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Presidential Address on Indian Society and Sociology: Challenges and Responses

At 38th All India Sociological Conference, Udaipur (2012)

Ishwar Modi*

At the outset, let me thank and express my heartfelt gratitude to Mohanlal Sukhadia University, and its functionaries for organizing the 38th All India Sociological Conference in this beautiful lake city of Udaipur.

I must also express my heartfelt thanks to all the members of the Indian Sociological Society for having given me the opportunity to serve it as its President. I once again assure you all that I will do my utmost to promote and strengthen sociology in every part of the country.

A major step in this direction has been initiated in the form of establishing five Zonal Sociology Promotion Councils. The ISS Managing Committee has also constituted more than half a dozen committees to promote and address our common concerns such as young scholars, women's participation, research co-ordination, publications, programmes, job-oriented courses and papers, liaison with regional associations, finance and membership, and of course to suggest ISS election reforms.

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As some of you may be aware, the ISS has entered into MOUs with the National Sociological Associations of Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa (popularly known as BRICS) besides the Polish Sociological Association. We also have limited understanding with the British Sociological Association. We can look forward to having some joint international conferences and other collaborative academic activities in near future. The benefits of such dialogues to the benefit of the participating partners can hardly be overemphasized. Only last week, when I was in Bangladesh to address the Conference of Bangladesh Sociological Association, we have agreed to establish the South Asian Association of Sociology (SAAS).

We have also decided to bring out the ISS e-Journal and e-Newsletter. Going forward, we shall explore the possibility of bringing out the ISS Journal in Hindi and other regional languages too. Friends, I can go on to appraise you about the initiatives that the ISS has taken to strengthen and widen the scope of its activities, but I think it is now time that I come to my address.

I now seek your kind indulgence to the customary address delivered by the President of the Indian Sociological Society. The theme of my address is: 'Indian Society and Sociology: Challenges and Responses'. My predecessors have been eminent stalwarts and scholars, who nourished sociology in India to great heights. I am too small a person to match their scholarship and yet I deem it my duty and honour to reflect on the current challenges faced both by the society and sociology in India.

Even as many of us have been concerned about the changing face and characteristics of our society, the question beckoning us as sociologists is: Are we doing enough to observe and study these changes and are we enabling our students to become productive leaders of social change? If that is a tall order, can we say that we are contributing to a better understanding of Indian society and its ever evolving challenges.

All through its history, Indian society has remained a multicultural society in every sense of the word. So is the case today. Probably no other country in the world can match its diversity and its capacity to absorb and amalgamate external influences of the magnitude that we have encountered. We have

successfully met and overcome these challenges, and gone back to our path of growth and development, may be after strife and tribulations. Each period of major socio-structural change in Indian society had its nuances and impact, altering and creating a set of new social hierarchies and social formations. These hierarchies and social structures have presented in one or other form, and have shaped and reshaped the nature and character of Indian society and its various institutions, be it marriage, family, *jati*, caste, community, kinship, religious practices, rural/urban/tribal communities, state, etc (Modi, 2012a).

As such, socio-cultural and politico-economic institutions had been at the centre of indigenous intellectual traditions and discourse in India. A tradition of reflection on socio-cultural and politico-economic institutions had persisted in different philosophical and scholarly texts. A large number of these classical texts authored and compiled by eminent sages and scholars over the millennia contain valuable insights on different aspects of Indian society (Modi, 2012a).

However, gains of the post-independence period in India are enormous. In spite of its social, religious, cultural, political and economic diversities India is functioning as a unified entity to the amazement of the whole world.

Over the last few decades, India has made tremendous progress in almost all aspects of life. The process has become sharper over the last two decades and more visible, thanks to the increasing role and activism of the media, be it print or electronic and now the internet.

If caste and kinship were the dominating themes until the sixties, social unrest and political plurality coupled with issues relating to individual rights and freedom dominated the seventies. The nation awakened and the defining memories linger on of the victory on the eastern front and creation of Bangladesh, imposition of emergency and leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan.

Eighties saw renewed challenge to national integration – whether it be Punjab in the north, Tamil Nadu in the south or Assam in the north east. If society and politics had to deal with issues of terrorism and separation, later part of the decade witnessed polarization across religious divides. What started as agitation for and against reservation for backward and less privileged

castes, through Mandal Commission recommendations, echoed in the backlash of majority community, commonly referred to as the 'Kamandal' response. The decade witnessed renewed insurgency in J&K, even as the country faced huge political churn and instability. In between, issues of corruption took centre-stage, as evidenced by the huge support garnered by V.P. Singh.

Come to nineties and the nation made some huge decisions and deviated from the path it had been following the previous two decades. Economic reforms and liberalization unshackled the economy and threw open opportunities, which did not exist till then. The dismantling of the License Raj and opening up of the economy saw growth of several first generation entrepreneurs – from Mittals (Airtel) in the telecom space to Dhoots (Videocon) in consumer good industry to Subhash Chandra (Zee) in television to Tantis (Suzlon) in renewable energy space to Anil Agarwal (Vedanta) in metals and minerals space to Narayan Murthy in IT. The list is endless. These were the faces of new India and came to symbolize hope, aspiration and possibilities.

Nineties were dominated by the buzz around economic reforms coupled with lack of labour reforms; of free flow of capital and foreign investment to lack of transparency; to increased investments in infrastructure to stuttering reforms in power sector.

Cometh the new millennium and with it came the new found aggression and self-confidence of the average Indian. No more was he going to play second fiddle to the developed world or be in awe of the white skin. The Y2K experience and the IT boom had given Indians a new voice and confidence of success. Increasing material prosperity and greater disposal income meant consumerism was here to stay. Thanks to the unbridled population explosion of the previous decades, the demographic dividend was on the anvil. The country had hit the sweet spot of demographic divide – it had a vast pool of young, hungry and assertive youth. They were impatient for more and had faith in themselves. Nothing was impossible and impossible actually meant 'I'M POSSIBLE'.

The telecom boom and the National Highway Development Programme meant better communication and better mobility. Nation was on the move!

Yet, several formidable challenges: exploding population, widespread poverty, regional inequity, illiteracy, urban congestion and squalor, ruptures and cleavages based on religion, language and gender threatened to tear apart the social fabric, apart from continuing power outages. Another dimension has been added by globalization in terms of both economy and geo-politics. Never before in the history of mankind did a country with democratic dispensation had to feed so many poor and teach so many illiterate, and also simultaneously compete with the most advanced countries for a place under the sun (Mashelkar, 2000).

No discussion of the social situation in India can take place without discussing the twin issues of caste and untouchability. There are scholars who obliquely suggest that caste is a rumour and untouchability has become irrelevant in India. The other reaction is rather moderate in as much as it suggests that caste and untouchability have not disappeared, but have changed their nature. Others argue that those who tend to deny the very existence of caste suffer from the guilty feeling or sense of embarrassment that this social malaise causes to such people. On the other hand, there are those who argue that caste and untouchability cannot be wished away; it is there and exists but in a milder form (Guru, 2008).

Babasaheb Ambedkar offered us a multi-layered, counter-hegemonic reading of caste that was lost on at least three generations of sociologists and possibly accounts for several of the conservative trends we have seen in the social science in institutions of higher learning. What is particularly interesting is the silence in the sociological work that emerged at that time and for at least five subsequent decades about Ambedkar's contribution to the sociology of caste (Kannabiran, 2009). We all know that caste persists as a system of inequality that has burdened the Indian economy with inefficiencies in the allocation of labour and other critical resources, reducing the full development of human capital in society. Far from disappearing as the economy modernizes, discrimination remains a problem. It is not amenable to

self-correction, but rather requires interventionist policies to remedy, as articulated by Thorat and Newman (2007). One such interventionist policy pertains to reservations.

India today is caught in the grip of querulous debate over developing reservation policies for groups and communities suffering from economic exclusion associated with caste, gender and religious identity. Appropriate discussion with regard to economic empowerment and equal opportunity is the only way out to deal with the question of reservation policies. The questions regarding 'creamy layer' also need to be addressed in this context. Supreme Court judgments do not mean the end of debate on reservations.

A long-standing challenge for those who support affirmative action is to end the phenomenon of quotas being an instrument of political mobilization rather than a mechanism to ensure social justice. The main issues that need addressing are identification of Other Backward Classes, the criteria for deciding the creamy layer and the fallout of sub-classification of the intended beneficiaries. None of these issues can be seen as having been permanently decided by the Mandal Commission or the courts nor can they be seen as not changing over time (Palshikar, 2008). As such, we sociologists have great responsibility to reflect on these intertwined and waxed issues with sensitivity and fairness to all concerned.

It is not caste alone that has generated inequality in Indian society but certain economic factors are equally responsible for this. Poverty is the foremost among these factors. Almost as many Indians are below the poverty line and illiterate as the entire population of India in 1950. In 2005, one in every third person in the world who consumed less than \$ 1.25 a day (at 2005 purchasing power parity) lived in India – more than any other country. They accounted for about 40 per cent of India's population. Twenty-five years earlier, 60 per cent of India's population lived below the same poverty line, in real terms. While this is clear progress, India's long-term pace of poverty reduction is no more than the average for the developing world, excluding China, as pointed out by Martin Ravallion (2008).

The performance of the Indian economy, as measured by the growth rate of aggregate income, has been remarkable, both in terms of past performance and in comparison to other nations. Among the several factors behind this, two, which stand out are the economic reforms of the early 1990s and the sharp increase in the saving rate following bank nationalization in 1969. This outstanding aggregate growth, however, comes with growing inequality and (declining but still) unacceptably high poverty. It is argued that this is partly a consequence of globalization and gives rise to novel policy dilemmas, including need for multi-country coordination of policies of a kind that has little precedence, as per Kaushik Basu (2008), former Chief Economic Adviser of India and currently the Chief Economist with the World Bank.

However, the link between globalization and inequality is not yet very clear. While the pro-globalizers claim that integration with the world market has worked wonders in reducing poverty in India as well as China, the critics claim that globalization has contributed to a widening of inequality. Both these positions seem to be off the mark. As such a more nuanced understanding is called for. This has not yet been undertaken in all seriousness by sociologists.

While globalization and liberalization policy of the 1990s seemed to have given impetus to the broadening of the middle class in India which today constitutes almost 30 per cent of the Indian population and is growing every day; a pertinent question that remains unanswered is if globalization has encouraged inter-generational occupational mobility. Even today, very few systematic and rigorous studies on inter-generational occupational mobility in India exist. However, substantial inter-generational persistence has been reported particularly in the case of low-skilled and low-paying occupations e.g. almost half the children of agricultural labourers end up becoming agricultural labourers that clearly suggest considerable inequality of opportunity in India, as per recent studies by Motiram and Singh (2012).

At the same time, the new economic policy has led to the emergence of new business classes from communities whose traditional occupation was not commerce. In India, historically big and small business alike have been dominated by a few traditional mercantile communities, like the

Vaishyas/Banias and Marwaris in north and east India, the Chettiars in the south, and the Parsis in the west. This monopoly has been slowly whittled away, beginning in the late colonial period and accelerating after independence as members of a range of dominant agricultural castes like the Kammas of AP, Patidars in Gujarat, Gounders in Tamil Nadu, upper caste groups like the Khatri and even lower caste communities like the Nadars, have become prominent in different sectors of business and industry (Upadhyaya, 2009). The emergence of new business classes has added new dimensions to the socio-economic scenario of the Indian society. Its impact is yet to be assessed more so in its sociological dimensions.

At the same time, we also need to assess the impact of displacement caused by large development and infrastructure projects, as also due to the transfer of land from farmers to industrialists under the policy of promoting special economic zones (SEZs) – which has almost become a mad race between the various state governments.

Another area of major concern for us is politicization of religion which has led to the surfacing of intense debates on secularism vs communalism. The validity of secularism as a political ideology has been questioned, in the context of the communal violence against the Christian community in Orissa and in the jingoism against the Muslim community in the name of ‘hunting down the terrorists’. Since the post-Mandal agitations the political climate of India has drifted towards the right and has destabilized ‘secular India’. This failure of secular ideology in India has often been interpreted as a manifestation of the inadequacy of the modernization programmes taken up by the state.

The frame of debate around secularism emphasizes the issue of modernity and religion, which essentially invokes a Western model where secularism as an ideology comprehends the distance between the church and the state. This strand of argument employs secularism and communalism as analytical tools for explaining the religious and secularian identities in the context of the problems of integration with a liberal democratic state, and thus bypasses the

historical evolution of the terms like 'secular' or 'communal' in the Indian scenario (Mukhopadhyay, 2009).

The writings indicate that communalism is an outcome of the competitive aspirations of domination and counter-domination that began in colonial times. Cynical distortions of the democratic process and the politicization of religion in the early decades of independence intensified it. In recent years, economic liberalization, the growth of opportunities and a multiplying middle class have further aggravated it. More alarmingly, since the 1980s, Hindu communalism has morphed into fundamentalism, with the Sangh Parivar and its cultural politics of Hindutva playing ominous roles (Upadhyay and Robinson, 2012).

Another important issue for us to consider and probe is that of corruption. Jayaprakash Narayan, V.P. Singh and now Anna Hazare have drawn widespread attention to the issue of corruption. As citizens we might have kept our eyes closed towards this widespread malaise in society but as conscientious academicians we cannot remain aloof and as such there is a pressing need for the understanding of the various dimensions of corruption both in private and public life.

The waxed questions of discrimination, disparities and inequality based on caste, dalits, reservations, creamy layer etc. compel us to think as to 'what is to be done?' As such we have to think and ask questions such as: 'Do we need special policies to tackle discrimination and disparities or are universal anti-poverty or redistributive policies enough to close the caste gaps?' As pointed above popular themes such as the issue of the creamy layer, reservation and efficiency, perception of non-dalits and dalits about the effectiveness of policies should be dealt without any bias and with academic sincerity.

As Jodhka (2009) has pointed out why is it that sociologists and social anthropologists have remained preoccupied with the study of their own society, the Indian Hindu society, the caste system, family and the village, and yet at the macro level, the challenges of nation-building? Also why it is so that we have written very little on the oppressive and dehumanizing aspects of

caste system? Likewise, studies of tribal communities also in most cases remain descriptive in nature. Islam has always been a major faith tradition in south Asia. How come we see very little engagement to the Islamic as being part of the civilizational values of Indian society? While until some time back, no serious attempts were made at studying the Muslim communities of India and their social structure? Many of us are aware of the problems of questions, but we have not yet engaged with them more seriously.

As such we can see that as of today sociology in India is passing through a critical phase. On the one hand, it is still dominated by the changing paradigms of Western sociology and enamored by their methodologies, and is failing to make its own contributions to social theory and conceptual development. On the other, Indian sociologists are gradually becoming more conscious of the persistent inequalities operating at the inter-national as well as intra-national levels. They are trying to understand the processes, the reasons for, and the victims of inequalities. At the operational level, many young sociologists are working to understand the dynamics of the reservation policy (positive discrimination) both in the context of its positive and negative consequences, as also the issues of social inequality in the broader context of social (in)justice. However, a major handicap has been that many of these studies are either descriptive or at best analytical, but in most cases bereft of a sound theoretical foundation, even though efforts are being made to examine issues in the broader context of marketization and globalization (Modi, 2010).

Whatever the challenges of marketization and globalization and the growing clout of business management, the future of sociology in a large country like India, presently witnessing one of the fastest growing economies in the world, is not likely to lose its sheen and importance since there exists a large scope of research to grapple with the problems of poverty, illiteracy, health, hunger, and marginalization of a large section of its population, in a big and appropriate manner (Modi, 2010).

The problems of language, publication and funding continue to persist. Sociologists are either working in regional languages and suffer from paucity of

vernacular journals or even if they are writing their reports in English there is very little chance of getting them published, particularly in scarce English language journals, let alone foreign ones. As a result what is being done hardly ever comes to the knowledge of the international community and many a good works may never see the light of the day (Modi, 2010).

Among the many challenges that sociology is facing in India, while some pertain to the quality of students – since the brightest or even the brighter of them are not coming to sociology under the current market forces – others pertain to the paucity of facilities and funding due to neglect on the part both of the central and the state governments.

Indian Sociological Society is making every possible effort to strengthen the reach and scope of sociology. The ISS now regularly organizes a North-South dialogue between the eminent Indian and international sociology scholars on the occasion of its conferences. To enhance its reach internationally and to open the doors of dialogue between its members with the international community of sociologists, the ISS has already concluded MOUs with all the BRICS countries, latest being the Chinese Sociological Association.

Taking cognizance of the spread and utility of the information-communication revolution and in order to face the challenges of the contemporary world more effectively and also to bring the ISS at par with ISA, it has already embarked upon a plan to place every possible data at its command on its website. Its membership, as also its newsletter and the journal will shortly be available online as I mentioned earlier. The very fact that ISS is now functioning through its 23 research committees and an ad-hoc group, covering a large variety of areas and themes, speaks volumes about its growing contribution to the development of sociology in India. Yet it is noteworthy that many specialized areas on which the International Sociological Association has RCs or else working groups and thematic groups are still missing in the structure of ISS RCs. Noteworthy among them are futures research, language and society, sociology of sports, sociology of work, sociology of arts, biography and society, and sociology of disasters. Similarly, the ISS is yet to grapple with

the sociology of local-global relations, and also the body in the social sciences and time-use research. On the other hand, ISS seems to have the lead in the study of such areas as backward and marginalized groups, and tribal communities which mainly face the problems of poverty, inequality and injustice. It is precisely for these reasons that a large number of Indian sociologists present their researches focused on these themes in the respective research committees.

The fast growing NGO and NPO sector is also contributing significantly to the growth and development of applied and action sociology in India. This sector is also trying hard to grapple with and bringing to light the problems of the backward and the marginalized groups in the country. While academic sociology in India is losing ground in terms of providing jobs, the NGO sector has emerged in a big way to help the young sociology entrants since they are considered well equipped and trained in field research and research methodologies.

However, in spite of the fact that there is hardly a theme on which sociologists in India are not working, their role in public life is shrinking particularly in the higher planning bodies of the country, even as these bodies are deliberating on social issues of national consequence. The fraternity of sociologists in India has never been as conscious as today about its failure to contribute universally acceptable theoretical models and about their limited role in the affairs of sociology at international level, in spite of their being the second largest community of sociologists in the world (Modi, 2010). If we have to compete with the world and if we want to carve out our place both at the national as well as at the international level as sociologists, who matter, the only way out is to have passionate engagement with our discipline. This is the call of the hour. I would like to envisage and envision a sociology in India which is deeply concerned with the issues of the common man, the downtrodden, the marginalized and such others as well as their empowerment that could lead to a desired type of society based on egalitarian principles.

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Caste(s): Through the Archetypal ‘Orientalist’ Predicament of Sociology on India

Bula Bhadra*

Abstract

This article interrogates the articulations on the concept of caste(s) by digging its origin, pathways and the good fortune it enjoyed since its birth with a brief appraisal of Dumontian notion of caste. The paper also makes an attempt to show how the stereotype of anthropological ‘other’ as an integral part of colonial epistemological and ontological thinking provided the basis for analysing caste as ‘other’ which became the be-all and end-all category for explaining Indian social reality and, which again in its turn have orientalized Indian sociological imagination subsumed under Social Anthropology and Indology. The paper shows how caste and sub-caste have no direct correspondence with Varna or Jati. And, finally, Dumont’s views on caste and hierarchy in India are unsubstantiated as Dumont turns speculative into empirical and empirical into speculative in the distinguished company of Anthropological/Orientalist tradition of Hegel, Marx and Weber. The need of the hour is to critically look at the dependence on caste for explaining reality in India. The paper calls for a more appropriate and reflexive classifications based on theoretical-methodological rigor and in-depth study of Indian society without resorting to Eurocentric and Colonial biases.

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Keywords: Orientalism, Colonialism, Eurocentric, Caste, Varna, Jati, Occupational specialization.

Introduction

As early as 1980, D.N. Dhanagare reminded us that the 'academic concerns' of the Indian sociologists were 'complacently wallowed' in studies of caste, tribe, village, marriage, family and kinship and thereby stereotyped the contexts of research (1980: 28). Almost a decade after a somewhat similar concern was expressed by Meenakshi Thapan while she was taking stock of the scope and character of Indian sociology published in the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. She wrote in no uncertain terms that there is remarkable 'thematic continuity' between the Old and New series of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 'in terms of substantive articles' as the good old issues of caste, kinship and religion dominated the other themes (1988: 268). Satish Deshpande echoed similar opinion when he wrote in 2001 that the present sociological discourses about Indian society are still dominated by and large with the notion of 'caste' which, in turn, create disciplinary predicaments for Indian sociology (2001: 247–60). Even in 2012, Jodhka writes, that, 'the subject of caste has been a staple in the courses on society and culture(s) of India taught in the Sociology departments of colleges and universities across the country' (2012: xxii). In fact, as Roland Inden so aptly remarked that India was consistently represented as radically different from the societies of Europe, an essentially static society of which caste was the defining social institution (1990: 49). Analysts on caste starting with Max Weber (1864–1920), Celestin Bougle (1870–1940) via the British colonial censuses at the last quarter of 19th century and reaching its pinnacle with Louis Dumont's (1911–1988), theory of caste, indubitably confer this impression that the concept of caste(s) have been at the centre in understanding and explaining Indian society for about one and a half century. Thus, caste has been omnipresent and if one wants to understand India the best short cut route was to understand caste.

If a plain truth is told then this riding of the same bicycle of caste has been a characteristic feature of both Sociology on India and Sociology of India. Despite the fact that the discourses on caste(s) have done 'intellectual and

administrative overtime' (Sharma, 2002: 10), for an elongated period ranging from unquestioned and/or qualified/modified acceptance to slipshod orientation(s) along with parroting of the works done on caste(s) by overlooking the historical and etymological trajectory and roots of the concept of caste since its particular propitious (?) modern/colonial ontological beginning. This article attempts to commemorate (just passed) birth centennial year of Louis Dumont (1911–1988) by interrogating some of the articulations on the concept of caste(s) by digging its origin, pathways and the good fortune it enjoyed since its birth with a brief appraisal of Dumontian notion of caste which is distinguished by both rise and fall. In this paper I also make an attempt to show how the stereotype of anthropological 'other' as an integral part of colonial epistemological and ontological thinking provided the basis for analyzing caste as 'other' which became the be-all and end-all category for explaining Indian social reality. Moreover, historically, in India, the customary practice has been to use the label 'sociology' to refer to both sociology as well as to social or cultural anthropology. The twinning of the disciplines testifies that by and large, anthropology, especially its colonial variety has dominated sociology, to the relative neglect of the latter. Thus the disciplinary terrain of Indian sociology has been profoundly influenced by colonial discourses of anthropology and a specific category of anthropological imagination. This article demonstrates how this penetration has been coupled with another significant baggage i.e. the Orientalist approach with which Indian sociology has been overloaded with and how Caste as an integral part of this saga generate mayhem by giving birth to discourse(s) which at best can be labeled on the one hand a potpourri of loose ends and, on the other, a classic post-colonial predicament still hanging though sometime loosely with the colonial umbilical cord.

What is Colonial Anthropology Plus 'Orientalism' = 'Oriental Other'

Without the Rest... the West would not have been able to recognize and represent itself as the summit of human history 'The other' was the dark side-forgotten, repressed and denied; the reverse image of enlightenment and modernity. (Hall, 1995: 314)

What is unique about anthropology as a discipline is the use of its 'other', to overcome the limits of its origin and location. (Das, 1994: 24)

As a discipline born with the patronage and sponsorship of colonial administration, anthropology's survival has depended on the idea that there are other cultures with differences (mostly negative) and that they can be studied. Traditionally, the anthropologists ventured into remote villages to study them, the 'other' people with the 'other' culture. Anthropologists' assumed ability to thoroughly study cultures unlike their own has made anthropology the study of the human other. It is a logical corollary of the discovery of the 'primitive' i.e. un- or non-civilized human beings as opposed to 'civilized' ones. Historically viewed, the development of the Enlightenment worldview, the growth in scientific reasoning, the rise of evolutionary thinking, and most importantly the rise of colonialism are closely associated with the appearance and usage of the notions of the 'other' and 'otherness' the favorite knowledge categories of the classical anthropological discourse. Anthropology, owing its ontological start from Colonialism was implicated in 'inventing the human other', which is basically also 'epistemological' for developing a 'theory of mankind'. Thus 'the notion of perceived differences' proven through the cognitive process of observation, collection of data' and finally of course 'theorizing' for generating notions of 'a plethora of other' (Sarukkai, 1997: 1406).

With the rise particularly of Colonialism and contact with 'other' cultures, a specific pattern of thought and language, a system of representations emerged, underpinned by the discourse of the 'West and the Rest' where the 'West' became synonymous with the developed, civilized, and normal in contrast to the 'non-West' which was perceived as underdeveloped, primitive, and deviant. This essentialist identity of West/Europe was then formed not only through its perceived sense of difference from the other cultures, but also by its perceived sense of superiority to 'other' cultures. This kind of 'Eurocentrism' – the perception of almost everything European as normal, natural and ideal – in the hidebound heyday of colonialism became crystallized into common sense. Consequentially a number of negative stereotypes of the

'other' emerged. Social theorist Hulme points out that stereotypes operate mainly through a combination of adjectives which established characteristics as if they were essential truths and are always split into two opposing elements – a good and a bad, which is known as 'stereotypical dualism' (Quoted in Hall and Gieben, 1995: 308). This stereotyped dualism is clearly reflected in Eurocentric binary oppositions such as these:

White	Black
Noble	Savage
Culture	Nature
Christian	Heathen
Evolved	Primitive
Differentiated	Simple
Developed	Backward
Refined	Rude
Civility	Barbarism
Modern	Traditional
Rational	Irrational
Dynamic	Stagnant
Active	Passive
Progressive	Conservative
Men	Women
Self	Other

This, of course, does not exhaust the list of binary stereotypes. As Edward Said has shown that 'Orientalism' is a discourse about the Orient as the 'other' of Europe, which by all means confirms Europe's ethnocentrism, in spite of all its refined pluralities. Since in Orientalism 'orient' is always a tableau of queerness, 'there is nothing about Orientalism that is neutral or objective. By definition it is a partial and partisan object' (Sardar, 2002: vii). Accordingly, in a profound sense, the other is not a concept, not a name for something or

someone. It does not name an object. It is used as an indicator towards that which is noticeable only by its absence' (Quoted in Hall, 1995: vii).

