

Analysing The Women's Reservation Bill 2023: A Crack on the Glass Ceiling

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ABSTRACT: Nearly three decades after its initiation, the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, was passed by Parliament. This marks a historic step towards empowering women politically. The legislation reserves 33 per cent of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. This paper analyses the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, within its historical context, key clauses, and its significance in India's patriarchal, multicultural society. It also examines challenges faced during implementation. The paper concludes that reserving seats for women to a certain extent can help create an egalitarian society by addressing gender issues and producing effective legislation that reflects the needs of Indian women.

KEYWORDS: Parliament, Lok Sabha, State Assembly, Reservations, Women's Reservation Bill

1. INTRODUCTION

"We always held that when the men who have fought and struggled for their country's freedom came to power, the rights and liberties of women too would be guaranteed...."

-Renuka Ray (freedom fighter, 1947)

Reserving seats for women in legislatures is a form of affirmative action designed to enhance their representation in law-making bodies. Thus reservation policy allocates a specific number of seats to women candidates to combat centuries of gender-based oppression and promote greater gender equality in decision-making processes. The primary aim of women's reservation is to create an inclusive political landscape by ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds have fair and equal opportunities to participate in governance. Globally, reservation policies have been implemented at different levels of government, including village councils, state assemblies, and national parliaments. The rationale behind gender-based reservations stems from the recognition of the structural barriers and discrimination that have historically restricted women's access to political power. By providing women with a defined and dedicated space in

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legislatures, policymakers can foster a more representative democracy that reflects the diversity of the population.¹

The history of the women's reservation debate in India can be traced back to the movements for equal rights during the freedom struggle, debates in the Constituent Assembly, and Government policies aimed at enhancing women's roles in governance. During the pre-independence period, women contributed significantly to social reform movements, advocating for education and the abolition of child marriage. Leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Annie Besant were pivotal in the push for recognizing women's equal rights (Desai & Temsah, 2014)². Mahatma Gandhi leveraged the potential of women in his mass movements, such as the Salt Satyagraha and Quit India. However, there was still much to be accomplished on the political front. Despite limited opportunities, Begum Jahanara Shah became one of the few women elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1927.³ The Constituent Assembly, which was created indigenously, also failed to adequately highlight women's issues, as it had a significantly imbalanced sex ratio with only 15 women among its 389 members. Notably, women like Renuka Ray, Hansa Mehta, and Dakshayani Velayudhan opposed the idea of reservations during the Constituent Assembly debates. They believed such measures would compromise merit, undermine the principle of equal representation, and potentially deprive women of fair consideration for general seats. These women had full faith in the democratic process, believing it would ensure equal representation for both sexes.⁴

The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, upholds the principle of equality before the law (Article 14) and forbids gender-based discrimination (Article 15). The Directive Principles of State Policy obligate the state to promote gender equality and equality of opportunities for both men and women. The issue of reservation rose in 1931, when Sarojini Naidu and Begum Shah Nawaz submitted the official memorandum jointly issued on the status of women in the new Constitution by three women's bodies to the British Prime Minister.⁵ The report of the committee on the status of women in India, published in 1974, observed women's dismal status in politics, even after comprising the other half of the population. The committee was maiden in its approach to recommend gender-based quotas in political parties. The committee was vocal in its demand for women's reservation in municipal councils and panchayats.

The National Perspective Plan for Women, established in 1988, emphasized the need for reserving seats for women in legislative institutions. This plan anticipated the passage of the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts to the Constitution, which formalized the reservation of one-third of seats, as well as one-third of the chairperson positions, at all levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and in urban local self-government for

women. This reservation also included one-third of the seats allocated for women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.⁶

The Women's Reservation Bill (81st amendment bill) was introduced in the 11th Lok Sabha on 12 September 1996 by the Prime Minister Deve Gowda-led United Front government, providing one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha as well as the State Assemblies. But the essence of the bill was misunderstood by some political groups. Many other groups advocated quotas within quotas for women belonging to marginalised sections. Thus, lack of political will and the delaying tactics led to the lapse of the bill. The same scenario occurred again in 1998 with the 84th amendment and in 1999 with the 85th amendment. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee tried his best to pass the bill, but he failed to get a consensus on the same.⁷

The National Policy for empowerment of Women, 2001 aimed at 'advancement, development and empowerment of women'. One of its policy prescriptions was gender parity in power-sharing, advocating full access and equal participation in legislatures, executive and judiciary. It recommended affirmative action for women in higher legislative bodies for a limited time frame.⁸

Amidst these policy recommendations and pressure from women's welfare groups, the UPA II, led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, passed the bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2010, but the legislation never saw the light of day in the Lok Sabha. The bill finally lapsed in 2014. Meanwhile, the Report on the Status of Women in India (2015) again reiterated the demand for reservation of seats for women in legislatures.

Finally, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government (second term), in 2023, the Nari Shakti Vanadan Adhiniyam bill was tabled in the Lok Sabha during a special session of Parliament on 19th September, 2023. The legislation was decisively passed by both houses of Parliament and enacted into law, marking a vital milestone in the pursuit of gender equality in independent India.⁹

2. NAARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM

The NAARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM was the first bill introduced in the new parliament building during India's Amrit Kaal. The bill aims to reserve seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It intends to allocate, as nearly as possible, one-third of all seats for women across the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. One-third of these seats will be reserved for women within the existing SC and ST quotas in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.¹⁰ The Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, was

passed unanimously by both the houses of parliament. It came to be known as 106th constitution amendment act.¹¹

The passage of this historic bill can be seen as a transformative breakthrough in upholding women's right to political participation, making women representatives accountable to the common women and ensuring gender equality in India.

The following are some of the important clauses of Naari Shakti Vanadan Adhiniyam:

2.1. Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha

The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act provides for the reservation of seats for women in the lower house of the Indian Parliament. It inserts Article 330A to the constitution, which borrows from the provisions of Article 330, providing for the reservation of seats to SCs/STs in the Lok Sabha. Thus, one-third of the seats will be reserved for women of the SC/ST community within the SC/ST reservation quotas.¹²

Out of the total seats to be filled by direct elections to Lok Sabha, one-third will be reserved for women representatives (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the SC/ST community).¹³

2.2. Reservation for women in State Legislative Assemblies

The act provides for the reservation of seats for women in the state legislative assemblies. It inserts Article 332A into the constitution, borrowing from the provisions of Article 332, which provide for the reservation of seats for SCs/STs in legislative assemblies. Therefore, one-third of the seats will be reserved for women of the SC/ST community within the SC/ST reservation quotas.¹⁴ Out of the total seats to be filled by direct elections to the Lok Sabha, one-third will be reserved for women representatives (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the SC/ST community).¹⁵

2.3. Reservation for Women in NCT of Delhi

The act amends Art. 239 AA of the constitution, clause (2) (b), and inserts (ba), providing for the reservation of seats for women in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. It also inserts (bb), thus establishing one-third reservation of seats for women of the SC/ST community within the SC/ST reservation quotas. Additionally, it inserts (bc), stating that out of the total seats to be filled by direct elections in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, one-third shall be

reserved for women, including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes
16.

2.4. Commencement of Reservation (New article - 334A)

The 106th Constitution Amendment Act introduces Article 334A (1), which states that the provisions for reserving seats for women in the Lok Sabha, the legislative assemblies of the states, and the legislative assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi will take effect following a delimitation exercise. This exercise is to be conducted after the relevant figures from the first census taken following the commencement of the Constitution 106th amendment Act, 2023, have been published. The reservation will last for 15 years.

Article 334A (2): However, subject to articles 239A, 330A, and 332A, the reservation shall continue until a date determined by law made by Parliament.

