

Editor's report

August 2023

It is my pleasure to present the 14th issue of Explorations. The present issue consists of ten papers published under the 'Articles' category, one commentary, one conversation and one book review.

First article titled '*Changing Socio-Political Context in Manipur and Resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis*' by Yumlebam Khogen analyses the socio-political context that led to the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis. 'Hinduisation' and 'British colonialism' acted as a religious and political factors brought drastic changes in Meitei's social, cultural, economic, and political life in Manipur in pre 1960s. These two historical factors, directly or indirectly influenced the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis. The 'rise of democracy' and a revivalist movement called 'Sanamahi movement' enabled the growth of missionary zeal among the Meiteis. Rise of Meitei evangelist paved the emergence of an organised Meitei Christian Movement leading to the proliferation of Meitei Churches in the present Manipur valley.

Second article titled '*Sociology of Conflict and Violence: Towards a Theoretical Approach*' by Salah P, revisits sociological theories and contributions of scholars in allied disciplines to develop a critical sociological sensibility to the trajectory of studying conflict and violence in modern society. The essay proposes that sociology today needs a clearly demarcated branch of violence studies. Further, this essay argues for a comprehensive approach that demands a deeper sensibility to the multiplicity and pervasiveness of violence in our society. He argues that while prevailing views of violence are compartmentalised in terms of theoretical orientations and empirical interests, this essay argues that a combined view would enable to perceive violence as an 'interconnected' sociological phenomenon.

Third article titled '*Politics of Witchcraft Accusations and Violence among the Misings of Assam, India*' by Dinesh Mishong and Apparao Thamminaina, clarifies that many cultures believe that witchcraft skills are nurtured in the families and passed down in the same lineage. Witchcraft practice among the Mising community of Assam is no exception. The social identity of such

families reflects the principle that ‘once a witch is always a witch.’ In the Mising community, witch hunts are performed during any mishap in a village to neutralize the destructive influence of evil power. Such witch hunts often victimize the families identified with the witchcraft tradition. The paper examines the inheritance of victimhood, stereotyping, and the consequences of witch hunt among the Misings of Assam, India.

Forth article titled ‘*Politics of Telangana State: Trends, Prospects and Challenges: A Way Forward*’ by Jagannatham Begari, proposes to evaluate new trends in the Telangana state. The paper examines Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and its conventional leadership and its impact on the politics of Telangana. It also evaluates the emergence of Telangana Jana Samithi and its role in the process of democratisation in Telangana Politics. In addition, the paper further examines the vitality of Telangana Jana Samithi and the politics of the emergence of BRS and it analyses the interface between and ruling regime and political movements. Thus this article aims to evaluate the perceptions of the people, political trends, prospects, and challenges to the Telangana state.

Fifth article titled ‘*Work experience and job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the COVID pandemic waned scenario, Kerala*’ by Shamna T C, and K C Baiju analysis Kerala explores the direction, composition and occupational pattern of the emigrant labourers who were repatriated during COVID-19. A micro-level discussion on job loss and the future work plan of the COVID-induced repatriated emigrant labourers in a district, Kannur, Kerala, known for its higher incidence of repatriated emigrant labourer. The study found a positive relationship between the critical variables, the year of work experience in GCC countries and the job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the COVID pandemic waned scenario, further increasing the emigration prospects of the COVID-induced repatriated emigrants in the years to come.

Sixth article titled ‘*Language Contact and Language Choice in an Inter-state Context: The Case of Meghalaya-Assam Border*’ by Gordon D. Dkhar analysis that language contact studies prerequisite the linguistic analysis of bilingualism and multilingualism, which involve different socio-cultural and linguistic convergences. The inter-state contact situation in the National Border of Meghalaya in Byrnihat exhibits diverse socio-cultural and linguistic coexistence, providing feasible aspects for socio-linguistic research and language contact studies. In this region, contact is identified between the Khasis (of the Austro-Asiatic language family) and Assamese (of the Indo-Aryan language family), as well as other Tibeto-Burman linguistic

communities such as the Garos, Mikirs, Hajongs, and Biates. The paper argues that presence of these different linguistic communities has created a favorable ecological condition for examining the pattern of language choice displayed by the Khasi ethnic groups in this area. Multilingualism is deeply rooted in this area, as evidenced by its presence at both the individual and societal levels. This study focuses on aspects of language use and specifically attempts to examine the pattern of language choice appropriated by the local Khasis in this area with reference to the domain configuration.

Seventh article titled '*Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence among the PG students of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States: A Socio-Psychological Study*' by N. Sharon Sucharitha Gold, attempts to examine internet usage and its relationship with emotional intelligence besides their relationships with certain social variables independently. The study tries to understand internet use patterns and the consequences of internet use on Emotional intelligence. Since postgraduate studies demand internet use it is thought appropriate to gain an insight into the above phenomenon. The paper explored the relationships between the social variables like social, economic, rural and urban background in addition to gender and academic background of the postgraduate students with internet usage besides emotional intelligence.

Eighth article titled '*Trajectory of Indian agriculture and its tryst with Green Revolution*' by Ch Naveen Kumar analyzes the discourse on agricultural policy over the last six decades. It is widely noted by the social scientists that there is a major paradigm shift in the social organization of agriculture with the introduction of the green revolution. the paper argues that this new technology is highly responsive to fertilizers favourable to the large farmers and to the command areas. The differential spread had its drastic impact on the total agricultural system in the country. Usually large and progressive farmers, who are able to deal with the risks of commercial agriculture and who had sufficient institutional support and had social and economic capital could reap the benefits of the green revolution. Green revolution is also said to have widened the technology-knowledge gap leading to retrogression in agriculture.

Ninth paper titled '*Pain and Suffering Embedded in Caste Hierarchies: A Sociological Analysis of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi Poetry*' by Surendera engages in the sociological analysis of modern Hindi poetry from the time period of 1960s to 2000 when NayiKavita was being replaced by Akavita or Anti-poetry and Dalit poetry to counter attack the mainstream modern Hindi poetry. This paper seeks to address the question of pain and suffering embedded in the caste hierarchies through the examination of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi poetry. It also tends to analyze the inter-relationship between

sociology and poetry by looking at the writings of scholars engaged in the domain of sociology of literature. This paper argues that the history of modern Hindi literature suggests that the issue of caste has been at the periphery of the imagination of modern Hindi poets except few until the dawn of Dalit literature in 1980s.

Tenth paper titled *Revisiting education during pandemic times – response to change and its implications* by V. Sucharita argues that schools play a cardinal role in achieving the overarching goal of attaining foundational literacy and numeracy, along with value education, among children. Given such profound significance of schools and roles that they play, their sudden and unexpected closure worldwide due to Covid-19 pandemic left everyone perplexed obviously impacting school going children and their learning (or lives). The administrators, teachers, students and parents were completely unprepared to deal with such an unprecedented and unexpected situation. Nevertheless, every country grappling with this dire situation had worked out the ways to respond to this situation. The paper examines the ways school administrators responded to the school closures during this unprecedented situation and reflects on its wider implications.

Commentary titled ‘*Empowering the Bahujan Samaj: Way Forward*’ by Vidya Sagar Reddy attempts to analyze the major socio-economic and political developments that dealt with the issues and concerns of the marginalized communities like the SCs, STs, OBCs and religious minorities that constitute about 80% of the Indian population in India. Incidentally, these communities had been subjected to multiple forms of social exclusion. Given their numerical size and reckonable expansion, the marginalized communities have been described as the Bahujan samaj. The study is focused on the issue of their empowerment through economic reforms, educational reservations and political representations. The paper also examines how the process of ‘bahujanisation’ had been undertaken within the purview of bahujan politics.

This issue of the journal also includes a broad interview of *Professor Hari Babu* conducted by *Professor Sambit Mallick*, a noted Indian sociologist, sharing his life experiences in teaching and research, and his perspectives on them as well as on myriad issues of sociological significance.

This issue of the journal also includes a book review by *Abhas Kumar Ganda* on book titled “*The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India*”.

Explorations invite your contributions to future issues of the journal. We will appreciate your feedback or suggestions on the journal.

All the articles reflect diverse sociological interpretations of social facts across the states in India. I sincerely thank all the authors for choosing the explorations for publishing their articles. Am sure the explorations enrich scholars' sociological imaginations.

Thanks & Best Wishes



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**Article: Changing Socio-Political Context in Manipur and
Resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis**

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Changing Socio-Political Context in Manipur and Resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis

--Yumlembam Khogen

Abstract

The Meitei community was the first to encounter Christian missionaries in Manipur, and the first case of conversion to Christianity was reported in 1896. After a gap of nearly half a century, preaching among the valley Meiteis was resumed only in the late 1950s with some success. However, post-1993 development shows the proliferation of hundreds of Meitei Christian churches in Manipur. In this backdrop, by using both primary and secondary data, the present paper analyses the socio-political context that led to the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis. 'Hinduisation' and 'British colonialism' acted as religious and political factors, drastically changing Meitei's social, cultural, economic, and political life in pre-merger Manipur. These two historical factors, directly or indirectly, influenced the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis. The 'rise of democracy' and a revivalist movement unintentionally acted as helpful factors for the growth of missionary zeal among Meiteis in the post-merger Manipur. Effective mobilisation for conversion into Christianity by Meitei evangelists in the 1960s paved the emergence of an organised Meitei Christian Movement. They led to the proliferation of Meitei Churches in the Manipur valley.

Keywords: Meitei Christian movement, Hinduisation, British colonialism, rise of democracy, Sanamahi movement, etc.

Introduction

William Pettigrew from Scotland came to Manipur in February 1894 and was permitted to work in Imphal by A. Porteous, the Acting Political Agent of that time, in the absence of Maxwell (Dena, 1991: 106). The Hinduised Meiteis then began taking Pettigrew's preaching as a deliberate attempt to impose the Government's religion upon them. When Maxwell resumed his position, he was compelled to appeal to Pettigrew to stop preaching Meiteis in 1894, considering the possible trouble that might arise (Ibid.: 106). Another missionary named Watkin R. Roberts set foot for the first time to preach the Gospel of Christ to the tribes of south-west Manipur, especially the people of the present Churachandpur district, in 1910. After a few years, Roberts established his Mission, which he named the 'Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission', later changed to 'North-East India General Mission' in 1923 after broadening its field. In those days, the Manipur administration allowed only one Mission

to be operated within the State. Therefore, leaders of the native Mission were expelled from Manipur one after the other (Pulamte, 2007). It may be because of these reasons that today, most Christians in Manipur are found among the hill people, even though they were not the first targets of the Christian Missionaries. However, on the intervention of Robert Reids, the then Governor of Assam, C. Gimson passed an Order on April 11 1941, permitting the Independent Church to look after itself as desired by the bonafide indigenous workers (Dena, 1991: 112). After India became Independent in 1947 and Manipur became part of India in 1949, Churches in Manipur began to grow manifold and resumed their missions with greater vigour by the native missionaries sponsored by foreign missions. After converting the tribal population in the hill areas, Meitei Hindus in the valley became a fertile group for the missionaries.

The changing socio-political context in Manipur led to the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis in the post-Merger Manipur. In the following sections, 'Hinduisation' and 'British colonialism' have been discussed as two historical factors that brought about a drastic change in Meitei social, cultural, economic, and political life in pre-merger Manipur, which directly influenced the growth of Meitei revivalism and indirectly influenced the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis in years to come. The 'rise of democracy' and a revivalist movement called the 'Sanamahi movement' have also been discussed as fortuitous factors for the growth of missionary zeal among the Meiteis in post-merger Manipur. Eventually, all these socio-political changes led to the growth of the Meitei Christian movement from the 1960s onwards.

Hinduisation and Socio-Cultural Changes in Meitei Society

Hinduism entered Manipur during the 15th century A.D., and Vaishnavism took root in Manipur during the reign of King Kyamba (1467-1508) (Singh, 1963). Such entry of Hinduism in Manipur through the migration of Brahmins could not make much impact on the social and religious life of the Meiteis because of their negligible number. Kings of Manipur at that time allowed the absorption of migrant Brahmins into Meitei society through marriage with Meitei women and gave them a Meitei family name (McCulloch, 1980; Nilbir, 1991). The reign of King Pamheiba, aka Garibniwaz (1709-1748), marked the beginning of Hinduisation in Manipur, and unrestrained Hinduisation continued till the reign of Churachand Maharaj (1891-1941). The adoption of Hinduism in Manipur, with the King's patronage, was the most significant force that made the Hinduisation of Meiteis possible. Bhagyachandra Maharaj (1759-1798), the grandson of Garibniwas, adopted Gouriya Vaishnavism and brought the zenith of Hindu Vaishnavite glory¹ in Manipur (Nilbir, 1991).

King Candrakriti (who ruled up to 1886) and Churachand Maharaj (1891-1941) carried forward the process of Hinduisation. Because of Hinduisation, the notion of purity and pollution reached its peak, especially during the reign of Chandrakriti and Churachand Maharaj (Nilbir, 1991). With the advent of Hinduism in Manipur, the society was stratified according to religion and occupations (Brown, 1873; Dun, 1886). For example, Hindu Meiteis became a higher Kshatriya caste, sections of non-Hindu Meiteis like Lois and Yaithibi who refused to adopt Hinduism became degraded people and sometimes untouchables, and those Hill people (tribes) who were following their animistic faith began to be treated as uncivilised people. Thus, proponents of Hinduism in Manipur created such a system in which non-Hindus had to suffer and became marginalised.

Meitei revivalists began to argue that extravagant guidelines of Brahmins, which were not mentioned in any Hindu religious books² and extra items in death-related rituals (e.g. *Shardha*, *Sanskritan*) like refreshment, memorial fest, etc. only add to the financial burden of the deceased's family. As seen in Naoriya Phullo's critique of Hindu rites and rituals (Apokpa Marup, 2012), there was a contradiction between guidelines and practice. Meitei revivalists accused that Brahmins' motive of benefiting from the deceased's family only heightened the financial burden of the deceased's family. Revivalists often claims that with Hinduism, Meiteis adopted Hindu festivals and all their extravagancies and orthodoxies. Anthropologist K.S. Singh sarcastically (1998: 155) wrote:

It isn't easy to estimate the actual effect of the new religion (Hinduism) on people. Still, for an outsider, they seem to have adopted only the festivals, the outward rituals and the caste system but not really the spirit and onward essentials of the new religion.

Meitei revivalists argued that introduction of religious festivals like Ras Lila, Rakhali (Sansenba), Khrisna Janma (Janmasthan), Durga Puja, Doljatra (*Yaoshang Kumhei*), Maglati and related rituals and practices led to the wastage of time, money, energy, leading to habit of indulgence in other kinds of illegal activities; ignorance of the general education while focusing on religious items and hangover of enjoyment. The adoption of Hindu festivals produced numerous socio-economic implications in Meitei society. For instance, in his work "*Eigee Wareng*" (1940), Naoriya Phullo gave various reasons for Meiteis' pauperisation. Some reasons he cited were the lessening physical strength and wisdom of Meiteis resulting from the imposed restrictions and changes in their food habits; expensive and burdensome dressing style imposed by Vaishnavism; unnecessary, demanding and

extravagant expenses on *Shraddha*, *Vibhah*, etc. related rituals and *Daan* (sacrifices, tributes and gifts), special mention may be made of those needless ‘Aasan-daan’, ‘Jal-daan’, ‘Aanna-daan’, ‘Bastra-daan’, etc. Another important critique of Hinduism could be seen when revivalists gave the reason for the pauperisation of Meiteis to be the wastage of valuable time on the part of Meiteis on learning music (*Pung-Eshei-Pala*) because of which Meiteis missed formal education while wondering here and there in pursuit of Hindu musical and performing Arts. Expenditure on religious offerings, ceremonies and rituals like *Phiroi*, *Pala Ngambi*, Tarpan, Sanskritan, dance, and celebration of avoidable festivals like Krishna Janma, Durga Puja, Yaosang, Baruni Mela, etc., was another reason for Meiteis’ poverty according to the founding leader of Meitei revivalists, Naoriya Phullo (1940).

The system of social ostracism called ‘*Mangba-Sengba*’ (pollution and purity) became very acute during the reign of King Churachand Maharaj (1891-1941). During that period, any Hindu religious authority could excommunicate or ostracise any person by declaring the person polluted, who would then have to pay a renunciation fee (for purification) if he was to be re-absorbed into the standard social fold (Singh, 2000). Although Brahma Sabha emerged during the reign of Chingthangkomba (Bhagyachandra), it became popular during the time of King Gambhir Singh (1825-1834). However, rigid rules and regulations of Hindu Gauriya Vaishnavism were prescribed by Brahma Sabha only during the reign of King Chandrakriti (1834-1844). They became notorious during the reign of Churachand Maharaj (Nilbir, 2002: 160). After that, it has been working under the Shri Govindaji Temple Board (Ibid.: 164). Hence, all these perceived ill consequences of Hinduism were a major factor that led to the emergence of the Meitei revivalist movement called the Sanamahis movement.

British Colonialism and Socio-Cultural Changes in Meitei Society

Christianity arrived in Manipur only after the establishment of British Empire, and it came to Imphal only in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Vaiphei, 1995: 45). Even though the first failed attempt to establish a Christian mission in Manipur was carried out as early as in 1836 by the American Baptist Mission in Burma (Dena, 1991; Kamei, 2011), the actual Christian missionary work in Manipur started only in 1894. Political instability might be the reason behind the absence of missionaries in the Manipur Valley up to the end of 1893 (Singh, 1991).

On September 14 1762, King Bhagyachandra of the then Kingdom presently known as Manipur signed an agreement with the British East India Company. Manipuri King Marjit faced defeat at the hands of the invading Burmese army

in 1819, and Manipuri fled to surrounding hills and neighbouring kingdoms and countries for their own good. Manipur was devastated for seven years (1819-26), locally known as 'Chahi Taret Khuntaakpa'. In order to regain their lost Kingdom and set Manipur free from Burmese conquest, Maharaj Gambhir Singh (1825-1834) took help from the British East India Company. He defeated the Burmese and expelled them beyond the Chindwin River. This war, fought between the British and Burmese in which Manipuri forces sided with British forces, is known as the first Anglo-Burmese War. Manipur was liberated from Burmese by the 'Treaty of Yandaboo' (1826), and as a party to the Treaty, Manipur's King Gambhir Singh agreed to the establishment of the office of British political agent in Manipur and the same was established in 1835. After that, the British took advantage of internal feuds, played a 'divide and rule' policy and began to interfere in the socio-political life of the natives. Taking advantage of the political intrigue between Manipuri princesses over the throne, the British waged a war on Manipur and defeated the Manipuri army in the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891. Manipur became a British colony after 1891, and only a couple of decades later, a series of popular anti-colonial mobilisations took place. Some of these were Nupilal Ahanba, 1904 (First Women's War), the Kuki rebellion (1917-1919), the Zeliangrong movement, etc. However, the British efficiently handled such resistance and ruled Manipur until 1947.

Soon after Manipur was occupied by the British in 1891, Christianity was imported for the natives. Several modern schools were established to train a new class of native elite who would support the British and challenge the traditional authority. Manipur's resources till then were protected by the native people through their indigenous beliefs and practices. To have complete command over the resources, British colonisers wanted to create an alternative belief among the natives so that they could exploit the local resources without any resistance from native protectors (Singh, 1972: 35). Western education and value systems were imported to the local natives and in the name of modernisation; natives began to change their outlook towards belief system. Education and other forces of modernisation brought by the colonisers also became a means among some sections of natives to fight back the 'monopoly of the King and Brahmins by reducing their political and economic significance in the new system' (Singh, 2005: 109).

However, in order to rule the Kingdom more easily and influentially, British colonisers began to play politics to reduce the power of the King and increase their hold on the people. In the name of abolishing slavery/ forced men labour unit, the traditional system of *Lallup*, which was also a military institution of the King, was abolished in 1892. The new *Patta* system replaced the

traditional land-holding system. This ultimately reduced the economic and political power of the King, who otherwise was bestowed with strong power in the religious sphere of the country. Thus, to retain his stronghold over his subjects, Maharaja of Manipur established many Hindu institutions like Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, Pandit Loishang, Jagoi Loisang, etc., and imposed odd taxes. Thus, British colonisers' policy somehow increased the orthodoxy of the people by helping Hindu Kings in their religious monopoly by producing 'socio-religious subjects' through the notion of '*Maangba and Sengba*' (pollution and purity).

Rise of Democracy and Growth of Church among Meiteis

For more than two and a half centuries, the Hinduisation process tremendously impacted the socio-cultural life of Meiteis. The social transformation brought about by Hinduisation and British Colonialism had impacted the social consciousness of Meiteis. As Singh (2005: 5) opined, "...exogenous forces like Hinduism and Christianity created tension and hostility among the hill and valley in the social and religious spheres, which shaped the polity of the Manipur today". However, in this changed polity of Manipur, Meiteis did not respond similarly. Some Meiteis started leaving Hinduism and returning to their indigenous religion as an alternative, whereas some Meiteis started to treat the colonisers' religion as a better option. The Meitei Christian movement took off in the 1960s, in which two post-independence factors, i.e. the rise of democracy and the Sanamahi movement in Manipur, directly or indirectly helped in the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis.

With the rise of democracy in Manipur, political restrictions over preaching the Gospel in the plains of Manipur automatically became void, but despite the ideology of secularism, the cessation of British rule in Manipur and India brought uncertainty to the British and other foreign missionaries. Due to the changed political regime, it was impossible to stop someone from changing religion, and no Meitei or Hindu institution could openly oppose the conversion to Christianity by Meiteis. Both Meitei revivalists and Meitei Hindu reformists had the impression that Christianity was the colonisers' faith which entered Manipur as a cultural project of the British colonisers, but 'ironically none of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha or Meitei Marup was against conversion of Meiteis and hill people into Christianity' (Singh, 2005: 6). Such a soft reaction towards a foreign religion despite rising Meitei consciousness and drive for Meitei revival was due to the democratic ideology of that time.

Sanamahi Movement and Emergence of Meitei Christian Movement

The birth of the Sanamahi movement and its increasing acceptance among Meiteis influenced the attitude of the masses towards the change of religion. Those who adhered to Christianity also began to think that Hinduism was not their religion, and Meitei revivalists denounced Hinduism for another religion. Meiteis could also denounce Hinduism as a better religion than the indigenous one. Meitei Christians find both Hinduism and Sanamahism orthodox and non-rational (Singh, 2014). Such a critique of other religions by Meitei Christians can be found in the testimonies and arguments of Meitei Christians. This might have served as a significant factor for the emergence of the Meitei Christian movement while the Sanamahi movement was gaining public acceptance in Manipur. Thus, the growth of the conflict over ideology and the nature of practice between Hinduism and Sanamahism severely impacted the social, cultural, and economic life of Meiteis (Singh 2012: xi). On the changed context of Meitei Hindus in Imphal, Rev. Ph. Dhaneswor Singh (2008: 97-8) concluded that the Meitei Hindus were impressed by the faithful nature of Christians, and they had a strong desire that family must have the same religious belief.

In this changed socio-political context, some sections of Meiteis started looking for another alternative. In addition to the above-mentioned contextual changes among Meiteis (Meitei Hindus), Meitei Christian leaders have been optimistic that the mixed belief system found in Meitei Hindus gave them a chance to accept religious pluralism easily. Meitei Christian leaders were aware of the growth of the revivalist movement of the traditional religion of Meiteis. During the 1970s, there was an increasing trend of returning to their traditional religion among Meitei Hindus in response to the growing Sanamahi movement. As the movement for the revival of the old Meitei religion 'Animism' by denouncing Hinduism became popular, it brought liberalism among the Meitei Hindus and made conversion (either to Meiteism or to Christianity) more popular and changing religion was no more a shock (Vaiphei, 1986: 144-5). After analysing the changed context of Meiteis in general and Meitei Hindus in particular, Christians adopted a new approach to evangelise Meitei Hindus with due consideration to all the changing contexts of Meitei religion, script, language, culture, etc. (Singh, 2008). Thus, Christians have presented Christianity as an alternative to those moving out of their Hindu connection. However, analysis of the life histories and motivations behind the change of religion among some selected cases of Meitei Christians shows that it is not only Hinduism from which Churches are getting their new converts but also from the followers of Meitei traditional religion (Singh, 2014). In some cases, Meiteis inside the traditional belief system fold also

joined Churches as they too found their traditional rituals orthodox, expensive, and burdensome because they wanted to escape from the 'demonic power' of witchcraft, sorcery, and black magic commonly found among Meiteis (Singh, 2014).

Thus, it is evident that Hinduism, British Colonialism, and the rise of democracy are not the only factors leading to the Meitei Christian movement in 1960, especially in view of Manipur's changed polity and socio-religious context. The resurgence of Christian conversions among Meiteis during the 1960s and the rise of the Sanamahi movement during the 1960s and 1970s points towards Sanamahi movement as an indirect factor that encouraged Meitei Christians to come out openly and profess their religion with a missionary zeal.

Emergence of Meitei Christian Movement: The Early Phase (1960 onwards)

By the time foreign missionaries left Manipur when they had quit India, a large proportion of the hill people were already Christians, but in the case of Meiteis in the valley, Angom Porom Singh, who converted on January 3 1896 and his family members, and a couple of others were the only Christians (Kumar, 1993). Another Meitei, Angom Chanu Kaboklei, also became Christian, but she was converted outside Manipur. The absence of new Christian converts among Meiteis continued till 1959 due to various political, religious, and personal reasons. Due to obstructions and resistance, many who wanted to convert also stepped back. However, attempts were persistent to reach the Meiteis with the Gospel. By the early 1950s, foreign missionaries were banished from Manipur, and the tribal Churches and missionaries were busy establishing self-supporting Churches in the hills (Singh, 2008). After a long gap, preaching among the valley, Meiteis was resumed only in 1958-60 in Napet, Heirok and Wangjing areas with some success (MBA, 2008).

The effective mobilisation for Christianity among the Meiteis took place only after 1960. In 1959, the Tangkhul Church sent Mr Mingthing, and the Kuki Church sent Mr A. Dharma Singh (eldest son of the first Meitei Christian, Angom Porom Singh) in the same year to work among Meiteis (Vaiphei, 1986). The Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) took over the Meitei field in 1960 and appointed Mr. R.V. Masangthei (a Tangkhul from Somdal village) to work among Meiteis. The first Meitei Fellowship was started at Napet village in the year 1960 and later at Heirok village in the same year (Kumar, 1993: 6). Thus, the establishment of Meitei Church in Napet and Heirok villages in 1960 can be regarded as the beginning of Meitei Christian movement in Manipur. Rev. Mashangthei was ordained in 1962, he came to

Wangjing Mission Compound in 1965, and construction of the present Meitei Baptist Association (MBA) office was started in 1967, in which Rev. Mashangthei also played an important role in the beginning. Until then, no other Church except Baptist was preaching the Gospel among the Meiteis. Still, much later, the North East India General Mission (NEIGM) and Presbyterian Mission started work among Meiteis in the Wangu and Ningthoukhong areas (Kumar, 1993: 7). Meitei Baptist Christian leaders convened a meeting at their Wangjing Mission Centre and the Meitei Baptist Association (MBA) was formed on November 21 1982. In February 1983, at the Executive Council Meeting of the CBCNEI at Imphal, Rev. Mashangthei got farewell, and Rev. Th. Kumar Singh (a Meitei) was given the charge of Field Secretary, and Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) was made the guardian of MBA. From 1983 to 1993, MBC continued the Meitei mission seriously with the help of the MBA. After 1993, MBC handed over the responsibility of evangelising Meiteis to MBA (Singh, 2008).

Another wave of preaching the Gospel was initiated through the Presbyterian denomination at Moirang, a township 45 km from Imphal city. During 1941-56, many Mizo evangelists came to Moirang, distributed Gospel tracts, and sang songs in Meiteilon, but there was no baptism (Hmingthansangi, 1992: 295). Tuithaphai Presbytery, formed under NEIG Mission in 1953, grew fast and separated from NEIGM in 1958. In 1962, Tuithaphai Presbytery's Youth Fellowship expressed their eagerness to work among Meiteis. Therefore, they appointed L. Tombi Singh (a Meitei) as an evangelist to work among Meiteis (Hmingthansangi, 1992: 358). Tuithaphai Presbytery bought land in Moirang in 1965 for Rs. 2000/- and started Mission among Meiteis by opening Moirang Presbyterian Singlup/ Church. It was the first Presbyterian Meitei Church. Again, Imphal Mizo Church also appointed a Meitei named T. Komol as evangelist, which further strengthened the mission work among Meiteis (Meitei, 2008: 2). In 1967, Mizoram Synod Mission Board (MSMB) established an initial link with mission work among Meiteis. It became an important chapter in the history of the Presbyterian denomination's Meitei Church growth. A meeting of the leaders of Tuithaphai Presbytery and Mizoram Synod Mission Board (MSMB) held in Mizoram in 1975 decided to form the Manipur Presbyterian Mission Board with Headquarters at Imphal (Hmingthansangi, 1992: 365). Thereafter, Tuithaphai Presbytery and Mizoram Synod Mission Board (MSMB) separated officially.

After the beginning of the Church plantation in Imphal and nearby areas, some land was bought in the Imphal area in 1975, and the foundation stone of the new Church building was laid in May 1976. Meanwhile, Meitei Church at the Pastorate level was formed and named 'Manipur Presbyterian Singlup'

(Hmingthansangi, 1992: 364). Then, the head office of Manipur Presbyterian Church was opened at the heart of Imphal (near War Cemetery) in 1977. Starting with only two baptised members in 1967, Manipur Presbyterian Singlup's membership grew to 115 in 1976 (Meitei, 2008: 3). In 1985, its membership grew to 835 and by that time, three pastorates organised a meeting and formed a joint Church Court (ibid: 4). In July 1985, the Meitei Church Court was named 'Meitei Presbyterian Singlup' (MPS) (Meitei, 2008: 4). Later on May 5 1991, 'Meitei Presbyterian Singlup' was promoted to Presbytery level and it was named 'Meitei Presbytery'.

Proliferation of Meitei Churches: Post-1993 Development

After witnessing the success of MBA and MPS, many other Church denominations started opening their Missions in Manipur with a prime target on Meiteis. Some prominent are Believers Church, Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI), etc. Believers Church came to Manipur in 1996, got its first convert in 1997 and by 2011, it had managed to open 40 Meitei Churches in Manipur. Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI), which was founded in 1975 in Manipur, started focusing on its ministry among Meiteis in 1995 by forming Kanglei Area Presbytery (KAP), and it managed to establish 16 Meitei Churches by 2011. Similarly, Churches of other missions have been opening up with Meiteis as their prime target.

Nowadays, evangelists are working with much vigour among the Meiteis. Meiteis also respond to the preaching of the Gospel by establishing separate Meitei Churches under different denominations. Meitei Christians visibly exist as a religious group in Manipur with a total number of 293 Churches (Singh 2013: 84). However, there is no separate population account for Meitei Christians in Manipur, not even in the last decadal Census 2011. In 2005, according to church estimates, about 15,000 Meitei Christians in Manipur were associated with as many as 132 churches of different denominations (Christian Persecution Info, 2005). However, according to a statement issued by All Manipur Meitei Christian Forum (AMMCF) in July 2011, there are around 40,000 Meitei Christian converts in the four valley districts of Manipur (AMMCF, 2011), and approximately an equal number of Meiteis are attending Churches while preparing to convert. The Meitei Christian population has been significantly growing during the last few years.

Concluding Remarks

The Meitei community in Manipur was the first to encounter the missionaries, and the first case of conversion into Christianity was reported in the year 1896. After a long gap of nearly half a century, preaching among the valley Meiteis

was resumed only in the late 1950s with some success. However, post-1993 development shows the proliferation of hundreds of Meitei Christian churches in Manipur. Analysis of the socio-political context that led to the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis shows that 'Hinduisation' and 'British colonialism' brought about a drastic change in Meitei social, cultural, economic, and political life in pre-merger Manipur. These two historical factors, directly or indirectly, influenced the resurgence of Christianity among Meiteis. Apart from these pre-merger factors, the 'rise of democracy' and a revivalist movement unintendedly acted as helpful factors for the growth of missionary zeal among the Meiteis in post-merger Manipur. Effective mobilisation for conversion into Christianity by Meitei evangelists in the 1960s paved the emergence of an organised Meitei Christian Movement, leading to the proliferation of Meitei Churches in the present Manipur. Even though still a minority but the Meitei Christian population is significantly growing. Their population has shown a substantial increase and is continuing to grow significantly over the past few years.

End Notes:

1. Maharaj Bhagyachandra brought the zenith of Vaishnavism in Manipur by carving out the image of Govindaji in 1780, introducing the Rasa Dance, erecting Brahmasabha, composing the book *Wayen Lairik* (a book containing the rules and regulations to be observed by an orthodox Meitei Hindu), etc.
2. For example, the book *Prayog Chintamani*, containing the religious guidelines of the Shardha ceremony, does not mention many of the extravagant guidelines prescribed by Brahmins.

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Article: Sociology of Conflict and Violence: Towards a Theoretical Approach

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Sociology of Conflict and Violence: Towards a Theoretical Approach

--Salah Punathil

Abstract

The long tradition of social thought in Sociology and other social sciences disciplines focused on conflict and violence together. While ‘conflict’ emerged as a comprehensive theoretical framework capable of postulating social phenomenon, ‘violence’ has not yet emerged as a major sub-theme in the discipline of Sociology. This essay revisits sociological theories and contributions of scholars in allied disciplines to develop a critical sensibility to the trajectory of studying conflict and violence in modern society. The essay proposes that sociology today needs a clearly demarcated branch of violence studies. Further, this essay argues for a comprehensive approach that demands a creative collation of existing perspectives and a deeper sensibility to the multiplicity and pervasiveness of violence in our society. While prevailing views of violence are compartmentalised in terms of theoretical orientations and empirical interests, this essay argues that a combined view would enable us to perceive violence as an ‘interconnected’ sociological phenomenon.

Keywords: Violence, Conflict, Functionalism, Critical Theory, Sociology

Introduction

Conflict and violence are more ubiquitous today than ever in most societies in varied forms; be it inter-personal violence, collective violence, gender violence, state violence or terrorism. Yet, sociology as a discipline is still in its nascent stage to develop an adequate approach to address the pervasive nature of violence in our society. In this context, this essay critically reviews existing theories of conflict and violence and proposes an integrated approach to studying violent conflicts in contemporary societies. It first examines the direction(s) in which the theme of conflict and violence has been advanced in sociological theories and then reflects on the various perspectives and strands in sociology and allied disciplines on violence. This essay argues that there is limited scope for compartmentalised theories in understanding varied forms of conflicts and violence in our society. Thus, this paper offers a comprehensive approach that enables us to perceive violence as an ‘inter-connected’ phenomenon in society.

Conflict and Violence-Definitional Issues

It is worthwhile to begin with some of the central premises surrounding conflict and violence. Conflict is understood as any situation in which two or more ‘parties’ perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals (Demmers, 2012). Lewis Coser defined conflict in sociology as ‘a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aim of the opponents is to neutralise, injure or eliminate the rivals’ (Coser, 1956, p.8). Unlike violence, conflict is a broader phenomenon that encompasses

peace and violence (Kurtz, 1999). The term violence comes from the Latin words 'Vis' meaning 'force' and 'Latus' meaning 'to carry', which means 'to carry force towards something or someone', but over the years the word violence acquired wider meanings (Singh, 2002). The Oxford Dictionary defines violence as the 'behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something', it is the unlawful exercise of physical force or intimidation by the exhibition of such forces. The Webster dictionary classifies violence into the following four types: a) exertion of physical force to injure or abuse; b) to force injury by distortion, infringement, or profanation and outrage; c) intense, turbulent, or furious and often destructive action or force, and d) vehement feeling or expression and fervour (cited in Singh, 2002:23).

While dictionary-based definitions follow a uniform understanding, the idea of violence is a contested one in social sciences. Though violence is generally perceived as infliction of physical harm, this notion of physical injury is not acceptable to many. The violence extends beyond the physical as psychological harm or injury is rooted in the inequalities that exist in society (Galtung, 1969; Kurtz, 1999). Apart from physical or emotional pain or injury, violence can also come from social, political, or economic conditions that damage the quality of life (Fried, 1999). Although conflict is endemic to violence, it cannot be assumed that higher levels of conflict eventually lead to violence. Violence that is rooted in pre-existing conflicts should not be treated as a natural, self-explanatory outgrowth of such conflicts (Brubaker, 2002). In that sense, the shift from nonviolent to violent modes of conflict should not be seen as a phased one (Tambiah, 1996, p 292). It cannot be assumed that violence occurs naturally when conflict attains a certain level of intensity. Therefore, as Brubekar says, violence is not a quantitative degree of conflict but a qualitative form of conflict, with its dynamics (Brubakar 2002). Holdt (2013), in his study on violence in Rwandan society, he tries to show how partial connections and selective choices made in modernity impacted the violent events between ethnic groups.

Violence has not emerged as a sub-discipline in sociology yet despite the enormous significance of the subject in modern society (Walby, 2013). In an exclusive volume on violence, the journal 'Current Sociology' has introduced violence as an emerging field in sociology in the year of 2013 (ibid). Articles throughout the issue vehemently criticise the existing sociological tradition that ignored the complex forms of violence prevailing in the society. In the introductory article, Silvia Walby calls for the necessity of bringing violence into the core of sociological research with nuanced analysis (ibid). A distinctive contribution of this 'Current Sociology' issue is that it questions the central assumptions of modernity and locates violence at the center of the analysis of modernity. Violence is generally understood as something that declines with modernity and the remaining violence lies on the social fringes in the form of deviance and criminality of the marginalised (Kurtz, 1999). Modernity has been equated with peace and progress in the dominant assumptions and reduces violence as merely an anomaly. However, the

introduction of the Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict says, ‘most of the Enlightenment philosophers erroneously speculated that violence would slowly vanish as human society becomes more rational and civilised’ (Kurtz, 1999, p 3). It is the acts of disadvantaged groups who suffer from poverty and inequality are understood as criminal behavior (Kothari,1999). This understanding is very much reflected in sociological thinking too as violence is not seen as a key theme of research in sociology. Interestingly, it is argued that much of the violent experiences in most of the post-colonial societies can be seen as consequences of what Giorgia Dona (2013) calls the ‘interconnected modernities’. The argument is that the experience of modernity has been multiple, fragmented and at the same time, partial in most of the colonised societies and violence has to be located precisely in such contexts of modernities (ibid).

However, the founders of sociology were aware of the issue of conflict and the ‘crises of violence, as the ‘dark’ side that continues to exist or increase in the modern era they were studying (Walby, 2013). Conflict and violence, although did not emerge as a central theme of analysis except with Marx, gained currency in classical sociological theories as part of the analysis of broader social changes. While Marx has written about the alienation and class struggles and the possibility of violent protests and revolution, Durkheim has underlined the anomie, deviance and crime, Weber wrote about the monopoly of violence by state and Simmel has written about anonymity and its linkages with violence (Simmel, 1903). All of them were addressing the problem of ‘crisis’ in early 20th-century modern Europe. Sociologists of the 1920s and 1930s were also thoughtful towards the violence inherent in modernity as they observed the rise of fascism and the battle with communism and the concomitant violence (Dona, 2013). Sociological theories of violence can be broadly classified into two types - functionalist and critical. While the former views of conflict and violence are more influential and typical to early sociological thinking, the latter encompasses a range of violence studies influenced by different theories in sociology and allied disciplines.

Functionalist View on Violence

The origin of the functionalist notion of conflict and violence goes back to the theory of Emile Durkheim. His theory of society, though known mostly for the notion of ‘consensus’, also provides some insights into conflicts and violence. Durkheim (1982) while analysing what holds societies together and what brings order and social equilibrium, also tries to tell what happens when social changes weaken the social bonds embedded in shared beliefs. According to him, if the ‘collective conscience’ is shaken, it may lead to disorientation, destructive social life, conflicts and in worst forms, violence among the members of the group (ibid). In this view, violence comes as a consequence of anomie and social disorganisation. Apart from this, Durkheim’s (1982) account of simple societies bounded by mechanical solidarity gives some insights into how solidarity gets reaffirmed through repressive laws, including certain violent methods embedded in the traditional system. Durkheim’s idea

of social solidarity, based on moral and emotional ties and group mechanisms, also offers insights into violence that emerge between collective identities in the name of boundaries, inclusion and exclusion. George Simmel, another important sociologist who has paid attention to the dimensions of conflicts, argues that conflict is a ubiquitous feature of all social systems, but they do not necessarily lead to the breakdown of the system or hinder social change as he believes that violent forms of conflicts increase solidarity and internal organisation of a society (Simmel, 1903). Simmel argues that conflict promotes the integration of the system.

The structural-functional paradigm that dominated sociology and anthropology in the mid-20th century continues to promote the idea of social order. While social consensus, integration and equilibrium have been the primary concerns, the role of conflicts in social organisation has been largely ignored and violence has not been seen as an issue to be investigated (Jayaram and Seberwal, 1996). Overall, it can be said that there is a resilient 'pacifist' position in early sociological thinking which assumes that violence is simply an aberration in modern times (Dona, 2012). And this 'pacifist' position largely adheres to the functionalist notion of society. As mentioned above, much of the intellectual encounters of Durkheim and later sociologists like Parsons have revolved around the fundamental question of social order and change in the then emerging modern capitalist society (Jayaram and Seberwal, 1996). The omission of violence from functionalist sociology is a result of the notion that the larger transformation from a traditional feudal structure to a capitalist society is a change from conflicts and violence to peace and progress (Kurtz, 1999).

However, later developments in sociological theory have witnessed theories of conflicts emerging as a major theme alerting to the negligence of violence. Conflict theories gained momentum during the 1960s and 1970s as a critique of the tradition of functionalist theories. Lewis Coser's theory of conflict is a critique of the functionalist theory as the latter has been challenged due to its inability to handle questions of change and conflict (Coser, 1956). Coser looks at conflicts as an integral part of normal social processes at the cost of disregarding the functionalist perspective that treats conflict as a pathology or social disease. But, Coser's emphasis is on the functions rather than the dysfunctions of social conflict (ibid). Due to his focus on the functional dimension of conflict and its role in social integration, Coser is also known as a conflict functionalist (Turner, 1974). However, the uniqueness of his theory lies in its ability to focus on the themes of social order and social conflict simultaneously (Coser, 1956).

Another important theorist in conflict sociology is Ralf Dahrendorf (1959), who provides insights into the nature of conflicts in a capitalist society in his book 'Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society.' He argues that the modern industrial society has undergone a transformation where power, vested in 'imperatively coordinated institutions', plays an important role in social organisation and social conflicts (Dahrendorf, 1959). The 'decomposition of

capital' and the 'decomposition of labour', as he says, generate new forms of conflicts between and within the capitalist class and labour class and deny the possibility of class consciousness and class conflicts (ibid). Conflict, for Dahrendorf, exists predominantly in bureaucratically organised institutions. Dahrendorf's (1959) theory of conflict problematises Marx's notion of the bipolar division of society into two antagonistic classes involved in conflicts.

It can be argued that social thinkers like Coser and Dahrendorf were trying to capture the conflicting nature of modern capitalist societies, but their analyses were restrained to the Western social scenario of class formation, industrial sector, values of modern society etc. Though conflict theories addressed some of the limitations of functionalist theories, they did not develop into a substantial stream of study to address the varied forms of conflicts and violence, rather fell within the domain of functionalist theory. More importantly, they did not take violence and its unique dynamics as a serious issue while addressing conflicts in different societies. Conflicts and violence based on identity constitute a reality in both Western and non-Western social contexts. Prevailing conflict theories in sociology ignore conflicts and violence based on identities like caste, class, gender, ethnicity, nation, etc.

Critical Perspectives on Violence

The views that see conflict and violence as more than a matter of social order are broadly brought under the umbrella of 'critical perspectives' in this essay. This section deals with ideas that see violence as a more pervasive and deep-rooted problem in society.

Violence and Social Structure

There is a long tradition of social thought that emphasises the role of social structure in creating violence. Marx is the most powerful among all those who focus on conflicts rather than order in understanding social changes based on the structural dimension of society. Conflict in modern society, in his view, results from the inherent contradiction in the structure of the capitalist system. In his theory of class, Marx explains how relationships between individuals are shaped by their positions concerning the means of production and how the differential access to economic resources and power generates clashes of interest which often leads to conflicts (Marx, 1969). In this way, the Marxian tradition emphasises on the material conditions that shape social relations. The crux of Marxian thought is that social change is determinedly ingrained in material or economic conditions. Those who control the means of production stand in direct opposition to those whose only property is their labour time. The task of Marxian conflict analysis is to recognise the main social classes and the interests which arise from the organisation of production and the capacity of each class and its representatives to act on its interests (ibid). Again, it is Marx who has given a strong emphasis on violence in understanding society and social changes. Visualising the double role of violence in an exploitative society, Marx says violence is both a destructive and constructive instrument—an instrument of oppression for the ruling class

and the last weapon of the working class to establish a new egalitarian society (Demmers, 2012). It is important to recognise that Marx, although generally understood as a theorist of violent revolution in various societies, he does not see violence as an unavoidable, essential condition for radical social transformation. It is clear from above that the core of the Marxian theory of conflict and violence is embedded in structures. However, it is Johan Galtung who introduced the term 'structural violence' in his seminal article 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research' in 1969. Galtung explains:

Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations. Violence is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. In other words, when the potential is higher than the actual is by definition avoidable, then violence is present (1969: 168).