Implications of Orientalist Paradigms and Theories of Difference and Otherness

These anthropological and Orientalist paradigms and theories of 'difference' and 'otherness' had far-reaching implications for Indian sociology. Let me very briefly substantiate Indian sociology's anthropological connection in the post-independent period which is quite impressive and deserves mention. In the first volume of the *Sociological Bulletin* in 1952 M.N. Srinivas (1916–1999) wrote an article on 'Social Anthropology and Sociology' where he enthusiastically commented that the experience of intensive fieldwork has chiefly made social anthropology a respected and respectable academic discipline. Therefore, Srinivas thought, 'it would be a good idea if we could insist that students wishing to study "sociology" make a prior study of "social anthropology" for at least two years'. This, for him, 'provides a cure to ethnocentrism' as it is certainly capable of producing a 'certain charity and tolerance towards ways of life other than one's own'. In addition, Srinivas was also eager 'to do away with the distinction between sociology and social anthropology' as 'this would help to separate social from physical anthropology and ethnology'. In the first or last instances he argued that 'the union of social anthropology and sociology is desirable and will be to the advantage of sociology' (Srinivas, 1952: 35–37). It becomes evident from Srinivas' position that he was very anxious to separate social anthropology from anthropology as the latter at that time has fallen into disgrace especially in the former colonies. He candidly admitted that 'names are an important matter, and social anthropologists have reason to feel that their subject has not been lucky in the choice of its name' (ibid.: 32). But apart from the nomenclature, apparently nothing else about 'anthropology' was really objectionable to Srinivas and he was eager to have 'comparative sociology' and eliminate the distinction between social anthropology and sociology' (ibid.: 36). Almost faithful adherence to this guidance of Srinivas and also of some other Indian sociologists beyond doubt, explains why there was no real

resistance to any of the domain assumptions of Colonial Anthropology and/or Orientalist paradigmatic worldview of Indian Sociology in the first three decades after independence. Although interrogation of these articulations are in progress mostly from the last decade of the last century but, these paradigms are still popular among majority academics and the binary stereotypes dominate daily teaching of sociology in Indian colleges and universities, and thus reproducing the archetypal predicament. A close inspection is bound to attest that Indian sociology, both in its curriculum and in its majority researches still uncritically uses and depends on these worldviews. As Deshpande unmistakably wrote that in contrast to Economics, 'Sociology seems to have inherited a profoundly ambiguous and disabling self-identity. This is a direct consequence of the fact that it lacked a distinct presence in colonial India, being largely subsumed under Social Anthropology and Indology' (2001: 205). Beteille, who was also convinced up to 1970s about the unity of sociology and anthropology as advantageous for sociology expressed a somewhat different feeling in the 1990s. He wrote: 'It is undeniable that my enthusiasm for the unity of sociology and anthropology has cooled over the last thirty years. This is partly because changes in my own professional experience and intellectual horizons, but also because of changes in the two disciplines themselves'. In this connection the following narration of Beteille is unquestionably indicative of the fact that, despite colonialism's formal disappearance and flowing of much water down the rivers Ganges and the Thames about the deconstruction of binary opposites and essentialist categories, the 'Otherness' paradigm reigns supreme, though often invisibly as an archetypal post-colonial predicament.

When a student of Indian society and culture goes to such an (American) University, no matter whether he is a sociologist or an anthropologist in India, he is presented there as an anthropologist and not a sociologist. The established opinion in American, and to a large extent European, universities is that the study of Indian society and of other Asian or African societies is the province of anthropology and not sociology. (Beteille, 1993: 301)

Thus, the 'orient' is still the 'primitive others', as it remains so also in somewhat Anthropologized/Orientalized Indian sociology. Here, it may not be out of context to mention that in the last quarter of last century, Jacques Derrida (1976), wrote about how Western philosophy is based on binary opposites, such as truth/falsity, unity/diversity or madwoman, whereby the nature and primacy of the first term depends on the definition of its opposite (other). This emphasis on dualities and difference has led Derrida to call for a dismantling or deconstruction of meaning/discourse. This approach has discarded the universal, simplified definitions of social phenomena, arguing that these definitions essentialize reality and fail to expose the complexity of life as a lived experience. This approach emphasizes local, specific and historically informed analysis of different realities, the importance of difference and the pitfalls of universalizing essentialism (Derrida, 1976; Culler, 1982).

In this context let me draw attention to the first volume of the *Contribution to Indian Sociology* (1957). It is here one can clearly find that Louis Dumont and David Pocock were all quite ready to start a special sociological analysis of India's society under the heading of 'For a Sociology of India'. Further, they wanted to have 'genuine dichotomies' in place of what they called 'imaginary dichotomies', of course to prove the principle of difference between the West and India or in their respective social systems (1957: 16). In fact, Dumont assigned the sociology of India the task of standing at the 'Sociology's and Indology's point of confluence' (ibid.: 7). But was it a matter of developing sociology for India or was it an issue of inventing Indian sociology in a definite way (Lordinois, 2013: 344)? British anthropologist Bailey accused Dumont and Pocock of equating Indian sociology with an analysis of the values of Hinduism. He also inquired 'whether there was also an Indian chemistry' (Bailey, 1959: 39–40). It was clear that the underlying hypothesis behind Dumont's social anthropology was to limit India to a cultural specificity that could not be reduced to a generic model of universal type, which is of course reserved for Dumont's perception of Europe/West. For Bailey, Dumontian

analysis was certainly not true comparative social science. On the other hand, for Patricia Uberoi, it was wrong to dismiss Dumontian variety of sociology as merely 'Hindu sociology', when in fact Dumont's intellectual project was surely comparativist par excellence (Uberoi, 2006). But what was really Dumont's idea of comparative sociology, especially outside the parlance of Contribution to Indian Sociology?

As opposed to modern society, traditional societies, which know nothing of equality and liberty as values, which know nothing, in short, of the individual, have basically a collective idea of man and our (residual) apperception of man as a social being is the sole link which unites us to them, and is the only angle from which we come to understand them. This apperception is therefore the starting-point of any comparative sociology. (*Homo Hierarchicus*, 1980 [1966]: 8)

What's more, this is what Dumont wrote in the Preface of his book *From Mandeville to Marx: Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (1977):

At the end of my book on India, *Homo Hierarchicus*, I outlined what was to be my next task. It was to consist in reversing the perspective and throwing light on our modern, equalitarian type of society by contrasting it with hierarchical society. This might be done in a book called *Homo Aequalis*... . It so happens that this society (Indian society-BB) appears in stark contrast, regarding its values, to the modern type of society. (1977: 3)

Quigley is quite on target when he asserts that Dumont uses India as a particular representation of traditional society and as a mirror to explain what it is that makes for the distinctiveness of modern society. This, Quigley believed was Dumont's genuine preoccupation (1993: 22). Hence, the stereotypical dualism of Dumont can hardly be put under the rug in the name of 'comparative sociology' and then conveniently overlook Dumont's real objectives. Otherwise Dumont would not have presented *Homo Aequalis* to one group of readers and *From Mandeville to Marx* to another group of readers though the latter is the supposed translation of the former (Beteille, 2006: 111). But there is no dearth of following in Dumontian type of understanding of caste as well as no scarcity in criticizing Dumont's version of caste. What is lacking though is a comprehensive challenge to this colonial anthropological

conception of binaries which make sociological imagination in India as Yogendra Singh felt long back 'imitative than innovative almost by nature' (Singh, 1968: 25). In all honesty, Indian sociology might have been benefited if there was legitimate disciplinary amnesia of successive generations of Indian sociologists (Beteille, 1997: 98) which could have helped them to be innovative rather than imitative and prevented in taking things for granted by riding the same bicycle over and over again.

Before I go to the next section on caste per se let me refer to Jaganath Pathy's article in *Sociological Bulletin* to demonstrate how particular words matter historically and epistemologically. He so accurately points out that the term 'tribe' has never been defined with any scientific rigor in spite of its prevalence in social science literature. He asserted that the term 'tribe' actually originated with European colonialism and racist ideology. It cannot be construed as accidental and that only in the heydays of colonialism most people were designated as tribes (1999: 98–9). For Pathy, it was indisputably,

colonial subjugation that transformed nations, countries, kingdoms and peoples into the so-called tribe. Prior to colonial annexation, the term had no equivalent in Africa, Asia, Australia or America. It is not merely accidental that only in the heydays of colonialism were most of the people named tribes. The term tribe reflects the vocabulary of the colonial powers which, over laden by the 'Whiteman's burden' described it in several disparaging and contemptuous terms. (ibid.)

It was therefore the inescapable fate of caste, tribe, etc. to be the classic 'Oriental Others' fulfilling the prophecy and the in/unintended consequence of colonial anthropological and orientalist imaginations of perceived difference.

From Other to Parenting and Nurturing of Caste

My argument is about the power of colonial leviathan to produce caste as the measure of all social things... Under Colonialism, Caste was thus made out to be far more – far more pervasive, far more totalizing, and far more uniform – that it had ever been before. (Dirks, 2001: 8 & 13)

Karl Marx (1818–1883), although did not discuss caste but started writing on India with two objectives in mind: one, the assessment of the role of British imperialism in colonial India; second, and more importantly, the construction of an empirical and logical antecedent and direct opposite in India or, for that matter, the Orient/Asia of any or all of the modes of production (e.g. ancient, Germanic, feudal and capitalist) that originated in Europe (or synonymously the Occident/West). Marx also insisted on explaining course of Indian history by 'indigenous, not imported categories' (Bhadra, 1989: 1&91) which evidently meant that there are European categories which are for Europe only and Asia cannot have any claim to that and two shall never meet. Max Weber in his *The Religion of India* (first published in 1916–1917) proclaimed that the caste is the most fundamental institution of Hinduism. For Weber, 'before everything else, without caste, there is no Hindu' (Weber, 1964: 29). Forty years later, Dumont and Pocock in their clarion call for the appropriate kind of sociology of India declared that 'first, of course, comes caste' (1957: 17). This is really an enthralling and impressive historical continuity between the new and the old Orientalists although it may be a fact now as Appadurai reminds us that 'Dumont's work may be the last major work to make caste the central problem of Indian society' (1986: 745). It seems both Dumont and Pocock never cared to explore that their position of identifying caste as the fundamental institution of Indian society, however, begs a series of unavoidable theoretical and methodological questions which may be pertinent for pursuing such a caste-based analysis of independent India.

To begin with, for example, what can be said about the very word 'caste'? Before everything else let me locate its original birth place, its etymological root.

The Portuguese seafarers who traded mainly on the west Coast of India in the 16th and 17th centuries described the groups they called castas (from which derive the English and french words caste) meaning 'species' or 'breeds' of animals or plants and 'tribes', 'races', 'clans' or 'lineages' among men. (Marriott and Inden, 1985: 348)

Two points are in order here. First, the word 'caste', which has captivated and captured so much of our 'sociological imagination' is not an Indian word.

To be sure, it is rather an European invention. Secondly, castes are in a basic way 'unlike – as species are'. That is to say, jati or caste can be species in a zoological or botanical sense also' (Quigley, 1993: 4). The onerous responsibility of popularizing and stabilizing the word in the Indian psyche was borne by Max Weber with the necessary help from the British Colonial administrators and the so-called colonial anthropologists cum administrators. Weber's sole source on castes in India was in fact the British Indian censuses of 1901 and 1911 (Weber, 1916/1964: 29 & 344 notes). As far as the British 'official' view was concerned, Bernard Cohn provides us an excellent testimony of the 'official British view' of caste which was very much linked to how British gathered the information about the caste system. For British, in the first instance, a caste was a 'thing', an entity, which was concrete and measurable, above all it had definable characteristics – endogamy, commensality rules, fixed occupation, common ritual practices, regarded as the popular three line theory of caste. These, by the way, were things which supposedly one could discover by sending assistants into the field with a questionnaire and which could be considered authentic enough for reports and surveys. Alternatively, one could learn about the castes of a particular district by sitting on one's horse or in the shade of the village banyan tree as the adjunct of one's official duty. Thus, the recorded facts could be collated to pigeonholes like the Lothars, or the Ahirs or the Santals, etc. This could go on infinitely and the British administration did have the satisfaction or the illusion of knowing the people of India. The 1901 census of Bengal found over 205 castes and 2000 odd castes in India. No doubt, India was thus seen as a collection of castes; the particular picture was different in any given time and place, but India was a sum of its parts and the parts were castes (1987 [1994]: 154–56). This grossly empiricist and simplistic view of the caste system of India nicely fitted into Weber's problematic and was further accentuated one-sidedly in conformity with his own methodological prerequisites.

Now, as far as the British were concerned the classification of castes under the census of 1901 was based on 'social precedence' because apparently it was 'so recognized by the native public opinion at the present day' and because the particular castes were 'supposed to be the modern representative of one or the

other of the castes of the theoretical Hindu system' (Quoted in Mukherjee, 1958: 321). This procedure, clearly making caste as of central importance, was unfortunately adopted. This was despite the fact that if a person was asked to identify his caste he would invariably have referred to anything from his occupation to some titular designation he might have earned. Risley himself acknowledged this (Ghurye, 1969: 278). In any case the result of such classification was extraordinary livening of the caste spirit, along with the mushrooming of caste groups and bodies. This, as James Kerr, the principal of Hindu College at Calcutta wrote in 1865, was clearly conducive to the British interest:

It may be doubted if the existence of caste is on the whole unfavourable to the permanence of our rule. It may even be considered favourable to it, provided we act with prudence and forbearance. Its spirits is opposed to the national union. (Quoted in *ibid.*: 285)

Mr. Middleton, one of the two superintendents of census operations of 1921 for the province of Punjab, later correctly pointed out the effects of British colonial rule on the revival and consolidation of caste in India. He wrote that the classification of occupational castes were largely manufactured by and almost entirely preserved by the British Government. He categorically stated that the British land records and official documents were responsible for exacerbating the rigidity of the castes.

We pigeonholed every one by caste, and if we could not find a true caste for them, labeled them with the name of a hereditary occupation. We deplored the caste system and its effects on social and economic problems, but we are largely responsible for the system we deplore Government's passion for labels and pigeonholes has led to a crystallization of the caste system, which except amongst the aristocratic castes, was really very fluid under indigenous rule. (Quoted in *ibid.*: 281)

Unlike its predecessors in England, the censuses of British India attempted not only to count but also to define and explain caste. As a result, the censuses became not simply an accounting of what existed; they also become active participants in the creation and modification of 'Indian society'

i.e. a congeries of castes. Its obvious consequence was the successful creation of caste as the 'other' which nobody could locate anywhere in Europe or for that matter in whole of the West. The additional bonus was also the birth of a plethora of human 'others' through numerous castes, sub-castes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, etc. The 1901 census of Bengal along with 205 castes was able to discover 450 groups from one to 22,000,000. Half of them did not have over 1,000 members (Cohn, 1987 [1994]: 155). The situation boils down to the fact that almost there were as many castes as there were individuals. Lewis McIver, the Madras census commissioner for 1881 noted about difficulties in addressing caste enumerations. The numbers of castes swelled from 3,208 in 1871 to 19,044 in 1881, a clear indication of a difference in method rather than the growth of caste groups. McIver noted elsewhere in his report that the difficulties created by the overlapping of 'caste', 'sect', and 'locality' have defeated the purpose of the returns. With passing of years 'castes have been so infinitely multiplied that, even if there were any recognized principle of precedence, the nuances of rank would be so slight', that the places of the several castes could not be differentiated. 'Except the members of the admittedly degraded and depressed castes, each Shudra thinks, or professes to think that his caste is better than the neighbour's Wealth means social pre-eminence in the India of 1881, nearly as much as it does in England' (McIver, 1883: 102 & 108. Emphases added). In any case the result of such a classification was extraordinary revival of the caste spirit and mushrooming of caste bodies. This procedure, clearly making caste as of central importance, was adopted despite the fact that caste has become meaningless in the sense that a person, asked to identify his caste, would invariably refer to anything from occupation to some titular designation. The reality now has turned into a reality of multiple castes and castes reproving each other's claims.

Various ambitious castes quickly perceived the chances of their raising status. They invited conferences of their members, and formed councils to take steps to see that their statuses were recorded in the way they thought was honorable to them. Other castes that could not but resent this 'stealthy' procedure to advance, equally eagerly began to convert their claims. Thus a campaign of mutual

recrimination was set on foot ... The total result has been a livening up of the caste spirit. (Ghurye, 1969: 278–79)

Accordingly, one caste was the 'other' to another caste, and so on. India can now be successfully analysed through innumerable castes and its varieties and each one is based on some imagined and/or authentically imagined differences. The reversed image of enlightenment and modernity is now in full existence in the form of 'ignoble savage'. Interestingly, the reaction to the official colonial view of caste evoked serious responses and reactions from the historians of India but, barring a few exceptions (for details, see, Mukherjee, 1958; Ghurye, 1969) sociologists' reaction in the first few decades of post-colonial India was almost imperceptible. Srinivas and a few others in 1960 opined that Weber's source materials were census and reports which provided data that were 'superficial, and occasionally not quite accurate'. As far as Weber himself was concerned, his 'theoretical interests and kind of data he used, led him to view caste in all India terms, and he did not realize sufficiently that caste was a highly localized phenomenon. But, in the end there is no denying the fact that Weber gave us 'many penetrating insights into caste and Hinduism' (Srinivas et al., 1959: 138). Incidentally Srinivas, though highly critical of the 'book-view' of caste, unfortunately did not take up the challenge of combating the jaundiced colonial official field-view of caste. At the other extreme, Marxist sociologists like A.R. Desai and others never really took up any critical examination of the aforementioned 'official' colonial view of caste or any other methodological and for theoretical problem associated with the concept of caste. In fact, it was only Dipankar Gupta who took upon himself the onerous duty of at least confronting Louis Dumontian variety of caste analysis systematically, other than of course, Andre Beteille who sharply criticized Dumont. Beteille's works on inequality including caste is voluminous and it is certainly outside the purview of this article. But as Yogendra Singh as early as 1969 wrote that 'Beteille takes a line on caste and class which is intermediate to the positions held by Weber and Marx' (Singh, 1969: 169). Beteille did not really offer much attention to the historical trajectory of caste to expose the futility of caste analysis which he could have

possibly achieved as his focus was on inequality. In his latest article on 'The Peculiar Tenacity of Caste' in 2012 he wrote that the disproportionate attention paid to caste has deprived attention to other major sources of inequality (2012: 46) but even though caste is losing strength in contemporary India, media attention to caste especially in daily political life has increased and lost sight of long-term changes in the changing nature of caste (ibid.).

The Pell-Mell of Caste, Varna, Jati and Louis Dumont

In fact, it is more realistic to say that there are probably as many hierarchies as there are castes in India. (Gupta, 2000: 1)

Let me now focus on the meanings and usages of caste, varna, and jati. Caste and sub-caste have been generally used as the English synonym for both varna and jati. The basic idea of varna is function and not birth. Each varna is supposed to perform a specific function. For some, varna signifies the first trace of division of labour. Jati, on the other hand, is generally defined by birth. But it is possible to choose whether one's jati refers to a more or less inclusive group as this is going to depend on context. In one context, one's jati is one's lineage; in another, it may be all the lineages with whom one can intermarry; in yet another, it may refer to those whose common ethnic or cultural heritage sets them apart from their neighbors. Jati, of the essence, is always a relative term (Quigley, 1993: 5). Marriott and Inden make it abundantly clear about the range and flexibility of the concept of jati.

One of the commonest words for genus in most Indian languages, jati, is derived from Indo-European verbal root meaning 'genesis', 'origin', or 'birth'. It is applied to any species of living things including gods and humans. Among humans, jati can designate a distinct sex, a race, a caste, or a tribe; a population, the followers of an occupation or a religion, or a nation. (Marriott and Inden, 1985: 349)

This remarkable and rare elasticity makes it absolutely meaningless to undertake any worthwhile endeavor to examine how many jatis there are in any specific society or region at any given point of time. Regrettably, how to locate and identify a jati has become generally one of the most frequently asked questions by those who attempt to quantify and classify jatis in a particular

way. In an article, Beteille corroborates this when he informs that the concept of jati, there being no fixed number of jatis, 'can be stretched to accommodate all kinds of units, that cannot be accommodated by varna' (1996: 22).

This implies that jati can mean from manabjati (humanity) to kayasthajati (a particular mixed community where originally kayastha meaning 'scribe' in Sanskrit (Bhardwaj, 1993: 231), or from narijati (womenfolk) to biharijati (people from Bihar) etc., and this often can lead to substantial bewilderment even among them who are aware that jati is a relative term (Quigley, 1993: 5). In criticizing attempts to equate varna with caste, Srinivas wrote the following quite forcefully about half a century back:

The varna model has produced a wrong and distorted view of caste. It is necessary for the sociologists to free himself from the hold of the varna model if he wishes to understand the caste system. (1991: 31)

According to Beteille, Srinivas's impatience with the Varna model was a response to the dominance in Indian writing about society of what he called the 'book-view' which he was eager to replace with the 'field-view' (1996: 17). In fact, the empirical evidence suggests that four varna model was difficult to trace as Nayars, a warrior group, or Chetiars, a merchant group, have been considered sudras. Another example was 'the Shannas of Southern Tamil Nadu, whose traditional occupation was tapping the palmyra tree for its juices to make palm-sugar and a today drink, claimed that they were really kshatriyas, and should be called Nadars meaning Lords of the Land' (Hardgrave, 1969: 31). During census operation of 19th century they claimed high varna status and were successful. The point is that four varna model may be either purely a textual view or it represented the early development of division of labour, and not anything more than that. For example, Pauline Kolenda distinguished between varna and jati by asserting that varna signified 'occupational specialization' and jati stands for 'in-migrating groups, tribal groups with a newly developed craft' (1984: 35). These examples can be multiplied (Quigley, 1993; Dirks, 2001). The point is that 'to set out with the idea that castes are, in general, bounded groups with a fixed membership is to embark on a path of endless frustration' (Quigley, 1993: 9). That is to say, this intensely

problematic dimensions of caste preclude any stable conceptualization of caste. Moreover, its non-correspondence either with varna and/or jati makes caste even more an unproductive category. Though caste and sub-caste have been used in the most happy-go-lucky manner in Anthropological Orientalized fashion for varna and jati, they do not correspond either to varna or to jati. Varna model is not an all India model and jati is infinitely an elastic term which could mean many different things depending on the context. On the top of it 'there is endless dispute about which jati belongs to which varna and which does not' (ibid.: 7). Let me cite Jonathan Parry's work on *Caste and Kinship in Kangra* (1979) which makes it abundantly clear that varna refers to a function and not to the name of a group characterized by kinship. Additionally, it becomes positively evident that 'there is no consensus regarding the placement of some castes in the varna hierarchy' (Quigley, 1993: 92). So, there is no clear-cut-correspondence between caste and kinship which some analysts are so determined to establish (Kolenda: 1984). Therefore, if one takes the case of jatis, they are not closed groups. On the contrary, they are extremely flexible. On the other hand, if one takes varna it is neither a fixed model in terms of function and occupational position if one reads indigenous materials of pre-colonial India (Bhadra, 1989), nor a stationary one and which, also has not been actually an operational principle in reality. Consequently, then the logical question is 'does caste belong only in a relativist discourse about India in terms of cultural particularity ... and/or dehistoricizes it as a timeless and archaic organic society... which sets it apart from the rest of the contemporary world?' (Sharma, 2002: 30)

Any and all discourses on caste cannot take place in any form or shape without referring to Louis Dumont's views on caste because as Ursula Sharma so astutely reminds us that 'even thirty years after its publication, general discussion of caste among anthropologists still tend to take Dumont's work as a major point of departure' (Sharma, 2002: 23). In fact, 'a careful reading of Louis Dumont's several works on the caste system confirms that for Dumont the ideology of the caste system is all pervasive without exception in Hindu India. For the Hindus, Dumont avers, 'belief in God is secondary to belief in caste' (Gupta, 2000: 69), Dumont's whole 'comparative sociology' is

dependent on the binary difference between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies as shown earlier. For Dumont, the sole objective of comparison is to account for the modern type in terms of the traditional type where India was the classic instance of the latter. And India, as one of world's great civilization appears in stark contrast, regarding its values, to the modern type of society. This is the 'caste society which is characterized essentially by its adherence to hierarchy as the paramount value, exactly opposite to the equalitarianism that is one of the main values in our own, modern type of society' (Dumont, 1977: 3). Does this by any figment of imagination recall that Dumont's cherished notion of 'comparative sociology' is nothing but only a principle of difference to understand the 'other' culture of India based on the absence of the idea of individual, specifically the so-called Western individual who was by the way the repository of equality and liberty? Does this not take us about a couple of century earlier when both Hegel and Marx were frantically searching for the individuation and individuality but could not find the individual or the spirit of individualism in India? This absence of the individual particularly for Marx was one of the most fundamental causes for eternal stagnation of Asian societies. Marx categorically asserted that the 'Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time. This is due to its presupposition that the individual does not become independent vis-à-vis commune' (Grundrisse, 1973: 486). Of course, Dumont was not able to tell whether in Europe there ever was any non-individual, say serfs or slaves at any point of time. It is rather unlikely for Dumont to concede to the fact that Europe's egalitarian societies had extremely repressive regimes or social orders. Scholars like Dumont hardly looked back because then the theory he so feverishly propagated could be a real embarrassment for him. Therefore, at bottom, all this talk about 'comparative sociology' is nothing but rather an avowal and then celebration of the imagined 'other', apparently highlighting the differences between India and Europe. There is little doubt that for Dumont, the category of caste, whatever that may or may not be, serves as both a handy ideal and a concept for dividing humanity.

