you hundred times, no need to reconsider,
> Refused gandharv marriage in the hut, (but) you forced me.
> In-laws shower love on bride in celebration of marriage,
> Husbands shower love on wife, (but) you gave me attire of sorrow.

Shakuntala's scathing attack on Dushyanta makes her speech transcend borders of personal sorrow and become emblematic of the criticism of a patriarchal order in which a female exists at the bottom of familial and social hierarchy and has to face abuses and discrimination. Here, Shakuntala adopts the voice of a discriminated rural woman who is acutely aware of the injustice she endures. The image of Shakuntala as revealed in these speeches gets fused into a strong-willed, hot-tempered, and quick-to-answer rural female. She is interpolated within a rural agriculturalist north Indian female who does not hesitate to express her mind. Her assertiveness and fiery temper leave no room for demureness and acquiescence to exploitation.

Despite this streak of assertiveness and aggression, patriarchal norms cage north Indian agriculturalist females just as they do in other regions. Patriarchy in rural north Indian society works through moral axioms that identify the female sphere with domesticity, maternity, and

ghunghat. These three concentring circles are seen as inviolable within traditional morality, and any violation of them invites strong censure. Despite it, north Indian females have diligently resisted encroachment of dominant patriarchal ideology onto their turf. There are specific occasions and spaces reserved for females where male authority and power is resisted, criticised, and revealed to be based on injustice to females. That is how, what distinguishes Shakuntala of *saangs* is her awareness of the downtrodden nature of females. This awareness of the vulnerability of females in a male-coded society further becomes visible in her resistance to the proposal of Dushyanta:

> *Mat naneetbadi pa dhariye, me su kanya kanwari*
> *Byah ta pelham isi bat mannebilkulnahisuhati*
> *Teri jatmard ki, ma kanya kanwari, jhaldatnichahiya*
> *Er gair aur bure karam ki jaanpatnichahiye.* (p. 278)
> Don't give yourself to bad ideas, I am a virgin
> Before marriage, I don't like such talks
> You are a man, I am virgin; you should control yourself
> One should understand consequences of evil acts in life.

Shakuntala is acutely aware that Dushyanta's proposal will bring her dishonour. Here, one can discern the contemporary Haryanvi society's deep-seated fear of sexual transgressions and its fixation on daughters as the guardian of family honour. Shakuntala's speech is reflective of the contemporary situation in north Indian rural communities in which honour killings of daughters have become a norm. Raised in a society with dominant male values, Shakuntala understands the challenges of living and loving in a world dictated by masculine interests. She is aware of the position of women who are lured into love affairs by men and later rejected. Her awareness of the consequences of these actions makes her give a warning to them:

> *Janu the re in marda ki jaat, maharadil le le…*
> *Pehle sakalbna le bholi, pher ja baith phailakejholi*
> *Din dholichahe sir pa ho aadhiraat, mharajal le le..*
> *Ye na man ki baatbataven, ye to itnabhedchupaven*
> *Pehle to lavenchopadchopadbaat, mhara gal le le.* (p. 287).
> I understand the intention of males, they take our hearts,
> First, they make innocent faces, then they beg you with supplication,
> Whether it is full daylight or midnight, they will make you have them.
> They don't tell you their thoughts, they are all secretive,

First, they flatter you with sweet nothings, and then enter your thoughts.

Additionally, there are multiple occasions in which Shakuntala expresses her awareness of the downsizing of females in a male-controlled world. For instance: "*Mardkudjasausaukhai, beer aajadnahi se*" (A male can jump-over hundreds of ditches, a female is never free). (p. 286)., "*Murakh manas istri ko pairo ki batatedhul*" (Fools call females the dust of feet). (p. 284). "*Sard theeknaheene ki Thade ki theekgard ho sa; Beer parn pa jaanganvade, dhokhebaajmard ho sa*" (Weakness invites impotency, power justifies evil; Women give life on promises, men are cheaters). (p. 279). The implication is that a male is free to indulge in hundreds of adulteries, while a female is not free to do so.

The above extracts reveal that Shakuntala in *saangs* is acutely aware of the duplicity of moral norms between males and females. What makes Shakuntala of *saangs* different from the Shakuntalas of earlier versions, is her ability to become an epitome of a degraded gender in the contemporary society. While sharing her immersion in traditional patriarchal mores of the time with her counterparts in the *Mahabharata* and Kalidas, the voice of Shakuntala in *saangs* is never fully obliterated. It exists and affirms her as a human being, making her assert her individuality and resistance to patriarchal ideology from within its confines.

Menaka

If Shakuntala in *saangs* is modelled on a rural woman with her assertiveness, and awareness, the presentation of Menaka is a mixture of a wayward woman and a prostitute, whose only redeeming quality is her motherhood. When Menaka consents to seduce Vishvamitra, her voice is that of a woman who exploits her sexuality for selfish ends:

> *Kmakma ka suragpuri ka gharbharduyun*
> *Loot loot ka is duniya ka jar dharduyun*
> *Do aane me sastakarduyun, naukarorilal.* (Sharma, 2021, p. 268)
> By earning more and more, I shall fill the treasure-trove of heaven,By robbing this world, I shall bring riches,
> I can make even millionaires penniless beggars.

Menaka in *saangs*, like her counterpart in the *Mahabharata*, initially expresses her fear of the sage Vishvamitra, but she later agrees to do Indra's bidding. The difference here lies in the motive for doing so. In the *Mahabharata*, Menaka submits to Indra's commands solely to

obey her king. However, in the *saangs*, Menaka consents to seduce Vishvamitra when Indra asserts that if the sages' austerities remain unobstructed, he will ascend to the throne of heaven and his reign would be subversive to everyone, particularly the celestial nymphs. On the surface, this shows respect and fear of the sages' morality, however there is a direct suggestion towards a rule of conservative puritanism through Brahminic dominance. The proposition is that the kingship/society which is dominated by austerities of morality is equally inimical to liberal ways of life represented by Indira/kshatriyas and those of heavenly nymphs/women:

> *Menaka pachchekekarlegi, rishi jab raj svarag ka le lega*
> *Hum kartetadvir challenge, aageapnitakdir challenge*
> *Jab bhakti ke teer challenge, vokaunsasakshchot n khelega.* (p. 267).
> What will you do Menaka, when the sage will take over the rule of heaven
> We shall plan, rest is on fate
> When the austerities sharpen their arrows, who will withstand them?

In the *Mahabharata*, Menaka's abandonment of Shakuntala does not become her *hamartia* and remains there as a fact, without inviting much censure. It is accepted as a part of the life of *apsaras* who were considered beyond the pale of human morality. In the *Mahabharata* it is merely referred to only once by Duhshanta during his rejection of Shakuntala, along with other accusations against her. The charge of mercilessness on Menaka is equally shared by both Menaka and Vishvamitra: "Your mother, Menaka was a courtesan. She was merciless and abandoned you on the plains of the Himalayas, like a faded garland. Your father Vishwamitra was also merciless and was born in the kshatriya lineage" (Debroy 199). In Kalidas, Menaka's abandonment of Shakuntala is taken as part of the nature of heavenly nymphs, and she doesn't attract blame on this account. In contrast, the *saangs* convert this aspect of Menaka into a metaphor for the inherent cruelty of all females, who becomes an embodiment of their inconsiderate nature:

> *aayikonyadayadayanna, konisihatyari*
> *Nau mahinetakbojhmari, lagikonyapyari…*
> *Meethekhatarladkijandi, mrigund ki mari*
> *Hatyakhoripapanthi, saramlihajnaaayi*
> *Palan poshannhikarya ta, phirkyon kanya jayi.*(p. 271)
> The witch had no compunction, such murderer is unparalleled

Remain burdened for nine months, still lacked love
For sweetmeats she gave birth to a daughter,
the sweet balls tempted her
She was murderous evil without any shame
If she was not going to her rear her up, why gave birth to a daughter?

As is evident, the *saangs* place the blame for Shakuntala's abandonment squarely on Menaka's shoulders. They also reveal a marked amnesia towards Vishvamitra's role, which the *Mahabharata* refers to as cruel, thereby assigning blame to both parents.

Despite this note of condemnation towards Menaka as part of the vicious female nature, the *saangs* redeem her through her motherhood. After viewing her as an embodiment of female frailty, they convert her into a considerate mother who escorts Shakuntala to the ashram of sage Kashyap when she is abandoned by Dushyanta. Taking cue from the *Mahabharata* and Kalidas, this episode in *saangs* reveal her essential humanity and love for her daughter. What distinguishes Menaka of *saangs* from her epical and courtly portrayal is the lengths she goes to rehabilitate Shakuntala after she is thrown out by her husband. Furthermore, the episode fuses both mother and daughter into a single figure of erring femininity, whose only protection lies in surrendering completely to an older patriarchal figure. The passage, in which both Menaka and Shakuntala cling to the feet of the revered sage, portrays them as archetypical figures of erring female surrendering to a patriarch:

> Kashyap rishi kepayanke main, lipatgyi ma betidono…
> Hum aayen s dartedarte, bhariviptabhartebharte
> Phirte-phirtethakliyegode, jhudhekonyakartiodde
> Paire pakadkekonya chode, chipatgyi ma-betidono
> Lok laajsaram ki maari, simatgyi ma-betidono. (p. 288-89)
> To the feet of sage Kashyap, mother and daughter clung together
> We have entered fearfully, we have faced huge sorrow
> Our knees are tired of wandering, we are not lying
> They didn't loosen the feet, both mother and daughter hugged them firmly.
> Tainted with social shame, both mother and daughter bundled together.

Dushyanta

Not unlike Shakuntala and Menaka, the portrayal of Dushyanta as it progresses from the *Mahabharta* to the *saangs* through Kalidas also reveals some interesting transformations. In the *Mahabharata*, Duhshanta is a hedonist liar who is ready to promise anything to get what he desires. After killing thousands of animals in the forest, he arrives at the hermitage of sage Kanva, and finding him absent, he asks his daughter Shakuntala about her parentage. His promise to Shakuntala after hearing about her lineage seems in the nature of pro-quid-pro: "O one with beautiful hips! Be my wife. Tell me what I can do for you. O beautiful one! Today, I will present you with golden necklaces, garments, golden earrings, sparkling gems and jewels from many countries, golden coins and skins" (Debroy 2015, p. 192-93). His rejection of Shakuntala when she goes to him with Bharata is based on superficial grounds and is too harsh. He very well remembers his liaison with Shakuntala, but instead chooses to prevaricate in words that reveal his misogynistic nature: "Women are liars. Who will believe your words?...You were born in a lowly lineage and you speak like a harlot. It seems that Menaka gave birth to you from the lust alone" (Debroy 2015, p. 199-200). His pretence after the divine intervention that "it was natural for people to think that the union I had with you was because you were a woman and had my son been instated by me in the kingdom, he would have been considered to be impure" (Debroy 2015, p. 203) is too specious. Juan Miguel De Mora expresses the similar apprehensions when he asserts: "Although Dusyanta's argument is acceptable from one point of view, it seems evident that the king's reaction to Sakuntala and her son is far from correct, and that Dusyanta's statement could be a clever excuse meant to justify his previous attitude. There is no explanation for the king's not recognizing Sakuntala" (Mora 1991, p. 465-466). It doesn't answer the natural questions regarding why Duhshanta chose to ignore Shakuntala after marrying her until she came to his capital. Kalidas' invention of the ring and the curse of Durvasa appear to be part of the playwright's uneasiness with Dushyanta's motives. The ring and the curse serve as effective tools to shift the blame from Dushyanta to external factors, thereby transforming the once caddish king into a romantic hero. Ankur Betageri reads into the rejection of Shakuntala by Dushyanta a fear of Brahminic disapproval of a forest bred, *varna-sankara* girl: "This is the meaning of Duhshanta's fear of social disapproval—more so in the *Mahabharata* but also in Abhijnanasakuntalam—for how can a forest girl, a mixed-caste 'Adivasi', though one adopted by a Brahmin and born to a transgressive kshatriya and a celestial seductress, be the wife

of a king, lord it over a caste-coded society as a queen" (Betageri 2018, p. 180).