Article 334 A. (3) provides for rotation of Seats reserved for women after each delimitation exercise, as determined by a law made by Parliament. To give all constituencies in states or Union Territories a fair chance for ascriptive (gender-based) representation.¹⁷

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BILL

The women's reservation bill is important in the following ways:

3.1. Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women

Women had 4.4% representation in the first Lok Sabha, which has risen to a meagre 13.6% in the 18th Lok Sabha, while in state assemblies, women have less than 10% representation.¹⁸

Reservations will help address this skewed gender representation in politics by ensuring a minimum threshold of 33 per cent seats for women legislators in parliament and state legislatures. Enabling half of our population with a significant stake in decision-making will lead to increased political candidacy of women across all representative bodies.¹⁹

3.2. Political Empowerment Leading to Mindset Change

Reservations will empower women by increasing their numbers in legislatures, transforming them into an effective pressure group within these bodies. Greater access to legislative power and public decision-

making may inspire more women to run for office and contest elections. This, in turn, is likely to create a spillover effect in other aspects of social life, significantly influencing how women are perceived.²⁰

3.3. Women's Issues and the Benefits of Comprehensive Governance

Increasing the number of women in legislatures will create a constitutional space where women's thoughts, issues, and viewpoints are considered on a wide range of matters, including women's rights, education, health, and safety, as well as other significant issues facing the country. This, in turn, will facilitate the development of laws and policies that address discrimination and gender-based oppression. A greater presence of women Members of Parliament (MPs) in decision-making bodies will lead to improved governance and decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences.²¹

3.4. Development of the Constituency and Increased Accountability

Research indicates that women representatives at the panchayat level are more inclined to invest in development by prioritising health, education, and access to drinking water. Furthermore, these women representatives are less likely to engage in corruption. They also play a vital role in addressing social issues such as domestic violence and child marriage. If these trends were to be replicated at the national level, it could lead to significant development within constituencies. Consequently, this could also enhance accountability among women representatives.²²

3.5. Socio-Economic Development

The political liberation of women will lead to gender-sensitive laws, access to quality healthcare, education, and skills training, as well as better economic opportunities by increasing employability and pay parity, thus transforming into social and economic progress.²³

3.6. Reducing Gender Differences

Reservations will lead to the prevalence of gender sensitive policies at national and regional levels, due to the legislative foresight of women members. This, in turn, will go a long way in reducing gender-based discrimination.

3.7. Electoral Effect

Analysis indicates that constituencies reserved for women show greater levels of female representation following the implementation of reservations. Therefore, there is a notable trend of enhanced women's representation in reserved constituencies compared to those that are unreserved.²⁴

3.8. De-Gendering of Political Parties

Establishing a 33 per cent quota for women in legislatures will encourage greater participation of women within party structures, not just as workers but also in key leadership roles. This initiative will help create a pipeline of capable women leaders for future parliamentary work. Additionally, it will challenge the stereotypes surrounding women leaders and help eliminate the inherent gender bias that exists within political parties.

4. CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION

The following challenges are likely to be faced in the successful implementation of women's reservation.

4.1. Patriarchy and Its Resistance to Women as Leaders

The societal stereotype that women are politically irrelevant and incapable of holding political positions may result in a widespread rejection of reservation policies. This could reduce reservations to mere tokenism resulting in symbolic gestures and empty promises. Consequently, this undermines the ability of women representatives to exercise their agency and create meaningful change.

4.2. Lack of Election Financing

State and parliamentary elections in India can be quite expensive. Women candidates often rely on their families for financial support. Even though they receive endorsement from their political parties, they may struggle to campaign effectively and connect with voters due to insufficient funding. This financial barrier contributes to their underrepresentation in politics.²⁵

4.3. Lack of Family Support

Many women with political ambitions often face discouragement from their families in pursuing their goals. In India, women are frequently expected to prioritise household responsibilities and act as

primary caregivers. As a result, most women from modest backgrounds tend to consider their political aspirations only after they have fulfilled their duties as mothers.

4.4. The Practice of Sarpanch Pati

The practice of "sarpanch Pati" is still common in Panchayati Raj Institutions. In this scenario, women serve merely as nominal heads while their spouses or other male family members make political decisions on their behalf. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of the proposed bill. There is a possibility that this same phenomenon could also occur at the parliamentary level.²⁶

4.5. Violence Against Women in Politics

Women in politics experience various forms of violence, including character assassination, physical aggression during election campaigns, and even sexual assault. Research indicates that this violence is a reflection of gender discrimination fostered by the patriarchal society in India. Such violence discourages women from pursuing their political aspirations.²⁷

4.6. Delay in Implementation

The reservation of seats for women will take place after the delimitation exercise is completed, and the data from the first census conducted under the 128th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2023 will be available. This process will require considerable time, which presents a significant challenge for its implementation due to potential delays.²⁸

4.7. Omission of Reservation for OBC Women

The Women's Reservation Bill does not address the issue of OBC (Other Backwards Classes) reservations in the legislature. The Mandal Commission's report from 1980 indicated that over 52% of Indian women belong to the OBC category. As a result, their representation will likely increase, making them a significant segment of the women's vote bank. This growth underscores the need for fair representation of OBC women in Parliament.²⁹

5. CONCLUSION

The Women's Reservation Act of 2023 is a monumental stride toward elevating the political representation of women in India, reserving one-third of seats in both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. This progressive act is not just a legislative change; it is a powerful statement in our ongoing fight against



gender inequality. By ensuring that women have a dedicated voice in our legislatures, we are not only rectifying historical injustices but also enriching our democratic framework with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Now, the urgent task before us is to implement this Act swiftly and efficiently, eliminating unnecessary delays that could hinder its impact. We must foster a political landscape in which women can flourish as leaders and decision-makers on equal footing with their male counterparts. However, it is crucial to approach the concept of reservations with a discerning eye; they should be viewed as short-term strategies that pave the way for a more equitable environment, empowering women to make meaningful contributions to policy-making.

As we welcome more women into our political sphere, we will inevitably shine a spotlight on issues that resonate with women and seek solutions tailored to their unique challenges. This shift could usher in fresh, innovative perspectives on the myriad issues facing our nation, leading to transformative, gender-sensitive solutions. Moreover, increased women's representation is not just about the present; it will lay the groundwork for a future generation of effective and dynamic leaders, bridging the gender divide and enriching our society as a whole.

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Digital Currency in the Indian Economy: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract: In recent years, globalization driven by technological revolutions has digitized nearly every aspect of human life, reduced barriers of time and space and making life easier worldwide. In the economic sphere, digital currency has emerged as a significant outcome of this global process. This paper examines digital currency in the context of the Indian economy and highlights the various opportunities it presents as well as the challenges it poses. The paper concludes on a positive note regarding the potential of digital currency in India.

Keywords: Digital Currency, Globalization, Indian Economy

Introduction

In recent years, digital currency has become deeply integrated into the global financial system, rapidly gaining prominence over traditional physical currency. Digital currency refers to any form of money that can be stored and transacted electronically using devices such as computers and mobile phones, particularly over the internet. The concept of digital money first emerged in the 1980s with the aim of creating anonymous and secure electronic transactions. One of the earliest attempts was David Chaum's DigiCash, established in 1990, which laid the groundwork for future developments in this field. The rise of the internet significantly boosted interest in digital payment systems, culminating in a major breakthrough in 2008 when an anonymous entity known as Satoshi Nakamoto introduced Bitcoin the first decentralized digital currency. This innovation marked the beginning of the cryptocurrency era, powered by blockchain technology, which enables secure transactions without the need for a central authority. Digital currency has transformed the traditional monetary system, influencing how value is transferred and stored. In India, the move towards a cashless society has been accelerated by the widespread adoption of digital currency. Across the nation, the number of digital currency users is increasing rapidly, driven by advancements in technology and a growing preference for secure, fast transactions. Today, the financial system relies on both centralized and decentralized methods of money transfer. Centralized transfers are governed by national authorities, particularly central banks. In recent years, central banks around the world have begun developing their own digital currencies, known as Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). A CBDC is

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a digital form of a country's official fiat currency and is fully controlled by the central bank. In India, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) oversees financial operations through its CBDC initiative. The Indian CBDC is categorized into two types: retail CBDC, intended for public use and launched on December 1, 2022; and wholesale CBDC, designed for financial institutions and interbank settlements. Recently, the RBI has also permitted non-bank payment system operators to participate in distributing retail CBDC. The growing interest in CBDCs stems from their potential to enhance payment efficiency, promote financial inclusion, and reduce dependency on physical cash. This paper explores the advantages and disadvantages of digital currency, with a focus on its implementation and impact within the Indian economic context.