The distinctiveness of Dumont's caste was in the principle of hierarchy based on the opposition of the pure and the impure. Superiority and superior

purity are identical: it is in this sense that, ideologically, distinction of purity is the foundation of status. Thus for the fundamental characteristic of the caste system for comparison is the hierarchical disjunction between status and power (1980: 56 & 232). Dumont wrote to illustrate his point further that in theory of the varnas one finds that status and power are differentiated, just as the general consideration of hierarchy seemed to require (ibid.: 72). According to Dumont, the opposition between pure and impure is sustained by the disjunction between ritual status and secular power which characterizes Hindu society. He argues that within the caste system, there are two competing sources of authority – the spiritual authority of Brahmanas and the temporal authority of the kings. In the ideology of caste, he argues, temporal authority is subordinated to, encompassed by spiritual authority. For all practical purposes, Dumont's theory of caste is thus historically and conceptually based on Brahmanas and their alleged superior status. But Dumont alone cannot be accused for being obsessed with Brahmanical model. In point of fact, 'so deep rooted is the Brahmanical version of the caste system in academic circles that it really requires an empirical jolt to shake it loose' (Gupta, 2000: 3). If this is the scenario then how can Dumont, a very mainstream observer of caste detour? By making the Brahmanical worldview as the only noteworthy aspect of Indian society he deliberately neglected the existence of any other alternative worldview or even contested worldview. Accordingly, by successfully achieving in making the Brahmanie as the only worldview, Dumont was constructing 'a master narrative of Indian society' that artificially produced Brahmanic worldviews as the sole representative of the whole of Indian society (Das, 2009: 198) even though in India especially when both Hinduism and Brahmanism have always been characterized by ideological pluralism along with many movements hostile to Brahmanism and priests. This unquestionably is a clear corroboration of Orientalist paradigmatic presence in Dumontian worldview where so-called oriental/traditional societies are represented as homogeneous and devoid of diversities and/or associated complexities unlike Europe/West which produces history and thus makes those European societies dynamic, progressive, rational, etc. Here, it will be pertinent to bring Srinivas back into

the interrogation on the undue importance of the Brahmanical position as the unitary portrayal of Indian caste. Srinivas wrote in his *Social Change in Modern India*:

I now realize that in both my book on Coorg religion and my “Note on Sanskritization and Westernization”, I emphasized unduly the Brahmanical model of Sanskritization and ignored the other models Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. (1966 [2009]: 7)

Srinivas also tells us about the diversity of Brahman varna. ‘In the first place, some elements of the local culture would be common to all the castes living in a region, from the highest to the lowest. Thus the Brahmin and Harijan (Untouchable) of a region would speak the same language, observe common festivals and share certain local deities and beliefs. I have called this ‘vertical solidarity and it contrasts with “Horizontal solidarity” which members of a single caste or Varna have’ (ibid.: 8).

Continuing in the same thread, it can be said that in the luminary company of Marx and Weber, Dumont inherited the appreciation of so-called comparative method from two traditions, one of Orientalists and the other of Colonial Anthropologists. Dumont’s argument of absence of individualism in traditional society like India similar to his intellectual predecessors/mentors of these two varieties is teleological as he takes this as axiomatic and as a binary opposite with modern society. ‘There is no shortage of historical examples of oppressed peoples’ liberation movement in traditional societies which Dumont could not find because he sealed their faith without checking’ (Quigley, 1993: 42). Besides, Dumont’s contention that one can meaningfully characterize Hindu society or even the caste system in terms of a consensus of values is extremely problematic. In this connection, Beteille wrote, ‘Dumont concedes ‘that the identification of paramount values is of course open to debate and is not supposed to be always easy’. I am not sure that he realizes how much he is giving away by making that concession – or perhaps he feels that he has covered himself adequately with phrases like ‘supposed to be’ and ‘always’ (2009: 112). Beteille further affirmed: ‘I do not believe that there is any society in which all values are of equal significance, and I doubt if any

sociologist believes in such nonsense. But that does not oblige me to agree that all values can be arranged in a single hierarchy of the kind specified by Dumont' (ibid.).

What is more intriguing and a clear indication of Dumont's cluttered thinking is this: To begin with, Dumont has argued that in the ideology of caste, temporal authority is subordinated to, and encompassed by, spiritual authority. But surprisingly and interestingly, Dumont himself agrees that the observable facts do indeed contradict his theory. 'In theory, power is ultimately subordinate to priesthood, whereas in fact priesthood submits to power' (1966 [1980]: 71–72). There is, he says, a 'confrontation of ideology with observation' (ibid.: 77). But he is crystal clear about his preference: 'first, we shall be concerned with the ideology, which easily accounts for the overall framework' (ibid.: 76). But what happens when Dumont faces contradictory evidence 'Dumont simply says that the facts are not important'. (Quigley, 1993: 82)

This is certainly in the celebrated tradition of classical Orientalists like Hegel, Marx and, of course, Weber (See, Bhadra, 1989). Dipankar Gupta has levelled a host of criticisms against Dumont's views on caste and hierarchy. He provides some relevant facts to contradict Dumont. For example, 'why is a vegetarian merchant below the meat eating king? Or why do "untouchables" of Tanjore village believe that if a Brahman were to enter their village, pestilence and disease would strike it? Why do farmers "pose" as puritans? In short, the major problem is: why do people who believe in the caste system not follow the dictates of the true hierarchy? Is there a true hierarchy at all in the sense in which Dumont has enunciated it with reference to the caste system? Is it possible that contrary to Dumont's belief of total allegiance to the pure hierarchy, castes indeed have very different notions of who they are and what positions they should occupy in that hierarchy' (Gupta, 2000: 64–65). Could there be several hierarchies as it is not possible to hold innumerable number of castes in one hierarchy? Or, are there as many hierarchies as there are castes? In fact, all societies have rules and taboos and in a sense and concerned with purity is to a great extent 'human universal' but this can hardly be used 'to explain a particular case such as caste India'. The researches of Hesterman,

Parry and Fuller have shown that we need to 'construct a composite league table ranking various types of Brahmanas in relation to one another' (Quigley, 1993: 46 & 66). History proves to us that it was not possible for all Brahmanas to earn their livelihood by becoming priests (See, Yadav, 1973). Hocart's book *Caste: A Comparative Study* (1950 [1938]) has shown that caste like phenomena were prevalent in almost all ancient societies and not alone confined to Hindu India. Hocart's book was first published in French in 1938. Did Dumont read Hocart's book? Or, even if he read it did he decide to suppress that? Neither Dumont's unfounded metaphysical theory nor the advocates of Dumont could answer this. Again, Dumont had a real aptitude for turning speculative into empirical and empirical into speculative in the distinguished Orientalist tradition of Hegel, Marx and Weber when it comes to societies like India.

It is perplexing that though neither varna nor jati has direct correspondence with caste or sub-caste, this unhappy translation continues and still enjoys hegemonic position even though a lot of water has flown down all the sociological explanations of Indian society. At bottom, the net result is that we keep creating as many Indians as there are castes, as per the colonial classification and careful arrangement of our destiny. To give the benefit of doubt, British administrators might have understood the system in religious terms and once it was codified and enshrined in census reports they saw that it is serving their purpose of dividing Indians and they evidently stuck to it. But what is 'puzzling that modern scholars should so often concur with the colonial interpretation of caste when their own evidence contradicts it repeatedly. Why should they claim that the Brahman stands supreme when, time after time, his status is shown to be at best intensely ambivalent, at worst vilely degrading?' (Quigley, 1993: 84). How long is it apposite to lay the blame on the Colonial masters and the European conspiracy and not embark on proper analysis of whatever India had and has?

This brings us face to face with the stark reality of the problem of finding suitable conceptual categories with which we can explain Indian social reality. Let me once again go back to what Srinivas, Beteille and others wrote in 1960 while explaining the phenomenon of caste dominance.

The concept of dominance shows that it was not always or even usually, the Brahmin who dominated the caste hierarchy. ... In actual fact, however, a caste which owned land were genuinely dominant only when they owned land. Where land was owned by other and lower castes, the Brahmin retained his high ritual position, but had little influence in secular matters, and even in ritual matters, he was likely to be brushed aside by a leader of the dominant caste. It was the land owning castes which were the most Influential. (Srinivas et al., 1959: 140. Emphases added)

Kolenda wrote to the same effect that the 'largest jati, making up over 40 per cent of Khalpur's population, was the landowning Rajputs' (1984: 87).

Closing Thoughts

If ever there was a pandora's box, caste is it (Quigley, 1993: 158).

With the concept of caste thus doing intellectual and administrative overtime, we might ask whether it was ever anything but a projection of the western ideological imagination. Has it had, or could it have any analytic force as a sociological tool? (Sharma: 10)

Caste was ensconced as the only identity for Indians and the quintessential 'other' to Europeans and the most anthropologically oriented sociologists of the first three decades or so after India's independence, accepted it with benign protest and mild concussion. It was only in the late 1980s or so that a new discourse on the anomalies of the notion of caste and its empirical applications and the challenges posed to the Orientalist and Colonial Anthropological narratives gradually gained strength to dispute a few old assumptions and also empirical facts on the so-called 'master status' label of Indians. If we still retain the category of caste to explain Indian social reality some of the unresolved predicaments and unanswered questions/objections are as follows:

- How is class related to varna and jati in theory and praxis?
- How is varna related to jati in theory and praxis? And is it possible for them to be related?
- What is really the meaning of hierarchy as casteness and caste as a matter of consciousness? How one can distinguish between ethnicity and

casteness, between tribalness and casteness and between classness and casteness?

- Should one can go further and try to differentiate between casteness and varnanness, casteness and jatiness, and varnanness and jatiness?
- Do we really need the term 'caste' in view of the stark reality that we cannot even give a working definition of 'caste' because the theoretical criteria and the actual contexts vary unlimitedly from village to village, city to city, region to region and even within a single village, neighbourhood or community?
- The discourse of caste-as-identity ran into a lot of contradictions and inconsistencies as the identity constructed by the caste may not square with the identity attributed to it by others, like 'Brahmans should be affluent, educated and cultured but some of them are poor and illiterate and have to plough the land'. Therefore, is caste as identity a productive endeavor for further research?
- Is there any validity in using caste as a general concept in Social Science minus the Indian context?
- Are we scared to get rid of caste as a conceptual category because we are told that it exists in some form or other even though we do not have a proper definition and at best can express it through some rituals and customary prohibitions as if these do not exist in so-called 'non-caste' societies?
- Therefore, if the institution of caste does not possess any enduring content to the essence of India as the Orientalist scholars and observers of 19th century were inclined to think, then, can we more or less safely conclude that 'the concept of caste is of no value at all if it simply confirms us in our view that societies like India are strange, "essentially" different, governed by quite alien principles' (ibid.: 94)?
- The central point, ergo, is then, why can not social scientists find fitting reflexive classification based on sound theoretical logic and empirical reality to study Indian reality without resorting to Eurocentric, Colonial biases and categories? Can we attempt to reconceptualize in an intersectional way?

There is no denying the fact that caste is haunting as a spectre on the body politic of India as we have brought back the Colonial legacy in the census of 2011. This is clearly an attestation of the inability of modern India to break the covert manacles and sinister nexus of the colonial past and keep reproducing the Archetypal 'Orientalist' predicament of sociological imagination on India.

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Jatra Theatre as a Culture Industry: A Study of Popular Theatre from Eastern India

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Abstract

Taking the shift of cultural economy – production – of a traditional theatre form called Jatra to a hybrid theatre into account, this paper interrogates the commercialization of leisure in Odisha. Largely using Pierre Bourdieu's approaches to cultural productions, the paper theorizes that Jatra theatre has achieved the status of industry of entertainment on a medium scale for its production and transmission in an expanded market structure in modern Odisha with businesslike approach, mass patronization, management system and employment criteria. Parallel to other entertainment media, Jatra industry is a multi-million business. It is consumed by millions of audiences and mediated by the market logic. The shift can be seen at the level of expanded cultural consumption, production and participation. So, in this paper I shall delineate the field of its production – internal hierarchy of the theatre companies – located in a wider network of social relations that configure the art for Jatra functions in a resilient manner.

Keywords: Popular culture, Cultural production, Field, Distinction, Culture industry.

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Introduction

Culture and economy are in coexistence and, as Bourdieu explains, ‘cannot be understood properly without the other’. The artistic production consumed by a large audience, is mediated by the mechanisms of commercial and capitalist market. Cultural production in relation to market and patron shifts its functions and mode of production in the society. Art, in Marxist terms as Raymond Williams states, ‘reflects the socio-economic structure of the society within which it is produced and presents its instances of this relationship’ (Bourdieu, 1982: 33). Arthur Danto remarks that for Bourdieu choices and cultural products are made within a social and historical structure (1999: 4). In this paper I attempt to apply Bourdieu’s approaches of field, distinction and habitus to understand struggle of Jatra the popular theatre form of Odisha, as an industry.

The Jatra known as *Gananatya* or *Opera*, *Nacha* of Odisha, forms a part of the world of popular culture. The traditional Jatra has undergone substantial changes in its rise and development brought about by colonialism, modernism and developed into a tradition in its own right. As a composite art form or as a theatre of mixed means – song and dance, acting, and recitation – historians declare that Jatra is a combination of multiple performative forms of other Odia folk theatre arts that emerged in different times and has emerged as the most popular form of entertainment in rural Odisha. The synthesis of syncretic popular religious practices and literature of the elite and non-elite classes, several dominant forms of Jatra emerged and eventually got shaped into a separate dramatic activity. Jatra has been capable of depicting a range of diverse and complex stories – mythology, secular themes, humor, valour of heroic characters and melodramatic events.

The form is enriched with the development of highbrow and lowbrow Odia literature. Jatra in its formative stage as dance drama was enactment of *Gita Gobinda* inside Jagannatha temple, for the kings and pundits/priests. The anti-Brahmin reformists of Bhakti movement in 15th century through vernacular language and literature created mass theatre for the lower castes and classes. The *Shudramunis*, non-elite/Vaishnavites who mostly hailed from

upper castes (but were Shudra by philosophy/*Bhavarthe Shudra*), disseminated the esoteric teachings from the Sanskrit epics written in peasant's language. Jatra in the forms of *Suanga* and *Krushna Lila* enacted stories from the literature of the *Shudramunis*. In medieval Odisha, Jatra was recognized for its potential as an autonomous art form opposing presentation of classical dramas that continued in parallel. This performing art found a convenient way to achieve 'Odia/Hindu nationalism' and reinvented itself in all dominant forms of Jatra. The emergence of Odia and domicile Bengali educated middle class critiqued the performance of 'inauthentic Odia Jatra' and called for reform in the structure and regeneration of 'Odia nationalist' narratives in Jatra performance. The revival of the glory of Odia culture, tradition and language through modern prose literature of Senapati, Ray and Rao inspired semi-educated Jatrakaras as well as the modern Odia dramatists. As a blend of religious sentiments, chauvinistic spirit and social instincts, folk and historical legend articulated nationalism and emerged 'as a powerful symbolic capital' for cultural and political mobilization. *Geetinatyas* of popular poets (e.g. Vaishnaba Pani) emerged as a resistance to Bengali dominated European type theatre, and modern Bengali Jatra of the social/secular themes. Instead, they adopted episodes from popular Hindu literature/vernacular translated epics, Puranas, folk and historical legends. Through musicals, farce, satire and allegory, poets criticized the oppressive zamindari system and anti-Odias (Bengali) for a nationalist cause.

Jatra was considered as a low art belonging to low class, caste and rural masses, by the newly emerged urban middle class. Confined to only rural Odisha, the Jatrakaras were either threatened by cinema, radio and modern theatre in the growing urban areas through the urban migrated educated class, who built modern stages in their villages. The urban modern stage of Cuttack, Puri and Bhubaneswar flourished in due time and could reach the villagers. Highly influenced by modern commercial drama companies in 1970s and Odia/Hindi cinema from late 1980s until today, Jatra subsequently became the most popular theatre in Odisha. The new economy of post-independence Odisha, new entertainment media and the continued prejudice from educated

class did not allow the prevailing Jatra troupes to flourish. Kali Charan Pattanaik of Banki moved to Cuttack and started commercial theatre with regular stage and screen for the first time in the early 1950s. He was also the one who first brought women artists to Odia theatre. The most professional and commercial urban modern stages like *Annapurna Rangamancha (A)* of Puri and *Annapurna Rangamancha (B)*¹ of Cuttack and other theatre groups started declining in early 1970s. Some of the well known theatre artists of that time, like Babi, Dukhi Shyam, Peera, Bhanu Mati, Sujata etc. left *Annapurna* and moved away to Odia cinema. And some lesser known artists deserted *Annapurna Rangamanch (B)* of Cuttack and started *Janata* theatre at Bankabazar of Cuttack that lasted for a decade or so. In the New Theatre Movement commercial plays as well as modern experiment in theatres were carried out by Manoranjan Das, Bijay Mishra and others, who were inspired by Brecht, Freud and Sartre who produced absurd theatre. The 'Odia mind' was not prepared to accept the 'absurd' plays for long. This decline of professional urban theatre has given way to the highly commercialized theatre called Jatra in the province. The professional educated dramatists, directors and actors incorporated degrees of specialization in the dramatics of Jatra. They considered Jatra as their source of living and a form to experiment. This was the beginning of a new era of modernity in Jatra: commerce and innovation. Trained dramatists and directors like Bhanja Kishore Patnaik, Kartik Kumar Ghosh, Bijay Mishra and Sachi Das of modern theatre groups started experimenting with traditional Jatra. Two Jatra parties noteworthy here, because of their high popularity then, were Benirampur Opera and Nageshpur Opera. In 1972, Das as the production manager of Nageshpur Jatra designed double pandals/stage – the existing square stage and the cyclorama to present simultaneous scenes or sceneries, trains, war etc. to have more effects. In fact by this period the Jatra had already crossed its folksiness and was constantly being experimented with, by some of the independent Jatra makers and modern dramatists who have been called *Gananatyakar* or *Pallikabi*. The mass poets therefore became legendary, earned fame and inspired the Jatrakaras of independent Odisha to continue the cultural activity. It is mostly concerned with the traditional value system, idealism of Indian culture – the nature of 'moral virtue', conflict

between love and family, the rural urban conflict, class, marriage, heroism of men and women, sentiments and plight of women; all with a combination of fictive and live experiences. However, the modern narratives whether crime dramas or social dramas, have always offered complicated developments in the storylines. The textual structure of Jatras of 1980s are more of crime-based plays and 90s till the date is more family-drama oriented. The writing is in the format of the conventional (popular and commercial) Hindi cinema screenplay of 1980s and late 1990s.

Socio-historical developments in creating a mass literature and thereby a mass theatre influenced the patronage, dissemination, audience, thematic concerns and style of performance, while many folk forms have declined or are in the process of disappearance from public space and memory. However, the exploration of the social and cultural conditions of the artistic production cannot be sufficient unless an analysis of the work of art in a complex social network is undertaken. Jatra has come to be known as an industry of entertainment on a medium scale for its production and transmission in an expanded market structure. It is socially located and materially produced. Thus, in this article, I shall try to delineate the social organization – the production located in a wider network of social relations that configure the art form and its internal organizational structure. An extensive ethnographic fieldwork has been undertaken in the form of interviews with producers, distributors, intermediaries along with a close observation of the audiences, who shape and redefine Jatra as a cultural product. A comparative study of the internal hierarchy (different classes of Jatra troupes) within the Jatra industry would reveal systems of stratification and class power in Odia society. The modern electronic and print media of entertainment did not jeopardize the modernized Jatra in post-80s. Rather Jatra was successfully occupying a space within television channels, cassette and CD companies. It has also attracted its coverage in local newspapers and magazines, to be transmitted for wider publicity. I shall present the complex interplay of aesthetic, social, economic, and political factors responsible for the establishment of the Jatra world in contemporary times.

Jatra as a Culture Industry

Jatra, an artistic production is consumed by a large audience and is mediated by the mechanisms of capitalist market. It has been the dominant entertainment medium since last 35 years, parallel to other entertainment media like film and television in the state. With their tendency to become popular now and again, to be revived and altered, these mobile entertainers carry a promising future. A pressing demand for entertainment leads to the creation of an industry. By responding to the social-cultural forces, it has expanded its cultural consumption, production and participation. After the abolition of zamindari system and princely kingship for nearly two decades (1950–60) Jatra parties were left either in penury or powerless. The Jatra poets became weaker and socially disconnected. The transition from sponsored patronage to the patronage of common masses through ticketing system executed by the new business class or the existing rich Jatra troupes who later took up other businesses. These developments took place due to a changing economic pattern. As the larger processes of state formation increased the political independence and rapid commercialization² of the economy in the state, the power of local elites and merchant class began to take up Jatra as a business activity.

Due to growing business interests, Jatra is changing its aesthetics by accommodating the contemporary taste of a popular class. We see the historical transition in the field, from its amateur status where the artists were rewarded and were offered hospitality, to a professional art form dominated by the business tycoons, who offer direct monetary exchange for specific art work. This resulted in the emergence of specifically instituted artist. Some of the Jatra makers created their own canon of genres through realistic plays, modern dance and songs, technical innovations (stage machineries) and spectacles, followed by a number of commercial Jatra troupes in creating a space for the institutionalization and modernization of the art form.

Today Jatra is one of the thriving industries without any official status, which generates an income, amounting to rupees 50 crore (500 million), a year approximately.³ The regular production of works of art as commodities for sale

at a mass level and the emergence of the new patronage is involved with modern market conditions as a form of investment along with a form of prestige. Jatra as an industry has surpassed the modern Odia cinema, and it has been catering to the entertainment needs of the common masses in both urban and rural areas. Providing the entertainment needs of 85 per cent rural population through its cultural presentation, the form is seldom consecrated by the Odia intelligentsia. Although for the last five years the business of Jatra parties is facing an economic challenge vis-à-vis new private television channels, the form still struggles and continues to dominate. More than 200 small and large Jatra troupes, nearly 20,000 performers and more than 30,000 non-artists entertain 40 per cent of the rural Odia population. On an average two lakh spectators in a day watch Jatras. Among 50–60 Jatra parties, some parties have performed regularly for nearly 300 nights in certain years. The new generation performers choose it as their profession. The buying and selling of actors by a competitive market of different troupes is characteristic of contemporary professional Jatra industry. It not only provides livelihood to a large number of artists, and non-artists, but also to nearly 25 established writers and 25 directors (some of them have chosen it as their sole profession) who regularly create and compose plays for Jatra parties. The professionalization of the art form fosters competition and rivalry between the various classes – large and small – to achieve a higher status through acceptability.

Given the fact that Jatra is a medium-scale industry, following the business strategy of film industry, divides the works of art in an increased specialization that matches the diversified tasks of production. Along with modernization of the form, other small enterprises also get established. Haripur, a village in Panikoili block of Jajpur district, is called the village of Jatra *posaka* (costumes). Since 1980s, 80 per cent villagers here produce costumes for dancers, actors, and *jhallars* (colourful golden and silver thread laces) for the decoration of Jatra stages. Similarly, specialized skilled workers are engaged in making modern stages, materials for tent, bamboo poles, lights and speakers. They sell them to Jatra troupes according to their requirements. Painting and printing of Jatra play posters on order from different Jatra troupes

are also a well-grown business taken over by a few painters since 1980s. They contribute immensely in distribution of the production of the art object. Some of the known artists have been earning their living by making posters, banners, and slides for projector shows, signboards and stickers for leading Jatra troupes. Apart from poster making, there are small advertisement agents in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar who make painted curtains, sceneries, cars, and helicopters, etc. on cardboard for display in the play.

The Jatra parties run with no state patronization. The plea to the culture department by academicians⁴ and journalists to declare the growing Jatra as an industry has been there for quite a few years. They indicate that aspects like employment opportunities to a large number of artists and a businesslike approach, like the film industry *imply* the need for its official industrial status. Kulamani Barik (1997) pleads for the recognition of Jatra as an industry:

It is an oddity that government is apathetic to Jatra world. Its culture department must come forward to patronize it. It must develop an infrastructure for Jatra parties. Especially, government should do something for the poor artists who make millions laugh and weep night after night. After retirement, these artists lead miserable lives. Government should pay pension to the retired artists. Odia Jatra parties are highly popular in Bengal and Bihar. Government should undertake measures to bring market in other states for our Jatra parties. Government should be careful, so that Jatra of Odisha may not face tragedy of Annapurna (the theatre that has become extinct today). Despite making millions happy, Jatra artists have to go back to a life of misery at the end of the day. Efforts are needed to improve their lot.

By recognizing it as a powerful medium, Balakrishnan Hariharan (2008) in his article suggests that, ‘maybe it is time that government wakes up to its potential, recognizes it as an industry and takes advantage of this medium for information, education and sensitization of society in its own enlightened self-interest’. Therefore, the collective urge for its status for an industry and its potential for social development is still a matter of concern. The Jatra association, however, is no longer interested in the issue of the status of industry. It is because of their inconsistent profit or no profit that results in

instabilities of their business. The proprietors are mostly dependent either on their personal business or on the profit, they make from annual Jatra business.

Similarly, the direct involvement of the government with Jatra is occasional. The Sangeet Natak Akademi of Odisha, an apex cultural body of government that aims to preserve the tradition and declares that traditional performing arts also can be created afresh,⁵ but has not paid much attention to the form, actors, directors and writers. It was only for two consecutive years (1988–89) that Sangeet Natak Akademi had organized Jatra festivals on competition basis in Bhubaneswar. Yearly special Jatra festivals are being organized by private cultural organization like *Patitapaban Sanskrutik Parishad* in Bhubaneswar city from 1996 that continue for about 15 days. Similar organizations conduct Jatra festivals in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur and in the villages of the Jatra legends like Jagannatha Pani, Gopala Dash and Baishnab Pani. There are also Jatra fan clubs in many corners of Odisha that have been rewarding and felicitating the veteran actors, playwrights and directors of Jatra world. In the wake of events like film awards, some private cultural organizations like *Panchasakha Jatra Akademi* in Balasore confer awards to veteran actors, playwrights, music directors and choreographers through a panel of judges from film, theatre and Jatra in the memory of legendary Jatrakaras⁶ in their yearly Jatra festivals. It is only since 1980 that the Akademi recognized and felicitated five Jatra artists.⁷ However, unlike Bengali Jatra artists their Odia counterparts are yet to receive the government's recognition. The fellowship or the pension granted by government is just insufficient for large chunks of artists in the Jatra industry. Since 1981–82, the state government has been granting pension to the veteran performers of Jatra as folk artists. However, the pension was a meagre amount of rupees 200 in 1981. In 1992, it went up to 300 and now from 2002 it is rupees 500. After their retirement, the artists either go back to farming or go for petty business and live a life of penury.

The Internal Hierarchy within the Jatra Industry: Classification of Jatra Troupes

As a growing business, there are categories of Jatra troupes in terms of their professionalism. They are divided into upper, middle and lower class by the producers and the consumers. Contemporary Jatra as an industry has been discussed in several scholarly articles, but a good deal of analysis is on the sources of finance and how various agents – producer, manager, committee members as distributors – with relation to power and dependency of all types of troupes is grossly neglected. Generally, the division is perceived according to the purchasing capacity of audiences as consumer and the quality of production of a Jatra troupe. To understand the industry structure, we should first consider the production and distribution of different classes of Jatra troupes that is consumed by different layers of audiences. A comparative observational technique has been used for this paper to compare the processes of production of the older Jatra institution and its modern counterpart, to understand their functions in the society. Description of the field of the smaller groups has not received its due attention because of the limited access to such troupes which mainly operate in remote villages of northern Odisha. This is nonetheless a limitation in the present research.