The misogyny reflected in the character of Dushyanta gets passed onto his portrayal in *saangs* too. Though the *saangs* adopt the motifs of ring and curse, in his speeches, Dushyanta reveals characteristics not far from his *Mahabharata* version. While in the *Mahabharata*, Duhshanta promises palaces and queenship, in *saangs* the inducement takes the flavour of local delicacies: "*Bhojantyardharyakamre ma ji chahva so khaiye; Londi bandi la dyunga, tubaithimaujudaiye.*" (The food will be kept prepared and you can eat whatever you like, I shall purchase female slaves for you, you can just sit and enjoy) (Sharma 2021, p. 273). Further, not unlike the *Mahabharata*, Dushyanta in *saangs* promises her: "*le kasamdiwaleraaj ka malik beta tera hoga*" (Let me take a vow that the king will be your son). (Sharma, 2021, p. 280), topping it with a promise obliquely referred to in Kalidas: "*m hathnapur ka raja su, tubhi maharani hogi*" (I am the king of Hastinapur and you will be the chief queen) (p. 280).

What distinguishes Dushyanta of *saangs* from his counterparts in the *Mahabharata* and Kalidas is that his reaction when Shakuntala arrives in his capital with Bharata is quite severe and inhuman. He refuses to see Shakuntala and calls her 'dayanhatyari' (a killer witch), ordering the doorman to eject her from his palace: "*Kon khadi se barne, behudisinaar; Darwajetetahdiyo, dhakkemaro char.*" (Who is at the door, an uncouth woman, Remove her from the door, push her out) (p. 284). The demeaning adjectives in are quite blatantly sexist and misogynist revealing a connection between the degradation of females and the eulogization of hardy in North Indian rural culture a result of peculiar political-historical factors in the region[10].

It is apparent that the character of Dushyanta in *saangs* is modelled on the typical conception of a macho, flirtatious, powerful man who refuses to accept his responsibility in his relationship with Shakuntala, particularly when it results in the birth of a progeny. Perhaps it would have been easier if Shakuntala had given birth to a daughter; then Dushyanta could have left her without any consequences. The birth of a son complicates the matter, as a son cannot be rejected without bringing a disgrace to the father in patriarchal societies. This dimension is visible in both the *Mahabharata* and the *saang* renderings, as these versions agree on the values of sons in their communities, both for their continuation and preservation. The long litany in the *Mahabharata* wherein a disembodied voice from the sky instructs Duhshanta why sons belong to the father and mother is

only a container[11] is a testimony to the agreement within patriarchal cultures that sons have to be accepted, however dubious their conception and lineage may be. The *saangs*, too, born in the same patriarchal culture in the land of Kurus, rely upon this wisdom. Shakuntala has to be accepted, not because of the fading of the curse of Durvasa, but because she has given birth to a son, who will claim the kingdom one day whether Dushyanta accepts him or not, as Shakuntala reminds Duhshanta: "O Duhshanta! But when you are dead, my son will rule over the entire earth, crowned by the king of the mountains and surrounded by oceans in four directions" (Debroy 2015, p. 202).

Conclusion

A shift in socioeconomic conditions creates subtle changes in both the content and drive of ancient tales. Every retelling has its own unique structure and message. The outward structure and major characters in these tales may remain the same, but a close examination of them reveals a shifting of emphasis from one set of values to another and sometimes a total abandonment of a few. Consequently, these tales serve as social and historical monuments, revealing multiple layers of value sets that align with prevailing socio-cultural, economic, and historical factors. That is how Shakuntala, Menaka, and Dushyanta in *saangs*, through based on their epical and Kalidas' versions, take on different personalities. The folk theatres transform Shakuntala into a woman who embodies the strength, passion, and vulnerabilities of a rural North Indian woman—betrayed by her husband and stigmatized by her own sexuality. Her rejection by the sage Kanva and Dushyanta is largely part of a social structure that places a premium on male control and ownership of sexuality. At the same time, her strong admonition to Dushyanta in *saangs* gives a voice to other such females and makes apparent their resistance to male-coded society, in which a female is wooed and later discarded by males. Similarly, the portrayal of Menaka in *saangs* transforms the promiscuous heavenly damsel into a compassionate mother who is ready to grovel at the feet of a patriarch for her daughter's sake. On the other side, Dushyanta in *saangs* mingles his epical hedonist attributes with masochism of north Indian rural males. The *saangs* highlight his seduction of Shakuntala as a trope, yet his repentance seems too artificial to be authentic. By converting a romantic hero of Kalidas' *nataka* into an insensitive, self-assured, arrogant male, saangs not only convey a realistic picture of gender dynamics in their geographical region but also reveal how these relations have been mutated through historical times.

It is apparent from the foregone analysis that due to an intimate connection between social ethics and gender formulations, a scrutiny of how man-woman relationships are viewed, maintained and propagated in a particular society's imaginative artefacts, gives significant insights on operation of socio-economic processes between its diverse segments. It also discloses that ethics are not situated within a vacuum but are part of dynamic exchanges between the social space and gender—revealing important clues to understand connection between labour and leisure, procreation and inheritance among others. Saangs, as part of north Indian rural society's imaginative response to reality and social life, convey these relations in a convincing and subtle way.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Kathryn Hansen erroneously considers Nautanki as the modern epithet and *saag*, *swang* or *sangit* as disused terms for the same performances. See, Kathryn, 1988, p. 29.

2. Arjun Singh Kadian in *Land of the Gods: The Story of Haryana* (2021) discusses the ancient roots of Haryana region and its connection with Vedic civilization. (Kadian 2021, p. xi)

3. Along with being the vehicles of moral conditioning, *saangs* also possess a power to question caste and gender rigidities, as argued by Karan Singh. See: Singh 2019.

4. The relationship between the *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Mahabharata* and *Padam Puarana* versions has been discussed by M. Winternitz, and A.B. Keith.

5. One of the strengths of *saangs*, as discussed in *Folk Theatres of North India* by Karan Singh, is their ability to communicate through other artistic manifestations, which is manifested in their multiple layers and segmentations. (Singh 2020a, p. 180)

6. In *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, it is not Shakuntala who asks for her position in royal household after her marriage with Dushyanta, but her friend Anasuya to whom Dushyanta replies: "Notwitstanding the multitude of wives, (only) two (will be) the glory (or the mainstay) of my line, the sea-girt earth, and this friend of yours" (Kale 1969, p. 111).

7. All translations from Haryanvi texts to English have been undertaken by the authors.

8. Females under Brahmanism have been viewed as preservers of caste purity. Here, too, one suspects that economic implications of a woman giving birth to an inter-caste child determined the religious strictures.

9. On a significant level, Dushyanta's pursuit of the deer and later on that of Shakuntala connects blood lust and sexual lust, thus making Shakuntala's rage against Dushyanta as part of her guilt on prospective loss of virginity. See, Hansen 1992, P. 28.

10. Prem Choudhry notes: "Historically, this ideology of violence was useful in this region as it faced frequent foreign invasions. Indeed, one may well agree with the suggestion that it is violence and the need to counter this violence in this region that underlies the deep- rooted preference for male progeny at the cost of females" (Choudhry 2015, p. 12).

11. "O Duhshanta! The mother is only a vessel for holding water. Born from the father, the son is the father himself" (Debroy 2015, p. 202).

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Reading the political in Sukumar Ray's nonsense poems

-Devjani Ray

ABSTRACT

The traditional literary perspective on 'nonsense' has been predominantly negative, with critics viewing it as absurd and lacking substance. While nonsense literature is often associated with childhood and nursery rhymes, there is a deeper complexity to the genre that is overlooked. I argue that nonsense texts can have a political aspect that adds depth and intellectual value to the genre. To substantiate my argument, I look at the poems of Sukumar Ray published in the Bangla children's periodical *Sandesh* between 1913 and 1922.

Keywords: nonsense literature, colonial, political, children, laughter

Introduction

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nonsense literature in Bengal experienced a significant surge, notably through the works of Rabindranath Tagore and Sukumar Ray. Though writers like Troilokyanath Mukhopadhyay had already explored the 'nonsense' in his adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*, it solidified as a genre in Bangla with the publication of Ray's poems in the children's periodical *Sandesh*. A genre, heavily influenced by English nonsense literature of the nineteenth century, found a permanent place in Bengali literary tradition. According to Michael Heyman (2007), the Indian nonsense tradition can be traced back to various folk writings but evolved into a modern literary form through colonial contact. The educated Bengali middle-class intelligentsia, well-versed in Western literature, engaged in a paradoxical relationship with the West. While there was admiration for Western material success, there was also a growing critical awareness of its imperial tendencies.

Before engaging in a detailed discussion of Sukumar Ray's nonsense writings in *Sandesh,* it is important to understand nonsense as a subversive form, its intended audience, and whether Ray's pieces fit the framework of nonsense literature.

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The analysis of Sukumar Ray's poems reveals a subtle theme of 'adultness' that is often present in children's literature. This 'adultness' in the text can evoke different reactions from adult readers compared to child readers. This 'adultness' in literature for children as well as nonsense literature is a consequence of the adult perspective of the narrator and his understanding of the child's world and experiences. Behind the whimsical facade of nonsense verse lies a 'hidden adult' who shapes the content, leading to a 'hidden text' or 'shadow text'. The narrator assumes the presence of an implied reader - someone who can appreciate how the text challenges conventional logic, power structures, and cultural norms. Recognising these elements of adultness, shadow text, and implied reader allows for a deeper interpretation of Sukumar Ray's nonsense poetry.

Kimberley Reynolds suggests that nonsense is "concerned with changing the present than restoring the past". Therefore, it has the power to express ideologies (despite rejecting the presence of any coherent meaning) which may be an expression of the writer's/narrator's anti-conservatism. Even though nonsense has the potential to do away with what is old and regressive, it may not be entirely correct. As far as Sukumar Ray is concerned not much is known about his political leanings (Lahiri and Mazumdar 1982).

However, despite not being explicitly crafted as a form of protest literature, the genre of nonsense writing, exemplified by the works of Sukumar Ray, serves as a powerful vehicle for rebellion and subversion. Ray's nonsense verses, originally intended for children, embody a spirit of madness which is essential for dismantling age-old traditions and superstitions. Through his whimsical and nonsensical creations, Ray effectively disrupts established norms and invites readers to question the status quo.

Ray revolutionised the use of illustrations in his works. Unlike others who viewed illustrations as supplementary, Ray's drawings played a crucial role in altering, challenging, and enriching the essence of nonsense verse. Ray's sketches of imaginary creatures not only complemented but also shaped the literary nonsense texts.These creatures became integral to the fabric of literary nonsense. But their significance transcends mere aesthetics. As a colonial subject, Ray embodied Bhabha's concept of 'empowered hybridity,' disrupting conventional notions of identity formation. His fantastical beings defied easy categorisation. The exploration of hybridity by Ray is characterised by a nuanced perspective that recognises both the progressive potential and the undesirable aspects of hybrid forms of

existence. Ray's scrutiny extends even to the "mimic men" within his community, illustrating the detrimental effects of unequal power dynamics in colonial society through sociocultural cross-pollinations. This is evident in Ray's skillful incorporation of the hybrid form of Bengali literary nonsense, where he seamlessly merges Western genres with indigenous literary traditions. Particularly noteworthy are the diverse representations of hybridity in his nonsense works, such as the portrayal of bizarre and fantastical creatures and scenarios in his verses and illustrations. Ray's approach underscores the complexity and richness of hybrid identities and cultural intersections, shedding light on the intricate dynamics at play in a colonial context.