Digital currency: A critical evaluation

Advantages of Digital Currency are as follows:

1. Enhancing Financial Inclusion:

Digital currency has emerged as a transformative instrument in promoting financial inclusion, particularly in developing economies such as India. A significant segment of the population approximately 190 million individuals remain outside the formal banking system (World Bank, Global Findex, 2021). Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) offer an alternative access point for financial services through mobile-based platforms, reducing reliance on traditional banking infrastructure. This is particularly beneficial in rural and underserved areas, where access to bank branches is limited. The use of digital wallets, QR codes, and offline transaction capabilities enables low-cost, real-time transactions. Moreover, digital currency facilitates more efficient Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), allowing government subsidies, pensions, and welfare payments to be disbursed directly into recipients' digital wallets, thereby enhancing the financial resilience of economically vulnerable groups.

2. Improving Cost Efficiency:

The traditional cash-based economy entails significant operational costs including currency printing, distribution, ATM maintenance, security services, and counterfeit detection. In contrast, digital currency infrastructure significantly reduces these overheads. While cybersecurity and digital infrastructure investment are necessary, they are generally more cost-effective in the long run. The reduced need for physical cash handling, ATM networks, and associated logistics translates into fiscal savings for both the government and financial institutions. Post-2008, the economic landscape has increasingly shifted toward digital modes of transaction, driven in part by cost-efficiency and technological advances.

3. Accelerating Payments and Settlement:

One of the primary advantages of digital currency is the ability to facilitate instantaneous payments and settlements, operating independently of traditional banking hours and holidays. This 24/7 accessibility enhances liquidity and improves cash flow management for both businesses and individuals. In India, the adoption of the digital rupee has seen significant growth, with its circulation value increasing from ₹234 crore in 2024 to ₹1,016 crore by March 2025. Approximately 4.6 million retail users and 400,000 merchants are currently utilizing CBDCs. The reduction in settlement times lowers counterparty risk and improves efficiency in high-value and time-sensitive transactions.

4. Implications for Monetary Policy:

CBDCs provide central banks with enhanced tools for implementing and monitoring monetary policy. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) can access real-time data on money flows and consumer behavior, thereby improving the speed and accuracy of policy responses. This greater visibility strengthens the transmission of monetary policy measures such as interest rate changes. Furthermore, CBDCs could facilitate unconventional tools, such as programmable monetary policies or the implementation of negative interest rates. However, these capabilities raise potential concerns regarding financial surveillance and data privacy. It will be critical for policymakers to balance efficiency gains with the protection of individual rights and liberties.

5. Promoting Transparency in the Digital Economy:

Digital currencies, whether on centralized or distributed ledgers, offer higher levels of traceability and transparency. Transactions can be recorded and audited in real-time, enabling authorities to combat illicit financial activities such as money laundering, terrorist financing, and tax evasion. This level of traceability enhances governmental oversight, ensuring better compliance and improving public trust in the financial system. A transparent and accountable digital currency ecosystem can also support more informed monetary policymaking and fiscal governance.

6. Strengthening Resilience During Crises:

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the resilience and utility of digital currency in crisis management. Digital payment mechanisms played a pivotal role in distributing financial aid to rural and informal sector workers during periods of lockdown and restricted mobility. Consumer behavior also shifted toward contactless transactions, reducing reliance on physical cash. According to a joint report by Visa and

Worldline (Gadget 360), digital payments in India increased sixfold during the pandemic. Platforms such as UPI, mobile wallets, and QR codes became mainstream, expanding the digital ecosystem and bringing new users particularly from the informal economy into the fold.

7. Enhancing Monetary Control and Flexibility:

The integration of CBDCs into the Indian economy has provided the RBI with improved control over monetary supply, especially during times of economic volatility. The programmable nature of digital currency allows central banks to implement policy changes, including interest rate adjustments, more swiftly and effectively. This increased flexibility enhances the central bank's ability to stabilize the economy and respond to financial shocks.

8. Improving Economic Data Collection:

CBDCs generate vast amounts of transactional data that can be utilized for economic monitoring and forecasting. The RBI's access to granular transaction-level information supports better risk assessment and the formulation of timely macroprudential policies. This data-driven insight contributes to identifying trends, detecting anomalies, and mitigating potential risks during financial instability.

Disadvantages of Digital Currency are as follows:

1. Risk of Disintermediation of Commercial Banks:

One of the most frequently cited concerns surrounding the implementation of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) is the potential disintermediation of commercial banks. Disintermediation refers to the erosion of traditional banking roles in deposit mobilization and credit creation, which are fundamental to economic development. Since commercial banks rely on public deposits to fund loans and investments, a significant migration of funds from bank deposits to CBDC holdings or digital wallets could limit the banks' lending capacity, thereby affecting credit availability and overall economic growth.

Empirical evidence from early adopters of CBDC underscores this risk. The Central Bank of The Bahamas' introduction of the Sand Dollar the world's first fully deployed retail CBDC demonstrated improved financial inclusion outcomes but also revealed challenges in maintaining the financial intermediation role of banks. Similarly, a survey conducted by the Deutsche Bundesbank on the digital Euro highlighted that up to 10% of money holdings might shift from commercial bank accounts to digital currency under certain

conditions. The extent of disintermediation depends significantly on CBDC design features such as holding limits, interest-bearing structures, and interoperability with existing financial systems (Bundesbank, 2021).

2. Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities:

Digital currencies are inherently reliant on complex and secure digital infrastructures, making them susceptible to a variety of cybersecurity threats. Risks include external cyberattacks such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), which can paralyze transaction networks, and targeted breaches aiming to access or manipulate digital wallets, payment gateways, or central bank servers.

Moreover, digital currencies present new attack surfaces that may be exploited by both external and internal actors. The potential for double-spending, token forgery, and transaction manipulation increases if robust cryptographic safeguards are not in place. Insider threats from personnel with privileged access to sensitive systems also pose non-negligible risks. Furthermore, insufficient protection of transaction metadata may compromise financial privacy, raising the dual threat of cybercrime and state surveillance. As such, maintaining the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of digital currency systems is a continuous and costly endeavour requiring advanced threat mitigation strategies and regulatory oversight.

3. Gaps in Regulatory and Legal Infrastructure:

The successful deployment of CBDCs depends significantly on the existence of a well-defined legal and regulatory framework. In India, while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cautiously advanced CBDC pilot programs, a comprehensive statutory basis for digital currency remains underdeveloped. The absence of clear legislation creates ambiguity around several critical domains:

Data Privacy and Security: There is a pressing need to establish frameworks for how user data is collected, stored, shared, and protected.

Consumer Protection: Mechanisms for redressal in cases of fraud, technical failures, or erroneous transactions are not yet clearly defined.

Cybercrime Legislation: Current legal instruments do not adequately address the specific threats posed by digital currency, including unauthorized access, token duplication, and system tampering. Given the cross-sectoral nature of digital currencies, policy harmonization between the RBI, the Ministry of Finance, and technology regulators is essential. Establishing a dedicated Digital Currency Act that clearly delineates

legal definitions, institutional responsibilities, and compliance standards is imperative for fostering public trust and ensuring legal certainty in digital financial systems.

4. Public Awareness and Adoption Barriers:

Despite significant progress in digital payment infrastructure in India most notably through platforms such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) the mass adoption of digital currency continues to face substantial challenges. Public trust, digital literacy, and infrastructure access remain uneven, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

Key barriers to adoption include:

Low digital and financial literacy, especially in semi-urban and rural communities. Concerns over data misuse and digital fraud, which deter users unfamiliar with online financial platforms. Linguistic and technological barriers, such as the lack of user interfaces in regional languages or the requirement of smartphones and stable internet connections.

For digital currency to achieve inclusive adoption, it must be accessible, secure, and culturally attuned to the diverse demographics of the Indian population. Government and central bank efforts should include widespread awareness campaigns, financial education initiatives, and incentives for early adoption. Importantly, platforms must be designed with inclusivity in mind—catering not only to tech-savvy urban users but also to the digitally marginalized.