Pierre Bourdieu appropriately presents ‘the structure of life-style/class, its unity (of an art form) which is, hidden under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in fields governed by different logics and therefore inducing different forms of realization’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 101). Bourdieu’s work (1992 and 1993) in understanding the principles of hierarchization of the Jatra industry as an autonomous art in modern Odisha has been useful. Jenkins mentions that ‘Bourdieu’s cultural classification for the taste arises from cultural practices that are mobilized in, struggles for social recognition or status’ (1992: 129). Following Bourdieu’s method of analysis on cultural product, I would present the whole set of relationships between producers and agents engaged in the production or the social values of the art work. To understand the internal hierarchy with the industry, I shall present the *distinction* between the different classes of troupes. Jatra as a

cultural production is ‘classified and classifies the classifier’. To articulate the ‘field’ of the cultural production from the broader political, economic and social structures within which it is situated, I propose to understand the ‘sets of position’ which bring with them various levels of capital proper to a particular field and a corresponding set of social and cultural interests specific to that position in that field. However, in the case of the present research, the folk theatre in comparison to the classical/modern theatre belongs to one class – that is the lower class and lower-middle class. The consumers and producers can also be categorized as the class system which is inherited in the form itself. Thus, the concept of taste to make and maintain social boundaries does not seem to be applicable in my study. The classification of various Jatra troupes would entail the idea of class system within the cultural form and it also would demonstrate the coexistence of the different classes in the art world that reinforces the class order – elite, middle and low class – in society. This stratification within the Jatra industry may contribute significantly to our understanding in order to ascertain the major-class type theatre troupes that exist. The aim is the following:

1. Observe the variance and differences/hierarchies.
2. Study the emergence of various ranges or classes of Jatra. Who categorizes them and on what basis?
3. Explore as to how they are functioning on different occasions for pre-established consumers at different social levels.

Jatra troupes may be divided into different classes. Today, I find a hierarchical structure of Jatra troupes in Odisha, such as A, B, C and the *Malei/D* or amateur Jatra parties. The categorization is mostly dependent upon the financial status and they can further be classified in terms of highly-professional, semi-professional and amateur groups, which is common among its spectators. The interviews of the owners, managers, committees and the observation of live performances are taken into account for their conviction on categorization. The comparison table presented below discusses the differences between these classifications from a random selection of A class Jatra troupes situated in coastal districts.

Classification of Jatra Troupes

A (22-25)	B (20-30)	C (25-30)	Amateur/D (60-80)
Duration of Tour			
Travel and perform 400-450 plays for 10 months or 280-300 days.	Same as A.	9 months.	4-7 months.
Geographic Spread			
These class groups can be found in Jagatsinghpur and then in Puri, Bhadrak and Balasore.	Same as A.	More in Jagatsinghpur, Balasore and Kendrapada.	Mostly in Northern Balasore, Jaleswar, Bhograi, Remuna, etc.
Apart from the state they also travel to perform at Delhi, Surat, Kolkata and Chhatisgarh.	Generally they perform within the state.	They travel to the border areas of West Bengal like Medinapur, Digha, Kanthi, Tikayatpur, Chhatisgarh, Rayagarh, and Sadeikala.	Only move within the adjacent areas like northern part or coastal Odisha.
They perform both in urban areas and major villages.	Same as A.	Most of the time in rural and semi-urban areas.	Only in rural villages.
Number of Production (Per year) and Occasion of Performance			
They produce two new plays in a month's time and one during the tour in a year.	They produce 2 plays in a year.	A maximum of 2 new plays.	They produce the printed Jatra texts of the A class parties.
Sometimes present double shows – evening and night.	Rarely double shows.	Sometimes perform only record dance in the evenings, followed by the play in the night.	Once a full-fledged performance in the night.
Perform in all bigger and popular <i>Melas</i> and established pandals.	Same as A.	Do stage in <i>Melas</i> but in the most popular and bigger organized <i>Melas</i> .	Participate in local village <i>Yagnas</i> and small village specific festivals.
Apart from festivals, they perform in other free time.	Same as A.	Apart from <i>Melas</i> it depends upon the committees.	Only during fairs.

Audience Size and Composition

Around 3,000-6,000. They comprise of all classes and castes and education.	Rs. 2,000-3,000, Same as A.	Rs. 1,500-2,000. Mostly the rural audiences	Rs. 500-1,000. Very few from the upper class/caste of village and majority are from lower-class background.
Female audiences comprise 10%-20% of the majority.	Same as A.	More or less than 50%	Nearly 75%.

Investment Pattern and Annual Income (in Rupees)

For A class party one has to invest nearly Rs. 1-3 crore.	Maximum of Rs. 50 lakh.	Maximum of Rs. 50,000-1,000,00	Starts from Rs. 2,000 to 10,000.
The annual income of the group varies from one to five crore.	Maximum of Rs. 30-50 lakh of profit they earn.	Maximum of Rs. 10 lakh.	Less than Rs. 1 lakh.

Pattern of Hiring and Payment: Performer, Playwright and Director

They hire established professional playwrights and directors, choreographers, music directors from film, television and theatre.	Mostly the producers are the creators of their Jatra. At least for one play they hire the? from outside.	Rarely do they invite the well-known team of creators. Only for one play they invite best playwrights and directors.	Either they learn themselves, or the actors of the high-class troupes who on their vacation are invited to produce a play.
Recruitment of 'banner artists'-best actors on a contractual basis for one year is basically the process. 50-60 artists (actor, dancer and singers).	Same as A, but they give chance to newcomers and train them. 30-40 artists.	Recruit the newcomers and less-experienced actors in their team. 20-30 artists.	The actors are not contractual. They are amateur actors mostly from the village drama groups. Maximum of 20 artists.
The percentage of female performers is equal to that of male performers.	Comparatively less female performers.	2-5 female performers.	Still female impersonators are found in such class troupes.
Payment to a playwright is 30,000, a director is 50,000 and a choreographer is 10,000 and music directors are 10,000. The assistants get accordingly. However, negotiations go on.	It starts from 20,000 to a playwright and 30,000 to a director.	It starts from 10,000 to 15,000 rupees.	They learn the play, dance and compose music themselves.

Actors are paid according to their popularity and talent. If it is a star it starts from 6 lakh of rupees or 2 lakh for 10 months contract. Female actors' payment starts from 3 lakh to 50,000 rupees.	A hero gets maximum 2 lakh to 1.5 lakh and it is divided according to the talent and his role in the plays.	For a woman actor starts from maximum of 3,000 and for a male actor it is maximum of 10,000 per month.	Rupees 7,00-3,000.
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Ownership Pattern and Background

The owners are basically from business class. Jatra is their second or third business. Most of them are educated and politically active.	Most of the B class parties are old troupes established for last 30-70 years. The ownership transfers in a family from one generation to another.	They are generally from petty business class and are semi-educated.	Mostly semi-educated. They are the performers or retired performers from higher groups.
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Sometimes one owner has two troupes.	One.	One.	One.
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Assets: Stage Equipment and Transports

More investment on decoration, multiple stage craft, sound system, light operation, modern musical instruments, casting through projectors, tent and chairs.	Less expenses on them. Triple stage.	Lower than a B class. Double stage.	They still perform in a traditional Jatra single stage with minimum light and sound system.
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Generally this class has one luxury bus for performers, two trucks for transporting stage and tent equipments, and one car for publicity.	They have one bus for the performers and one truck for transportation.	Same as C and they go for rent if more conveyance is needed.	They have just one mini truck to carry both their limited theatre equipment and its performers.
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Performance Space

It is always on the huge open field (nearly 1 acre area) at the end of the village.	Same as A.	Inside the village. Preferably in front of the temple or at the Zamindar's residence compound.	Same as C.
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They are booked in advance by the committee members for the whole year.	Perform in known festivals but not always the established pandals.	Not always they are contacted by the committees, they also contact the committees.	If they are contacted they perform or else in free time their performers go for cultivation/farming.
They mostly perform ticket show (sell), and also contract shows, sometimes free show Jatras in established pandals. The cost of ticket ranges from Rs. 30, 40, 50.	Ticket sale. But they prefer percentage shows rather perform only contract shows Rs. 30, 20 and 15.	For four months (esp. during rainy season) ticket show Jatras and five months ticket show Jatras. Rs. 10, 15 and 20.	Free show Jatras as they are given by the committees from a collection from the villagers.
They charge if it is contract show Rs. 60,000-65,000 per night.	Rs. 40,000-45,000	Rs. 25,000-30,000, some other lower to C but higher to D demands for Rs. 10,000-25,000. They do not have any fixed charges.	Rs. 5,000-10,000 They too have no fixed charges.
Organizational Structure			
A top to bottom approach or hierarchical and specialization (Division of labour) is more functional. Technicians, fitters, labourers, make-up man, costume in charge, ticket collector, advertisements, script printing, cooks, drivers, assistants to major actors, etc.	The producer/owner controls directly. One manager takes the minimum responsibilities.	Same as B.	The performers do the multiple performance – acting, dancing and singing. They have maximum of 4-5 helpers. Villagers take care of the stage, sound and light management.
The employees are provided good facilities – food, accommodation in their camps, pension system.	Less than the A class employees.	The standard of living is low compared to the two.	They are treated as lower-class actors in the host villages and are given poor facilities.

Source: Data compiled through fieldwork during 2006-2009

The above determinants divide the class of troupes. Pre-dominantly these Jatra parties are categorized according to their economic capital/status and typical popular aesthetics. The existing dominant groups as well as the viewer's make this *distinction*. They erect clearly defined boundaries between

high, middle and low quality Jatras. The high-class Jatra parties set standards, new conventions and also the performing text for the smaller parties. The differences are apparent in the presentation of performances of same kinds of texts of different troupes of Jatra in different performative contexts. On the one hand, the process of production of Jatras in highly professional groups is combined with highly specialized effort and on the other hand, smaller ones have few specialized personnel. The gradation of Jatra parties further classifies the creators – writers, directors and artists in the world of Jatra industry of large and small troupes.

Sociologically, this classification to understand social power or inequality within an art form can be best analysed from the artistic habitus to take up or compete for one or the other positions. Habitus accordingly, is the embodied structure that generates the artists and the producers' ambitions, aspirations and dispositions. However, the different status of Jatra troupes and the producers take up different positions within their field in order to achieve the class status and accordingly the artists embed the habitus in their art works. Importantly, the artists and audiences of each field within the larger field of Jatra production participate in it and it has a 'shared value'. The field of each class reproduces the value and aesthetics that the status of institution has established.

This classification, however, is fragile and the mobility between high, middle and low class categories is observed. The effort to achieve the higher grade among the lower class is always there. Class struggle within the hierarchy, for instance D wants to possess the status of C, C wants to be B and B wants to be A, is observed. Sometimes the established troupes lose power and the surviving low class troupes surpass them. The first two class of troupes are operated in a highly competitive atmosphere. They are graded every year according to their financial profits. If D group can sustain itself for five years and gain profit from its investment, it achieves C grade status. The more commodified high/elite Jatra groups in a state of rivalry have knock-on effects that contribute to the construction of uncontested space for the already old groups by undermining them only on financial ground. The established and powerful A type groups retain their place and are not fear-stricken by the new

A class troupes. The new A class Jatra producers do not seem to thrive in the industry more than one year because of their lack of experience in managing Jatra troupes. Huge profits based on a substantial economic capital accentuate the existing high-low/rich-poor class divisions. They also contribute to the unsustainability of lower class troupes. However, the producers of C/D class of troupes predict the high chance of collapsing of the top class Jatra troupes who are equally liable to loss. Small troupes can sustain against it as they are not profit oriented because of low investment in it. This classification of the field of Jatra can be discussed through the descriptions of each class of Jatra troupes based on their production, organization, distribution systems, expenses, investment and the classes of audiences.

'A' Class or the Elite Class Jatra Troupes

Emergence of new A class parties every year indicates the proliferation of troupes as one of the profitable businesses. A few days before a festival A class mobile Jatra troupes, the chief attraction of village fairs, arrive on trucks and put up their tents, trappings on a fixed spot decided by the village Jatra committee. The top troupes of the hierarchy are generally successful before its audiences because of their winner take perspective. The dominant class struggles to increase the overall reach of their power by creating and exploiting connections between the cultural and economic fields. These groups continually transform their capital, maximizing the yield of such transformations by contesting the terms of exchange, via the rules of the game in the two fields. The potential success at the industrial expositions is measured by the group's size, its capacity to produce many different varieties of programmes, the number of workers employed and its ability to produce standardized works in quantity. The strategy to manifold the business from one troupe to establish another sister troupe is dominant in case of the elite class. For instance, Siba Prasad Lenka of Jagatsinghpur has been the owner of two Jatra troupes, namely, *Tulasi* and *Gouri Ganantya*. More strikingly, Lenka is the richest person in Jagatsinghpur, who apart from producing Jatra has also produced three Odia feature films. Ironically, he expressed that what my films did not offer in terms of profit, Jatras did. Pradip Balasamanta and Bipin Bhusan Deo of Jajpur Road are primarily business persons and partners of two

Jatra troupes – *Konark Gananatya* and *Dhauri Gananatya* and share the profit. More than 500 people including the performers are employed in both troupes. Thus, establishment of Jatra troupe has been a profession for the propertied classes of coastal Odisha who have not only modernized the form but also have contributed to change the repertoires. New rich peasant and business class are involved in consolidating and exploiting their positions in the field of production. They invest money in the Jatra troupe from the personal business – government contractors, owning mines business, transport business, cassette companies, prawn business, film productions, etc. Politicians⁸ are no exception. A few of them have been exclusively into the Jatra business. Thus, the political affiliation, business status and other respectable positions reinforce the class status of Jatra owners.

Payment, Profit and Expenditures

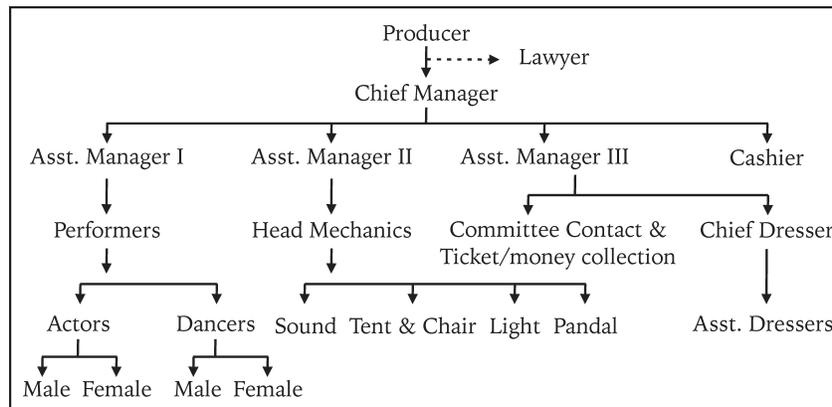
The financial gain is fully dependent upon the sale of Jatra plays as they perform on both ticket sale and contract show Jatra plays. If a play clicks in the market, the sale goes up to 1.5–2 lakh per show.⁹ Moreover, the ticket sale of ‘A’ class parties in a major festival varies from a low profit to high profit in consecutive days at the festival. For instance if 65,000 rupees is earned in the first night, then rupees 98,000 can be collected on the third night. Producers are well tuned with such sale. Thus, to adjust the collection they schedule low-high popular plays according to the days of performance. They perform a maximum of four to six nights in one village, depending on occasion of performance and the affordability of the village committees. These troupes call such performances ‘ticket show Jatra’. Sometimes tickets are sold in black for superhit Jatras. On the other hand, actors/major cast change the troupes every year. They give prior notice to the manager and quit at the end of the Jatra movement. Thus, the replacement of the actor goes on either by offering attractive salary or through newspaper advertisement. The brokerage, forcible shifting and kidnapping of talented actors in their Jatra troupe are also not uncommon. The actors receive annual advance amount in the beginning of a year or take payments monthly or half-yearly according to the agreement.

Star Performers as the Crux of Business

There is a growing competition between A class troupes to have the stars as they are lured by a better pay package by the rival parties. Daitari Panda, the star of Jatra, is the most popular actor of Jatra industry. It has been aptly said that what Ajit is to Bollywood, Daitari Panda is to ‘Jollywood’ and is also called the ‘Jollywood Shehanshah’ by *Jatra Duniya*, the popular Jatra magazine. Fans of Panda buy tickets for rupees 200 for his show. For profit motive, producers are more interested in producing plays specific to Panda as the central character. Being a versatile actor, two of his plays – *Jianta Saba*¹⁰ and *Nara Rakhayasa* have established him as the most ferocious villain in Jatra world. The producers of his party have made huge profits because of his acting. Panda is the highest paid (six lakh rupees in a year) actor who has been working for Jatra for the last 33 years. Other superstars like Lokanath Lenka, Manibhadra Biswal, etc. follow suit. Now actors from Odia films, television and music albums too join these high-class parties. The troupes are always on the lookout for beautiful, educated actors for their performances to make a successful Jatra. For instance, Anjana Nayak is a highly demanded actor for her acting as well as for her ‘sex appeal’ since she is also into music albums. It is now evident from the above accounts that the ‘A’ class party has set its standards to achieve its status. A typical ‘A’ class party is operated as a professional organization that follows a strict hierarchical structure as featured in the following diagram.

Diagram 1

Organizational Structure of a Highly Professional Jatra Group



The above organizational structure is similar to all professional Jatra troupes (A and B) with slight variation in the number of employees. The structure of hierarchy follows a typical top-bottom approach. The numbers of managers are assigned specific responsibilities according to their experience either as performers or as managers of other parties. The producer takes major decisions. The lawyer is a consultant to the producer and managers. However, lawyers are not necessarily appointed by all parties. The responsibility of the lawyer lies in the negotiation of the artists' agreement, claim case and entrenchment with deceitful committees. He plays the role of a negotiator between the artists and the managers. Payments are made in a hierarchical manner depending on their status, for example, the lead actor, actress, supporting actor, villain, comedian, singer, dancers and other junior artists occupy the lowest rank of category as artist.

The differentiation is developed by a set of rising business entrepreneurs to serve the pre-established audience from middle and lower middle classes. Thus, the new organizational model developed the newly emerging professional Jatra troupes in order to promote the careers of the artists and the new conventions of performances. The best of production components – known film directors, the star performers and the price of the troupe are the factors of attraction among its consumers. Such dominant popular Jatra makers are concerned with significant changes in themes, values, modes of presentation and spectacles. More importantly, as Dimaggio (2002) analyses, they generate a constant stream of unique production and aesthetic preferences of its consumers, which may disrupt the commercial routine of the producers. The Jatra producers are more likely to achieve commercial success and popularity, as they are experienced in having quality productions due to possessions of cash, skills and social contacts. Despite the class determinism and market competition, a close analogy between control of price and control of creativity can be seen. As Sharada Prasanna Dash informs me:

We know the field better and our consumers too. Everybody produces formula stories. Producing plays centring around women's plight are market oriented and it is the contemporary formula of successful Jatra plays. That is why I prefer to

write stories for the targeted audiences...when I produced plays like OMP Chhakarejhiati Kia, the story was based on the life of Taslima Nasrin who was unknown to Odias and that clicked in the market. (Interview: 25.04.06)

There are educated middle class audiences who have an arbitrary choice of admiration, criticism and dislike. Being conscious of their social values and cultural taste, they are aware of the works of the known playwrights and producers. They sometimes communicate on phone or write comments to the producer or the playwright with regard to the viewed play. On the other hand, the viewers of the low class Jatra troupes are left with no option of having a greater exposure to high class Jatras. They are the natural audiences – basically poor and illiterate – who have not cultivated the status of middle class audience. Continued profits and artistic merits of work are produced to evaluate works of art and differences in spectacles and performances. With the rapid changes in the taste of people, as creators of the Jatra culture they develop a tendency to innovate – changes in techniques, stage designs, and electronic gadgets and more importantly, in product generation. Improvisation in stage – like from one stage to double and multiple stages (five stages include running, moving stages) are being introduced – advanced light and sound system, modern costumes, and other spectacles like stage decoration, etc. are launched to give a new look to the art form. To introduce newness to draw a large audience, Jatra producers invest for the improvisations all round. The characteristic features of a typical A class party include the recruitment of trained and good looking actors, established playwrights, directors, musicians and choreographers from film and theatre and manager. To maintain the best standard Jatras is the mission. The elite class Jatra parties offer a packaged entertainment and spectacle, which is manufactured collectively by production-line specialists by coordinating, packaging, marketing and fitting to tested formulas that contain both pleasure and engage people in producing the standard Jatra texts.

'B' or Middle Class Jatra Parties

The major difference between A class and B class is their continuing legacy of producing Jatras. The producers of almost all B class groups continue the

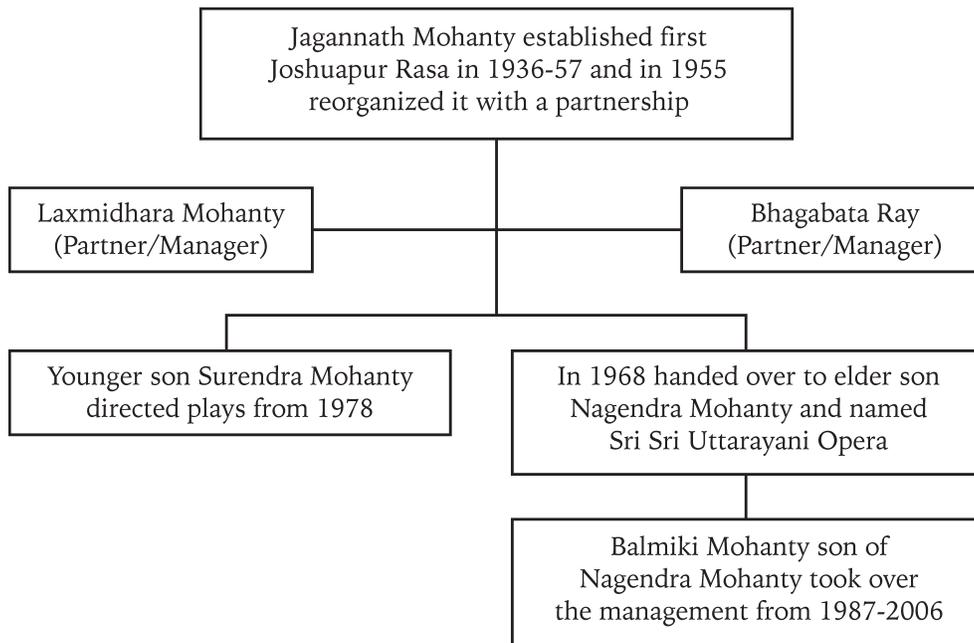
tradition of producing Jatras themselves from generations. They depend upon the income from the Jatra shows, as this is the only source of living for them. Almost all B class parties comprise the 30–70 years old Jatra troupes which struggle against their enterprising rivals. The middle class parties act as the cultural training centres for Jatra artists. More importantly, these Jatra troupes have brought significant changes to the form. In order to make the Jatra a commercial and popular theatre tradition, Jatra makers like Manorama Dash, Uttam Pala, Nagendra Mohanty, Phakir Sahani have greatly contributed to the movement and have encouraged their sons to continue the tradition.

The owners, who are in their initial years of production, were either zamindars or rich landowners or petty business persons. Until late 1980s they were the dominating Jatra parties whose living was entirely borne by the income generated by their productions. It is only in the early 1990s that they faced a challenge in marketing their production as the new capitalists started investing in the Jatra parties without having adequate experiences in Jatra production. Except for a handful of parties, by the end of 2006, two of the oldest and popular parties got closed down as they could not compete with the increasing business rivals. They had either to auction their parties or close them down forever. Some of the oldest troupes in Odisha like *Satasankha* and *Radhanga* troupes got closed down. The organizational structure and market situation of their group, the lack of capital, increasing price of actors, decoration, costumes, stage equipment, etc. were the reasons of closure. During my preliminary phase of fieldwork, I explored about these two troupes as they were already struggling to survive. And when I met the producers in my second phase of fieldwork, these two troupes had closed down, they had auctioned their party's assets and the artists had relocated to other parties. The pattern of evolution of such class parties reveals that financial mismanagement or loss has been the sole cause of their irregular productions. As an involved observer, I stayed at the *Satasankha* Opera's producer's house to understand the production of Jatras in one of the oldest and middle class troupe. This troupe is known as a cultural organization or a

training centre of dance, drama and music. A diagram of the ownership structure of a B class Jatra party indicates a distinctive structure where ownership is transferred generation wise.

Diagram 2

Ownership Structure of an Old Jatra Party



The data for the diagram is sourced from my interview with Balmiki Mohanty (Sri Sri Uttarayani Opera, Satasankha, Puri). This is a typical structure of old Jatra groups that revived itself around 1960s. Constant financial difficulties of the party for the last 70 years within the competitive market challenged its producers to survive. Balmiki, the last owner of the Jatra party, in order to save the organization started truck business and managed the party. On the one hand, the pressurized Balimiki (pressure from father and of preserving the name and fame of the party) could not meet the increasing demand of higher salary by the new artists who were already comparing with their co-artists working in A class party. On the other hand, the super cyclone

of 1999 wrecked them financially as they lost their stage and tent equipment. It was extremely difficult for them to pay even their 100 employees. Apart from insufficient finance flow, hand to mouth situation – three of them (Nagendra, Surendra and Balmiki) contend that the changing occupational structure of Jatra audiences, dominance of private television channels, frequent elections and A class expensive spectacles like entrance gate design of a Jatra tent and banners, etc. were major obstacles in its financial growth. Finally, the closure or the losses in the other business which used to be the support for the Jatra party forced them to discontinue the long tradition of entertainment. On June 2006, the era of one of the first professional Jatra troupes, supported by the *Babughara*,¹¹ finally ended.

The production of Jatra as a family tradition was dominant for a long time. *Satasankha Opera* was a worthy example. Similarly, Manorama Dash, the first woman producer of *Tarpur Opera* continued producing Jatra performances, sharing responsibility with her husband – manger Dibakar Dash and later handed over the production to her son. She hailed from the princely family of Kujanga and was well trained in music and drama by her musician father. Known as *Maa* in the Jatra industry, she herself selected artists even from the roadside on her way to Cuttack if she found a good-looking boy and believed in grooming him as an actor. However, because of the market pressure her son, Sharada Prassana Dash lamented about the expenses over tent, trucks, chairs, etc. for which he had sold nearly 7–8 acres of his own land. During our meeting, he indicated that he was planning to close down the party.

The desire of the B or C class types to compete with top groups clearly did not fructify. The Jatra plays of such troupes are no less than the higher parties in the production of Jatra plays. One might not find stars in such parties because they switch to the rival A class troupes for higher salary. Similarly, the selection of directors according to their payment makes the difference in directorial debut of the play. People admire the plays and their representation despite the low quality or inferior arrangement of light and sound system on the stage. The difference between the high and middle class can only be defined

in terms of the talented and known actors, good-looking female actors, dancers, singers, modern costumes, properties, expensive and technically advance stage arrangements. Their storyline bears no difference from the A class parties apart from its style of delivery by its actors with their dialogue modulation and acting calibre.