Thus, the inequality and social suffering that are produced through the same social structure itself is named 'structural violence'. Galtung (1969:169) argues that 'violence is built into an unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social'. He views that the difference between the actual and the potential need satisfaction among a section of society is indicative of violence in that society. There is a silent form of violence permeating the society in the form of poverty, low education and poor health and the resultant general low life expectancy, and such forms of violence are inherent in the ways societies are organised. These forms of violence are embedded in the normality of things, unlike the gory forms of violence. Galtung rightly points out that we fail to address the invisible but massive destructive forces of structural violence that are at the bottom of society (Galtung, 1990). This perspective profoundly questions the analytical frameworks of studies on violence and the binaries of violence and peace (Demmers, 2012).

Galtung says violence with a clear subject is manifest because it visibly appears as actions involving individuals committing acts of violence, which are easily captured and expressed verbally, while violence without such visible nature is structural and built into the social structure (Galtung, 1990). While personal violence, or violence with visible agencies, fluctuates or increases and decreases, structural violence is relatively permanent and encompassing (Ibid). He further proposes that those sections of a society that experience the most structural form of violence are likely to have experienced other forms of visible violence as well.

Similarly, Slavoj Zizek, in his book 'Violence', considers violence as a systemic process rather than a spectacle and underlines the need for thinking beyond subjective violence that is visible with a clear agency like crime, terror, international conflicts etc. (Zizek, 2008). While subjective violence is seen as a 'perturbation of the normal', objective violence, which is invisible, lies at the very heart of normalcy. According to Zizek, unravelling this objective 'systemic violence' is crucial to make sense of subjective violence

(Ibid). Zizek (2008) uses the idea of systemic violence to question violence and injustice rooted in capitalist society. According to him, such violence is embedded in the larger structure of modern society and is hidden in nature. Here, both Galtung and Zizek emphasise on the necessity to locate spectacular violence in the larger structural violence that runs as a source of other forms of violence without any attention.

Frantz Fanon, who holds a radical position on violence, argues that violence is necessary for social emancipation from inequalities and oppression in the larger social structure. In his celebrated work 'The Wretched of the Earth' (1961), Fanon argues that the entire colonisation process, through the dichotomised notion of the coloniser and the colonised, the settler and the native, the Westerner and the non-Westerner, was made possible through violent processes. Fanon, by hinging on his larger project of social emancipation, sees counter-violence as the sole method of achieving freedom and pleads for the oppressed to take up arms against the enemy. Fanon, in this sense, propagates violence as a mechanism to demolish the oppressive structure of colonialism for a free society. However, he does not restrict his analysis of violence into the oppressive structure of colonialism alone, as he also mentions the continuing violence in decolonised African countries like Algeria.

State and Violence

Several studies focus on the linkage between the state and violence. While such theories uncover the role of the state in creating and perpetrating violence, they also expose the hidden violence in the acts of the state and the legitimisation of state violence. Again, state violence is first addressed in the classical sociological theory as violence appears as a theme while Max Weber defines the modern state (Weber, 1968). Weber conceives of the state as a modern institution that has a monopoly over legitimate violence in its territory (Walby, 2013). Weber perceives this as the consequence of a long historical process through which violence became gradually concentrated in states. This monopoly of the state sanctions violence with opponent states on the one hand and acts violently over its people on the other (ibid).

Studies have shown that the idea of power is very important in understanding state violence (Arendt, 1969, Fanon, 1963, Weber, 1968). It is the power that decides the legitimacy of state violence and the illegitimacy of violence by the marginalised and poor (Fanon, 1963). Power justifies state violence as an act that checks an unprecedented number of deaths by war, genocide, etc. State violence is justified by the view that force is necessary to curtail violence in society (Kurtz, 1999). Hannah Arendt, in her book, 'On Violence' (1969), elaborates on the linkage between violence and power. In opposition to Fanon and many other scholars who see state violence as pervasive and argue for the necessity of violence in an exploitative society, Arendt does not see violence as an inevitable phenomenon; instead, she says, violence is secondary to power. Power is the ultimate aim of the state and violence is only an instrument that is being used when power is threatened. She opposes those

who believe in resistance and revolution through violence as she argues that counter-violence is destructive and incapable of producing an alternative to injustice.

However, state violence can be called as institutionalised violence and, therefore legitimate (Kothari, 1999). According to Rajni Kothari, institutionalised violence refers to the 'process by which acts of violence of force are undertaken by an official group on behalf of, or with the fascist approval of the society as a whole' (Kothari, 1999, p.225). The violence unleashed by the police against criminals, warfare, violence by the armed forces against external enemies and internal members and other forms of repression by the state are examples of institutionalised violence. Kothari terms other forms of violence as non-institutionalised violence, say, violent actions by individuals such as serial killings, gang violence or spousal and child abuse. Such unsanctioned violence, in opposition to the sanctioned violence produced by the state, is seen as deviant behaviour and may have a direct link with social inequalities and state activities itself (Kothari, 1999). Broadly speaking, violence is perceived with dichotomies of legitimate violence and illegitimate violence.

Walter Benjamin has shown the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence as linked to the law of the state. He says it is the law of the state that views violence in the hands of individuals as a danger because it undermines the legal system. On the other hand, the law always tries to monopolise violence (Benjamin, 1999). In this way, 'any violence outside the law is perceived as a threat as it frightens the very existence of law not by the end that violence may pursue but the mere existence of violence outside the law' (Benjamin, 1999, p.58). He cites military laws and military violence as powerful, directly-used predatory violence over civilians for its own ends. He criticises violence in modern times from two angles: the law-making function and law preserving function. The military and police interventions 'for the security reasons' are either means of law-making or law preserving (ibid).

Drawing inspiration from Benjamin and Carl Schmitt's theories on violence and law, Giorgio Agamben proposes the idea of a 'state of exception' to understand violence in contemporary society, especially in situations of 'emergency'. According to Agamben, a state of emergency is an exception to rules where the state infringes upon its own rules to survive even by suspending the constitution (Agamben, 2008). The theory of the state of exception says there is always a possibility of violence that lies outside and beyond the law in conditions of 'emergency'. For Agamben, a state of exception is not a special kind of law but rather a suspension of judicial order itself (ibid). A state of exception appears in the language of war, security and terrorism and it validates the concentration of powers on the citizens. A state of exception is a situation where 'life is bare because it can be taken by anyone without any mediation from law and without incurring the guilt of homicide' (Das and Poole, 2004, 11). Agamben's theory shows that law produces certain bodies as 'killable' because they are positioned by the law

itself prior to the institution of law (Das and Poole, 2004). The potential of the term 'state of exception' lies in its ability to show official legitimacy that is guaranteed by the exercise of violence.

However, the conventional understanding of state violence as a spectacle that is visible and direct is challenged by new scholarships. Foucault's (1977) analysis of the changing form of governance with modernity and democratic processes shifts the attention from the overt use of violence by the state to everyday forms of violence. According to Foucault, modern power replaces spectacular violence in society and that the modern forms of disciplining the public through technology and governance are invisible forms of violence over citizens (Spencer, 2007). The exercise of state power over its population through overt violence has given way to control of the population through the process of the internalisation of norms (Walby, 2013).

Following Foucault, Jonathan Spencer talks about the limitations of the preoccupation with sporadic violence. He points out that sociologists and anthropologists working on violence have been too often stunned by violent movements and thereafter produce a fully decontextualised explanation (Spencer, 2007). He says that existing studies on violence are presented either as a departure from the expected shape of political order or simply as its negation. By advocating Foucault's view, he argues that the main challenge of studies on violence is to look at how modern technologies of power are working through the populations as an inevitable consequence of post-colonial governmentality (ibid). Das and Poole say violence happens not only through making killable bodies, as posited by Agamben but also through categories of power embodied in the state in everyday forms as proposed by Foucault (ibid). Stated differently, 'the state of exception' is made possible not always through spectacular interventions of state agencies in situations of 'anomalies' but through varieties of confrontations between the state and the marginal subjects in their everyday life (ibid). However, it is extremely important to see the empirical contexts to understand the ways in which state violence operates in different societies.

Symbolic Violence

Another interesting concept capturing the features of hidden forms of violence is 'symbolic violence' as postulated by Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is 'gentle, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, and is mostly exerted though purely symbolic channels of communication and cognitions (more precisely misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling' (Bourdieu, cited in Holdt, 2013, p. 115). Symbolic violence is invisible in nature as it is practised through 'durable depositions' internalised in the minds and bodies of the victim or the dominated. More importantly, it is through symbolic violence that ideologies of hierarchies and structures of authority are exerted on individuals and groups. The force of the dictator through 'durable dispositions' is practised only with the consent of dominated. Bourdieu says the modern state is the center of the construction of symbolic order as it holds 'the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 2000, p.75).

Symbolic violence, he says is the crucial method through which social order and hierarchies and structures of power endure and reproduce over time. By producing and reproducing symbolic violence, the dominant sections are injecting legitimacy into the hierarchical practices and effectively hiding the continuing power relations at play (Holdt, 2013). It becomes increasingly difficult for the subjects of symbolic violence to realise and fight back as symbolic violence is invisible and pervasive.

Everyday Violence and Representation

Some recent literature on violence illuminates the immediate interpersonal relationships, leading to an emphasis on the phenomenological experience of violence both by the victim as well as the perpetrator. These are ethnographic studies that emphasise the micro-dynamics of violence (Das, Kleinman, Lock, Ramphele and Pamela, 2000). Such ethnographic accounts, inspired by the phenomenological tradition, depart from the structural explanations which provide a depersonalised account of violence. These ethnographies question the taxonomies of violence like public versus private, the ordinary against extreme cases of violence (Kleinman, 2000). The concept of the everydayness of violence gives us the insight that such acts are a routine part of day-to-day living. The mundane nature of violence can be understood only by looking at the everyday interactions of local social and cultural realms. Such studies explain the hidden, routine forms of conflicts operating at the surface that act as the ground for larger national or regional phenomena (Das, 1990). These ethnographies are useful in understanding the reorganisation of social life and the impact of memories of individuals and groups in violence-affected localities. Gender violence is a preferred subject in this line of inquiry as the everyday violence that occurs in both private as well as public spaces and is rooted in patriarchy has been explored ethnographically (Das, Kleinman, Lock, Ramphele and Pamela, 2000).

Those who study the representation of violence examine the ways in which agents like victims, perpetrators, state, etc. engage in discursive practices that legitimise or illegitimise the violent act and construct varieties of discourse on individuals and groups involved (Demmers, 2012). They are interested in narratives and representation of various parties involved in the crime to see how the event is inscribed in a specific way after the incident (ibid). While looking at the various narrative reconstructions of reality, it addresses the circumstances that determine whether and to what degree people are receptive or resistant to certain discourses on violence. They scrutinise in particular how and why stories are reaffirmed, enacted, resisted and policed, and finally, institutionalised (ibid).

The studies on the representation of violence are interested in various kinds of construction of violence. Scholars have analysed state representation in documents of violence that see how the problem is inscribed in such records (See Pandey, 2006; Das, 2007; Hansen, 2001; Mehta, 2007; Baxi, 2007). For example, most riots in the country are 'judicially' investigated and recorded by the state in the form of government reports and are archived as public

documents. The politics of representations in such documents are unravelled by social scientists. Hansen in his study on violence in ‘post-colonial Bombay’ argues that there is a performative dimension to the public document prepared by the state basically to preserve the myth of rationality and neutrality of the state (Hansen, 2001). The legitimacy of the state is primarily secured in public in performative dimensions of governance; therefore, the government’s reasons for appointing commissions of inquiry are often an effort to preserve the myth of the rationality of its actions (Brass, 2003; Hansen, 2001; Das, 2007). Studies have also exposed how police killing and state violence are often justified by rejecting the victim’s testimonies as illogical or unscientific, not backed by evidence (Patel). Deepak Mehta (2002) argues that the representation of ‘communal’ carries several other markers, which further legitimises the state as a rational entity and the communities as irrational, frenzied, ignorant, infuriated, and so on. Appellate judgments on communal riots thus furnish a privileged site that allows us to detail this language of the state where ‘mob fury’ and ‘timeless’ hostilities between communities find repetition in the judicial writing of communal riots in independent India (Baxi, 2007).

However, it can be argued that the analysis of the representation of violence in a particular context may sometimes be well captured by fieldwork as well. Many have studied the localities where violence has been erupting at frequent intervals and see how hostile groups construct a discourse of the other group before and after the incident (Mehta 2000). Likewise, the circumstances following police firing may lead to a variety of discourse by the state to justify the act. At the same time, there will be counter-discourses by the victims that question the version of the hegemonic state and it can well be captured by powerful ethnographies in the violence-hit areas.

Psycho-analytical approach to violence also enriches the studies on the subject. This micro perspective raises questions about what ordinary human beings are capable of in settings of violent conflicts (Boman, 2000; Nandy, 1976; Kakar, 1996). It directs attention to the question of why people are ready to attack or even die for a nation or an ethnic group or for other affiliations. Several studies are being conducted now on what moves people to fight against each other, even against their neighbors for ethnic or religious causes. The implicit assumption behind this approach is that violence is inherently related to some fundamental human needs and violence becomes inevitable when those needs are prevented or become unattainable (Demmers, 2012). Many scholars, while giving importance to the larger social circumstances or causes, locate the psychological processes at the heart of violence. For instance, people individually and collectively have an essential need to classify themselves, a need to belong to and to secure a sense of the self. Whenever this identity impulse is threatened, it leads to a sense of loss and produces violent practices, including terrorism (Bauman, 2000). The sense of attachment to certain groups, like religion, is a sense of social identity stemming from childhood emotions of belongingness to one’s cultural group that gets translated into violent behaviour in crisis situations (Kakar, 1996).

Conclusion

While Sociology as a discipline is yet to advance much from its earlier preoccupations as violence is still a neglected theme, recent attempts in the discipline draw concepts and theories from allied disciplines to expand the domain of the sociology of violence. The critical reflections on existing concepts and theories in this essay enable us to argue that violence is an 'interconnected phenomenon'. While contributions of various thinkers across disciplines give interesting insights into various dimensions of violence, a comprehensive approach that addresses the pervasiveness and multiplicity of violence requires more conscious efforts. While the disciplinary concerns and empirical issues enrich our understanding of violence, they will also restrain our prism of analysis unless we do not bridge the gap between theories of violence and the comparative contexts and forms of violence. In the existing literature, one group of thinkers focus on the structural dimension of violence where violence is located in the broader processes like modernity, colonialism, nationalism and institutions of state apparatus like law, etc. Violence, in this view, insists on focusing on structures that can be economic, political, cultural, historical, etc., or a combination of these. The advocate of the everydayness of violence, on the other hand, focus on agencies, mental structures, and interactive possibilities of violence. They also emphasise the everyday consequences of violence in society. While psychoanalysts point out that violence has actors with self-aggression; violence can also be symbolic. Attempts have also been made to see how violence is represented through various agencies. However, it is hard to see any event of violence without all these dimensions in one way or the other, in visible or subtle forms as violence encompasses all these dimensions. It is to be acknowledged that these dimensions of violence such as structural, everyday, symbolic, representational, etc., have wider applicability across societies to understand various forms of violence once we perceive the idea of violence as an 'interconnected phenomenon'.

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**Article: Politics of Witchcraft Accusations and Violence among
the Misings of Assam, India**

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Politics of Witchcraft Accusations and Violence among the Misings of Assam, India

--Dinesh Mishong & Apparao Thamminaina

Abstract

Many cultures believe that witchcraft skills are nurtured in the families and passed down in the same lineage. Witchcraft practice among the Mising community of Assam is no exception. The network of interpersonal relationships seemed primarily liable to trigger the charge of witchcraft, as the reputation for such malevolent behaviour could be shaped and continued to adhere to a family line. The social identity of such families reflects the principle that 'once a witch is always a witch.' In the Mising community, witch hunts are performed during any mishap in a village to neutralize the destructive influence of evil power. Such witch hunts often victimize the families identified with the witchcraft tradition. The present paper examines the inheritance of victimhood, stereotyping, and the consequences of witch-hunt among the Misings of Assam, India.

Keywords: Witchcraft, Witch-hunt, Marunaam, Politics, Mising, Assam

Introduction

The Misings are the second largest tribal group in Assam, primarily inhabiting north of the Brahmaputra valley. In particular, they live in ten districts of Assam; North Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Majuli, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Darrang, Biswanath, Dhemaji, Golaghat, and Tezpur. Ethnically Mising people are Mongoloid and belong to the Tibeto-Burman language group. The community has no written record of their origin. They consider *Se:di Me:lo* as the creator of the universe. Their oral narratives called *Mibo Ah:bang* describe the tale of Mising origin. *Sedi*, with his female consort *Melo*, came down to the earth in person with body and soul from 'Kihling Kanggey,' the God-created heaven,

with the help of an 'Awin-cobang' (golden ladder), and began human habitations on *Dong-Among* or the earth (Pegu, 2019, p. 28). According to Gait, the Misings are originally a hill tribe and came down from a hill in the Himalayan region and settled down permanently in the Brahmaputra valley (Gait, 1907). Hence, the Misings became famous as 'river people.' Mising is derived from two words: *mi*, which means man, and *sing*, which means water. Since they live near rivers, building flood-resilient houses have been essential to their survival.

This article explores *marunaam* (witchcraft) practice in the Mising community of Assam, India. It results from long-term ethnographic research. The study has vividly used the case study method while depending on semi-structured interviews and structured observation schedules to collect data. The data collected from diverse sources is triangulated and analysed to arrive at conclusions the article has drawn about witchcraft, violence, and its repercussions on the Misings and its broader implications. The study village, Boralimora, is homogenous, with all the residents from the Mising community. The village is in the Majuli district. The district is famous as the world's largest inhabited river island with unique culture and history. The island presents a diversified complex, from tribes to the highly acculturated castes such as Brahmans and Kayasthas. Among the tribes, the most numerous are the Mising. According to the 2011 census report, they comprise 43 percent of the island's population.

The material culture of Misings is closely related to their beliefs in witchcraft. Hence, the following components in the discussion trace the connections between witchcraft beliefs of Misings and significant aspects of their material culture, particularly residence. It analyses the cultural and political aspects of witchcraft, witch-hunt, and its consequences.

Taleng okum and its cultural significance

The Misings reside in a distinctive *taleng okum* or *chang ghar*, an elevated house constructed using bamboo stilts. The space below *taleng okum* is known

as *kitik*, considered a family's private space. Entry into *kitik* is known as *kitik ginam*, which is restricted to family members. With the passage of time and the advent of modern living, there have been changes in Mising lifestyle. However, the *taleng okum* is a distinctive feature of the Mising way of life, particularly in rural areas. Building a *taleng okum* out of locally accessible materials like bamboo, wood, cane, and straw is nothing less than a meticulously crafted work of art. The beautiful, eco-friendly yet durable architecture of the *taleng okum* makes it resilient to seasonal changes.

Kitik: a site for secret meetings

Traditionally, the Misings practice village exogamy. The community prohibits the girls and boys of the same village from establishing pre-marital relationships. However, the boys of a village visit other villages to find and meet the girls they like. If the girl has a similar interest, they meet the prospective husband at the *kitik* before the parents officially arrange the marriage. This space gives them privacy to engage in conversations. They preferably meet slightly after dark to conceal their identity. In cases of unrequited love, the boy uses *Muini Baan*¹, which requires them to place a talisman in the *kitik* precisely beneath the place where the girl sleeps in the house. They believe this would guarantee a return of affection a boy felt for a girl. Nevertheless, most often, Misings consider the *muini baan* as a *marunaam* performance if used with malicious intentions.

Marunaam

The *marunaam* (witchcraft) is considered an evil practice by the Mising community, and a few specialists (*marune-tani*) perform it to harm the enemy through magical spells. Anybody can use the services of a *marune-tani* to harm their enemies. The knowledge about *marunaam* is transmitted through the hereditary line, and community members believe it is the natural skill of all members of those families identified with the *marunaam* practice (Akrong,

¹ Love magic or spell and set of mantras meant to get a person infatuated with someone.

2007; Dysa, 2013). Nevertheless, Basumatary (2020) rightly says, the community uses it to ostracise a person. As Das (2018) argues in the context of Rabha women, witch-hunting is an instrument to gain and sustain power. The Mising people believe there is a connection between the *taleng okum* and *marunaam*. The *marunaam* should be performed in the *kitik* to inflict harm to the targeted person. Hence, the stigma is attached to the entry into other's *kitik*. There are instances of people chasing men caught in the *kitik* and beating them in public.

The *marunaam* is also known as *buttu onaam* (Kuli, 2014; Payeng, 2014; Pegu, 2019). According to Pegu (2019), the phrase *buttu onaam* refers to the magical practitioner called *marune-tani*, who rears evil spirits or a wild ghost called *buttu* and keeps it like a pet animal at home to target a person, which may cost the latter's life (Pegu, 2019, p. 271). In popular belief, the practitioner was bound to feed the ghost with a human soul periodically; otherwise, the ghost would take the life of his/her master. The *marune-tani* uses such soul in *marunaam* performance to harm others and sustain the soul in the spirit form (Payeng, 2014). Mising holds that the *urom* (soul) does not immediately depart after the death of some people who met unnatural or accidental death at an early age. These souls are still in the vicinity of their former home in this world and still experience hunger and thirst. The family suspects *marune-tani* for performing *marunaam* if a member dies by accident or from unknown ailments (Payeng, 2014). However, Borah & Das (2019) argue that superstitions lead to brutality against the accused and, in some cases, his/her relatives.

The Mising believe that *marune-tani* chants *baan mara* to strike a target individual with an invisible arrow. *Such a magic spell* is the first step in the *marunaam* process, and other mantras such as *Tekeli baan*² and *Bayoo baan*³ follow. Mishra (2003) points out the existence of such a kind of *baan*

² Causes stomach ailment in which stomach enlarges and looks like an earthen pot.

³ Witches often use this mantra to arouse viral diseases like smallpox.

mara practice among villagers in the East Singhbhum area (Mishra, 2003, p. 35-41). Misings believe that it is impossible to escape *Baan mara*. It is bound to hit the target under any circumstances. It can cause harm in various ways: for example, it may cause disease and death of a person, disputes within the family or in the neighbourhood, and death of cattle. The *baan* can be seen only by the witches and the witch doctors. The affected member or his/her family consult an *Ojha* or a witch doctor to heal from the ill effects of such arrows.

Doley (2017) wrote about *Muini baan*. *Muini* in Mising is derived from the word *Mohini* in the Assamese language, which translates to “delusion personified” and derives from the verb root *moha*, which means “to delude, enchant, perplex, or illusion.” Elwin (1939) explains “erotic magic or spell” in his analysis of magic’s role in the development of male-female bonding in the Baiga culture of central India (Elwin, 1939, p. 344). The magic spells are woven around the physical beauty of a woman. It is similar to the *muini baan* of the Mising. The essence of female beauty and allurement is implicitly associated with the name *Mohini* in Assamese and Mising languages. As discussed in the preceding sections, men use *muini baan* to pursue the girl of their choice. They believe that they can attract any woman with this mantra. As Malinowski described (1948, p. 67), “Magic is based on specific experience of emotional states in which man observes not nature but himself, in which the truth is revealed not by reason but by the play of emotions upon the human organism.” The belief in the success of magic and the allegations against the performer are based on the stakeholders’ emotions. Such beliefs are observed in several communities of the world. For instance, Evan Pritchard discussed a similar belief of Nuer, according to which a man can manipulate a woman’s dreams from a distance through a magic spell to get her love (Pritchard, 1937). Among the Mising, the man uses *tabeez* (amulets) to manipulate dreams to attract the woman of his love interest. Babic (2016) observed that women try to gain their love through magic, amulets, and rituals in rural Slovenia, especially when marriages are arranged based on the economic and social status of the families (Babic, 2016). Nevertheless, magico-religious practices, particularly witchcraft, often lead to violence

(Adinkrah, 2017). As Chaudhuri (2014) rightly elaborated in the context of migrant tea planters of West Bengal, the severed relations among different stakeholders often result in witchcraft accusations and violence.

When a practitioner of *Muini baan* fails to get the desired outcome, the Mising believe that the practitioner can harm or even kill the target. Hence, the community considers it *marunaam*. Such “indirect communicative magic,” as commonly known, is practiced to develop male-female bonds (Rosenblatt, 1971). It involves using facial expressions and hand gestures to act out rather than verbally expressing what the man feels or thinks of a girl of his interest. Consequently, love magic might be viewed as an exotic example of what Goffman (1959, p. 13) refers to as “defensive practices,” in this case, a practice that helps a person avoid the embarrassment of rejection by substituting contact and, more crucially, by safeguarding identity. According to Elwin (1939), a male willing to establish a relationship puts something on the girl’s shoulder or in her hair, throws pebbles at her, and throws oily material on her hair so that she can be impressed by the performer. Goodwin (1942), in his research on the Western Apache, observed that some men obtain the hair of their love interest and perform magic to convince her to marry (Goodwin, 1942). According to Elwin and Goodwin, the victims are aware of the practitioner’s identity, which is highly prevalent in their society. However, Mising girls are not aware of the identity of the performers of *muini baan*. Hence, the community identifies such performers as witches who can cause harm through rituals, spells, and medications.

Witchcraft performance

The *marunaam* is a secret process performed in the dark, preferably during a new moon (*Amabhaisya*) night. The *marune-tani* secretly collects a small piece of any material possessions of the target, such as hair, nails, garments, bed linens, and mosquito nets, and applies *sindoor* (red vermilion). They keep everything in a *tabeez* (amulet). Afterward, they bury the *tabeez* in the *kitik*, precisely beneath the target’s bed. Due to the proximity of the dwellings, the

residents constantly interact with one another, making it simple to learn every detail about the target. Some respondents mentioned that before executing *marunaam*, *marune-tani* places a live fish in a pot with a secret spell in the victim's name and occasionally feeds it with contaminated food and drink. Anjali Daimari (2012) mentions a similar kind of practice among the Bodo community of Assam, where the witch (*daina*) brings harm through rituals, spells, and medicines and uses the victim's hair, nails, and clothes. *Diana* is a male witch who uses *daina baan* to get a person infatuated with someone (Daimari, 2012). In order to increase their chances of success, *marune-tani* collects the soil left by the target's footprints, chants the appropriate mantra, buries the *tabeez* filled with the soil in the *kitik*, and performs a nude dance at a secret location. People believe that nude dance results from the performer's anxiousness which helps to reduce painful anxiety. The magical structure of a culture reflects the fundamental anxieties of that culture as well the internal anxieties of an individual. Men who have been rejected are often humiliated by their peer group. It increases embarrassment and angst. Unrequited love is a state of social and personal anxiety that leads to the use of love magic. Anxiety reduction is probably the most frequently stated explanation for magical performances (Malinowski, 1948). It would imply that performing such magic helps the practitioner feel less anxious. It helps in the persistence of magic by making practitioners feel at ease. For instance, people can be more calculative or detached from their target if they are less worried. However, the identification or suspicion of witchcraft performance results in accusations on the performer. The accuser files a complaint on the suspect in the village *kebang*.

Kebang

The *kebang*, Mising's traditional village council made up of more than twelve elderly men, summons any suspect of the village upon a complaint. The *kebang* is headed by a village headman called Gam. Any conflict, violation of social norms, and crime are adjudicated and settled by the *kebang*. The Gam performs the role of the president, and the elders help to finalize the judgment.

Generally, the offenders are punished with a fine in cash or by arranging a community feast. However, in extreme cases, the offender is punished with bodily assault, social boycott, or ostracisation from the village. The identification of the culprit is based on the complainant's suspicion. A rumour or gossip about a person's engagement in witchcraft (Stewart & Strathern, 2004) is sufficient to identify him/her as a culprit in several cases. For instance, the council validates the complainant's claim based on the suspect or his/her family history of engaging in *marunaam* practices. The council awards punishment based on the severity of harm or loss to the complainant's family. The identification of *marune-tani* is often arbitrary. Hence, the innocent may be awarded the punishment. The identity of the family and the suspicion by the community members can make him/her a victim. Such a process makes the position of the suspect fragile in the community and subjected to a witch hunt.

Significance of clan relations

In Mising villages, the social ties woven based on the clan system are significant in decisions about witch-hunts. The relations between different clans and sub-clans and the resultant power dynamics often influence the decisions of the Kebang. There are forty clans among the Misings, namely Bori, Basing, Chintey, Chungkurang, Darik, Dang, Dawo, Doley, Kardong, Kagyung, Kumbang, Kuli, Lagasu, Loing, Medok, Mili, Mipun, Mirang, Modi, Morang, Norah, Ngate, Padi, Pait, Pamse, Panging, Pangyeng, Payeng, Patir, Pawo, Pegu, Perme, Pertin, Pogag, Saro, Taid, Takoe, Taye, Tayung, and Yein. The surnames of the Misings are clan-specific, so one cannot adopt a clan surname to which he does not belong by birth. However, a few more surnames are the sub-titles adopted by some families, e.g., Gupit, Patgiri, and Chandi belong to the Pegu clan; the Patiri, Misong, and Gajera constitute the Doley clan.

Accusation and punishment in Boralimora

In Boralimora village, the Panging clan is the most dominant among the four clans; the others are Mili, Taye, and Yein. The Panging clan is divided into

two sub-clans – Chiru and Koktak. Chiru and Koktak were brothers. Chiru in Mising means 'well,' and Koktak means 'cook.' It indicates their work profile. The Chiru was entrusted with safeguarding the 'well,' and the Koktak with preparing the meals for the family. Later, they both fought, and their lineage got divided. The succeeding generations made alliances with different other clans. The Chiru and Koktak sub-clans refused to enter marriage agreements with the same clans. The Chiru sub-clan preferred to marry persons from the Mili clan of a neighbouring village for several generations. The continuity of practice has cemented the bond between the Mili and Chiru sub-clan, which remains a vital source of social capital. Koktak sub-clan members, on the other hand, have marital relations with Yein, Taye, and Payeng clan members. The scattered relations have not helped them gain the consolidated support of all those clans except the support of a few families from each of them. In case of conflicts, the Chiru sub-clan always gets guaranteed support from the Mili clan. Even today, the Chiru sub-clan is better positioned to defend itself in conflicts with the Koktak sub-clan or other clans.

The recent case of the witch-hunt involved Chiru and Koktak sub-clans. A member of the Chiru sub-clan, a Mibo, a religious priest, accused member of the Koktak sub-clan of witchcraft. Even though the Chiru sub-clan has a lesser population than the Koktak, they wield authority in the village through the *kebang* as they belong to a priestly clan. They can influence the decisions of the *kebang*. The priest of the village is a hereditary position within the Chiru sub-clan. Also, many members of the Chiru sub-clan are settled in white-collar occupations, such as school teachers and government officials. Hence, they have become powerful and influential in the decisions of the village council.

DP⁴ (pseudonym) is a twenty-five-year young man who lives in Boralimora village. He belongs to the Koktak sub-clan. He fell in love with MN⁵ from the same village when he was twenty-year-old. MN is from Chiru sub-clan. As he

⁴ The real name is concealed to ensure anonymity.

⁵ The real name is concealed to ensure anonymity.

reveals, initially, MN (pseudonym) was not interested but later fell in love with him. However, MN's family disapproved of their love since the relations between both families were severed. The family warned her not to meet him. However, they continued to meet in secrecy. There was a rumour that DP's grandfather went to Chabjali village, located far away from Boralimora, to learn *marunaam*. MN's family believes that one of their family members died due to his *marunaam* performance. Subsequently, the enmity continued between both families. In the vengeance, MN's family harassed DP's elder sister when she was bathing at the river. Following the incident, the relations between both families further deteriorated, making it even more difficult to continue their love. Nevertheless, DP continued his efforts to meet MN secretly. He went a night to meet MN at her *kitik* with the help of a friend. Her uncle caught him and accused him of performing *marunaam* at their *kitik*.

MN's family filed a complaint with the village council. They accused DP of burying *tabeez* in their *kitik* to kill their family members. The *kebang* convened a village-level meeting. It summoned DP and his family to attend the meeting. The *kebang* found him guilty without inquiry. In the belief of his act, the council members inquired about the place of *tabeez*. The council ordered him to take it out immediately. If not, threatened to impose the death sentence. They doused him with petrol. He expressed innocence in the meeting and explained his purpose in visiting MN's house. MN's family denied his love. They forced MN to reject his love publicly in the council meeting. She has acted accordingly with the pressure from the family. DP was left with no option. The *kebang* members and others at the meeting brutally attacked and forced him to confess the act of *marunaam*. Upon the confession, the village council identified him as a *marunaam* practitioner and ostracized him from the village.

DP's narrative describes the complexity of the phenomenon. Identifying a *marune-tani* operates outside the community's belief system. The family background, economic conditions, and power relations between the clans and sub-clans play a vital role in identifying the witches. The social and economic

status of the accused and the accuser are crucial in accepting or rejecting *marunaam* allegations and decisions on punishments. The village council meeting, the arguments, and the decisions reveal the status differences and power relations in the Mising community.

Witch-hunt victims are generally from the impoverished and marginalized sections of the community. Hence, they rarely get support from the members of the village council. When community tensions flare up, some people attempt to channel evil power for their benefit. The accusers' neighbours—those with whom they already had strained relationships—are the first to engage in the search for a witch. When the victim entered MN's *kitik* late at night, the severed relations with MN's family resulted in the charges of witchcraft. The socio-economic position of MN's family played a significant role in determining the perpetrator. MN's family is dominant in the village and owns most of the land. They frequently lend land to the tenants of the village for farming. Hence, they receive unwavering support from the majority of the village. On the other hand, DP's family has two acres of fertile land, which is not enough for his family. The MN's family also plays an active role in village politics. The village *Kebang*, made up primarily of senior members of MN's family, significantly impacts the council decisions. They can identify a *marune-tani* of their choice and punish him/her with the *kebang's* assistance. They could not accept their daughter's relationship with a person from an impoverished witch family. Hence, they have used their position in the village to victimize DP. When MN's uncle passed away unexpectedly, her family blamed DP's family, which marked the beginning of their enmity. DP's involvement in a romantic relationship with MN escalated the tensions between both families. They accused DP because MN resisted withdrawing from the relationship. DP's family's reputation as witches strengthens their charge. The *kebang* has not allowed DP to prove his innocence. DP and his family could not get support from the village community due to their lower status. As a result, DP and his family members were isolated and brutally attacked at the council meeting.

Conclusion

The prevalent perception is that witchcraft and its magical abilities are related to fear and necessity. The people are afraid of it due to the perceived harmful effects. However, there are instances where magic appeared to be the final resort when no other solutions seemed to work—for instance, using *muini baan* to win a woman's heart. As a result, the witches are considered influential in the community. The Misings believe that the impoverished and powerless use *marunaam* to harm enemies and strengthen their position. They transmit knowledge about *marunaam* practices through the family line, most often the male line. Nevertheless, such families' women are also considered a potential source of *marunaam* skills and a threat to the village. Such belief makes the powerless more vulnerable to the decisions of the traditional village council upon the occurrence of any suspicious activity in the village.

DP's case indicates that identifying a *marunee tani* is a strategy of the powerful clans to control low-income families with low social status in the village. The higher social and economic status helps people eliminate enemies by labelling them as witches. A witch-hunt is a violent act on an identified *marune-tani* and his/her family members. The violence finds an easy way to legitimacy in the village society through accepted institutional mechanisms despite embedded injustices. It is used as an instrument to safeguard the position of influential people in the community. It is labelled as a process to neutralize the harmful effects of the misconduct of a suspect. However, the dominant clans of the village community justify their actions in the name of society's well-being. In this instance, the *kebang* awarded punishment to a family based on the allegations made by the other family, which appears to have been done with explicit intention. The dominant family could secure the support of the community, particularly the *kebang* members, against the impoverished. The social and financial capital of the victim is inadequate to refute their allegations.

The study reveals that the Mising use witchcraft and witch-hunt as strategies to act upon and vent out the suppressed anxiety and animosity. The identification of *marunaam* practitioners and finding culprits from suspects is an arbitrary process that depends on the relative position of the accuser and the accused in the village social hierarchy. The traditional village council, *kebang*, consider the cases based on the clans involved in the conflict. Substantial evidence is not required to punish the suspect, which can make an innocent person a victim. It reveals the significance of power vested in specific individuals, families, clans, and sub-clans with control over land and other resources. They manipulate the decisions of the *kebang* and victimize people in the name of culprits or *marune-tani*. It reveals the fragility of a few individuals, families, and clans over others. Hence, the witchcraft and witch-hunt among Mising are not just the outcome of a specific belief system but a dynamic interaction among multiple organizational elements of society.

Finally, as Roy (1998) argues, the causes of persecution are economic and social subjugations. The less privileged are often subjugated and made scapegoats in the process. In such cases, the state can delve into the causes of economic subjugation to empower the vulnerable sections of society. However, Sinha (2015) discussed witch-hunt as a culturally sanctioned violence, emphasizing its dynamic and layered nature among *the Adivasi* of the Chotanagpur region. The cultural legitimation of *kebang's* decisions makes it difficult for the state to respond to the dreadful consequences. The community may interpret the state's assertions against people's traditional practices as an attempt to impose the majority culture (Nath, 2014). Hence, the state should be cautious while acting on traditional practices that proliferate societal injustices. The Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Act, 2015, envisioned the goals of human safety and dignity. Nevertheless, the police and civil society are vital in creating awareness among the people to realize the goals. It requires following a culturally sensitive approach to sensitize people about the undesirable outcomes of such

traditional practices and the consequences of violence to ensure everyone's peace and dignity of life.

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Article: Politics of Telangana State: Trends, Prospects and Challenges -- A Way Forward

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Politics of Telangana State: Trends, Prospects and Challenges -- A Way Forward

--Jagannatham Begari

Abstract

The article proposes to evaluate and articulate new trends in the Telangana state and intends to analyse the party politics and new dimensions. The paper proposes to explicate the emergence of new leadership in all the main political parties in Telangana and critically discusses the shift in their ideologies and investigate the new ways and means of the political parties to mobilize the people, articulate, and aggregate them. It examines Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and its conventional leadership and its impact on the politics of Telangana critically. Subsequently, it evaluates the emergence of Telangana Jana Samiti and its role in the process of democratisation in Telangana Politics. In addition, the paper further examines the vitality of Telangana Jana Samithi and the politics of the emergence of BRS and it analyses the interface between and ruling regime and political movements. In other words, this article aims to evaluate the perceptions of the people, political trends, prospects, and challenges to the Telangana state. It is based on qualitative research, descriptive analysis, and exploratory method.

Keywords: Telangana politics, Indian politics, Telangana movement, democratic aspirations, political parties' trends

Introduction

Politics in India after independence has been influenced by national freedom, democratic struggles, ideas, ideology, colonialism, and the aspects with regard to the socio-economic, political, and cultural (Mukherjee & Mukherjee, 2007). Politics in India since independence had passed through the democratic, development, populist, co-option, and coercive dimensions which had a tremendous impact on the current political scenario. Indian politics has been dynamic as initially it was dominated by the one-party system to the two-party

and presently multi-party system. India has also witnessed the individual charismatic political to mass political leadership, idealistic politics to opportunistic politics, and politics of trust to politics of suspicion. The approach of people towards the elections, government, and leadership in the country has changed tremendously (Kothari, 2010). As Rudolph and Rudolph have emphasised the demand politics and command politics that are evident in Telangana politics after its formation (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2001). The politics of Telangana state has presently witnessed the new shape and trends in Indian politics as the emergence of new young leadership, new political scenario, new people's expectations and demands, forms, tools and means of mobilisation. It is to note the dimension of class, caste, gender and region but also a religion which influences India's party politics in India since its independence and present as well. There was also an insistent religious and soft Hindutva political mobilisation been seen. Besides these, global trends too had an impact on India's politics. After the formation of the state, there are new expectations, long-cherished hopes, and aspirations from the people to see the inclusive, participatory development and accountable state to the people (Rao, 2014).

It is to note that unprecedented popular mobilisation for a separate state has not resulted in the search of a democratic political culture in the state and political culture presently has more continuity with former AP based on patronage provision by a strongman leader (Quadri, 2021) It is noted that India's political economy started with a socialist, mixed economy and moved towards a neoliberal model of development in which the role of the state became a facilitator rather than a provider (Jayal, 2007). It is to note that due to the liberalisation policies, the priority of the state had been shifted gradually from agriculture to urbanisation and industrial development in India (Frankel, 2004). As a result, there is a sharp gap between rural and urban areas. Andhra Pradesh was not exempted from this changed trend and scenario.

It should be noted that there was a visible caste mobilisation in the united Andhra Pradesh. For instance, Telugu Desam Party was formed in 1983 by

NTR based on the regional identity of Telugu and its pride. These political developments reflect the emergence of the Kamma caste and its influence on the polity and economy of the state (Srinivasulu, 2002). Furthermore, globalisation also had tremendous impact on India's economy. Andhra Pradesh state was not exempted from this trend as in the 1990s. During the period of Nara Chandrababu Naidu as a Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh witnessed a spurt in people's movement as farmers and backward region i.e., Telangana in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh state was ignored except Hyderabad city (Srinivasulu, 2002). As a result, the people of Telangana raised the demand for a separate Telangana, after a long last movement, political processes, and pressure from all the stakeholders of Telangana, the Congress-led UPA government formed the new Telangana state in the year 2014 (Begari, 2014). As a result of injustice (social, economic, political, and cultural) being done to the Telangana region in the united Andhra Pradesh, KCR had started his political party i.e., TRS to only demand a separate state for the Telangana region. After the fourteen years of Telangana movement, UPA government has declared Telangana as separate state and K. Chandrasekhar Rao became its first Chief Minister (Praveen, 2023).

Hausing had argued that the national and regionalist parties created positive conditions which strengthened further by a popular movement started by several organisations and the stakeholders of the Telangana region from the late 1990s and by TRS since 2001 against a perceived betrayal of trust, discrimination, and historical injustice from politically dominant groups from Andhra Pradesh. Suan Hausang has further argued that the aspirations of the Telangana region are accommodated through possible ways by the convergence of strategic interests of multiple actors and parties in the state of Andhra Pradesh, like; Telangana Rashtra Samithi, the Congress-I, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Praja Ragyam Party and YSR Congress Party. These parties identified as the distinct territorial identity of Telangana to remain electorally relevant (Suan, 2018). In view of this, it is prerequisite to emphasise the TJS and its role in Telangana politics.

The Emergence of Telangana Jana Samithi and its role in Telangana Politics

TJS was formed by M. Kodandaram in the year of 2018. After its formation, there are significant differences between the TJAC and the TRS government. In its initial year, it was not opposed to government policies and cooperated with the state. It was silent in the first year after the formation of the state to understand the policies and assess the implementation of the policies and waited for the implementation of demands raised during the Telangana movement. But there was a spurt between them as Kodandaram under the banner Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) organised several movements/protests. With this approach of Kodandaram in particular and JAC in general, the TRS government brutally brushed up the activities of JAC and the voice of Kodandaram by using the police force, humiliating him personally and arresting and criticising him and questioning his role in the movement. Notwithstanding the pressure from the TRS government, TJAC with its limited cadre, and resources and with the help of support from the other political parties continued its movement against the undemocratic political culture, and anti-people's policies and demanded land distribution, proper rehabilitation of Tribals, employment for unemployed youth, free and compulsory education, development of agriculture, waiving the farmers' loans at a time but in installments.

Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) opposed the proposed/redesigned plan for the construction of projects like the Kaleshwaram Project, Mallanna Sagar, etc. and it further demanded the implementation of several government acts, including the Tribals Act and demanded the democratic space for democratic dissent. All these democratic moves of TJAC caused trouble to TRS which identified it as a direct threat to the government and thus to their future political career. All these developments led Prof. M. Kodandaram (retired Professor of Political Science, Osmania University) to start a new political party i.e., Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS). Temaji argued that although Kodandaram is not a political leader but a social activist, human rights activist,

and a prominent figure in the Telangana movement. He wanted to fight for the rights of the people in the state but he was not allowed to organise protests at his residence. Hence, he has no other alternative except to form the political party and fight TRS and its undemocratic politics even though doing politics is difficult for Kodandram given the current manipulative political realities (Dongre, 2022).