Analysis
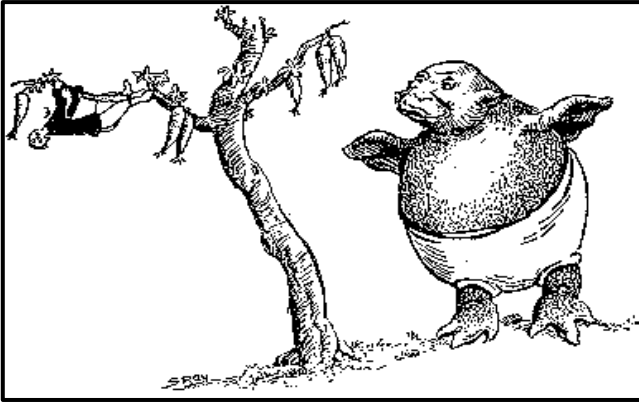
Fig.1

I begin this discussion with the poem "Kumropothash" [Pumpkin Grumpkin] (hinting at an imaginary 'Japanese invasion') published in *Sandesh* in July-Aug.1916. The poem enumerates certain specific rules which have been laid down to maintain and keep pace with the laughs, cries, and other antics of the Kumropotash (Fig.1). In the illustration, the Kumropotash is like a single-toothed bald walrus which has a pumpkin-like body, webbed feet, arm flippers, and whiskers resembling that of a man. He appears to be harmless but not overtly friendly. He is seen wearing something like a toddler's pull-ups which seem to be a combination of a diaper, underwear, and shorts. A miserable and desperate Bengali man is seen clinging to a (scientifically unknown) radish tree. The nonsense and the uncertainty of 'if' is reinforced by the radish tree which grows in the ground and not on a tree. Surprisingly, no one has ever heard of it or seen it. However, given the constant presence of *jodi*(if) at the beginning of each stanza, the fear of its possible arrival is there. Though it has still not appeared in the vicinity of Calcutta, the

natives are already anxious. Interestingly, anticipation of such an event is not in the realm of "if" or uncertainty(Mazumdar 1982). Written in the backdrop of World War I there is some truth in the lines as it implies the war's possible impact on the natives. The English had not only declared war but also ensured the participation of its colonies by luring them with the promise of self-governance after the war. The bearded old man (Englishman-like) in "Katukutu Buro" [Tickling Tom] (Ray, May-June 1915) while tickling a native with a feather narrates the tale of the bravery of his Emperor (Fig.2).

Fig.2

"Ek je chilojodhhya raja- Ho! Ho! Ho! He! He!
Tar je ghoda- Ho! Ho! Ha!-dak to shey ta chinhin,
Chhuttojokhon He! He! He! –shobaiboltobaha!"
(There was once a warrior King-Ho! Ho! Ho! He! He!
His HorseHo! Ho! Ha!Would neigh,
And when it trotted He! He! He!- all said " Wow"!)

The poem *per se* seems to be about a failed storyteller who insists on reading his work and expects a proper response (here laughter) for his excellent tale. The illustration depicts a child being forced to listen to the creepy old man. The story he narrates is not nonsense but makes no sense as it ends up being incoherent animal sounds that have no connection with what was said earlier. The other possible reading could be that it was speculating whether it was at all worth or tempting for an Indian soldier to journey across the seven seas without thinking about the peril of war and dying at the hands of strangers in an unknown land. From a close reading of the text, it emerges that the narrator intended to praise the emperor's horse more

than the emperor himself. The emperor is undoubtedly a brave warrior but it is also possible for the loyal kinsmen of the emperor to appear admirable by fighting for the Emperor in the days of crisis. While wooing the native in a very amiable tone the 'katukutuburo' suddenly implores the native to come and have food with him:

> *"Hothatboley, aar kotha jaokatukutumoyena,*
> *Bhaatkhabitohaayenadekhiaartohtorshoyena."*
> *(Suddenly he says "Where do you go tickle parrot,*
> *Come have rice, can't wait any long")*

It was certainly becoming essential for the British to garner the assurance and support of the native Indians; as they feared that without the participation of the Indians, they would not only lose the War but also lose their sway over the Indian colony. Ultimately the natives did respond to the "friendly pinches" and "tickles" of the "old tickler" (the British) and they were brought into the British fold through wooing and persuasion. With the hope of post-war self-governance, the Indians not only joined the British but also sent an army of natives to the war. Such a promise was reiterated in the Congress Session of 1914. "War has been declared in Europe and the Congress made profuse declaration of loyalty and promised all help in the prosecution of the war…demanded that the higher ranks of the Army should be thrown open to the Indians" (Aiyar and Bhandari 1945).

In the years immediately before such loyalties were declared, those involved in the freedom movement were inhumanly tortured and sentenced to death or exiled to faraway islands. It is not surprising then that when the natives expressed their solidarity and allegiance to the British, it could have possibly troubled the far-sighted Sukumar who could sense the tragedy of the moment and expressed his dismay and discomfort when he wrote: "Haashicherekannaaashebeshi"(It makes one cry more than laugh).

However, it was only after the passage of the Rowlatt Act (1919) instead of the promised Home Rule, that the sympathizers of the war and the British policies realised the falsity of pre-war promises. From the autobiographies of the contemporary figures, one learns how the British with the help of the native intelligentsia (like Surendranath Banerjee and Panchkori Bandyopadhyay, who went to Dinajpur [now in West Bengal] encouraged the native youths to join the Army) spread the message of war affecting not only the British but also the natives and that they should wary of those whom the British were fighting (Das,1954). The bombardment of Madras (then British India) by the German Cruiser Emden (1914), though a relatively small event in the

larger context of World War I, was projected and disseminated in the contemporary media as an act of aggression on the Indian subcontinent which jeopardised the security of the native Indians. The rumours regarding the Germans might get firmly rooted in the native psyche and a sense of paranoia about the war prevailed among the masses. While commenting on the elaborate preparations for war, the contemporary periodicals mentioned the inhuman torture perpetrated by the aggressive German soldiers. Thus, it is not unlikely that such gory details of war affected the consciousness of the common Bengali as it was not impossible for them to visualise the death and devastation caused by war. This situation is recalled in "Gaaner Guto" (The Power of Music) [Fig.3] (*Sandesh,* Sept.-Oct.,1914), where people are running hither-thither listening to the songs of Bishwalochan Sharma!

Fig.3

"Chutche loke charidiketeghurchemathabhonbhon
Morche kotojokhomhoyekorchekotochotphot"
(The people, dazed, retire amazed although they
know it's well meant.
They're trampled in the panic rout or languish
pale and sickly).

It was also a phase in the Indian national movement when the native youth was already losing interest in studies and growing restless under the oppressive British regime. They were trying every means to oust the British and felt that by aligning themselves with the British during the World War, they would be able to free themselves from the

shackles of British rule. However, despite their unflinching loyalty to the British, the Bengali youths encountered bitter irony when the British recruiters wary of the defiant Bengalis avoided enlisting them in the British Indian Army (Sinha 1995). Thus, the dreams and desires of many a Bengali youth like Jagai in 'LoraiKhyapaJagai' (War Crazy Jagai)[Fig.4] (*Sandesh*, April-May 1915) who wished to fight were nipped in the bud.

Fig.4

Interestingly, this did not discourage the Bengalis, and finally about two years into the War, the British Government announced the raising of an infantry regiment for Bengalis in August 1916. The first step in this process was the establishment of the Bengali Double Company (BDC), popularly known as the *Bangali Polton* (Nath,2014). Reuters was publishing stories of the heroic deeds of the native Indians who had gone to the battlefields and the likes of Jagai were seething with anger at the inability to join the army which thwarted their dreams of going to the war (*Prabasi*, Dec-Jan 1914-15). Ray brings out the trauma of such exclusion in the lines which Jagai wrote praising his own imaginary exploits in the war and his bravery,

> "Likhlotaate 'ore Jagaibhishonloraiholo
> Dui byata k khotom kore Jagai dada mollo
> Aar dutolok koi j gelobhoyetedeshchhara-
> Tin German jokhomholoJagaigelo mara."
> (Listen Jagai, there was a great war
> In which Brother Jagai died after

Killing twoand wounding three Germans
And the other two fled the country out of fear)

These lines were written in the backdrop of the news of the bombardment of Madras by the German Emden which resulted in the killing of some local natives and loss of property. In the poem, Jagai is the actor as well as the chronicler, but nobody pays any heed to him. In the picture mustached Jagai is seen wearing a dhoti and wielding an umbrella and there is nothing violent about his gesture. However, despite the affectionate tone, Ray is perhaps distancing himself from the horrors of war by portraying a youth who takes delight in killing and being killed. We also come across a letter from a Sikh soldier to his father, 'Bilate Sikh Shoino' (The Sikh Soldier Abroad), who informs about the Germans who had already reached the borders of Hindustan (Ray1915). The only hope for the natives now was that the English would take measures to safeguard the country in case of any German invasion.

On the other hand, there was information about Japan invading the Chinese provinces which were under German control. This created fear in the minds of the natives as those writing in the contemporary periodicals about the Japanese might be prominent members of the Bengali intelligentsia. An unknown fear of a possible Japanese invasion and struggle with India as well as other East Asian countries was being expressed through the columns of the periodicals. UnlikeGermany, Japan was an undeclared foe and preparations for its imminent invasion of the sub-continent were to be decided tactfully. Just as the *bhadraloks* were yet to recognize the real self of the British, they had no inkling about how the Japanese would be, what their expectations from the Indians would be; so, it was essential to forge a relationship with this unknown power (even Kumropotash). However, there prevailed a sense of cynicism in the minds of those who proposed this idea which finds expression in the lines,

> *"Kumro potash chotle pore ghotbetokhon ki je*
> *Bolbokichhaibujhaikaarebujhtenapayinije"*
> (Don't know what will happen if Kumropotash gets annoyed
> Don't know what to tell others as I fail to understand myself)

Despite these doubts it was important to be prepared about the imaginary arrival of the Japanese troops, so a list of activities was prepared to resist any act of Japanese aggression; for instance,

> *"Chaar paatuleythakbejhulehottomulergaache"*
> [Instead cling with all four legs to holler-radish branches]

or at times, *"upurhoyemaachaeshuyelepkombolkaandhe, Behagshuregaayibekhaliraadheykrishtoraadhey"*
(Crouch down Low on Machan bunded to the eyes
Sing 'Radhe Krishno Radhe' till your lusty throat dries"

but then if Kumropotash laughed one did not know how to converse with it was best to speak in the pre-colonial administrative language, "JhapshagolaeFarshikoben his haashephishphishey"[Speak Persian in a misty voice] (Chatterji 2008).

If none of the above solutions works, then one should politely submit, 'shokto inter toptojhama' (with a red-hot pumice stone rub your nose until it crawls) to the calls of Kumropotash just as it is expected of any obedient kin!

On the one hand, there is the panic of war with the Germans and on the other there is the apprehension of a Japanese occupation. In this atmosphere of anxiety, paranoia, and restrictions there was neither any scope for discussions nor meetings in the parks which would enable discussions on the means to be adopted for uprooting the British from the Indian soil. The Defence of India Act 1915 was indiscriminately used to curb and curtail the nationalist and revolutionary activities in the aftermath of World War I. With an extremely stringent surveillance system in place, the government was arresting people at the slightest of suspicion and an air of threat loomed large in the minds of the native Bengali intelligentsia. Terrorised by the happenings of the times, the native Bengalis remained completely silent about the injustices perpetrated by the British in the name of national defence and security. Despite the existence of strict Press Laws, such silence and complacency on the part of the Bengali intelligentsia as trying to guard themselves from inviting the wrath of the colonial masters was highly criticized in the columns of the contemporary periodicals.