‘C’ Grade/Low-middle Class Party

The striking distinction between A/B and C class Jatra party is the ownership of the art form. The business-oriented troupes, A class parties particularly, emerged in the modern Odisha independently with a growing entrepreneur class, and the small troupes including the *Malei*/free show Jatra were confined to villages. Because of its desire to escalate the class status, it often compares itself with a B class party. The small troupes participate in *Yagna Anusthans* (institutes for sacrificial offerings) in Odisha, if not in major festivals and locations. Nevertheless, there is no uniformity of economic and social status in the class itself. There again is stratification within the C class. The classification depends upon professionalism achieving a higher-grade status before the audiences. The structure of organization is quite similar to the higher-class troupes. The market structure of C class parties varies from others, as one can find a clear distinction in their low investment, quality of performance – below standard performers, less property, stage equipment, sets and low frequency of mobility. The lower C class negotiates with organizing committees for percentage of payment.

The organization of this class party is simple as the owner manages everything. He acts as owner, manager, artist and cashier. This structure is more similar to that of the traditional Jatra troupes. For the producers, it is a prestige issue to have a Jatra party. For instance Sudhir Pati the producer of *Srikhetra Ganantya*, a top C class party, mentions that – Jatra business is like a prestige issue now a days. If I close it then people would say that he could not manage a Jatra party in his life. Once it gets closed it is the same as being *Debaliya* (bankrupt). *Srikehtra Ganantya* and similar C class troupes are now in the middle stage and they follow the same production method as the bigger parties.

The recorded film dance shows have a primacy over the plays in such class troupes. The low class troupes produce more gratifying programmes like recorded dances for a special audience. Pati in his interview describes the demand of such dance numbers is for commercial purpose.

We are ready if audiences ask for a record dance of so and so film instead of two scenes of the play, then we immediately can show it to them. We learn it in the daytime and perform in the night. Similar is the case with stories. We alter some scenes according to their wishes. For example, if we do not have a rape scene or abuse of a woman by the villain, we have to introduce such sequence forcibly in the play. The demand of the audience can only be fulfilled by the medium of Jatra. Recently in four-five camps we were forced to show a naked dance – an album song Baba Tume Kauthu Asila Himalaya ru.... In the beginning, we perform that dance sometime after the play we have to show that dance. It is the demand of the audience through committee members who come and say please show that dance again even if you have to cut two scenes from the play. We do perform the dance as we do not have any problem as we are being paid (Pati said with great emphasis). (Interview: December 2006)

The producer fulfils the desire of being the unruly drunk, smoking, pan-chewing, resting their legs and hands audience. The ‘naked record dances’ appeal to them as they get bored seeing the classical or neat (Oddissi) dance numbers and lengthy plays. For a one-two hour dance numbers, most audiences do not have to invest their intellect. On the other hand, the element of sexuality attracts more audience because of the presence of young girls in scanty clothes. That is why it seems the committee members of C class enquire about the number of girls in the party before they sign the contract paper as told by Pati. The Jatra will be a flop if there are less number of girls. They only perform record dance shows in Western Odisha exclusively for about two hours in the evening for which they earn 8,000–10,000 rupees. The cost of tickets depends upon the occasion of performance. For instance, the ticket costs from 10, 15 and 20 rupees and for the play it is 25, 30 and 40 rupees.

High-class Jatra parties treat them as cheap Jatra parties because of women fetishization. The erotic movements in record dance and song programmes on live stage contain sexual appeal that draws the young mass invariably. The

popular demands of such live shows where there is a presence of the actor and performer indicate that the male spectators, in turn, are offered the pleasures of erotic voyeurism. The low class troupes aspiring for a higher-class status offer such ludic activity. Jatra plays are not given much emphasis as separate dance programmes pull in more money. They sometimes dictate the writers and directors, who occasionally direct Jatras for such class party to produce some sensational/sexual (rape or romance) scenes. The directors and writers are none but the same ones who produce high-class Jatra plays, who feel pressurized to compose such scenes that fetch good money. The reproduction of the popular plays of A and B class parties is mostly carried out in their performance of the plays. Smaller parties sometimes do not invite writers or directors as they cannot afford money. With a low investment for the process of production, the performers learn their respective role from the printed script/books themselves. These printed Jatra scripts are adapted to act out in the troupe with the permission of the owner of the respective party's scripts.

It is interesting to note here that most of the established actors start their career from such lower class groups, and slowly these experiences facilitate them for upward career mobility. Thus, the smaller Jatra parties tend to champion the business and resilience of the higher-class Jatra troupes. On the other hand, the mainstream parties not only look down upon them because of their amateurish approach but also typify them as low class Jatra parties.

'D' Grade/Malei/Free Show Jatra Parties

At the outset let me mention that due to the irregularity of performance by these performing groups and very little advertisement of their troupes, I had difficulty in accessing them. These are confined to either one small village or few remote villages in Odisha. These are called *Malei* or free show Jatra party sometimes. However, one can still distinguish a *Malei* party or sometimes it is graded as D class. The villagers who have some interest in acting themselves learn their dialogues and finance collectively the free show Jatra performances. The mutual participation in producing and consuming Jatras by the village amateurs with the unorganized troupe's plays are found to be more carnivalesque type when compared to the content, presentation and audience's

views. It is probably due to the fact that the participants are none but the amateur actors of the same village. Thus, the interaction between the participants and the observers is informal compared to the highly professional troupes. The less improvised Jatra stage and the immediate neighbour on the stage create more excitement among its viewers for a close engagement as sometimes verbal exchanges or encounters go on during the performance.

The organizing villages are economically backward. Villagers are not able to pay for tickets nor can they collect *chanda*. Hence, it can be inferred that to maintain the status quo – the power and status in the village – they upkeep the tradition of free Jatra shows for the villagers, despite their poor economic status. They also arrange food and accommodation for the performers. The low class producers are from middle class peasantry and have been performers in middle class Jatra parties. This new business class, whether continuing to produce Jatras for long time or not, control the power bloc within the segmented market. Either with direct connection with political parties or independent political candidates, these try to yield influence over their audience.

Many of my respondents suggested that the reason behind the concentration of such small cultural troupes particularly in Northern Odisha was because of impoverished economy of the region. That is why they cannot invest heavily unlike the top Jatra groups and do not travel to far distances like Western and Southern Odisha. Moreover, the owners of such troupes are from the lower economic class. There is no clear statistics of the total number of troupes of this grade as these get formed and break up in a short span of time. The business thrives on the calls/contacts, as they do not follow advance booking. Rest of the time when they have no bookings, they sit idle or go for farming or do their own personal business in their villages. Thus, it also depends on the economy and unity of the villagers. They require one small truck which is used for carrying the basic stage equipment, costumes and the artists sit on the carriage. For makeup, costumes, musical instruments they depend upon the *Chitralayas* – shops to rent musical instruments, costumes and make-up.

Despite the incompetence of such low class troupes, these manage to survive in the society. The brokers vehemently express that because of their very low financial standard, they are susceptible to closure at any time. Problems are more acute among the artists of low class Jatra. If they do not have 50 stage shows in hand to perform, actors are not appropriately paid. Low payment to the artists, insufficient number of artists and low quality production are the major causes of poor standards. If the troupe closes down, the owner becomes bankrupt. Small party artists leave the party frequently as they join the large groups for more money. Thus, lack of proper and timely payment by the owner to their artists is the main reason for the closing down of the parties.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude the discussion, the major distinction between the high and low class parties is in terms of rural-urban divide, accumulation of economic capital/status, professionalism and the standard/quality of Jatra performance/production. The differences in external structure of the classified troupes may be seen in the above determinants. But mainly it is the investment pattern or the economic and social status of the owner that ultimately affects the standard of production and professionalism. The performing text is the same in all types of Jatra troupes. The A class produces the original text written by a hired playwright. It is reproduced on the stage by the direction of a professional director. Because of the commercial motive the lower class Jatra troupes might be cashing on the sexually appealing record dance programmes on popular demand of a section of audience, nonetheless their performances are taken seriously. They may also include scenes of violence and obscenity in their adapted plays, but the novelty of the story does not seem to be affected much. Secondly, the spectacles – advance light, sound, set and very talented actors used for the performance of the same text, produced by a top professional group, do not necessarily differentiate the presentation of the text used by a smaller group. The sharp difference can be seen in the economy of the hosting village or committee. The low purchasing power of its population indicates their inability to invite the top-class Jatra troupes. As a result, the degree of cultural choices is marginal. In contrast, the large committees are

financially better off in the sense that the management and organizing responsibility are divided among its members. Compared to the economic status of the small troupe's host, they generate more funds to take a greater risk of loss. As they invest in organizing the event, they expect profit. The internal hierarchy within the Jatra tradition is based on the multi-layered and multi-leveled regional structure. Each class enjoys different levels of economic status of the consumers and the organizing village committee. The classifications within the art form reveal the economic and social inequalities in the society. The differential mobilization within the classified organization is absent as the Odia social relations and structure remain relatively stagnant. Economic inequalities in an agrarian society generate social contradictions in terms of class, caste and other social categories in the framework of history and tradition in the interpretation and construction of reality. Thus, the lack of entrepreneurial skill amongst Odias for instance in investing in large-scale Jatra troupes indicates the existence of a large number of tenuous low class troupes in rural Odisha.

Jatra today has been a lucrative medium-scale industry, which attracts new talent, educated and young people to join as directors, writers and artists. It has just not flourished but has achieved its unofficial industrial status. Nonetheless, with the increasing demand of the payment of the artists and competition among the high and middle class Jatra parties, the small troupes can only anticipate the prospects of continuity of the Jatra tradition as they are not following the capitalist model of business. Those who perform ticket show Jatra face the problem of financial loss and for them Jatra is like 'a gambling business'. In his concluding remarks on the future of C and D class Jatra troupes, Sudhir Pati said that the persistence of religious festivals in Odisha would always inspire Jatra to survive. Government might ban the ticket show Jatras but for the preservation purpose, it cannot stop the free show Jatra.

Market organization, production, distribution, consumption, and social structure are intertwined and are conditioned by each other. They together influence and get influenced by the cultural product. My description on the cultural economy of Jatra fits in quite accurately in Paul Dimaggio's typology of cultural-production systems in which the popular culture is generated according

to its distinct form of organization. Popular Jatra does not fall under his mass culture type of cultural production. Rather, it is a mix of pluralistic culture and mass culture type of cultural-production systems (2002: 160). The contemporary Jatra industry is mass-cultural, 'presenting similar materials to a wide range of audiences'. The record companies, television producers and the live Jatra creators supply diverse materials through their market channels. The four types of Jatra troupes through a highly competitive market structure, with an entrepreneurial brokerage, loose market segmentation with high innovation and diversity offer the audiences the greatest variety of performative narratives. The independence of the popular-culture creators, in turn, affects the degree of innovation and diversity in the industry. However, the monetary success of Jatra cannot be the sole answer to its popularity and resilience. There is a nexus between the economics of the form and construction of the ideology of the popular narratives. The emerging market of Jatra industry coincided with the intention of modern playwrights to create Jatra plays with popular appeal in which tradition and modernity are portrayed as both dichotomy and continuity. The newly emergent hybridized Jatra serves the growing middle class well. The synthesis of cinematic technique and traditional play structure present a combination of styles of film, television, modern theatre and the existing repertoire. Such resilient traditional performances rooted within human and social contexts animate the life worlds of societies, past and present, and transmit a gamut of meanings. The existing structures decay and assimilation, acculturation and adaptation of 'newly imported modes and values' continue. In a similar way, Jatra as highly mobile is moving between cities, small towns, and villages, containing extensive rural/folk elements; it fosters social solidarity and collective memory and imagination.

■ NOTES

1. The first commercial theatre of Odisha that was highly popular and commercially successful for about three decades. See for detailed study of Panigrahi (1996) and Hemant Das (1997) on Annapurna Rangamancha.

2. For instance, Hirakud Dam, Rourkela Steel Plant and NALCO Aluminum plant, Paradeep port, the Express highway, Thermal power plant and state electrification etc. were established during 1960s and 1970s in Odisha.
3. The facts presented in the paper are drawn from the fieldwork conducted by the author during 2006–2009. The figures presented by the researcher are prone to variation on there is no single authentic source of data available.
4. Jatra scholars like Rashmi Ranjan Mohanty, Krushna Charan Behera and Niladri Bhusan Harichandan have urged for its industry status.
5. See the introduction to SNA in www.sangeetnatak.org/sna/sna1.htm
6. Like Odisha Jatra Gaurab, Natyacharjya Rangunatha Smrutisanman, Jatrasamrat Shyamsunder Mahapatra, Natyashri Artabandhu Routraysanman and pallikabi Krushnaparasad Beherasmrutisanman, (Lenka 2004).
7. They are the actor-writer Ghanashyam Swain (1980), Writer-director Raghunath Panda (1981), Actor-director Artabandhu Routray (1989), writer Jadumani Kanungo (1991) and writer-director Umakanta Behera (2007).
8. Pradip Maharathi (a candidate of BJD) of *Kalinga Ganantya* of Pipili, and Kartik Mahapatra of *Jatra Sharadabali* of Sora are members of legislative assembly and Lenka is a Sarpanch and councilor. Ravi Ray of Baghajatin is the director of the NGO called *Lokshakti* in Balasore.
9. Bidesini (2004), one of the most popular and financial successful production of Sibani Ganantya, written by Anant Ojha earned maximum of 2 lakhs rupees in 2005 per show.
10. In the play he played an insensate character that ate a live chicken every night.
11. The aristocratic and influential family in a feudal set up.

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Declining Powerloom Industry and Allied Technology Factors: A Sociological Study of Siminoi Powerloom Cluster in Odisha

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Abstract

Powerloom is a dominant player in weaving in India. The need of the hour is to integrate both handloom and powerloom for better production. Nevertheless, there was an uncritical transition from handloom clusters to powerloom clusters initiated by the Government of Odisha in 1972, it is having a deteriorating effect on both handloom and powerloom. The present paper attempts to examine the factors contributing to the plight of powerloom clusters in Odisha. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with various stakeholders of Siminoi powerloom clusters of Dhenkanal district in Odisha. A lack of unplanned installation of powerlooms, government patronage, competitiveness, product diversification, marketing, infrastructure bottleneck etc. are responsible for the plight of powerloom sector at Siminoi cluster.

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Keywords: Cooperative society, Deskilling, Modern technology, Indigenous technology, Product diversification.

Introduction

Debates on science and technology (S&T) in independent India have largely taken place around changes in S&T policy, the role of the state in distinguishable phases, ranging from the strong promotion of S&T, pursuit of self-reliance and dominant role of the state sector under the Nehruvian State to the ongoing phase of state withdrawal, attenuated emphasis on self-reliance and indigenous research, heightened influence of foreign governments and multinational corporations on public policy including in S&T. This analysis has undoubted validity in organized industry and the main current of scientific research in institutions and universities. However, there has been continuity rather than change in the broad area of livelihoods and habitat of rural and petty producers such as agricultural labour, artisans and other off-farm workers and the self-employed in manufacturing, construction or related sectors, and perhaps including the peasantry as well. Since independence, there has been an almost complete neglect of, indeed perhaps blindness to, these sectors and to the generation and application of S&T appropriate to the development needs of this section of the populace.

This huge and persistent systemic chasm in the S&T ecosystem in India has, along with other structural biases and institutional failings, contributed to the now chronic deprivation of these sections, steep decline in the economic weight of their occupations and activities, their disconnect with the mainstream development and a loss of hope in the future. And, powerloom sector in Odisha is no exception to such distress. The purpose of the present study is not to reflect upon the demarcation problem (demarcation between two conflicting knowledge systems), but to find out the impediments contributing to the plight of powerloom sector in textile industry in Odisha. In this context, it is important to dwell upon a plethora of concepts and ideas which contribute to the debate on powerloom industry, both globally and on a specific locale.

Prior to independence, Gandhi (1938) promoted small-scale and cottage industries as a gainful economic activity. The rationale for Gandhi was simple – it required little investment, provided individual with gainful employment opportunities and was seen as a means of ensuring self-sufficiency and the survival of the country's traditional craft and artistry. More importantly, Gandhi's vision of self-reliance was part of a larger struggle for independence from the imperialist yoke. Gandhi's advocacy of small-scale and cottage industries is constitutive of one of the alternative and/or multiple modernities.

Niranjana and Vinayan (2004) argue that India's passage into modernity has centred significantly on the textile industry. The textile sector is one of the largest employers in the country and within this sector; handloom weaving enjoyed a pre-eminent status. The persistence of handloom weaving right into the present either due to its organizational responses to changing markets, technological or product innovation, or other kind of adaptation of labour, capital and skills – calls for its in-depth exploration. Today's globalized macroeconomic processes have also affected the non-formal sector and a contemporary understanding of the nature of the handloom industry and its responses are very important.

The coexistence of two knowledge systems – represented by handloom and powerloom – involves a variety of perspectives straddled within progress discourse, poverty discourse and market discourse, constitutive of the socialist project, welfare project and liberalization project respectively. In this context, Mamidipudi, Syamsundari and Bijker (2012: 41) propose an alternative view of handloom weaving as a socio-technology: understanding handloom as an ensemble of knowledge, skills, technology and social relations explains the continued sustainability of handloom, and also offers clues for socio-technical innovation and an alleviation of vulnerabilities.

The conflicting interests between two knowledge systems, viz. indigenous and modern knowledge systems – represented by handloom and powerloom – have significant implications for the ways in which they are socially, economically, politically, culturally and institutionally embedded (McKenzie and Wajcman, 1999). Indigenous/local/traditional knowledge has been

generated by the local people in contact with nature by living in a particular area across generations. Local knowledge helps people in decision-making about vital activities concerning their health, environment, safety and regulations (Hansen and Van Fleet, 2003: 3). But now the practices and policies of colonization seem to have adverse impact on all forms of practices of indigenous knowledge. The Western knowledge systems, depicted as universal and authoritative, have marginalized and subjugated indigenous or traditional knowledge systems, and are in continuous attempt to legitimate its own knowledge while de-legitimizing indigenous knowledge systems. Legal, government and academic channels transmit such ethnocentric knowledge¹ (Western knowledge system) to promote capitalist and often ecologically destructive policies and practices. This ethnocentric knowledge system underestimates and undervalues the indigenous or traditional knowledge systems, which has resulted in marginalization or in some cases loss of practices of indigenous knowledge systems.

The uncritical transition from handloom to powerloom clusters involves the question of ‘deskilling of labour’: the process by which skilled labour within an industry or economy is eliminated by the introduction of technologies operated by semi-skilled or unskilled workers. In this regard, Braverman (1974) argues that capitalist forms of production reduce the cost of labour by breaking down complex work processes into smaller, simpler and unskilled tasks. This continuous fragmentation process replaces the skilled craft worker by unskilled labour requiring little training, so that jobs in the secondary sector of the labour market are substituted for jobs in the primary sector. In consequence, wages and employment conditions are pushed down to the lower level typical of the secondary sector: unemployment and insecure employment becomes widespread; and people in the deskilled jobs become alienated from work.

In the development discourse, there is a difficulty in figuring out the appropriate level of technology to fit the given circumstances: in other words there is a choice of technology and it cannot be assumed that the level of technology used by the affluent societies is the only possible level, let alone

that it is necessarily the best for the poor countries (McRobie, 1979). The state, instead of giving priority to the existing indigenous knowledge and improving upon that, is engaged in emulating modern technology. However, it is beyond the scope of the present study to critically engage in the nature of the state.² Since technology is alien, it is important to understand how a specific technology is culturally assimilated by its practitioners, stakeholders, and so on: absorbing minorities into the ways of the majority requiring them to adopt the majority's language, customs and values. Industrial technology requires high-skilled and professional labour force controlled by normative orientation, value systems, institutional mandates and ideological moorings: the problem of order.³ In order to motivate and keep this labour force intact, there must be a progressive educational system accompanied by social mobility and social equality at large. Work ethics has to be encouraged in an industrial society (Watson, 1995). The industrial development of Odisha is not balanced and integrated (Meher, 1992) and hence work ethics in the powerloom sector in Odisha requires redesigning: a set of ideas and beliefs 'commonly held by the actors' involved (Dunlop, 1958). There must be progressive ideological moorings to be followed by the powerloom weavers to survive and compete in the market. Productivity improvement requires not only financial investment but also unity, sincerity, cooperation and skill from the workers: rule-governed shared culture is based on relevance, acceptability and elegance (Weber, 1978). The maintenance of cordial industrial relations is important for ensuring higher productivity and full utilization of the production capacity. The management and supervisory staff need to build a suitable organizational ambience where workers can do their job best (Rao, 1989). Perhaps in these matters, the Japanese and other competitors are more efficient than India (Mote, 1967). Since there is a lack of product diversification in textiles, there is a less competitive environment in the state due to which the powerloom is not able to flourish. The textile industry depends heavily on an agricultural raw material (cotton). The price of cotton tends to fluctuate depending on the size of the crop as well as market volatility. In other countries, the respective governments have taken steps to arrest the heavy fluctuation in cotton prices by deploying price stabilization policies, which has not happened in India

(Anubhai, 1988). Since the price of cotton is high and Odisha is also not a chief producer of cotton, it ultimately leads to the shortage of raw material in the sector, thereby responsible for the plight of textile industry, both handlooms as well as powerlooms. As Bythell (2008) points out, the fixed cost of powerloom is high. In the powerloom sector of Odisha there is high investment and low return. Such situation calls for in-house technological innovations: the situational new development and introduction of knowledge – derived tools, artifacts and devices by which people extend and interact with their environment, which is firm – specific and continuous (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). The major dimension of technological development arises from the social system in which the technology operates. The individual private firms only operate on the basis of their own individual interest rather than social welfare (Murty, 2002).

The state of Odisha has a poor industrial setup. A majority of its population depends upon agriculture for their survival. The handloom sector is the second next employment generating sector in the state. The people dependent on handloom weaving have acquired skill and knowledge from their ancestors: it has been easy for them to cope with the handloom. In 1972, there was a transition from handloom clusters to powerloom clusters initiated by the Government of Odisha, albeit uncritically, in the districts of Ganjam, Nayagarh, Khurda, Puri, Dhenkanal and others. Such an uncritical transition from handloom to powerloom clusters has made the situation even worse, and has resulted in the distress of powerloom in the above mentioned powerloom clusters.

It is against this backdrop that the study sheds light on the factors contributing to the distress of powerloom industry in Odisha. It is important to examine the factors for the growth of powerloom industry in the western and southern part of India on one hand, and decline of powerloom industry in eastern India on the other. The factors for the growth and/or decline of powerloom industry in different regions of India are interrelated, and any attempt to study them in isolation would be misleading.

Table 1
Profile of Powerlooms in Odisha

Name of the District/Zone	No. of Powerlooms in Private Sector			No. of looms installed			Powerloom under Cooperatives			No. of Looms installed	
	Total	Functional	Non-Functional	Total	Functional	Non-Functional	Total	Functional	Non-Functional	Total	Functional
Athagarh	15	11	4	74	60	14	Maa Bauti	142	-	142	
Berhampur	148	147	1	273	271	2	Berhampur Powerloom	100	-	100	
Cuttack	15	12	3	66	32	34	Madhunagar	100		100	
							Sri Parvati	150		150	
							Baldevjew	100		100	
							Chhatia Weaver Mill	100		100	
Khurda	71	63	8	222	201	21	Barunei	100		100	
Bargarh							Ramnagar PL	96	96	-	
Baripada							Baripada PL, Takatpur	96	96	-	
Sundergarh							Mahalaxmi	150		150	
Nayagarh	67	47	20	229	145	84					
Balasore	14	4	10	174	50	124					
Dhenkanal (Siminoi)	120	110	10	367	344	23					

Source: Directorate of Textiles, Government of Odisha (2005).

Table 1 provides a brief profile of powerlooms in Odisha. Table 2 offers the number of powerloom units in the private sector in different zones in Odisha. The two tables provide a comprehensive understanding of the state of powerlooms in Odisha.

Table 2

Number of Powerloom Units in the Private Sector in Different Zones

<i>Name of the Zone</i>	<i>No. of Powerloom Units</i>			<i>No. of Looms in the Unit</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Functional</i>	<i>Non-functional</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Functional</i>	<i>Non-functional</i>
Athagarh	15	11	4	74	60	14
Nayagarh	67	47	20	229	145	84
Balasore	14	4	10	174	50	124
Dhenkanal (Siminoi)	120	110	10	367	344	23
Berhampur	148	147	1	273	271	2
Khurda	71	63	8	222	201	21
Cuttack	15	12	3	66	32	34
Total	450	394	56	1405	1103	302

Source: Directorate of Textiles, Government of Odisha (2005).

Powerloom Clusters in India

In India the powerloom sector is the dominant player in the weaving processes. It contributes more than 60 per cent of total textile production. The present day powerloom behemoths of Surat, Bhiwandi, Erode, Coimbatore etc. were once famous for handlooms and now they are completely transformed into powerlooms. The need of the hour is the integration of the handlooms and powerlooms for maximizing the benefits of the industrialization and raising the standard of living of the people. But the problem is that, in Odisha, the powerloom is in a distress condition compared to the rest of India. In a few cases like Odisha, it is observed that both handloom and powerloom are

integrated to produce market-oriented products. But the present number of 1,238 powerlooms in the state of Odisha are producing low value products such as gamcha, saree, dhoti, blouse and loin cloth (Textile Committee Report, Government of India, 2003).

The GOI Textile Committee Report (2003) showed that the textile industry accounts for as large as 21 per cent of the total employment generated in the economy. Around 35 million of people are directly employed in the textile manufacturing activities. There are about 1.7 million registered powerloom in India, out of which 43 per cent belong to Maharashtra and 20 per cent belong to Tamil Nadu. Gujarat stands third in the number of looms with a share of 19 per cent. Besides these states, the powerloom weaving is more in existence in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha; and that taken together accounts for 15–20 per cent of the total powerloom units in the country (ibid.).

Powerloom Industry in Odisha

According to a survey conducted by the Textile Committee, Government of India in the year 2003, there are a total number of 707 powerloom units in the state of Odisha of which 469 units are found to be working. The powerloom weavers are mainly working for the master trader or master weavers who supply yarn and other raw material relating to weaving and collect the fabrics or the finished product from the weavers. The powerloom units only employ about 2,012 weavers of which 1,303 are males and 709 are females (ibid.).

The entire establishment of powerloom in Odisha is a government-sponsored scheme initiated in 1972. In the initial years the powerlooms were running smoothly. However, since 1985 onwards the powerlooms of Odisha have been facing severe crisis whereas at the same time the powerlooms of southern and western Indian states were flourishing. The causes of the decline of the powerlooms and closing of the powerloom cooperative societies are manifold. The following section tries to find out the major causes of decline of the powerloom in the state of Odisha from different perspectives.