Implications of Digital Currency on the Indian Economy:

India is currently one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and is actively working towards becoming a digitally advanced nation. A key component of this transformation is the integration of digital currency into its financial system. The adoption of digital currency has multi-dimensional implications spanning economic, financial, business, and societal spheres.

From an economic perspective, digital currency offers significant cost-saving benefits. Unlike fiat or physical currency, which incurs substantial expenses related to printing and material procurement, digital currency reduces or eliminates these costs. Kasana and Singh (2024) argue that the adoption of CBDCs can lower transaction costs and enhance the speed of transactions, contributing to a more efficient financial ecosystem.

Additionally, digital currency can play a critical role in expanding the monetary base, which refers to the increase in the most liquid forms of money in the economy. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) often seeks to expand the monetary base to stimulate economic growth, combat deflation, and respond to economic crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which is vital for macroeconomic management. The centralized nature of the Digital Rupee allows the RBI to maintain control and oversight, which is crucial for monetary policy implementation (Bhavsar, 2024).

From a financial standpoint, digital currency has shown strong potential in reducing fraud-related risks. Carrying large amounts of physical cash poses security threats, including theft and loss, whereas digital transactions are inherently safer and more traceable. Moreover, digital currencies lower operational expenses associated with cash handling and transaction processing.

According to the study "Evolution of Digital Currency and Its Economic and Financial Implications in China", while digital currencies may intensify competition among commercial banks, they can also impact their profitability and autonomy. In the Indian context, the rise of digital currency is beginning to affect bank deposits, as consumers increasingly transfer funds to digital wallets rather than traditional bank accounts. However, this challenge presents an opportunity for commercial banks to invest in digital infrastructure and adopt innovative financial technologies to remain competitive in the evolving financial landscape.

Conclusion:

Digital currency presents significant opportunities for the Indian economy, including enhanced financial inclusion, cost efficiency, faster payments, improved monetary policy implementation, and greater transparency in financial transactions. The Reserve Bank of India's CBDC initiatives both retail and wholesale are key steps toward modernizing India's financial infrastructure. Despite clear challenges such as cybersecurity threats, regulatory gaps, disintermediation risks, and adoption barriers, the overall outlook is optimistic. The benefits outweigh the drawbacks when appropriate regulatory, technological, and educational frameworks are in place. With continued investment, legal clarity, and public engagement, digital currency can support India's transition to a more efficient, inclusive, and resilient digital economy.

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Gandhian Elements in India's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

Pramod V. Watkar¹

Abstract: Gandhian principles of universal humanism, trusteeship, nonviolence, peaceful coexistence, moral persuasion and empowerment continue to shape India's foreign policy from the 1950s till date. Gandhian values influence India's nuclear doctrine, multilateral engagements, development assistance and global governance. It can be traced in the historical continuity through India's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement, peacekeeping and principled responses to world crises. Gandhian elements are also highlighted in modern adaptations as well as the nuclear no-first-use policy, Vaccine diplomacy, climate advocacy in G20/BRICS, and active participation in forums like SAARC, G4, QUAD, G7, and ASEAN.

Through doctrinal and comparative analysis of speeches, policy documents, and scholarly literature, the research paper tests three hypotheses (1) Gandhian values underpin India's nuclear restraint and global moral credibility; (2) development partnerships reflect trusteeship and empowerment; and (3) multilateral diplomacy embodies universal humanism and peaceful cooperation. Content analysis reveals themes such as moral autonomy, non-alignment, disarmament, developmental trusteeship and intergenerational equity.

The case studies involve India's role in NAM (1955), UN peacekeeping (1950s), the 1971 Pakistan-Bangladesh conflict, nuclear doctrine post-1998, development outreach through SAARC, BRICS, ASEAN, climate action in G20, and Vaccine Diplomacy (2020). It is evident that India integrates Gandhian values both as moral vision and strategic framework. In doing so, India projects ethical leadership and strengthens Gandhi's relevance in modern diplomacy. Gandhian thought remains a living compass in India's global conduct and diplomacy in a multi polar world.

Keywords: Gandhism, Non-alignment, nuclear doctrine, Trusteeship, Multilateralism, Moral diplomacy

Hypotheses:

1. Gandhian philosophy supports India's nuclear doctrine and no-first-use stance, boosting its moral authority.
2. Trusteeship, universalism, and empowerment shape India's south collaborations and development diplomacy.
3. India's engagement in SAARC, NAM, UN, BRICS, G20, QUAD, and UN reform reflects non-violent universalism and peaceful coexistence.

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Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative, historical and comparative approach to examine how Gandhian ethical principles of truth, nonviolence, self-reliance, human dignity and universal brotherhood are reflected in India's domestic policies and international strategic conduct. Through textual analysis and interpretive reasoning, the study traces the evolution of ethical communication in Indian governance and compares modern strategies with Gandhian ideals.

Research Focus:

The study seeks to identify key Gandhian ethical markers such as:

- a) Ahimsa in nuclear restraint,
- b) Sarvodaya in humanitarian outreach,
- c) Satyagraha in diplomatic resistance, and
- d) Trusteeship in economic and environmental policy.

Together, these elements reveal how Gandhi's legacy continues to inform India's ethical positioning in a complex global order.

Introduction

India's foreign policy has long been guided by its civilizational ethos and moral foundations, with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy at its core. His ideals of non-violence, truth, trusteeship, and universal humanism have extended beyond domestic reform to shape India's international identity. He believed that "Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow men."¹ As the world navigates growing multi polarity, geopolitical tensions, and global inequalities, Gandhian ethics of prioritizing dialogue over deterrence and cooperation over coercion gain renewed relevance. He remarked "I do not want my house to be walled in all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible."²

From India's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War to its present-day support for peaceful coexistence, humanitarian aid, and strategic autonomy, Gandhi's vision continues to influence India's global conduct.

This research examines how these ethical principles have been adopted and adapted in India's foreign engagements from the 1950s to today. Using doctrinal analysis and empirical examples, the study explores India's participation in global forums and key policies like nuclear no-first-use, Vaccine and climate diplomacy. It argues that India's diplomacy is shaped not only by strategic interests but also by moral responsibility and soft power, rooted in Gandhian thought. In a world facing war, ecological crisis and inequality, India's ethical governance anchored in Gandhi's timeless values offers a compelling model for global peace and justice.

Gandhian Outlook in Contemporary Global Forum Engagements

1. Universal Humanism & Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

For Gandhi Nationalism is not the highest concept; the highest concept is world community i.e. 'Mankind is one family'. This belief in universal brotherhood upholds India's active role in forums like NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) and ASEAN, where it advocates for collective problem-solving, respect for cultural diversity, and cooperation among developing countries. Gandhi claimed, "My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all-embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities."³

2. Trusteeship & Empowering Other Nations

Gandhi's concept of trusteeship i.e. holding wealth or power in trust for the welfare of others has echoed in India's developmental partnerships, from lines of credit to Africa to capacity-building initiatives within BRICS. It reframes India not as a donor, but as a guardian partner in shared growth. He strongly believed "All men are brothers, being the children of the same God. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots, which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest winds cannot move it."⁴

3. Peaceful Coexistence & Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

Gandhi envisioned conflict resolution through non-violence, emphasising peace building, disarmament, and civilian-based defence. "Peace will not come out of a clash of arms but out of justice lived."⁵ Within UN, UNESCO, G20 and G4 diplomacy, India pursues multilateral arbitration over coercion, reflecting the Gandhian strategy of moral persuasion over force.

4. Views on War, Nation Empowerment & World Conflicts

Gandhi's writings make it clear that all war stems from exploitation and results in permanent moral harm. Even in World Wars, his approach was to stand by truth while supporting the defender in a non-violent manner. His open letters to Hitler and Mussolini in 1939–40 mentioned "You are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war" "stand as testament to his appeal for universal humanism. Through global bodies like the SAARC, UNO, G7, and QUAD, India channels this legacy by forging coalitions based on shared values rather than polarized blocks.