Fig.5

*Prabasi*in its December–Jan, 1916–17 issue expressed its contempt for the palpable lull in the nationalist spirit of the Bengalis and rhetorically asked whether the Bengalis were *conserving* strength through their calculated silence. Similarly, Ray too seems to be critical about such reticence and indirectly articulates his exasperation in "Shabdhan"(Beware!), [Fig.5]:

> *"Tai boli – shabdhan! Koro naakodhupdhap*
> *Tip tippayepayecholeyjawachochap*
> *Cheyeonakoaageypiche, jeyeonakodaayene*
> *Shabdhanebaanchelokey-eilekheaaine"*
> (That's why- Beware! Don't make any noise
> Go away quietly
> Don't look hither thither, don't go right,
> Be careful and save yourself- says the law)

Those who wished to remain the favourites of the British walked on the left side of the road and those who broke the English laws and aligned themselves with the Germans on the right. The tragic outcome of such cautious moves and sycophancy among the natives themselves is revealed in the way in which Ramesh's clever maternal uncle lost his life trying to balance both in Ray's lines,

> *"Shesh kaaleekdinChannirbajare*
> *Pore gelo gari chaparaastarmajhare"*
> (Finally, one day when at Channi market,

Was run over by a car in the middle of the road)

In the illustration Pyalaram is attempting to rid himself of the absurd annoyance and the speaker is anxiously insisting he abide by certain rules if he wishes to survive. Even thoughthe speaker's anxiety is meaningless and is contrary to common sense, it reveals the uneasiness which existed in a colonised society. Ray focuses on the real anxieties of the time by juxtaposing India's weak political power and self-determination vis-à-vis its involvement in the war; he does this by connecting causes to incompatible outcomes like breathing with dying. The unnecessary and misguided emphasis on how to protect oneself by doing nothing is revealed in the character's apprehension of misery in the face of uncontainable events.
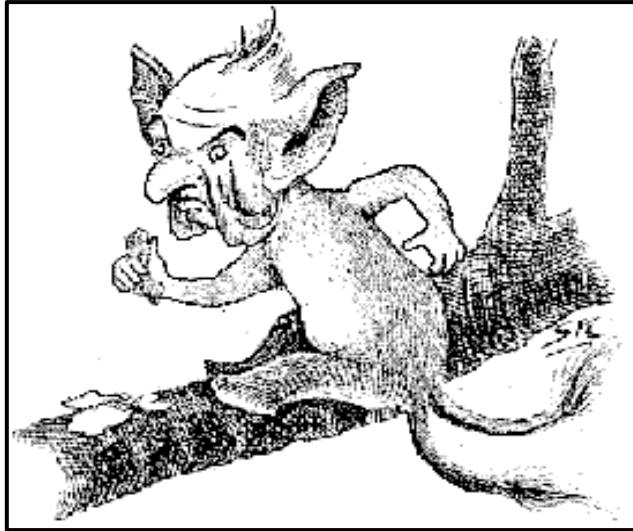

Fig.6

In 'Kaajer Lok', Ray chides those stalwarts of contemporary Bengali society who created anxiety among the masses with their vague apprehensions and irrational 'ifs and buts' (Ray, Jan-Feb 1917). Later the same members are represented in the character of 'HukomukhoHangla'(Dopey Mopey Olli), [Fig.6], who has forgotten to smile and is always terrified of something unknown though he was perfectly normal walking and singing only recently (Ray, March-April 1917)!

> *"Thopthoppaye..*
> *Ahladegodogodo…*
> *Gayitosheysharadin 'saregamatimtim'"*

(Flip-flap on merry feet he'd dance up the street
 His fat cheeks bursting with glee
He'd sing all day 'Do-re-mi-hip-hooray')

The same progressive Bengali *bhadraloks* who were actively supporting the British in World War I had suddenly become extremely restrained and almost helpless. Ray (Ray,July-Aug. 1917) once again focuses on this grave situation when he writes:

> *"Chhutche motor ghotorghotorchutche gari juri*
> *Chhutche loke naananjhonkekorchehurohuri*
> *Chutchekotokhyapar moto porchekotochapa*
> *Shaheb mem thomke theme bolche 'mama papa!"*
> (Cars are running hither thither,
> People are running helter-skelter,
> Some are running like madmen and getting crushed
> Watching them the English men and women say 'mamma papa'!

One may infer that Ray felt it was really unfortunate that instead of constructively involving themselves in the march of civilization the progressive Bengali *bhadraloks* were maintaining a status quo which resulted in an unproductive stasis,

> *"Aamratobu table thukegachhikemontere*
> *Daanredaanredroom! Dere deredere!"*
> (Drumming the table, we at least sing out loud,
> DaanreDaanre Boom! Dere deredere!)

This was not only the period which exposed the inabilities of the Bengali intelligentsia, it was also the moment when those who believed in the ideals of human liberty, independence, and self-governance busied themselves in debating about and preparing for imaginary freedom. Dissensions were brewing even within Ray's social circle, the Brahmo Samaj. There were tensions between the young Brahmos led by Sukumar and other fellow members like Prashanto Chandra Mahalanabish (1893–1972), an eminent statistician, and those belonging to the old order regarding contemporary issues. The Samajists established a truce among themselves by engaging in an exchange of unnecessary pleasantries. Such a love-hate relationship was best revealed in the debates which arose within the Indian Congress around the election of the Congress President (*Sandesh*, Oct.-Nov.1917). Those who were Annie Besant's supporters responded by saying,

> *"Can re byatakorboisshtupid?*

Thengiyetoreykorbodhit"
(Why you stupid brainless fellow!
I'll beat you black and yellow!)
The ones in Calcutta who were against Besant's selection replied:
'Chuprao tum speakti not maarboregepotapot'
(Shut up don't you speak,
Or else I'll trash you in a jot)
Finally, it did not matter which group was right as both the camps reconciled and ended the debate saying:
"Mithya keno lortejaabi? Very very sorry, masala khabi?
'Shake hand' aar 'dada' bolshobshodhbodhghoreychol
Don't poroya alright how do you do good night.
(I can take a friendly hint, very sorry, come have a mint!"
'Shake hands and call it quits, Let's put an end to this nasty blitz.'
Well then, don't mention, all right, How do you do, good night.)

Ray, time and again attempted to stir the Bengali conscience by reminding them that though they knew which government official held sway in which department or kept an account of the festivals during the year or ability to start indigenous industries which would strengthen the foundation of Indian nationalism, they were completely powerless in front of an unknown enemy. This is echoed in Babu's plight who prepared himself to catch the thief who stole his lunch every day. Disguised as a warrior and hiding behind a shield and with eyes wide open, he waited for the arrival of the thief:

"Ei dekho dhal niyekharaaachiarale
Eibar terpaabemundutabarale"
(Look here, I am hiding behind a shield
Now you will know what happens when you peep in)

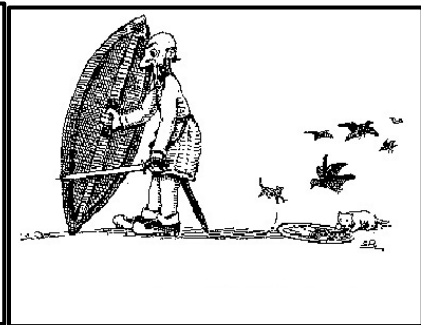**Fig.7**   **Fig.8**

The illustrations of the two poems not only add humour to the text and make it more convincing, but also satirize the ignorance of the otherwise clever and meticulous Bengalis, who fail to spot the enemies in their immediate vicinity. In "Ki Mushkil"(What a Crisis) [Fig.7], the mad bull is standing just behind the Babu and in "Chordhora"(Catching a Thief) [Fig.8], the Babu is unable to discern the presence of 'native enemies'—the cat, rat, and the birds who were busy finishing his lunch as he desperately waited for a face to face encounter with the enemy!

That the 'mad bull' had arrived was already published by the end of 1917. The natives were made aware of the formation of a committee which would advise the British government on the formulation of a new law which would further curtail the freedom of the natives. *Prabasi*,(December–January 1917–18) reported that the then Governor of Bengal was preempting a possible act of violence by the revolutionaries in their pledge to oust the British. Such revolutionary groups were conspiring against the British for a long time and to resist their activities the government felt the necessity of forming a committee to devise laws to thwart the desires of the revolutionaries and control their activities. In the Chaitra issue of 1324 (March–April 1918), *Prabasi* declared the name of the committee chief as George Rowlatt, the Judge of the English High Court. The Moderates and the Anglo-Indian media were aware of the legislation of such an oppressive Defense of India law, but hardly found a space in the discussions at the Indian National Congress and neither did they discuss what they should do to resist invasion by the unknown enemies.

By this time the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montague, was arriving in India to legislate upon reforms which would eventually lead to the granting of dominion status to India. The end of the British rule and formation of a responsible government by the native Indians had become the primary focus of the Bengali intelligentsia even if that meant supporting and fighting for the British in the war and providing financial help which would ultimately lead the country to bankruptcy. However, such blind faith in the 'fair' British who spoke of human liberty, received a sudden blow with the announcement of the Rowlatt Act which was similar to The Egyptian Law of Suspects 1909.

At the end of the war, this was certainly not something the Bengali intelligentsia was prepared for or had expected. Their faith in the British was shattered and the gravity of the situation is expressed in 'Abol Tabol' (Ray, April-May 1919) the lines:

"*Chinch kandunephokla manic, pher Jodi tui kandishre-*

Eina bole jeimerechekadarchapti phot kore
Kothayebaki, bhooterphanki-miliyegelochot kore."
(Dear toothless crybaby, if you cry again,
Saying this when he hit the mud ball
There was nothing to be seen, everything disappeared like a spirit.)

With the enactment of the Rowlatt Act, the native became almost a prisoner in his own country, where in Ray's terms no one had the right to laugh freely and it became a restricted space ruled by the British's stringent and stifling acts and regulations. This space finds its echo in Ramgorur's (The Billy Hawk Cow) nest-

"Jayena boner kaachekimbagaachegaache
Dakshin hawarshurshurite
Hanshiyephelepaache."
(Stays clear of the trees. The smallest forest flees
In case the north wind's ticklish ways
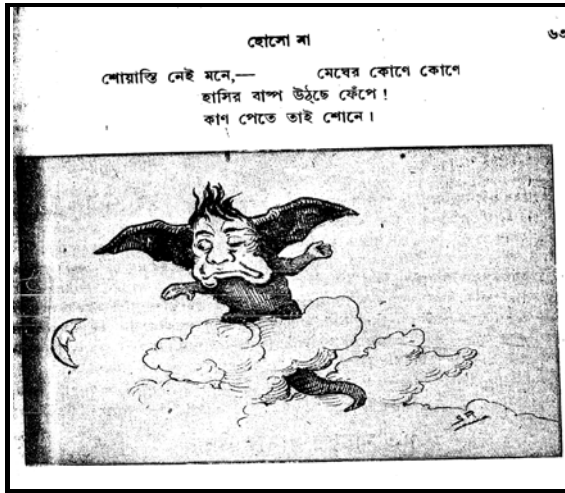Should make him laugh and wheeze!)

শোয়াস্তি নেই মনে,— মেঘের কোণে কোণে
হাসির বাস্প উঠ্‌ছে ফেঁপে !
কাণ পেতে তাই শোনে ।

Fig.9

Or in 'Heshona' [Don't' Laugh] (Fig.9) in *Sandesh* (May-June 1919),

"Jhoperdharedhareraaterondhokare
Lakh jonakirchokkuthara
Haansteshekhaekaare?"
(In the pitch night, by the bushes in the park
Glow worms glow ho-ho-ho
Who is being taught to laugh?)