Case of Siminoi Powerloom Cluster

In-depth personal interviews were conducted with various stakeholders of Siminoi⁴ powerloom cluster in the state of Odisha. The official staffs of the Directorate of Textiles, Textile Committee, Weavers Service Centre Bhubaneswar and Powerloom Service Centre Choudwar, Cuttack, Government of Odisha were consulted about the declining status of powerlooms. Data were collected from the secondary sources that include report of the Textile Committee regarding the present status of powerloom and data were also collected from a variety of reports of the Directorate of Textiles, Government of Odisha on the present status of the powerloom in the state of Odisha. There is little literature found on the distress of powerloom in Odisha. Hence the study is entirely based on the data collected from the respondents of the specific powerloom cluster and data collected from the officers of the different offices relating to textiles and some preliminary secondary data on powerloom from the Directorate of Textiles and Textile Committee Office, Bhubaneswar.

Poor Marketing

The reason for the establishment of the powerloom units in the states has mainly been the industrialization of the backward economy. Therefore, there is no adequate initiative to take care of the marketing aspects. Though the putting up of powerlooms has been encouraged through different schemes, the production, planning and marketing strategies have been omitted (Government of Kerala, 2003). In Odisha, the demand for the powerloom product is low. Why is the demand for the product of the powerloom of Odisha low, but the powerloom of other states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu are flourishing? The most and important reason is lack of product diversification (Textile Committee Report, 2003). In Siminoi, the powerloom weavers basically weave Lal Gamcha.⁵ If all weavers make Lal Gamcha, then that particular product gets flooded in the market thereby decreasing the demand for that particular product. The powerlooms of Odisha are simple, plain powerlooms which only weave cotton material that has low demand in the market.

From plain gray cotton to sophisticated synthetic textiles woven in Surat

Surat concentrates entirely on synthetic cloth, mostly nylon and partly polyester varieties which are in much demand. Surat powerlooms produce textiles that are considerably cheaper (Goswami, 1990). Hence market demand for their product is high. The powerlooms of Odisha produce only cotton fabric, whose demand is very low in the market. The powerlooms of Odisha are not sophisticated due to which their production does not look attractive. In Western India powerlooms have wide range of weaving facilities, from high speed jet looms, used in some units in Surat, to simple non-automatic looms (Goswami, 1990). There is also unavailability of pre-and post-loom facilities in Odisha like warping, sizing, calendaring⁶ etc. Since all these facilities are not available, the products from powerloom of Odisha look like raw and not finished products. But in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the availability of calendaring machine makes the product look attractive due to which their product has a high market demand whereas the product of Odisha powerloom has a low market demand due to the absence of proper infrastructure.

Lack of Product Diversification

Product diversification refers to a marketing strategy to increase sales volume from new products and new markets, and can be expanding into a new segment of an industry where business is already in, or investing in a promising business outside the scope of the existing business.⁷ Lack of product diversification and production of similar products make the powerloom industry of Odisha uncompetitive in the state as well as in markets outside the state. Another thing is that the weavers of Odisha are only weaving cotton materials which have a little market demand. In this regard the Surat powerlooms are much ahead. The popular powerloom sari brand came from Surat which exported much of its production. But this was nylon or rayon. In cotton, powerloom do not have a long history of exporting (Roy, 1998). Since the Siminoi powerloom cluster only produces cotton Lal Gamcha without any product diversification, its market demand is low. A group of weavers of

Siminoi powerloom cluster opined that *'We have mere production of only Lal Gamcha. If the production would have been diversified, then demand for each product will be felt in the market. As the same product is going on, there is a small demand'*. The market flooding of similar kind of products leads to distress sell.

Since only one product is produced from a specific powerloom cluster, it's easier for the middle man to bargain as much as possible thereby devaluing the powerloom weavers and their talent. If we look at it from another perspective, we can conclude that, only job work is done in these powerlooms. The powerloom weavers are only producing a product, which has been ordered by the big merchants or middlemen. The powerloom weavers also do not have sufficient financial flexibility to do something of their own. It depicts the capitalist structure of the powerloom sector of Odisha, according to a weaver,

There is no proper coordination among the weavers. Every weaver is not selling his/her product to the Mahajana (feudal moneylender) at a fixed rate; rather they sell at different rates. For example, if one weaver sells his product at Rs 45 per piece to the Mahajana, another weaver will sell his product at Rs 41. And another weaver will sell it in Rs 40 per piece. Here in this case the Mahajan bargains with the weaver and gets the material in the lowest possible price. Ultimately the weaver is the loser. We have more production, and hence, less demand. We are selling the product in a haphazard manner. Since handloom is producing less number of products, there is poor demand for the handloom products. The new generation people do not know the abcd.... of handloom weaving and also do not want to be involved in the powerloom activity.

Owing to a lack of product diversification, one particular product gets flooded in the market which gives the middle man a chance to bargain thereby lowering the wage rate and devaluing the work of the weaver. The powerloom of other states are trying to ape the Odisha handloom design as well as powerloom design which again worsens the condition of the handloom as well as the powerloom sector of the state. In this regard, according to a group of weavers, *'powerloom of other states are copying our product in a more sophisticated way. That means they are doing our product by using sophisticated raw material (yarn, dye) and technology'*. From this response it can be inferred that, the powerlooms of Southern and Western India are copying the designs of the powerloom as

well as handloom products of the state of Odisha in a more sophisticated way and they sell their products at a cheaper price thereby leading to the crisis in the powerloom sector in the state of Odisha. Owing to the absence of the cooperative society, the weavers are facing difficulty in storing as well as selling their products, which again gives a chance to the middleman to exploit them.

Absence of the Cooperative Society

Another problem is that the powerlooms of Odisha are not under the cooperative fold rather these are now individual units. There is an absence of either bank or cooperative credit facility in the powerloom sector (Goswami, 1990). The powerloom units are individual units; there are no specific organizations that look after the specific problems of powerloom like raw material, electricity or proper market research in Odisha (Textile Committee Report, Government of India, 2003). Small industries in India have come up in a haphazard, uncontrolled and unplanned manner. A majority of these clusters are based on natural and traditional skills. All these clusters lack proper infrastructural facilities like power, road, water, communications, information and technical issues (Subrahmanya, 2004). After the closing of the powerloom cooperative societies and Odisha Textile Mills, powerlooms have now become individual units and are working in an informal manner. Hence it is difficult for the individual family to run powerlooms without community as well as government support. The shortage of raw material, lack of working capital, shortage of power supply and lack of proper market aggravates the situation. Hence many powerloom weavers are quitting their jobs and shifting to other occupations: according to a powerloom weaver, *'now the independent weaver becomes helpless since he has to do everything, from buying raw material to marketing of the finished product'*.

In Odisha specifically in Siminoi (Dhenkanal) the owner entrepreneurship type of powerloom prevails more. In the owner entrepreneur type all the operations are carried out by one person who takes the entire risk. The master weaver types dominate in Western India, whereas in Surat, there is a little bit of exception (Goswami, 1990).

Owing to the absence of a specific organization to look after the specific problems of the powerloom clusters, the powerloom of Odisha face severe crisis. The initiatives should be taken by the small industry itself particularly through their associations. The importance of achieving and sustaining competitiveness in the long run and investing self-efforts and resources need to be realized by the associations. It will help the small industry in the long run (Subrahmanya, 2004). Because of the absence of these associations like cooperative society, the small industry i.e. powerloom is in severe crisis. Various causes for the closing of Siminoi powerloom clusters have been lucidly explained by a group of weavers.

In the past we had a cooperative society, and we were benefitted out of that society a lot. When the first cooperative society came up, only 50/60 mills were there. At that time the society gave the raw material to the weavers and collected the finished goods from the weaver by giving appropriate wage for the appropriate products. But some clever weavers thought that, if they own their production as well as marketing, then their profit will be more. Likewise all the weavers ran away from the society and society collapsed. Another thing for which the weavers ran away from the society was that the society gradually became irregular in giving raw material and wages to the weavers in proper time. And at the same time, some rich people wanted to open their own powerloom production units. Now the production has been increased. But at the same time other necessary things decreased like market research, proper planning, and coordination among the weavers. Everyone is doing things according to his/her own will. Nobody is there to control the production process. Now the production is more, but we are unable to sell the product in a proper way, for the reason of which the whole benefit is appropriated by the middle man. When there was a cooperative society, we have never faced this kind of marketing and raw material trouble, which is a major problem now. Now unplanned production, no product diversification, improper selling mechanism have worsened the condition of the powerloom sector in Odisha. If we produce the finished goods according to the requirement of the market and according to the taste of the people, then people will definitely buy our product. Instead of doing that, if we only produce Lal Gamcha, Lal Gamcha and Lal Gamcha, then who will buy it. Again its cost is Rs 70, which is again more than the powerloom Lal Gamcha of Erode. That's why our product has no market value. Hence where the raw material is available, the production unit

should be made there. Since we do not have the raw material, for that reason, our production unit is not running properly. We are investing more in the transportation since we have to bring raw material from Nuapatna. Odisha is now days a consumer market, no production is going on here. Since we are doing labour, for that reason we are surviving.

After the closing of the cooperative society, the powerloom weavers are confronted with several difficulties. They are facing difficulties from buying raw materials to selling of the finished products. There is no specific organization to look after their business. Some weavers gave their response in favor of the cooperative society. According to them, cooperative society is an imperative for the smooth functioning of the powerloom industry.

If cooperative society would have been formed, then we will be benefited. Why should we go outside? Since the machines are available in our home, we can weave and run our family. Actually those who have stored the yarn are getting all the profit because they create artificial scarcity in the market, thereby increasing the price of the yarn as per their mood. By giving bribe to the government officials they do all these things.

The large-scale interstate migration can be controlled if the state's industrial development will be emphasized. In Odisha, along with technology, infrastructure has also remained underdeveloped. The government investment in the industry is very low. The history of cooperative development and management of commons is practically nonexistent in the powerloom clusters. Doing business in the home market means making as cheap cloth as possible. It never demanded such attributes like timely delivery, market search and access to information (Roy, 1998). For all these reasons the powerlooms could not flourish in the state of Odisha.

Role of the Middlemen

According to a group of weavers of Siminoi Powerloom Cluster,

We the weavers, by doing hard labour, earn 50 paisa per meter but the whole seller gets Rs 1.00 per meter. Basically the traders are the Marwari and Bengali people. The business is run by the Marwari people. We are getting no profit, we are living from hand to mouth. The Mahajan will tell us, to sell the product at such

a price. The price is decided by the Mahajan. Since the weaver has no choice he has to agree with the rate fixed by the Mahajan. Hence he faces all the trouble. Another thing is that the powerloom weavers do not have proper infrastructure to store their own material.

Since there is no specific organization to look after the problems of the powerloom clusters, the middlemen are taking advantage of the situation. They help the powerloom weavers in terms of credit facility and selling of their product and for doing this, they appropriate a huge profit margin. Hence the actual profit is not reaching to the weavers. This ultimately led to the development of capitalism in the powerloom sector. According to Braverman (1974), work within capitalist organization was exploitative and alienating. For Braverman the search of capitalist interest over time ultimately leads to deskilling and routinization of the worker. Braverman argues that the capitalist owners and managers are intentionally driven to deskill the labour force to lower production cost and ensure greater productivity. Deskilled labour is cheap and easy to control. In turn, work is intellectually and emotionally unfulfilling. This theory is appropriate in the case of the powerloom clusters of Odisha. The middlemen play the role of capitalist and try to deskill the labour force to lower the production cost. Thus they can have a control over the entire labour force and they can exploit the labour force in future.

In Siminoi powerloom cluster, the weavers have not been bestowed with adequate economic and political endowments, on account of which the design/s of several products become the main casualty. The shortage of raw material, inadequate funding and the absence of the cooperative society compel the weavers of the powerloom cluster to make cloth designs according to the choices of cloth merchants. Cloth merchants extend raw material, funding as well as proper marketing facilities for only *Lal Gamcha* to the weavers through the middlemen. The weavers very often have to resort to borrowing informal loans from cloth merchants for the smooth functioning of their family. The absence of government patronage, lack of educational facilities and awareness among the weavers encourage the cloth merchants to deskill most of the weavers by imposing their choices upon the powerloom

weavers, which has resulted in the deskilling of a large section of workforce engaged in weaving in Siminoi powerloom cluster. Cloth merchants' imposition on the weavers to make a particular type of product time and again and unwillingness to create a market for the development of other products alienates weavers from their work. Such alienation or estrangement has led to deskilling of weavers in Siminoi powerloom cluster.

Low Wage to the Weavers

There was a transition from handloom cluster to powerloom cluster in Siminoi initiated by the Government of Odisha in 1972. Earlier, it produced *saree* and other dress materials in the handloom. Powerloom was introduced in Siminoi in order to increase the productivity of the villagers. But at that time nobody could anticipate that introduction of powerloom in the village without proper infrastructure would make the situation worst. Now the weavers of Siminoi are facing a more severe crisis. They are in the stage of ambivalence. They do not know what to do in the present situation. Without critical thinking the government introduced the powerloom in a handloom village. But powerloom is not an indigenous technology rather it is a foreign technology. How far a village can maintain a foreign technology? After the forced disappearance of the traditional technology (handloom) the powerloom arrived. In the phenomena of development, there is a difficulty in figuring out the right level of technology to fit the given circumstances: in other words there is a choice of technology and it cannot be assumed that the level of technology used by the affluent societies is the only possible level, let alone that it is necessarily the best for the poor countries (McRobie, 1979). The government introduced the technology of affluent society in a poor society. For that reason the powerloom technology remains unsustainable. Now the villagers of Siminoi are in a great confusion. Now they are in such a situation that they have already forgotten the indigenous technology (handloom) and at the same time unable to maintain the powerloom machinery. After the breakdown of the traditional social structure (handloom and the management of handloom), a new social structure has emerged (based on powerloom). With the introduction of mechanized large-scale technology, a highly prosperous local industry could disappear (McRobie, 1979).

One of the most important challenges is that the weavers after leaving their ancestral occupation and after accepting this new technology are unable to get two square meals per day. And for that reason many weavers are now quitting this occupation and searching for other occupations. Many weavers do not even find other jobs suitable for them. There are many other factors due to which the weavers cannot switch from one occupation to another occupation, such as distance from home, self-respect, duration of work, nature of work, social life etc. Due to these reasons many weavers of Siminoi are now thinking of reviving the traditional handloom sector, which again is a difficult task. A weaver of Siminoi powerloom cluster of Dhenkanal district opined that '*today, when a daily labour gets Rs 200/Rs 250 per day, and his monthly income is Rs 7,000 approximately, in the powerloom sector, after investing in loom, raw material and marketing the weaver will get Rs 6,000 per month. Now the looms have been decreased from 40 to 30*'. It is clear that the powerloom owners as well as weavers are unable to maintain their livelihood through powerloom business. A daily labourer earns Rs 200/Rs 500 per day without any investment whereas a powerloom weaver is paid Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,000 per month after investing a lakh of rupees. Powerloom workers work for extremely long hours for low wages. They have little or no job security, poor access to medical and educational facilities for themselves and for their children.

A weaver of Siminoi expresses: '*Monthly in two powerloom machines we used to get Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,000. After the maintenance charge and labour payment, the owner gets Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,000*'. Now our argument is that the powerloom weavers are not getting proper wage. There are many causes for which the powerloom weavers are unable to get proper wage. As a weaver mentions further; I am a powerloom weaver; I am getting Rs 150 per day. People are unable to get their livelihood from handloom sector, for that reason they changed to powerloom sector. But again we are facing the same situation. Therefore we have now made this powerloom business a part time business. If we do it on a fulltime basis, we will not even be able to run our families. Hence we have other side businesses. Simultaneously we also act as daily wage labourers.

Regarding the wages, the weaver said, after changing from handloom to powerloom the situation has become worse. Some powerloom weavers also told that they were not even able to earn the amount of profit that they usually earned in the handloom sector in the past. Powerloom weavers are not able to get proper wage, on account of which they do not want to continue in the powerloom sector.

Infrastructure Bottleneck

Infrastructural bottleneck is one of the major causes for this plight of the powerloom sector. A master weaver opined that *'In Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, they have a separate production house for powerloom and they have raw material, government support for which they are running their own business. They have 80 looms in a production house with one printing machine'*. But this common facility centre is not available in Odisha. The weaver also told that *'If the government gives us a loan of Rs 20,000 we have to do so many formalities. Our days are wasted in doing the formalities'*. Here we can say that due to lack of finance the weaver is unable to make proper arrangement for the weaving.

The unavailability of common facility centre in the powerloom sector in Odisha is responsible for the unorganized production of materials in the powerloom sector. In Western India the powerloom sector is very strong because in Western India for example, in Surat from 1950 onwards, there was an extensive middle class investment. The same case also happened with Bhiwandi. The town has an advantage since it is situated near Ahmedabad and Bombay. These two cities are major source of trade and information which enable quick response to the market (Roy, 1998). In contrast, in Odisha this kind of facility is not available. A lack of pre-loom and post-loom facilities is also one of the major hindrances for which sophisticated products cannot be woven. It can be said that due to infrastructural bottleneck, they are unable to produce sophisticated products.

A Lack of Major Renovation in the Powerloom Sector

In Western India powerlooms are increasing day by day, because the weavers are getting huge government patronage and have entrepreneurship quality.

They also get raw material easily from their own state. In Odisha, raw material is not available because cotton is not produced in the state. The state of Odisha also does not get sufficient government patronage for cotton cultivation. According to a weaver,

In western and southern India raw material and government patronage are available. In Odisha only the labour work is being done. Here labour work refers to the weaving work. Yarn and dye come from southern and western India. In Odisha, only weaving is done. The major profit is appropriated by the merchants of southern and western India from where the yarn is coming like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. While selling raw material they keep a high profit margin.

The closing of the handlooms in Siminoi, and an uncritical conversion of handloom to powerloom has made the situation worse. When Siminoi was a handloom belt, it was sustainable. Its sustainability came because of the available infrastructure for handloom, that includes availability of raw material, sufficient pre – and post-loom facilities, product diversification etc. Another thing was that since it was a homemade or indigenous technology, its sustainability was assured. The new technologies that are created by the developed countries are suitable to themselves. Every country can develop its own technology on the basis of its human resource, natural resource, climatic environment and need. Hence a technology developed by one country may not be suitable for other country. Since instead of strengthening our own technology, we prefer to borrow technology, for that reason the foreign technology is not sustainable (Rao, 1989). In Odisha, powerloom is a foreign technology. It becomes difficult to maintain a foreign technology, because weavers of Siminoi do not have adequate expertise on the powerloom technology.

Role of the State

The fact that most of the powerloom units have failed to operate on a viable commercial basis proves the inadequacies of business skills. So far no developmental efforts have been taken to strengthen the level of expertise of the entrepreneurs and the prospective entrants in the field. There is a need to

create training facilities for the existing and prospective entrepreneurs in the powerloom sector (Textile Committee Report, Government of India, 2003). In Odisha powerloom owners lack technical, managerial and financial skill to upgrade the industry. Therefore the extension of new technology in the powerloom is really difficult. Technology development can be achieved in small industry through in-house technological innovation. Technological innovation includes situationally new development and introduction of knowledge-derived tools, artifacts and devices by which people extend and interact with their environment (Fleischer, 1990 cited in Subrahmanya, 2004). But no such training is imparted by the Government of Odisha for development of in-house technological innovation. In Odisha the entrepreneurship quality is not encouraged. According to a government officer of the textiles department of Odisha,

Actually the entrepreneurship quality is not encouraged by the Government of Odisha. Basically the major infrastructure for entrepreneurship is not available in Odisha. A person of Odisha basically wants to depend upon government job or private job because of the absence of entrepreneurship training. No risk taking behaviour also aggravates the situation. Lack of education may be one of the causes for the deterioration of the powerloom sector in Odisha.

Entrepreneurship with social welfare schemes is not encouraged by the state. Owing to lack of education among the unskilled and skilled powerloom weavers, they are actually unable to understand government plans and policies. The government officers are taking advantage of this situation. An officer adds:

The Government of Odisha is not interested in the handloom as well in the powerloom sector. The government officers and leaders have an indifferent attitude to the whole textile sector. Even banks are not interested in giving loans to those interested in doing handloom and powerloom business because banks also know that the handloom as well as powerlooms make a failure scheme in the state of Odisha.

If any industry has to flourish in the state, government support is highly essential. How much a private person can invest in an industry if it is not patronized by the state? In this regard a weaver said that, '*how much a private*

person can invest in an industry, if it will not be patronized by the government seriously. We are only making Gamcha here because of lack of proper infrastructure. Due to lack of proper training to the powerloom weaver, the powerlooms are copying the handloom products and selling it in the market in the brand name of handloom’.

The Government of Odisha has not been paying any attention to handloom as well as powerloom industries, thereby neglecting the textile sector. Technological innovation is very essential. A lack of technological innovation has destroyed the powerloom industry in the state of Odisha (Subrahmanya, 2004). A weaver of Siminoi powerloom cluster explained how the government is not encouraging the enterprising quality among the weavers:

In Surat, one owner has 500/1,000 powerlooms and he runs them successfully. If we have 10 looms, then we think that we have enough. Whatever the government patronage was there, is being stopped now. The government is not encouraging enterprising skill among its people. Total investment in the powerloom sector is Rs 15,000 (machine) + Rs 15,000 (yarn and other raw material). Investment is of Rs 30,000 but there is no profit. The only satisfaction is that we work in our own place and earn some money. If we were working through a cooperative society, then it would have been better.

A Lack of Planned Installation of Powerloom

Relatively better off weavers started to replace handlooms by powerlooms (Roy, 2002). According to the owner of a powerloom unit, ‘those people, who have money, install a powerloom. Who will deny them? The government of Odisha is unable to give us work. Our product is getting sold at foreign country like Indonesia and other country and gets maximum appreciation there. Our talent is getting appreciation outside the country but our government is not recognizing our talent. Then how can the powerloom flourish?’

In this context, it is important to understand the nature of the integration of stable systems of social interaction, that is, of social structure, thus focus on the integration of the motivation of actors with the normative cultural standards which integrate the action system, in our context interpersonally. These standards are patterns of value-orientation, and as such are a

particularly crucial part of the cultural tradition of the social system (Parsons, 1951). There is no rule and regulation in the installation of powerloom. The people who have money can install a powerloom. Now the government of Odisha is unable to create work for the people. One of the weavers expresses that in the past the handloom product of the state of Odisha had a high demand in the international market, which is now waning. In Odisha, all spinning mills were closed due to a lack of government intervention, on account of which there is a shift in occupations. According to a group of weavers of Siminoi powerloom cluster, *'the yarn rate is increasing. Previously the spinning mill was in Odisha, hence we were able to get the yarn easily. The spinning mills which are available are now privatized. And the privatized spinning mill makes yarn for their own requirement and not for us. We have to depend upon other states for the yarn now.'* Owing to the closing of the spinning mills, the weavers are facing difficulty in the procurement of the yarn also.

Discussion

Lack of proper education, lack of business ethics and business skills and greater dependency on foreign technology have hindered the industrial culture of the state. In the phenomenon of development, there is a difficulty in figuring out the right level of technology to fit the given circumstances: in other words there is a choice of technology and it cannot be assumed that the level of technology used by the affluent societies is the only possible one, let alone that it is necessarily the best for the poor countries (McRobie, 1979). The government, instead of giving priority to the existing indigenous knowledge and improving upon that, is relying only on borrowed technology. Since industrial technology is of foreign origin, it is very difficult to maintain that technology. Industrial technology requires highly skilled and professional labour force which is controlled by a range of norms and rules. In order to motivate and keep this labour force intact, there must be a kind of open educational system accompanied by social mobility and relative social equality at large.

Without creating a proper infrastructure for the installation of powerloom, the government introduced the powerloom in the state in a

haphazard manner, for the reason of which the powerloom sector in the state is a failure. Since the powerloom was installed in the state in a haphazard manner, it ultimately leads to irregularities in giving finance to the powerloom sector. Further the closing of the powerloom cooperative society due to heavy corruption has also lowered the condition of the powerloom sector in the state. An ideology which holds the system together. This according to Dunlop (1958) is a set of ideas and beliefs 'commonly held by the actors' involved. Hence there must be common ideology to be followed by the powerloom weavers to survive and compete in the market. Productivity improvement requires not only financial investment but also sincerity, cooperation and skill from the workers. Cordial industrial relations are very much important for ensuring higher productivity and full utilization of the production capacity. For that reason the management and the supervisory staff need to build a suitable organizational climate where the workers can do their best job (Rao, 1989). The powerloom sector of the state still lacks all these qualities, which need to be strengthened. Provision of education, training and motivation creates a cordial relationship between the management and workers which ultimately leads to a better productivity (Rao, 1989). Management should concentrate on imparting quality training on various aspects of the work. Perhaps in these matters, the Japanese and other competitors are more efficient than India (Mote, 1967). Since there is a lack of product diversification in the state, there is a less competitive environment in the state for which the powerloom is not able to flourish. Cotton prices tend to fluctuate depending on the size of the crop. In other countries the government has taken steps to maintain the heavy fluctuation in cotton prices by deploying price stabilization policies. However, this has not happened in India (Anubhai, 1988). Since the cotton price is high, and Odisha is also not a chief producer of cotton, hence it ultimately leads to the shortage of raw material in the sector, thereby responsible for the plight of the textile industry, both handlooms as well as powerlooms.

■ NOTES

1. Sumner (1906) coined the term, 'ethnocentrism' to describe prejudicial attitudes between in-groups and out-groups by which *our* attitudes, customs and behaviour are unquestionably and uncritically treated as superior to *their* social arrangements.
2. For a better and critical understanding of the nature of the state, refer to Alavi and Shanin (1982: 1).
3. Two aspects of (imperative) problem of order may ... be distinguished, order in the symbolic systems which make communication possible, and order in the mutuality of motivational orientation to the normative aspect of expectations, the 'Hobbesian' problem of order (Mills, 1959: 25).
4. Siminoi is a powerloom cluster in Dhenkanal District in the state of Odisha.
5. Gamcha is a thin, coarse, traditional cotton towel found in India and Bangladesh that is used to dry the body after bathing or wiping sweat. Gamcha is the local term for a sweat towel. Lal means red. Lal Gamcha means red towel.
6. Calendering is a finishing process used on cloth where fabric is folded in half and passed under rollers at high temperatures and pressure.
7. Product diversification is only one of the four aspects of growth strategies: the other three aspects include market penetration, product development and market development (Ansoff, 1957). Further, diversification may be of three types, viz., concentric, horizontal and conglomerate or lateral.