Integrating Gandhi into India's Foreign Policy Strategy

1. Universal empathy: India champions global initiatives on climate, health, and development echoing Gandhi's "step into the shoes of adversaries".
2. Trusteeship in action: Indian aid to developing countries aims for mutual empowerment and not for supremacy over them.
3. Nonviolent diplomacy: India consistently seeks conflict resolution through negotiation, arbitration, and multilateral platforms rather than force. Gandhi criticized the violence and moral degradation leading to such destructive technology. He writes, "War is the result of exploitation of the people by the rulers, and the atom bomb is its inevitable fruit. It is the last word in violence."⁷
4. Empowerment through capacity-building: By sharing technical, educational and health resources reinforce self-reliance among partner countries.
5. World-order reform: By engaging with Security Council reform (G4) and digital governance (G20), India seeks structures guided by moral equity and not by dominance. Gandhi wrote, "The force of nonviolence is mightier than the mightiest weapon."⁸
6. Collective security over military blocs: India's outreach through NAM, SAARC, ASEAN, and BRICS emphasizes cooperation over confrontation even with major powers, mirroring the Gandhian ethos of moral coexistence amidst difference.

Post-1950s Case Studies

1. UN Peacekeeping Missions: Since 1950, Indian troops participated in Korea, Congo and Lebanon supporting humanitarianism without aggression, embodying Gandhian principles of trusteeship and non-violent intervention.
2. Bangladesh Liberation War & 1971 Crisis: While India engaged militarily to support East Pakistan's secession, its principles emphasized humanitarian aid and the moral duty to protect millions of refugees closely aligned with Gandhian justice.
3. Nuclear Doctrine Post-1998: After Pokhran-II, India declared a no-first-use policy and credible minimum deterrence, rejecting nuclear aggression. This restraint reflects Gandhi's denunciation of mass violence and faith in moral strength.
4. G20 Climate Leadership

India emphasizes sustainable lifestyles and intergenerational justice reflecting Gandhi's advocacy for simplicity and environmental respect.

5. Vaccine and Global Health Diplomacy (2020–2021)

During COVID-19, India exported vaccines to 70+ countries, exemplifying Gandhian universalism, non-violence and trusteeship in health diplomacy. It echoed Gandhi's belief that "My nationalism is as broad as the universe. It includes in its sweep all the nations of the earth."⁹

Global Forums and Gandhian Diplomacy

Mahatma Gandhi may not have held political office in independent India, but his values of nonviolence, truth, trusteeship, human dignity, and moral responsibility have deeply influenced India's foreign policy orientation. India's engagement in various global and regional forums often reflects these Gandhian principles, whether explicitly or subtly. This form of diplomacy, rooted in ethical commitment rather than power politics has come to be known as Gandhian Diplomacy, a strategic approach that prioritizes peace, justice, cooperation, and moral leadership.

The following global forums illustrate how India has practiced Gandhian ideals on the international stage:

1. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

Gandhian Principle: *Strategic Autonomy and Global Unity*

India's Practice: India was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), initiated under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Drawing directly from Gandhi's principle of nonviolence and independence from unjust influence, NAM emerged as a platform for countries to avoid alignment with either the US or the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Gandhi's idea of *Swaraj* (self-rule) found expression in NAM's insistence on strategic autonomy, peaceful coexistence and global solidarity. Even today, India uses NAM to voice support for global South cooperation, disarmament and equitable global governance.

2. SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

Gandhian Principle: *Regional Peace, Mutual Cooperation, and Goodwill Among Neighbours*

SAARC consists of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives. India's engagement with SAARC reflects Gandhian ideals of peaceful coexistence, neighbourhood harmony and regional upliftment. Gandhi believed in resolving conflicts through dialogue, trust-building and nonviolence, emphasizing interdependence and service over dominance. Gandhi stated "Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint."¹⁰ Guided by this vision, India has consistently worked for regional cooperation through SAARC in areas such as education, health, trade, disaster relief, connectivity and poverty alleviation.

India was a founding member of SAARC in 1985 and has since provided economic assistance, technical training and humanitarian support to smaller South Asian nations. Initiatives like the SAARC Satellite (GSAT-9) and India's COVID-19 Emergency Fund contribution in 2020 under the SAARC framework demonstrates its commitment to trusteeship and Sarvodaya (welfare of all). These reflect Gandhi's belief in service to neighbours and shared regional responsibility.

However, challenges particularly with Pakistan have tested Gandhian diplomacy. Despite this, India has largely avoided coercion within SAARC, preferring bilateral engagement, dialogue-based conflict resolution and people-to-people contact in line with Gandhi's faith in truth and reconciliation.

3. ASEAN and East Asia Summit

Gandhian Principle: *Peaceful Coexistence and Mutual Respect*

ASEAN includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Through its "Act East" policy, India strengthens ties with ASEAN nations by promoting mutual growth, cultural exchange, and regional harmony. This resonates with Gandhi's emphasis on respecting others' cultures and sovereignty, and building trust rather than dominance. For Gandhi, "My nationalism is as broad as the universe. It includes in its sweep all the nations of the earth."¹¹ India emphasizes dialogue over confrontation in Southeast Asia and supports ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region.

4. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)

Gandhian Principle: *Economic Trusteeship and Shared Prosperity*

Gandhi's idea of trusteeship where wealth is held in trust for the welfare of all is echoed in India's commitment to inclusive development and global equity through BRICS. "The rich must hold their wealth in trust for the poor."¹²

India actively supports BRICS initiatives like:

- a) The New Development Bank (NDB) for financing sustainable infrastructure,
- b) Knowledge exchange platforms and
- c) Cooperative action on health, technology, and climate.

India advocates for a just economic order, where emerging economies are empowered, aligning with Gandhi's ethical economics.

5. United Nations / UNESCO

Gandhian Principle: *Humanism, Peace and Education for Harmony*

At the United Nations and UNESCO, India consistently advocates for:

- a) Global peace and disarmament reflecting Gandhi's staunch anti-war stance,

- b) Universal education as a path to character building, and
- c) Dialogue between civilizations promoting a culture of peace.

October 2, Gandhi's birthday being recognized by the UN as International Day of Nonviolence is a direct reflection of Gandhi's legacy.

6. G7 (Group of Seven Industrial Nations)

Gandhian Principle: *Ethical Responsibility and Climate Justice*

Although not a permanent member, India is increasingly invited to G7 summits, where it promotes the Gandhian ethos of moral responsibility, especially regarding climate change. India emphasizes:

- a) Equitable energy transition,
- b) Global climate finance for developing nations, and
- c) Lifestyles for Sustainable Development movement.

This aligns with Gandhi's vision of simple living and responsible consumption, addressing the modern crises of climate change and overconsumption.

7. G20 (Group of Twenty Largest Economies)

Gandhian Principle: *Justice Between Generations and Sustainable Development*

During its G20 presidency in 2023, India championed the themes of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam emphasizing Gandhian values of universal brotherhood, economic justice, and environmental stewardship. India advocated:

- a. green development and climate finance,
- b. Sustainable lifestyles and renewable energy,
- c. Inclusion of the African Union in G20 echoing Gandhi's connection to Africa and global justice.

India's vision of inclusive and future-oriented development echoes Gandhi's commitment to Sarvodaya i.e. welfare of all and ecological responsibility.

8. G4 (India, Germany, Brazil, Japan)

Gandhian Principle: *Justice and Equality in Global Governance*

India as part of the G4 coalition, advocates for reforming the UN Security Council to make it more democratic and representative. This mirrors Gandhi's belief in truth-based justice and global equality.

India argues that the current UNSC structure is outdated and unjust and seeks reforms that give voice to underrepresented regions like Africa, Latin America, and the Global South.

9. QUAD (India, USA, Japan, Australia)

Gandhian Principle: *Cooperation Without Coercion*

India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific through QUAD reflects *Gandhian moral politik* pursuing strategic interests through *cooperation and not coercion*. Focused on health, climate, technology, and maritime security, India promotes a *rule-based, inclusive regional order* without power projection. Across global forums like the *UN, G20, and QUAD*, India practices *ethical diplomacy*, rooted in *truth, nonviolence and human dignity*. In a world shaped by militarism and exploitation, Gandhi's ideals remain a *guiding light* for just international relations. India's soft power and principled conduct demonstrate that *ethical governance can* shape global politics as effectively as economic or military strength.