However, amidst the dangerous implications of the Act and other repressive measures, there was also a surprising tone of indirect moral support provided by the authorities to the natives. On May 2 1919, the governor-general in Calcutta claimed that there was nothing to fear. Though he did mention that the suspects would be jailed without any trial, he did not imply that the natives were to refrain from participating in any political activities. Ray explained the situation in 'Bhoy Kisher?' (Fig.10)[What is there to Fear?] (Ray, June-July 1919).
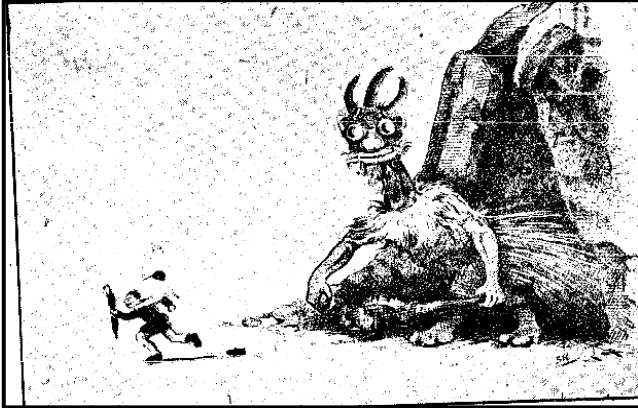

Fig.10

"Bhoypeyeonabhoyepeyeona,
Aami tomayemarbona"
(Fear not! Fear not! I beg of you, I won't hit you at all)
And even if the native is hit,
"E mugur je boddonorom,
Marle tomarlaagbena"
(Don't tell me you're put off the cudgel in my hand
It's so light it won't hurt you if I whack you
As you stand)

Such assurances from the British once again won the trust of the educated *bhadraloks* and they continued with the Moderates' policy of petitioning while making political demands from the *British.* Sibaji Bandyopadhyay (1991) observes, "All of them are in a kind of trance in complete worship of the sahibs. On the one hand, they wished to be praised by the westerners, on the other they arescared of being oppressed." Despite their past experiences with the false promises of the British, the Bengali intelligentsia anticipated independence in the form of the Montague Chelmsford Reforms or Government of India Act (1919) which was their first step towards self-government. For the

first time, the Act allowed native Indians to become elected ministers in the provincial legislative councils.

In reality, the Act had failed to satisfy the political demands of the nationalists as it introduced only limited self-government. How the British unleashed repression once again by reenacting Rowlatt's Act and curbing the freedom of the press and movement, confirmed the betrayal of the support provided by the Indians to the British for their war efforts. Though the *bhadraloks* repeatedly assured the natives and appealed to them to have faith in the British promises, the natives were repeatedly disappointed. The plight of the distressed natives and the uncertainty in which they lived come alive in Ray's words-

> "Aaggeysheyki? Ete aargolhobey ki?
> Neraketohnityidekhiaaponchokheporishkar-
> Amaderibeltalasheynearshethakhelteaashe
> Horey doreyhoyetohmaashenidenpokhheponchishbaar."
> (How can this be?
> I often see them chasing the wild geese
> In the house next to me
> On an average they come twenty five days in a month
> To play the silly wild geese games to play)

The Government of India Act (1919), resulted in the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. The entire nation participated in the protest and the British authorities once again unleashed its reign of terror. Implementation of martial laws led to extreme forms of repression as innocent natives were being jailed and tortured every day. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre has been recorded as one of the most inhuman and worst expressions of British terror and oppression. Ray too noted the excesses of the ruthless British laws and conveyed his disappointment in "Baap Re" [O Dear!] (Ray, June- July 1921). In the poem, the snake charmer Baburam is being asked by an unknown person to bring two snakes which do not have eyes, horns or claws!

> "Aaye baba dekhejaa, dutoshaaprekhejaa-
> Je shaper chokhnei, shinghnei, nokhnei"
> (Come here, leave two snakes
> Which donot have eyes, fangs or horns.)

Baburam is a snake charmer and a snake charmer's ability to play with poisonous snakes symbolises courage. Ironically, Baburam is a snake charmer who keeps snakes which have no eyes or fangs and the demand of the stranger is equally absurd as he insists on having a live

yettoothless snake which could be beaten and punished. Lines and portraits like these covertly indicate that Ray's sympathies perhaps lay with the 'extremists'. The poem could be read as a jibe against the moderate nationalists who were at the forefront of the national movement.

Fig.11

Similarly, another poem which criticised the moderate policy and
Fig.11

praised the courage of the extremists or the aggressive nationalists was "Daanpitey" (The Pranksters) published in *Sandesh* (September–October 1919) [Fig.11] just after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The poem was written against the backdrop of revolutionary terrorism announcing the beginning of the era of extremism in the Indian national movement as it eulogised the valour of two native youths who were willing to face adverse situations without any fear and court arrest or death without any qualms.

> *"Baapre ki daanpiteychele!*
> *Kon din phanshijaabenoyejaabejele*
> *Ekta sheybhootshejeaathamekhemukhe*
> *Thai thaishishibhenge slate diyethuke*
> *Onyotahaamadiyeaalmarichorey*
> *Khaattheke raag kore doomdaam pore"*
> (Oh Dear! How irrevocably wayward they are
> Someday they will either go to the gallows or jail
> Dressed like a ghost one breaks bottles with a slate
> The other crawls up the shelf and
> Falls from the bed.)

The two mischievous brothers in the poem could be the revolutionary groups, *Yugantar* and *Anushilan Samiti,* as both believed

in the ideals of confrontation and self-sacrifice. Also, Punjab and Bengal were the centres of revolutionary activities. So, the two brothers could also be identified as youths of Punjab and Bengal. The poem suggests the bravery of the native youths of Punjab and Bengal who were responsible for the rise of aggressive nationalism in India and who for the first time succeeded in challenging the British regime directly. 'Daanpitey' was written at a time when the brave native youths of Bengal and Punjab had begun using guns, pistols, and bombs against the British. Even though the activities and methods of the extremists were questionable and unacceptable for many, their courage and spirit of sacrifice were praiseworthy. Despite having reservations about the means used by the extremists Rabindranath Tagore wrote 'JhorerKheya'(The Ferry of the Storm) and Sukumar Ray wrote 'Daanpitey' to celebrate the brave and fiery nature of the extremists (Chattopadhyay 1982).

Similarly, in 'EkusheAain' (Act No. XXI), Ray provides a glimpse of various atrocious acts and legislations which were brought into force by the British to rein in not only the extremists but also anybody suspected of being involved in political activities; it hints at the laws which allowed imprisonment and torture of a poet or performer without trial or the stringent regulations which curtailed the freedom of the vernacular press or freedom of expression. Even commoners were harassed:

> *"Je shob loke podyolekhe*
> *Taaderdhorekhanchaeraakhe..*
> *Choltegiyekeu Jodi chaaye*
> *Edikodikdainebayen*
> *Rajarkaachekhoborchotte*
> *Poltoneralafiyeuthe*
> *Dupurerodeyghamiyetaaye*
> *Ekushhaata jol gelae"*
> (Those who write poems,
> They are placed in a cage…
> While walking the streets one can't wander
> For if one looks left or right the king is called yonder
> His guards are summoned who come in with a run
> And they force you to sit while sweating in the sun
> And they offer you 21 spoons of water)

The poem emphasises how laws were becoming mere procedures and had no regard for the context and such an unbridgeable gap between thought and practice is also underlined in the

accompanying illustration. The characters are angular, one-dimensional cut-out-style paper dolls. The Indian policeman is bearded and moustached and is sporting a turban and wearing a dress which again is a combination of Western and Indian attire. A *lathi* is seen hanging from his belt *and he* is trying to seize the shoulders of an indigenously dressed babu who has lost his balance and is falling backwards.

"Ha-Ja-Ba-Ra-La" [Topsy Turvy Tale] (Ray 1922) is an indictment of the colonial justice system and was published in the same year in which Sukumar Ray wrote "EkusheAain". The absurdity of the colonial justice system is exposed in "Ha-Ja-Ba-Ra-La", where one comes across a twisted depiction of the hierarchical structure of the court (the supreme judge, the well-known lawyers, and the common folk). The judge's superiority is weakened as he is sleepy, inattentive, and passes a preposterous judgment, the protests of the powerless *jatra* singer is overlooked by the crocodile lawyer who brings paid witnesses, and the logic-seeking child remains a mere observer. The combination of events and characters makes the narrative a parody of the functioning of the colonial legal system.

Conclusion

Ray's poems serve a dual purpose - offering a critique of contemporary political and social norms while providing a source of pure enjoyment for child readers. By creating a topsy-turvy world in his poems, Ray invites young readers to escape the confines of the adult world and enter a realm of laughter and fun. This sense of mirth and festivity mirrors that of a carnival, where rules are suspended and hierarchies are blurred.In Ray's nonsense world, he relinquishes his adult authority and embraces the child within himself. The laughter that ensues stems from the temporary liberation from societal norms and the playful subversion of established orders. By challenging the boundaries between adults and children, teachers and students, Ray's nonsense writings open up possibilities for alternative social structures.Through the suspension of hierarchical relations, Ray's poems hint at a world where rebellion and freedom are encouraged. By allowing young readers to question and challenge existing norms, Ray's work empowers them to imagine a different reality. In this way, Sukumar Ray's poems not only entertain but also inspire young minds to think creatively and critically about the world around them.

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A new trend in Indian literature: From Angare to the birth of All India Progressive Writers' Association

-Panchali Majumdar

ABSTRACT

Angare, a collection of short stories, was published in 1932. Edited by Sajjad Zaheer, with contributions from young writers like Ahmed Ali, Mahmuduzzafar and Rashid Jahan, the book raised a tremendous furore in India. Sajjad Zaheer was the guiding factor behind the publication and he himself contributed five stories. The conservative Indian intelligentsia labelled it as indecent and unacceptable. The book was eventually banned by the British. The writers who contributed to *Angare*, were primarily young Indians residing in England. They had come into contact with ideas about socialist realism as expressed through contemporary European progressive literature. Imperialist exploitation of colonial India and the consequent nationalist movement, showed them that the Indian society too was full of contradictions that needed to be resolved. They began to feel, like their European counterparts, that literature could help in influencing the society so as to bring about the emancipation of the exploited classes and raise an awareness of the maladies present in traditional social life. *Angare*was a collection of realistic and often unspoken stories of ordinary men and women. It symbolised the emergence of a new trend in Indian literature and exposed social injustice in different forms and at different levels.

Key Words: socialist realism, progressive literature, Progressive Writers' Association, masses, exploitation.

Angare, a collection of nine short stories and a one act play, was published in 1932. Edited by Sajjad Zaheer, with contributions from young writers like Ahmed Ali, Mahmuduzzafar and Rashid Jahan, the book raised a tremendous furore in India. Sajjad Zaheer was the guiding factor behind the publication and he himself contributed five stories. The conservative Indian intelligentsia called it loud and obscene and unacceptable to refined literary tastes. And soon after its

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publication the book was banned by the British. Now the question is why did a small collection of nine short stories and a one act play, written by young and virtually unknown writers, create such a tremendous impact on the rich literary tradition in India, instead of fading into oblivion for being improper and objectionable?

The reaction can be explained if the general attitude of the writers is taken into account. These writers, residing in England for higher education, generally belonged to the educated upper class Indian families. They had been influenced by western thoughts, ideas and literature from their very childhood. Later on, their education in Europe and the contemporary European literature gave them an exposure that altered their literary tastes once and for all. They began to envision a classless society that would be free from imperialist domination on the one hand, and socio-religious oppression on the other. Like contemporary progressive European writers, they too felt that literature had a role in influencing the society, one that could be used to emancipate the downtrodden from different levels of exploitation. In this way, they wanted to communicate with their readers on a level that had never been imagined before. Hence their description of society was very different from that made by their established Indian counterparts. The writers who contributed to *Angare,* wanted to write down stories of real people: they wanted their characters to be real, those who would combat real situations in a very realistic manner. These writers, consciously and deliberately, wanted to jerk the readers into the realisation that literature was not just romantic and pedantic portrayals of elite thought and life. Literature could also depict the lives of common men and women. The idea was to make a different statement altogether—to expose social injustice at various levels in various forms and in a genuine and convincing way. *Angare*exposed details of life that were earlier left unspoken.

Garmiyon ki ek Raat (*A Summer Night,* Sajjad Zaheer) is a conscious and deliberate depiction of the injustice that was being faced by Jumman, the peon, as he related his perils to Munshi Barkat Ali. Munshi Barkat Ali's reaction as apparent to the readers is one of extreme irritation at Jumman. However, there is perhaps a feeling of guilt too for not helping the peon. This is evident from the uneasiness on his part, one that runs throughout the story. On the one hand there is the urge of the middle class Munshiji to live a better life, while on the other there is the poor peon trying to scratch out a living amidst exploitation and struggle. This contrast forms the basic plot and is evident throughout the story (*Angare* 2014,pp.1-9).