TRS government tried its best to divide the members of TJAC. It was found that a few members of JAC either joined the TRS and few were co-opted and given the nominated positions. By doing this, the state tried to weaken the JAC and Kodandaram and mute his voice (Kodandaram, 2022). After the formation of BRS, there was a new trend of politics in the state has emerged. The pattern that has been noticed can be attributed to the lack of a distinct regional party that represents the regional aspirations of Telangana, while the Congress and BJP are the national parties, and exert significant influence. TRS became a national party and was renamed as BRS. They have the national approach/dimension/national issues along with the regional/Telangana issues. But the only political party present is Telangana Jana Samithi which solely represents the region's interest in principle.

It has so far, no role at the national level (Begari, 2019). Of course, Kodandaram was the convener of TJAC (political) during the Telangana movement (2009-2014), and at present, he is the president of TJS. This political party has more space in the state as he is its president and was convener of TJAC (Political) and people still respect his contribution and his active participation in the movement from across the sections, parties, organisations, and ideologies. Given this political new trend, it intends to argue that TJS also has been trying to educate the people, particularly youth and marginalised sections but the limitation of TJS is that there are no influential leaders, no cadre, and no resources but they have a commitment to Telangana, its development and welfare of the people (Kodandaram, 2023). The politics of India at present witness the coalitional politics/politics of alliances. It is argued that if the party can organise itself and represent the

issues and demands of the people, obviously it influences Telangana politics and the development of the Telangana state. In view of this backdrop, it is essential to evaluate the politics of TRS (Kodandaram, M., 2022).

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS): Conventional leadership: a critical assessment

Telangana Rashtra Samithi has been renamed as Bharat Rastra Samithi) and was successful in the formation of Telangana state in 2014 with the support of all stakeholders/sections irrespective of religion, caste class, and gender. Tragically, many young people committed suicide, quitting their schooling, and resigned from their employment on numerous situations. However, M. Kodandaram argues that the TRS party has been turned into a family-centric party. In the 2014 and 2018 Assembly elections, TRS won the elections and formed the government twice. It is understood that the general perceptions of the people of the state that the decisions of the party are influenced by KCR, KTR, Harish Rao, Kalvakuntla Kavita and Santhosh Rao etc.

They became ministers, MPs, MLAs, and MLCs and are active and influencing government policies. It is argued by many activists, other political parties and intellectuals that the Cabinet meetings of the government are merely procedural and formal but all the decisions are taken practically by KCR and KTR. It is argued that the ministers in the government, became mere spectators. They are either not free to take decisions independently or not allowed to act on their own. In other words, there is no democracy in the party. At present, being a working president of TRS, KTR is more influential in the party and the government as well. In other words, other leaders who are young, educated, articulate, charismatic, and influential leaders in the party, but not free in the party but speak the language of the party and KCR (Gampa, V. 2022). However, there is a visibility of representation of leadership from minorities, vulnerable groups, and other weaker sections formally in the party and the government, but it is understood and argued by many social activists that it is more symbolic and formal but not substantial. In view of this, brief

conceptual clarity concerning TRS's conventional politics, it is a prerequisite to evaluate the changing of the name from TRS to BRS.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) to Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS): New trends and challenges

It is unprecedented in Indian politics that the regional party which started with the objective of achieving the state and fulfilling the aspirations of the people. This party formed the government twice by using regional aspirations, and emotions and promising to prioritise the development of the people. However, it has changed its priority from the state to national and intended to see its political prosperity at the national level. Keeping this objective, it has changed its name from TRS to BRS intending to emerge as an alternative to the BJP and Congress party.

The party is yet to come up with a political agenda and concrete objectives. However, the party intends to bring Kisan sarkar (government of farmers). It claims that it has an alternative development model which both Congress and BJP do not have (Yadav Beeraiah, 2022). In this vein, it is a prerequisite to analyse these current political trends. This raises important questions in this regard. Kodandram argued that the people of the state do not trust BRS as they stepped back from their real agenda i.e., the protection of the people of the state. It is to argue that there is very little time or no time for the party to get the support of the people at the national level as BRS may not attract the national media. It is not in a position to articulate the national issues or other issues and demands that pertain to southern states including Andhra Pradesh (Kodandaram, 2023).

It is pertinent to argue that the KCR wanted to expand his party to Andhra Pradesh, but he used foul language on the leaders, people, language, and culture of Andhra Pradesh and humiliated them during the Telangana movement. These apprehensions raise ethical, ideological, and moral questions for TRS and its leadership and its leadership to represent Andhra Pradesh that considering their earlier political stand. Can the party be accepted

by the people of Andhra Pradesh? Do the people of the AP trust KCR? Will they forgive him and support TRS? These important questions need substantial and deeper research to be undertaken. How will BRS address these questions and convenience the people? Hence, it is to argue that the parties in Andhra Pradesh are ready to demand KCR/BRS on issues regarding the irrigation projects, drinking water, distribution of resources, and unsettled issues. Notwithstanding these, the people of Andhra Pradesh demand an apology to the people of Andhra Pradesh. Hence it is a prerequisite for BRS to provide substantial solutions and respond to their demands positively (Kodandaram, M: 2023).

If one examines and probes the internal leadership of BRS further, KCR is the president of (BRS) and the working president of TRS is Kalvakunta Taraka Ramarao (KTR) and he is also the Cabinet minister of Municipality, Urban Affairs and Science and Technology. Harish Rao (Nephew) is the Minister of the Finance and Health department and Kalvakuntla Kavitha, Former MP, and MLC presently and also the president of Telangana Jagruthi (Acharyulu, S. N. C. N: 2018) Another leader of TRS, Joginipally Santhosh Kumar, MP (Rajya Sabha), Managing Director of Media house i.e., Namaste Telangana. Based on the roles and affiliations of the leaders, it is noted that they all belong to the KCR family. In other words, it is to argue that one caste and family has been dominating the polity, economy, and power of the state. If one examines nine years of TRS government, this unprecedented trend in TRS politics has pushed back the aspirations of the people of Telangana and made the people rely upon the family for their welfare. TRS merely relied upon symbolism, soft Hindutva, accommodative politics, false propaganda, and coercive and co-option politics. In the name of a few populist policies like Rytu Bandu, Dalita Bandhu, Shadi Mubarak, Kalyana Laxmi, double-bedroom houses for the people who come under BPL, etc. However, the TRS party introduced, researchers, intellectuals, and social activists and argued that these policies may not provide economic and social security as they are merely populist policies and substantial development policies (Begari, J. 2019).

Shanta Sinha (Raman Megases Award Winner and Child rights activist) in one of her interviews argued that the Kalyana Laxmi scheme supports one lakh roughly to the family of the bride. But it does not help the girls and girl education and does not employ girls and has no economic empowerment. Shanta Sinha argues that this scheme further pushes young girls to rely either on their husbands or on their in-laws' families. There is no economic independence that women get. However, she argues that instead of populist policies, providing training to women in skill development and vocational training will support them economically, encourage them to take part in small-scale industries and provide them with free education from KG to PG. She argues that such initiatives of the state would help girls and girl children. Kalyana Laxmi policy may partially help the parents of the bride but not the bride (Sinha, Shantha, 2023). This complex political scenario of BRS certainly became the subject of concern for political leaders, intellectuals, and social scientists. In this context, it is pertinent to argue hypothetically that the BJP has tremendous scope to emerge as an alternative to BRS in Telangana politics.

Bharatiya Janata Party: new trends and the participatory politics in Telangana

BJP has significant political visibility, cadre, and influence in Telangana presently. There is a Minister in the Government of India from Telangana presently. However, there was no visibility of the party in United Andhra Pradesh except in Hyderabad city and other cities and towns. The senior leaders of the party like K. Vidyasagar Rao, and Bandaru Dattatreya became Governors and were not active in state politics. Though Indrasena Reddy and many other senior leaders are there presently, their national party leadership felt that the youth in the party is equally important to develop the party. Its political prosperity propagates its ideology and hence it encourages new young leadership. It is to note that since the year 2001, BJP has been trying hard to emerge as an alternative to TRS and Congress (Bikunoor, 2023). However, it is mostly strong in some areas or constituencies and particularly in the urban

areas. Even before the formation of the state, the BJP tried hard to get the people's support by supporting Telangana state demand and it took an active role in TJAC and tried hard to win the elections. As a principle, the BJP had supported the demand of Telangana state and took an active part in TJAC in its movements held under the convenorship of M. Kodandaram. (Gudavarthy, n.d.) In other words, no party at present can stand as a strong party to TRS. It is noted that after the elevation of Revanth Reddy as PCC president, BJP promoted G. Kishan Reddy as Cabinet Minister in the Government of India to counter not only TRS and the Congress party but also strengthen the party. In the context of this, the party appointed Bandi Sanjay as the new president of the BJP Telangana state Committee to fight TRS and form the government in the forthcoming elections.

Bandi Sanjay hailed from the Backward class community, a member of the Parliament from Karimnagar district, has been appointed as the new president of Telangana Bharatiya Janata Party on 11 March 2020. He became the leader of the party without any high political rank and privilege. He was a grassroots worker from Karimnagar in northern Telangana and he is very vocal unlike other previous presidents i.e., Bandari Dattatriya, K. Laxman, and Kishan Reddy. He has completed the fifth phase of his padayatra in Telangana State. It is to be noted that, compared to the BJP style of functioning of BJP earlier, he is very much assertive and uses forceful language in his speeches. Mostly uses religious symbols and he starts his public programs from temples and religious places. He has been continuously challenging K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his style of administration. Since he became the state president, he has targeted the family members of KCR and their domination. In his leadership, the party won a good number of Corporators in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections in 2022.

It is further witnessed that there are many leaders from other political parties who have joined the BJP and the national executive committee meeting of BJP was held at Hyderabad in 2022. It is found that there is a shift in the leadership in the state. Earlier mostly Vidhya Sagar Rao, Bandaru Dattatreya, Indra Sena

Reddy Laxman, Kishan Reddy, and a few other leaders were prominent in Telangana BJP politics. However, by appointing Bandi Sanjay, the BJP high command encouraged, developed, and brought the new young leadership to the forefront of the state BJP. After his takeover as a president of the state BJP unit, MLA by-elections, two of its candidates won from in Dubbak and Huzurabad Constituencies and one candidate lost the election by only 10000 votes margin (Minhaz, 2022). However, the party exhibited its strength in state politics. Prior to Bandhi Sanjay became the President of the party, other senior leaders of Telangana BJP were mostly from urban areas and that too based in Hyderabad city, however they are strong ideologically. They are not as vocal as compared with the present leadership. Though they fought TRS, AIMIM, and Congress, however, their mark of politics is not aggressive as compared to the present leadership.

In this regard, it is to note that there are new political trends and new leadership in shaping and reshaping the Telangana politics in the new Telangana state. The party has been attracting new leaders and cadres from other political parties. In the last three years, it has been found, there is a good number of senior leaders from different political parties i.e., Congress and TRS have joined the BJP (Vijaya Shanthi, G. Vivek, D.K. Aruna, Vishweshwar Reddy, Eetala Rajender, G. Ravinder Reddy, Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy, student leaders from Osmania University). Interestingly the leaders joined the party not because they believe in BJP and RSS ideology, but because they are not happy with their own earlier party leadership and they intend to take revenge on their political opponents. How far do these new political shifts and trends help the party? Do the new leaders cope with the BJP ideology? Do they work wholeheartedly for the party? Do they change the prosperity of the party challenge other parties and form the government? The politics of the BJP rely more on religion, symbolism, and culture. Do they have developmental programs for the welfare of the people? Is merely opposing KCR and his family to support the BJP to get the electoral mandate from the people of Telangana? These new trends and dynamics surely are new

political experiences for the people of Telangana to exhibit their political consciousness in the forthcoming elections in 2003.

Telangana Congress Party: trends, prospects and challenges

The Congress in Telangana state since long time been desperately craving a popular and able leader to take on the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and KCR as it is invincible and thereby revive its diminishing fortunes. As the party had almost been pushed to the corner after the formation of Telangana state despite its historical decision to form Telangana state and fulfill the dreams and aspirations of the people of Telangana in 2014. The party has also been defeated in both the Telugu-speaking states: Andhra Pradesh (2014) and Telangana (2019) in the Assembly General elections and TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samithi) won and formed the government in Telangana and YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh. Despite all the failures of TRS and its government, the Congress Party was not in a position to fight against the anti-people's policies of the TRS government due to its internal clashes, leadership crisis, lack of social engineering, lack of coordination among the top leadership and no substantial support of Muslim minorities, SCs/STs, weaker sections, etc. The Congress party was missing the aggressive agitations and of course, no Chief Ministerial face in the Party. Incumbent Congress state president Uttam Kumar Reddy (from 2014 till 2020) by nature is soft-spoken, intellectual appearance is honest and hailed from the army background. He could not use the same language, means, forms, and aggressiveness in his style of functioning as like TRS leadership and he and his wife were defeated in the elections. Therefore, Congress could not gain the people's support for the last eight years.

Furthermore, the elevation of Revanth Reddy Anumula as the President of the Telangana Congress Party gave new enthusiasm among the cadre and leaders of the Congress Party. The change of president took place at a time when the party was facing its worst-ever crisis. The party had suffered a series of electoral setbacks and an exodus forcing itself to cede the opposition space to

the BJP. After substantive deliberations, and one-to-one meetings with congress leaders for almost one year, the Congress party appointed Revant Reddy as the President of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee. Revant Reddy presently is the Member of Parliament from Malkajgiri Constituency. He started his political career in ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad) as a student leader. Subsequently elected as the ZPTC and MLC from Mahbubnagar district and later joined the TDP. Thereafter he won an MLA two times between 2009-2014. For the first time from Kodangal Constituency from Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and from 2014 and 2018 in the newly formed Telangana state. He left TDP and joined the Congress party in October 2017 and subsequently, he became the working President of the state Congress. He was of course defeated by TRS in 2019 in the general elections by using the state coercive measures.

As a result of this, it is necessary to note that prior to becoming party president, he was the star campaigner for the Congress Party and toured the entire state in support of Congress MLA candidates. TRS was very particular about defeating him. Thus, TRS used all means: money, manipulation, police administration, and so on to defeat him. The police arrested him at midnight from his residence one week before the elections were scheduled. As a result, he was defeated and TRS won from Kodangal Constituency. Fortunately, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, he contested from Malkajgiri constituency and won as MP from the Congress party. Revanth Reddy's outspoken attitude, good oratory skills, huge mass and cadre following, and informal and friendly approach fetched him massive popularity in the state. It was he who has been constantly raising voices against the autocratic and family hierarchy politics of the KCR and government openly. Since the Congress party is a grand old party and many senior leaders in the party previously worked as ministers (in the state and Centre), AICC members, and former PCC presidents. Naturally, it will be difficult for a young leader like Revant Reddy as a newly elected president to gain the wholehearted support, cooperation, and coordination of those big shots. It is therefore a challenging task for Revant Reddy to overcome within the party and outside the party along with the actual

problems of people. Revant Reddy has been trying his best to overcome internal problems and challenges by organising public meetings and coordinating with senior leaders of the party, getting their support and reaching to the people. He made it clear on the day of the oath-taking ceremony that the party and ideology of the party are more important than individual leaders and he said he is only representing the party. He said that there is no individual priority except to fight the hereditary politics, undemocratic, anti-people policies, and corruption of the government and KCR, and bring the Congress to power in the forthcoming general elections of 2023.

Apart from these, the alarming signs of the rooting of the BJP that its candidates won from Dubbak bye-elections and Congress pushed to the third place. The new BJP State president is equally aggressive and has a strong critique of KCR and TRS policies. It is to be noted that polarisation of people based on religion and ideology is a major indirect threat to the state as well as the other democratic parties including Congress. The abundance of support from the ruling central government is boosting the confidence of the BJP to claim overwhelming victory in the upcoming election and form government in 2023. BJP is a cadre-based party and has dedicated workers. In view of this, the PCC president Revant Reddy has to prove that he is the builder of the organisation rather than individual-centric. Leaders of the Congress party are known for their uncertain understanding as and when with no context they act, react, and respond individually without considering party stands. In the name of internal democracy, they speak whatever they wish to speak which most of the time comes around the neck of the party. Thus, it is pertinent to assess how the new president and the state committee would handle, overcome, and put a check on these challenges.

Importantly, one needs to look at what are the development-oriented plans, programs, initiatives, agendas, and policies that this new committee comes up with the aim of improving the overall development of Telangana state after coming to power. It is claimed that highlighting the capabilities of the

Congress to take up the issues which the TRS failed to give a signal to the orientation and mobilisation of masses towards the Congress. As in the united Andhra Pradesh, political parties like CPI, CPI (M), and MIM had a pre-poll alliance with the Congress party earlier but at present there is no such political pre-poll alliance. The question that comes up is, does the present Committee take up these kinds of steps by looking at the broader present political scenario and work reasonably with other political parties who share the handsome percentage of the voters in their grips? These parties too believe in democracy, secularism, and socialist development which is the common concern for all the parties. By insisting on employment, Congress needs to educate and mobilise the youth of the state which comprises 40% of the state population. Unemployed youth are waiting for job opportunities as COVID-19 has put a break on job opportunities in the private sector too. The social activists from Dalits, tribals, and other weaker sections feel that there are no wholehearted initiatives and substantial planning and implementation of the policies by the TRS government for socio-economic development (Gampa, 2023).

Apart from these, the Congress party seems convinced that the state Congress prepared to address the concerns with regard to women, children, old age, and youth from all sections of society in their development agendas. It is argued that the immediate concern for the Congress party is to adopt people-centric and subaltern-centric development, inclusive policies, inclusive government, pro-poor policies, free education (KG to PG), restructuring of land holdings, land distribution, employment generation, and so on. With its introspective approach, Congress should look into its past mistakes and see how it can manage to gain support from all sections and start with new aspirations, enthusiasm, and achieve Telangana. Success and failure of the party or the leader depend on the capabilities of the leaders, the ideology of the party, and attracting the new cadre and leaders to the party. Besides these, the new Committee can be able to communicate strongly that the Congress party stood by the people of Telangana in the formation of the state. One has to wait and see how the PCC is going to be addressed. How is it different from that of the previous PCC and how is it going to fight TRS? How would the party work

with other like-minded political parties and people's organisations? How does the committee address issues like social justice and rights and what kind of strategies the Congress going to adopt?

Challenges before the Congress party and leadership

The foremost challenge for the party is to gain the trust of party workers and veterans and unify the house to inspire the people and cadre. Other society-centric issues need to address like the growing unemployment among youngsters. It is worth mentioning that there are 1.91 lakh vacancies in the government. All those who fought for Telangana statehood are still waiting for job notifications. Even after nine years, KCR has done little for the wider society. The prime objective of the new president is to gain the support of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities as they have been the strong support base for the party for many decades. Bring back many Congress leaders and cadres to the party by providing confidence and trust to get their support. Importantly, the new Committee needs to come up with new welfare agendas and policies that the TRS could not implement. The social activists, students, and youth who are at the forefront of the Telangana movement are presently not happy with the TRS party. They have been ignored. No agitations are allowed and JAC leaders are arrested. No substantial new recruitment of vacant posts, particularly no regular teacher, or faculty recruitment. The health and education sectors are being completely ignored by the state and need to be given priority.

It is to be noted that the main demands of the people of Telangana during the movement were that the construction of projects, employment, and allocation of funds (neelu, nidulu neyamakalu) should be the priority. Congress should say no to ongoing corruption, no lumpen and administration loopholes, it should encourage the democratic Telangana Statehood along with territorial statehood in which substantial land distribution to the landless, and no discrimination based on caste, class, creed, and gender is taken place. It should protect the dissent, voices of people, and democratic spirit of the state which

are the foundations for the movement to form a separate state. It is to argue that social, economic, political, and cultural equality should be the primary agenda of the government and political parties. There should not be opportunistic politics and pursue fair politics. It should be free from the influences of money and muscle power. All parties must adopt trust and value-based inclusive politics by sidelining communal or family-based politics. New leadership needs to adopt democratic politics based on ethical, moral, and legal rather than mistrust and opportunistic politics.

Communist Parties in Telangana: Decline, Re-orient and Re-emergence

Communist parties became nominal after the Telangana state formation. The top leaders of the parties (CPI and CPI (M)) in United Andhra Pradesh like Raghavulu and K. Narayana are from the Andhra region. Both became members of their party's National Executive Committees. Hence, there are not many influential leaders in the Telangana state. As a result, the Communist parties appointed new secretaries immediately after the formation of the state. Chada Venkat Reddy and Thammineni Veerabhadram became secretaries respectively. However, they couldn't resist strongly as the cadre of the parties was neither active nor participated in the movement. They even lost the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections (2014 and 2018). Though the CPI party had supported Telangana's demand they couldn't get the support of the people. Thus, The Communist parties did not influence Telangana policies significantly after the formation of the state.

The Communist parties, it is argued, did not fight substantially against the policies of the state in the newly formed state though there were no employment notifications, no permission for democratic protest movements, protests of farmers, and misusing of funds in the name of the construction of irrigation projects by the TRS Government. No resistance was allowed for the democratic movements. But the Communist parties have been silent for nine years almost on these people's demands and issues. This silence of Communist parties gave the scope for the people that the Communist parties

were with the ruling party and their party cadre at the grassroots had been joining either with the other parties or working with the other organisations. This trend is evident in recent political developments. These new political developments have occurred in the state where both the Communist parties supported TRS candidates in the Munugodu by-elections in the Nalgonda district of Telangana. At present both parties have taken the political decision to fight the BJP politics and politics at the Centre. They support the TRS party and if needed they may contest together in a political alliance with the TRS party in the forthcoming election to be held in 2023 (Minhaz, Ayesha: 2022). This new political scenario changes the concrete/real politics of the state. However, the question here is, does their alliance get the people's support? Is their friendship successful? Are they able to fight together with the BJP wholeheartedly? These questions are in the public domain till the general elections are to be held.

Debating Interface Between and Ruling Regime and Political Movements:

In the post-Telangana formation, the strong state or the politics of command with the minimal people's democratic resistance or protests for the fulfillment of their demands witnessed significantly as the state predominant rather than demand politics where there is no strong people's voice or resistance visible. The voice of the opposition parties was brushed thoroughly by adopting the co-option and coercive measures. Twelve (12) Congress MLAs joined TRS and subsequently recognised them as members of TRS and offered them minister berths in their government. TRS government by the adopting co-option method, encouraged splits in TJAC and other organisations which were active during the Telangana movement. It is argued that the narratives of main media houses (print and electronic) are in favour of the state government and TRS. There was no substantial representation of people's demands and aspirations in their programs. There are government policies that are good and support the poor and marginalised sections and religious minorities. However, it is argued that they are populist in nature, caste-based, wooing/pleasing

voters to favour their party in the elections. It is argued that electoral politics or elections became very costly as using money power in the elections became a regular trend. Ruling BRS is at the forefront in this regard. These unwanted political developments intend to argue that the state government and TRS have been relying upon coercive and co-option politics but there is no substantial visibility of developmental and democratic politics.

State Assembly Elections-2023: Political Parties, democratisation and development:

The ruling BRS is very much confident that they would form the government third time in the state as they believe that their development model, welfare policies, charisma of KCR and the good governance surely influence the people to vote in their favour. The Congress party, other hand, is hope and confident that this time (after the formation of the state) will get the support the people from across the state as it believes that the UPA government under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi has formed the Telangana state , announced six guarantees (welfare schemes) as a election manifesto, their able leadership of the state leadership and the charisma of Rahul Gandhi, anti incumbency on the TRS government and strong leader-cadre based party in the state. Notwithstanding these, inability of TRS government to implement their previous election manifesto. In the case of BJP, Narendra Modi is the face of the party, ideology of the party and the support of the affiliated organisations of the party. However, there is strong feeling among the people that BRS has political understanding with BJP and MIM in the state. Based on this context, the forthcoming Assemble elections which will be held in December 2023 would be a greater challenge for all the people, political parties and democracy to prove their maturity. It is the time for the voters to prove their maturity, political consciousness and timely decision to uphold democratic and constitutional vision and promote inclusive development by electing the party and representatives to Assembly in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Conclusions and Way Forward:

The politics of Telangana at present faces several challenges. The people had a lot of expectations from the TRS and its government. However, the efforts of the government are not in the process of meeting their aspirations effectively. Instead, it promoted politics of conventionalism or family/individualistic-centric politics rather than participatory/democratic politics. The policies of the government are more populist and symbolic rather than concrete/development of the weaker sections. The policies that the government not merely uphold the principle of equality but should upload equity. However, it is found that the spirit of the policies in Telangana does not meet the idea of equity (samrashta). It is to be noted that the political parties work for the expansion of their respective parties. A positive aspect of Telangana politics is the emergence of new leadership.

It is significant to note that changing the name of TRS to BRS is understood that there is a shift of its original objectives, priorities, and regional aspirations and represented the aspirations of Telangana. Therefore, it is argued that rebranding TRS to BRS does not fulfill the aspirations of the people but rather disappoints the aspirations of the people as the original objective is contradictory to the present. However, in view of this, it is argued that the political vacuum that gives rise to and gets the support of the people for the Congress, BJP, and other political parties in the state has been striving hard for almost a decade. Based on the political trends and political culture at present, the state intends to argue that it is time for the state to give due respect to the democratic deliberations and respecting of the opposition parties and democratic people's organisations and debate the issues democratically which are about the people. The politics of trust is more vital than the politics of suspicion and distrust. It is essential to see that the efforts of the state and leadership must transform the formal democratic institutions, constitutional provisions, public policies, and politics into substantial democratic institutions and implement the policies substantially by adopting a participatory approach in order to ensure an inclusive state and society. The new State needs an

inclusive development model that respects the democratic aspirations of the people and promotes a democratic political culture that deepens democracy.

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Article: Work experience and job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the COVID pandemic waned scenario, Kerala

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Work experience and job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the COVID pandemic waned scenario, Kerala

--Shamna T C & K C Baiju

Abstract

Kerala is one of the largest sources of emigrant workers in GCC countries. The income, employment and way of life of the emigrant workers in GCC countries have become vulnerable because of COVID-19 as it compelled them to relocate from their destination country to their countries of origin. The study explores the direction, composition and occupational pattern of the emigrant labourers who were repatriated during COVID-19. A micro-level discussion on job loss and the future work plan of the COVID-induced repatriated emigrant labourers in a district, Kannur, Kerala, known for its higher incidence of repatriated emigrant labourers is attempted. The study found a positive relationship between the critical variables, the year of work experience in GCC countries and the job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the COVID pandemic waned scenario, further increasing the emigration prospects of the COVID-induced repatriated emigrants in the years to come.

Keywords: Emigrant labourers, Labour market, unskilled labourers, repatriation, job plan, re- emigration

Introduction

Kerala's economy is known for its distinct dependency on migration and expatriate remittances since the 1970s, making its dominance in the State Domestic Product (SDP), infrastructural and overall socio-economic development of the state. The extensive visibility of the emigrant labourers of Kerala's social, economic, and cultural spheres is well documented. The surge in the emigrants' profile of the state in Middle East Countries is mainly due to the existence of a myriad of employment opportunities, and attractive wage rates prevailed there than that of their country of origin. The GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries have better employment options for the unskilled emigrant labourers of Kerala than the developed countries, preferring the skilled labourers, becoming the most sought-after migration corridor for the emigrant labourers of Kerala.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus a pandemic as far back as March 2020. The economies are still transitioning to the stage of endemicity. The fallout of COVID-19 devastated the socio-economic fabric of many economies, especially the work and employment of migrant labourers. The diverse socio-economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work are pretty visible, particularly to the low and semi-skilled international migrant workers. The emigrant labourers have experienced job loss in their host countries and are often stranded due to lockdowns and border closures. Apart from the direct job

losses, a significant proportion of low- and semi-skilled migrant workers worldwide are experiencing wage cuts, layoffs, reduced working hours, and subsequent earning losses (Abella, 2020; ILO, 2020; World Bank, 2020). The World of Work Report estimated that 11.2 crore labourers lost their job globally during the pandemic (ILO, 2022). Many migrant workers had their employment summarily suspended or terminated as the spread of the virus aggravated, leaving them without a source of income. Some employees withstood without pay, while others had their hours of work or wage rates slashed or were constrained to go on leave. In addition to the loss of jobs, emigrant workers were often directly or indirectly excluded from COVID-19 social protection packages provided to native workers, including primary healthcare and income security measures against sudden job and wage losses. Many migrant workers incurred additional debt and loss of savings while meeting their households' livelihood. The mounting debt of the repatriated migrant labourers over the COVID pandemic causes financial, social and psychological implications for their reintegration into the labour market (WMR, 2022).

The total number of persons returned from abroad and other parts of India to Kerala registered 9.1 lakhs on September 3, 2020. Of these, 5.62 lakh persons returned from other states to India and 3.47 persons from foreign countries (Boillat & Zahringer, 2020; International Organisation for Migration, 2020; Migration Data portal, 2021). The returnees from foreign countries include persons who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, students, persons who were stranded in foreign countries and tourists of short duration. The state-wise analysis of the number of returned emigrants reported during COVID-19 through the Jagradha Portal registered 17 lakh in Kerala 2021 (NORKA, 2021), where 72 per cent of them lost their jobs due to COVID-19. The data showed that more than 95 % of the COVID-induced repatriated emigrants in Kerala are from GCC countries (June 22, 2021), and the rest are from other countries. Out of the repatriated emigrants, the majority of them are from United Arab Emirates (59.3 %), followed by Saudi Arabia (11.7 %), Qatar (9.7 %), and Oman (9.1 %) (Prakash, 2022).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The district-wise analysis of the intensity of emigrants in Kerala revealed that Malappuram had the highest number of emigrants (Prakash, 2022). Further, it is noticed that those labourers who have emigrated to the Gulf countries are mainly semi/unskilled in the category of skill sets with temporary contract employment (90 %). On the contrary, most skilled labourers have migrated to developed countries. The outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the repatriation of more than 17 lakh NRIs to their home country. Of these, 72 % have either lost their jobs or been temporarily displaced (GOK, 2021). The exodus of these emigrants to the state had further spilt pessimism in their attitude toward getting regular and remunerative jobs in the domestic labour market. Hence they strongly prefer remigration to secure a regular job with an assured monthly income in the Middle East Countries/elsewhere to help their families

economic stability (Prakash, 2022). A study on the impact of COVID-19 on GSDP, employment, unemployment and migration in Kerala's economy revealed that the secondary sector suffered a considerable loss of GSDP along with the other sectors due to the lockdown. The significant concern about the effects of emigration-related issues in the Kerala labour market is evinced by a decrease in the size of remittances to the state economy (Prakash, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected the millions of migrant workers in Gulf countries who were mainly employed as temporary labourers in construction and allied sectors (Rajan & Arokkiaraj, 2021). Sulaiman et al., 2021, have discussed the various schemes adopted by the state to reintegrate the return emigrants through economically viable schemes in Kerala like the Swanthwana Financial Scheme, Pravasi Welfare Fund and Initiative for Entrepreneurship Development. The Kerala Return Emigrant Survey, 2021, emphasized the need for creating a robust database with a comprehensive register of all emigrants who returned to Kerala during COVID-19 using Census methods/ New migration surveys (Rajan & Pattah, 2021).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The outbreak of COVID-19 has posed challenges in the realm of work, employment, income and well-being of the emigrant labourers in Middle East Countries. The COVID-induced vulnerable situation, coupled with job loss experienced by the emigrant labourers in the destination, resort to counter-migration to their country of origin. Among the Indian states, the labour market of Kerala has become the worst affected by the pandemic outbreak as the state predominantly depended upon expatriate remittances over the decades as having 89 % of its emigrant population migrated to Gulf countries, contributing 30 % of Kerala's SDP. The outbreak of COVID-19 has considerably impacted the growth and development of the regional economy of Kerala (Xavier et al., 2020). It has led to economic shocks with the depletion of expatriated remittances to the state economy. The fallout of the pandemic would dampen the sectoral activities of the state, further raising more critical questions about the growth and development challenges of the region, Kerala. The related studies highlighted that the escalation in COVID affected the job loss of emigrants, i.e., 75 % of them, further raising the question of their socio-economic rehabilitation in the domestic economy, Kerala (GoK, 2021; Prakash, 2022; Rajan & Pattah, 2021; Sasikumar, 2021). The studies related to the work plan of the COVID-affected repatriated emigrant labourers at the micro level remain scanty despite various studies discussing the intensity, incidence and reasons for the COVID-induced repatriation of emigrant labourers in the Global, National, and Regional economy of Kerala. The study intends to discuss the twin issues, viz., either reintegrating the repatriated emigrant labourers within the domestic labour market or sorting out the option for remigration of them to the GCC countries, helping to delineate the micro-specific issues and policies thereon. The study has taken a district in Kerala, Kannur having the higher incidence of repatriated emigrant labourers, where the incidence and the job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the study area are attempted with a well-

conceived research design.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the incidence and job profile of the Return Emigrants from the GCC countries to Kannur district in Kerala during COVID-19.
- To discuss the reasons for the job loss of the repatriated emigrant labourers and their job plan during COVID-19 in the study area.
- To explore the direction and intensity of the relationship between the years of work experience in GCC countries and the job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the study area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study mainly relies upon empirical and descriptive methods to discuss the stated objectives using a structured interview schedule with open-ended and closed-ended questions. Based on the random sampling method, the study selected a representative sample size of 100 COVID-affected repatriated emigrant labourers choosing the reference period, 2020-2022. The study considered the repatriated emigrant labourers as labourers who have been employed in GCC for at least six months and underwent COVID-affected repatriation. Since some of the sample respondents have emigrated back to the GCC countries after their stay in the peak season of the COVID period as repatriated emigrants in the country of origin, their relevant particulars are compiled through the 'telephonic survey method'. The district, Kannur, which has the third position in the size of repatriated emigrant labourers in the state during COVID-19 (NORKA, 2021), has been selected as the area of study. The study has taken a significant proportion of unskilled labourers as the sample respondents than the skilled /semi-skilled labourers as the former is more prone towards deprivation in the labour market during the pandemic period. The study classified the COVID-affected repatriated emigrant labourers into Normal Return Emigrants (NREM) and Distress Return Emigrants (DREM) based on the nature of repatriation to their country of origin. NREM is those return emigrants who have repatriated to Kerala during the COVID-19 period with their sanctioned leave from the employer in GCC countries and who used to visit their home country in a year with salary and other benefits. At the same time, DREs are those returned emigrants who had lost their jobs/ displaced/ stranded due to COVID-19 resulting in loss of employment and wages in GCC countries. The secondary data are collected from the official reports, namely NORKA ROOTS (GoK), KMS (2018) and Kerala Return Emigration Survey, 2021. The study has estimated the correlation between the years of work experience of the repatriated emigrant labourers in foreign countries and their future re-emigration plan, if any, by using descriptive statistics, namely mean, frequencies, and 'Karl Pearson correlation methods'. The 'Scatter diagram' has also been used to test the linearity of the relationship between the critical variables before applying the Karl Pearson Correlation method to discuss the stated objectives. The

qualitative tools, including anecdotes and Ishikawa Diagram Analysis, were also applied to examine the cause and effect of job loss among the sample respondents during COVID-19.

REPATRIATION OF EMIGRANT LABOURERS DURING COVID 19 IN THE DISTRICTS OF KERALA

Kerala holds the first position in the number of emigrant labourers among the states in India, with an estimated size of 1935625 emigrants from 2016 to 2021. Among the states in India, Kerala has the most elevated place in the domain of repatriated emigrants also, i.e., 1168796, 24 % of the emigrant labourers in India as of 22 March 2021 (Indiastat, 2021). COVID-19 arrived early in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with the first cases in February 2020 (Fawcett, 2021). While the first confirmed case of coronavirus infection was identified in India Thrissur district, Kerala, from China, dated 30 January 2020. A micro-specific analysis is attempted to discuss the work, employment and job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers in Kerala during the non-economic crisis of COVID-19.

Table No.1: of Repatriated Emigrants from GCC countries to Kerala during COVID 19

District	Repatriated emigrants (%)
Malappuram	2,62,678 (17.9)
Kozhikode	1,72,112 (11.7)
Kannur	1,64,024 (11.1)
Thissur	1,18,503 (8.1)
Thiruvananthapuram	1,16,531 (7.9)
Kollam	1,01,125 (6.9)
Ernakulam	87,075 (5.9)
Palakkad	76,871 (5.2)
Kasaragod	62,886 (4.3)
Alappuzha	54,367 (3.7)
Pathanamthitta	53,777 (3.7)
Kottayam	42,573 (2.9)
Wayanad	18,310 (1.2)
Idukki	9,823 (0.7)
Not mentioned	1,30,782 (8.9)
Total	14,71,437 (100)

Source: Non Residents Keralite Affairs Department (NORKA), Thiruvananthapuram, 2021

Among the different districts of Kerala, the district Malappuram is also known for its high incidence of emigration (19.1 %) and repatriation of emigrants, i.e., 17.9 % till 22 nd June 2022, followed by Kozhikode (11.7%), Kannur (11.11 %) and Thrissur (8.1%) districts. The Kerala Migration Survey, 2021 also uphold almost the same sequence of ranking of the districts in Kerala viz., Malappuram (22.17 %), Kozhikode (10.13 %), followed by Kollam (9.5 %) and Kannur (9.27 %). It is important to note that those districts in Kerala which have registered the coincidence of lesser incidence of emigration and their corresponding repatriation displayed the same ranking in the order of the repatriated emigrants. For instance, the district Idukki is having lesser number of both emigrants and repatriated emigrants. The revealed non-linear distribution of the repatriated emigrants across the districts in Kerala warrants an appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration strategy towards the targeted groups giving due weightage to their intensity and incidence.

REPATRIATED EMIGRANT LABOURERS DURING COVID 19 IN KANNUR DISTRICT

In the given distribution pattern, Kannur district secured the third position in the COVID-induced repatriation of emigrants from foreign countries to Kerala, i.e., 11 % (See Table 1), constituting students, labourers, tourists and visitors. From the identified repatriated emigrants based on the secondary data, the investigator conducted a primary survey of COVID-19-induced repatriated emigrant labourers (N=100) in Kannur district. Here the study selected the repatriated emigrant labourers of GCC countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman) as sample respondents (See Table 2).

Table No.2: Bare facts of the sample respondents

Particulars	Frequency of Repatriated Emigrant labourers (%)	Particulars	Frequency of Repatriated Emigrant labourers (%)
Country of Destination		Educational Qualifications	
United Arab Emirates	36 (36 %)		
Saudi Arabia	13(13 %)	Less than Matriculation	10 (10 %)
Qatar	9 (9 %)	Matriculation to Plus two	51 (51 %)
Bahrain	19 (19 %)	UG-PG	21(21 %)
Kuwait	10 (10 %)	Other Professional Course	18 (18 %)
Oman	13 (13 %)		

Gender		Marital Status	
Male	93 (93 %)	Unmarried	25 (25 %)
Female	7 (7 %)	Married	73 (73 %)
Age		Divorced	2 (2 %)
15-25	27 (27 %)		
26-35	48 (48 %)		Income Per month
36-45	14 (14 %)	Less than Rs. 20,000	5 (5 %)
46-55	8 (8 %)	Rs.20,000-35,000	50 (50 %)
Above 55	3 (3 %)	Above Rs. 35,000	45 (45 %)

Source: Sample survey, 2022

The gender composition of the repatriated emigrant labourers revealed the built-in gender divide in the emigration process, where 93 % of the sample respondents are male. Considering the age composition of the repatriated emigrant labourers, one could see that a significant proportion (48%) of them belong to the age group between 26-35, followed by the age composition of 15-25 (27 %). The age composition between 15-35 is considered the most productive age group in development parlance as it is often associated with a demographic dividend. The given composition of the repatriated emigrants by 'age and gender' is more often proactive towards re-emigration resulting in better income and employment prospects. The educational credentials of the repatriated emigrant labourers have revealed that the majority (51 %) have the educational qualifications equivalent to matriculation to plus two, followed by UG- PG education and other professional education, including computer skills. The educational level and the skill sets of the repatriated emigrant labourers clustered around matriculation/plus two with low/semi-skill sets, which agrees with the information provided in the KMS, 2018 (Rajan, 2018). The marital status of the repatriated emigrant labourers also had its bearing on the inclination towards re-emigration. In the present study, 73 % of them are married and living with their families or single.

The given data reveals the varying incidence of repatriation of emigrants from one country over the other from the Middle East, i.e., UAE (36 %), Bahrain

(19 %), Oman and Saudi Arabia (13 % each), Kuwait (10 %) and Qatar (9 %) where 1/3 of the total sample respondents were repatriated from UAE only. The estimated growth rate of the emigrant labourers in Kerala for the period 1998-2018 further revealed that the UAE had become the most sought-after destination of the emigrants of Kerala, particularly the unskilled / semi-skilled labourers (Rajan & Zachariah, 2019). The attractive wage and other labour market conditions existed in destination countries, motivating the repatriated emigrant labourers to re-emigrate. The wage and income of the repatriated emigrant labourers in their destination country are much higher than what they would have received if they were employed in their home country. For instance, half of them have drawn an income slab of Rs. 20,000- Rs. 35,000, followed by Rs. 35000 or above (45 %). The attractive wage rate in GCC countries may have compelled the repatriated emigrant labourers to belong to the productive age group to migrate towards the Middle East countries in the coming days.

REPATRIATED EMIGRANT LABOURERS BY DURATION OF THEIR STAY IN THE GCC COUNTRIES

The fallout of COVID-19 has made havoc on the emigrant labourers of Kerala in the Gulf countries, adversely affecting their way of life and living and paving the way for an early return to their state of origin (NORKA, 2021). The objective-specific analysis of the study helped the investigator to discuss the particulars regarding the work, experience and period of stay among the repatriated labourers in the country of destination. Over time, the acquired experience of the repatriated emigrant labourers gained them a better stake in the labour market, where they intend to re-emigrate as the COVID-affected labour market situation gets normal.

Table No. 3: Repatriated Emigrant labourers by the duration of stay in the destination countries

Countries	<1Years	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15- 19 years	> 20 years	Total
Bahrain	1(5.26)	1(5.26)	9(47.37)	2(10.53)	2(10.53)	4(21.05)	19 (100)
Kuwait	-	3(30)	4(40)	-	-	3(30)	10 (100)
Oman	-	-	10(76.92)	-	-	3(23.08)	13 (100)
Qatar	-	5(55.56)		1(11.11)	-	3(33.33)	9 (100)
Saudi Arabia	-	-	3(23.08)	10(76.92)	-	-	13 (100)
United Arab Emirates	7(19.44)	9(25)	4(11.11)	5(13.89)	6(16.67)	5(13.89)	36 (100)
Total	8 (8)	18(18)	30(30)	18 (18)	8(8)	18(18)	100 (100)

Source: Sample survey, 2022, Note; *Figures in parenthesis represents the percentages

The duration of stay of the repatriated emigrant labourers in their country of destination has been identified with a reference period of less than one year to greater than 20 years. The rich legacy of emigration of the labourers of Kerala in Gulf countries ever since the 1970s (Baiju & Shamna, 2019) has contributed a vast treasure of work experience to the emigrant labourers, which may become further fillip for the re-emigration of the repatriated. The data reveals that almost one-third of the representative sample size of the repatriated emigrant labourers have had an extended stay in GCC countries, between 5-9 years. The emigrant labourers have ample geospatial information, awareness and experience regarding the availability of employment, wage, and income in the labour market of the GCC countries where they have a long stint of stay in these countries as labourers. The extended stay and work of the repatriated emigrants in GCC as destination countries explains the prominence of these countries in ensuring better income & employment for the emigrant labourers.

RETURN EMIGRANT LABOURERS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIZATION

The broad classification of the occupational category of the repatriated emigrant labourers gives further insights into the level of skill sets and experience they acquired in the work they engaged as emigrant labourers in the destination countries. The acquired experience would enable streamlining the rehabilitation/ re-emigration of the repatriated emigrant labourers in the labour market of Kerala according to their acquired skill sets and experience.

Table No. 4: Occupation of the repatriated Emigrant Labourers in GCC Countries

Occupation	Number of repatriated emigrant labourers (%)		
	NREM	DREM	Total
Business owners	1 (5.88)	2(2.41)	3 (3)
Construction sector	3 (17.65)	37(44.58)	40(40)
Restaurant and Hospitality	-	19 (22.89)	19 (19)
Medical services	2(11.77)	2 (2.41)	4 (4)
Domestic workers	9(52.94)	6(7.23)	15 (15)
Industrial Employees	2(11.77)	17 (20.48)	19 (19)

Total	17 (100)	83 (100)	100
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Source: Sample survey, 2022, Notes: DREM*: Distress return Emigrants, NREM**: Normal Return Emigrants

The gravity of the rehabilitation measures relies upon the composition and magnitude of the DRM repatriated and their job plan to either reintegrate into the domestic labour market or re-emigrate. The study classified the repatriated emigrants as DREM and NREM, where DREM is higher than that NREM, i.e., 83 % and 17 %, respectively. Their rehabilitation, somehow or other, primarily depends on their job choice. The occupational wise analysis of the repatriated emigrant labourers revealed that the labourers were mainly engaged in construction activities (40 %), followed by the industrial sector (19 %), restaurant and hospitality (19 %) and domestic work (15 %). The sectoral participation of the repatriated emigrant labourers showed that the economic and non-economic crisis would initially impact those sectors where a more significant proportion of the unskilled labourers are engaged, such as the construction sector, industrial work and restaurant and hospitality work.