Conclusions

1. India's foreign policy demonstrates a lasting continuity with Gandhian values, despite evolving geopolitical contexts.
2. No-first-use and nuclear restraint project moral power, giving India diplomatic credibility.
3. Trusteeship is realized through south-south solidarity, especially in Africa and ASEAN.
4. Gandhi's concept of global unity lives on through India's multilateral activism and reforms advocacy.
5. Non-violence shapes India's preference for dialogue over confrontation, evident in QUAD diplomacy and climate forums.
6. Gandhian ideas are not just moral decorations but operational tools in India's foreign relations.

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Governance of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Arunachal Pradesh: Evidences from the Field

Pani Renyu¹

Abstract: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a notable programme introduced by the Central government in 2001 to primarily focus on achieving universal elementary education. The programme was touted as the most comprehensive programme of all times taking into account various aspects of elementary education under its shelter from infrastructure funding to providing quality education, decentralization in management through involvement of local bodies, community mobilization and participation and teacher's training.

Subsequently, the programme has been introduced in Arunachal Pradesh and many changes has been noticed and achieved in the realm of elementary education. Scores of schools have been established, hundreds of teachers appointed and funds released to achieve the aim of universal elementary education in the state. Nevertheless, many problems have been reported as well. Field data analysis revealed that the programme indeed contributed to development and spread of elementary education to a considerable extent. The programme has been a game changer in realizing the aim of universal access to elementary education and enrolment of children but has failed to retain them. Idea of community mobilization and participation has not been realized due to lack of awareness among public. There is inconsistency in implementation of intervention programmes due to delay in disbursing funds and other factors.

Thus, the paper is an effort to examine the implementation status of SSA in the Arunachal Pradesh. It enquires if the programme has been successful in ensuring universal access, universal enrolment and retention of children in schools. How does the community see it and to what extent the community participates in the programme? What are the hindrances if any of such persist is faced by the administrators in executing the programme?

Keywords: Governance, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Arunachal Pradesh, Elementary Education

Introduction

The importance of education in the life of every child has been well recognized in the Declaration of The Rights of Children (1959) which considered education as right of every child. India has been making strides in education sector by making various provisions overtime. The incorporation of Article 45 in Part IV of

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Directive Principles of States Policy (DPSP) in the Indian constitution that provides that there shall be a provision for free and compulsory education for children is known to all. Besides many initiatives have been taken in the subsequent years such as appointment of various educational commissions such as University Education Commission (1952-53), Kothari Commission (1966) etc. and declaration of education policies such as National Education Policy (1968, 1978, 1986 and 1992). Further, various programmes like National Literacy Mission (1986), Operation Blackboard (1987), Mahila Samakhya Programme (1988), District Primary Education (1993) etc. were initiated.

Meanwhile, a major international development took place with the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 at Jomethian, Thailand. India became a signatory to this commitment and it set its target of universal elementary education by 1995. At the national level, the case of *Unnikrishnan vs State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) further intensified the children's claim on basic education. The Supreme Court of India in its judgment held that all children up to fourteen years of age have the fundamental right to education. It was around this time that the Government of India introduced the 83rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1997) to make education a fundamental right of all children from six to fourteen years of age. Consequently, a programme called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was introduced to realize the goal of universal elementary education by 2010 in a mission mode manner following a convergent approach.

Subsequently, the Government of India introduced the 86th Constitution Amendment Act, 2002 and inserted Article 21A "Right to Education" in the Indian Constitution. The Article states that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of six to fourteen years in a manner as the state may by law determine. This was further consolidated with the introduction of a bill called the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Bill passed by both the Houses of Indian Parliament and received the President of India's assent on 26th August 2009. It was added in the Statute Book as 'The Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009). Hence, a new thrust towards attainment of the goal of universal elementary education began in India.

A Brief Background of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Following independence in 1947, the Government of India in its resolve to achieve universal elementary education initiated many steps. For instance, the Kothari Commission (1964) had viewed that primary education is something which requires highest consideration. It suggested for steps like provision of school within an easy distance from every child's home and each state as well as district to have a perspective plan of its own to develop primary education. This resulted in declaration of National Policy on Education (1968) suggesting for a provision of incentives such as mid-day meals, free textbooks and school uniforms to

children from economically distressed families. It also called for a special emphasis on education of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/handicapped and women along with involvement of the community to ensure effective implementation. This was further stressed in National Policy on Education (1986) which called for quality education, community involvement and supply of essential equipments under Operation Blackboard. To achieve the target, the National Policy on Education (1992) called for a nationwide mission to ensure universal elementary education by the year 2000.

In the following years, a conference of State Education Ministers was convened in 1998 which recommended for a mission mode approach to pursue the goal of universal elementary education (Kainth, 2006, 3288). Consequently, a national committee under then Union Minister of Human Resource Development along with other education ministers was appointed in 1999. The committee agreed with the idea of mission mode and convergent approach. Thereafter, the cabinet approved the scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) on 16th November, 2000 (Agarwal, 2007, 175). The programme was formally launched in 2001 and revised the target of universal elementary education to 2010.

After its introduction, the programme subsumed all the then existing programmes at the elementary level such as Operation Blackboard, Teacher Education, Non- Formal Education, Mid-Day Meal scheme and so on which dealt with different facets of education. After its introduction, a new element was its holistic vision to develop definite projects for every district. The programme also intended to ensure community mobilization and participation and instill a sense of community ownership among the public by involving local bodies. Thus, SSA is a comprehensive programme in the arena of elementary education. As of now, the programme has been subsumed under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan which conjoins school education under one shelter.

Hence, SSA programme was pursued keeping certain goals in perspective such as:

- To bring back all children to schools, alternative schools, education guarantee scheme centers and back to school camps by 2003.
- To allow children to complete five years of schooling by 2007 and eight years of schooling by 2010.
- It also stresses on standard quality of education.
- It yearns to bridge gender and social disparity in primary levels by 2010.
- It endeavours to realize target of universal retention by 2010.



In order to achieve the intended goals, the programme identified certain deliveries. To illustrate a few, it stressed on consolidating existing infrastructure, provide required strength of teachers in every school, ensure universal education facility in all habitations which had not been covered, focus on education of children from weaker sections and bridge digital divide through provision of computers and advanced teaching learning equipment. It also recognized the need of an efficient staff through extensive training. At the same time, to deliver the output, the programme also employed some relevant strategies. These strategies included an institutional reform at the national and state level to devise relevant means to revamp the delivery system.

A sustainable financing system was envisaged through a financial partnership between the central and state governments. Participation of community members became an important measure to ensure effective monitoring. To ensure meaningful planning, habitation planning became the ground for preparation of district plan. Priority was given to education of children such as girls, scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe, children with special needs and other weaker sections of the society. It acknowledges the role of teachers for quality education and ensured their development through resource support from Block Resource Centres, Cluster Resource Centres, exposure tour, institutional training through District Institute of Education and Training (DIETS).

Further some norms of intervention were framed. For example, maintenance of a good pupil-teacher ratio for schools at the primary and upper primary level, creation of school or alternative school facility within 1 km of every habitation and provision for free textbooks under the state plan to all ST/SC/ Girl child with a ceiling of 150 per child. It also talks about provision of funds for school maintenance and repairing under school grant and maintenance grant. It provides for a provision for training of community members limited to eight at max in every village for two days annually along with establishment of Block Resource Centres/ Cluster Resource Centres to provide academic resource support to teachers. It recognizes the need of training of teachers and as such training of teachers into refresher course, in service training and orientation programme were introduced.