Dulari (Sajjad Zaheer) is a narrative on a very common problem where an orphan servant girl was sexually exploited by Kazim, the son of the household and then abandoned when he got married. Dulari fled, became a prostitute, and was brought back home by an aged servant who spotted her. However, Dulari could not stay back and she disappeared again. As the story unfolds, it exposes clearly the feudal mind set of the members of the household. It is only at the end that Dulari's feelings are given due consideration. This transforms the story of the household into the story of Dulari, the servant girl (10-16).

Jannat ki Basharat (*Heaven Assured!* Sajjad Zaheer) is about an ageing Maulavi, Mohammad Daud-sahib, who holds himself in high esteem as he delivers his religious duties with fervour and zeal, so much so, that the duties physically tire him out. It is on the pretext of this religious dignity, that he refuses physical intimacy with his young second wife. On the other hand, however, he dreams of engaging with naked *houris* in heaven, and is awakened by his wife's laughter who mocks him as he wakes up clutching the holy- book to his chest. This story is a satire on the so called dutiful practice of religion. It brings into question the role of human intellect, reasoning, wisdom and imagination in the practice of religion. It made a very strong statement, unheard of in earlier literature, and was obviously bound to shock the so called elite(17-24).

Neend Nahin Aati (*Insomnia,* Sajjad Zahir) is about the life of Akbar, a poor poet (shair). An assortment of jumbled thoughts rushes through his mind as he stays awake at night. These thoughts not only picture his problems, but contrast them with the existing society and even the moderate nature of nationalist politics (25-37).

Phir ye Hungama (*The Same Uproar, Once Again,* Sajjad Zahir) narrates a series of events, each of which question the role of the almighty in the preservation of life. These incidents indirectly criticise the imperialists, the feudal set up, the agony of the poor and the role of faith in all this (38-48).

Dilli ka Sair (*A Trip to Delhi,* Rashid Jahan) is a very short story that relates the experiences of Mallika begum, who was forced to wait at the station as her husband had left her stranded there in search of something to eat. She sits on top of the luggage and observes the people around her, often reacting, without being observed herself as she is clad in a burqa. As she relates her experiences to her friends, she

even mentions feeling uncomfortable in the burqa and the men roaming about openly expressing curiosity about her (49-52).

Jawanmardi (*Masculinity,*Mahmuduzzafar) is about an estranged relationship between a husband and his ailing wife until it becomes important for the man to establish proof of his virility. It results in the death of his ailing wife during child birth (53-61).

Badal Nahin Aate (*The Clouds Don't Come,* Ahmed Ali) is yet another narrative about how the women are exploited and abused. The plight of Muslim women is the main focus here (62-72). *Mahavatton ki ek Raat* (*A Night of Winter Rain,* Ahmed Ali)vividly portrays the struggle of a woman and her children on a cold winter night. It relates how the woman tries to accept the reality of the changed circumstances of her life (73-82).

The play, *Parde kePeechhe*(*Behind the Veil,* Rashid Jahan)shows how the life of a woman is entirely under the control of men, the control often justified by social and religious norms. The helpless woman, although well to do, has no choice but to give birth to children on a regular and continuous basis. She hates it, yet there is no way in which she can put an end to the agonising process. These are certain facts, very common to the contemporary society, but no one had frowned upon them before, nor questioned them or even brought them into discussion (83-101).

Whereas *Dulari, Jawanmardi, Dilli ka Sair*and *Parde ke Peechhe* highlight the oppressive nature of patriarchal households, *Mahavaton ki ek Raat* is about the silent struggle of a woman to keep herself and her children afloat amidst dire circumstances. *Angare*evoked thought provoking emotions and forced the readers to think beyond literature and beyond linguistic structures and cultural barriers that had been so important and so dominating in earlier literature. They created unwanted ripples in the existing Indian literary circles and raised the ire of established Indian conservative writers, who perhaps began to sense the danger of the evolution of a new literary style, already in vogue in Europe, and one that had the potential to replace the existing trend of Indian literature. The British on the other hand, sensitive of anything related to communism, however farfetched it could be, stoked these flames of indignation among the Indian educated elite. Always prompt in their attempt to curb communism, an enemy of their imperialist ideology, they banned the sale of *Angare*[i]. Nevertheless, socialist ideas of art and literature had already made inroads among the modern Indian educated classes, a fact

that led to the evolution of Indian literature on a new basis in the years to come.

Four months after its publication, *Angare* was proscribed. Yet it became the formal declaration of the beginning of a new genre in Indian literature, that of progressivism andone that was soon to take over. It was this controversy that led to the moulding of the idea of forming the Progressive Writers' Association or the PWA. Despite the fact that *Angare*was a criticism regarding the existing style of writing, representing in fact, a denunciation of everything that it said, the writers refused to apologise on its accord. Five months after its publication, on 5th April, 1933, the authors issued a statement from Delhi. It was drafted by Mahmuduzzafar and published in *The Leader* (Allahabad) on the same date, entitled *In Defence of Angare: Shall We Submit to Gagging?* It said in clear terms that the idea was to expose the malaise of society. They wanted the right to express and criticise and in doing so they were not apologetic in any way.[2]

Background to the establishment of the PWA

Towards the end of the 19th century, there emerged a new trend in European literature; that of social realism. Depiction of society in such literature was stark and real, very unlike its earlier counterpart. It had a deep connect with human nature and human relationships. Although this genre of literature very often did bring into focus the lives of common men and women, it could not rise to the level where emancipation of the masses could be discussed. It was with the emergence of socialist realism that the notion of purposeful literature began to take shape—the purpose being the establishment of socialism and the consequent emancipation of the masses. This was strongly emphasised in the Soviet Writers Congress of 1934. Socialist realism was against imperialist and fascist forces that suffocated freedom of expression. Its purpose was to expose how the exploitation of the masses was rampant in modern civilisation, its purpose was to highlight the need for a revolution in favour of upholding the interest of the masses[3].

Speakers debated and discussed upon how literature and art could influence the existing world situation; the relevance of literature in the lives of the masses; how the role of purposeful literature was to reach the ultimate goal of socialist realization.[4] Gorky said in his speech that the common men and women needed to be trained in writing so that they could write their own stories in perhaps the most realistic manner than ever before.[5] Karl Radek reiterated these thoughts and explained them further.[6] Other issues that were discussed were

about the new literary from; its style, content and appeal; and whether it would actually be able to influence the masses into the realisation of their socialist goals.[7] Socialist realist literature had a profound influence among contemporary writers across the world and soon Indians began to feel the impact of the surge of these new ideas.

Soon after the Soviet Writers' Congress, the First International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture was held in Paris from June 21st to June 25th, 1935. Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse organised the Congress and it clearly advocated a strong bonding with the peoples' front as had been propagated by the Soviet Writers' Congress. The whole event was held under the patronage of Maxim Gorky, and the invited guests included Louis Aragon, André Gide, Aldous Huxley, André Malraux, Robert Musil and Boris Pasternak, among others. There were émigré German authors like Anna Seghers, Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Robert Musil, Bertolt Brecht and others. Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand from India too attended the Congress.

Andre Gide delivered the inaugural address, where he upheld need for socialist realist literature. He underlined the need for writing "literature of protest" against the socio-economic structure that was promoted under fascist regimes. The main points of discussion were the relation of the work of artists and writers with the contemporary socio-political issues. Among the subjects discussed were cultural heritage, nation and culture, and the role of author in society. The contemporary socio-political scenario as related to the rise of fascism was an issue that was taken up very seriously in the Congress. It discussed how fascism was a threat to the independent expression of authors, and how it was to be thwarted. The Congress gave the exiled German writers a platform to fight against both fascism and anti-Semitism. To them, the idea of liberalism still meant invoking the principles of the French Revolution. It is no wonder therefore that they actually expressed their views in their Memorandum the *Defense of the "Ideas of 1789"*. Debates as usual, were numerous, of which the controversy between the surrealist André Breton and the USSR delegate Ilya Ehrenburg is particularly well known. However, this Congress was not limited to the role of the writers regarding the ushering in of socialism, it was also about freedom of expression as posed against threats from fascism and other authoritarian regimes.[8]

Contemporary political situation in India

In order to analyse the earliest influences of progressive writing on Indian intelligentsia, it becomes necessary to evaluate the

contemporary historical background. It was the year 1935. India was in the throes of the independence movement. The Congress led movement was had spread throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. Yet, it had not quite silenced the discontent that had arisen about its moderate policies. Communism that had been more or less crushed by the British through the Meerut Conspiracy Case, was once again trying to reorganize. Even within the Congress there had emerged a socialist strand of thought that was increasingly influencing young impressionable minds.

The main agenda of the Lucknow Congress of 1936 was the rejection of the Government of India Act of 1935. Jawaharlal Nehru's presidential address had a deep leftist tenor, one that undoubtedly made things rather uncomfortable for Gandhi and his followers. He said clearly that the Indian problem was not an isolated one and that it formed an integral part of the world situation, one that needed to be analysed before coming into any conclusion about the plight of the Indians under the British. Nehru believed that "the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism" and it was also the only way to put an end to the poverty, unemployment and imperialist control over India. He also felt that the Congress should support and facilitate the formation of workers' and peasants' unions in India. Socialism as represented by the U.S.S.R, was the only hope of the future (Nehru Jawaharlal, Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress, Lucknow, 1936, Cited in *The Labour Monthly*, Vol. 18, May 1936, No. 5, 282-305)[9].

Nehru's speech at the Faizpur session of the Congress was in the similar undertones. He blamed the British policy of appeasement for the rise of Nazism in Germany. Here too, like that at the Lucknow session, Nehru clearly reiterated that the answer to India's problems lay in socialism, without which a mere freedom from foreign rule might be achieved; a fact, that would not solve the more pressing problems of poverty and exploitation of the masses.

Meanwhile the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a socialist faction within the Indian National Congress, was formed in 1934 with Jayprakash Narayan as its general secretary and Minoo Masani as its joint secretary. The constitution of the CSP defined that the members of CSP were the members of the Provisional Congress Socialist Parties and that they were all required to be members of the Indian National Congress. The CSP wanted its members to fight from within the Congress and under no circumstances did it allow otherwise.

Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri says, "...Although the Congress socialists accepted the fact that the Congress represented the mainstream of the nationalist movement, they also contended that the influence of the reactionary forces over its leadership had rendered it incapable of leading a revolutionary struggle against British imperialism and its native allies..." (Chowdhuri 2011, p. 155). Members of communal organizations or political organisations, whose goals were incompatible with the ones of CSP, were barred from membership. It rejected the theories of Gandhi, which it found irrational. At the same time it criticised the sectarian attitude that the communists had about the Congress. Influenced by Fabianism as well as Marxism Leninism, the members of the Congress Socialist Party or the CSP, advocated a decentralised, socialist and secular state.

Around 1933-34, there was a revival of communism especially after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement. By 1936 the communists had joined the CSP as an answer to the popular front strategy of the Comintern. Bipan Chandra has said, "...The period was so favourable to socialist ideas, and they spread so widely and rapidly that it appeared that the Left was on the verge of ideologically transforming the Congress and the nationalist movement in a socialist direction..." (Chandra 2010, p. 118) The Congress socialists began to increasingly collaborate with the communists and the "...results were increasing working class enthusiasm and militancy around 1937-38..." (Bandhopadhyay2007, p.380)

Jayaprakash Narayan presented a *Programme* of the All India Congress Socialist Party in its Third Annual Conference in 1937 whose objectives were to create a nation that was based totally on socialist principles (Narayan 1937, pp.7-8). It also said:

"The formation of peasants' and workers' unions and active support to the struggle conducted by them should be kept in the forefront of this programme… The Anti-imperialist struggle cannot be separated from the day-to-day struggle of the masses. The development of the latter is the basis for a successful fight against imperialism therefore, one foremost task outside the Congress is to develop independent organizations of the peasants and workers and other exploited sections of the people...Besides these class organizations we should also attempt to organize the youth of the country so as to mobilize the most active elements of the lower middle class..."(pp. 24-25).