The challenge posed by the repatriated emigrant labourers would unfold simultaneous opportunities to the domestic labour market as they could be utilized in those segments of economic activity requiring more skill and experience. The reintegration would be more advantageous to Kerala's regional economy, which relies more heavily on the service and manufacturing sectors.

REASONS FOR THE REPATRIATION OF EMIGRANT LABOURERS

Various economic and non-economic crises have hit migrants in the Gulf labour markets in the history of migration. During the 1990 Gulf War, nearly 1,70,000 Indians were evacuated from Kuwait. Similarly, many workers lost their jobs and returned to India during the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis (Prakash, 2021). The COVID-induced economic shutdown has resulted in a massive loss of employment for emigrants in the Gulf countries in the interim period. Migrants felt the pandemic's effect in different ways, ranging from loss of jobs/ cancellation or expiry of visa resulting to unemployment. Thousands of Indians in Kuwait lost their jobs during the pandemic, where most were engaged in construction, hotels, sheep herding, gardening, and other low-profile jobs. Being infected by the virus, their health expenses have increased, taking a significant toll on their meagre savings on which they relied for sustenance abroad after being rendered jobless. It has also been reported that two to three lakh migrant workers have lost their jobs and returned to Kerala due to the COVID-19 crisis from the Gulf if the situation continues (Prakash, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent insecurities encountered by Indian migrant workers regarding jobs, wages, income, health hazards and repatriation have also revealed the various vulnerabilities confronted by the low- and semi-skilled workers at different phases of the migration cycle. The

affected repatriated emigrant labourers had experienced high recruitment costs and exploitation at the hands of the illegal recruiting agents in the pre-emigration phase, including violation of the provisions of the employment contracts, lack of adequate social protection in destination countries and lack of effective reintegration policies on return (ILO, 2019). The backlog of these negative externalities was further aggravated by the economic loss inflicted by the COVID pandemic.

Table No. 5: Reasons for the repatriation of the sample respondents

Reasons	Number of return emigrant labourers (%)
Loss of jobs	60 (60)
Reduction of wage during COVID 19	16 (16)
Lack of effective health protection during COVID 19	13 (13)
Visa Expiry	5 (5)
Senior citizen	4 (4)
Spouse of pregnant women	2 (2)
Total	100

Source: Sample survey, 2022, Note; *Figures in parenthesis represents the percentages

Among the identified reasons for the repatriation of emigrant labourers during COVID-19 was that 'loss of job' was the prime reason for the repatriation, i.e., 60 %. It has been found that the loss of jobs is mainly due to COVID-19, where the world has undertaken the security measures such as isolation, closure of borders and social distancing. In the process, the emigrants felt the

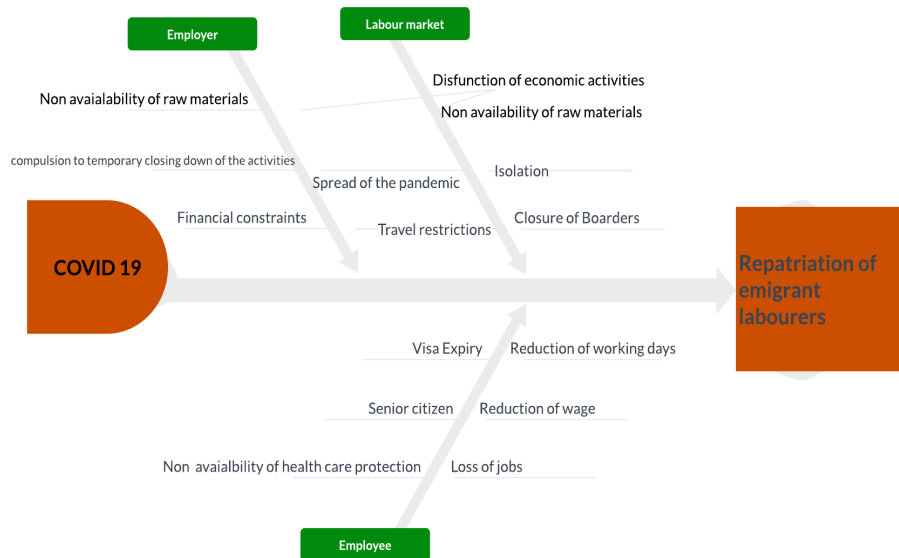
negative externalities of the pandemic's effects ranging from loss of employment to cancellation or expiry of visas. The transient nature of the emigration and the unskilled nature of skill sets at the disposal of the emigrants make them an extremely vulnerable group, especially during a crisis like the pandemic (Rajan & Arokkiaraj, 2021). It has been documented that most of the emigrant labourers in the Gulf countries have been employed in the informal sector of economic activities. The nature of informality in the recruitment & work of migrant labourers is out of the purview of social security protection (Baiju & Shamna, 2021). Due to the standstill situation of economic activities during COVID-19, employers experienced a more significant threat to their cost effectiveness. They even found it difficult to reach the breakeven point of their business and the firm. Thus, employers have been compelled to temporarily close their business/ economic activities, resulting in the 'loss of work and employment of the emigrant labourers in their destination countries. The studies showed that there might be a chance for job loss for unskilled labourers if emigrant labourers with high and middle-end skill sets have been forced to choose the unskilled segment of work, further aggravating their income and employment prospects (Prakash, 2022). The situation also led to the unprecedented practice of working from home for some emigrant labourers during COVID-19. It has influenced the reasons for the repatriation of emigrant labourers during COVID-19, where 16% of the sample respondents reported the main reason for their repatriation lies with 'reduction of wage'. 'Lack of adequate health protection during COVID-19' is another reason for the significant return of emigrant labourers from the study area, i.e., 13 %. The inadequate health protection facilities for treatment, lack of hospital beds to admit COVID-19 patients, inability to undergo costly treatment in private hospitals, and lack of space and facilities for Quarantine in labour camps compel the emigrant labourers from Kerala to get repatriated. However, a meagre percentage of the emigrant labourers returned to their state of origin due to family-related issues, i.e., only 2 %. The aforesaid discussion narrates the different facets by which the COVID pandemic inflicted vulnerabilities to the work and employment of the repatriated emigrants in the labour market.

The sharing of experience of one of the sample respondents in the study area during COVID-19 reads:

He has been working in Saudi Arabia as a salesman in a textile shop for the last five years. The COVID-19-induced closure of the border and the lockdown enacted worldwide resulted in losing his job. After that, he stayed in Saudi Arabia for almost three months without a job or wages. When he got COVID positive, the Saudi government did not provide/ ensure preventive or curative medical or health protection facilities. He could not even afford the expenditure involved in his routine, livelihood and stay. Hence he returned to Kerala and underwent Quarantine. He realized the stated situation with a soliloquy, i.e., as, and when a crisis emerges, only the domestic country will remain as a solace of rescue. He added that if the COVID situation is normalized, he would re-emigrate to the same destination or elsewhere where

he could secure a new job as the wage rate in the destination country remains more than two-fold or higher than that of Kerala. He argues that he could earn more money in GCC countries within a short period than the same could be earned in Kerala only if putting himself for more work with a lesser wage rate .

FIGURE 1: ISHIKAWA DIAGRAM



Source: Source: Sample survey, 2022

The repatriated emigrant labourers and the reasons for their repatriation in the study area are further detailed in the given Ishikawa diagram (See Figure 1) describing the cause-and-effect relationship between the Outflow of COVID-19 and the repatriation of emigrant labourers. The diagram portrays the causal variables leading to the repatriation of emigrant labourers during COVID-19 with the key players, namely employers, employees and the labour market. The spread of COVID-19 has initially affected the labour market, consequent on the take-care initiatives of the mentoring and surveillance of officials in terms of isolation, closure of borders, lockdown and travel restrictions. The disruption of supply chain factors in the labour market regarding the non-availability of raw materials, work, and employment of labourers in their destination region has ultimately resulted in the dysfunction of economic activities. The financial constraints and non-availability of raw materials have forced employers to postpone their economic activities temporarily or permanently across the world. The abrupt deadlock in economic activities had made its set blow to the employers at their receiving end within a short while.

They have experienced an unprecedented reduction of working days and wage cuts in their monthly wage rate in the destination region. Subsequently, they lose their job, even temporarily or permanently. The paucity of healthcare amenities further accelerated their pace of repatriation to their country of origin rather than staying in the country of destination without a job/ income.

JOB PLAN OF THE REPATRIATED EMIGRANT LABOURERS IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WANED SCENARIO, KERALA

The decision of the considerable size of the covid induced repatriated emigrant labourers in Kerala (14,71437) concerning their job plan to seek either job in the domestic labour market or for re-emigration would have more significant ramifications in the income and employment generation in the domestic labour market as well as the regional economy's expatriated remittance prospects. The Government of Kerala had rolled out a series of schemes and programmes targeting the rehabilitation challenges of the repatriated emigrant labourers. The massive programme includes the Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission, envisioning 20 lakhs jobs in the economy within the next five years, and the 'Additional Skills Acquisition Programme' to transform the skill development among the labourers in the State (GoK, 2021; Rajan & Pattath, 2021). It becomes more relevant to discuss the way forward decisions in a situation where the pandemic getting waned of the repatriated emigrant labourers, and their appropriate rehabilitation policies are significant.

Table No. 6: Way forward strategies of Repatriated emigrant labourers

Future Plan	Number of repatriated emigrant labourers (In %)		
	DREM*	NREM**	Total
What is your work plan?			
Start a new Business in Kerala	9 (10.84)	3(17.65)	12(12)
Re- emigrate to get a New job	52 (62.65)	2 (11.77)	54 (54)
Re- emigrate to the same job as before	10(12.05)	9(52.94)	19 (19)
Retired from work	1(1.21)	1(5.89)	2 (2)
Seek new job in Kerala	11(13.25)	2(11.77)	13 (13)
Total	83 (100)	17 (100)	100 (100)

Source: Sample survey, 2022, Note:*Figures in parenthesis represents the percentages

The respondents were given five different options to the query on what is the work plan of the repatriated emigrants?, start a new business in Kerala, re-emigrate to get a new job, re-emigrate to assume the previous job in the destination, retire from work and seek new employment in Kerala. Despite the

turbulence and havoc experienced by the emigrant labourers during the COVID-19 period in terms of job, income loss, and health hazards in their destination country, most (54 %) of the sample respondents still prefer to re-emigrate to foreign countries to get better employment opportunities. The prime reason to choose foreign countries to re-emigrate but to access new employment opportunities is that they did have to enable the threshold skill sets and work experience from foreign countries. Moreover, it will fetch better work, employment and wage rate in foreign countries leading better standard of living. In contrast, 19 % of the sample responded with their interest in re-emigration in accessing the same job. Altogether 73 % of the repatriated emigrant labourers plan to re-emigrate to Middle East Countries for employment. Only 25 % intend to get absorbed in the domestic labour market. Of these, 12 % of the sample respondents reported their interest in starting a new business in Kerala, while 13% are interested in seeking new jobs in Kerala. Since almost 1/3 of the sample respondents did register their preference to stay back in the labour market of Kerala, postulate the issue of rehabilitation of the repatriated emigrant labourers considering their acquired skill sets and educational credentials. Here, the study assessing the given situation found the need for formulating multi-pronged schemes and programmes to rehabilitate the repatriated emigrants with avenues of gainful employment/ startups reckoning with their experience and resources at their disposal.

The state of Kerala has already experienced a high unemployment rate and is further aggravated by the net addition of repatriated emigrant labourers in the domestic labour market. The Karl Pearson correlation test was administered to understand the association between the work experience and the job plan of the repatriated emigrant labourers. It uses the critical variables as work experience among the repatriated emigrant labourers in GCC countries on the one hand and their job plan on the other (See Table 7).

Table 7: Correlation Result

		Years of work exp.	Work plan Strategy
Years of work exp.	Pearson Correlation	1	.874**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Work plan Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.874**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Estimated by the researcher

The Pearson product correlation of years of work in GCC countries and work plan strategy among the repatriated emigrant labourers are found to be highly positive and statistically significant ($r=0.874$, $P < 0.001$) (See Table 7). Hence H1 was supported, and it found that an increase in years of work would lead to

a higher possibility of taking decisions on re-emigration and accessing employment in the GCC countries by the sample respondents.

CONCLUSION

The discussion on the repatriated emigrant labourers from the Middle East economies and their job plan shows that the 'loss of job' was the prime reason for the repatriation of labourers from GCC countries to Kerala during COVID-19. The informal and unskilled character of the work and workers in destination countries accelerated the process of job loss and further repatriation among the labourers during the pandemic. The estimated positive correlation between the years of experience and the decision to re-emigration among the repatriated emigrant labourers has revealed the bright prospects of the unskilled labourers' re-emigration towards the Gulf countries. The process would become a stimulus to the regional economy, worsened by the covid induced repatriated emigrant labourers' expatriate remittances and the growth of the domestic economy. The study found the need for multi-pronged approaches from the part of the state and the Central Government to rehabilitate/ reintegrate the repatriated emigrant labourers who intend to stay back in the economy by exploring their achieved/ acquired skill sets/ experience.

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Article: Language Contact and Language Choice in an Inter-state Context: The Case of Meghalaya-Assam Border

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Language Contact and Language Choice in an Inter-state Context: The Case of Meghalaya-Assam Border

--Gordon D. Dkhar

Abstract

Language contact studies prerequisite the linguistic analysis of bilingualism and multilingualism, which involve different socio-cultural and linguistic convergences. The inter-state contact situation in the National Border of Meghalaya in Byrnihat exhibits diverse socio-cultural and linguistic coexistence, providing feasible aspects for sociolinguistic research and language contact studies. In this region, contact is identified between the Khasis (of the Austro-Asiatic language family) and Assamese (of the Indo-Aryan language family), as well as other Tibeto-Burman linguistic communities such as the Garos, Mikirs, Hajongs, and Biates. The presence of these different linguistic communities has created a favorable ecological condition for examining the pattern of language choice displayed by the Khasi ethnic groups in this area. Multilingualism is deeply rooted in this area, as evidenced by its presence at both the individual and societal levels. This study focuses on aspects of language use and specifically attempts to examine the pattern of language choice appropriated by the local Khasis in this area with reference to the domain configuration.

Keywords: Language Contact; Bi/multilingualism; Khasi; Byrnihat; Language Choice

Introduction

North-East India comprising of the seven sister states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Hitherto, Sikkim has been incorporated as the eight state of North East India. Linguistically, North East part of India comprises of different languages belonging to three language families viz, Indo-European languages represented by Asamiya, Sino-Tibetan represented by Tibeto Burman

languages like Boro, Karbi, Garo etc. and Austro-Asiatic language represented solely by Khasi language (Moral, 1997). Meghalaya means ‘The Abode of Clouds’ in Sanskrit and other Indic Languages. The state of Meghalaya is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. It is flanked between the lower Assam plain in the North and Surma Valley on the south. In the north, it is bounded by Golpara and Kamrup district of Assam, on the east by North Cachar and by Karbi Anglong and by Bangladesh on the west and south. An extensive border running about 496 km. long to the southern border is also the International border between India and Bangladesh. Toponymically, the state of Meghalaya is a plateau which emerged out of the plains of Assam millions of years ago (Zimba, 1977). The elevation of the plateau ranges between 150 m to 1961 meters Devi (2010, p. 6). The central part of the plateau comprising of the Khasi Hills which has the highest elevations, followed by the eastern section comprising of the Jaintia Hills Region. The Garo Hills region in the western section of the plateau is nearly plain.

Background information of Meghalaya

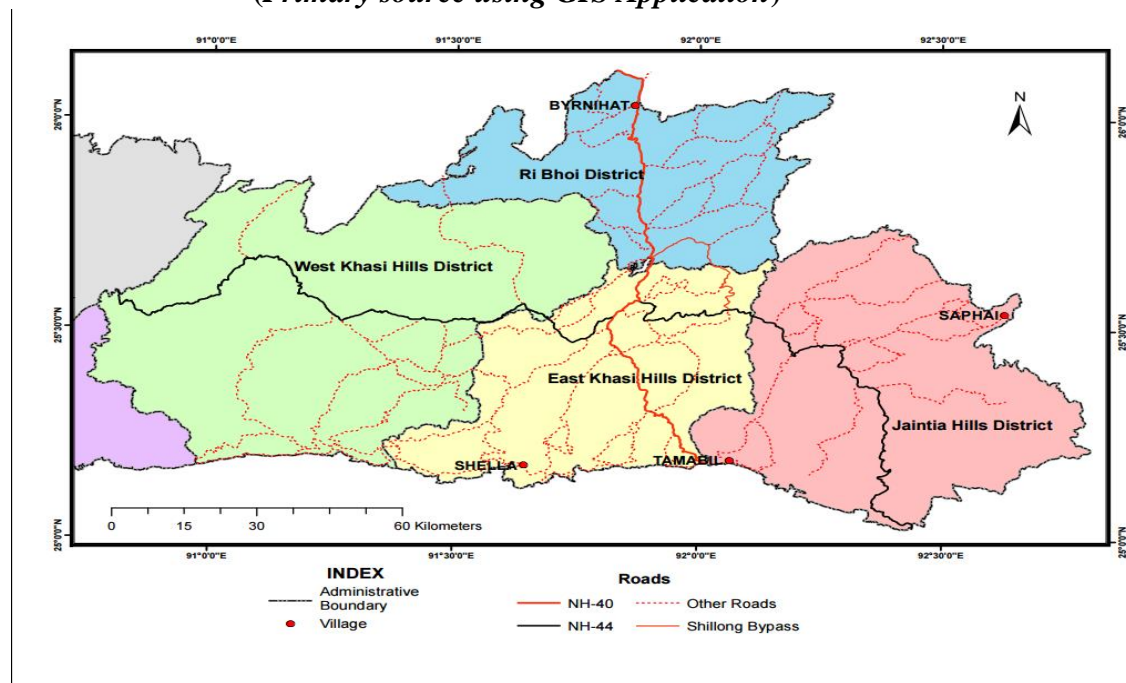
The state of Meghalaya is broadly divided into three hill sections: The Garo Hills in the west, The Khasi Hills in the middle and the Jaintia Hills in the east. Linguistically, the languages of Meghalaya reflect its rich culture and three principle languages are spoken in Meghalaya: Khasi, Pnar and Garo. Khasi has been first found mentioned in Grierson (1904). In terms of genetic classification, Khasi is an off- shoot of the Mon-Khmer language, a group of Austro-Asiatic family of the Austric Super- family, Bareh (1977). According to Diffloth (2005) Khasi has been classified as part of the Khasi-Khmuic group of languages and is related to the Munda branch of the Austro-Asiatic family. The Khasis, according to Bareh (1979), had no literature of their own but adapted Bengali orthography until 1841 when the Roman script was introduced by Thomas Jones I and was put into use. Khasi is mainly spoken in and around Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya and ‘a sizable number of Khasi speakers are also found in neighbouring state of Assam and other states of India mainly in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, West Bengal, and

across the international border in Bangladesh' Khyriem (2013 p. 2). Khasi has innumerable dialects, in fact, Pnar is a dialect of Khasi, which is spoken in Jaintia Hills. Garo, a Tibeto-Burman language, is spoken in Garo Hills. Structurally, Khasi has S-V-O as the basic word order type; it is morphologically agglutinating and partly isolating language.

Background of the Study Area: Primary Survey

The Khasis inhabiting northern part of Meghalaya are known as the Bhoi Khasis. Ribhoi is one of the administrative districts of Meghalaya, with its headquarters located in Nongpoh. Byrnihat is a town situated in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. It is located along National Highway 6, approximately 15 km from Guwahati in Assam. **Figure-1** below shows the base map where the specified area under study is depicted.

Figure-1: Base Map of Meghalaya-Assam National Border
(Primary source using GIS Application)



Byrnihat holds strategic importance as it lies at the inter-state border between Meghalaya and Assam. The town has grown significantly over the past few decades due to industrialization and its proximity to Guwahati. It is a major transport hub that connects Meghalaya to the rest of Northeast India via road

and rail networks. Numerous businesses and other small-scale industries are located in Byrnihat. This border zone in Byrnihat has been an on-going point of territorial dispute between Meghalaya and Assam, as the boundary demarcation remains ambiguous. With an ill-defined border, this inter-state contact area has witnessed long-standing tensions between the two state administrations over jurisdictional issues. The dynamic and politically sensitive nature of the Meghalaya-Assam border in Byrnihat renders it a socio-linguistically intricate site to examine language contact processes. The ambiguity regarding the official boundary potentially amplifies interaction between populations across state lines, consequently influencing language use patterns in this border region.

Language Contact and Multilingualism in Byrnihat

The language contact situation under examination, in the inter-state context of Byrnihat area, is characterized by a high degree of multilingualism as people from different linguistic backgrounds come into close contact with each other. The concomitant socio-cultural and socio-linguistic proximity, as well as other coexisting linguistic communities in this border region often leads to diverse social, cultural, and linguistic developments (Dkhar, 2019). A concise primary survey of the socio-linguistic and socio-cultural factors inherent to this area is provided below.

From a *socio-linguistic perspective*, the presence of diverse populations belonging to distinct linguistic communities in Byrnihat, such as Assamese, Bengali, Nepalese, Biate, Mikir and Garo, as evidenced by the primary survey, has implications for language learning among groups in contact. Multilingualism is nearly ubiquitous across localities in this area. Consequently, the majority of inhabitants were found to be polyglots, demonstrating proficiency in a minimum of three languages: Khasi (standard), Bhoi (a Khasi dialect), Assamese, and Hindi. Additionally, some individuals reported competency in Biate, Bengali, Hajong, Mikir and Garo languages. This level of multi-competence in the region is further substantiated by the data presented in **Table 1**. The pervasive linguistic diversity engendered by

demographic factors has undoubtedly shaped the heterogeneous linguistic repertoire of residents in this inter-state border region between Meghalaya and Assam.

From a *socio-cultural* perspective, the existence of diverse communities belonging to different socio-cultural groups in the Byrnihat contact area presents a complex network of multicultural coexistence and a zone of extensive language contact. As evidenced in the primary survey, and via interviews reported, it was suggestive that there is increased interaction between the native Khasis with their out-groups, which is almost inevitable given the multilingual nature of coexistence in the various domains of activities, especially in commercial, institutional, and societal settings. This close proximity of coexistence between in-groups (Khasis) and out-groups (other linguistic communities) has often led to an exchange of cultural and linguistic traits in a bidirectional manner. Indeed, all informants in Byrnihat concurred that industrialization, inter-trade relations, and the common practice of intermarriage between groups along this border have brought the Khasis closer to the socio-cultural values of out-groups and vice versa. Moreover, a symmetrical composite of inter-cultural practices and transmission is also apparent. The prevalent intermingling and integration of diverse communities has undoubtedly shaped the heterogeneous socio-cultural milieu of this inter-state border area between Meghalaya and Assam.

The concomitant socio-cultural and linguistic contact of the Khasis of Meghalaya with the cultural and linguistic communities of the neighboring state of Assam and other linguistic communities in this ecology has contributed to an additive type of multilingualism in which languages exist in a complementary relationship. In fact, there exist a bidirectional influence on language learning and acquisition along this border region. This occurred because of increased face-to-face interaction among local Khasis with their respective out-groups. Such contact has implications for the functional roles that languages enter in varying configurations or domains of language use. Given the intensity of the contact situation in Byrnihat, the questions of

language choice and linguistic behavior among the Khasis amidst the prevalent multilingual orientation at both the individual and societal levels become of intrinsic interest. In conjunction with the overarching multilingual landscape of the Byrnihat contact area, the present work seeks to highlight patterns of language choice adopted by the Khasis in this region.

Literature Survey

Language Contact and Multilingualism

The study of language contact dates back to the beginning of 1950s with the influential work of Weinreich (1953). Contact linguistics according to Nelde (1997, p. 287), was ‘first introduced at the First World Congress on Language Contact and Conflict, held in Brussels in June 1979’. According to Weinreich (1970, p. 1), ‘two or more languages will be said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same person’. Thomason (2001, p. 1) on the other hand, defines it as ‘the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time’. Both these definitions are grounded in ‘Bilingualism’ which is elucidated by Weinreich (1970, p. 1) as the practice of ‘alternately using two languages’ and the ‘persons involved, Bilinguals’. McMahon (1994, p. 200) claims that ‘...bilingualism necessarily means linguistic contact’. Mohanty (1994, p. 120) on the other hand, states ‘contact between two speech communities leads to bilingualism at the individual and societal level’. Both Thomason (2001) and Weinreich (1970) emphasize on the ‘bilingualism’ and ‘individual bilingual speakers’ in their definition of contact.

According to Mackey (1970, p. 554) ‘bilingualism is a characteristic of language use’. The literature on language choice abounds in the study of multilingualism in language contact situation. Riley (2000) pointed out that different languages are always used in different circumstances and the choice of language is always governed by societal rules. This view also finds expression in Theiberger (1990, p. 336) who argues that ‘multilingualism can be seen both as contributing to and detracting from the cohesion of a society’. India, according to Appel and Muysken (1987, p. 4), ‘...faces a combination

of languages spoken of daunting complexity, and has become one of the world's centres for language-contact research'. Studies carried out on aspect of language contact and multilingualism, in the Indian linguistic scene, has revealed the numerous complexities associated with language behaviour, language borrowing and language choice appropriated in different social norms and differentiated role relationships.

Thus, the language contact situation occurring where Meghalaya and Assam intersect in the region of Byrnihat provides an ideal natural setting to examine how the Khasis use language. Given its close proximity to other represented language groups in this border area, contact with these communities can be directly observed. Interactions in this region occur at social, political, and economic levels. Socially, there is contact between different linguistic communities in various domains of activities. Politically, there is increased coordination required between the two states given its jurisdictional ambiguity. Economically, trade transpires between individuals from diverse language backgrounds. This sustained level of contact has demonstrable effects on language change among the Khasis, both structurally and functionally. Structurally, modifications can be witnessed through borrowing of lexical and grammatical forms from other languages, as discussed in Dkhar (2019) and Baishya et.al (2012). Functionally, language usage diverges depending on the social situation or domain of activity. In summary, the intermingling of languages where Meghalaya and Assam intersect provides an ideal ecological setting to empirically study how bilingualism/multilingualism has influenced patterns of language employed across different social contexts.

Pattern of Language Choice

The concept of 'patterns of language choice' refers to how multilingual communities distribute use of different languages across various social domains and contexts. These patterns emerge from the negotiations between linguistic groups as social, political and economic forces determine the functional roles allocated to each language. Understanding language use patterns across domains provides insight into the dynamics of language

choice, shift, and maintenance within communities, especially in contexts of language contact.

Language choice is a complex issue for any multilingual society especially in an intense language contact situation, as sociolinguistic, socio-cultural and socio-psychological factors often significantly influence these decisions. Research shows that relationships between linguistic groups as well as social, political, economic, and identity considerations can shape language choice. Riley (2000) argues that language use is always governed by social rules, and that the choice of language in a multilingual community is always influenced by the specific context. He notes that bilingual speakers will often use their choice of language to define the situation.

In the Indian context, the patterns of language choice stem from the manifold functions different languages serve in varied contexts. Mohanty (1994) describes this as a non-competitive and differentiated role relationship, in which different languages are used for different purposes. Srivastava (1994) agrees that the allocation of functional roles to languages is identified by the spreading of the different languages. Singh (2001) proposes a tentative typology of language use in India, which identifies different domains that are associated with different languages. He argues that the choice of language is not always restricted to the immediate speech community, but is also influenced by the hierarchical layers of Pan-Indian ecology.

In summary, the literature discussed, clearly shows that patterns of language choice illuminates how multilingual communities distribute language use across social spheres based on negotiated roles for each language in the contact environment. Contextual sociolinguistic dynamics emerge from social, political and economic forces can notably affect these complex choices. Examining the patterns of language use of the Khasis in the national borders of Meghalaya-Assam contact areas in Byrnihat will provide insight about how Khasis negotiate use of languages against the backdrop of intermingled

communities on one hand, the dynamics of language choice, and the type of multilingualism that operates in this ecological setting.

Methodology

Objective

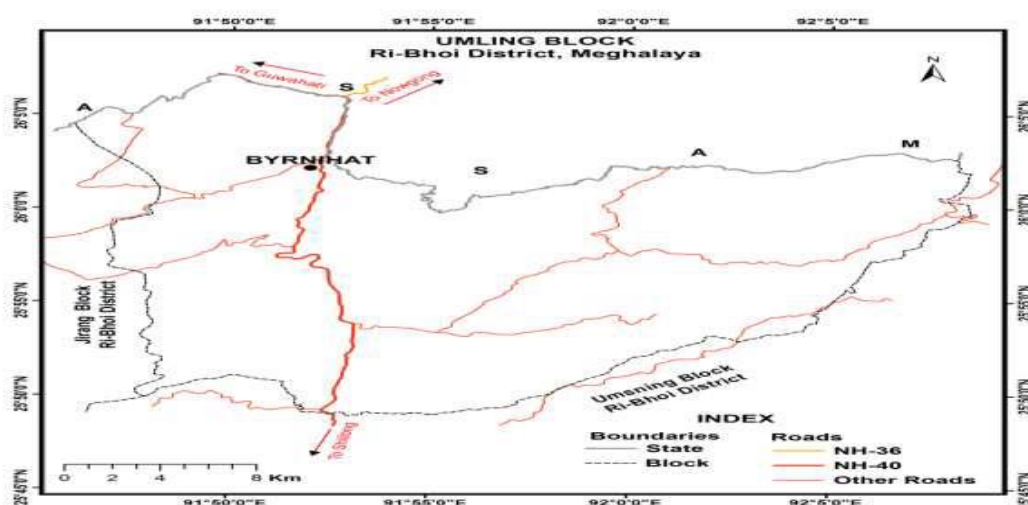
The present study attempts to explore the underpinnings of pattern of language choice of the Khasis in the national borders of Meghalaya-Assam contact areas in Byrnihat where multilingualism is manifested naturally in the language ecology of this geographical area. The objective of the study is given below:

To investigate the pattern of language choice that exhibit in the contact situation of Meghalaya-Assam border in Byrnihat.

Study Area

The geographically contiguous border of Meghalaya-Assam located in Byrnihat, which lies north of Ri-Bhoi districts, is delineated for our study. This area share National boundaries with the state of Assam. **Figure-2** below shows the base map where the specified areas of the study are depicted.

Figure-2: Base Map of Byrnihat showing Meghalaya-Assam National Border
(Primary source using GIS Application)



3.3 Participants

Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. The quantitative data set consisted of 60 subjects, encompassing both males and females who were surveyed. These subjects were selected from diverse geographical areas within the Byrnihat contact zones. Specifically, they belonged to the Khasi ethnic group and were permanent residents of their respective areas. The subjects exhibited distinct socio-cultural and demographic profiles, with notable variations in age, gender, education, and length of residence. A detailed demographic profile of the subjects is provided in Tables 1 below.

The variable of "length of residence" was carefully considered during the selection process. Only subjects who reported being permanent residents of the study areas or had resided in the given area for more than 10 years were included. This deliberate decision aimed to trace the impact of language contact, particularly the neighboring language (out-group), on these border areas (in-group), as reflected in their language behavior. The background information gathered from the sample indicates that the majority of the informants have educational attainment levels that fall significantly below expectations for their respective age groups and representation. Notably, the randomly selected subjects exhibited variations across different parameters, including age, gender, and education.

Table 1: Quantitative Data- Detailed Demographic Profile of the Participants

Location	Gender		Age Group			Education					Linguistic profile	
	M	F	31-Oct	31-50	50+	Illitrs	Prmy	Middle	Hgr.Sec	Grads		
-												Polyglot (Khasi, Hindi, Assamese, Biata, Bengali, *Bodo *Gar)
Byrnihat	30	30	20	20	20	10	10	14	15	11		

For the qualitative aspect of the study, data were elicited from four participants who, in addition to completing the questionnaire, enthusiastically engaged in interviews. Table 2 provides a distribution and description of these participants.

Table 2: Qualitative Data- Distribution and Description of the participants

Location	Samples	Age Group			Gender		Education	
		Young	Middle	Old	Male	Female	Educated	Uneducated
-	Nos.							
Byrnihat	4	2	1	1	2	2	2	2

3.4. Procedure

Primary survey data on the language contact situation, multilingual orientation, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-linguistic profile of the Khasis in this border region were elicited via interview methods (Demographic information given in Table-2). Quantitative data was elicited via questionnaires. A total of 60 participants were requested to fill all the items enclosed in the questionnaire objectively and confidentially. The responded questionnaire (or raw data) contains open-ended questions (for demographic information and domains of language use). The data elicited is analyzed using SPSS software. Each response is coded according to the defined numerical values. Here, a single response is treated as a unit of analysis. The data was quantified through SPSS tools, frequency were computed and represented in the form of a tableau(s), and conclusions were drawn.

4. Results

The frequency analysis of patterns of language choice employed across various domains of communicative activity are analyzed and computed in the following categories discussed below. The frequencies of language choices within each of these domains are then quantified and reported in the tables (Table-5.1 to 5.6) below:

1. *Home Domain*: Familial interactions between parents and siblings
2. *Social Contexts*: Communication amongst friends, neighbors, elders, children
3. *Commercial Domains*: Interaction encompasses transactions in the market between buyers and sellers
4. *Media Outlets Domains*: Language preferred by participants in the print media (newspapers) as well as audio-based (radio programs) and audio-visual broadcasts (television programs).
5. *Religious Domains*: such as churches where language use occurs between congregation members and church leaders.
6. *Institutional Settings*: such as public and private offices, and educational institutions including schools and colleges where formal language use predominates

5.1 Home Domain

Table- 3: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Home settings

Languages	Mother	Father	Siblings	Mean
Khasi	60.00%	58.00%	64.00%	60.60%
Assamese	10.00%	19.00%	nil	9.60%
Khasi+ Assamese	8.00%	6.00%	9.00%	7.60%
Biate	5.50%	3.00%	5.00%	4.50%
Hajong	4.00%	3.00%	9.00%	5.30%
Mikir	8.00%	5.00%	3.70%	5.50%
Garo	4.5	6.00%	6.70%	5.70%
Khasi+ English	nil	nil	2.60%	0.80%
Total=	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.2 Social Context

Table- 4: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Social context

Languages	Friends	Neighbours	Elders	Children	Mean
Khasi	11.70%	6.70%	20.00%	41.70%	20.30%
Hindi	3.30%	3.30%	3.30%	3.30%	3.50%
Nepali	nil	3.30%	nil	nil	1.3
English	6.60%	nil	nil	8.30%	3.70%
Assamese	nil	6.60%	nil	nil	2.00%

Khasi+ Hindi	13.30%	16.70%	20.00%	16.70%	16.60%
Khasi+ English	nil	3.40%	10.00%	10.00%	5.00%
Khasi+ Assamese	58.40%	26.70%	40.00%	20.00%	36.20%
Assamese+ Hindi	6.70%	28.30%	6.70%	nil	10.40%
Mikir	nil	5.00%	nil	nil	1.00%
Total =	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.3 Commercial Domain

Table- 5: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Commercial setting

Languages	Market	Sellers	Buyers	Mean
Assamese	3.30%	3.30%	3.30%	3.30%
Hindi	nil	10.00%	6.70%	6.00%
Khasi+ Hindi	6.70%	3.30%	3.30%	4.40%
Bengali	3.30%	11.70%	11.70%	8.90%
Khasi+ Assamese	48.40%	30.00%	33.30%	37.20%
Assamese+ Hindi	38.30%	41.70%	41.70%	40.20%
Total=	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.4. Media Outlets

Table- 6: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Media

Language	Newspaper	Radio	Television	Mean
Khasi	40.00%	30.00%	15.30%	28.40%
English	10.00%	10.00%	20.00%	13.30%
Assamese	nil	nil	29.60%	9.80%

Khasi & Hindi	10.00%	16.70%	7.60%	11.60%
Khasi & English	40.00%	43.30%	14.30%	32.50%
Hindi & English	nil	nil	13.20%	4.40%
Total=	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.5. Institutional Domains

Table- 7: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Institutional settings

Languages	Education	Offices	Mean
Khasi	3.30%	27.00%	15.15%
Hindi	11.70%	13.30%	12.50%
Garo	nil	nil	Nil
English	80.00%	14.70%	47.35%
Assamese	5.00%	8.00%	6.50%
Khasi & Hindi	nil	14.00%	7.00%
Khasi & English	nil	13.30%	6.65%
Assamese+ Hindi	nil	10.00%	5.00%
Total=	100%	100%	100.00%

5.6 Religious Domain

Table- 7: Percent use of different language by the Khasis in Religious places

Languages	Church
Khasi	70.00%
Hindi	nil
Garo	11.70%
English	3.30%
Assamese	10.00%
Khasi & Hindi	nil
Khasi & English	nil
Assamese+ Hindi	5.00%
Total=	100%

5. Discussion

The primary data collected indicates that linguistic contact within the Meghalaya-Assam inter-state border region of Byrnihat extends beyond the Khasis and their immediate Assam neighbors. Rather than being confined to these groups, the data provides a representative sample of various out-groups from different linguistic communities, such as Assamese, Nepali, Bengali, and Garo. Additionally, sparse populations of Mikir, Biate, Hajong, and Rabha minority groups were also observed in this area, as discussed in Section 1.3. Thus, the inter-state border encompasses a linguistically diverse setting comprising three major language families: Austro-Asiatic (Khasi), Indo-Aryan (Assamese, Bengali, Nepali), and Tibeto-Burman (Biate, Mikir, Hajong, Garo). The co-presence of these diverse linguistic communities has fostered a socio-linguistic condition characterized by multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Evidence of an additive form of multilingualism exists along the Byrnihat inter-state border, whereby acquiring additional languages does not impede existing ones due to the lack of linguistic hegemony. This reflexive multilingual dynamic stems from the discrete functional roles and social values assigned to each language across hierarchical domains (see Dkhar, 2009). Consequently, the promotion of the different languages available in the speech repertoire is recognizably an additive type of multilingualism where there is absence of linguistic conflict in terms language use of the different language in the different situations. In the national boundary of Byrnihat area, language use (especially in inter-group contexts) is dictated by the most intelligibility language or link language namely, Hindi and to some extent, Khasi or Assamese which is predominant.

The analysis of the choice of language use is found to be dependent on the functional roles allocated to different languages and the type of attitudes and motivations, which influence the choice of language used in different domain of activities. For intra-group communication that corresponds to Home

domain, (see. Table-3), Khasi or native language operates. Hence, Khasi received the highest mean score (60.0%) in one's home in Byrnihat. Other languages (i.e. 40% of the mean score) are used in home domain, which includes Assamese (09.6%), Khasi +Assamese (07.6%), Mikir (05.5%), Garo (05.7%), Hajong (05.3%), and Biata (04.5%). Our findings suggest that Khasi occupies a prominent position as the dominant language within Byrnihat region. Data analysis shows that the majority of families primarily utilize Khasi for communicative purposes, marking it as the most prevalent language employed across all three social groups - mothers, fathers, and siblings. While Assamese also maintains a notable presence in the linguistic landscape of this area, the data suggests it is used comparatively more frequently by fathers during interactions than mothers or siblings. Thus, our empirical evidence positions Khasi as the foremost language in Byrnihat, though Assamese also circulates rather regularly, especially amongst the paternal social network.

An analysis of the data pertaining to language choice patterns in informal societal interactions with neighbors and friends indicates a predominant selection of either Khasi alone or in conjunction with Assamese through code switching. As shown in Table 4, the highest mean score of 36.2% was associated with the alternative/combined use of Khasi and Assamese. Khasi individually received the second highest mean of 20.3%, followed by the alternative combination of Khasi and Hindi at 16.6%. Based on these findings, one can conclude that Khasi, Assamese, and Hindi represent worthwhile language choices for the societal domain among the surveyed population. Specifically, Khasi - as the native language and associate official language of Meghalaya state - along with Assamese, the official language of neighboring Assam, appear to be most extensively and jointly used in informal social exchanges. Additionally, Hindi, serving as both the official language of India and a key lingua franca in Byrnihat, can facilitate communication when alternated with Khasi.

An examination of language choice patterns within commercial settings reveals that selection favours a pragmatically useful lingua franca dependent

upon the marketplace value ascribed to specific language(s). As this is a multilingual region located at an inter-state border, the data presented in Table 5 suggests language use in the market domain consistently aligns with the preferences of buyers. The results demonstrate that in Byrnihat, approximately 40.2% of responses on average most heavily supported alternating between Assamese and Hindi as the dominant choice for commercial interactions. Meanwhile, alternating or combining Khasi with Assamese was also deemed a worthwhile option, receiving 37.2% of the mean score on average. Taken together, these findings indicate that for trade-related domains within the surveyed area, strategic adoption of both Assamese+Hindi and to a lesser yet still substantial degree, Khasi+Assamese, best facilitate business transactions.

Print media, audio broadcasting, and audio-visual broadcasting comprise the key modes of mass media communication analyzed in this study. Information dissemination through such media platforms is inherently unidirectional, as respondents lack direct participation and remain passive recipients devoid of two-way dialog. Language preferences relating to media consumption in the context of our analysis refer to the choice of language preferred and consumed by the respondents via different broadcast forms. These include audio preferences like radio and music versus audio-visual preferences involving television programming such as movies, news, etc. as well as print preferences for newspapers published materials. As shown in Table 6, respondents convey distinct values ascribed to language(s) across the media domain. Analysis of preferred languages for media transmission shows Khasi alone or combined with English are predominantly consumed via print and audio-visual broadcasts, receiving around 40.0% of responses respectively. Meanwhile, audio broadcasts attracted higher consumption of Assamese (29.6%) and English (20.0%) alone relative to other combinations. This provides insights into how valued linguistic repertoires in the surveyed population intersect with media distribution channels to shape language preferences when passively receiving broadcast communications.

The languages used in Schools and Offices collectively form the domain of **Institutional Settings**. In education, English is the dominant choice by a large margin, receiving 80% of the mean score. This underscores English's role as the primary language of instruction in schools and colleges. The choice of Hindi (11.0%), Assamese (05.0%) and Khasi (3.3%) or their combination is relatively low. This implies that English is the dominant language for instruction and communication in this context while other languages represented in this context likely reflect their use for certain curricular aspects that celebrate local culture and language or as a school subjects in the curriculum. Offices show a more diverse distribution of language choices compared to education. Khasi emerges as the leading single choice for offices (27%), signifying its importance for conducting business in the region. English (14.7%) and Hindi (13.3%) remain substantial options, enabled by their status as official languages of India. Combined choices like Khasi-Hindi and Khasi-English are also common in offices (14% and 13.3% respectively). The data indicates a preference for multilingual approaches that blend local, national and international linguistic resources in institutional domains.

The sole religious domain analyzed in this study is churches. Churches were selected as the religious institution of focus because they are overwhelmingly representative of the Khasis who are mostly Christians in the region studied. In fact, 2011 census reported 84.42% of the total Ri Bhoi population are Christian. Thus, with the time and scope limitations of this research, churches provided the most viable option that allowed for an in-depth analysis where language contact and choice dynamics could be meaningfully observed and assessed. Our data shows that Khasi emerges as the clear preferred choice for communication in churches, receiving 70% of the responses. This highlights Khasi's significance for religious practices and sense of cultural/linguistic identity among community members. Garo is the second most popular option at 11.7%, likely owing to its use by Garo Christians within the region. Assamese garners 10% and blended Assamese-Hindi receives 5%, signifying these languages also play some role in terms of language use. English is a minor choice at only 3.3%, suggesting services/discourse are mainly

conducted in local, rather than international, languages. Thus, the data strongly suggest that other indigenous (Garo) and neighboring (Assamese) languages are accommodated for inclusiveness in Khasi religious faith.

6. Findings and Conclusion

Certain inferences can be made from the present study. Firstly, the inter-state situation in national border of Meghalaya-Assam contact area in Byrnihat is a melting pot of diverse socio-cultural and linguistic groups. Quantitatively, different ethnic groups such as Khasis, Garos, Bengali, Nepalis, Hajong, Biate and Rabhas are represented in this area. Contact among these different linguistic communities in Byrnihat has not only given rise to exchange of language and cultural but facilitates multilingualism as the sociolinguistic reality. Evidence from the demographic linguistic composition of the Khasis (see Table-1) strongly suggest that multilingualism is found at the individual level and collectively at societal level since all respondents are polyglot with knowledge of more than two languages. Qualitatively, a close proximity and intensity of contact is evident in this area and language contact pervades in the different domain of activities, which created a feasible ecological condition for multilingualism. An additive type of Multilingualism operates in this area where learning a second or third language does not prevent the Khasis from retaining their first language. This is evident from the fact that different languages that are available in a person's speech repertoire are all valued and promoted because they each have a unique functional role in different contextual situation. This implies that multilingualism essentially created a no conflict zone as far as language use is concerned in different situations, as the choice of language is dictated by factors such as intelligibility and competence.