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Empowerment as an Indicator of Development of Tribal Women in Rural Jharkhand

Bhola Nath Ghosh*

Abstract

Women's empowerment had emerged as an important issue in the last decade of the 20th century. Empowerment could be defined in terms of a process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs as well as interests. Noteworthy that India is placed very low in terms of gender development index (GDI) as well as gender development measure (GDM) in the human development reports annually issued by the UNDP. A gender empowerment measure (GEM) is constructed according to the UNDP guideline in respect of opportunities for the women. Three key areas are being considered – political participation, economic participation and decision-making power and control over economic resources for the said purpose, which are some important indicators of development differentials across the countries. But considering the extreme rural setting

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in Jharkhand, we have relaxed the criteria little bit and taken the close substitutes of the variables on which the measure is constructed by the UNDP. The paper tries to: (a) bring out the importance of the socio-economic variables in determining the levels of empowerment of women, which further lead to human development, and (b) examine the level of awareness of women towards their health and environment. And the study reveals that the level of education and awareness towards health and environment in the study area is not up to the mark.

Keywords: Empowerment of women, Socio-economic variables, Gender empowerment measures (GEM), Political participation, Participation in decision-making, Control over economic resources.

Introduction

Development is a multidimensional phenomenon. Several attempts have been taken to prepare a composite index, which capture not only economic but also social, cultural and political indicators. Here, we are interested to understand the situation of tribal women in terms of empowerment. So, we will emphasize on empowerment. Therefore, I intend to slightly change the title which was printed in the seminar notice, we want to start the heading as empowerment in lieu of development. We would like to emphasize on empowerment as an indicator of the development of tribal women in rural Jharkhand.

Women's empowerment is a multifaceted, multidimensional and multilayered concept. It is the action and interaction of various factors, namely, socio-economic, political, cultural, psychological/attitudinal and so on. Women empowerment could be described as a process in which women exercise control over resources: material (means of production) as well as human (social, cultural, educational and intellectual). Empowerment means the access to power in order that their wishes can be materialized. Empowering women does not mean to give them power to dominate others or to use power to establish their superiority over others. In reality it is to empower themselves only.

The primary objective of this paper is to understand the level of development achieved by women in Jharkhand in the beginning of 21st century in the eyes of millennium development goal. For understanding it, we shall try to consider a number of socio-economic variables for estimating the level of women empowerment in the rural set up. Empowerment can be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests. Women's empowerment has emerged as an important issue in the last decade of the 20th century. Empowerment can serve as a powerful instrument for women to achieve upward social and economic mobility and achieve power and status in society. It is a source of mobility, equality and emancipation both at the individual and societal level (Rao, 2005). Gender development constitutes an important part of development in this context. It is important to bring women into mainstream of development so that society benefits from women's empowerment. According to Gurumoorthy (2000), empowering women contributes to social development. Economic progress in any country whether developed or underdeveloped could be achieved through social development.

The concept of empowerment has been in existence since the 1990s, and several scholars and development agencies have strived to map women's socio-economic and political situations (Mizan, 1994; Bisnath and Elson, 1999; Kabeer, 1999; Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2005; Heyzer, 2005; Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Studies on empowerment generally highlight dimensions such as access to resources, control over resources, or the impacts of access and control over resources (Kishor and Neitzel, 1996; Elson and Cagaty, 2000).

Based on a few macro level indicators like education and income, the UNDP (2000) has developed a gender-related development index. According to this index, the gender inequality in 1998 is high in India and ranks a poor 108th out of the 143 countries for which the index value is available. In India, a gender gap in literacy still persists, though it has narrowed over the years. According to the 1951 census, only nine per cent of females were literate, compared to 27 per cent of males. Female's literacy improved faster than males after 65 years of independence, the level of literacy for females and males is 54 and 75 per cent, respectively. The differentials are particularly wide in the states of Bihar and

Uttar Pradesh. It is not surprising that India is placed very low in terms of gender development index (GDI) as well as gender development measure (GEM) in the Human Development Reports annually issued by the UNDP.

A gender empowerment measure (GEM) is constructed according to the UNDP guideline in respect of opportunities for the women. Three key areas are being considered – political participation, economic participation and decision-making power and control over economic resources for the said purpose, which are some important indicators of development differentials across the countries. But considering the extreme rural setting in Jharkhand, we have relaxed the criteria little bit and taken the close substitutes of the variables on which the measure is constructed by the UNDP.

Development is a multidimensional phenomenon. Several attempts have been made to define and prepare a composite index, which captures not only economic but also social, cultural, environmental, psychological, political and philosophical aspects. So when Morris (1975) defined development in terms of improvement in the quality of life of people, Liu (1975) noted that quality of life has multiple dimensions ranging from economic to social, environmental, political, cultural, psychological and philosophical aspects.

Gender relations are the key to understand the inequalities between men and women, which may be explicit and implicit. At macro level, the explicit measures are well known and are revealed in statistics depicting differences in the sex ratio, child infanticide, literacy rates, health and nutrition indicators, wage differentials and ownership of land and property. The implicit measures are embedded in power relations and hierarchies and are more difficult to measure. At micro level, in the households, in custom, religion and culture, these intra-household inequalities result in unequal distribution of power, unequal control over resources and decision-making; dependence rather than self-reliance; and unfair, unequal distribution of work, drudgery, and even food (GoI).¹ In order to remove the evil effects of such discrimination from the society and to promote gender equality; empowerment of women is being declared as one of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),² (Goal-3 of the eight goals targeted to be achieved by 2015).

Review of Literature

In 1995, the UNDP³ introduced two new indices: a gender-related development index (GDI) and a gender empowerment measure (GEM) in order to know the position of gender-related development in comparison to general level of development measured in conventional sense on overall income and employment. Focusing on women's opportunities rather than their capabilities, the GEM captures gender inequality in three key areas: (i) Political participation and decision-making power, as measured by women's and men's percentage shares of parliamentary seats; (ii) Economic participation and decision-making power, as measured by two indicators – women's and men's percentage in employment as legislators, senior officials and managers and women's and men's percentage shares of professional and technical positions; and (iii) Power over economic resources, as measured by women's and men's estimated earned income.

The GEM is calculated using equally distributed equivalent percentage (EDEP) mechanism, which was first developed by Atkinson (1970) while deriving a measure of income inequality through social welfare function. Ministry of Women and Child Development of Government of India (MWCD) supported by UNDP had changed the way of measuring the gender gaps in development and empowerment for India. According to MWCD the indices used by United Nations in general have been developed from a northern perspective and do not incorporate the perspective of the countries of southern hemisphere especially of India. With this as the objective, they decided to recast GDI and GEM for India and its states/union territories. The final choice of dimensions and indicators was adopted on the need to use variables that are intuitively understandable and relevant, within the constraints imposed by availability of reliable data and for maintaining international comparability, the dimensions used are the same as used by UNDP. Equal weights are also being assigned to all the dimensions. 'However, within dimensions, the indicators chosen, weights and goal posts would be more relevant to the Indian context' (Gendering Human Development Indices, MWCD, 2009).

The dimensions and indicators identified for computing GEM as followed by MWCD are given below:

Dimension 1: Participation in Political Arenas and in Decision-Making by Women:

Indicators: (a) Percentage Share of Parliamentary Seats; (b) Percentage share of seats in Legislature; (c) Percentage share of seats in Zilla Parishad; (d) Percentage share of seats in Gram Panchayats; (e) Percentage of candidates in Electoral Process in National Parties; and (f) Percentage of electors exercising their Right to Vote.

Dimension 2: Economic Participation and Decision-Making Power of Women:

Indicators: (a) Percentage share in Indian Administrative Services and Indian Forest Service; (b) Percentage share of Professionals graduating from medical and engineering colleges; and (c) Percentage share of High Court Judges (Supreme Court Judges for all India estimate).

Dimension 3: Power of Women over Economic Resources:

Indicators: (a) Percentage of Female/Male Operational Land Holdings; (b) Percentage of Female/Male Availed of Credit (accounts over Rs 2 Lakh); and (c) Percentage of Female/Male Estimated Earned Income Share.

Using goal posts and weights,⁴ the dimension indices are calculated. In case of GDI and GEM, while calculating dimension indices, the penalty for gender inequality i.e. the value of 'ε' is taken as 2, which is moderate penalty. The methodology of calculation is the same as followed by UNDP. The aggregate score of GEM for India was 0.451 and for Jharkhand 0.350 in 2006 (Gendering Human Development Indices, MWCD, 2009).

Mehta (1996) using representation in Lok Sabha, state legislatures, gram panchayats, panchayat samitis and zilla parishads; literacy rate; exercise of the right to vote; life expectancy and income for the 16 states explained the existence of gender-based disparities and its degree of variation across those states that can be meaningfully used by policy-makers.

In the present study, we would like to examine the level of empowerment of women in extreme rural setup of Jharkhand. But there are problems relating

to the availability of data and using the suitable formula for estimation. In most of the cases if the standard formula of GEM is used at the village level, the value of the indices would be very close to zero reflecting very poor performance as the female participation in various socio-economic field is negligible according to the norms set by MWCD or UNDP for measuring gender empowerment measure. But still there is a scope of measuring the gender empowerment in a similar manner for rural areas which is discussed in the later part of this paper.

Methodology

Our focus of analysis was at the grass root level. We have chosen the state of Jharkhand for our analysis that ranked 32nd (with value 0.350 in 2006) in respect of dimension-wise GEM scores as constructed by MWCD for 35 states/union territories after recasting the measure realistically. Jharkhand also ranks last among the newly born states which came into being in 2000. The economy of the newly born state is predominantly agricultural even though a large number of mineral mines are prevalent. Poverty is a common scene especially in the rural setting and the society is characterized by its patrilineal structure even though large number of tribal groups are there.⁵ However, the panchayati raj system is yet to come for the smooth implementation of several rural development and poverty eradication programme. Therefore, there is no question of reservation in the local administration and politics for the women who suffer most in the form of deprivation and lack of empowerment. In the present study the gender deprivation has been examined through the comparison of status of women, in terms of various social, economic and political indicators with that of their male counterpart. For the purpose of analysis, a primary survey was conducted during 2007–08 for the collection of information at the family level from eight villages in four blocks of two districts chosen by systematic multistage sampling procedure. First of all, two districts of the state, namely, Giridih and Dumka have been selected, one from comparatively developed and another from underdeveloped section of the districts. In the same way two blocks, Bengabad and Giridih from the district Giridih and two blocks Dumka and

Ramgarh were selected, on the basis of records of District Census Handbook. Finally four villages are chosen from each of the two districts i.e. two from each of the selected blocks. The villages chosen from Giridih district are Baghra, Bhandaridih, Harsinggraidih and Parsatanr and other four villages of Dumka are Karikadar, Kusmaha, Murabahal and Purnia. Thereafter, a complete enumeration of households of the selected villages has been done and we observe a total of 1,298 households combining all the eight villages of the selected districts, namely, Giridih and Dumka. Finally 50 households from each of the selected villages have been chosen as final sample units by the application of stratified random sampling method. Here, considering the caste and educational status of the head of the households, the stratification is done. The selection and distribution of sample on the basis of the sex of the household head is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Sampling and Distribution of the Households by the Sex of the Head

District	Block	Village	Sex of the Households Head		
			Male	Female	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Giridih	Bengabad	Baghra	49	1	50
		Bhandaridih	50	0	50
	Giridih	Harsinggraidih	50	0	50
		Parsatanr	48	2	50
Dumka	Dumka	Karikadar	49	1	50
		Murabahal	49	1	50
	Ramgarh	Kusmaha	50	0	50
		Purnia	49	1	50
Total			394 (98.5)	6 (1.5)	400 (100.00)

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

Initially data have been collected on socio-economic characteristics of the households by questioning the head of the particular household. In the second stage, the heads of all the final sampled households were interviewed for further information relevant for the study. Also adult female members of the selected households were also interviewed in order to have a comparison with the information on perception and opinion provided by the male heads as here we did not find sufficient female heads for comparison of status of male heads with the female heads. Also, the adult male members of a subset of selected households were interviewed to see if there are differences in the perceptions and opinions.

Observation and Analysis

We need to recast realistically for capturing the level of empowerment in the rural villages of India. (All dimensions are given equal weight i.e. one-third). In this context we want to consider the indicators which actually enhance the capability of women, the expansion of choices in front of them by which they may consider themselves to be empowered. We are only interpreting their condition according to our perspective, but what they consider about their life is much more important, but still expanding the choices or rather their capability is our concern, but how they or society functions with the available choices is a difficult question beyond our scope in this analysis. The values we have inherited through generations, way of looking at different issues matters a lot. Still expansion of information, knowledge and participations in social networks empower them and ask them to consider their own situation.

We have constructed gender empowerment measure according to the formula used by UNDP.⁶ We have thus considered some different indicators to make-up the gap as far as possible depending upon the availability and those are relevant for the analysis of rural Jharkhand. These are given below.

For understanding the level of gender empowerment by GEM, we have considered the following dimensions as well as indicators:

Dimension 1: Participation in Social and Political Arenas and Decision-making Power of Women:

Indicators:

- (a) Percentage of Female/Male who are member of any club, community centre, social organization, NGO etc.,
- (b) Percentage of Female/Male who are member of any political organization,
- (c) Percentage of Female/Male who regularly attend/watch cultural programme,
- (d) Percentage of Female/Male who knows Panchayat member representing their area,
- (e) Percentage of Female/Male who are aware of the activities of the Panchayat. (Weight – one-fifth for each indicator within the dimension i.e. equal weight is given to all the indicators here).

Dimension 2: Economic Participation and Decision-making Power:**Indicators:**

- (a) Percentage of Female/Male engaged in business/services,
- (b) Percentage of Female/Male who has read at least up to class five. (Weight – half for each indicator within the dimension).

Dimension 3: Power over Economic Resources:**Indicators:**

- (a) Percentage of Female/Male who have received any kind of property by inheritance,
- (b) Percentage of Female/Male agricultural worker in their village. (Weight – half for each indicator within the dimension).

In case of all the indicators we have taken the maximum value as 100 and minimum value as 0. But in case of the agricultural wage we have taken maximum value and minimum value for male as Rs. 106.96 and Rs 47.64 respectively and for female as Rs 62.31 and Rs 37.78 respectively.⁷ In all of the equally distributed indices for all indicators we have taken female and male population share as 0.5 as in each of the household we have considered the

Table 2
Village Level Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) for the Sample Areas of Jharkhand

Village	a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	a2	b2	a3	b3	DIM 1 Index	DIM 2 Index	DIM 3 Index	GEM
	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
	Social	Political	Attend	Knows	Aware	Business	Up to	Prop	Agri.	Social &	Econo	Econo	Village
	Particip	Particip	cultural	P.M	P.	/Service	class V	erty	Worker	particip	mic	mic	level
	ation	ation		Activi	Activi					ation	Resou	resourc	
				-ties	-ties						rces	resourc	
Baghra	0	0	0.989	1	0	0	0.124	0	0.358	0.398	0.062	0.179	0.213
Bhandaridih	0.038	0	1	0.989	0	0	0.032	0	0.473	0.405	0.016	0.236	0.219
Harsingraidih	0	0	1	0.989	0	0.038	0.251	0	0.545	0.398	0.144	0.272	0.272
Parsatanr	0	0	0.989	1	0	0.037	0.140	0	0.384	0.398	0.088	0.192	0.226
Karikadar	0	0	1	0.980	0	0.036	0.346	0	0.041	0.396	0.191	0.020	0.202
Kusmaha	0	0	0.979	0.863	0	0	0.169	0	0.041	0.368	0.084	0.020	0.158
Murabahal	0	0	1	0.989	0	0.072	0.439	0	0.039	0.398	0.255	0.019	0.224
Purnia	0.038	0	0.989	0.979	0	0	0.173	0	0.041	0.401	0.086	0.020	0.169

Note: Ki: indicator k of dimension i, k = (a, b, c, d, e), i = (1, 2, 3).

Source: Field Survey conducted during 2007-08.

response of the household heads as well as that of counterparts, but in case of agricultural wage index we have taken the population shares in terms of the participation of the household heads and counterparts in agriculture. Actually the GEM measure in this case can be called as the Village Level GEM Measure. The computation and the variation in the level of gender empowerment measure is shown in Table 2.

It is observed from the Table 2 that values of some indicators' b1, e1, a3 are zero for all the villages. For b1 and a3 as the value of the female/counterpart index is zero, the final value of the index also turns to be zero, thereby representing strong gender bias in this regard. This happens because in all the villages all the members of any political organization are male and none of their female counterparts had received any kind of property by inheritance. This is why till now after marriage the females take whatever is provided in the form of dowry, and they do not receive any share of their ancestral property even though there is a legal provision for that. All ancestral property is being inherited by the male members only. Similarly, females in those areas do not involve themselves (also not allowed from their families) in active politics, which could be changed (as happened in Tripura and West Bengal) to a certain extent (Ghosh and De, 2003)) with the introduction of local self-government at the panchayat level. It is very interesting to find that all the household heads/males and counterparts/females are not aware of the activities of panchayat system. The ideas of direct democracy which we talk about these days are just a myth in this type of social settings. This fact must be taken care off in a diligent manner for ensuring higher level of development in these rural setups. Similarly for a1 and a2 we have five and four villages which have got the indicators' value as zero which is reflected from Table 3. It happens because almost all of the household heads are not members of any club, community centre, social organization, NGO etc. While in four out of the eight sample villages, more than 50 per cent of the female counterparts are the member of some social organizations. It is observed that women of some villages take part in the social network system which has an important role in

empowering women. In this context one may also argue that men are lagging behind the women in forming a viable social network in those villages that play an important role in the development process.

Table 3

Membership of Social Network (SN) and Participation in Business and Services

<i>Village</i>	<i>Male Members(SN)</i>	<i>Female Members(SN)</i>	<i>Males in Business & Services</i>	<i>Females in Business & Services</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Baghra	0	0	11	0
Bhandaridih	1	24	2	0
Harsingraidih	0	0	18	1
Parsatanr	0	0	12	1
Karikadar	0	19	11	1
Kusmaha	0	0	2	0
Murabahal	0	28	18	2
Purnia	1	28	2	0

Source: Compiled from the Field Survey conducted during 2007-08.

In case of c1 and d1 the values are close to 1 and that reflect almost a perfect equality situation with regard to attending/watching cultural programmes. Thus we can say that almost all of these rural people are in a well knit traditional village culture, which if guided by quality education, training programme leading to employment generation, can enhance the participation of women in various socio-economic activities leading towards a higher level of development.

As noted earlier, we observed a very sharp discrimination with respect to inheritance of property for the sample villages, where the ancestral property is inherited by the males and not by females (Table 4). Where the percentage of male is lower than 100, it is an indication that some of them could not inherit which may be due to the non-availability or those do not want.

Table 4*Property Received by Inheritance in the Study Area*

<i>Village</i>	<i>Percentage of Male Household Heads, Received Ancestral Property</i>	<i>Percentage of Female Counterparts, Received Ancestral Property</i>
<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
Baghra	68	0
Bhandaridih	60	0
Harsingraidih	20	0
Parsatanr	10	0
Karikadar	62	0
Kumaha	92	0
Murabahal	70	0
Purnia	98	0

Source: Compiled from the Field Survey conducted during 2007-08.

In the study area we observed that marriages take place at very young age for both males and females, which may be due to the lack of education. Moreover, parents want to get relieved of their burden of daughters whom they used to regard as liability. However, the gap between the age at marriage of bride and that of groom is more or less same in all the villages of the study area.

Table 5*Average Age in Years at the Time of Marriage*

<i>Village</i>	<i>Bride</i>	<i>Bridegroom</i>
<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
Baghra	17	20
Bhandaridih	17.08	20.6
Harsingraidih	17	20
Parsatanr	17	20
Karikadar	21	23
Kumaha	20.9	22.94
Murabahal	21	23
Purnia	20.94	22.94

Source: Compiled from the Field Survey conducted during 2007-08.

Generally women are less empowered in the poor households and their level of empowerment decreases with the incidence of poverty. In the present analysis, we computed the headcount index for measuring the proportion of poor in each village.

Table 6

Use of Health Facilities by Women from the Registered Medical Practitioner during Pregnancy

<i>Village</i>	<i>No. of Visits to doctor during pregnancy for the birth of last child</i>	<i>No. of times of tetanus toxoid injection taken for last baby</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)
Baghra	1.86	0.98
Bhandaridih	1.96	0.98
Harsingraidih	1.96	0.98
Parsatanr	1.84	0.92
Karikadar	1.85	1
Kusmaha	0.86	0.88
Murabahal	2	1
Purnia	1.85	1.32

According to Maternal and Child Health, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, three visits to doctor during the pregnancy and two tetanus toxoid injections during the same period is at least needed. While the survey report shows that the utilization of the medical facilities for the purpose is far below the minimum requirement. In terms of average visit to doctor the highest value is observed 2 in case of Murbahal and the lowest 0.86 is observed in case of Kusmaha. The overall picture is very low with respect to all India standards. Similarly, the use of tetanus injections during pregnancy is less than 1 on an average in Kusmaha, which is the lowest among all the sample villages. It indicates that all the women do not visit doctor even a single time and take tetanus injection. It is the highest in Purnia with figure recorded as 1.32 on an average, which is also very low considering the Indian average

standards. The observation reflects the strong lack of awareness in health and also the constraints they face in enjoying a healthy life.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

From the overall analysis, we can conclude that the study area of Jharkhand is heavily poverty stricken and there is high inter-village variation of it. But it should be noted that most of the families are below poverty line and the level of empowerment is also very low, despite high inter-village variation. So, overall development for all sections of the society including women needs to be prioritized.

Figures in all the human development indicators (income, education and health) for women are extremely low, which could be due to discrimination and deprivation in occupation, education and lack of either healthcare facilities or awareness. These areas need special attention for the desired welfare of whole population of the area.

The discussion made here indicates that empowerment requires full participation of those who are empowered in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the action strategies. Hence any strategy for women's empowerment must aim at creating the power among men and women to collaborate with each other in order to achieve their fullest potentials as human beings which must lead both the sexes to enjoy freedom with dignity. Such an atmosphere may be created only when women's collectives along with men, civil society, NGOs, governmental agencies and programmes and the social work professionals would establish a meaningful partnership with one another.

Among the indirect measures of empowerment, education in particular is important and plays a positive role in enhancing different dimensions of empowerment. Of the three direct measures of empowerment, like involvement in decision-making, freedom of movement and access to money/material resources, women, particularly in Jharkhand, are the least empowered in terms of decision-making, which turns out to be an important indicator of the evidence against empowerment.

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■ NOTES

1. MWCD – Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India.
2. MDGs – Millennium Development Goals.
3. UNDP – United Nations Development programme.
4. Gendering Human Development Indices, 2009, Ministry of Women and Child Development.
5. In the tribal dominated North-Eastern states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland we observe matrilineal framework of the society and there are Dorbars in the absence of any Panchayati Raj system of local self-government.
6. Dimension index = (actual value-minimum value)/(maximum value-minimum value), Equally Distributed index = $\{[\text{female population share (female index}^{-1})] + [\text{male population share (male index}^{-1})]\}^{-1}$ for each indicator.
7. All India annual average daily wage rates in different agricultural occupations, 2007-08
<http://labourbureau.gov.in/WR%20Rural%India%202k7-8%Summary20Pages201-3.pdf>

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Everyday Politics of Water in Village Community

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to explore the questions of access and control over water for agriculture in a village community. The key argument is that politics of water in village is a micro level, everyday phenomenon. Village community in India is essentially hierarchical in its structural arrangements and access to any resource is determined by caste-class array of the rural populace. Since, the selected village has numerical preponderance of lower castes i.e. Chamars and Pasis. Of late land ownership among them has made them conscious about their water rights. It has led to the emergence of contestation and conflict over water in a village among the lower castes and higher caste Brahmins who are in minority. Thakurs and Muslims (although are not part of village populace) are other dominating castes as they are economically and politically influential and their fields lay nearby lower caste farmers. The everyday politics of water in Nasratpur village of Uttar Pradesh reveals that dominance, resistance, conflict on the one

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hand and negotiation, support, alliance and mutual adjustment on the other, is a daily routine activity engaging all strata, higher, middle and lower caste in the process.

Keywords: Politics of water, Everyday politics, Caste dominance, Land distribution, Changing social equations, Caste conflict.

Introduction

‘Politics of Water’ is one of the most used phrases to understand the process of production, control, allocation and use of water amongst various groups at different levels (macro or micro, global or local and across various disciplines). ‘Politics’ has been defined by various scholars with various connotations. Lasswell (1936) states that politics is all about who gets what, when and how. However, politics is the complex or aggregate relationships of people in society, especially those relationships involving authority or power, any activity concerned with the acquisition of power or factors leading up to influencing something. Politics is about the control, allocation, production and use of resources and also the values and ideas underlying those activities (Kerkvliet, 2009). It embraces the network of social relationships involving power or authority, leading to competition, conflict, domination and resistance on one hand and negotiations, alliance, cooperation, adjustment on the other. ‘How do the powerful secure the compliance of those who are dominated – and, more specifically, how do the powerful secure other’s willing compliance?’ (Lukes, 2005: 12), is the essence of politics of water.

Everyday Politics of Water

‘Everyday politics’ is a micro level phenomenon and is best suited to understand the access to and control over water in village society. Benedict Kerkvliet (2009) first coined the word ‘everyday politics’ and has stated that politics in peasant societies is mostly the everyday, quotidian sort, in his study of villages of the Philippines and Vietnam. He analysed the changing agricultural relations due to green revolution, underlying factors of a large rebellion in San Recardo and its surrounding villages, the acrimonious relationship between large landowners and their tenants and their farm

workers, their organization structure and their negotiations with government authorities.

‘Everyday politics involves people embracing, complying with, adjusting and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of or allocation of resources... . It can occur in organization but everyday politics is itself not organized. It can occur where people live and work. Often it is entwined with individuals and small groups’ activities while making a living, raising their families, wrestling with daily problems, and interacting with others like themselves and with the superiors and subordinates. Everyday politics also includes resource production and distribution practices within households and families and within small communities in ways that rely primarily on local people’s own resources with little involvement of formal organizations’ (Kerkvliet, 2009: 232). Everyday politics of resistance is the most studied form of everyday politics. Against this backdrop, the present paper aims at exploring the everyday politics of water in an Indian village. There are some relevant studies reflecting upon everyday politics of water.