The Congress Socialists, with the support of the communists, were instrumental in the establishment of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936. It should be mentioned here that Kisan Sabhas (peasant committees) had already been formed on a local basis in Bihar, South India and other parts of the country. They were all united under the banner of the All India Kisan Sabha that was set up under the aegis of the Congress on April 11th, 1936. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha fame, was made its first president. The decision of the Comintern to follow the 'united-front' policy helped in the collaboration of the Communists with the CSP activists in pursuing the goal of spreading mass movement in India. Despite opposition from the right wing leaders of the Congress, the All India Congress Committee, under the leadership of Nehru, resolved to provide support to the peoples' movements that had generated in India. It was at this juncture that the All India Progressive Writers Association was formed.

The birth of the Progressive Writers Association

The PWA was formed in London in 1935 by Indian writers and intellectuals, with the encouragement and support of some British literary figures. It was in the Nanking Restaurant in central London that a group of writers, including Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, and Jyotirmaya Ghosh drafted a manifesto which stated their aims and objectives. The Association initially comprised university students from Oxford and Cambridge, who met once or twice a month in London to discuss and criticise articles and stories. In 1935, Zaheer left for India and thus the idea of forming an All India Progressive Writers Association or the AIPWA began to take shape. Always conscious about the growth of communism, especially after its proliferation in India prior to the Meerut arrests, the British intelligence was aware of this new trend. It "...placed the movement under close scrutiny from the very beginning, despite being a literary association and never being proscribed in pre-independent India..."(Ahmed 2009, p.32).

E.M.S. Namboodripad said, "It was no accident that the PWA was formed in 1936 and that too in the city of Lucknow." (Namboodripad, E.M.S. 1985 S. Pradhan Ed. *Half a Century of Marxist Cultural Movement in India*) He was of the opinion that the leftist thoughts that had made a profound impact on politics and economy were beginning to get reflected in the cultural sphere as well. The IPWA and soon afterwards, the IPTA, are examples in this regard. He felt that the writers too had a role to play in the development of nationalism.

It can also be mentioned here that political leaders were also interested in the proliferation of the progressive writers' movement, many of them being prolific writers themselves. They too had been influenced by the idea that the writers too had a duty to perform in the struggle for freedom and in the emancipation of the masses. However, it would be a mistake to say that all writers who joined the PWA led movement were communists. Sajjad Zaheer has said in one of his interviews, "...Now these people did not become communists and then join the CSP, as in my case, for example. They were Congressmen, who became Congress Socialists and then later on became communists…" (Zaheer 1969). Sajjad Zaheer was of the opinion that this helped in giving shape and consolidating the movement in India[x].

The political turmoil brought about by the nationalist movement against the imperial masters had also shaken the socio-cultural life in the sub continent. In such a situation, the progressive writers felt awakened to a new situation. Congress leadership did not impress them and they often "...viewed them with contempt..." (Ahmed 2009, p. 66). They felt that they too had a role to play in the development of nationalism and the crushing of exploitation in the country. They understood, through western socialist movements and socialist-communist literature, making rounds in the cultural and political circles of the West, that exploitation did not end with the end of imperialism. It was much more deep rooted than was ever imagined, and that an idyllic world would emerge only with the end of exploitation and appropriation of the toiling masses. They thus began to write realistic literature thinking that the more realistic the story is, the more full of expression and movement in the picture, the more intimate the observation of human nature and psyche, the greater will its influence be on its readers. Human beings with raw and real emotions make human characters real and thus touch the deeper sensitivities of the readers (Pradhan 1985, pp.53-54). This was the duty that the progressive writers had to perform in order to bring about the society that they envisaged. However, their programme was not one that was limited merely to a recording of suffering. It was to supposed to arouse the "critical spirit" inherent in the readers. It said that all that all that managed to stimulate this critical spirit was to be accepted as "progressive" (p.21).

Shabana Mahmud says, "The idea of forming a League of Progressive Authors was announced for the first time in this statement. It could be said that the publication of *Angare* had, as early as I932, laid the foundation for the establishment of the Progressive Writers'

Association. Consequently, they established the Progressive Writers' Association in London in 1934, and then took the initiative to set up the All India Progressive Writers' Association in India in 1936" (Mahmud 1996, p.451)

The British were indeed exceedingly vigilant about the proliferation of communist ideology across the world and more so in the colonies that they held in domination.[11] However, it would be erroneous to label the Indian progressive movement as a mere component of "socialist construction" of culture. Nor was it imposed from above. Like the emergence of communism in India, the progressive movement too originated under the influence of both international and national political situation. On the one hand, there was the influence of the Bolshevik ideology of spreading culture among the masses so as to create a new generation of writers and artists who would depict the dreary and difficult world inhabited by the common masses, and then take up the narrative to another level that would hail the ushering in of a new and better world for one and all. On the other hand, there was the advent of fascism, its exploitative, repressive and violent manifestation condemned at large; and the rise of anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America, on the other. Besides, there was also the influence of the socio-religious reform movements, especially those that dealt with the emancipation of women, the denunciation of the caste system and so on.

All these factors found expression in the works the early progressive writers. Aijaz Ahmad has said that just as the "poetry of medieval theisms" spread across "diverse languages, regions and social strata", so also did the progressive movement in its modern context. He further says that the Indian progressive movement was "...something of an analogue of the national movement itself, intersecting with it and providing something of a national cement in the artistic and cultural arena, as the national movement did in the political arena – but intersecting with the progressive side of the national movement while staying clear of its regressive and conservative side. And, like the national movement, it too served as our link to the rest of the world..." (Ahmed 2011,p. 29). There are indeed different shades of progressive literature both at the international level and in India. They are realistic portrayals of society often advocating without reconciliation the complex social hierarchies that determine the lives of the common masses. They may or may not be totally in terms of the guidelines set at the Soviet Writers' Congress, yet they are, in their own ways, a conscious, convincing and deliberate depiction of social contradictions.

Aijaz Ahmad is of the opinion that "The relationship between the communist and the non-communist components of progressive thought, even within what we can recognisably call Marxism, has always been very difficult to pinpoint (p.31).

Sajjad Zaheer was perhaps the driving force behind the formation of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. From the publication of *Angare* in 1932 to the organization of the first Conference of the All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in Lucknow in 1936, he was the person who had always been in charge. His evolution to communism in the 1930's was the result of the changing world atmosphere coupled with the stifling political situation in India. This attraction towards communist principles was not exceptional, for several intellectuals of the time had either momentarily or permanently shown such tendencies as it had appeared as the only plausible solution. It can also be mentioned here that several political leaders were also interested in the proliferation of the progressive writers' movement, many of them being prolific writers themselves. They too had been influenced by the idea that the writers had a duty to perform in the struggle for freedom and in the emancipation of the masses. And this idea to awaken a "critical spirit" among the readers became the goal of the writers for a long time to come. Munshi Premchand's iconic presidential address at the first conference of the All India Progressive Writers' Association bears true testimony to this spirit when he said, "…literature can best be defined as a criticism of life…The literature which does not arouse in us a critical spirit, or satisfy our spiritual and intellectual needs, which does not awaken our sense of beauty, which does not make us face the grim realities of life in a spirit of determination, has no use for us today. It cannot even be termed as literature…It becomes his (writer's) duty to help all those who are downtrodden, oppressed and exploited—and to advocate their cause and his judge is society itself—it is before society that he brings his plaint. He knows that the more realistic his story is, the more full of expression and movement his picture, the more intimate his observation of human nature, human psychology, the greater effect he will produce…" (Premchand1985, pp. 52-54).

NOTES

1. The book was banned by the Government of the United Provinces on 15 March I933,under section 295A of the Indian Penal Code, which reads, "Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of His Majesty's subjects, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults or attempts to insult

the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both." (See United Provinces Gazette, I933 IOR V/I I/5I I and Proscription Notice: Publications Proscribed During the Quarter Ending 31 March, I933 IOR L/R/7/75)

2. "…Shall we submit to such gagging? That is the question I wish to raise here. Coming to the contents of the book itself, the stories of my friend S. Sajjad Zaheer are concerned chiefly with the criticism and a satire of the current Moslem conceptions, life and practices. His attack is directed primarily against the intolerable theological burden that is imposed from childhood upon the average Moslem in this country-a burden that leads to a contortion and a cramping of the inquisitive or speculative mind and the vital vigours of body of both man and woman. Ahmed Ali essays into the realms of poverty, material, spiritual and physical, especially the poverty of the Moslem woman, and imagination and admirable boldness breaks through the veils of convention to expose the stark reality. Rashid Jehan, who is also a Doctor of Medicine drawing on her practical experience, also portrays vividly the ghastly plight of the woman behind the purdah. My own single contribution is an attack on the vanity of man which seeks to find an outlet at the expense of the weak and defenceless womanhood. Nobody can deny the truthfulness of those portraits, and any one who chooses to exert himself can see that he is not drawn for the sake of literary 'flair', but spring from an inner indignation against 'this sorry scheme of things.' The authors of this book do not wish to make any apology for it. They leave it to float or sink of itself. They are not afraid of the consequences of having launched it. They only wish to defend 'the right of launching it and all other vessels like it' ... they stand for the right of free criticism and free expression in all matters of the highest importance to the human race in general and the Indian people in particular....Our practical proposal is the formation immediately of a League of Progressive Authors, which should bring forth similar collections from time to time, both in English and the various vernaculars of our country. We appeal to all those who are interested in this idea to get in touch with us. They may communicate to S Ahmed 'Ali, M. A., Jalal Manzil, Kucha Pandit, Delhi…" See *The Leader,* Allahabad, 5th April, 1933.

3. Andrei Zhdanov (Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party), well versed in contemporary cultural trends, made the opening speech at the First Soviet Writers Congress with great vigour and eloquence. He declared that the success of Soviet literature was a result of the success of socialist construction. Soviet literature, he felt, had brought about a metamorphosis in literature 'by smashing every kind of obscurantism, every kind of mysticism, priesthood and superstition'(and by bringing about in its place, a literature that not only propagated equal rights for the toiling masses but also for women—a fact, so long left untouched by the literary world. See A. Zhdanov, Soviet Literature—the Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature *Soviet Writers Congress*

1934, the Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1977, p.18. Hereafter referred to as *Soviet Writers Congress 1934*.

4. Gorky felt that realism as expressed in the portrayal of the existing is not enough. The idea of reality should be completed "by the logic of hypothesis" by supplementing it with the "possible" and the "desired" image. Only then would it "provoke a revolutionary attitude to reality, an attitude that changes the world in a practical way" See Groky's speech, *Soviet Writers Congress 1934,* p.44.

5. The training of "beginners" who were later to assume the responsibility of promoting a literature for the toiling classes, one that would expose their socio-economic significance on the one hand, and reveal the revolutionary role to be played by them in their own emancipation on the other, was a very vital point raised by Gorky. See Gorky's speech, *Soviet Writers Congress 1934,* p.68. However, the questions regarding how this training was to take place, or what its subject matter was to be, or other details regarding it, remained unanswered.

6. Radek felt that just as the noted proponents of earlier literature lacked "contact with the masses", so also the young proletarian literature "suffers from an insufficiency of culture". Hence they needed to be educated in terms of literary style, form and expression. This was possible only through the systematic study of earlier literature, "without losing their contact with the masses, without withdrawing for a single moment from the struggle of the masses, without turning into spectators, onlookers of this struggle..." See Karl Radek's speech, *Soviet Writers Congress 1934,* p.146.

7. Doubts were expressed by the French writer Malraux, regarding the fact that such supervision might smother the originality of talented writers. Radek laid the French writer, Malraux's apprehensions at rest by saying that this "solicitude for literature" would not in any way "smother" the literary urges of a new born Shakespeare. He said: "I think that the apprehensions of our friend Malraux as to whether a new-born Shakespeare might not be smothered in the crèches of our country evidence a lack of confidence in those who mind the children in these crèches. Let this Shakespeare be born—I am convinced that he will be born—and we will lose no time in bringing him out into this world. Even those who are not born Shakespeares we do our best to bring out into the world and give them all assistance." Ibid. p.148.