The pattern of language used in the different domain of inter-state context in national border in Byrnihat shows that *Khasi* plays a dominant role as the home and community language, reinforcing cultural identity and social ties within the Khasi ethnic group. *Assamese* serves as an important lingua franca, especially among generations that may have weaker Khasi proficiency. Its use

reflects Assam's influence as the surrounding state. Languages like *Assamese and Hindi* facilitate contact with outsider groups from other communities engaged in trade, migration, employment etc. along the border region. English fulfils a key function in education, enabling social and economic opportunities associated with the language in India. Its presence in media also exposes people to a global lingua franca. Conjugation of different languages in a domain signals code switching which bridges the communication gap between ethnicities in conversational practices. Language choices vary systematically based on attributes like domain, interlocutors and pragmatic needs, which demonstrate strategic, context-sensitive uses that balance cultural, social and administrative factors in this diverse region. Hence, our finding shows that contact with the different languages in this area do not bring about a situation of linguistic hegemony of the host community (i.e. Khasi) rather, each language or multiple languages functionally compliment an important aspect in specific domain configuration for family, community and institutional needs.

The findings of this study have implications for other border areas, it suggests that multilingualism can be a means of promoting social and cultural cohesion as exemplified in the inter-state of Byrnihat border. This is significant because border areas are frequently seen as being more susceptible to conflict and violence. Hence, the promotion of multilingualism can facilitate communication and cooperation between different groups and help to preserve local languages and cultures.

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Article: Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence among the PG students of AP and Telangana States: A Socio-Psychological Study

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Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence among the PG students of AP and Telangana States: A Socio-Psychological Study

--N. Sharon Sucharitha Gold

Abstract

The paper attempts to examine internet usage and its relationship with emotional intelligence and their relationships with certain social variables independently. Increased dependency on the internet day by day has an imperative to find out its impact on the psychological well-being of individuals. From the simple everyday use of Android phones for communication to working on machine tools for very complicated applications, humans are dependent on the internet. In academic life, dependency on the Internet has become inevitable for advanced studies. In a way, it is a benefactor and at the same time baneful as it has become distractive for studies and even affecting psychological health.

Keywords: Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence psychological well-being

Introduction

The present study tries to understand internet use patterns and the differences in internet use depending on variations in Emotional intelligence. Since postgraduate studies demand internet use it is thought appropriate to gain an insight into the above phenomenon. As psychologists have become interested in examining the relationships and effects of interaction between internet usage and some psychological variables such as emotional intelligence, mental health, anxiety, depression etc., sociologists are concerned about relationships between social variables such as gender, economic, rural/urban background in their interaction and the internet usage. In this background, the present paper explores the relationships of sociodemographic variables like gender, social, academic, economic, rural and urban background of postgraduate students with internet usage and emotional intelligence in addition to the interrelationship between internet usage and emotional intelligence.

Internet and Emotional Intelligence

Studies show that access to communication technology in India is unequal across socio-economic, gender, age, religion and caste lines. Further, there is a digital divide between urban and rural communities as well in terms of infrastructural facilities. To a large extent mobile phone technology facilitates communication and information access while computer technology is not available for a large majority of the population. In addition to this, there is a skill divide (Sharma and Banerjee 2022). Though university students are considered to be more educated and better off to some extent in terms of

socio-economic conditions, there exists a digital divide across the university youth that goes parallel to the socio-economic factors (Pandey, n.d). Despite the digital divide due to the socio-economic conditions, university students do have to use the Internet as it has become almost mandatory in the educational context.

One of the most revolutionized technologies for public use that has affected the common man happens to be the internet from the 1990s. Despite its great contribution to human betterment, the internet has also negatively affected humans as its use has become problematic to some. Young (1998) was the first psychologist to identify Problematic Internet Usage (PIU) as Internet Addiction (IA) or Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) in 1996. She termed it addiction as she found similarities between those who use the internet in excess and those who use substances. All human behaviour is primarily a response to stimulus and in this regard, mental, physical and social responses of an individual to an external or internal stimulus can be called behaviour. Individual behaviour is very complex and it is determined by individual traits as well as external influences. Since then, there has been a plethora of research publications on the negative (for example, Emmanouilides & Hammond, 2000; Christakis et al., 2011; Vishwanathan et al., 2013; Kim et al., (2020) as well as positive (for example, Wong, Yuen & Wang On Li, 2015; LaRose & Eastin 2004; López-Sintas, Filimon, and García-Álvarez, 2010; Castellacci and Tveito, 2018) impact of internet usage on individuals either students or others of all age groups. Research has also been carried out regarding the relationship or association of internet usage with demographic and psychological variables as mentioned above.

In this context, the present research work is intended to examine the relationship between human social behavioural dimensions such as emotional intelligence and internet usage which is an external stimulus. The ability to recognize one's own emotions as well as those of others, interpret them and use them to cope or adapt to the environment by influencing thought processes and behaviour is emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006). Intelligence is most often considered to have been associated with one's success in academics, inventions, discoveries and dealing with people in society (Fortugno, 2012). However, almost all researchers of intelligence agree that it is not intelligence alone that is responsible for success but certain traits and characteristics that an individual possesses. Mayer and Solovey (1995) referred to this ability other than the conventional concept of intelligence as Emotional Intelligence. Petrides (2009) has identified well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability as four factors grouped under the Trait Emotional Intelligence. All these traits reflect the controlling capacity of an individual concerning desires, urges and behaviour. In this background, the earlier research carried out about the relationships among internet usage, emotional intelligence and gender are reviewed.

Internet Usage and Gender: The motivation for Internet Usage (IU) varies on several factors such as personality, gender, individual differences etc. Studies show that there is a gender difference in Internet use (Odell et al., 2000, Ayyad, 2011, Coniglio, 2012, Soh et al., 2013), Hossain & Rahman, 2017). Females use the Internet more than males (Servidio, 2014) and while they use the Internet for messaging (Teo, 2001), for entertainment and educational purposes (Ayyad, 2011; Macharia & Nyakwende, 2011, Horvat et al., 2011; Eduljee, Kumar and Buhariwala, 2020), information gathering (Soh et al., 2013); males use it for messaging, browsing, downloading and purchasing (Teo, 2001), and for communication through email as well as knowledge of current affairs (Ayyad, 2011), internet for games, music, films and humour (Teo et al., 2001; Horvat et al., 2011) and motivated by eroticism (Soh et al., (2013). Females showed greater anxiety about internet usage (Macharia & Nyakwende, 2011). The percentage of students using the Internet from business discipline was found to be 100%, from science 92% and arts 90% (Hossain & Rahman, 2017).

From several surveys during the years 1997 and 2001 in the USA, Ono & Zavodny (2002) found that the gender gap which was present in the earlier years in internet usage disappeared by 2000. However, there were gender differences regarding the frequency and intensity of internet usage. According to Horvat et al., (2011) both male and female students had a positive attitude toward using the Internet for academics. Eduljee, Kumar & Buhariwala (2020) found differences between the genders in time spent on the internet in Mumbai college students.

Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence (EI): Researchers have established an association between Problematic internet usage (PIU) and emotional intelligence (Lan-Hua et al., 2010; Kwon, 2017). Besides EI there is a relationship between, Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Compulsive Internet Usage (CIU), aggression, phobia, and Hypochondriac Disorders (HD) (Khoshakhlagh & Faramarzi 2012; Amjad et al., 2020; Sechi et al., 2021). In some studies, the relationship between IU and EI is found to be negative, though not statistically significant (Kant, 2018; Saraiva et al., 2018) and significant in others (Caplan, 2002). Females are found to be more with IU (Sharma & Sharma, 2017) comparatively, EI was proved to be higher in boys (Sharma & Sharma, 2017).

There is a relationship between IU, PIU and depression (Christakis et al., 2011; Malott et al., (2013)), mental health (Ciarrochi et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2018; Forsman & Nordmyr, 2017), more time spent on internet and psychiatric issues (Koc 2011; Malott et al., 2013; Vishwanathan et al., 2013). In a study by Horgan and Sweeny (2010) about the preference for obtaining mental health information, it was found that about 68% of participants were willing to use the Internet for mental health purposes such as browsing online for various measures to cope or online counselling and support whereas 79.4%

preferred face-to-face support. CIU predicted poor mental health where females had higher mental health problems compared to males, females had worse mental health and tended to engage in more social forms of internet use (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Problematic smartphone use and mental health are found to be correlated with depression, anxiety, stress, poor sleep quality and decreased educational attainment for about 23.3% of cases of Problematic Cell Phone Usage (Sohn et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020). Contrary to this a study finds internet usage has no association with increased mental health issues (Coynne et al., 2020).

It is clear from the above review of literature that there is a gender difference in terms of motivations for using the internet. Further, females are more on the disadvantaged side of the balance after the advent of the internet in the modern era for their susceptibility to PIU, IA, IAD, CIU, anxiety, depression and poor mental health in general. However, the researchers have not established the relationship between increased mental health and the increased use of mobile phones. Given this global scenario, it is important to examine the issue on hand about the situation in the case of students in Indian universities for the Indian social system is a classic example of gender, social, economic and religious inequalities wherein the female is on the disadvantage side.

It is in this milieu, that an attempt has been made to study internet usage and its relationship with emotional intelligence besides their relationships with certain social variables independently among the students pursuing university education.

Materials and Method

Research Design: The study adopted a descriptive non-experimental and correlational study.

Survey: For the required data, a one-time survey among the postgraduate students pursuing studies in six universities located in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh was organized between December 2022 and February 2023 with the help of a schedule developed for this purpose.

Schedule for Data Collection: The schedule contained a consent form to be signed by the students willing to participate. It was administered randomly to those students who signed the consent form covering as many disciplines as possible so as to get representation from sciences, social sciences, humanities, business, commerce, education etc. After signing the consent, the participants were requested to provide the demographic information on gender, postgraduate study being pursued, residence, education and occupation of the parents, economic category according to their assessment, social status and religious affiliation if any. It also tried to elicit information on the failure if any in the educational career, known mental problems or psychological issues

and domestic conflicts through closed questions. Then, they were to proceed to respond to the self-reporting inventory and a questionnaire on internet usage and emotional intelligence as applicable to them individually.

Tools for Collection of Data on Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence: For collecting the data on Internet usage, the schedule included (1) the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) developed by Kimberly Young (1998) and (2) for Emotional Intelligence, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEQ-SF) by Petrides (2009). The IAT was a 20-item inventory, and each item had 6 point Likert scale (0 = Not Applicable 1 = Rarely 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Often 5 = Always) in addition to a ten-item internet application checklist on the mode to internet usage and the time spent on each item in a day. The IEQ-SF had 30 items, with 7 point Likert scale, and options ranging from 1 (Completely disagree) to 7 (Completely agree) were used. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short form is used to identify the individual's score on sub-scales of well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability.

The Internet Addiction Scale by Young has an internal reliability, calculated by Cronbach's alpha, of 0.89 (Frangos et al., 2012) and the TEQ-SF scale has an internal consistency score of 81 and test-retest reliability of a total score is 0.86 (Engin et al., 2013).

It is author's part of the PhD work at Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, which is approved by the Research and Development Cell of the said university; it is not associated with any funding agency or university's fund.

Exclusion and Inclusion criteria: While only government run state and central universities are included, private universities are excluded for the study. Also disciplines such as fine arts and performing arts are not included.

Sample for the Study: Out of the total random sample of 1056 collected, 16 questionnaires were rejected on the ground of incomplete information. The details of the social variables are provided in Table 1. Of the total, the gender of the respondents shows 507 (48.8%) male and 530 (51.0%) female while the remaining 3 (0.3%) claim not to belong to either of the genders. The gender distribution of the sample matches with the gender proportions in the universities of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states (Govt. of India, n.d).

Thus, the sample (N = 1040) drawn from the postgraduate students formed the data for the study. The total 1040 comprised of males (N = 507) and females (N = 530) and third gender (N = 3). The details of the sample are shown in Table 1. It is found that the gender distribution of the sample matches with the data provided by the Government of India's (n.d) All India Survey on Higher Education 2020- 2021, Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, New Delhi, for universities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Analysis of Data

The data collected are entered into SPSS and subjected to largely descriptive non-parametric statistical analysis such as mean and standard deviations except Pearson's correlation which is a parametric measure relating to Emotional Intelligence and Internet Usage. The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) is used normally to identify the addiction among internet users, along with clinical diagnosis of addiction. One cannot categorize individuals as being addicted on the basis of scores obtained on the tool alone. Therefore, the scores obtained by the participants are considered indicative of their level of internet usage by them. Accordingly, the students are categorized into four types based on the score obtained by them on the IAT (1) Normal users (2) Mild users, (3) Moderate users, and (4) High users according to the norms provided in the tool. In the case of EI, according to Petrides (2009) there are four facets of Emotional Intelligence: (1) Well-being (2) Self-Control, (3) Emotionality and (4) Sociability. Therefore, the participants are categorized into these categories on the basis of the scores obtained from the TEQ- SF scale.

Results and Discussion

A Profile of the Respondents: The data obtained from 1040 (507+530+3) students are from the disciplines of Sciences (38.8%), Social Sciences (27.5%), Humanities (17.6%), M. Com/MBA (9.3%), and other (6.8%) who are pursuing the postgraduate programme in SKU – Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur (174); Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa (214); Andhra University, Visakhapatnam (196); University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad (227) and Osmania University, Hyderabad (229). These students hail from urban (34.3%), semi-urban (21.2%), and rural (43.9%) and have an economic background of Below the Poverty Line (11.2%), Middle (86.8%) and Upper (1.3%) classes. They belong to the social background of general (25.0%), Backward Classes (50.8%), Scheduled Castes (17.0%), Scheduled Tribes (6.1%) and having religious affiliations with Hindu (77.4%), Muslim (11.3%), Christian (7.7%) and Buddhist (0.4%) and with no-religion (0.6%) and even do not like to identify with any religion (2.5%) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: SHOWING THE SAMPLE DESIGN

S. No	Social Variable	Gender			Total
		Male	Female	Third Gender	
Education					
1	MSc	196 (48.6%)	207 (51.4%)	0 (0.0%)	403 (100.0%) 38.8%
2	MA SS	128 (44.8%)	156 (54.5%)	2 (0.7%)	286 (100.0%) 27.5%
3	MA Humanities	78 (42.6%)	104 (56.8%)	1 (0.5%)	183 (100.0%) 17.6%

4	MCom/MBA	57 (58.8%)	40 (41.2%)	0 (0.0%)	97 (100.0%)	9.3%
5	Others	48 (67.6%)	23 (32.4%)	0 (0.0%)	71 (100.0%)	6.8%
6	Total	507 (48.8%)	530 (51.0%)	3 (0.3%)	1040 (100.0%)	(100.0%)
Residence						
1	Urban	143 (40.1%)	214 (59.9%)	0 (0.0%)	357 (100.0%)	34.3%
2	Semi-Urban	95 (43.2%)	124 (56.4%)	1 (.5%)	220 (100.0%)	21.2%
3	Rural	265 (58.0%)	190 (41.6%)	2 (.4%)	457 (100.0%)	43.9%
4	No Response	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)	0.6%
5	Total	507 (48.8%)	530 (51.0%)	3 (.3%)	1040 (100.0%)	100.0%
Economic status						
1	BPL	72 (61.50%)	45 (38.50%)	0 (0.00%)	117 (100.00%)	11.30%
2	Middle Class	421 (46.70%)	478 (53.00%)	3 (0.30%)	902 (100.00%)	86.70%
3	Upper Class	9 (64.30%)	5 (35.70%)	0 (0.00%)	14 (100.00%)	1.30%
4	No Response	5 (71.40%)	2 (28.60%)	0 (0.00%)	7 (100.00%)	0.70%
5	Total	507 (48.80%)	530 (51.00%)	3 (0.30%)	1040 (100.00%)	100.00%
Social Status						
1	General	116 (44.6%)	142 (54.6%)	2 (.8%)	260 (100.0%)	25.0%
2	BC	264 (50.0%)	263 (49.8%)	1 (.2%)	528 (100.0%)	50.8%
3	SC	90 (50.8%)	87 (49.2%)	0 (0.0%)	177 (100.0%)	17.0%
4	ST	30 (47.6%)	33 (52.4%)	0 (0.0%)	63 (100.0%)	6.1%
5	No Response	7 (58.3%)	5 (41.7%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (100.0%)	1.2%
6	Total	507 (48.8%)	530 (51.0%)	3 (0.3%)	1040 (100.0%)	100.0%
Religion						
1	Hindu	404 (50.2%)	399 (49.6%)	2 (.2%)	805 (100.0%)	77.4%
2	Muslim	53 (45.3%)	63 (53.8%)	1 (.9%)	117 (100.0%)	11.3%
3	Christian	31 (38.8%)	49 (61.3%)	0 (0.0%)	80 (100.0%)	7.7%
4	Buddhist	2 (50.0%)	2 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (100.0%)	0.4%
5	Any Other	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)	0.6%
6	No Religion	15 (57.7%)	11 (42.3%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (100.0%)	2.5%
7	No Response	0 (0.0%)	2 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (100.0%)	0.2%
8	Total	507 (48.8%)	530 (51.0%)	3 (.3%)	1040 (100.0%)	100.0%

In summary, the sample postgraduate students of the study are almost in equal proportion of male and female and six universities, and are mostly rural, middle class and Hindu social background mainly studying science programmes in the universities.

Patterns of Internet Usage: The analysis of the number of hours spent on the Internet per day shows the following results. Table 2 shows the details of internet usage by the order priority among the genders.

TABLE 2: SHOWING MODE OF INTERNET USAGE BY TIME SPENT AND GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No	Demographic Character	Academic Surfing		WhatsApp/ Messages		Facebook		Entertainments	
		Mean	Std. Dev	M	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Gender									
1	Male	2.15	1.63	2.47	1.78	2.35	1.88	1.41	1.44
2	Female	2.18	1.65	2.38	1.69	1.89	1.80	1.15	1.38
Academic Background									
1	MSc (Sciences)	2.01	1.56	2.27	1.71	2.03	1.79	1.24	1.29
2	MA (S. Sciences)	2.31	1.61	2.36	1.63	2.09	1.80	1.21	1.47
3	MA (Humanities)	2.16	1.74	2.55	1.84	2.25	2.00	1.30	1.52
4	M.Com/MBA	2.04	1.71	2.89	1.80	2.40	1.94	1.46	1.57
5	Others	2.59	1.75	2.65	1.77	2.03	1.91	1.42	1.38
Residence									
1	Urban	2.25	1.63	2.52	1.76	2.22	1.91	1.12	1.33
2	Semi-Urban	2.28	1.66	2.31	1.67	1.96	1.81	1.17	1.51
3	Rural	2.03	1.63	2.38	1.74	2.09	1.82	1.44	1.41
Economic Background									
1	BPL	1.96	1.71	2.31	1.72	1.96	1.87	1.42	1.57
2	Middle	2.17	1.63	2.44	1.74	2.13	1.84	1.26	1.40
3	Upper	3.33	1.61	2.25	1.49	2.58	2.19	0.83	1.19
Social Background									
1	General	2.46	1.66	2.46	1.70	2.11	1.87	1.09	1.43
2	BC	2.06	1.63	2.41	1.76	2.09	1.84	1.32	1.39
3	SC	2.11	1.63	2.41	1.71	2.07	1.87	1.40	1.46
4	ST	1.90	1.53	2.44	1.81	2.48	1.90	1.29	1.36
Religion									
1	Hindu	2.20	1.62	2.44	1.73	2.15	1.85	1.31	1.42
2	Muslim	1.91	1.64	2.45	1.78	2.03	1.87	1.32	1.52
3	Christian	2.00	1.58	2.45	1.81	1.96	1.82	1.09	1.32
4	Buddhist	2.20	1.62	2.44	1.73	2.15	1.85	1.31	1.42
5	No religion	2.3	2.4	1.7	1.5	1.9	2.0	0.9	1.1
Family Size									
1	1-2 Members	2.4	1.4	2.6	2.0	2.6	2.1	1.6	1.5
2	3-4 Members	2.3	1.7	2.4	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.4
3	5-6 Members	2.0	1.5	2.5	1.7	2.1	1.9	1.3	1.4
4	7 and above Members	2.2	1.7	2.5	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.1	1.5
Psychological Health Issues									
1	Yes	2.2	1.7	2.7	1.7	2.4	2.1	1.4	1.7
2	No	2.2	1.6	2.4	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.4

As the male students follow the order of priority: WhatsApp - Messenger, Social Media –Facebook etc., Academic Emailing and Surfing, News Sites and Chat rooms, the female students, on the other hand, follow the order of priority as: WhatsApp – Messenger, Social Media – Facebook etc., Academic Emailing and Surfing/Social Media –Facebook etc., and Chat rooms. Thus, academic surfing takes second priority while WhatsApp takes top priority among both male and female students. However, in the case of females academic surfing and Social Media take second place; academic surfing has taken third priority in the case of males. While news sites take sixth place among females, it takes fourth place in males. The fourth place is taken by Chat rooms followed by Discussion Lists for female students, these have taken fifth and sixth place among male students.

Students of Science streams such as Mathematics, Physics, Botany, Zoology and Chemistry spend more time on academic surfing compared to those of non-science streams. Students of MBA, others and MA (Humanities) spend more time than students of Sciences and Social Sciences on WhatsApp and the same pattern is observed in using social media. In the case of spending time on entertainment, students of M. Com/MBA spend more time than students of other disciplines. Thus, the overall picture shows M. Com/MBA students are closely associated with internet usage compared to others. (Table 3)

Students from rural backgrounds spend relatively more time on entertainment sites than others; the urban and semi-urbanites spend more or less the same amount of time on academic surfing while the rural folks lag behind in this regard; the urbanites are ahead of semi-urban and rural students in the case of WhatsApp and Social Media – Facebook. Thus, it appears that rural students are more or less behind urban and semi-urban students in terms of spending time on the Internet. (Table 3)

The SC students spend time more than other social status category students on entertainment sites, while the general category students spend more time than others on academic surfing and equal time on WhatsApp. Relatively the ST students are spending more time than others on social media than another category of students. (Table 3)

Very interestingly, while upper-class students spend more time on academic surfing than social media, the students below the poverty line spend equal time on academic surfing and social media but far less time than upper-class students. In the case of middle-class students, they are between the upper class and BPL students in this regard. (Table 3)

In terms of religious affiliation, there is no significant difference among the students shown affiliation with different religions in spending time on academic surfing or any other and App-Messages, except for those without religion who spend less time. The Hindu and Buddhist students spend a little

more time than Muslim and Christian students on social media – Facebook. As far as Christian students are concerned, they spend less time than students of other religions on social media and entertainment. (Table 3)

It seems, there is no difference as far as family size is concerned in spending time on entertainment sites except the students of large families who spend less time on entertainment. As far as the students with self-recognized psychological issues, there is no considerable difference between those having problems and those not having any problems with internet usage. (Table 3)

TABLE 3: SHOWING THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERS OF THE RESPONDENTS BY INTERNET USAGE IN HOURS IN A DAY

S.No	Social Variable	IA					Total
		Normal	Mild addiction	Moderate addiction	Severe addiction	No Response	
Gender							
1	Male	137 (27.0%)	176 (34.7%)	182 (35.9%)	10 (2.0%)	2 (.4%)	507 (100.0%)
2	Female	247 (46.6%)	171 (32.3%)	110 (20.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (.4%)	530 (100.0%)
3	3 rd Gender	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (100.0%)
4	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)
Academic Background							
1	MSc	150 (37.2%)	133 (33.0%)	116 (28.8%)	4 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	403 (100.0%)
2	MA-SS	98 (34.3%)	108 (37.8%)	75 (26.2%)	3 (1.0%)	2 (.7%)	286 (100.0%)
3	MA-H	73 (39.9%)	52 (28.4%)	54 (29.5%)	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.1%)	183 (100.0%)
4	M.Com/MBA	40 (41.2%)	29 (29.9%)	28 (28.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	97 (100.0%)
5	Any other	24 (33.8%)	26 (36.6%)	20 (28.2%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	71 (100.0%)
6	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)
Residence							
1	Urban	134 (37.5%)	123 (34.5%)	97 (27.2%)	3 (.8%)	0 (0.0%)	357 (100.0%)
2	Semi-urban	83 (37.7%)	70 (31.8%)	61 (27.7%)	3 (1.4%)	3 (1.4%)	220 (100.0%)
3	Rural	165 (36.1%)	152 (33.3%)	135 (29.5%)	4 (.9%)	1 (.2%)	457 (100.0%)
4	No Response	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)
5	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)
Economic Background							
1	BPL	46 (39.7%)	33 (28.4%)	34 (29.3%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (.9%)	116 (100.0%)
2	Middle	331 (36.8%)	306 (34.0%)	251 (27.9%)	8 (.9%)	3 (.3%)	899 (100.0%)
3	Upper	5 (41.7%)	5 (41.7%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (100.0%)
4	No Response	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)	5 (71.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (100.0%)
5	Total	383 (37.0%)	345 (33.4%)	292 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1034 (100.0%)
Social Background							
1	General	103 (39.6%)	89 (34.2%)	66 (25.4%)	1 (.4%)	1 (.4%)	260 (100.0%)
2	BC	185 (35.0%)	188 (35.6%)	147 (27.8%)	7 (1.3%)	1 (.2%)	528 (100.0%)
3	SC	72 (40.7%)	50 (28.2%)	53 (29.9%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	177 (100.0%)
4	ST	23 (36.5%)	19 (30.2%)	21 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	63 (100.0%)
5	No Response	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	6 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (16.7%)	12 (100.0%)
6	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)

Religion							
1	Hindu	315 (39.1%)	266 (33.0%)	213 (26.5%)	7 (.9%)	4 (.5%)	805 (100.0%)
2	Muslim	32 (27.4%)	37 (31.6%)	47 (40.2%)	1 (.9%)	0 (0.0%)	117 (100.0%)
3	Christian	23 (28.8%)	34 (42.5%)	22 (27.5%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	80 (100.0%)
4	Buddhist	1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (100.0%)
5	Any Other	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)
6	No religion	10 (38.5%)	6 (23.1%)	10 (38.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (100.0%)
7	NR	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (100.0%)
8	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)
Mental Health Issues							
1	Yes	38 (26.4%)	46 (31.9%)	56 (38.9%)	3 (2.1%)	1 (.7%)	144 (100.0%)
2	No	347 (38.7%)	302 (33.7%)	237 (26.5%)	7 (.8%)	3 (.3%)	896 (100.0%)
3	Total	385 (37.0%)	348 (33.5%)	293 (28.2%)	10 (1.0%)	4 (.4%)	1040 (100.0%)

Internet Usage:

The analysis of data reveals, only one per cent of the total students are found to be high users while more than one-third of them are normal users. Mild users are more by seven per cent than moderate users. When gender is considered, while two per cent of males are high users, there are no high users among the female students. Thus, a higher percentage of female students is normal so far as internet usage is concerned. While males are more than female students by five per cent in the category of mild users, it is raised to 15 per cent in the case of moderate users and the trend continues in high users where males are likely to be victims of Internet Addiction (see Table 4). It is important to note here that without diagnostic tests and considering manifested symptoms one cannot state that high users of the internet are internet addicts. It can be safely said that mild and moderate users are likely to develop psychological and physical issues of depression, stress, sleeplessness etc., and high users may already have developed these problems.

TABLE 4: SHOWING CATEGORY-WISE INTERNET USAGE

S. No	Variable	Well-being		Self-Control		Emotionality		Sociability		N
		Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	
Gender										
1	Male	4.96	1.070	4.44	.933	4.68	.990	4.19	1.052	507
2	Female	4.99	1.092	4.33	.945	4.82	.970	4.28	1.059	530
3	Third	4.83	1.481	5	3.83	4.56	.536	4.56	.536	3
Education										
1	MSc	4.98	1.057	4.41	.958	4.72	.953	4.26	1.058	403
2	MASS	4.96	1.104	4.39	.956	4.84	1.004	4.23	1.034	286
3	MAH	4.99	1.129	4.41	.946	4.65	1.004	4.16	1.047	183
4	MCom/MBA	5.02	.987	4.29	.804	4.60	.922	4.24	1.036	97
5	Others	4.91	1.148	4.28	.949	5.06	1.008	4.34	1.178	71
Residence										

1	Urban	5.00	1.126	4.40	.995	4.83	1.027	4.35	1.109	357
2	Semi-Urban	5.08	.931	4.34	.931	4.79	.954	4.34	1.003	220
3	Rural	4.91	1.106	4.40	.904	4.69	.939	4.11	1.027	457
4	No response	4.42	1.320	4.19	.853	3.83	1.764	4.08	.743	6
Economic Background										
1	BPL	5	1.179	4.37	0.956	4.95	0.936	4.21	1.129	116
2	Middle Class	4.98	1.065	4.38	0.931	4.73	0.98	4.24	1.041	899
3	Upper Class	4.99	1.204	4.96	1.329	5.13	1.131	4.33	1.274	12
4	No response	4.38	1.224	4.21	0.665	4.29	1.399	4.26	1.294	7
Social Background										
1	General	4.91	1.155	4.32	.970	4.74	1.012	4.27	1.047	260
2	BC	5.02	1.057	4.39	0.947	4.77	0.996	4.3	1.054	528
3	SC	5.03	1.031	4.48	.876	4.75	.873	4.07	1.046	177
4	ST	4.76	1.087	4.25	.945	4.75	1.002	4.09	1.081	63
5	No response	4.82	1.109	4.56	.848	4.63	1.268	4.11	1.074	12
Religion										
1	Hindu	4.95	1.088	4.39	.944	4.75	1.000	4.26	1.065	805
2	Muslim	5.21	.891	4.29	.803	4.62	.891	4.25	.938	117
3	Christian	5.03	1.031	4.42	1.047	4.91	.909	4.12	1.092	177
4	Buddhist	4.42	1.590	4.21	1.363	4.69	1.529	3.79	1.022	4
5	Any other	5.31	1.631	4.58	1.357	5.10	.561	4.50	1.502	6
6	No religion	4.99	1.171	4.53	.920	4.83	1.017	3.96	1.043	26
7	No response	4.67	.943	3.42	.825	5.63	.177	5.08	.118	2

In total 10 students are found to be high users of the Internet. A higher percentage i.e., 1.4 is found among the students of other disciplines than humanities (1.1 per cent) sciences (1.0 per cent) and social sciences (1.0 per cent). There is none in commerce and business administration who are high users. Among those with mild usage, a high percentage is found among the students of social sciences followed by other disciplines and sciences. The percentage of normal usage is found to be highest in the case of commerce and business administration students.

A slightly higher proportion of high usage is found among rural students than among urban and semi-urban students. Mild usage is slightly higher among the urban followed by semi-urban background students while moderate usage is higher among the rural students compared to the other two categories. As these differences are not very significant, mild and moderate usage of the internet appears to be more or less the same among all the students of urban, semi-urban and rural backgrounds students.

A higher percentage of high internet users is found among the students (7 i.e., 1.3 per cent among the BCs) from Backward Class, it is less among SC and general category students (1.1 per cent and 0.4 per cent) respectively. As regards to normal internet usage more or less equal percentage is found among the SC and general category students compared to the rest, while mild internet usage is less among the SC compared to the other categories. Moderate internet usage is highest among ST students.

As regards the association between internet usage and religion is concerned, the highest percentage is found among Buddhist students (25 per cent, i.e. one out of four) followed by Christian students (1.3%) and it is less than one percent in each among the Hindu and Muslim students. Normal internet usage is found more among the Hindu students followed by Muslim and Christian backgrounds. Mild internet usage is found among the Buddhist and Christian students compared to the rest while moderate usage is mostly found among the Muslim students.

Interestingly, a higher percentage of internet usage is found among those who claim to have been having psychological problems.

The statistical test, One-way ANOVA, when performed to find out if there are any variations in internet usage across the above social variables the results showed that there was a significant difference in the case of gender, education and residence whereas there was no significant difference in case of social status and religion of the student. (see Table 5). Therefore, the above results reveal that there is a relationship between internet usage and gender, education and residence.

Table 5 ANOVA – Variance between Internet Usage and Gender, Education, Residence, Social Status and Religion

S.No	Time on Internet Usage	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Gender					
	Between Groups	1187.423	2	593.711	8.4	0
2	Education					
	Between Groups	993.874	4	248.469	3.5	0.01
3	Residence					
	Between Groups	665.401	3	221.8	3.11	0.03
4	Social Status					
	Between Groups	208.454	4	52.113	0.73	0.57
5	Religion					
	Between Groups	836.454	6	139.409	1.95	0.07

Emotional Intelligence:

The scores of the individuals obtained on the subscales of well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability are described as follows.

Well-being: The scores of female students are slightly better than the male students regarding well-being. Similarly, M Com/MBA students are ahead of the rest with slightly better scores, and likewise, the students of semi-urban background, upper class, SC and Muslim students show better scores than others.

Self-control: The male students seem to have better self-control than the female students, and students of sciences and humanities show higher scores than the rest. Upper-class students seem to have better self-control than the rest in the category of economic category, and SC students are better within the social category of students. Students of any other religion than the formal ones followed by no religion are in a better position than the rest with reference to self-control.

Emotionality: The female students seem to have better emotionality than the male and third gender. In this respect, students of social sciences and other than the rest of the disciplines possess higher emotionality. Upper-class and urban background students show higher emotionality than the rest. So far as social background is concerned there are not many differences in this regard. Students from other than formal religions followed by Christianity show higher scores in emotionality.

Sociability: It is interesting to find that the third-gender students show greater sociability than males and females, and between the male and female the latter show more sociability than the male students. Except for students of humanities who show less sociability compared to others who show more or less the same sociability. Urban and semi-urban students show better sociability than rural students and similarly, the upper-class and general social category students appear to possess more sociability than the rest. Students of other than the formal religion and Hindu background show more sociability than students of other religions.

TABLE 6: SHOWING CATEGORY-WISE SCORES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

S.No	Variable	Well-being		Self-Control		Emotionality		Sociability		N
		Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	
Gender										
1	Male	4.96	1.07	4.44	0.933	4.68	0.99	4.19	1.052	507
2	Female	4.99	1.092	4.33	0.945	4.82	0.97	4.28	1.059	530

3	Third	4.83	1.481	5	3.83	4.56	0.536	4.56	0.536	3
Education										
1	MSc	4.98	1.057	4.41	0.958	4.72	0.953	4.26	1.058	403
2	MASS	4.96	1.104	4.39	0.956	4.84	1.004	4.23	1.034	286
3	MAH	4.99	1.129	4.41	0.946	4.65	1.004	4.16	1.047	183
4	MCom/M BA	5.02	0.987	4.29	0.804	4.6	0.922	4.24	1.036	97
5	Others	4.91	1.148	4.28	0.949	5.06	1.008	4.34	1.178	71
Residence										
1	Urban	5	1.126	4.4	0.995	4.83	1.027	4.35	1.109	357
2	Semi- Urban	5.08	0.931	4.34	0.931	4.79	0.954	4.34	1.003	220
3	Rural	4.91	1.106	4.4	0.904	4.69	0.939	4.11	1.027	457
4	No response	4.42	1.32	4.19	0.853	3.83	1.764	4.08	0.743	6
Economic Background										
1	BPL	5	1.179	4.37	0.956	4.95	0.936	4.21	1.129	116
2	Middle Class	4.98	1.065	4.38	0.931	4.73	0.98	4.24	1.041	899
3	Upper Class	4.99	1.204	4.96	1.329	5.13	1.131	4.33	1.274	12
4	No response	4.38	1.224	4.21	0.665	4.29	1.399	4.26	1.294	7
Social Background										
1	General	4.91	1.155	4.32	0.97	4.74	1.012	4.27	1.047	260
2	BC	5.02	1.057	4.39	0.947	4.77	0.996	4.3	1.054	528
3	SC	5.03	1.031	4.48	0.876	4.75	0.873	4.07	1.046	177
4	ST	4.76	1.087	4.25	0.945	4.75	1.002	4.09	1.081	63
5	No response	4.82	1.109	4.56	0.848	4.63	1.268	4.11	1.074	12
Religion										
1	Hindu	4.95	1.088	4.39	0.944	4.75	1	4.26	1.065	805
2	Muslim	5.21	0.891	4.29	0.803	4.62	0.891	4.25	0.938	117
3	Christian	5.03	1.031	4.42	1.047	4.91	0.909	4.12	1.092	177
4	Buddhist	4.42	1.59	4.21	1.363	4.69	1.529	3.79	1.022	4
5	Any other	5.31	1.631	4.58	1.357	5.1	0.561	4.5	1.502	6
6	No religion	4.99	1.171	4.53	0.92	4.83	1.017	3.96	1.043	26
7	No response	4.67	0.943	3.42	0.825	5.63	0.177	5.08	0.118	2

Correlation between Internet Usage and Emotional Intelligence: Pearson correlation test between internet usage and emotional intelligence shows that there is a significant correlation as the following Table shows.

TABLE 7: SHOWING CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNET USAGE

Variable	1	2	Mean	SD
Total Emotional Intelligence	-			
Total Internet Usage	.361**	-		

Note: ** Significant at $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Conclusion

The above findings reflect a profile of postgraduate students concerning internet usage and also social intelligence or emotional intelligence, an important dimension of human beings and their association among the postgraduate students in the universities of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The latter in reverse reflects its effect on the usage of the internet. The modern era has witnessed new technologies that have profoundly affected not only individuals but also the social environment through individuals. It has now become inevitable to use the internet in academic pursuits and it forces individuals or creates incremental necessity such that one enters into a machine created an artificial world which is a virtual world that has a determining effect on an individual's personality.

In this background the findings reveal that male students spend more time on internet than the females; females give priority to academic use of the internet than males; students of rural backgrounds lag behind in making use of the internet for academic purposes. Rural and SC students are more attracted to entertainment. Upper-class students spend more time on the Internet for academic purposes than others. The religious background and family size do not show any difference in internet usage. Thus these findings reflect the social concerns as well as the sociological ethos of Indian society at large. In most Indian families, parents are not inclined to invest in the girls on their education for they will be married off, and now that the girls are changing their attitude towards life to be self-dependent, they are likely to be industrious and desire to complete their studies on time and not to be a burden to the

parents. This is well reflected in their spending time on the internet for academic surfing on a priority basis. The findings also reaffirm the gendered nature of Indian society wherein women possess more emotionality and sociability. The case of spending more time on entertainment sites among students of rural backgrounds and SC category reflects their deprivation, exclusion and inaccessibility due to poverty to the social environment that is more desirable than their present predicament. The priorities of upper-class and urban and semi-urban students appear to be different than the rest as they come to postgraduate studies with certain academic targets to be achieved for improving their present situation or maintaining the same at least.

It is a matter of self-gratification that only one per cent of the students are high internet users and a third of the students are normal. The usage is more among the rural and Backward Class students which reflects again the larger social system where deprivation and restrictions are imposed. While the males possess better self-control, the females possess better emotionality and sociability than the men. Upper-class, urban and semi-urban students show greater emotionality and sociability reflecting the rural and urban contrast as well as ways of life which is characteristic of modernizing traditional societies like India as several sociological studies have dwelt upon.

Concerning earlier studies, the present study confirms the fact there is a gender difference in internet usage as Eduljee, Kumar and Buhariwala (2020) have found in Mumbai college students, and others as stated above. However, it partially supports the study of Sharma and Sharma (2017) in that males are found to be more with IU than females. However, it agrees with their findings that EI is found to be higher in males. This study confirms that the students of Commerce and Business Administration use the Internet but do not become addicted and they have better scores of emotional intelligence (Hossain & Rahman 2017). A positive correlation between internet addiction and emotional intelligence that the present study has found, supports other research carried out by Lan-Hua et al., (2010), Khoshakhlagh & Faramarzi (2012), Amjad et al., (2020) Sechi et al., (2021), Jun & Choi (2015) etc., rather than those of Kant (2018) and Saravia et al., (2018). Further, this study also agrees with Busari (2016) that socioeconomic status variables do impact academic stress and internet addiction.

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Article: Trajectory of Indian agriculture and its tryst with Green Revolution

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Trajectory of Indian agriculture and its tryst with Green Revolution

--Naveen Kumar Cherupelly

Abstract

The discourse on agricultural policy has changed substantially in the last six decades. It is widely noted by social scientists that there is a major paradigm shift in the social organization of agriculture with the introduction of the green revolution. It is widely accepted that the "success" of the Green Revolution made the country self-sufficient in food grains and made it the model for all agrarian futures envisioned in the country. Green revolution technology may be considered the epicenter for radical changes in rural India, resulting in severe changes in the agrarian social structure. This new technology is highly responsive to fertilizers favorable to large farmers and to the command areas. The differential spread had a drastic impact on the total agricultural system in the country. Usually, large and progressive farmers who are able to deal with the risks of commercial agriculture and who have sufficient institutional support and social and economic capital could reap the benefits of the green revolution. The green revolution is also said to have widened the technology-knowledge gap, leading to retrogression in agriculture. The green revolution has been seen as representing the convergence of interests of power groups. It is argued that it suits the interests of a large section of the international market, particularly the multinational firms that specialize in producing petrochemicals and farm machinery.

Key Words: Agriculture, Green revolution, Technology, development and HYV

Introduction

Agriculture has played and will continue to play a major role in the process of development. The economic growth of the third-world countries directly depends on the development of the agriculture sector. For decades, Indian agriculture remained traditional in character. Indian agriculture has been witnessing low yields, limited income, and lack of capital to invest and has

been prey to the unpredictable monsoon. Climatic factors like rainfall have shown a drastic impact on the yield variability. Traditionally, agriculture in India has been characterized by subsistence farming, primitive techniques, and low yields. To achieve self-reliance, growth, equity and to achieve overall development of the country, state introduced modern technology known as the green revolution (Gupta 2012).

Green Revolution

The name 'green revolution' is given to the technology associated with the new seeds in terms of a package of agricultural inputs and new practices. Large-scale application of modern sciences and technology in agriculture to improve productivity is described as the green revolution. In short extensive and intensive use of improved production technology and high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds has been the essence of the green revolution (Brainerd and Menon 2014). One of the important characteristics of HYV seeds is that they are more responsive to fertilizers, which results in higher yields per unit of fertilizer. Sometimes, they can give two to four times the yields of the indigenous varieties. These seeds have a shorter maturing period, which allows farmers to double cropping.

The term green revolution was first used during the late 1960s to refer to the effects of the introduction of high yielding variety seeds of wheat and rice in developing countries (Fujita 2010). William Gaud of the United States Agency for International Development used the term green revolution for the first time in reaction to the communist revolution associated with colour Red in his speech to the Society for International Development in March 1968 (Ameen and Raza 2017). In December 1969, the idea of the green revolution was presented to the US Congress as a major tool of American foreign policy that provided bright market prospects to the pesticide, fertilizer, seeds, and tractor industries (Yapa 1993).

Historically, the agrarian structure in India was characterized by large landholdings held by the zamindars, who were intermediaries between the

state and the peasants. They gave support to the colonial state in the process of extracting surplus from the peasants. The lack of adequate productive investment by the zamindars since the end of the 19th century underlined the slowdown in food production (Roy 1990). After independence, the country was heavily dependent on food imports from the United States, for which India had to pay a heavy political price. Besides, there was uncertainty about the ability of the food-surplus countries in the world to continue to supply the needs of the food-deficient countries (Singh, 2000).

During the 1950's Indian economy suffered a major setback due to two consecutive years of drought. Thus, the National Economic Planning (NEP) sustained efforts have been made by the planners to accelerate the pace of agricultural development. During this situation, the green revolution has shown a way to overcome poverty, starvation, and unemployment and to feed a large and fast-growing population (Clasen et al., 2019). The main focus was to transfer institutionalized knowledge to farmers through an extension system and to improve farm productivity by using external inputs efficiently. The adoption of the HYV seeds was facilitated by the 'Intensive Agricultural District Program' (IADP). The state support for the green revolution went beyond mere propagation of new technology. It provided credit support and a direct supply of inputs like fertilizers, seeds, and machinery to selected farmers in preferred regions (Gupta 2012).

India became self-sufficient in food production within a short span of time after the introduction of the green revolution. The grain output increased from 50 million tons in 1951 to 150 million tons by the mid-1980s. The green revolution led to a substantial increase in agricultural output, and it almost solved India's food problem. In purely economic terms, the agricultural sector experienced growth at the rate of 3 to 5 percent per annum, which was many times more than what the rate of growth had been during the colonial period (less than 1 percent) (Walker 2009; Nelson et al., 2019).