As far as financial share is concerned, as of 2015 the ratio of financial share has been decided at 60:40 between the central and other state governments and in case of North Eastern states it is 90:10 (Gohain, The Times of India 2017). Further, the cost of intervention programmes under SSA such as mid- day meals were to be shared. The cost of food grains and transportation is to be borne by the Centre and cost for cooked meal by the state governments. However, the cost for incentives such scholarships and free uniforms would continue but under the state plan for education. (Jha et al 2008, 273). Thus, the programme strives

to establish a congenial environment for children and achieve the goals of universal access, universal enrolment and universal retention in a planned out and effective manner.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Arunachal Pradesh

SSA in Arunachal Pradesh was introduced during 2001-02. During the first phase the programme was confined to three districts namely, Tirap, Tawang and East Kameng. It was later in 2002 that the rest of the districts were covered (Saroh 2015, 19). Consequently, as a measure of action towards realizing the target of universal elementary education the Government of Arunachal Pradesh passed the Arunachal Pradesh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010. It guaranteed every child in the state a provision for free and compulsory education from 6-14 years of age. Further led to the establishment of hundreds of schools, recruitment of hundreds of teachers, establishment of SSA mission office in every district and introduction of several intervention programmes are undertaken.

Many initiatives were launched such as establishment of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) for girls from scheduled castes and schedule tribe, monetary incentive like Pratibha Khoj was introduced to ensure their enrolment and retention in schools along with quality education. The government also provided aids such as hearing aids, crutches for disabled, spectacles for children with poor eyesight, braille kit for visually impaired kids, wheel chairs for physically challenged kids and so on. A programme called Digital Computer Aided Learning System was also introduced to enable computer education for innovative learning of subjects such as science, mathematics, english and others. Other incentives in the form of free school uniforms, free textbooks and mid-day meals have also been provided for children in the elementary level (Report of the CAG 2011, 25-32).

However, time and again many problems have been reported in the state. The problems include state of poor infrastructure such as broken desks, benches, ceilings to poor facility of drinking water facilities and toilets; reports of teachers protesting against delay in salary for many months; shortage of subject teachers; irregularity in appointment and inspection and so on. An audit report of 31st March, 2011 further highlighted some grey areas in the elementary education sector. Some of the problems identified were:

- Failure of state government to release its financial share resulting in backlogs of funds which affected intervention programmes under SSA.
- Unauthorized expenditure of 692.70 lakhs against expenditure approved under Project Approval Board.
- Failure of the state to attain target of universal enrolment of children in the schools.



- Illogical deployment of teachers resulting in problem of single teacher schools. For instance, by 2011 about 758 schools was manned by single teachers.
- Presence of at least 76.32% of untrained teachers.
- Above 50% and above lack drinking water facility and about 47% of schools were in wreckful condition.
- Cases of embezzlement reported around whooping 26.95 crores by executing agencies. Such amount was neither refunded nor the work every accomplished.
- Irregularities in supply of mid-day meals, Pratibha khoj, school uniforms and textbooks.

All these implementation issues question the governance of the programme in the state at the ground level.

Universe of the Study

The field work was carried out in Doimukh Circle in Papumpare and Kamba Circle in West Siang. Among the two study areas, Kamba in West Siang district is home to various tribes like Galo, Minyong, Bori, Bokar, Palibo, Ramos and Memba. According to 2011 census, the literacy rate of the district was 66.46%. In contrast Doimukh in Papumpare district is home to the Nyishi tribe with a total literacy rate of the district standing at 79.95%. With regard to development, Kamba circle is comparatively less urbanised as compared to Doimukh whereas the latter is near the capital city and more urban.

With regard to Papumpare district, SSA was introduced in 2001-01. During that year forty primary schools and six upper primary schools were sanctioned which however was not opened. It was only in 2002-03 that twelve primary schools and ten upper primary schools were opened in the district. As of 2017-18, 269 primary schools have been opened, forty-three primary schools have been upgraded to upper primary schools and seventy-five upper primary schools opened and three upgraded to secondary level. Further, till 2017-18, the district has a total of twelve residential schools and teachers' recruitment (cumulative) as on March, 2019 for primary classes is 511. For upper primary classes teachers sanctioned and recruited (cumulative) stands at 112. (Management of Information on School Education (MISE), Papumpare district 2019).

In the West Siang district, SSA was introduced on 13th August, 2001-02 but no schools were sanctioned nor opened. It was during 2002-03 that 10 primary schools were sanctioned and opened under SSA. As of 2018-19, the district has a total of 158 schools out of which 101 of them are primary schools and thirty-eight of them are upper primary schools. The total strength of primary teachers working under SSA is 177

in the district. Further, enrolment of students in class I-V is 3963 and enrolment in class VI-VIII is 2641. (Unified District Information on School Education (UDISE), West Siang district 2019).

Methodology

With regard to sampling method, purposive sampling method was employed. Purposive sampling method was employed because among the respondents from the community members, parents of the students who were taken as sample respondents were included. Further, SSA implementing authorities, prominent educated people from both the districts were interviewed to understand the various implementation issues and to get a holistic picture of SSA implementation. In addition, sampling method was employed to choose schools feasible to the researcher in the study area for logistical reasons.

As far as sample size is concerned a total of 174 respondents, 87 from each study areas were taken for the study. The samples comprised of five categories of respondents which include 7 SSA Functionaries, 10 Teachers, 10 School Management Committee (SMC) members, 50 community members and 10 students. The primary data was collected through survey of the opted areas employing techniques like interview schedule, telephonic interview, observation and discussions with the respondents. The secondary data was collected from books, articles, official records, journals, newspapers, reports and other available materials.

Field Findings

For field survey, the questions asked ranged from basic awareness regarding the programme and its provisions to knowing their perception as well as suggestions from the respondents. The following section enumerates the findings and results of the field survey.

- During field survey it has been found that the level of awareness among the respondents regarding Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is very low. Those unaware from the community members were mostly the illiterate and lesser educated ones from the community. What is more surprising is that even the School Management Committee members (SMC) and some teachers at the elementary level were not fully aware about the programme and its provisions. When compared between the two study areas though low, awareness about the programme is comparatively better among people in Doimukh than those of Kamba. The possible reason could be that Doimukh being close to the capital city many educated people live here, hence better aware about the program.
- Accessibility to elementary school education among children has improved to a great extent. In both the study areas, every habitation has their own primary and upper primary schools. However, during

field survey it was seen that some schools even though found in the record of running schools were actually defunct. This indicates that action towards achieving the goal of universal access to education by establishing schools in every habitation has improved but is away from being universal.

- As far as enrolment of children is concerned field data show a positive view. In both the study areas be it boy or girl, there has not been any case of children deprived of basic education. According to teachers, SMC, community members and SSA functionaries' enrolment has been going strong and is satisfactory. Those of the parents who could afford had enrolled their children in private schools and rest in government schools. They were of the view that every person today understands the value of education and perhaps that is the reason that enrolment has been satisfactory in both the study areas.
- With respect to retention though comparatively better in Doimukh than in Kamba, some inconsistency has been noticed in both the areas. It has been found that many dropped out from schools due to irregularity of teachers and dissatisfaction with the quality of education provided to them. This can be well ascertained from the instances of defunct schools in the study areas. It has also been seen that after dropping out those who could afford send their children to private school to pursue education. However, those families which could not afford such opportunity were the affected ones. This data indicates that wastage continue till today.
- The status of gender literacy has been found good in both the study areas. Data collected from the field survey as well as discussion indicates that every girl child is enrolled for education by their parents. The girl students and women from the community informed that attitude of family towards education has been positive. They informed that every child is treated equal by their parents in the matters of education. Hence, this show that society's take on education of both the male/female child has been encouraging.
- With respect to intervention programmes under SSA, field data, study of report and discussion held with the respondents reveal that there has been tremendous inconsistency in implementation of these programmes. The implementation of interventions though found better in Doimukh than in Kamba has been irregular. For instance, mid-day meal was not provided regularly to children. The reason being irregular supply of food grains to respective schools. It was also found that though food grains reach but adequate conversion cost was not provided. Sometimes rice was provided but dal was not. In such case, preparation of complete meal is not possible. On the question of textbooks it has been found that many a time's supply of textbooks was delayed. In some cases some subject books never

reached for a session and many times damaged books were received with pages missing. This affects the completion of curriculum in the schools.