8. Differences between the surrealists and the socialist realist writers had been there for sometime. It surfaced again in the Paris Congress of 1935 where the surrealist authors and artists were, in various cases, deliberately stopped from voicing their opinions.

9. "...our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action…"…I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination; I work for it even

more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like the Congress to become a socialist organisation and to join hands with the other forces in the world who are working for the new civilisation. But I realise that the majority in the Congress, as it is constituted to-day, may not be prepared to go thus far…" Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress, Lucknow, 1936, Cited in *The Labour Monthly*, Vol. 18, May 1936, No. 5, pp. 282-305.

10. "I had also started working in the Congress, the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party. At this time, I was quite close to Pandit Nehru and I talked to him also about this and he also liked the idea. Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and RambrikshaBenipuri of Bihar also liked it. So, naturally we started expanding, as it were, from Allahabad. At Calcutta, there was my friend Hiren Mukerjee to whom I sent the manifesto and he took it to other Bengali writers. Rabindranath Tagore was also approached; similarly Sarojini Naidu was approached; so was Maulana Hasart Mohani and in that way we contacted even some of our greatest writers as well as younger writers, who were, more or less, patriotic minded and who believed in this kind of literature. That is to say, that literature must serve the cause of the people and the biggest cause at that time was the liberation struggle of the Indian people. So we got general sympathy and support from our political leaders, I mean, the Congress leaders like Panditji, Mrs. Naidu and Maulana Azad. These were the three people who, one can say, took interest in matters of culture and literature. Then the Congress Socialist leaders, I must say with emphasis, took a deep interest in it, particularly, Jayaprakash Narayan, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan" Oral history interview with Shree Sajjad Zaheer, Interviewer: Dr. Haridev Sharma,New Delhi, Dec. 4th 1969, Oral History Transcripts, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 98.

11. The political situation in India was quite volatile. There was discontentment among nationalist leaders about the moderate Congress policies. Besides, the Communist movement was once again trying to reorganise after it was badly crushed through the Meerut Conspiracy Case. There was the emergence of a socialist faction in Congress leadership that eventually led to the consequent formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. The All India Kisan Sabha was established in 1936 with the support of communists and Congress Socialists.

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Book Review

India and China: Building bridges amidst rivalries

A review essay by Harish K. Thakur

Indian foreign policy has registered a significant shift in its role and character in the twenty-first century. Unlike the principles of NAM, the five principles of peaceful coexistence and disarmament have been guided more by factors like Indian national strategic interests, proactive diplomatic policy, regional dynamics, and global aspirations. The 'Look East policy' has transitioned into 'The Act East policy', which prioritises the expansion of economic relations, the promotion of cross-cultural interactions, the consolidation of security cooperation, and the strengthening of engagement with East and Southeast Asia. India's foreign policy has also shifted towards a more China-centric approach, as its ability to assert itself globally hinges on its management of China. Strategic rivalry, border conflicts, economic interdependence, and larger geopolitical factors all play a major role in determining how India views its northern neighbour. After the tension between India and China over the complex borders and China's BRI project, India has been dealing quite incisively with China over different platforms, be it the SCO meeting, BRICS, or the recent Panchsheel celebrations by China. In the changing global geostrategic ambit, India's has been following a nuanced foreign policy approach, as evidenced by its decision to keep a respectful distance from China in recent multilateral and minilateral engagements (Thakur 2024).

An important issue and top concern in Indian foreign policy continues to be striking a balance between collaboration, rivalry, and handling future confrontations with China. In order to maintain balance, India remains soft and cautious in its approach too. According to Chellany, "In a fundamental sense, India today pursues a non-doctrinaire foreign policy approach and seeks to preserve strategic autonomy. It has moved from non-alignment to multi-alignment, but India largely remains a reactive state and punches below its weight internationally" (Mattoo 2022). However, this view doesn't seem to be accurate, as India's approach has significantly deepened and strengthened over the last

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decade, particularly during and after the Galwan episode. It has responded responsibly and sternly to issues such as the Ukraine war, oil imports, and summits like the G20, SCO, and BRICS.

It has also been argued that India needs to follow a more comprehensive approach to meet challenges from its immediate neighbours like China and Pakistan and challenges in the Indo-Pacific. In a time of weakened multilateral order, it has been felt that India has to play a lead role among the world powers, especially on behalf of the Global South, in international affairs. Many believe that there is a need to place a greater emphasis on trade relations and economic diplomacy and to take aggressive measures to use India's economic potential. In the last few decades, we have received some wonderful works of counsel and comprehension on Indian foreign policy by SS Menon, S Jaishankar, A. Pandey, Shyam Saran, R Sikri, Rush Doshi, Bertil Lintner, Sumit Ganguly, and Brahmo Chellany. An important addition is Kanti Bajpai's (2021) *India versus China: Why they are not friends* published by Juggernaut.

An insightful examination of India's strategy for dealing with international affairs is offered by Kanti Bajpai, an eminent expert on Indian foreign policy. Bajpai argues that a combination of historical grievances, strategic rivalries, and differing political systems has created an enduring mistrust. The book, at times autobiographical in style, systematically examines these aspects, providing a nuanced understanding of why India and China struggle to establish a cooperative relationship despite their growing economic ties.Bajpai emphasises the continuation of the Indian commitment to upholding strategic autonomy and continuing to exercise its power to take independent decisions related to issues of national interest. He also counsels on avoiding alignments with the dominant power blocs, as it has been in the case of NAM. Bajpai supports a multi-alignment strategy that will enable India to expand its alliances and strengthen its position in international affairs. He suggests reevaluating the tenets of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for the modern era and tailoring them to India's present international obligations and difficulties.

The current volume, *India vs. China: Why are they not friends?* has in all six chapters focused on borders, Tibet, their relations during the cold war, rivalry, power asymmetry, and partnerships. According to Bajpai, India has three big world views: the classical, the modern cosmopolitan, and the great power view of the day. The classical view goes back to the Hindu past, to the era of Kautilya; the modern cosmopolitan view can be traced to Indian thinkers from Vivekananda

onward to Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi; and the great power view is evident in the thinking of a range of social thinkers, including Nehru, M.S. Golwalkar, and contemporary strategists such as Bharat Karnad. Against it, China's view of India is based on the concepts of 'tianxia, communism, and great power'. It sees India in a 'secondary or subordinate' role and not as a 'fellow great power'. (42-44). According to Bajpayi, the reason the two states couldn't become friends is because of the "four Ps": negative perceptions, differences over perimeters, rival partnerships, and power asymmetry. Pakistan, which is the consequence of the conflict, adds the fifth 'P' factor, which further exacerbates the conflict. Besides having developed negative perceptions of each other and having borders and Tibet as a bone of contention, China has developed stable partnerships while India lags behind. Russia does not hold the same firm standing as Russia and China do. Similarly, there is a big gap in power asymmetry between the two states, which needs to be bridged to look for rapprochement in the near future.

Bajpai highlights the strategic need to fortify ties with Asian powers and the region's growing significance in world events. He also promotes measures that foster growth and international trade, highlighting the critical role that economic diplomacy plays in India's foreign policy. In addition, he discusses India's security worries, especially in light of China and Pakistan, and he makes the case for a revised and more inclusive global governance framework. Borders and territories have become more sensitive issues due to various reasons in the last few decades. According to Bajpai, "Not surprisingly, the post-imperial countries are very jealous of their territories and boundaries. Countries can also have material interests. In a section of land, even if it is relatively small. The land may have valuable natural resources—oil and gas, minerals, forests, and water. It may be important by virtue of its geostrategic location—for example, as a buffer zone against a powerful rival neighbour or a connecting zone between two larger parts of national territory. It could also be a crucial basing area for the military" (64).

China sees the border issue through the lens of Tibet. While India has, once committed blunder over passing recognition to China's right over Tibet, the volume hesitates in counselling the withdrawal from the recognition. India has been gradually reducing the words on Chinese occupation from recognition to 'control of China over Tibet' to 'One China Policy'. This has resulted in the recent violent border incidents, moving ahead from the soft border scuffles of early decades. India's support for His Highness the Dalai Lama also irks it (China), as he

represents the possibility and even realisation of the Tibetan nation. "Chinese thinking, the border quarrel with India, and Beijing's continuing struggles with Tibetan integration are linked. The border between India and China is essentially Tibet's border with India, so it must be delineated in a way that ensures India cannot militarily or politically influence Tibetan affairs" (65).

For Bajpai, the root of the mutual suspicion between India and China is their security concerns and their greed for territory, as would be observed by many. In order to protect their territories, states even turn deceitful and violent. The unsettled territories since the Second World War still face such complexities and interventions. The loosened multilateral order makes the unilateral ineterventions and aggression more frequent now. However, the India-China interactions in the last 13 years are not the interactions between two greedy countries. Or even between one greedy and one more moderate country. Instead, they have been both security-seeking countries. As in a Greek tragedy, one came to see the other as greedy, expansionist, and aggressive (69). Charles Glaser, the American political scientist, has suggested that international conflict often arises because of greedy countries that are aggressive-minded and expansionist (69). Hence the Wilsonian vision and view is obfuscated by the the realist lens, through which the powerful seeks to settle the issues in its own interest.

Bajpai notes that one could see a shift in Indian policy towards China after the year 2008. During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Beijing in 2008 and a joint communiqué issued at the end of the Chinese Premier's visit to New Delhi in 2010, the reference to 'Tibet' was omitted, even as it attributed India's adherence to 'One China policy'. Similarly, the 2010 communiqué went further, dropping reference to both 'Tibet' and the 'One China Policy', thus endorsing the basic principles and consensus on bilateral relations set out in 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2008. The change in Indian stance could be due to continued Chinese nibbling at borders and Kashmir. The signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal also registered a stable mark on Indian foreign policy choices and orientations.

Against the rhetoric of a multipolar world in the making, Bajpayi sees the evolution of a bipolar world in which India has to make its way. Under such a situation, India has to seek 'external balancing, which could be done by developing better strategic ties with the US. The power asymmetry between the two states has been discussed, however, in greater detail by Ganguly, Pardesi, and Thomson in their recent volume *The Sino-Indian Rivalry: Implications for Global Order.* "While the present partnership of India with the US and China with Russia seems durable, endogenous and

exogenous developments could alter the strategic landscape. With Joe Biden in the White House, the US could rethink the relationship with China and decide to work with rather than against it" (182). However, the rise of Trump may strengthen their strategic partnership to new heights. India and the US have moved reasonably fast during the tenure of President Trump. "The US has clearly identified China as a strategic and economic adversary, and as a result, the roles of QUAD, AUKUS, and India have gained more significance in its involvement in Asian and Indo-Pacific issues. Indian and American interests are currently highly aligned, with both countries collaborating on various important matters. These include addressing China's increasing influence, counterterrorism efforts, nuclear non-proliferation, defence cooperation, peacekeeping operations, climate change mitigation, cyber security, healthcare, agriculture, education, technology, and space exploration (Thakur, 2023).

Becoming a big power is not just the number game of a double-digit growth rate and doubling of GDP every decade; rather, a whole systemic change is required for that. Bajpai contends that India must reject old norms and undergo a comprehensive rebuilding of society as a whole. With so many stunted children, jobless youth, and oppressed women, no country can be rich and exercise economic and military might. According to economist Branko Milanovic, the author compares the fundamental split to the communist revolutions in Asia that eliminated feudal order and made room for native capitalism. China underwent a civilizational change with the communist revolution. India will need a near civilizational change to: not some gold run almost mythical error, but forward to a society that is more equal, experimental, and ecological. These are not just good values. They are the essential attributes of a society that wants to imagine and accrue power in the 21st century (240–41). However, the grand civilizational overhaul appears to be a myth when a society changes steadily, keeping in touch with its mighty past and the moderate future.

India and China have a long way to go in the twenty first century with many ifs and buts in their sleeves, which further obfuscate their future possibilities. Of course, currently China has an upper hand but their growth rate story, GDP strength, man power,advancement in science and technology, IT, AI and Big Data, and above all the maintaining of the territorial integrity are the drivers that will determine their global status in the coming decades.

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