Green Revolution and Imperialism

After independence, fundamental changes in agriculture have occurred, and primarily after the green revolution, capitalism has become the dominant form of agrarian relations. The developing countries which gained independence during the 19th century have formed into nation-states very quickly. The underdevelopment already prevailing in these countries due to colonial rule became a challenging task for newly formed states. Such countries were compelled to import science and technology from developed countries in order to achieve development. It has become compulsory for Third World countries to depend on developed countries for importing science and technology (Ameen and Raza 2017)

Green revolution carried the conviction that 'agriculture was being peacefully transformed through the quiet working of science and technology and reaping the economic gains of modernization by overcoming the disorders of the society' (Nelson et. al; 2019). The US played an active role in the conception and implementation of the green revolution in Third World countries. However, it is argued that because of the strategic, geopolitical interest that the US had at the time in the changing social and economic conditions in the Third World countries, it offered green revolution technology to them (John and Babu 2021).

Other analysts argue that external actors, in particular the United States government, the World Bank, and private US agencies such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, were largely instrumental in influencing and pressurizing India's policy (Goldsmith 1998). It is also argued that new technology is the result of 'imperialist and neo-colonial domination' of India's political economy, facilitated by the organized class power of the landlords and emergent kulaks (rich peasant farmers). The adoption of the green revolution strategy was the logical outcome of the alliance between the bourgeois landlords and foreign capital, committed to rapid capitalist development (Byres 1998). The adoption of new technologies has been

projected as a rational choice by farmers, and adopters are viewed as progressive or gentlemen farmers.

India was among the first developing countries to adopt farming strategies under the green revolution in the mid-sixties (Tripathi and Prasad 2009). Improved seeds, one of the key components of the green revolution, arrived in the villages of India carrying the authority of science and modernity. The new seeds sponsored by the international aid agencies, developed by crop-breeding science, backed by multinational agro-business capital, approved by the government of India, and promoted by an army of trained extension workers presented a formidable power that challenged peasant farmers living in their 'traditional culture of poverty' (Peet and Watts 1996).

Intensification of inequality

The new agricultural strategy of the 1960s, namely the green revolution, had a selective approach. It was extended to only some areas that were endowed with favorable infrastructure like irrigation, transport, communication, and credit facilities. Even within these areas, only the progressive farmers (who are usually large farmers) were selected for the distribution of inputs. The allocation of inputs at each level of the administrative hierarchy of the state, from district to block, was dependent on its resource endowments and fulfillment of other criteria adopted by the state. The most distinctive feature of the 'progressive farmers' is that they combine ownership of land and capital with skills in manipulating both 'traditional and modern' institutions (Otchia, 2014). The logic behind the focus on progressive farmers was that the new technology would percolate down to small farmers over a period. However, in practice, this never happened. In fact, it had accelerated the inequalities.

The adoption of any kind of new technology depends on the type or design and cost of the technology. When the degree of uncertainty and fixed cost is low, farmers tend to adopt such kind of technology. In the case of the green revolution, the adoption of technology took place only among a few large farmers because of its cost. For large farmers' adoption of new technology is

nothing but an investment, whereas for small and marginal farmers, the additional dependence on informal sources and high productivity entails more risk.

However, over a period, medium and small farmers started partial adoption of new technology, whereas large farmers increased their rate of adoption and eventually applied it to the whole field. Large farmers were the early adopters of the new innovation because they enjoyed political power, which ensured they obtained additional economic advantages (priority in access to credit and inputs, preferential prices, social capital, etc.). The late adoption of new technology among the small and marginal farmers widened the inequalities (Mara and Gershon 1981).

The agricultural policies adopted by the government from the 1960s onwards have also tended to increase the degree of inequality between perpetually irrigated regions and those regions that have to depend mainly on rainfall for cultivation. It is a known fact that farms in the wet areas are better served and supported by the development programs of the state bureaucracy as compared to those in the dry areas (for e.g., agricultural extension services are largely concentrated in the wet region or command areas than in the dry areas). Production of high-yielding varieties of grain with heavy doses of fertilizers has mainly affected irrigated areas, which are already favored (Sharma and Singhvi 2017). In the wet area, a poor peasant household's agricultural income is four times more than the average income of a corresponding household from the dry areas (Dhanagare 1984). Even though dry crops and drought-prone regions have shared the gains of agricultural growth, this growth has been accompanied by increasing yield instability and production costs. It is stated that adoption and non-adoption occurred simultaneously in the same geographic space at different levels of society (Blaut 1987). Advocates of green revolution technology argue that it is scale-neutral and, hence, could be used by small as well as big farmers. However, in the actual implementation, small holdings were neglected, assuming that they are unviable.

Environmental degradation

The introduction of HYV seeds opened a new era in Indian agriculture, leading to a rapid increase in the usage of fertilizers. A mode of chemical agriculture accompanied the new hybrid seeds. In fact, it is suggested that the mission of the US during the introduction of the green revolution was to push its products to the Third World markets. The HYV seeds have been developed through selective breeding so as to be highly responsive to ammonia fertilizer input. The vulnerability of the new seeds (particularly of rice and wheat crops) to pest attacks and the fertilizer-induced growth of weeds has led to increased use of pesticides and weedicides (Dayal 1984). Synthetic fertilizers and pesticides are applied to mono-crops of HYV wheat, rice, and cotton (Newman 2007). Fertilizer consumption in India rose from 1.0 kg. per hectare in 1956-57 to 7 kgs per hectare in 1966-67. Subsequently, it reached 46.4 kgs per hectare in 1984-85. The use of chemical fertilizers shifted from non-food crops to food crops (Roy1990).

Table 1: Consumption of chemical fertilizers in India

Consumption of Fertilizers (Lakh tonnes)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Urea	296.14	298.94	314.18	336.65	350.43	341.8	357.25
DAP	89.64	92.94	92.11	101	119.11	92.72	105.31
MOP	28.63	31.58	29.57	27.87	34.25	24.57	16.32
NPK complex	84.14	85.96	90.28	98.57	110.11	114.79	100.73
SSP	37.57	34.39	35.79	44.03	44.89	56.81	50.18

Source: Government of India 2023

Table 1 explains that the consumption of urea has increased from 296.14 in 2016-2017 to 357.25.65 lakh tonnes in 2022-23. Consumption of DAP, MOP, NPK complex and SSP have also increased significantly over the years. The all-India average consumption of fertilizers has increased from 84.14 kg per ha in 2016-17 to 100.73 kg per ha in 2022-23 (Government of India 2023).

As a result, arable land has been degraded through soil erosion, salinity, alkalinity, and chemicalization. The productive capacity of the land has declined due to nutrient mining, imbalances in the application of soil nutrients, neglect of micronutrients, and inadequate application of organic fertilizers. Indeed, the Department of Land Resources in the Ministry of Rural Development estimates that only one-third of India's agricultural land is still in good condition, the other two-thirds being degraded or sick to some extent (Planning Commission 2007:15). As a result, according to the Ministry of Agriculture the net sown area of land has fallen from 143 million hectares in 1990-91 to 140.9 hectares in 2003-04.

Changes in cropping pattern

Pingali (1997) argues that the commercialization of agriculture takes place when household product choice and input use decisions are made based on the principles of profit maximization. A farm household is assumed to be commercialized if it is producing a significant amount of cash commodities, allocating a proportion of its resources to marketable commodities, or selling a considerable proportion of its agricultural output. Commercialization of agriculture is used to describe two related processes: first, a shift in the agrarian economy from production for consumption to production for the market, and second, a process where land starts acquiring the features of a commodity and begins to be sold and purchased in the market like other commodities. Production for the market was not an entirely new phenomenon for Indian agriculture. However, the green revolution increased the pace of commercialization of agriculture very quickly.

The capitalist tendency started in India with the disintegration of the old system during colonial rule. The process of accumulation gathered momentum after independence (Patnaik 1990). Modern agricultural technological innovations have established their superiority over traditional ones. Unlike traditional cultivation, where the farmer largely uses the previous year's seed, manure produced by farm animals, homemade tools, family-owned bullocks,

and family labour as the major inputs, the new mode of agriculture made farmers dependent on the market for the supply of new seeds, chemical fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, hired labour and hired agricultural machinery (Rudra 1992).

Anita (2004) argues that landlords cum money lenders continue to dominate the process of agricultural production. Peasants and labourers are tied to them through the mechanism of debt that is leading to 'forced commercialization' of labour and agricultural yield. This produced a self-perpetuating stagnant and exploitative agrarian structure that could be at best described as 'semi-feudal'. Today, farmers are highly dependent on machinery for ploughing and harvesting. The use of tube wells and tractors among the small farmers made them dependent on rich farmers because they could not purchase the machinery. In exchange for this, they had to sell their crop, which was mainly meant for family consumption, to landlords and commercial monopolists (merchants who controlled the purchase of particular crops).

Yapa (1993) contends that capital-intensive innovations in the package of high-yielding seeds soon acquired a landlord bias in the fragmented markets of India. The privileged farmers accessed the resources and adopted innovations. Farmers moved from traditional to commercial crops to reap more profits. The technological development, rather than being need-based, became market-oriented. As the other trade policies have changed, even the production and production have become market-oriented. Only those technologies that can be effectively marketed were developed by researchers in both public and private sectors. This made the poor farmers depend more and more on the external markets. As the market dependency has increased, agriculture has become more capital-intensive (Baskaran and Boden 2004).

Green Revolution and co-operatives

Credit is the chief contributor to adopting green revolution technology. Institutional credit through co-operatives is meant to help the marginal and small farmers who are afflicted by indebtedness. Money lenders, as a distinct

social category, have always been a part of the village's social life. In most regions, they exist as a separate caste group. Whenever a farmer needs credit for cultivation and for other social rituals like marriage, death ceremonies, and other social functions, s/he goes to the *sahukar* (money lender) for a loan of grain. The moneylender is more of the functional category as s/he gives credit in critical situations (Jodhka 2012a). The money lender evaluates the creditworthiness of a particular peasant on the basis of his/her ability to pay back and decides on how much credit could be given to a particular peasant. The system of credit is perhaps close to what Weber conceptualized as 'neighborhood help' (Weber 1978). When small farmers purchased the HYV seeds and other modern inputs from large landowners, they were charged higher prices. To meet these expenditures, farmers took credit from traders and informal sources. They had no choice but to sell the farm yields, which were primarily meant for their own consumption, to the large landowners immediately after the harvest when the prices were relatively low. This is termed as 'distress sales'. They also had to sell their farm to meet their expenses.

The process of 'land alienation' is attached to credit. Landowners, who are also the main source of credit for small and marginal farmers in villages, give loans with the intention of grabbing the lands of smaller peasants rather than earning interest on it. They tend to lend loans to farmers beyond the latter's payback capacity by mortgaging their land. The professional money lender generally did not remove the peasant from his land. If the peasant could not pay back his loan, the money lender asked for the transfer of ownership of land while the peasant continued to work as a tenant of the money lender. In cases where the money lender was also the landlord, the indebted peasant ended up as a landless labourer under him/her. By 1999-2000, the proportion of landless rural dwellers had reached 41 percent, while that of the landless and marginal combined had risen to 63 percent (Research Unit in Political Economy 2005).

After the introduction of the green revolution, capitalist penetration has grown throughout the country, the process of de-peasantisation has been accelerated,

and consequently, large numbers of small and marginal farmers or poor peasants have been pushed into the ranks of landless labourers (Yapa 1993). Some later Marxists have argued that the high indebtedness of the peasantry, forced commercialization of agricultural produce, land alienation, and the increasing domination of rich landowners and money lenders over tenants and peasants led to 'the primitive accumulation of capital' (Cox 1987). Credit needs of cultivators have been largely met by informal sources like money lenders and traders. Much of this available at the village level came from spurious money lenders. It was in recognition of this fact that the Indian state expanded the network of co-operative credit societies.

At the village level, the primary co-operative societies are responsible for allocating credit. As bureaucratic formalities are associated with their functioning, a large part of the modest amount is not disbursed to the farmers. Many farmers, particularly the poor landless tenants, have faced institutional difficulties in gaining access to the benefits being distributed by the co-operatives. The co-operative societies, particularly credit societies, serve the wealthy farmers better than the poorer ones. The rich peasants are also reported to be in a much better position to buy large quantities of fertilizer on credit, thereby ensuring a good harvest (Epstein 1978). Moreover, the rural elite's dominance of the local co-operative societies, as well as the district and state political and economic institutions, allows them access to information on new technology and institutional credit. Officialdom has been lukewarm in serving small and marginal farmer's needs.

Over the years, the dependence of rural households on informal sources has come down significantly. While in 1961, an average of only 18.4 percent of the total credit needs were being fulfilled by institutional sources of credit, in 1981, the corresponding figure had risen to 62.6 percent (RBI, 2009-10). The assessment studies on the co-operative credit societies show that the benefits of credit from co-operatives reached the better-off sections of rural society, and the poor continued to depend on the more expensive informal sources. Although banks were never controlled directly by the rural rich, the benefit of

their credit has largely gone to those who had substantial holdings. It is said that Co-operatives became political institutions rather than developmental bodies (Kaur and Kaur 2009).

Demand for labour

The green revolution is closely associated with the mechanization of agriculture. Although mechanization increased productivity, the cost of cultivation increased drastically. The tractor density in India is about 16 tractors for 1,000 hectares. Small and marginal farmers who cultivate about 85 percent of the holdings cannot afford the high cost of agricultural machines. The high cost of mechanization and lower creditworthiness result in the 'exclusion' of the majority of small and marginal farmers in India from the benefit of farm mechanization (Government of India 2013).

On the other hand, it is argued that the green revolution made it possible for rural workers to obtain employment for a whole year through multiple cropping practices. The income levels of the poor and landless workers increased at peak periods such as harvesting. Labour demand becomes more critical because of the immediate need to clear land and prepare it for the next crop. According to one estimate, the proportion of agricultural labour to the total population dependent on land experienced a significant increase. According to the Registrar General of India, New Delhi (2001), agricultural labourers increased from 19.5 in 1951 to 26.7 in 2001.

While the new technology has expanded employment in the short run, in the long run, with further advances in mechanization, there has been a negative employment. The introduction of sophisticated technology, such as tractors and pumping sets, led to a remarkable decline in manpower requirements. When pump sets, threshers, and tractors were introduced, the average demand for labour dropped down to 25.6 man-days. The green revolution has led to the replacement of manual labourers with machines and other modern equipment (Aryal, et al; 2021). Usage of modern equipment like tractors, threshers, weed cutters, etc., are used for double cropping. Critics argue that the green

revolution encouraged unnecessary mechanization, thereby pushing down rural wages and employment. The use of modern technology led to a subsequent decline in full-time employment, which resulted in the exclusion of sharecroppers and small and marginal farmers. These sections of farmers were left with no option but to sell their small holdings (Mishra 2006).

Brass (1990) observes that mechanization had a drastic impact on the Dalit agricultural labourers since many of them are attached labourers. The use of machines reduced the need for attached labour. As a result, landlords opted for free wage labour. Mechanization of agriculture has led landlords to hire labourers who could work with machines (Venkateshwarlu 1998). Due to the mechanization of agriculture, the demand for labour diminished and deteriorated the economic condition of the poor peasantry and agricultural workers. NSSO (2001) data on migration suggests rising migration out of rural areas. A large number of youth, close to 30 percent, commuted to nearby towns or villages daily for work. Most of them work as agricultural labourers. NSSO's (2005) findings about people wanting to quit farming show the growing disenchantment with the profession, which has led to increased withdrawal from this profession.

Role of small farmers

The green revolution has become a ray of hope for many Indian farmers. However, the adoption and diffusion of the green revolution are not uniform throughout the country and occurred only in small pockets of India. It is successful only in the irrigated areas, whereas in India, only twenty percent of the area is irrigated. Over 70 percent of India's cropped area remains non-irrigated, for which new technology has failed to provide viable high-yielding varieties and whose production hence remains disproportionately small. It is argued that improved farm production and income will solve the perpetual problems of rural poverty. But the green revolution has shown a positive impact on a few farmers only. It is proved that the green revolution is meaningless for the poor farmers whose access to credit is limited. In addition

these small and marginal farmers have their prejudices about the new technology due to their illiteracy, and they choose to avoid any risk. It is viewed that the green revolution technology is capital intensive. It suits rich farmers because the rich farmer alone had adequate resources to afford that technology. Thus, it is agreed that the green revolution increased the polarization between rich and poor (Bhalla and Chadha 1983).

Poor farmers who could not afford to respond and intelligent farmers who actively rejected the new seeds for ecological reasons were labeled as 'backward farmers' or 'laggards' through the language of the sociology of innovation diffusion (Rogers 1995). Green revolution is an intellectual construction that reflects the dominant worldview of capitalist culture. Knowledge flows from one direction, i.e., from top to down. Those who are strong and educated get enlightened with this knowledge. In the name of development, the green revolution has spurred rapid diffusion throughout the country, but the process of actual implementation of such technology has become superficial for the rural poor because their farm size is small (Gerage et al; 2017)

Green revolution and caste intensification

In the early phase of the green revolution policy, policymakers concentrated on increasing production, and they have overridden issues like equity and redistribution. Most of the policies are in favor of well-endowed regions and rich farmers. This resulted in the widening of interpersonal and regional inequities and also led to sectoral imbalances within the agricultural sector (Government of India 1976). Despite being the key source of economic modernity, the benefits of new technology have not been shared equally among different classes in rural India. Green revolution has not initiated any significant rupture of the existing caste-based social structure but rather reinforced it. Upper castes and the predominantly established dominant castes continued to reap the benefits of the new technology. It increased the profit and assets of the particular castes, and they have become politically and

economically strong. Their economic, political, and social success, in turn, has facilitated their emergence or strengthened their position as the 'dominant castes' (Bardhan 1984).

The green revolution has thrown up serious problems to policymakers, like how to attain optimal yields and to extend the green revolution to the crops, farms, and regions where it has not reached so far. The green revolution has also thrown foremost issues like removing the disparities and imbalances and providing irrigation facilities. Growth disparities among regions have resulted in complex socioeconomic strife of a serious nature. The increased inequality has led to a sense of deprivation among the weaker and poorer agrarian classes (Das and Tripathi 2014). The policies formed by the state were in favor of rich farmers rather than small and marginal ones. These farmers became more prosperous with the help of government policies such as repayment of credit low rates of interest and other subsidy policies.

Importance of market

The role of the market has increased with the introduction of the green revolution. Farmers now produce surplus and for profit, whereas earlier farming was subsistence and the role of the market was minimal (Fujita 2010). White (2005) observes that while every agricultural product has its own distinctive attributes in general, agricultural supplies are characterized by being seasonal, decentralized, sporadic, and often perishable. The marketing of agricultural produce needs specialized attention due to the perishability and bulkiness of the products involved. Basically, Indian farmers move to mandis (regional market yards) to sell the produce, where agricultural produce is auctioned in an open method.

In the context of developing countries, markets may be too thin, leading to market power by one or other agents, or the risks and costs of participating in the markets may be too high (Hussain 2003). Social or economic barriers (market power, economies of scale, asymmetry, or costly information) may mean that the poor are excluded from certain markets. A market failure can

result in an increase in transaction costs and a decrease in farmer's total revenue. The high transaction costs may keep many farmers away from participating in markets since inadequate means of transportation (bad roads) and lack of access to telecommunications (high cost of gathering market information) make transactions more risky. Social networks continue to be an important means of acquiring information in rural communities and play a decisive role in the social and economic organization of farmers. However, they have been on the decline due to the growing importance of the market economy (Escobal 2001). In the market, price formation at the point of exchange with the producer is segmented not only by the specifics of class but also by custom. Prices are also affected by the association of each end product with a subset of trading firms, by territoriality or spatial network.

Role of Agricultural Extension

Aker (2011) observes that the green revolution made farmers extremely dependent on the bureaucracy for information. In the early phase of the green revolution, the state approached farmers to disseminate agricultural information. State extension services supported farmers by providing seeds, fertilizers, agricultural information, and credit. A watershed in the agricultural extension services is the withdrawal of the state in the post-liberalization period of agriculture, which paved the way for the entry of private and non-state initiatives into agricultural extension services. Over a period, private multinational organizations that gained prominence in the seed sector entered extension services as well. It is quite important to note that the state has become paralyzed in administrating the agricultural sector due to the liberalization policies. At the same time, on the other hand, access to 'information' has become one of the important factors in raising the productivity in modern agriculture process.

Vasavi (2012) observes that many small and marginal farmers are very passionate about adopting new technology. These sections of farmers are strongly influenced by the landlords, and their aspiration for upward mobility

made them try out new technologies. However, the lack of state support and lack of availability of capital resulted in the haphazard application of new technologies, resulting in a serious crisis. Meera (1995) argues that after liberalization, Indian agriculture is treated as a major source of increasing export earnings rather than a source of subsistence. New agriculture policy concentrates on export-led development, and it can be understood as the end of the import substitution model of agricultural modernization associated with the green revolution. The policies are mainly towards the accumulation of capital and profit making. Green revolution seems to have intensified the external technology and science-driven models, which facilitated the entry of corporate groups into the agriculture sector.

Conclusion

Science and technology have increasingly been used as tools in the development process carried out after independence. Within the larger frame of ideological state apparatus, science and technology have played an uncritical role, leveraging little hope for reflexivity. Science and technology thus provided legitimacy for the skewed structure of development. It is criticized that modernity and development are based on techno-science that institutionalizes violence as part of the development process. Although some Indian scholars have critiqued the hegemony of science (e.g., Nandy 1988) and technological determinism and optimism (Saith and Vijayabaskar 2008), critical questioning of the role of science and technology in development, specifically in agriculture, remains elusive. The critique on the role of development in shaping 'technology,' i.e., how the politically and culturally loaded agenda(s) of 'development' influence the concept, design, and access of 'technology,' is negligible in the public sphere and inappreciable in academia.

In the globalized context, relations of production are framed and constructed within the pragmatic point of the market. Thus, innovations are institutionalized in the hegemonistic capitalist economic development agenda (Habermas et al. 1964). According to Ravetz (2003), the priorities of research

aimed at new technologies are not set by the scientific community but by the external interests that supply funds. Economic factors play a predominant role in new knowledge production that creates a close relationship between science and the market. A science that does not fit into the category of market mechanism and a low level of returns doesn't find a place in the research agendas of the scientific community. It is argued that development based on modern technologies focuses on enhancing economic goals and ignores the social goals of poverty eradication and building an egalitarian society. Planned development pursued by the state after independence is believed to have interstate and inter-regional economic and agricultural imbalances. The green revolution is said to have exacerbated socioeconomic disparities between the large landowners and the small and poor peasant farmers.

The new regime of commercial agriculture triggered by the green revolution paradigm caused distress and loss of livelihood for many small and marginal farmers. Green revolution has been seen as representing the convergence of interests of power groups formed by the rural elite at the local level and the industrial elite at the national level. It is argued that it suits the interests of a large section of the international market, particularly the multinational firms that specialize in producing petrochemicals and farm machinery. Modern technologies have succeeded in producing enough food for people, but there are dramatic failures at various levels of food production. After the implementation of green revolution technology, it came to be known that it is not a runaway success due to deficiencies in itself and constraints peculiar to the Indian farms. With the adoption of the new technology, the majority of the small and marginal farmers are facing multiple problems like indebtedness, loss of production, unviable livelihoods, food insecurity, and continuous loss of their capabilities. Although new technology was designed to raise agricultural output and to benefit particularly small and marginal farmers and for the well-being of the rural inhabitants, the green revolution is captured by large and capitalist farmers due to their knowledge level and 'social network' within society

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Article: Pain and Suffering Embedded in Caste Hierarchies: A Sociological Analysis of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi Poetry

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**Pain and Suffering Embedded in Caste Hierarchies: A Sociological
Analysis of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi Poetry**

--Surendra Kumar Jandu

Abstract

This paper engages in the sociological analysis of modern Hindi poetry from the time period of 1960s to 2000 when Nayi Kavita was being replaced by Akavita or Anti-poetry and Dalit poetry to counterattack mainstream modern Hindi poetry. This paper seeks to address the question of pain and suffering embedded in the caste hierarchies through the examination of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi poetry. It also tends to analyze the inter-relationship between sociology and poetry by looking at the writings of scholars engaged in the domain of sociology of literature. This paper argues that the history of modern Hindi literature suggests that the issue of caste has been at the periphery of the imagination of modern Hindi poets except few until the dawn of Dalit literature in 1980s. From the Bhartendu period to Akavita or anti-poetry, caste was not an issue of serious concern for the Hindi poets. Critic Manager Pandey writes that ‘Dalit occupies the same place in the Hindi literature as they occupy at the material level in Hindi speaking regions. We see a minimalistic representation of the issue of discrimination, humiliation, and exploitation based on caste in the writings of modern Hindi poets. Renowned Hindi poet and writer Om Prakash Valmiki criticizes mainstream Hindi literature for its failure to represent the pain and agony of Dalit lives and argues that Dalit literature characterizes the elements of “mass literature” and “literature of action” through its depiction of anger and struggle of common masses and their human values against feudal mentality. Interpretative hermeneutic understanding is the chief methodological tool to comprehend the issue of human suffering embedded in the caste hierarchies through the analysis of select modern Hindi poetry.

Keywords: Caste, Dalit literature, Humiliation, Pain, Struggle, Suffering, Structural Violence

Introduction

The question of human suffering can be understood as a perennial attribute of human life. The various forms of suffering people encounter in their lives include physical, mental, and emotional forms. The different shades of human life are being portrayed by philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, as well as poets, saints, and painters on their respective canvas. The question of the origin of human suffering and its possible remedy has been a cause of concern for academic intellectuals, mystics, and artists. Can human pain and suffering embedded in caste hierarchies be understood from the vantage point of sociological perspective while undertaking the journey of literary depiction of human suffering in the writings of modern Hindi poets is the question we wish to explore in the proposed work? How does sociology and poetry inter-relate with each other and enrich their respective domain through enhancing the literary sensibilities and “sociological imagination” of the people is also our area of concern in this work.

Sociology, from being objective, scientific, positivism has transformed its method of study into being subjective, social, and interpretative over a period of time. This shift in the approach opens an entire window of opportunity to engage with artistic or literary domains like cinema, theatre, novels, and poetry in order to understand the subtle layers of human emotions like joy, sorrow, love, pain, and suffering. C. W. Mills tried to connect the experience (biography) and social reality in his writing on ‘sociological imagination’. Weber’s notion of interpretative sociology also helps us to understand social action by making sense of the meaning individuals impart to their action and interpreting their mode of action. The discipline of sociology, when tries to engage with the domain of human suffering, it enters into the realm of interpretation. So, when we try to understand the pain and suffering that is entrenched in the hierarchies of caste, class, or gender, the lived reality of people and their depiction of experiential reality in the form of caste humiliation or class struggle in the poetry provides us the literary sensibilities

and sociological imagination- that Mills talked about- to understand the subtle nuances of caste, class or gender hierarchies.

Terry Eagleton talks about two approaches, namely, realist and pragmatist in the study of the sociology of literature. Eagleton holds that the realist approach signifies the social context in which any literature is conditioned and thus a critical analysis should take into account its social dimension. The pragmatist approach is one that signifies the holistic factors by which any form of literature can be influenced but its social aspect is studied because it tends to serve the purpose of a specific political standpoint (Eagleton, 1988:469). He argues that literature can be conceived as a social product, but its sociological treatment can be undertaken differently. Poetry, being one of the important forms of literature best represents its aesthetic as well as sociological symmetry that can help us in understanding the issue of human emotions-joy, sorrow, love, and suffering- from the vantage point of the sociology of literature.

Renowned Hindi writer Manoj Pandey, in his book “Sahitya ke Samajshastra ki Bhoomika” (Introduction to the Sociology of Literature) writes that literature is not static in nature and its form undergoes several transformative phases during different time epoch. He cites the example of various literary writers who have described literature in distinctive ways that represent the historicity and social current of the specific time period into which the writer is situated and consumed and produced specific kinds of literary content. For instance, Balkrishna Bhatt wrote an essay in Pardeep magazine that was titled as ‘Literature is the development of the heart of masses’ (Pandey 1989:7). Bhatt tried to challenge the classical notion of literature through this essay and tend to show the specificity of Bhartendu literature era. Pandey provides us with another example of the specificity of literature by citing the example of Dwivedi era which represented the time of knowledge-science diffusion. While Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi has defined literature in terms of “the stock of knowledge accumulation” (Pandey 1989:8), Ramchandra Shukla describes literature in his famous work History of Hindi

Literature in the following words: “Literature is the accumulated reflection of people’s psychic feelings” (ibid: 8). Pandey (1989) argues that social development plays a crucial role in the changing notion of literature and its subsequent transformation. He cites the example of national and world literature development in this context. The emergence of the capitalist mode of production has played a critical role in the birth of world literature. This development produced celebrated world poets like Kalidas and William Shakespeare.

Manager Pandey contends that sociology of literature is produced by critics of literature rather than sociologists. Critics like Lucien Goldmann, Adolph Taine, Leo Lowenthal, and Raymond Williams have played a significant role in the development of sociology of literature (Pandey 1989:5). Pandey asserts that different types of sociology of literature are the product of distinct types of sociology. For instance, Adolph Taine represents the sociology of literature that contains a positivistic approach. On the other hand, French writer Robert Escarpit advocates an empiricist approach in his writings. Goldmann’s sociology of literature is influenced by structuralism and John Hall’s sociology of literature carries the imprint of structural-functionalism. Leo Lowenthal is the representative of critical sociology and Raymond Williams tends to represent Marxist sociology (ibid: 6). Pandey opines that the development of sociology of literature that imbibes the ideas of Karl Marx or Marxism treats literature as a social product and literary writing as a commodity. This reflects the status of art and literature in the era of capitalism and its reflection of specific social circumstances through its production, distribution, and consumption. It also shows, Pandey writes, the specific location of a writer in the society and his/her aspiration of treating his writing as sacred. According to Pandey, three insights are visible in sociology of literature that aims to explore the relationship between literature and society; the authority of literature in the society and location of writer; and the analysis of the relationship between literature and reader (ibid: 12). The sociology of literature tends to reflect upon the actual condition of literature and its influence over the people in modern society. Pandey sees two stream of

sociology of literature that characterizes the specificity of literature in the modern time. The first stream is epistemology current that explores how society is portrayed in the literature and its specific attributes are analyzed by Marxist, structuralist, and critical sociology thinkers. The second stream is empiricist, which analyzes the social status of literature. Positivists and structural functionalist ideologues deliberate upon the empiricist current that characterize the second type of sociology of literature.

Poetry, according to Michael Hill reflects the mirror image of sociological reality. Modern Hindi poet Nagarjun considered poetry as the mother tongue of humanity. Poetry seeks to provide us the literary sensibilities and visual imagination to understand the intensity of human suffering. It also tends to provide the tools/ways to fight against structural and relational suffering embedded in caste/class/gender/religious hierarchies and thus act as a cathartic experience or healing in the form of psychological relief from undue suffering.

The issue of human suffering can be conceptualized at two levels. While analyzing the four faces of human suffering depicted in the works of Zygmunt Bauman, Sociologists Michael Jacobsen, and Sophia Marshman discuss social suffering manifested in the form of “structural suffering” and “relational suffering” (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008:6). Structural suffering is a result of suffering embedded in the very foundation of different institutional structures in the form of rules and regulations. It operates at the macro level and affects the lives of people in a significant manner. State apparatus, whether ideological (family, education, media) or repressive (army, police, law, bureaucracy)-to use Louis Althusser’s concepts- can inflict pain on human beings. Caste, family, media, police, bureaucracy, class, and gender can be cited as an example of that structural set-up that can cause structural suffering. Likewise, the onslaught of capitalism, modernity and science & technology can afflict the human lives. Relational suffering, on the other hand, results from suffering imposed by specific and identifiable groups of people on the other equally specific and identifiable groups of people in the form of stigmatization, marginalization or killing. It generally operates at the micro

level. In this way, suffering causes and consequences- is both abstract and concrete, intangible and flesh and blood.

Johan Galtung is known for applying the concept of structural violence to understand the process of structural inequalities that creates hindrance for an atmosphere of peace in this chaotic world. In order to understand the conceptual scheme of structural violence, it becomes imperative to understand how Galtung looks at the notion of violence. He defines violence in terms of people's failure to exploit their, what he calls 'potential realizations' due to numerous impediments. To quote Galtung; 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations' (Galtung 1969:168). Galtung classifies violence as "personal violence" and "structural violence". He writes that both kinds of violence can be further categorized into six categories. Structural violence thus can be of six different types; 'physical, psychological, manifest, latent, with objects, and without objects' (ibid: 173).

He argues that structural violence occurs because violence is directly in-built into the structure. Thus, structural violence need not be committed by a person directly over another person; rather it is carried by the structure itself. Galtung writes;

'The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances. Resources are unevenly distributed, as when income distributions are heavily skewed, literacy/education unevenly distributed, medical services existent in some districts and for some groups only, and so on. Above all, the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed' (ibid: 171).

Galtung further argues that structural violence affects the vulnerable section in the most effective manner because of the inability on the part of an individual to exercise his or her choice due to unfavorable circumstances in which he or she is placed due to in-built structural violence. This creates the space for structural suffering as well as relational suffering for the individual and his/her

community members. Galtung observes, ‘The situation is aggravated further if the persons low on income are also low in education, low on health, and low on power - as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure’ (ibid: 171).

It can be argued that the continuous practice of untouchability and caste-based discrimination creates not just “structural violence” but also “structural suffering” and “relational suffering” to the people of marginalized sections. Caste-based discrimination humiliates the dignity of people and fills them with agony and inexplicable suffering. Modern Hindi poets like Omprakash Valmiki, Namdev Dhasal, Adam Gondvi, Nagarjun, Malkhan Singh, and Asangghosh have depicted the pain and suffering of Dalits in their poetry. The articulation of human suffering at the hands of fellow beings because of birth in a specific caste is depicted in the poetry of these artists, who not only critique the caste-based social order but also provide the language and tools to fight against oppression and suppression at the hands of ‘upper-caste’ people. It was the time of 1960s when modern Hindi poets started criticising mainstream Hindi poetry for its failure to address the issue of caste, class, and gender-based discrimination and exploitation. This resulted in the arrival of a new kind of poetry called as Akavita or Anti-poetry or Unpoetry in 1960s later being replaced by Dalit Hindi poetry.

Nayi Kavita was replaced by Akavita (Anti Poetry/ Unpoetry) in 1960s when the hopes and aspirations generated by the euphoria of the newly independent nation started shattering. As Jawarimal Parakh makes a critical evaluation of this time period and writes, ‘Nehruvian utopia had been shattered. Three wars with neighbouring countries, growing unemployment among educated middle classes, the growing crisis in the economy due to the devaluation of the rupee and unbroken feudal social structure had created disillusionment among masses’ (Parakh 2010: 7441). Parakh further argues that the resultant consequence of this lost of hope and ambitions was also felt by educated middle-class youth who found themselves in a paradoxical situation of

bondage and marginalization. Parakh contends that this middle-class youth ‘felt torn between the traditional value system and their own ambitions of a new free life. They found themselves in a tunnel, tunnel of despair and haplessness’ (ibid: 7441). The prevailing situation of hopelessness and frustration was also felt by the poets of 1960s and they made a call for breaking with the old tradition of Hindi poetry and thus writing Anti poetry or what Radhekant Dave prefers to call Apoeetry to better describe the term Akavita (Dave 1979: 63). The poets of Akavita acquired nihilistic attitude and saw life full of despair and meaninglessness. These poets were also influenced by Beat poets of America and thus tried to introduce their poetry in an altogether different fashion. These poets of Akavita negated the structured system of history, culture, religion, and morality and wrote poetry in a way where everything got mixed up without any regard to the ethical and moral value system. As Parakh writes while making a critical analysis of the poets of Akavita with regard to their writings on women, ‘They had different thinking about women in comparison to earlier modern Hindi poets. They had love-hate relationship with the woman’s figure and flesh. They expressed sexual relationship boldly and without hesitation; on the other hand, their expression did not show the honour for women’ (Parakh 2010: 7442). Poets like Jagdish Chaturvedi, Shyam Parmar, Ravindranath Tyagi, Saumitra Mohan, Ramesh Gaur, Chandrakant Devtale, and Srikant Verma are associated with Akavita.

Jagdish Chaturvedi’s poem ‘Samadisath’ talks about the darkness prevailing over dome, a black river flowing at the endpoint, Nepolean’s injured body which becomes an innocent child in the hands of an army doctor despite being a world conqueror, Gatuam Buddha’s redemption from fake masks of jealousy, sickness, and elitism, and saints wandering in search of peace in the forest (Chaturvedi 2009). The poet has juxtaposed the various dimensions of human life and play of cosmic nature in this poetry, which imbibes the elements of intellectual realism and mortality of human life. The other poems of Jagdish Chaturvedi such as ‘Saanjh Ke Phul’, ‘Taaje Gulab Ka Unmaad’, and ‘Barsaat’ contain the poet’s nostalgia, unfulfilled desires and dislike for rain. The poetry written by people like Shyam Parmar, Ravindranath Tyagi,

and Saumitra Mohan has also been criticized for its narcissism, nihilism, and obsessive sexism, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and discrimination, and anarchism by literary critics like Namvar Singh, who blames Akavita poet for destroying the language and respectability of literary writing. However, Radhekant Dave offers the defense of Akavita poets and cites the quote of G. R. Tanjea, who argues that Akavita poets do not escape from the harsh realities and try to project the reality as it is in bare style rather than sugar-coating romantic poetry of earlier Hindi poets (Dave 1979: 67). Dave in his attempt to defend Akavita poets and their poetry provides Jagdish Gupta's citation of Herbert Read who asserted that, 'In order to create it is necessary to destroy, and the agent of destruction in society is poet. I believe that the poet is necessarily an anarchist' (ibid: 67). Dave does accept the low level of poetry written during Akavita age but contends that the poetry of Akavita should not be negated because 'to negate Akavita is to negate our own time and our self' (ibid: 72).

The changing climate of Indian polity after the imposition of emergency by Indira Gandhi Government in 1975 altered the socio-politico-cultural landscape of the Indian social milieu. The uproar caused by J. P. movement to remove the anti-democratic government from power made the poets of progressive ideology once again relevant and Akavita poetry was pushed in the background. A new generation of poets came at the centre stage in the literary circle that negated the nihilistic attitude of Akavita poetry and injected afresh elements of poetic idioms and imageries. Poets of this era of the second half of the seventies are 'Vinod Kumar Shukla, Vishnu Khare, Ibbar Rabbi, Arun Kamal, Girdhar Rathi, Mangalesh Dabral, Asad Zaidi, Rajesh Joshi and Alok Dhnwa' (Parakh 2010: 7442) who changed the static and meaningless image of Hindi poetry written during 1960s.

The significant changes on the political surface brought a transformation in the character of the social and cultural realm. The establishment of B. P. Mandal commission by Morarji Desai government on January 1, 1979 to look into the matter of social and educational backwardness of other backward classes

(OBC), the formation of Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) by Kanshiram on April 14, 1984 and the emergence of the politics of Bahujans in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh altered the consciousness of the oppressed classes. The Mandal Commission made a strong recommendation to not only provide 27% reservation to OBCs in central government jobs and educational institutions but also called for bringing changes in relations of production and land redistribution to address the issue of social injustice and exploitation. The Mandal Commission contended that,

‘Reservations in government employment and educational institutions, as well as all financial assistance, will remain mere palliatives unless the problem of backwardness is tackled at its root. The bulk of the small landholders, tenants, agricultural labour, impoverished village artisans, unskilled workers, etc; belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes’ (Hindustan Times Aug. 6, 2020).

Some of the recommendations like providing reservation in central government jobs and public sector units, were accepted by V. P. Singh government on August 7, 1990. The reservation in central educational institutions was provided to other backward classes as late as in 2006. The quest for establishing a free social order on the principle of liberty, equality, and fraternity led the writers of 1980s and 90s to write the literature from the standpoint of oppressed communities.

Renowned Hindi poet and writer Om Prakash Valmiki, in his analysis of Dalit Sahitya ka Saundrya Shastra draws insights from Hindi fiction writer Rajendra Yadav, who stressed upon three important elements that are vital for literature-struggle, suffering, and vision (Valmiki 2019:48). Valmiki criticizes the mainstream Hindi literature for its failure to represent the pain and agony of Dalit lives and argues that Dalit literature characterizes the elements of “mass literature” (*jansahitaya*) and “literature of action” through its depiction of anger and struggle of common masses and their human values against feudal mentality (*ibid*: 15). The prominent names in Dalit poetry are Om Prakash

Valmiki, Malkhan Singh, Adam Gondvi, Mohandas Naimishrai, Kanwal Bharti, Sarad Kokas, N. R. Sagar, Jaiprakash Kardam, Anita Bharti, Rajni Tilak, Rajat Rani Meenu, Sushila Takbhore, Sheoraj Singh Bechain, and Asangghosh. Dalit literature draws its inspiration from Buddhist literature and Bhakti poets like Kabir, Ravidas, Gora, ChokhaMela, Karmamela and thinkers like Narayan Guru, Jyotiba Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, and others.

Ravidas or Raidas for instance gives importance to ‘Brahmaatma’ instead of accepting the divine origin theory of caste.

ऊँचे कुल के कारणै, ब्राह्मन कोय न होय।
जउ जानहि ब्रह्म आत्मा, रैदास कहि ब्राह्मन सोय॥

“Because of the high clan, there is no Brahmin.
If you know the soul of Brahma, where Raidas is the Brahmin”.

Raidas asserts that a person cannot be accepted as Brahmin merely because he has taken birth in a so-called higher caste. A person who knows ‘Brahmaatma’ is entitled to be called as Brahmin.

जात पांत के फेर मंहि, उरझि रहइ सब लोग।
मानुषता कूं खात हइ, रैदास जात कर रोग॥

“In the vicious cycle of caste and creed, all the people are trapped
It will swallow humanity; if people don’t overcome this disease says Raidas”.

Raidas says that people are trapped in the vicious circle of caste and if they do not come out of this sickness of casteism, then it will swallow all humanity.

The literature written during 1990s by Dalit writers and poets sought inspiration from writings and movements of Ambedkar and Phule to raise a question mark over the sanctity of Hindu social order, which seeks to legitimize the exploitation of so-called ‘lower castes’ at the hands of so-called ‘forward castes’. These writers and poets seek to dismantle the existing social structure, which is based on the doctrine of inequality and injustice. Om

Prakash Valmiki in his poetic collection ‘Sadiyon Ka Santaap’, ‘Bas, Bahut Ho Chuka’, and ‘Ab Aur Nahi’, vehemently criticizes the notion of Hindu social order and turn on its head. His autobiography ‘Juthan’ draws the graphics of structural violence embedded in the so called sacred institution of learning called school and portrays the inhuman torture inflicted upon writer by his headmaster. Tulsiram in ‘Murdayia’ and ‘Manikarnika’; Mohandas Naimishrai in ‘Apne Apne Pinjare’; Surajpal Chauhan in ‘Tiraskrit’, Saran Kumar Limbale in ‘Akkarmaasi’, Kaushlyaa Besantri in ‘Dohra Abhishaap’, and Sushila Takbhore in ‘Sikanjhe Ka Dard’ autobiographies have described their journey of pain and suffering caused by the institutionalized structure of caste, class, and gender. Their journey of intense human suffering is a testimony of the inhuman social order that snatched the love, happiness, self-respect and freedom from their life and forced them to live life worse than animals. Manager Pandey accepts the fact that the caste system of India is the most reactionary, barbaric, and repressive aspect of Indian society, which has kept a large section of human beings in worse condition than animals (Pandey 2015: 171). Prof. Devendra Choubey in his book ‘Aadhunik Sahitya Me Dalit-Vimersh’ (Dalit Discourse in Modern Literature), writes that many of the thinkers and intellectuals of Hindi literature criticized Dalit literature and did not accept as part of Hindi literature due to their belief that ‘this new literature will destroy their tradition on which they proud; it will dismantle the social structure which they have tried to save and it will darken the pages of those words and literature which they think of high quality and excellent in nature’ (Choubey 2009: 38). Prof. Choubey draws from the works of post-structuralist and post modernist theorist Michel Foucault and contends that the central organization of Indian society is based upon power and knowledge. He links power with feudalism and knowledge with Brahmanism. Due to this power, the Varna system of Hindu society has kept women and Shudras deprived of the tradition of knowledge. Choubey believes that the literature of Dalits is the literature of the struggle, pain, and suffering and thus it creates the “sociology of struggle” (ibid: 39).