Narayanan and Kamath (2012) have explored serious inequalities in the distribution of water within and between villages and observed democratic deficit of local governance in semi arid watershed of Udaipur. Unequal caste, class and power relations have aggravated the scarcity of water causing resistance by dalits in a Gujarat village, who eventually had to restrain due to dominant upper castes (Prakash and Sama, 2006). Peasants’ struggle for equitable distribution of water in government sponsored water schemes also reveals contestations and negotiations within and between villages of Khanpur Taluka and the government officials (Patankar and Omvedt, 1991) and in resistance in Baliraja dam in Sangli district of Maharashtra (Phadke, 1990; Rout, 2009).

A case study conducted in a group of eight villages in Jharkhand reveals the water sharing conflicts between head-reachers and tail-enders within the village and between upstream and downstream villages. At the time of construction of dam and canal, a local advisory committee of village farmers was formed to represent local priorities and farmers’ interests. Later, when the

construction work was completed, the same committee was converted into user group's management committee. It is important here to mention that the user group's management committee has no representative from Musahar, the scheduled caste community of the villages and it has led to complete negligence of their water rights. Therefore, conflicts over water sharing are not only water based conflicts, these are conflicts between castes, communities and villages and the farmers' organization is not able to distribute water equally in village hierarchy (Lal et al., 2006). Nevertheless, scholars argue that effectively functioning traditional farmers' organizations have been successful in managing irrigation systems in India. For instance, '*ahar-pyne*', an indigenous irrigation system in south Bihar has successfully incited the local farming community in large numbers against caste divisions and ecological obstacles for over 100 years and ensured equitable distribution of water among individual cultivators (Pant, 1998). Further, there are tanks under local management in southern India reflecting a very high level of performance Mosse (2006). Organizational and financial sustainability of Pani Panchayats is linked with equity and dominance at the level of village social structure (Thakur and Pattnaik, 2002).

Ownership of modern water extraction means (tube well and pump set) is restricted to upper caste farmers having large landholdings and the marginal farmers from lower caste groups are still not within the reach of the modern tools. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, the backward caste communities are racing ahead of the upper castes in terms of ownership of modern agricultural implements and the marginal farmers from SCs/STs communities find ownership of mechanical water extraction devices and modern agricultural implements out of their reach (Pant, 2005).

Some of the research questions of the study are: (1) village social structure (caste-class dynamics) is decisive to water use either in common property resource or in state owned irrigation structure; (2) hierarchical arrangement of village society creates barriers to equitable distribution of benefits of state-led irrigation development; (3) effective organization of farmers may facilitate equitable distribution of water and resolve the caste-based conflicts.

In the study village, canal, the key source of irrigation, is an outcome of state development intervention. Empirical analysis of access to the benefits of such development initiatives suggests that at the local level, social-structural set up is decisive to the distribution of fruits of irrigation development. The large and middle farmers have better access to irrigation either through tube wells or canals (Dhawan, 1982; Bardhan, 1984; Pant and Rai, 1985; Shah, 1993; Pant, 2004 and 2005).

The study attempts to articulate the phenomenon of everyday politics¹ in a village, viz., Nasratpur of Raebareli district of central Uttar Pradesh. It argues that how everyday politics emerges out of the caste-class backdrop of the village and is reflected in the forms of dominance, resistance, conflict, support and adjustments.

Some key objectives of the study are: To assess the role of hierarchy in access to and control over water for agriculture; interactions among various social groups across caste, class and gender in order to understand everyday politics; modernization of agriculture and irrigation and changing social relationships among various caste groups in the village.

Methodology

Nasratpur village in Tiloi block of Raebareli district of Uttar Pradesh has been studied by covering the entire households of the village. The qualitative primary data were collected through a semi-structured interview schedule, observation, focused group discussion and oral history method and case study methods. The respondents were chosen to represent the different sections in the village. To obtain further relevant information about various developments with regard to water access and disparities, interviews of the head of the households were undertaken. Further, the secondary data was collected from Block Development office, Tehsil office, Census office and some relevant publications from the state irrigation department.

The rationale behind selecting the village was its location in the command area of the minor irrigation project at Nasratpur and social milieu of its inhabitants. Nasratpur due to its location in head reaches of the minor

irrigation project gets water in abundance. However, being a multi-caste village with numerically preponderant scheduled caste population, it encounters the problem of unequal distribution of water leading to deprivation and marginalization of poor scheduled caste marginal farmers and conflict situation.

II

The Project

Nasratpur village is situated in the head reach of the minor Nasratpur which is a part of Sharda Sahayak Canal Irrigation System. Sharda Sahayak Canal Irrigation System is an outcome of Sharda Canal Project (SCP) which was commissioned in 1926 for providing protective irrigation to 15 districts of central and eastern Uttar Pradesh. It emerged from Upper Sharda Barrage located at Banbasa village of Nainital district in Uttaranchal state. However, after four decades of SCP's installation, in late 1960s, there was a dramatic spurt in demand for irrigation owing to the onset of green revolution in India in general and in the command area of Sharda Canal in particular. The study conducted by the irrigation department of UP in 1967 reveals that SCP was able to provide irrigation to only 19 per cent of its command area. Hence a new project, called Sharda Sahayak Pariyojana (SSP), was conceived and formulated in 1968 for providing canal irrigation to those unserved areas of SCP's command.

Being one of the premier river diversion-based irrigation projects of India, SSP provides canal irrigation to 16 districts of central and eastern UP. The 260 kilometer long Feeder Channel of SSP emerges from the banks of Sharda River located in Sharda Nagar village of Lakhimpur Khiri district. Five major canals, viz., Dariyabad, Barabanki, Pratapgarh, Allahabad and Haidergarh arise from the Feeder Channel that provide irrigation to lakhs of farmers in 150 development blocks of 16 districts in UP.

The state of Uttar Pradesh is endowed with abundant water resources both at surface and underground level with vast fertile tract of land; however due to its ever increasing population, the challenges being faced in mostly

disjointed and unorganized sectoral development and management process in various use sectors e.g. drinking, agriculture, industrial, etc. The state adopted a progressive water policy in 1999 to ensure that the development and management of water resources would meet the overall development perceptions of the state. In order to achieve the objectives of the state water policy, Government of Uttar Pradesh has received a credit from IDA towards the cost of 'Uttar Pradesh Water Sector Restructuring Project' (UPWSRP) through Government of India. The UPWSRP envisaged a comprehensive programme of reforms in management of state water resources in general and irrigation, drainage and ground water in particular. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sharda Sahayak Canal Irrigation System was one of the major objectives under the project.

Before the beginning of the rehabilitation and de-silting task under the project, Nasratpur minor along with other minors of the area was facing acute problems of siltation leading to water logging in the fields. Villagers reported that about 50 *bighas* of land of village was waterlogged and only suitable for paddy cropping. During the fieldwork, it was observed that the reconstruction and rehabilitation activities have already been undertaken and water logging has been reduced to some extent. However, villagers have been facing other problems such as complaint of construction of small size outlets which release less water into the channels. Despite such constraints, canal water proved to be crucial for the farmers of the Nasratpur village which has numerical preponderance of scheduled caste who own very small chunks of lands ranging from less than one *bigha* to three *bighas*.

More than two-third of the total population of the village belongs to scheduled castes comprising of chamars, pasis and dhobis and out of them, majority belong to chamar community. Upper caste hierarchy of the village has been marked by the presence of Brahmins. Middle strata comprises of bhurji, murai, nai, lohar and teli. Chamars, dhobis and pasis belong to bottom of the caste hierarchy. Few households belong to mangta, scheduled tribe and they are landless.

Both canal and tube well are used for watering the fields but mostly canal water is the key source as the village situates in the head reach of the minor Nasratpur and receives water in abundance. The interplay of caste, class and power becomes crucial in access to water from public means, i.e. canal water. Out of 81 cultivators in Nasratpur, 49 cultivators are those who are totally dependent on canal water and all of them own less than or equal to two *bighas* of land. Around 29 per cent of households use both tube wells and canal. This group comprises of big landholders from high and middle caste groups (brahmin and bhurji). Tube well is the source of water for the pasi and chamar communities since their landholdings are out of reach of canal water.² Only about 10 per cent of the households in the village were dependent on tube well. Amongst them, a brahmin household headed by a female was completely dependent on tube well and reported not to receive any water from canal. It reflects persisting gender inequality along with caste inequality in access to water from public source.

Table 1

Source of Water among Cultivators

<i>Caste</i>	<i>No. of Cultivators</i>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Canal</i>	<i>Tube well</i>	<i>Both</i>
Brahmins	8	-	1	7
Thakur	1	1	-	-
Bhurji	5		1	4
Murai	5	3	1	1
Pasi	8	6	-	2
Teli	1	1	-	-
Lohar	4	-	-	4
Nai	4	4	-	-
Dhobi	2	2	-	-
Chamar	43	32	5	6
Total	81	49 (60.5)	8 (9.9)	24 (29.6)

III

Village Hierarchy and Access to, Control over the Use of Water

Hierarchy appears as the single most important idea in the Indian culture that pervaded almost every aspect of village life (Appadurai, 1988) and caste divisions are seen to determine and decide all social relations (Majumdar, 1955). Similarly, hierarchy is observed to be the decisive way to have control over water and it is also a determining factor in the distribution of water among various social groups in the study village. Besides, every village has some form of land-based relations where the economic prescriptions based on caste govern the nature of relations between the owners of land and the tenants or the landless labourers. These inter-caste relations constitute a distinct economic or agrarian structure that has often paralleled the social hierarchy prevalent in a village and is seen as the basis of the agrarian social structure. There are three identifiable classes: the land owners, the tenants and the landless labourers. They are reflected as upper caste, the middle caste and the lower caste in the social hierarchy (Thorner, 1955; Gough, 1981; Beteille, 1969 & 1974). Since the village has become the site of state development interventions, this equation has undergone some changes. Abolition of zamindari system and introduction of land reforms during post-independence period reshaped relationships between landlords (traditional zamindars, rich peasants and farmers) and tillers, labourers and poor peasants. The whole process of reshaping of relationships has twofold dimensions. Firstly, land reforms provided land entitlements to the tillers and poor peasants and subsequently, this helped them in realizing their other rights including water rights. Secondly, every peasant enjoys the rights to use canal water by the state.

In Nasratpur, land distribution to lower and middle castes as 'patta' has endowed them with land ownership right. It has not only enhanced their social status in the village but land has also become a very crucial means of subsistence. It has driven the marginal farmers of lower castes to claim their share of canal water. Since ground water is privately owned, land ownership has automatically enabled the farmer to extract ground water over his chunk of land. Thus, it could be argued that land provides the right to water to any farmer.

In stratified societies like India, there is a certain amount of overlap between twin hierarchies of caste and class (Srinivas, 1976; Beteille, 1965; Bagchi, 1982) and it is evident when land ownership is viewed in terms of caste of the owner. For instance, the ownership of land is highly unequal; of the 128 households in the Nasratpur, 47 (36.7%) households are landless and 25 (30.9%) households own only less than one *bigha*. On the other hand, 8 (9.9%) households own almost one-third (29.6%) of total land and all of them are Brahmins. Further, Bhurjis comes next to Brahmins who constitute only 6.2 per cent of village populace but own 20.1 per cent of total land. It is observed that the farmers falling in category of more than 10 *bighas* of land ownership are Brahmins. Murai and Lohar, the two other intermediate castes, own lesser proportion of land in comparison to Bhurji. Chamars, despite being numerically preponderant (53.1%) own only one-fourth of the total land (25.8%). Other lower castes such as Pasi and Dhobi own land less than one *bigha* per household.

Table 2
Caste-wise Distribution of Landholdings

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Village Nasratpur</i>		
	<i>Total No. of Households</i>	<i>No. of Land owning HHs</i>	<i>Land Ownership (Bigha)</i>
Brahmins	9	8 (9.9)	47 (29.6)
Thakur	1	1 (1.2)	1.5 (0.9)
Bhurji	6	5 (6.2)	32 (20.1)
Murai	6	5 (6.2)	10 (6.3)
Pasi	12	8 (9.9)	12.5 (7.9)
Dhobi	4	2 (2.5)	1 (0.6)
Lohar	4	4 (4.9)	6 (3.8)
Nai	5	4 (4.9)	1 (0.6)
Teli	2	1 (1.2)	7 (4.4)
Chamar	68	43 (53.1)	41 (25.8)
Mangta (STs)	11	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	128	81 (100)	159 (100)

Table3

Landholdings Size and Caste-wise Distribution of Farmers

Caste	Nasratpur					Total
	Landholding Size in terms of Bighas					
	<1	1-<2	2-<5	5-<10	=10	
Brahmins	-	-	-	5	3	8
Thakur	-	1	-	-	-	1
Bhurji	-	-	3	2	-	5
Murai	-	-	4	1	-	5
Pasi	-	6	2	-	-	8
Teli	-	-	-	1	-	1
Lohar	-	4	-	-	-	4
Nai	4	-	-	-	-	4
Dhobi	2	-	-	-	-	2
Chamar	19	20	4	-	-	43
Total	25	31	13	9	3	81

The data suggests that reforms have played a very significant role in distribution of land among lower castes. The lower castes including Chamar, Pasi and Dhobi have gained their land rights through land distribution under *patta* scheme. About 40 out of total 43 Chamars have gained land rights through land reforms. Mangta, the only scheduled tribe community in the village are landless. They have no ownership of agricultural as well as residential land. They are staying outside the village on public land owned by Gram Panchayat.

Hierarchy and Everyday Politics of Dominance, Contest, Conflict and Negotiation

In order to understand the dynamics of control over the access to water in the village, cultivators have been classified into two social groups based on their

socio-economic status. First social group comprises of upper and intermediate castes viz. Brahmin, Bhurji, Teli, Murai and Lohar (28.9% of total cultivating households) who own the maximum proportion of agricultural land (own 64.2% of total land) whereas second social group comprises of numerically preponderant Chamar and Pasi (63% of total cultivating households) who were landless prior to land reforms and some of them had land up to one *bigha* (own 33.7% of total land). The lower castes have been distributed land under *patta* category.

Abolition of Zamindari system and introduction of land reforms have been significant factors underlying changing landlord-tenant relationship. The intermediate caste groups are also significant beneficiaries of land reforms. The lower castes have been taken into consideration in the village primarily for three reasons: first, they are numerically preponderant; second, their water rights are crucial in view of their subsistence; and third, they have been subjugated since long and they have been dominated by upper and intermediate caste and possibilities of their insurgence and conflict situation.

Distribution of land among the lower castes including Chamar and Pasi in the village provided them land rights and it has made them conscious about their water rights too. Although it was revealed by them that they have been allotted *usar* i.e. sodic land, still they consider it important because of the fact that with improved access to water they can grow at least paddy and wheat for their own consumption. This situation has strengthened their claim of share in canal water. Being poor, most of them also perceive availability of water free of cost or fewer prices from canal for their sustenance.

Chamar and Pasi being owners of small piece of land ranging from >1 to 2 *bighas*, require lesser quantity of water to irrigate their fields and that is fulfilled by the canal water. The conflict situation sometime emerges out of socio-structural set up and is provoked by untimely and irregular supply of water in minor. Canal water is much cheaper than the tube well water. The situation gets perplexed with water intensive crops such as paddy which is the most grown crop in the village. Since they grow only two crops, wheat and

paddy, their water requirement is limited and it is sufficed by rainfall during monsoon. There is a dependency for canal water for the above reasons.

However, the group consisting of Brahmin, Bhurji, Murai and Teli uses water provided by canal and tube well equally. They revealed that insufficiency of canal water for watering the fields and the following reasons are articulated by them. Majority of the landowners in this group own big patches of land ranging from 5 to 20 *bighas*. Landowners owning land more than 5 *bighas* of land mention that there is a shortage of canal water in all the seasons. They grow multiple crops including pulses, oil seeds and vegetables other than paddy and wheat. The commercialization of agriculture is facilitated by the use of HYV seeds and fertilizers and that has also aggravated the water crisis. The untimely and irregular supply of canal water compels them to the use ground water through tube wells or pump sets. It has been observed that the big land owners use more tube well water in comparison to the small land owners whose reliance is more on monsoon.

The presence of canal water in the village has accelerated the agricultural activities on the one hand for higher and intermediate castes and on the other oriented lower caste towards subsistence agriculture. The growth of new employment opportunities with or without migration has also economically supported the village in general and poor in particular to suffice their agricultural needs along with improved access to water. The access to water cannot be separated with the phenomenon of dominance and conflict.

However, the harmful aspects of dependence of farmers on canal water can never be ignored. The major constraints of using canal water is that Nasratpur falls in head reach of the minor and has been waterlogged before the beginning of UPWSRP in 2002. Water logging of the fields has led to mono cropping of paddy in the area. The soil has become saline and less fertile due to seepage in the fields lying adjacent to canal. It was reported by the farmers that about 50 *bighas* of agricultural land was affected from it and was suitable only for paddy cropping. The productivity of wheat has reduced to a great extent. Even after clearing the silt and maintenance of canal under UPWSRP, farmers could ensure the use of such waterlogged fields by retaining the productivity of fields through manure, cow dung and crop residues.

Now, diversified cropping is practised among those who own more than five *bighas* of land constituting only Brahmins and Bhurjis as they can afford tube well water along with canal water. Poor farmers having landholdings of less than 1 to 2 *bighas* which happen to be the Chamars and Pasis mostly grow only wheat and paddy. Thus, lower castes that have been allotted land and are engaged in agriculture are still growing wheat and paddy and they assign two reasons for the same. First, according to them they have been allotted *usar* land which is less fertile and second, even if they want to grow some other crops they have to ensure water which is possible only through tube wells which they cannot afford.

Dominance and Conflict

Socio-cultural constraints, tenurial rights, and disappearance of traditional water systems have led to conflict and competition between different classes of farmers. The causes behind such conflicts are lying with these phenomena; firstly, it is evident from the study that indigenous technology required intensive involvement of manual labour leading to landlord's dependence on labourers and other poor farmers who used to work as agricultural labourers on their fields; secondly, those who did not own wells, the prime source of water, were dependent on these landlords owning wells. This mutual dependence led to formation of informal relationship between landlords and labourers engaged in agriculture and specifically in water extraction and water, and it was based lesser on competition and conflict than on mutual cooperation. This mutual cooperation emergence of exigencies, maintains the order.

Brahmins and Thakurs³ are dominant castes in the village and nearby areas. Srinivas (1966) has noted the dominant castes in rural India and found them very important to understand village social and political life. 'A caste may be said to be "dominant" when it preponderates numerically over the other castes and when it also yields economic and political power in the locality. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not very low' (1959: 18). Soon, he realized that education and occupation are elements of dominance too (Srinivas, 1959: 1).

Later, Oommen (1970) systematically categorized all the attributes of a dominant caste formulated by Srinivas (1959) and Dube (1968) into three categories; ascriptive-land ownership and ritual status, achieved-modern education and occupation, demographic including two aspects; quantitative numerical superiority and qualitative reputation and ability for physical aggression (Pattnaik, 1987: 344).

While looking into the attributes of dominant caste in Nasratpur, both Brahmins and Thakurs, fulfils the criteria of ascriptive-land ownership and higher ritual status, achieved-modern education and occupation and qualitative reputation for physical aggression. However, as far as numerical preponderance of Brahmins and thakurs is concerned, brahmins constitute a very small proportion (3.9%) of village population and there is only one thakur household. However their dominance is not restricted to the village boundaries alone, rather it reached in other villages also.

Scholars have observed that when there is an overlapping between caste and class, the caste conflicts automatically turns into class conflicts (Bagchi, 1982; Betteile, 1969). Domination of rich farmers of upper castes particularly Brahmins and Thakurs is a common phenomenon in the study village. Thakurs are however not a part of village populace but their agricultural fields lie adjacent to the fields of poor and lower castes like Chamar, Pasis and Dhobis. The conflict over access to water is reported by poor low caste farmers in the village.

Conflict has become a part of life due to irregular and untimely supply of water in canal. Although it occurs in both the seasons, rabi and kharif, it is more frequent in kharif season when paddy seedlings are planted in the fields. Paddy is water intensive crop and requires more water than any other crop. Two reasons can be traced operating behind such conflicts and dissatisfaction among the farmers. Farmers complained about slow force of water during the supply which leads to insufficient water. Significantly, *warabandi*⁴ is not implemented, which implies that water is distributed on first come first served basis. This stimulates power play in access to water. Upper castes who eventually own large chunks of land are the dominating groups. Illegal cutting of minor and drains, and construction of bunds by dominant brahmins and

thakurs are frequently encountered by lower castes which lead to conflict among them.

Chamar families mentioned about the domination of a Brahmin family whose one member was Ex-Pradhan of Nasratpur village panchayat. Interestingly, two factions exist among *Chamar* families which constitute the largest proportion of total population. One faction favours the Brahmin family while other faction opposes them. The group favouring Brahmin family mentioned that there is greater availability of water from canal while other group mentioned problems in access to canal water and domination of that family.

Another significant source of conflict in the village is Muslim community which though does not reside in the village but has fields adjacent to the fields of Nasratpur village. Most of their family members have been working in Arab and Middle East countries, and are economically sound due to remittances. They dominate the scene and fight with others for irrigating their fields first. Many Murai families who have land adjacent to them reported that they damage the drains and bully others not to irrigate the fields until their fields are irrigated. The reason behind this conflict is water leakage causing water logging in the fields due to mud drains. It forces them to ultimately depend on canal water and thereby on higher and middle castes since they irrigate their fields first when water is released in the minor. *Chamar* and *Pasi* caste groups mention that they have to depend on Brahmins, Thakurs and Bhurjis who own big chunks of land and get water after their fields are fully irrigated. They have to share good relations in terms of patron – client and *malik-mazdoor*. Women of their families work as agricultural labourers for the upper caste in return they receive water on request.

One police case was found to be lodged against dominance of Muslim family. Many Murai and *Pasi* farmers who had land nearby his fields faced the problem of pressure for irrigating his fields first. Farmers reported that he used to stop the flow of water to their fields and divert water to his fields. But after discussing with another respondent, the same issue was presented in a different way. The reason behind such issue was seepage of water in his fields

due to damaged drains which could ruin his crops. This incidence also indicates the negligence of WUAs of Nasratpur Minor. It was reported that these conflicts are not of such intense nature which can further convert into communal conflicts. However, the cause of harmony between Hindus and Muslims lies in history. Most of the Muslims are converted Muslims and before conversions they were Hindus.

Conflict Resolution: Negotiations and Adjustments

The study to resolve conflict reflects that the first preference among the farmers to resolve the conflict is through mutual cooperation while to back out is found to be the second choice. Legal action is not preferred by anyone and only one case was recorded in the village where canal is the major source of water. Farmers also mentioned that influential and powerful people intervene to resolve the conflict. Similarly, Brahmin families in the village also preferred to resolve the conflict. Technology has played positive role to avoid the conflicts arising out of water leakage due to mud drains between two farmers. The farmers have sought an alternative to the problem through technology. They use PVC pipes to channelize water to the fields.

Role of Water User's Association

Unfortunately, the study finds Water User's Association (WUA) a complete failure in the village. No one is aware about the existence of such a group in the village. The conflict is either resolved mutually or the weaker group waits for its turn. In such a condition, sometimes their fields remain unirrigated and the canal is closed. Sometimes some influential person favoured by both the groups intervenes in the matter and finds some middle path such as letting the weaker section to irrigate his fields in between. The repairing and maintenance task is not taken care of by any authority or the group. Generally, the farmers do the required possible repairing of the canal but on individual basis.

Moreover, elections for membership in WUAs has become an arena of local politics and are characterized with dominance of politically and economically powerful people who belong to dominant caste, thakurs and on reserved seats

for scheduled castes only those are supported who are in their good books. Thus, in turn, forgetting its purpose of ensuring maintenance of canal, ensuring timely and regular supply of water, fair distribution of water among all sections of farmers and conflict resolution has aggravated the problem.

IV

Conclusion

Hierarchy is found to be the basis of access to water. Higher castes are still dominant in the village social structure. Muslim community has made its presence felt due to the remittance. Higher the social, economic and political status, higher the access to education. Brahmins being the most educated in the village are pursuing other economic activities such as service or business along with agriculture. Large landholding with other economic activities and influence in Panchayat has enabled them to exercise the power.

In post-independence period, abolition of zamindari system and introduction of land reforms to an extent reshaped relationships between landlords (traditional zamindars, rich peasants and farmers) and tillers, labourers and poor peasants. The whole process of reshaping of relationships has twofold dimensions. Firstly, land reforms provided the tillers and poor peasants, entitlements to land hence making them conscious about their water rights. Secondly, since the canal was a state development intervention, every peasant now had the rights to use its water.

Social relations have also undergone change due to introduction of modern water access means. There are other underlying social structural changes promoting such changes in social relations. Earlier the relations were based on strong mutual interdependence but now these bonds have loosened their holds. Earlier the relations were based on cooperation which emerged out of inter-caste solidarity and poor caste consciousness among lower castes. Now the relations are based more on competition as every caste claims its share in state development interventions. Diminishing patron-client relationship has also affected the agrarian relations adversely.

Now the lower castes are no longer ready to be exploited by higher or middle castes and middle castes are more powerful in the study village. The relations are more contractual and formal rather than being informal and personal. Generational attachment of one family providing labour services for water and agriculture to another no longer exists. Labourers are driven more towards good wages rather than emotional bonding. Young generation is out migrating and their earnings suffices their daily needs with remittances. Out Migration has opened up employment opportunities for rural poor therefore detaching them from their age old relationships. Those who reside in village manage watering their fields either with the help of family members or with a few labourers, while those who do not stay in village have given their lands for sharecropping to other farmers and this relation between sharecroppers is formal and contractual. Eventually, high caste domination in terms ownership of land and modern water extraction devices and agricultural implements is losing its significance while on the other middle and backward castes are making their presence felt.

The empirical evidence reflects the contestation over water in day to day life as agriculture is the key economic and survival activity. Changing scenario of village on account of various state interventions for land reforms, agriculture and irrigation development has modified the land ownership based social relationship among various categories of farmers. Earlier tenants are now land owners although the size of land is quite small. Canal water which is state owned, ensures equal right to water to each farmer in the command area; making negotiations, contestations, dominance, resistance, mutual cooperation and adjustments as a part of daily routine activity.

■ NOTES

1. Several studies have recorded the politics of resistance; however, the present study articulates domination support and adjustment taking place either simultaneously or at different times.
2. Some of the farmers from Chamar and Pasi communities were the beneficiaries of land distribution scheme and they have been allotted land at far off places and thus are inaccessible to canal water.

3. Single Thakur household which does not have considerable amount of land, but asserts its dominance due to support of nearby Thakur community, which fulfill all the criteria of dominant caste.
4. Warabandi refers to turn wise distribution of canal water among farmers to ensure access to water to each farmer in the command area

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