Prof. Vivek Kumar asserts that the contribution made by Dalits in the smooth functioning of Indian society, polity, and economy has not been duly recognized by Indian sociologists. He cites the example of the role played by Dalit midwives in assisting millions of women to deliver their babies or, the role of gravedigger (Dom), or the contribution of Dalit men working as landless labourers in fields and industries. He sees some hope in Dalit literature, which has developed from the “existential and experiential realities of Dalits” (Kumar 2005:527) and has raised the question of the social exclusion of Dalits in every sphere of life. Prof. Vivek Kumar writes, ‘As Dalit writings have emerged from the sufferings and exclusion faced by Dalits in different regions of the country and demand liberation from the same, there is a sense of unity and purpose in them’ (ibid: 528). Kumar points out the significance of Dalit literature to understand the Dalit society and culture. He lays emphasis on the inclusion of Dalit writings in the curriculum of sociology to enrich what C. Wright Mills calls “sociological imagination” of the young minds. He also suggests making use of “Human Distress Index” to measure the social exclusion faced by Dalits in Indian society (ibid: 529). The Human Distress Index (HDI) evolved by Kumar has five components to assess the exclusion of Dalits. These include social exclusion (atrocities, practice of untouchability, and involvement of Dalits in hazardous occupations); political exclusion; economic exclusion; religious legitimization of exclusion, and internal oppressor in the caste (ibid: 531).

The poetry of Om Prakash Valmiki imbibes the element of rebellion against the humiliation, exploitation, stigmatization, and exclusion faced by the poet and Dalit community. Valmiki in his poems talks about the pain and suffering of Dalits and the inhumane nature of their oppressors. In his poems, clouds, mountains, fireflies, rivers, sun, stars, and sand are not the embodiment of romanticism like the poets of Chhayavad or Prayogvaad but represent the image of patience, perseverance, persistence, and courage. The poet does not make hue and cry in his poems, rather makes direct eye contact with oppressors and raise a question mark over the so-called civility of their culture, which has forced a section of human society at the margins. It is

evident in his poems ‘Tab Tum Kya Karoge’ and ‘Kabhi Socha H?’. Poet asks a series of questions to his oppressors in ‘Tab Tum Kya Karoge’ and writes that if the same conditions are encountered by them, their colour of the skin will turn black and dusky and they will become handicapped.

यदि तुम्हें,
 धकेलकर गांव से बाहर कर दिया जाय
 पानी तक न लेने दिया जाय कुएं से
 दुत्कारा फटकारा जाय चिल-चिलाती दोपहर में
 कहा जाय तोड़ने को पत्थर
 काम के बदले
 दिया जाय खाने को जूठन
 तब तुम क्या करोगे?

“If you
 be pushed out of the village
 not even allowed to take water from the well
 be reprimanded in the chilly afternoon
 where to break the stone
 instead of work
 be given leftovers to eat
 what will you do then?”

The poet in his poem ‘Kabhi Socha H?’ asks his exploiters to think about the question of why people from so-called lower castes are victims of the Varna system and consider them as ‘strangers’.

कभी सोचा है,
 गन्दे नाले के किनारे बसे
 वर्ण-व्यस्था के मारे लोग
 इस तरह क्यों जीते हैं
 तुम पराये क्यों लगते हो उन्हें
 कभी सोचा है?
 “Have you ever thought,

settled on the side of the sewer
 victims of the caste system
 why live like this
 why do you seem alien to them
 Have you ever thought?"

The poet in the 'mountain' poem talks about his intimacy with the mountain and his breakdown when a part of mountain breaks and feels the pain when snow does not fall. In 'Jugnu' poem, the poet hails the significance of firefly in the darkness but fears that one day buyers will snatch the brightness of firefly and sell it in the market at a high price with the tag of culture.

Om Prakash Valmiki does not hesitate to call out his exploiters and tries to awaken the people who have been suppressed for centuries and bearing all the pain, suffering, and humiliation silently. In his poems 'Sadiyon Ka Santap', 'Yug Chetna', 'Unhe Dar H', 'Mutthi Bhar Chawal', 'Vidhwans Bankar Khadi Hogi Nafrat' and 'Bas, Bahut Ho Chuka'; the poet's intense pain, resilience, and effort to awaken his people are clearly visible. In 'Roshani Ke Us Paar', the poet shows the poverty, hunger, and darkness in the lives of people at the margins where they have been reduced to a unit in the ration card or a piece of paper to cast their vote; where money sent by World Bank for their upliftment becomes the headlines of a newspaper but never reaches to them; where sunset happens every day but never rises in the life of marginalized; where darkness surrounds the entire houses of ex untouchables.

"रौशनी के उस पार
 जहाँ आदमी मात्र एक यूनिट है
 राशन कार्ड पर चढ़ा हुआ
 या फिर कागज़ का एक टुकड़ा
 जिसे मतपेटी में डालते ही
 हो जाता है वह अपाहिड़
 और दुबक रहने के लिए अभिशप्त भी"(Valmiki 2011).

“Beyond the light
where man is just a unit
mounted on ration card
or a piece of paper
as soon as it is put in the ballot box
he becomes crippled
and cursed to lurk”

The language, imagery, metaphors, and symbols used in the poetry of Om Prakash Valmiki are the embodiment of pain and suffering caused by the structural violence of the caste system and the constant struggle, resilience, and fighting spirit of oppressed people against the injustice meted out to them in the name of caste. Language of Valmiki is the language of resistance and hope. The single most critique of Valmiki’s poetry is his choice of words in the poem ‘Jaati’ where he fails to make a distinction between the use of rebellious words and use of sexist vocabulary. Though the poet’s immense struggle and suffering is understandable, yet his ignorance of violence embedded in women-centric abuses in a way undermined the intensity of his fight against exploitation per se.

The poetry collection of Sharad Kokas includes ‘Humse to Behatar H Rang’, ‘Puratatavveta’, and ‘Gunguni Dhup Me Bethkar’. The aesthetics of Sharad Kokas’ poetry lies in his use of simple and eloquent use of language and his sensitivity towards dynamics of caste-class-gender hierarchies, which creates an amalgamation of structural and relational suffering for the subaltern. The poet is critical of the growth of unwarranted modernity which has swallowed the human beings in its trap. The poet is also sensitive to the existing relations of gender-based discrimination and the suffering of women. In his poem ‘Unkahi’ poet talks about the suppression of women through the metaphorical use of two verbs, ‘tell’ and ‘listen’ slip. The poet writes that from time immemorial women always got the receipt of ‘listen’ and men got the slip of ‘tell’ and this led to the dominance of the male over the submission of

voiceless women who were compelled only to listen to the whims and desires of men.

The poet talks about the violence committed upon Dalits in the name of listening to Vedic mantras and screams of the tortured and wounded souls. He contends that he has been exploited and humiliated in inheritance from his ancestors and exploiting class has got distinctive privileges in inheritance from their ancestors. The poet writes that oppressors should feel grateful that dynamics are only changing; not getting reversed to take revenge. Some of the stanzas from 'Shukar Manawo' poem are cited here.

"वैदिक ऋचाएँ सुनने के आरोप में
मेरे पूर्वजों के कानों में
उँड़ेला हुआ पिघला गर्म सीसा
जला रहा है मेरी धमनियाँ
उनकी मर्मान्तक चीखें
हर रात उड़ा देती हैं मेरी नींद
गर्म सलाखों से दागी गयी"(Kokas 2015).

“On the charge of listening to Vedic hymns
in the ears of my ancestors
poured molten lead
burning my arteries
their heartbreaking screams
wakes me up every night
seared with hot rods”

Sharad Kokas sees the beauty and aesthetics of nature-human interplay from the perspective of a marginal man and thus hears the silence of cuckoo, laughter of child taking bath in the pond, breath of fishes, tears of villagers merging in pond, anger of sun, ego of stars, and the innocent cry of a child. This aesthetics of poetry of Sharad can be seen in poems like 'Koyal Chup H', 'Prakarti Ke Daftar Me', 'Taalab', 'Sitaare', and 'Eshwar Yahin Kahin Parvesh Karta H'.

Another prominent poet of Dalit literature is Kanwal Bharti. His poems 'Pinjare Ka Dwaar Khol Dena', 'Bahiskaar', and 'Mukti- Sangraam Abhi Jaari H' characterize the rebellion against Brahmanism, feudalism, and capitalism; and make a call for acceptance of tenets of French revolution-liberty, equality, and fraternity. In his poem 'Pinjare Ka Dwaar Khol Dena' poem, Bharti talks about the internal conflict in the mind of some people from so-called upper caste who realize the violence and suffering embedded in caste but do not have enough courage to oppose their community fellow beings and stand with oppressed class. The poet compares the state of Dalits with the anguish of a caged bird and makes an appeal to liberty conscious people from forward caste to open the gate of cage for the slaved bird.

"शायद ऐसा हो कि तुम्हारी अन्तरात्मा ने
 पिंजड़े में फड़फड़ाते पक्षी की वेदना को समझा हो
 खोलना चाहा हो उसकी मुक्ति का द्वार
 कि तभी किसी वृद्ध सदस्य ने कहा होगा—
 यह पिंजड़ा खानदानी है
 बरसों-बरस से हमारे सम्मान का प्रतीक है
 और तुम्हारी अन्तरात्मा सलीब पर टंग गयी होगी
 प्रतिष्ठा के प्रश्न पर।
 इस शायद और तभी के बीच कोई भावना
 बुलबुले की नियति जीती है
 प्रतिरोधों से अविचलित
 कोई व्यक्ति-चेतना
 यदि जन्म ले तुम्हारे भीतर
 तो तुम सिर्फ इतना करना
 पिंजड़े का द्वार खोल देना" (Bharti 2012).

"It may be that your conscience
 understand the pain of a bird fluttering in a cage
 wanted to open the door of her salvation
 That's when some old member must have said-
 this cage is of lineage

A symbol of our respect over the years
 and your soul must have hung on the cross
 On the question of prestige.
 any feeling between this maybe and then
 bubble's destiny won
 undisturbed by resistors
 any person-consciousness
 if born inside you
 so all you have to do
 Open the cage door”.

In his poem ‘Bahiskaar’, Kanwal Bharti talks about the boycott of Brahmanism, feudalism, and capitalism which have given birth to the practice of casteism and fascism. The poet also talks about the boycott of politics, literature, and philosophy which has led to the oppression, humiliation, stigmatization, and suffering of ex-untouchables. He makes a plea for following the principle of liberty, equality, and fraternity on the occasion of New Year for the holistic development of the country and human beings. The poet pays his allegiance to Ambedkar who played a crucial role in the emancipation of Dalits and helped them to fight against the injustice and oppression. In ‘Mukti-Sangraam Abhi Jaari H’, poet remembers the struggle of Ambedkar and takes pledge to continue the fight for equality, respect, and freedom until the faded plant does not bloom again. Some stanzas are cited here from Bharti’s poem.

"मैं उस अतीत को
 अपने बहुत करीब पाता हूँ
 जिसे जिया था तुमने
 अपने दृढ-संकल्प और संघर्ष से।
 परिवर्तित किया था समय-चक्र को
 इस वर्तमान में।
 तुम बिलकुल नहीं मरे हो बाबा!
 जीवित हो हमारी चेतना में,

हमारे संकल्प में, हमारे संघर्षों में।
समता, सम्मान और स्वाधीनता के लिए
मुक्ति-संग्राम जारी रहेगा / जब तक कि
हमारे मुरझाए पौधे के हिस्से का सूरज
उग नहीं जाता है" (Bharti 2013).

"I miss that past
feel very close to me
whom you lived
With your determination and struggle.
changed the timeline
In this present.
You are not dead at all Baba!
alive in our consciousness,
In our resolve, in our struggles.
for equality, dignity and freedom
The liberation struggle will continue / until
the sun on the part of our withered plant
does not rise".

Prof. Vivek Kumar talks about literary representation of Ambedkar in the Hindi Dalit literature, which has emerged out of Dalits' intimate relationship with Ambedkar. Thus Dalits see Ambedkar as a source of inspiration in the form of "fire of hearth", "light of lamp", and "ointment of affection". Kumar cites the poem of Sudesh Tanvar to highlight the significance of Dr. Ambedkar in the lives of Dalits. Kumar also criticizes the study of Indian villages from the perspective of either Charles Metcalf, who saw Indian villages as an epitome of "republics" or Gandhian notion of "Gram Swaraj" (Kumar 2007: 48). Kumar is right in his critique of Indian villages as akin to romanticization or undue glorification by Indian anthropologists and sociologists. This romantic portrayal of Indian villages is also reflected in the poetry of Chhayavad, Prayogvaad, and Nai Kavita poets. However, Dalit writers and poets have deconstructed this notion of an Indian village in their

writings and shown the other side of Indian villages which are den of casteism, feudalism, and patriarchy.

The poetry of Sushila Takbhaure is the poetry of courage and resilience of women against the feudal, patriarchal human society. She engages in a strong critique of the structural violence and suffering embedded in the patriarchal system of Indian society. She also talks about the triple oppression of Dalit women because of their specific standpoint in society entangled with caste, class, and gender. In her poetry, Takbhaure deconstructs the notion of superior, inferior, purity, and pollution. She encourages women to become like a volcano to fight the battle against male domination. She asks women not to compromise with their rights and don't live the life in fear and darkness. Instead, she asks the women to carve their own identity and claim the rights over universal entities like earth, sky, air, and light in the poem 'Ugate Ankur Ki Tarah Jiyo'. Takbhaure teaches the independent path to her daughter in the poem 'Maasum Bholi Ladki' so that she can live her life without fear and can create her unique identity from the crowd and touch the sky with glory. In 'Peeda Ki Faslaen', 'Ghar Ki Chokhat Se Bahar', 'Stree', 'Aaj Ki Khudaa Aurat', and 'Nahi Haaregi Kabhi'; the poet asserts the continued fight of women against the oppression of the exploiting class. The poet draws a sharp distinction between those who see the things from their own privileged perspective and her perspective, which is holistic and universal. The poem 'Me Tatpar Hun' is cited here as an illustration of the poet's continued struggle against inequality, injustice, and suppression.

"तुममें और मुझमें यही फर्क है
 तुम डरते हो
 अपनी क्रीज अपनी इमेज खराब हो जाने से
 और मैं तत्पर हूं
 हरिश्चंद्र की पत्नी की तरह
 अपनी आधी साड़ी फाड़कर
 दे देने के लिए
 तुम बात को

अपनी नज़र से देखते हो
 और मैं
 सबकी नज़र बनना चाहती हूँ...!” (Takbhaure 2008).

“that's the difference between you and me
 you are afraid
 your crease from tarnishing your image
 and I'm looking forward
 as Harishchandra's wife
 tearing her saree in half
 to give
 you talk
 see with your eyes
 And me
 I want to be visible to everyone...!”

The writing of other Dalit poets also echoes the same kind of fighting spirit as reflected in the writings of Om Prakash Valmiki, Sharad Kokas, Kanwal Bharti, and Sushila Takbhaure. We see the poetry of resistance and resilience in the writings of Mohandas Naimishrai's poems 'Sabad', 'Raat Me Duba Loktantra Aur Vae', and 'Raja Ki Sawari aa Rahi H'. In these poems, poet talks about the power of words in 'Sabad' poem; the democracy submerged in the darkness captured by violent mob embodiment of oppressive political culture in the poem 'Raat Me Duba Loktantra Aur Vae'; and ride of King who does not have time to meet common masses but have to make policies and inaugurate something for the people depicted in the poem 'Raaja Ki Sawariaa Rahi H'. Another prominent poet of Dalit literature is Rajni Tilak who talks of women's suppressed dreams and exploitation by men in her poems. In 'Pyaar', 'Aurat', and 'Sankal' poems, poetess speaks of domestic violence and exploitation of women who are considered as mere objects or commodities for the consumption of men. She asks women to study and not remain docile and meek in order to fight against the male domination in her poems 'Shiksha Ka Parcham', 'Jeevan Badlega Avashey', and 'Tumhare Cheekhne Se'. Sheoraj

Singh Bechain critiques the notion of good poetry and contends that so-called good poetry or 'achhikavita' does not dismantle the structure of existing inequalities and injustice in society. Rather it helps to maintain the status quo by perpetuating the domination of the ruling class. In 'Achhi Kavita' poem, Bechain draws the characteristics of good poetry that does not become the voice of the voiceless but supports the subjugation and suppression of subaltern groups in society. The poet cautions the readers that this kind of so-called good poetry is not going to emancipate the human beings caught in the chains of domination and exploitation. Through this poem, Bechain has tried to deconstruct the meaning of good poetry and bad poetry and challenged the hegemony of self-proclaimed watchmen of Hindi literature. Manager Pandey also seems to be in agreement with Bechain and other Dalit writers when he says that Dalit literature is not the literature written for the purpose of providing entertainment and aesthetic experience to readers; rather it is the literature with the aim of awakening the readers or creating restlessness in their minds. Pandey calls the aesthetics of Dalit literature as the "aesthetics of resistance" and believes that this kind of literature will enrich the canvas of Hindi literature and fulfill the purpose of removing the evils of casteism, narrowness, inertia, and psychic backwardness of Hindi-speaking society (Pandey 2015: 109).

Conclusion

The question of caste hierarchies has been addressed by various scholars and the expression of human suffering inherent in these hierarchies has also been dealt with in detail by sociologists such as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 'Caste in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' and 'Hindu Social Order' and Vivek Kumar in 'Caste, Contemporaneity and Assertion' and 'Situating Dalits in Indian Sociology'. The proposed work attempted to address the question of pain and suffering embedded in the caste hierarchies through the examination of modern Hindi poetry. Thus, this study undertakes the theoretical framework of scholars who have examined the question of social suffering from different conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The proposed

work also seeks to engage in the writings of scholars from literature who have addressed the pain and agony of lower strata from a literary perspective. Thus, we find the different expressions of human suffering in the transforming modern Hindi period from Akavita to Dalit Hindi poetry. Different themes such as discrimination, humiliation, matrix of domination, and resistance emerge during our analysis of Anti-poetry and Dalit Hindi poetry. This study tends to fill the research gap existing at the level of sociological analysis with regard to comprehending and critically examining the issue of pain and suffering embedded in the caste hierarchies through the analysis of select modern Hindi poetry.

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Article: Revisiting education during pandemic times – Response to change and its implications

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Revisiting education during pandemic times – response to change and its implications

--V. Sucharita

Abstract

Schools play a cardinal role in achieving the overarching goal of attaining foundational literacy, numeracy, and value education among children. In addition to the reading-writing-arithmetic skills, schools also play an important role in inculcating life skills among children, which is a reflection of quality education in its truest sense. Given such profound significance of schools, their sudden and unexpected closure worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic left everyone perplexed, obviously impacting school-going children and their learning (or lives). The administrators, teachers, students and parents were completely unprepared to deal with such an unprecedented situation. Nevertheless, every country grappling with this dire situation has worked out ways to respond to this situation. In this context, the paper examines the ways school administrators responded to school closures during this unprecedented situation and reflects on its wider implications.

Keywords: Pandemic, Education, Administrators, Change, Inequity, India

BACKGROUND:

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only been a major health crisis but had profound ramifications on the economy and labour market as well as on the overall well-being and sustenance of families. Humans were affected differently depending on their social class or caste, their gender and age, and the country where they live (Van Barneveld et al., 2020). Apart from health and economy, education was another severely impacted sector. Schools were shut down in almost 200 countries, impacting the students' lives and learnings. Students ranging from early years to higher education faced disruption to their education (UNESCO, 2020) with unusual challenges that varied not only on their level and course of study but also on the point they reached in their programmes. Students, in different phases of their education, faced peculiar challenges. Those coming to the end of one phase of their education and moving on to another, such as those transitioning from school to tertiary education or from tertiary education to employment, face particular challenges (Daniel, 2020).

Nevertheless, the immediate response across the world was to shift to remote learning, which paved the way for online learning. The online learning

opportunities, which were considered as an additional extracurricular facility of learning, became a critical lifeline for schools for imparting education and dovetailing their multi-functional roles (OECD, 2020). Across the world, education was re-crafted, re-designed and re-booted as a home-based, technology-enabled, online activity (Harris, 2020). Thus, the use of technology in education, which was viewed only as a supplementary before the pandemic, became the predominant and overarching means during the pandemic. Educationists across the globe and at all levels in the system were spending their time influencing and engaging with others through a laptop or phone screen (Harris, 2020). Though online learning was the immediate option during the pandemic, the education systems were not equipped for this transition. The OECD's latest round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggests that most of the education systems were not ready for digital learning opportunities (OECD, 2020). In addition to online learning, the pandemic period also witnessed individual schools trying different ways to ensure that schooling continues. Some replicated schooling using online tools; some tried to broadcast content to students; some gave out schoolwork without requiring all students to check in online; some tried to let students decide what they wished to do; and some enabled teachers to reorganize student learning (Zhao, 2020).

The situation was not much different in the Indian context. The schools in India were shut down on 24 March 2020 and remained shut/closed in many states for almost two years. Though few states did reopen schools shortly, especially for the senior classes, but were closed again due to the subsequent second and third waves of the pandemic. While parents and students were thinking about how learning would continue, the administrators and teachers were perplexed about dovetailing the multi-functional roles of the school. It remains undeniable that schools pursue a broad range of aims: they are not just restricted to teaching academic content but also to cultivating social skills and critical thinking, preparing young people for work and citizenship, fostering creativity, and promoting emotional and physical health (Wilder, Jacobsen, & Rothstein, 2008). Given the sudden closure of schools, can schools continue to play such paramount and multi-functional roles was a major question in front of school administrators and authorities.

Further, school administrators, particularly those overseeing the public education system, also had other challenges. Predominant access to the public education system by disadvantaged groups and lower socio-economic households; the readiness of the public education system to embark upon the online learning system; access to online learning mediums among pupils; internet connectivity; remote and scattered locations of habitats; etc. were

some other specific challenges in Indian context. Amidst this, school administrators had to ensure continuity of learning despite the closing down of schools.

Despite these challenges and limitations, and with no previous familiarity with handling such an unimaginable circumstance, the school administrators, like in other parts of the world, did respond to the situation. It would be pertinent to highlight here that in such unprecedented situations, responsiveness to change and navigating through the complexities is vital as it keeps the system going. The present paper attempts to understand how school administrators responded to the situation amidst these challenges via examining the various pandemic-led initiatives undertaken by them. . The paper also reflects upon the broader implications and explicates whether schools were able to fulfil their multi-functional roles during the pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the primary data collected from district-level educational administrators, who are in charge of school education at the district level. In the present context, District Education Officers (DEOs) are the educational administrators who have always been at the forefront in ensuring the seamless functioning of the school education system, apart from the implementation of policies and programmes. They are often envisioned as educational leaders and are instrumental in overseeing the education of the public school system within their district. In fact, they are the key functionaries in maintaining and improving the overall quality of education. Though the nomenclature of the officers differs from state to state, there is considerable overlap in their roles and responsibilities across the states.

A questionnaire was used to gather information on initiatives and changes initiated in response to the pandemic and impending school closures. The data was collected in the first quarter of the year 2021, exactly a year after the onset of the pandemic and the resultant shutting down of the schools. About 30 district-level officers responded to the questionnaire. Data was also collected through informal conversations with some of the officers regarding how different stakeholders responded to the initiatives introduced by the officers.

In the present paper, administrators and District Education Officers (DEOs) are used interchangeably. The initiatives discussed in the paper are either their individual-led initiatives or they have successfully implemented the interventions of their respective Education Department.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The work of educational leaders often involves strategy, culture, relationships, administration, operations and complex decision-making, with multiple moving parts and often conflicting stakeholder views (Netolicky, 2020). In fact, they play a very critical role in bringing change within the organization. Furthermore, in these precarious and stressful pandemic times, their leadership role becomes even more crucial to ensure the well-being of teachers and students and address their concerns against the backdrop of school closures. This untoward contingency necessitated the need for a revolutionary change within the system, which will completely redefine or replace the existing teaching-learning practices.

The administrators had to respond promptly and think of newer ways of doing things. They also had to devise ways to implement the change by designing strategies and developing a roadmap. However, it is easier said than done. Any change involves a redeployment or redirection of organizational resources toward a host of new activities, including developing a plan or strategy for implementing the change, communicating the need for change, training employees, developing new processes and practices, restructuring and reorganizing the organizations (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006). Undoubtedly, change creates ambiguity and uncertainties in and around those undergoing the change (Mc Kendall, 1993). In the process of change, resistance and inertia from various stakeholders is unavoidable. Thus, they must also build internal support for change and reduce resistance to it through widespread participation in the change process and other means (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006).

The pandemic brought a paradigm shift in the roles of the educational administrators (the DEOs in the present context), and they were at the centre stage in dealing with the demanding situation. Their role was not just confined to planning for newer ways of teaching-learning, but also to ensure learning for all, thereby catering to the different needs and circumstances of the children. The role of DEOs is even more crucial as they oversee the public school system, which is predominantly accessed by disadvantaged groups. Thus, thinking out of the box became inevitable as remote learning was only one of the several ways to connect with the students and ensuring equitable education for all was imperative. The administrators played a pivotal role in initiating the change, sustaining the momentum, dealing with resistance from different stakeholders and capitalizing on the existing resources.

RESPONSE TO CHANGE DURING COVID 19 - THE INDIAN CONTEXT

The year 2020 was a year of dual challenge for educational administrators working in the government school system in India. On the one hand, the administrators were grappling with the unexpected crisis that arose due to the school closures in view of Covid 19. In addition to this, the administrators also witnessed the release of a new education policy in the country, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and had to initiate the process of planning and implementation of the policy in their respective states. Both events laid enormous responsibilities on the shoulders of the administrators. Their change-prone attitude came to the forefront in addressing and dealing with two diametrically opposite contexts. The release of NEP2020 was the culmination of several years of discussions and consultations with various stakeholders, including the educational administrators and implementation guidelines were yet to be finalized . However, the sudden closure of schools due to the pandemic was unexpected and unplanned and left the administrators bewildered in such a grim scenario. The challenge in front of the administrators was to ensure continuity of learning despite the closing down of schools.

Due to the lockdown and sudden closure of schools, different stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, parents and students were surrounded by uncertainties and anxiousness. Several other challenges also surfaced due to the lockdown and the resultant unexpected economic distress. The majority of the DEOs reported that with the loss of jobs and livelihoods, many parents have started withdrawing their children from fee-charging private schools and enrolled them in government schools during the pandemic. Another major impact of the lockdown has been on the migrants residing in the cities and towns who started migrating back to their villages along with their children. Moreover, children belonging to the poorer families, who often availed of Mid-day Meals provided by the schools, had to forego their meals. In some states, provisions like dry ration being provided to the families or the meal cost being transferred to the student's bank account were adopted to meet the nutritional needs of these children. However, widespread economic distress and loss of jobs, including internal migration back to villages, have pushed families into poverty and children into distressing situations, including malnutrition, having to work and early marriages for girls (UNESCO, 2021).

The revolutionary change through technology:

In response to the closure of educational institutions, the entire world made a sudden and complete shift to online teaching, and India is no exception to this.

Technology, which was only a supplement to the teaching process before the pandemic, became the dominant mode of the transaction process. A shift in learning from classroom to home also brought a shift in teaching from offline to online mode. At this juncture, both administrators and teachers had to be accustomed to the various synchronous and asynchronous digital platforms to continue the teaching-learning process and limit the disruption in education.

The DEOs mentioned that initially, teachers were not very confident in online teaching and faced problems due to their unfamiliarity in using ICT and its integration with education. Like teachers and students, parents were clueless about the online teaching process. They were often asked to facilitate the learning of children at home. Still, they could not contribute much to their child's learning due to lack of familiarity, low literacy levels or lack of time. Many parents were also concerned about the health hazards of having their children spend long hours in front of the screen. At this juncture, the role of administrators became extremely crucial in leading the desired change and transitioning the stakeholders from the state of inertia. They imparted capacity building training to the teachers and instilled confidence in them.

A DEO from the southern state of Tamilnadu reported that the teachers responded well in handling the students via online platforms. They were trained with the help of the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) through the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Tamil Nadu. The training was given on various ICT-related topics like how to conduct online classes, evaluation strategies with the support of ICT-based websites and applications, subject-specific training on the integration of ICT for their subjects, creation of educational resources, etc. Two weeks of training for teachers was conducted in the evenings, and they wholeheartedly supported the initiatives by the administrators. Likewise, a DEO from Gujarat also shared that online teaching was carried out in all the government and private schools in his district. The directorate developed an educational portal, namely "E-Gyan Mitra", to cater to the students of classes I to XII. Launched first in the Union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, this application supports four languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi. Gradually, the teachers started gaining confidence, and classes were conducted using Google Classroom, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. The WhatsApp application emerged as one major platform for communication across the states for sharing information, sending short videos, audio clips, etc. Students, too, used this platform to share their written assignments with the teachers.

In addition, the teachers were also trained in using Google Forms for preparing question papers. They also supplemented the online teaching-learning through several other ways like preparing short videos or downloading educational videos on YouTube and sharing them with the students. In Tamilnadu, the students were also guided to scan the QR code from their textbooks and access the educational content videos and documents from their place. Teachers were also facilitated through the DIKSHA platform, a Government of India initiative that helps teachers create training content, profiles, in-class resources, assessment aids, news and announcements and connect with the teacher community. Needless to say, the centrality of the teachers in the teaching-learning process has been further reinforced during the pandemic times.

Similarly, regular counselling sessions were held for the parents as well as the students. In the words of one DEO, "There was a situation of panic among the parents as the lockdown hindered the studies of the children. Parents were anxious due to the complete closure of schools and classroom teaching". Administrators reported that regular counselling of parents was undertaken regarding their involvement and spending quality time with their children, especially in these pandemic times.

Non-technological initiatives to mitigate inequities:

In order to ensure every single child is learning and is not deprived of education, which is their Fundamental Right, the administrators came up with several non-technological initiatives. These were demand-driven interventions to ensure equity and to promote inclusive education.

A common practice adopted by a few states was to categorize the students as per the availability and accessibility of resources, thereby introducing focused interventions. For instance, in the state of Assam, students were divided into the following five categories of households to ensure quality and equity in the teaching-learning process - category 1: a smartphone with a 4G internet connection/desktop computer/laptop and a TV set with DTH or cable TV connection; category 2: a smartphone with a 4G internet connection; category 3: a TV set with DTH or cable TV connection; category 4: a smartphone with a limited data pack or no internet package/ a radio; category 5: No digital device. On the basis of these categories, access to education was planned accordingly by the administrators of each district. For instance, teachers visited the villages for children in category five and arranged a very small gathering of students following all the COVID-19 protocols.

In fact, this practice of initiating face-to-face transactions in smaller groups by following all the necessary COVID protocols has been one of the several ways to reach out to all the students during the pandemic. This has been adopted by several states and named differently, like homeschooling, community classes, Mohalla schools, etc, but the essence remains the same. In the state of Sikkim, for instance, the idea of homeschooling was introduced by the administrators to enable elementary students to have a continuum of learning during the pandemic with the theme "If the child is not able to come to school, let the school go to the child". The district-level administrator from the state of Sikkim reported that the homeschooling concept was initiated to cater to the educational needs of the students from KG classes to class VIII as per provisions of the Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The Block Resource and Cluster Resource Centre coordinators (BRCCs & CRCCs) were given the responsibility of surveying and mapping the physical location of students and teachers. The heads of institutions were responsible for formulating strategies and mapping challenges. The practice of visiting the homes of students or calling a few students to a common place was adopted. Utilization of open spaces as centres of teaching-learning as per the convenience of the students was identified. Once homeschooling was implemented, the administrators and the Head of the Institutions constantly monitored and supported the teachers in ensuring that teaching-learning was taking place effectively. Initially, the parents were apprehensive regarding the concept of homeschooling due to the fear of COVID-19, but they were convinced and assured about the safety and security of their child.

In case the parents were unwilling to send their children, the distribution of handwritten notes and worksheets was initiated. For this, the administrators motivated the teachers to physically hand out worksheets and notes on various subjects on a weekly basis. This practice was followed in several states like Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Sikkim etc.

In addition, the administrators also came up with the idea of using television to impart education. Due to the availability of TVs in the majority of households, this alternative was not only found feasible but also addressed the issues of lack of electronic devices and internet connectivity. Teachers and students were familiarized with the educational content telecasted through the television. For instance, in Tamilnadu, the Kalvi TV channel was introduced, wherein educational videos of about thirty minutes duration for all classes were telecasted. Similarly, Doordarshan also broadcasted classes under the Shiksha Darpan initiative. In Haryana, students were motivated to watch EDUSAT Programmes meant for distance classroom education from school level to higher education. The administrators were also proactively involved in

spreading awareness about several other initiatives of the Government of India, like Swayam Prabha channel meant for both school and higher education.

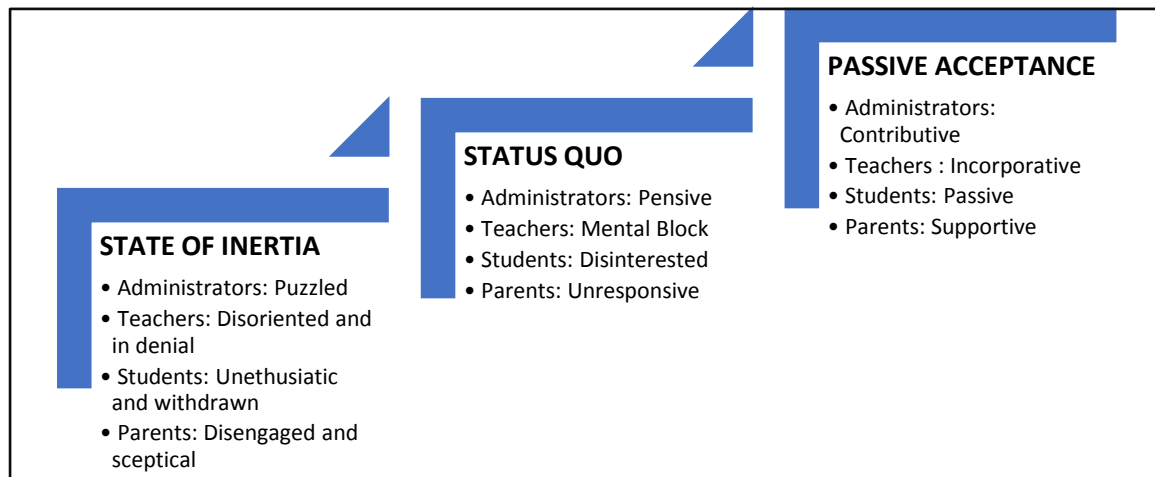
In areas with no or limited internet connectivity, the commencement of radio classes was another initiative undertaken by the administrators with the support extended by the Education Department. For instance, one educational administrator from the Leh Ladakh region reported that radio classes were started with support from the Education Department of UT Ladakh on different subjects. Similarly, in the UT of Lakshadweep, a similar initiative titled Lakshadweep Radio Padhashala was initiated by the Education Department and implemented by the administrators.

However, in the remotest locations, the challenges are very different due to the absence of any means of communication. In the words of one administrator of the Leh-Ladakh region:

There are some areas in Leh-Ladakh with extremely difficult access like Lingshed/Dipling/Yulchung/Nyraks etc. where it takes three days to reach by trekking, especially Trans-Singay-Lla area. These are the remotest villages with no network.

Due to scanty resources and poor communication channels, the administrator initiated the practice of teaching-learning through peers. The officer selected a few senior students who were taken as senior peer teachers and helped the students of junior classes a few hours every week. The officer followed up with the students every two weeks and this worked well for all the students who resided in remotest locations.

It is pertinent to highlight here that all the alternative approaches to teaching, both technology-driven and non-technology initiatives, are stakeholder-centric approaches and necessitated the involvement of one and all. Their level of involvement and participation witnessed gradual change due to concerted efforts (See Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Stakeholder transition model for alternative ways of teaching.

In the initial designing stage, there was a lot of reluctance from the teachers, students and parents. Even administrators were bewildered about how to deal with the unexpected and unheard situation of abrupt school closures. In the implementation stage, parents and students were gradually persuaded, and teachers were motivated and provided with adequate training on online teaching, yet there was reluctance to accept these approaches. As the stakeholders started foreseeing remote chances of reopening schools in the near future, they started accepting the newer ways of teaching-learning, but with a lot of passivity. In this 'new normal', the administrators' and teachers' proactiveness and promptness have been phenomenal. Parents also gradually started supporting in whichever possible way they could to ensure the continuity of their child's learning. The students, though adapted to the newer ways of learning, have been at the receiving end and have exhibited enormous endurance in facing everyday struggles. However, the consequences of the school closures have been severe and same are discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

IMPLICATIONS:

The online mode of teaching-learning did create a divide among those students who have access and are continuously learning, whereas there were many students who could not use technology due to various reasons. The lack of devices with the children due to financial constraints was a major impediment to online learning. This was even more difficult in households where there were two or more school-going children, thus requiring multiple devices. Highlighting the widening inequalities, one administrator reported:

"Students from privileged backgrounds supported by their parents and eager to learn could find their way past closed school doors to alternative learning opportunities, but those from disadvantaged backgrounds often remained excluded when the schools were shut down to contain the Covid spread".

Another administrator reported that as some of the students couldn't afford to buy smartphones, the teachers couldn't add all the students to WhatsApp groups and couldn't ensure the participation of all students in synchronous learning platforms. Also, poor internet connectivity at both teacher's and students' ends was reported by the DEOs from several states. This was even more challenging for districts located in difficult geographical terrain, hilly and forest areas. Poor attendance of students in online classes and less opportunity for face-to-face interaction with the students added to the problems. Some teachers, too, were passive towards teaching with the help of technology as online teaching requires them to have a basic understanding of using digital platforms, and they preferred face-to-face transactions instead. Students, too, gradually adopted this mode of learning, but in these challenging times, they are bereft of social and peer interactions and engaged in learning that is primarily technology-driven and in isolation.

The lack of access to technology or fast internet services has prevented such students to continue and participate in the learning process. Thus, the digital divide in education resulted in a learning crisis among the students. As rightly pointed out by Lancker and Parolin (2020), while learning might continue unimpeded for children from higher-income households, children from lower-income households are likely to struggle to complete homework and online courses because of their precarious housing situations.

Moreover, despite several government and administrators initiatives, the response has been lukewarm. For instance, in Odisha, only 35 percent students from Class I to X attended YouTube live classes, while only around 22.46 percent students attended classes broadcast by Doordarshan under the Shiksha Darpan initiative, and less than ten per cent attended the Radio Pathshala classes (Maharana, 2021).

Learning loss among the students is only one side of the story. Additionally, the majority of the DEOs reported that school closures greatly affected the mental well-being of the students. In the words of one DEO:

I do feel that the closing down of schools and online teaching has affected the psychological and emotional well-being of the students because they are in the habit of face-to-face interactions, i.e., offline mode. So it created a panic situation among the students and put them under tremendous pressure.

Another officer reported that those students who couldn't afford to buy gadgets and use internet connectivity because of their family's financial conditions were psychologically affected. Even though such students were provided with many alternative ways of teaching, it gave rise to untoward comparisons and complexes. In the words of another DEO:

When there is more than one child at home, they face problems due to insufficient gadgets at home. The smartphones were by the parents to their working sites. The students had to wait for the parents' arrival and also to complete the tasks given by the teacher in the early morning or late night. This made the students suffer academically as well as psychologically.

The effect on students' mental health due to the closure of educational institutions has not only been confined to the school level. A recent study by Dayal (2021) on a similar issue conducted on the students pursuing higher education points out that the majority of them feel stressed, and the major reasons that affected mental and emotional well-being included pressure of online learning, restriction on social interaction, and unavailability of emotional support.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this imminent pandemic-led educational crisis, a reorganization in the roles and approach of the educational administrators was witnessed. They embraced change and have worked tirelessly to ensure student learning continuity. The DEOs could not succeed without the forthcoming and relentless support of the teachers. Resilience in the education system has emerged as an essential concept, along with recognition of the centrality of teachers and teaching in school education (UNESCO, 2021). The educational leaders, along with their teachers, became the strong pillars of the system, and they worked together to deal with this colossal challenge of school closures. It would not be an overstatement to mention that the endurance of the administrators and the tenacity of the teachers were extremely instrumental in ensuring the learning of the students.

It would not be an overstatement to mention that during the pandemic, we created newer learning spaces, donned newer roles and embarked upon a challenging journey in the garb of 'new normal'. However, the centrality of schooling in a child's life is undeniable, and the profound role of schools in shaping a child's life has been well-established. School as an institution is not only an academic site but also a social space, and due to its multifarious functions, there cannot be any replacement or alternative to schools. Likewise, teachers had to change to online teaching, requiring them to use various digital

tools and resources to solve problems and implement new approaches to teaching and learning, but technology can amplify the work of great teachers, but it can never substitute them. Although the debate is still ongoing with regard to the effectiveness of school closures on virus transmission, the fact that schools are closed for a long period of time could have detrimental social and health consequences for children living in poverty and are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities (Lancker and Parolin, 2020).

Furthermore, in such challenging times, endurance, sensitivity, resilience, cooperation, empathy, etc., assume more importance than syllabus completion and exam scores. As rightly pointed out by Netolicky (2020), at this time, more than ever, we must consider humans before outcomes, students before results and well-being before learning. The pandemic has once again revealed the fact that there is an urgent need for an equitable, sustainable and humane education that moves beyond the instrumentalist perspective of education.

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Commentary: Empowering the Bahujan Samaj: Way forward

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Empowering the Bahujan Samaj: Way forward

--K.Vidyasagar Reddy

Abstract

This paper is about an ongoing research that attempts at analyzing the major socio-economic and political developments that dealt with the issues and concerns of the marginalized communities like the SCs, STs, OBCs and religious minorities that constitute about 80% of the Indian population in India. Incidentally, these communities had been subjected to multiple forms of social exclusion. Given their numerical size and reckonable expansion, the marginalized communities have been described as the Bahujan samaj. Various governments have tried to respond to the issues and concerns of the Bahujan samaj. Besides the state, civil society and individuals have also a role to play in their empowerment. The study is focused on the issue of their empowerment through economic reforms, educational reservations and political representations. Besides, the ongoing study examines how the process of 'bahujanisation' had been undertaken within the purview of bahujan politics.

Key Words: Bahujan Samaj, Reform Process, Reservations and Political Representation

Introduction

Indian society is largely a plural one due to the existence of a caste system that was formalized into the four-fold social hierarchy (chaturvarna system) that was justified by the ancient Hindu legal code, 'Manusmriti' (Michael, SM. 1999). At the top were the upper castes, viz., Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas and at the bottom was the fourth category the Sudras. Whereas an additional category of untouchables, also known as the Dalits, was not at all considered as part and parcel of the Hindu social order till recently! All these terms refer to graded groups of various artisans and occupational peoples, sometimes called castes and sub-castes (Ekta Singh, 2005). Like the colored

‘race’ in the US, the colorless ‘caste’ played havoc in India, as both these social categories were compared to ‘slavery’ in the writings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Ambedkar, BR., 1989).

The caste system in India can be described as an elaborately stratified social hierarchy, distinguishing its social structure from any other nation’s social structure. The history of the caste system is multifaceted and complex. Caste is a social evil and untouchability is the product of caste-based social system. Many struggles were launched against untouchability and social exclusion. Under the gifted leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, this evil effect of untouchability was widely exposed to the world. Its discriminatory role on the basis of one’s birth is unparalleled and inexcusable. Due to its divisive character, Hindu religious society is divided. He struggled for over two decades against its inhuman character, but in vain. Failed to evoke a positive response from the religious fundamentalists, Dr Ambedkar had to leave Hinduism and join Buddhism prior to his death.

Due to the role of caste in Indian politics for over decades, people belonging to various castes and communities had been so politicized as much as their politics was subjected to casteist influences. For long, the upper strata of society that comprised of the three upper castes viz., Brahmin, Vyshya and Kshatriya had participated in the political process only to monopolize it for itself, at all levels. All the democratic institutions of a socio-political nature were converted into their private ones, whereby the entry of the marginalized was almost restricted. Whereas the members of the Bahujan samaj had hardly partaken in the political process. Even if some of the marginalized communities like the Dalits and Adivasis were there entrapped into the political system in proportion to their populations, which was done more to legitimize the manuwadi⁶ politics rather than to reinforce the Bahujan samaj.

Despite the fact that some marginalized communities like Dalits and Adivasis were entrapped into the political system in proportion to their populations, this

⁶ It refers to the existing social categorization that justifies the divisive society on the basis of casteist social and legal code of Manu.

was more to legitimize the manuwadi politics rather than reinforce the Bahujan community.

Reform Process

Thanks to social crusaders like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Sant Ravidas and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, the cruel practice of social evil like the ‘untouchability’ and exclusion was questioned over a period of time. Although social reform movements were launched by several reformers in different states, expected social transformations was hardly achieved. Dr.Ambedkar was more forthright in his struggle against casteism at home and abroad. Owing to his thoughtful efforts of educating and organizing the ‘untouchable’ communities, the process of social liberation was initiated long before India attained Independence. In consequence, he was instrumental in getting certain social safeguards for these disadvantaged sections from the British government. Be it settlement of land or separate electorate for the purpose of this community was approved off in the Round Table Conferences held in London. Certain attempts were made to bring back the discriminated communities into the mainstream. In fact, the alien rulers enacted a few social policies that could liberate the marginalized from the age-old clutches of casteist hierarchy. Yet, social equality was incomplete.

In the post-independent India, thanks to Dr.Ambedkar, political equality has been achieved ever since there prevailed a universal adult franchise, ‘one man-one vote, and one vote-same value’ in the country. Since these marginalized have got their proportional representation, politically if not otherwise, the political parties had to cultivate this electorate on a regular basis. Not only that these communities were electing the representatives but also contesting themselves for the same political positions. Confined to contesting in the ‘reserved constituencies’ in the initial phase of the political process, they were contesting in the general seats thereafter. Thus, the rise of ‘vote bank’ politics had been witnessed for over a few decades. Owing to their rising political awareness, the marginalized votes cannot be taken for granted anymore, as

was the case for so long. By the way, one could witness the rise of social reform movements that were organized by mostly the Dalits in various states. Although such movements were instrumental in raising awareness among the marginalized communities, social transformation still remained a distant dream. Of course, various governments were ready to reform the deformities of unequal social hierarchy through piecemeal efforts.

Despite their rise in economic and education levels, caste discrimination acquired a new form and continued to persist. An overview of different forms of untouchability that deny the SCs access to basic public services as was observed by a study⁷ shows how deep-rooted is the issue of social exclusion. Besides, certain media reports about the refusal to eat midday meals cooked by Dalits in states like the Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, expose the gravity of the problem of caste discrimination in the country. Although there are numerous laws and enactments available for addressing the caste discrimination, states and governments find it difficult to implement the same. For, the upper strata of the Indian society were unwilling to such reform processes and thereby sabotaged the efforts. Different strategies of sabotage are being practiced for the purpose. Starting from the law-making agencies that keep many a loophole in the law so that it can be challenged in a court of law to the process of delayed implementation by the manuwadi-minded executive are such strategies. Obviously, the marginalized communities are at the receiving end.

Constitutional Ways

Age-old structural deficiencies like the caste exclusion and social distance are so naked that no civilized state can tolerate it to continue. Indian state and its constitution had to grapple with the problematic and offer some solutions in terms of various provisions that rescued the caste victims. Numerous Constitutional provisions are there clearly declaring about the scope of

⁷ An Action Aid-conducted intensive survey of 555 villages in 11 states in 2000 provided the data on the subject. Denial of access to basic public services like water facilities, barbers' services, carpenters, potters, village shops/hotels, health centres and public transport has been observed quite glaringly.

safeguarding the interests of this community. Incidentally, various political parties and pressure groups have endorsed accordingly the will of the state that was reflected in the preamble of the Constitution. Thus, the manuwadi leadership at the centre had to yield to the political pressure and thereby, untouchability was abolished legally, as per Art. 17 of our constitution. Since 1950, the Indian government had enacted numerous laws to benefit the untouchables and their social life. Suffice it to cite the case of such provisions like the Fundamental Rights (FRs) as well as the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). Besides, several acts and enactments were formulated at various points of time in the states and at the Centre. Legally speaking, the Bahujan community is the most safeguarded one in the country. Yet, the government was silent when these laws⁸ were hardly implemented. Perhaps the root cause of their social exclusion stems from the prevalent casteist social system in the country. In other words, contrary to the theoretical constitutional provisions is the practice of various regimes as discernible.

In other words, Contrary to theoretical constitutional provisions, the practice of various regimes can be discerned.

Besides, it is the state and government that launched a few programmes of socio-economic nature in the country. As part of anti-poverty programs, land for landless, house sites and subsidized food grains were offered to these communities. Although these programs were aimed at benefitting the marginalised communities, other communities have derived more benefits. In any case, the nature of such programs is casual and cosmetic, which hardly ensures sustainable development, let alone empowerment. Yet, the state and government could not initiate any radical programme that would fail the interests of dominant stakeholders like the upper castes. Even if there was one, that was hardly implemented to its logical conclusion. Thus, one witnesses a formulation of numerous acts and enactments that were aimed at manipulating the Dalits. A series of schemes and programmes were notified and introduced.

⁸ Reservations in education, employment and politics that were offered in proportion to their populations could not be implemented due to the non-cooperative attitude of the bureaucracy that was smacked of casteist character.

Yet, none of them were implemented to any extent to benefit these communities. One could observe this from the cases of Dalit-oriented socio-economic programmes in the last seven decades. In consequence, the marginalized had always been dependent upon the political parties that could raise their community issues and concerns.

And, the marginalised castes and tribes that were deprived of educational rights from times immemorial had of late availed the constitutional facilities in the fields of education, employment and politics slowly and gradually. Thanks to Dr. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian constitution, the marginalised communities started utilizing the reservation facilities so that at least their economic development was initiated henceforth. Despite many an obstacle, the marginalised communities had shown keen interest in educating their wards so as to get them into public sector employment. Some of them had also occupied key positions in the prevalent political and administrative processes, which ensured them certain representative responsibilities. In a way, some of those castes and tribes have had the rare opportunity to serve their respective communities to the extent possible. For, their official positions were meant to serve the state and nation first, but not their individual and communal interests.

Reservation Initiatives

Thanks to B.R. Ambedkar's instrumental role in the Constitution-making, the governments are bound to implement the policy of reservations in education and employment. The policy was conceived as a measure to promote social justice based on the principle of distributive justice and compensation for past disadvantages. But then, the policy was confined to only the public sector that employs not more than 10 percent of the workforce in the country. Whereas, the remaining 90 percent of employment is still controlled by the private sector. Meanwhile, over the years, the public sector was shrinking over a period of time due to deliberate policies that various governments had been pursuing in the country.

Thus, the reservation policy has been devised to undo the prevailing/age-old reservations to the upper castes from times immemorial. In a way, it is described as a measure of 'reverse reservation'. However, the upper castes seem to have devised different methods of sabotaging these political reservations, too. For instance, those spineless and selfish representatives belonging to these lower castes will be so selected and picked up as to get them elected as 'reserved' legislators! As Kanshiram⁹ termed as stooges in the hands of upper castes, such legislators dance to the tunes of their upper caste masters. Even such little gesture or tokenism as reservation policy was implemented only in the public sector.

Meanwhile, several studies on the Labour Market reveal that an insignificant percentage of these communities were employed while excluding a large majority of them by way of discrimination. Whereas those near and dear or kith and kin¹⁰ of the private managements were given jobs beyond their population proportion! In any case, the vast majority of private institutions were never asked to provide jobs to the candidates of the marginalised communities. Obviously, the private sector that employed around 90 percent of the work force in the country was under no obligation to fulfill the constitutional requirements.

Similar attempts were made at other global forums thereafter. At the national level too, there were some attempts to raise the issue of reservations in the private sector at Bhopal and other places. In consequence, the Digvijay Singh-led Congress government in Madhya Pradesh and other states was ready to comply with the Bhopal declaration that aimed at offering better facilities at all levels, including the private sector. Other states and political parties were compelled to gradually concede the demand of private reservations gradually. For instance, once the Maharashtra government, under the Congress Chief

⁹ Thanks to the efforts of bahenji Mayawati that the bhaichara committees, consisting of all castes and communities were established at the booth level in all the assembly segments so as to ensure unified campaign. As part of the campaign, booth level leaders were working, notwithstanding any sort of community differences.

¹⁰ Due to Bhai-Bhatijavad type of nepotism, favouring near and dear irrespective merit and talent is discernible.

Minister SK Shinde, tried to implement the same but failed due to protests from the business group pressure.

More than the private sector, the bureaucracy was reluctant to implement the same. Thus, the concept received a setback as the government retreated on the issue. As part of the continuity of privatisation process, the state has pursued the policies of more privatisation since 1990s. In the wake of two-decade-long globalisation, the state practised the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, whereby the public sector became under the weather. Still, the private sector was persuaded to take over and own such the so-called sick units that were under the public sector, at a throw-away prices! Meanwhile, the winds of change in the name of 'Economic Reforms' have slowly shaken the very foundations of the Dalits and Adivasis. In consequence, more than anyone else it is these who would be the first ones to be affected very adversely in terms of 'no reservation in private sector'.

Bahujan Samaj

Meanwhile, the emergence of Dalit-oriented parties was noticed in 1980s and after. Even some Dalit leadership-based parties had surfaced on the political horizon of the country. Thanks to the efforts of Kanshiram, one witnessed the rise of the missionary movement that came to be known as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984, for instance. Within a short span of three decades, the party had become the third-largest national party in the country. Because of its innovative ideas and strategies, the party became a ruling party in the largest state of India, Uttar Pradesh on a couple of occasions.

Unlike the other political parties, the BSP seeks to defend the marginalized communities in letter and spirit. Obviously, the paper elucidates the conceptual understanding of the very language and vocabulary that the Bahujan politics had been associated with. Based on the ideological backdrop of Phule-Ambedkar's struggles and works, Kanshiram was instrumental in leading the Bahujan samaj movement and party until it became the ruling regime in India's largest state (UP) in India. Later on, Mayawati had inherited

the political legacy of Kanshiram and continued to lead the movement and party, notwithstanding any sort of pressures from ‘within and without’ the Bahujan politics. The Bahujan politics is primarily aimed at ‘capturing politics power’, as politics was considered the ‘master key’. Hence, the politics of reservations that had been played on in since independence by the ‘manuwadi regimes’, has been exposed during the period.

Although the Bahujan samaj has got the nation-wide appeal and scope, its political spread is confined to a very few states in the North India. As part of the Bahujan politics, the Bahujan Samaj Movement (BSM) and its party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) that, largely represented the numerical majority in terms of social base, has emerged as the third largest national party within a couple of decades of its foundation. The party ruled the largest state in the country, Uttar Pradesh, for a full term (2007-12).

Interestingly, the issue of sarvajan samaj¹¹ that was popularized by Mayawati, as part of her strategy of social engineering, on the eve of the 2007 Assembly elections in the UP, albeit ensured landslide victory for the Bahujan samaj, became a point of utter confusion among the marginalized communities. The issue was so blown out of proportion by its political adversaries that a section of the Bahujan samaj was misled and thereby became controversial. As usual, the role of manuwadi media that was showing the rise of Brahmin samaj in the Bahujan politics in a big way, whereby the vulnerable sections among the Bahujan samaj got petrified and moved in a negative direction.

By the way, this has had some impact on the deviation of a section of OBCs as well as the Muslims in the last elections in the state. Interestingly, this issue has upset the poll prospects of the BSP in two ways. One, it had alienated a small section of the Bahujan samaj, like the most backward castes and the Muslims, from continuing with their support to the Mayawati regime. Second, on the same pretext, a systematic media campaign was conducted whereby the

¹¹ It refers to the inclusion of all communities and their welfare in proportion to their population size.

emerging bond between the Brahmins and Dalits went astray, which has had its toll in defeating the Bahujan samaj. Or else, there was hardly any scope for misapprehension between these communities at a time when Mayawati was harping on the theme of sarvjan samaj day in and day out.

The theme of sarvajan samaj was not to be considered as just an electoral strategy, instead as the author had argued that it had tried to bridge the wide gap between the two poles apart, Dalits and Brahmins, in the casteist social hierarchy in the country. A certain amount of social harmony and political friendship had been prevalent during the time when election campaigns were undertaken in the 2007 elections in the state¹². Besides fetching crucial electoral benefits, the theme of sarvajan samaj had raised awareness levels among both the contending castes. In a way, this was an unusual attempt at promoting goodwill and harmony among different communities within and without the state. There was a possibility of reading some long-term message on account of social engineering of diverse castes and communities in the state. In other words, Bahujan politics was trying to take the society in the direction of social transformation and economic emancipation over a period of time.

Way Forward

As the core theme of Bahujan politics indicates, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's slogan of 'political power is the master key', which had become the main inspiration for the rise of Bahujan politics in India. Political representation of these communities is expected in proportion to their populations in various institutions of governance and development. Political institutions certainly include the state, governments, and political parties, among others. As usual,

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1. ¹²Michael, SM. 1999. Dalits in Modern India: vision and Values, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
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in any democratic state, it is the popular mandate that decides the political regime and its ideological characteristics. Thus, it is beyond the scope of religious and casteist politics as it allows all castes and communities to play their due roles in the political process. And bahujan politics is also not about reservations, nor is it about conventional politics anymore. In fact, Bahujan politics deals with the politics of the majority society, which was the country's most marginalized one.

As part of deepening democracy and decentralizing the governance, bahujan samaj was encouraged to take active participation in the administration so that the Constitutional objectives were realized and implemented in letter and spirit. For over decades after independence, the Indian state and its various governments have been spreading about and thereby enticing the marginalized communities based on ongoing socio-economic reforms and reservation facilities in limited areas of development. While education, employment and political representation have been considered for the purpose, most of such institutions have hardly been controlled by the public sector in the country. Obviously, the private sector is on the rise, all in the name of a 'mixed economy'. More so is the case with the ongoing reform process of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG).

And the Bahujan empowerment that was aimed at creating a favorable environment in the state and society so that a healthy political process was undertaken at all levels. In the name of ideology or otherwise, manuwadi parties and status quo regimes had always tried to undermine the social and legal objectives that were enshrined in the constitution. Suffice it to cite the case of reservations as to know how those constitutional objectives were implemented more in breach than in practice. Thus, the regimes used to resort to the politics of reservations that had caused further humiliation to the marginalized communities rather than raising their dignity of life in the society. Viewed in this backdrop, the Bahujan politics had to expose the hollow claims of such regimes and offer an alternative politics that could raise their living standards and empower them in all fields of life over a period of

time. Apparently, these communities are at the receiving end in the case of availing educational opportunities, if not those in other sectors of development.

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4n Action Aid-conducted intensive survey of 555 villages in 11 states in 2000 provided the data on the subject.

Denial of access to basic public services like water facilities, barbers' services, carpenters, potters, village shops/hotels, health centres and public transport has been observed quite glaringly.

Reservations in education, employment and politics that were offered in proportion to their populations could not be implemented due to the non-cooperative attitude of the bureaucracy that was smacked of casteist character.

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communities were established at the booth level in all the assembly segments so as to ensure unified campaign.

As part of the campaign, booth level leaders were working, notwithstanding any sort of community differences.

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Conversation: Haribabu Ejnavarzala in conversation with Sambit Mallick

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Haribabu Ejnavarzala in conversation with Sambit Mallick**[Transcript of the interview held on 7 February 2023]****Introduction**

Haribabu Ejnavarzala obtained PhD in Sociology from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in 1980, and joined the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (1980–1990) and then moved to the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad (1990–2015). Currently, he is Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi, which aims to foster effective policy dialogue and capacity–building among developing countries on global and regional socioeconomic issues. He held high academic and administrative positions at UoH and other universities/institutes and public policymaking bodies of the Government of India. He made academic and academic-administrative contributions to the growth of the Department of Sociology at UoH where everyone could hold aloft the spirit of academic freedom and integrity without even an iota of fear. He was the Head of the Department of Sociology, UoH (2000–2003; 2006–2007), Dean of School of Social Sciences (2006–2009), Dean of Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication (2000–2002), Pro Vice-Chancellor of UoH (2011–2015), and then superannuated when he was Vice-Chancellor (In-charge) of UoH in 2015. His astute interventions at various bodies of UoH have changed our perceptions about the dynamic relationship between academics and administration. He is considered one of the finest minds in the dynamics of science–society interface studies in the current times. His attempts to forge a dialectical relationship between research and teaching are astounding. His mentoring skills – social production of knowledge – are many notches above the rest. He has supervised the maximum number of PhD theses (around 40) in the Department of Sociology of UoH. All his students are placed very well in top-notch institutions in India and abroad. There is hardly any gap between what he thinks and what he delivers – clarity of expression of a high order, an excellent teacher indeed. Grounded in empirical research with practical relevance, his research on cognitive and ethical dimensions of molecular biology and biotechnology, and their implications for science, technology, innovation and development policies is first-rate. His collaborative research with other disciplines, for example, philosophy and history (including science and engineering) have changed our notions about theory–research praxis, researcher–researched interrelations, theory–method–data embeddedness, nature of explanations, subject–object relations, fact–value dichotomy and research for policymaking.

Sambit Mallick is at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

Sambit Mallick (SM): On behalf of the Editor of Explorations (ISS E-Journal), I sincerely thank you for agreeing to do this. As per our earlier discussion, we would like to keep ‘interdisciplinarity’ and ‘institution-building’ as themes of the conversation. Before proceeding with the themes, I would like you to go down the memory lane and reflect on what motivated you to make a transition from BSc to MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology?

Haribabu Ejnavarzala (HE): After completing BSc, I decided not to depend on my parents for higher education. I got a job in telecom department government of India, Tirupati. I worked for two years (May 1972 to September 1974). I decided to pursue my master’s degree while I was employed. During this period, I started reading social science literature, especially works of Karl Marx that provided a picture of the dynamics of society, which I liked. Then I thought I should pursue a master’s degree in social sciences. Around that time, Sri Venkateswara University established the Department of Anthropology, which attracted me to seek admission. I managed my job by doing evening shifts and attending the university during the day. The job gave me an idea of how the real world worked. After completing my master’s degree in social and cultural anthropology, I got admission at IIT Bombay Humanities and Social Sciences to pursue doctoral program in Sociology.

SM: After completing MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology from Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, you pursued PhD at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Would you kindly narrate your PhD days at IIT Bombay – about the coursework, thesis work, your supervisor, academic ambience – your interaction within humanities and social sciences, in particular, and with science and engineering departments, as a whole?

HE: I joined IITB in November 1974 for doctoral programme in the department of HSS. At PhD level we did two courses in the discipline and two outside the discipline, including one foreign language. I was enrolled in French language and social psychology. We had to give three seminars in all in the doctoral programme. Late Prof. Vijaya Punekar was my thesis advisor. I should say that she was a gentle academic and understood the problems of students and mentored them to critically think. I was awarded the PhD degree in August 1980. I already had an offer to join IIT-Kanpur as assistant professor of Sociology. The offer letter said that I should join after defending my thesis. I joined IIT Kanpur in September 1980.

About the academic ambience: as the department had disciplines of Philosophy, Economics, Sociology and English literature I was exposed to all these disciplines through interaction with fellow students in these disciplines and periodic seminars and lectures by academics invited by the department. I

would say that the department provided an opportunity to appreciate the interconnectedness of social science disciplines.

Outside the department I stayed in a hostel that student drawn from different disciplines who hailed from different parts of the country. It gave an opportunity to interact with graduate (MSc, MTech and PhD) students from natural sciences and engineering disciplines. Students from these disciplines were curious to know the source of data in the social sciences. They were used to obtaining data from lab experiments. They had to be convinced that our sources are observations and interviews with individuals in the society, both archival and real time basis. We had a lot of informality in the hostel and could make friends who came from different parts of the country. I must say that national institutions serve to achieve national integration and national perspective.

SM: You joined as a faculty at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in 1980 and shifted to the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad in 1990. Your experiences at IIT Kanpur for a decade would be enriching for sociologists at technology institutes elsewhere. You must have taught basic sociology courses at the undergraduate level and advanced sociology courses at the PhD level. Your experience of interacting with students and faculty across disciplines, departments, etc. would be interesting.

HE: I joined IIT Kanpur in September 1980. The department offered introductory and advanced courses in the social sciences and English language, linguistics and philosophy at the UG level and offered PhD programme in social sciences. I must say that IIT Kanpur has a very democratic tradition of teaching. If an Assistant Professor may be instructor of a course, the tutorials are handled by senior colleagues including Professors. Further, for a UG mathematics course with a large number of students, tutors would be drawn from engineering departments. This practice breaks down the hierarchy among the faculty across the institution. IIT Kanpur has always respected dissent. A few engineering faculty were well read in philosophy, and social sciences and they appreciated the complex nature of social phenomena. Teaching bright BTech students was a challenge. While most students did courses in social sciences as they were mandatory, some took genuine interest in the courses and later shifted to social sciences to pursue their higher studies. In the department there was a collegiality in dealing with academic matters. However, as the department was rather large, over 30 members, there were cliques cutting across disciplines. But these cliques did not affect the academic activities. The department offered adequate resources to pursue one's teaching and research. One problem was that the teaching schedule is so tight there was little time to do fieldwork for research. The Institute ambience made me more confident and fearless. I was associated with IITK Teachers' Association's as one of the office bearers. The association took up several issues, including demand for higher pay and emoluments for IIT faculty with the Fifth Pay Commission (1996) before it was announced.

SM: What persuaded you to shift from IIT Kanpur to UoH? Would you kindly reflect upon your experiences of encountering UoH in 1990 and then in 2015?

HE: I mentored three PhD students at IIT Kanpur. Around the year 1990 IIT Kanpur increased the tuition fees across all programmes including PhD programme. I was apprehensive that many students aspiring to do PhD may go to universities rather than IIT Kanpur as the tuition fee would be less at many universities, including central universities. I did not want to end up teaching only UG courses. Then I decided to shift to one of the central Universities. Prof. G.S. Aurora, Professor of Sociology during his visit to IIT Kanpur encouraged me to apply for a faculty position at UoH. That is how I moved to UoH in July 1990. The UoH, established in 1974 was shaping up when I joined. In contrast to IIT Kanpur, hierarchy within UoH setup was palpable and resources were scarce.

SM: Interdisciplinary research and institution-building are two important ingredients in globalizing India. Having said this, I do not intend to deemphasize the significance of discipline-bound research. In more senses than one, we must keep the ethos of the academia. The ethos – I am using in a more Mertonian sense. We must hold aloft the banner of the ethos of the university. I mean we should not allow ourselves to be anarchistic at any point of time. At the same time, we must accommodate dissent. That IIT Kanpur was accommodative about the freedom to dissent. It is important to build the department so that it accommodates freedom to dissent and also contributes to knowledge production and dissemination. Academic freedom enables one to produce knowledge in one's field of specialization.

HE: Disciplines are historical formations. It implies that their cognitive domains evolve and expand over time and the practitioners of the disciplines must be alive to this development and accordingly they have to develop new theoretical and methodological resources. For example, our country has been undergoing rapid changes due to advancement in scientific and technological knowledge and social relations and cultural values, beliefs and meaning systems. The departments of sociology in the university must be more dynamic and incorporate the new tendencies in their teaching and research. The faculty members involved in teaching and research should be open-minded and pursue research in new domains and raise new questions in the conventional domains of research. As the department of social sciences are located in the universities, the leadership of the universities should encourage the new areas of inquiry by providing necessary support. The style of leadership of R&D institutions must be based on collegial, dialogic and reflective. The institutions should strive for achieving functional unity among knowledge producers and disseminators on the one hand knowledge seeks and the support staff as they are involved in pursuing the same goal of knowledge production and its dissemination.

I prefer a functional unity among people. I may not like you, you may not like me, but there is a need for functional unity because goal of all of us in the university, teachers and students, are the same- knowledge acquisition and dissemination. We are not antagonist groups as our goal is same. When you want to build an institution or department, what is important is one, democratic governance. Second, transparency. For example, when I was the HoD, UGC special instance program was sanctioned. The first thing I did was to circulate the details of the resources under the grant for different academic purposes. It enables you to do certain things and also places certain constraints on you to do certain other things. I told my colleagues that given these enabling and constraining features of the program, we would have to strengthen our academic program and research. I didn't hide anything from anybody. The sharing of information created a transparent environment where people could see what is there for themselves in the whole thing. I didn't take the resources of the Special Assistance program as I had ongoing research projects which supported my research. AS the dean of the School of Social sciences I adopted a similar approach. The school had different departments and the number of faculty members in the departments varied. Some departments were small and others were big in terms of number of faculty members. To establish equity, I suggested to HoDs that we will give a base grant of equal amount towards academic and maintenance. Then we would top-up the grant by giving an equal amount on the basis of the number of faculty members. The base grant is same for every department small, big. So base grant plus, if a department has 10 faculty members, 10 times x amount, the department gets 10x amount in addition to the base grant. Like that we worked out a formula. When I was Pro-Vice Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor in charge, I impressed up on all the sections of the University – students, teachers and administrative and support staff – that we all have stakes in this system. Different sections of the University are not antagonistic groups, they are stakeholders. So, we are pursuing the same kind of goal – the students, teachers, they are here to learn and also produce new knowledge. The non-teaching staff, support staff should facilitate academic activities. I had dealt with all the staff unions that whatever resources/ benefits they get from UGC, will be distributed according to the rules.

Equitable distribution of funds, takes care of every department - small and big- as I mentioned earlier. So, there is no sort of hiding anything and so on, right? So, I believe that if you have power especially in academic administration, you must use that power to enable people to do things rather than blocking things. In academia, everybody has space to grow right. In a given discipline, if there are 10 faculty members, all 10 people can grow in their own research areas without encroaching on other's path. I used to impress up on the faculty members, especially the younger faculty in the department everybody has space to grow. One you can use of internal resources, and also mobilize resources from other outside agencies. There is a lot of money for projects, right. One has to seek out avenues of funding and apply for research grants. Research projects help in increasing publications. Data collected for a project can be converted into research papers. This is the route that faculty in natural

sciences follow. I used to impress up on the younger faculty members that if you teach you will get salary, but if you do research, you will get visibility and recognition, right. Then resources, for example, when I joined the department in 1990, that was a beginning of introduction of computers in the university. Those day computers were of very small capacity of 258 MB hard disk. One computer for the entire school and one printer was provided for the entire school of social sciences.

Then when I became HoD, Prof. Ramarao, the then VC, whose vision was that all branches of knowledge must grow in a university. He secured UPA grant to the University and he insisted that the grant be given to all departments rather than specific program or departments. The UPA grant enhanced the teaching and research infrastructure, including in-house support for research to all the departments and increased publications significantly. I requested him as part of the improvement of infrastructure, every faculty member should have a computer and a printer to improve his/her performance. He agreed and approved of my proposal. Later, faculty members in other departments also got these facilities. Then in one meeting with Prof. Palle Rama Rao, the VC, with the faculty members of the School of Social Sciences somebody asked him, how come some departments are getting more money, some people are getting more money. You know what he said, “The gear which makes noise gets more grease”.

Dealing with students is another challenge. Whenever they had an issue, they approached me and said, “Sir, you have power, you can decide things right now, here.” I said to them on more than one occasion that I can’t do it. If it’s my household, I can take a decision right now here. It’s an institution; there are systems processes, so I have to go through the institutional protocol. We will try to see that your interests are not harmed, we will take it up at the appropriate level and decide. On one occasion some agitated students held me up for 6-7 hours in my pro-VC chamber. I told them they may agitate to revise my decision, but I can’t change it. The institution is important. I can’t decide things right in front of you.” So that’s how we handled it. So, one thing, in governance, especially academic governance – you should not have a personal agenda to push forward, you should be transparent, you should be more democratic in allowing people to speak. When I started teaching STS course, a few faculty colleagues had expressed the view that there is little sociological content in STS studies. I persisted with the course, mentored students in the area and also continued to publish. So that’s why my research students did research in STS studies. And now people like you are very active researchers in the specialty STS studies. If you pick up new areas of research and start working on that, your work will be noticed fast. And you get to contribute to a new speciality and become visible among the professionals involved in research in the specialty.

SM: How do you look at interdisciplinarity in social sciences broadly and sociology specifically?

HE: Disciplines are historical formations created by academics to gain deeper knowledge about different interrelated dimensions of natural world and social world. Overtime natural science disciplines as empirical disciplines emerged from a broad base of Natural philosophy. Social sciences as empirical disciplines emerged from a broad base of social/moral philosophy. Several subdisciplines (specialties) within different disciplines proliferated over the last hundred years. Disciplinary training gives depth and interdisciplinary exchange gives breadth. Both are required to understand the interrelated phenomena.

SM: About social and cultural dimensions of molecular biology and biotechnology...

HE: Science, Technology and Society (STS) Studies literature shows that there has been a shift in characterizing scientific knowledge from Karl Mannheim's view that all knowledge except scientific knowledge is socially and culturally condition to the view that all knowledge including scientific knowledge socially and culturally conditioned. This is the vantage point from which one should understand science. For example, a molecular biologist using molecular biology tools to improve a crop is motivated by perceived or real social and economic benefits that his/her research would to society. The moratorium imposed by the government of India in the year 2010 on commercial introduction of Bt Brinjal was based on social, economic and environmental concerns. Science as a morally neutral activity is no longer tenable.

SM: Influence of research projects and subsequently interaction with plant molecular biologists...

HE: I was teaching two courses, Science, Culture and Society and Technology, Culture and Society, in collaboration with faculty members from the department of Hyderabad. This involvement helped to initiate projects in STS studies. One of the projects, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, New York, I carried out was to look at how molecular biologists involved in rice research and plant breeders and other specialties also involved in rice research interacted with each other and collaborated. This project provided an opportunity to interact with molecular biologists, plant breeders and who were engaged in research on stresses – biotic (bacterial and virus and insect pests) and abiotic (salinity and drought) that crops are exposed to. I found that whenever new knowledge and associated research practices are introduced, they tend to create anxieties and apprehensions between scientists who are involved in lab-based research and those involved in field-based research who confront real-time problems like biotic and abiotic stresses mentioned above, apart from other field level issues. For example, plant breeders were expected to shift from breeding practices based on phenotypic characteristics to molecular breeding based on characteristics at the genotypic level. For example, molecular biologists who carry out their research at the laboratory

following the notions of standard time and protocols do not seem to appreciate the real-time field problems that plant breeders are confronted with.

SM: National and international funding for interdisciplinary research projects...

HE: Generally speaking, research in the area of innovation studies the funding agencies do recognize the multidimensional nature of the problem and support projects that draws on the expertise of researchers from different disciplines. They tend to see the cross-cutting dimensions and try to evolve a common perspective on the basis of their disciplinary inputs. Such projects provide greater insights in understanding the phenomenon. Now, there is a greater realization of the significance of interdisciplinarity.

SM: Subsequent publications from research projects...

HE: My involvement in research in the area of STS studies with a focus on plant biotechnology helped me to publish on the social and cultural dimensions of knowledge production and its application. I carried out, in addition to the Rockefeller Foundation- supported project, a collaborative project involving economists from India and China. The project – Systems of Innovation for Socially Inclusive Development (SSID), was supported by the IDRC Canada. My publications include cognitive and social dimensions of collaborative research on rice, involving molecular biologists and plant breeders. Potential of genomics-based non-proprietary technologies such as Marker-Assisted Selection (MASS) technology, open- source innovations in agriculture, obsolescence of genetically modified seed due to natural and economic considerations to mention a few. I also published in the area of DNA barcoding useful species of plants conserved by communities to mention a few. I also have chapters in edited books published by Springer: one on Risks associated with Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) and one Modern Genetics as an opportunity for innovations in agriculture. (My publications can be accessed on Google, Acadeimia.edu and Research Gate.)

SM: Science policies in developing countries with specific reference to India...

HE: India was perhaps one of the first countries in the world to announce the first national Science policy in the year 1958. This policy helped in expanding existing R&D institutions including universities and establishment of new ones. The policy created equal opportunities for men and women to pursue science education and research. It aimed at accruing benefits of science and technology to all sections of society. Later keeping in view, the advancements in science and technology and socio-economic and environmental concerns, Technology Policy Statement 1983, Science and technology policy of 2003 and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy of 2013. The relationship between policy and practice is dialectical. For example, the government of India mandates agricultural R&D institutions to improve productivity of food crops, horticultural crops. Agricultural scientists use their theoretical repertoire

and methodological tool box to find solutions to increase agricultural productivity. Similarly, whenever new knowledge is sought to be applied to solve real-world problems, it gives rise to a new policy to approve the application within a regulatory framework.

SM: What is the state of science in contemporary India?

HE: Though the significance of science for economic, social and cultural development was realized soon after gaining political independence, funding for science and technology activities has not grown consistently. Allocation of public funds hovers around 0.6 to 0.8 per cent of the GDP. In comparison, the developed countries allocate 2 to 3 per cent of their GDP. While the STIP 2013 recognizes the significance of scientific and technological innovation for the development of the country, this realization does not get translated to concrete and adequate budgetary commitments. When India achieved the status of the fifth largest economy in the world, to sustain this status, we must produce high-quality human resources in all branches of learning.

SM: How do you look at the hiatus between building scientific institutions and scientific temper in India?

HE: Scientific temper promotes rational thinking and evidence-based actions. Scientific institutions are hierarchical organizations established to promote scientific temper. While rule-based organizations are required to perform, the organizations must be more democratic and transparent in their functioning. Governance of scientific institutions must be democratic, transparent in sharing information and resources, decentralised decision-making. Academic institutions are dynamic by their very nature of activities like production of knowledge and its dissemination to students and the society at large.

SM: That is very important, I mean that democratic governance, that transparency. That social and cultural dimensions and the kind of funding, so far as interdisciplinary projects are concerned and subsequent publications. I mean projects on their own do not hold anything if they do not yield any publications, research papers. And some kind of implications of these projects, of these socio-cultural dimensions of molecular biology, biotechnology stuff – for the current science, technology, innovation and development policies that the government has taken up – I mean there is nothing new actually in that – actually they have kept most of the things from the 2013 document, then came up with the 2020 document. But science policies are extremely important for a developing country like India. And India perhaps was the first country to formulate its first science policy. Under Nehru's leadership the Scientific Policy Resolution in 1958. It was the first. And others followed India in fact. But even after 60-65 years of formulation of that scientific resolution, I think we lag behind in science and of course technology as such and where we missed that bus.

HE: After the Scientific Policy Resolution was announced in 1958, we expanded universities, created new institutions. So, what actually happened since then is that the budget allocated to science and technology research remained almost stagnant, at about 0.6 to 0.8 %, whereas in other countries if you see, they allocated at least 2-3% of their GDP. That makes a big difference in terms of creating facilities, expanding size in terms of human resources and so on. In our country, the allocation should be increased to at least 1.5% of the GDP, then the whole scientific landscape will look very different. Secondly, we also have created a lot of mission-oriented institutions right. Like we have over 40 CSIR labs with a mandate of engaging in applied research. Very few of these labs could transfer technologies to industry. To some extent it also happened in social sciences. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) created its own institutions, twenty-seven of them. Coming back to the CSIR, the CSIR started their own academy to train PhD students. On the one hand, you see universities have a lot of student population, but less funding; whereas these mission-oriented institutions have large funding but no students until recently. So that has really stalled the universities in terms of having funds. Imagine if these institutions were located on university campuses. Then there could have been a lot of exchange between these two sets of institutions. The scientists from CSIR labs could participate in teaching and collaborate with scientists in the universities. University students could make use of the facilities in the CSIR laboratories. Same thing with the ICSSR institutions. They are separate entities. Imagine if they were also located on the university campuses. There would have been a lot of sharing of resources, sharing of ideas. Contrast this with western universities, USA especially – all the federally funded research, industry-supported research, military-funded research – all the research is done in the universities. Big industrial enterprises have their R&D facilities. But they also give funding to universities. That's how linkage between the academia, industry, universities and government became very strong in the US. Further, in the US the government passed a legislation in 1980, the Bay-Dole Act, according to which all the federally funded research that has innovation potential may be licensed to industry in return for a license fee which will be shared by the inventor and the university. In our country, we keep talking about academia-industry interaction, but nothing significant has happened on this front. I said sometime back that it is also connected with our technology import policies. We have moved from a policy of imports of technology through import substitution and import-in-order-to-export. In this policy environment, industry never had an incentive or compulsion to go to universities for consultation or collaboration. Further, defence research system also has its own laboratories. DRDO –has its own chain of labs. As a result, the funding that ought to have gone to the public universities slowly started declining and hence they did not grow – in terms of knowledge production and its dissemination and increasing student strength and so on. See look at our university, University of Hyderabad, it took 40 years for us to reach 5000 students. Some private universities, within 5 years their student strength reaches 20,000. So that's the problem, we don't get enough funding, UGC does not give enough maintenance grants, so how will the university grow?

Funding must be increased to the public universities as they cater to students who hail from deprived sections of our society.

SM: Maybe a lack of political leadership?

HE: Political enlightenment I would say. Leaders like Nehru could see the importance of science. He is the one who said, “The future belongs to those who make friends with science.” He was instrumental in shaping the 1958 Science Policy Resolution. Later, the Technology Policy Statement of 1983, the Science and Technology Policy of 2003 and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy of 2013 have tried to see the interrelations between science and technology and their role in transforming the economy and culture.

SM: Do you think that actually we are perennially dependent on other countries, especially western countries so far as technology is concerned?

HE: One thing is in technology development domain we are, to a large extent, followers. So today we are able to send our satellite to Mars or our Mars machine, we could do it at a low cost, because the technology is available. Of course, cost advantage is there. In science also of course there are some bright spots but as a whole, the kind of impact that we wanted to see in the international arena, did not happen, so far. However, we have done extremely well in some fields like pharmaceuticals, space technology and nuclear technology as we trained students in these fields. For example, our universities taught courses in medicinal chemistry and biochemistry and the Patent Act of 1970 helped in the growth of the pharma industry. Similarly, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre had training programmes for newly inducted young science and engineering graduates. Of course, our students go to other countries for higher studies, they do very well there and get into teaching position, industry and so on. But what is it that makes them so very active and productive outside the country. That’s something that’s got to do with the institutions. So, the institutional ambience makes them do things much better there than here, right. So that is one thing you should keep in mind if you really want to retain young talent that you have within the country, you must provide facilities, give challenging problems and involve them in active research and so on. We see a lot of remarkable changes brought about by the Information Technology Revolution, which transformed the way we do things. India has become the global hub for IT and IT-enabled services. Since the middle of 1990s, there has been a proliferation of engineering colleges in the country which produce nearly one and half a million undergraduate engineers who find employment in the software industry and IT-enabled services. Information technology has become a source of innovations in the service sector. Right now, we have 70,000 startup companies of which 100 have become Unicorns with a turnover of one Billion USD.

SM: However, along the way, if you could just bring in that I have posed one question: the state of science in India. I mean one is the state of science in contemporary India and also, why I put this question that there is a huge hiatus

between building scientific institutions on the one hand and building scientific temper in the country on the other hand. That is extremely important in the context of contemporary India. There lies, partly of course, significance of state-science relationship. Even in socialist economies earlier and even today science is also controlled by the state, not simply in capitalist regions or in India. But does science also become subservient to the state?

HE: Let me say that science, as an institution, has relative autonomy from state apparatus. However, the state can mandate scientists to provide solutions to some strategic problems in areas like increasing agricultural productivity, public health, finding a cure for some diseases, etc. Then scientists use their cognitive autonomy to find solutions. This is also true of military research. The Manhattan project that developed atom bomb is a classic example. In some situations, science is called upon to serve national security interests, real or imagined.

As I mentioned above, science as an institution has relative autonomy. It is this autonomy that enables scientists to pursue basic research. You see, basic research will ultimately lead to some kind of knowledge which can be applied to produce innovations. Scientific ideas which are inventive, in order to convert them into innovations - products or processes. This transformation is a process and a lot of actors come into play in this process. So, the basic research must go on. There is literature which suggests that universities in the 21st century must become entrepreneurial universities. They should be like business enterprises. There is another argument which says university's mandate is not that, although it may happen, they should also engage in basic research which plays crucial role in the advancement of knowledge. So, there are two models of the relationship between basic science and applied science. One is British model which we follow – we say let us learn everything about the science, everything about the particular discipline, then start looking for applications. But the Japanese route is that they start with a problem and see what kind of basic questions can be raised and what kind of basic science must be done in order to solve the problem. That's why the Japanese are able to do things much faster. Of course, there are exceptions to this. The other thing is that the attitude of many scientists in India does not seem to encourage teamwork and collaboration.

Individual scientists, especially academic scientists, think that if they collaborate with others, the collaborators may steal their ideas, or they may get disproportionately more credit. They should realise that at present, the locus of innovation is a network. If they understand that, then they will be able to collaborate and perhaps deliver results. The idea that 'I am going to do everything' doesn't get us anywhere in today's context. This kind of mindset should change. People should realise that in collaboration, every collaborator wins, it's a win-win situation. That should be recognized.

SM: Thank you so much. I am sure your reflections on interdisciplinarity and institution-building are going to inspire the future generations.

Haribabu Ejnavarzala was formerly Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad.

Sambit Mallick is Professor of Sociology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

Book Review: *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India.* by Ajantha Subramanian.

Author: Abhas Kumar Ganda

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Ajantha Subramanian, *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India*. Harvard University Press, 2019, pp. I+374, ₹8780.98 (Hardcover). ISBN: 978-0674987883

--Abhas Kumar Ganda

The book is an attempt to bring out the reality of hegemony in the Indian education system particularly in the Indian Institute of Technology through the lens of caste and meritocracy. It is an attempt to understand by questioning is Indian engineering education for all or serves as a means of cultural power benefiting only a few. However, the book has accelerated by grounding the historicity of caste, particularly the upper caste and their occupational mobility under modernization. It notes that caste practices persist in contemporary society, leading to new forms of contestation, particularly in the context of meritocracy. The new forms of caste hierarchy can be visible not by the rituals or any socio-cultural and religious practices but by the stratification of labour or profession in a contemporary capitalist society where engineering as a profession was considered superior and was adopted by the upper caste by distancing and stigmatizing the artisanship and confining technical labour to the lower caste. So, post-independent India realized the oriental development and modernization and embraced the technical and engineering skills cleverly purified by the state power and social processes by the upper caste in order to have capital accumulation. Thus, the same engineers who were considered as the proponents of national development were confined to the public sector until economic liberalism. By the time of this phase, most of the IITians had successfully moved to Silicon Valley of the United State of America and established an identity as technological Indian, backing up by the brand IIT.

Though the entire argument of this book is to highlight how the upper caste engineers consolidate themselves as meritorious, the author somehow failed to deliberate the criticality of meritocracy within and among the upper caste engineers. It has been seen that meritocracy is always been a debate that

argues that lower castes are less meritorious and seek reservation. The word always seeks attention only when contextualized between the upper caste and lower caste and between the reservation and non-reservation. But the question is among the so-called meritorious upper caste engineers of IIT, are all getting into well-paid jobs? Is the word meritocracy carrying the same social sentiment and epistemological meaning when contextualized among the upper caste engineers? What about those so-called meritorious engineers who fail to acquire such high occupational positions compared to their counterparts? Further, the author relied on the institutional ethnography by taking one institution that is IIT Madras which can be technically correct from the perspective of methodology but epistemologically could have been more justified if she could have studied some more IITs. Even, she could have engaged with the discourse of gender and the monopoly of the patriarchy in her study. Why IITs are the first priority of boys and the least priority for girls even from the upper caste?

The book attempts to historicize engineering education from the colonial period to the post-independence period which is reflected in the initial chapter of this book. In this section, she has historically and sociologically engaged on how the technical qualifications and abilities were very much confined to the artisan class and were least acknowledged by the upper caste. It is because of the physical labour and hands-on work in which the artisans class were technically sound contrary to the upper caste those were more into academic and theoretical and conceptual knowledge. However, the colonial government later tried to institutionalize by providing practical skills and knowledge through technical schools and colleges by acknowledging only the upper caste. Further, even after independence, technical education was hierarchically divided into technical and vocational schools for craftsmanship and practical skill training for lower caste students and engineering colleges for theoretical and conceptual knowledge for upper caste students.

However, the author has not clarified about who are the artisan class. Whether they belong to a particular caste identity? Whether they were *Shudra*? *Whether they were Dalits*? The subsequent chapters glanced about the need to establish the IITs in order to accelerate the development and nation-building in which excellence was objectified by sidelining the democratic nature of affirmative action and inclusivity. The following chapters dealt with contextualizing the IIT in Madras presidency from the social and political aspects and the early postcolonial trajectories of engineers who not only claim as meritorious but were also proud by integrating themselves as the primary part of the nation and nationalism. The 5th and 6th chapter is a contestation and contrast between the merit and democratization of merit through affirmative action. The social hierarchy was clearly reinforced and reproduced through entrance exams like JEE where students claim as meritorious by qualifying the exams. However, the author has nicely theorized by articulating Bourdieu's work of forms of capital by encapsulating the dominance of the coaching centers in instilling knowledge and preparing for those entrance exams. Here, she explains how the cultural capital in the embodied state reinforces accessing the coaching by the upper caste and limiting the lower caste. Thus, merit is nicely institutionalised in the name of qualifying the entrance exams which is nothing but the process of reproducing the caste and class hierarchy. However, subsequently, it was challenged by accommodating the reservation policy through affirmative action in order to define and make IITs more democratic in nature. Hence, the eventual chapter concludes with the articulation of making a new identity of IIT as a Brand during the period of 90s liberalization which accommodated free economy and market. As a result, most of the IITians moved to Silicon Valley and established as entrepreneurs not solely in the field of engineering but in information technology, management, finance, and business and backed by the identity of brand IITians.

Overall, the book tried to unveil the social aspect of engineering education which questions the intersections of merit and caste in contemporary education dialogue particularly in the context of one of the Indian premier institutional setups like IITs known for excellence. So, the book can be useful for academicians and scholars who are working in the fields of sociology of education, anthropology of education, and educational policy.

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