- As far as free uniforms are concerned, it was found that many of the uniforms that reached schools were ill fitted. In subsequent years it has been substituted and children were provided some monetary incentive amounting to 350 rupees in lieu of free uniform. However, the problem is that the cost of stitching dress is more than what is provided to them. In such case monetary incentive makes no sense because students are left with no choice but to ask from their parents. Hence, this indicates that approach of government towards intervention programmes has been impractical and fails at the ground level.
- Respondents were asked a question related to satisfaction of infrastructure of government schools in their locality. Majority of the respondents from both the study areas seem to be dissatisfied with the existing infrastructure. This was further evident from the field visit by the researcher. It was found that many schools had broken windows, broken ceilings, distorted blackboards and shaky desks and benches. When asked the reason for such poor condition the teachers, SMC members and SSA officials informed that the maintenance grant provided by the government is not adequate. They also informed that the grant is often delayed that hamper speedy action and results in deplorable condition of schools and its infrastructure.
- When enquired about inspection of schools by the authorities, the community members, some teachers and School Management Committee members informed that inspection is done twice or thrice a year. However, the problem is that the teachers already know of their visits beforehand and they come on the day of inspection while rest of the days they are irregular. Many were of the view that regular visits every month by the authorities is necessary to curb this menace. There have also been some instances of surprise visits from block education officers and block resource coordinators; however, the root of the problem lies in the absence of action from the higher authorities towards irregular teachers. Hence this indicates that administrative vigilance over school management is loose in both the areas.
- During field survey it was seen that digital learning is far from real. It has been found to be a mere announcement of the government and nothing more than that. Out of the ten schools, five each from the respective areas, only one school in Kamba circle was some years back provided with computers. However, it was informed by the School Management Committee during field survey that the school lack regular electricity supplies and no teacher were ever appointed to handle the work. Students also informed that they never received any computer lesson. Hence, this indicates that goal of bridging digital divide is only a paper work.

- With respect to prescribed pupil- teacher ratio of 1:30 for lower primary and 1:40 for upper primary levels, it has been found satisfactory in both the study areas. However, during field survey it was seen that the problem is actually related to lack of subject teachers and not ratio as a whole. Consultation with respondents revealed that dearth of subject teachers was probably one of the reasons for incompleteness of syllabus. Probably this is one of the reasons that students from government school are weak in subjects like science, English and mathematics.
- SSA recognizes community ownership, mobilization and participation as one of the pivotal means for effective delivery of the programme. Data collected from the field survey indicate lack of participation from the community in both the areas. Majority of the general public were not aware of the programme and its provisions. They were never consulted about their role nor were mobilized for participation. Even the SMC members were not fully aware about their role. Further the community members were fully dependent upon the SMC, teachers and SSA officials for management and monitoring of school. This indicates that community participation has failed to percolate in the system.
- From field survey it has also been found that there is lack of training among the teachers in both the areas. This is evident from the data collected as majority of the teachers from both the areas; both regular as well as contractual teachers appointed under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) had very little knowledge about the SSA programme and its provisions. The head teachers of the school are no exception to this. This comes as a surprise because teachers are one of the major stakeholders in achieving the target of universal elementary education and they not being aware of the programme is saddening. Thus, this call for meaningful and intensive training of teachers or else the education system will crumble from within.
- Survey data and observation in the study areas also revealed that many schools lacked proper sanitation and drinking water facilities. Toilets were constructed with no water supply and the schools had no separate toilets for girls and boys. One student informed that because of lack of water supply in the toilets they skip classes. Further due to improper drinking water facility students informed that they bring water bottles from home and in other days resort to tap water for drinking. This indicates the problem of unhygienic conditions in the schools.
- Field survey also revealed that the problem of teacher's irregularity is persisting in both the areas. Overall, the problem is severe in Kamba than in Doimukh. Especially, this trend has been found more in schools away from administrative establishments. An administrator informed that during inspection in a school it was found that some teachers appoint proxy to teach and in return pay some amount as remuneration equivalent to half of their salary. It was also informed by the teachers that

delay in disbursing remuneration and absence of teacher's quarter in posted areas is one of the prime reasons for teachers' irregularity.

- With respect to satisfaction regarding quality of education, respondents from both the areas seem to be dissatisfied with the quality of education provided in the government schools. Many informed that many students of class V and VI from government schools were not able to comprehend better in English and lacked basic knowledge of subjects like Science and Mathematics. In contrast a class II student from a private school was better than those in government schools. This indicates that all in all they lack basic grasp on subjects and goal of providing education of standard quality has not been successful.
- During field visit while discussing with the officials it has been found that there were many defunct schools in both the areas which were in the list of functioning schools. Officials informed that one such reason is low enrolment of children as their parents prefer sending to private schools due to poor infrastructure. Thus, it has been found that long period of un enrolment results in cases of defunct schools affecting not only students and community but also costing the state exchequer.

Discussion

The above findings from the field reveal that the SSA programme in Arunachal Pradesh has brought in tremendous changes in the development and spread of elementary education in the state. It has provided an opportunity to make education a reality for many and reach as many children as possible especially from the economically distressed families. In this respect, progress has been witnessed with respect to accessibility and enrolment of children in the elementary level but these achievements are threatened by the continual menace of wastage which has been known during the study. Over all the implementation of SSA programme has been shallow in both the areas. The Government's aim of instilling a sense of community ownership among public for effective delivery of the programme through active involvement has not been realized. This is probably due to the failure in mobilizing the community for their participation. Non participation of community in implementation is a resultant outcome of lack of awareness which seems to be an administrative inefficiency in handling the same. Special care to physically challenged children through provision of aids to them is highly unsatisfactory because such facilities are not provided every year defeating the purpose of inclusive education.

Decentralization to involve local bodies has also failed in the sense that though local body members are involved as a member of School Management Committee yet they possess little knowledge about their role and are inactive which point towards a culture of careless attitude of administration towards the local bodies.

The goal of providing education of standard quality also seems to be unsatisfactory considering the performance of the students and rate of drop outs resulting in defunct schools. Inconsistency in implementation of intervention programmes such as mid-day meal, free textbooks and uniforms and so on constituting the core elements under SSA has been rampant and is disheartening. Irregularities met in this regard are one of the formidable factors for mediocre result delivered in the state. At a larger context, the programme has not been able to deliver highly as it should have at the grassroots due to political and administrative failure and uninterested attitude of community in handling the programme.

Implication Measures for Policy Making and Governance

The field survey and the data collected thereof and the observations and discussions with the respondents in the study areas makes one realize that SSA requires a revisit to ensure that its goals are achieved. Therefore, some plausible policy implication measures are presented which if initiated may be helpful to overcome existing gaps and aid in improving the machinery for productive and meaningful execution of the programme:

- Awareness among people is vital for any programme to be successful in its implementation. During field survey lack of awareness was found in majority of respondents from all the categories of respondents which has affected the implementation at the ground level. Perhaps this is the reason that they were voiceless with the notion that general public has no right to voice as well as participate in the system. Thus, spreading awareness regarding the programme is vital for optimum delivery of programme at the ground level.
- During field survey it has been seen that the target of creating sense of community ownership for effective implementation of SSA programme has not been effective. To ensure pro-active participation and community mobilization for management of schools, the SMC members should be trained well and generate awareness about their responsibility. It is through them that community could be better dealt with and encouraged for involvement. Hence, this way decentralization in educational management will be more effective.
- Irregularities related to funds such as unauthorized expenditure must be dealt with strongly in order to deter the offenders. Regular auditing and accounting is a needful intervention in this regard.
- It was also found that officials most likely depend on records submitted to them regarding the progress in every district. Considering the administrative irregularities such reports could be way from truth. In this direction regular investigation and evaluation through field visits by the higher authorities will go a long way.



- It has also come to light that gaps regarding implementation of the intervention programmes such as mid-day meal, supply of free textbooks and uniforms on time is due to delay in releasing of funds from the government. From records it has also been known that backlog of funds by the state government has been witnessed on many occasions. Therefore releasing of funds at regular intervals for various purposes under SSA shall be a welcoming step for effective implementation.
- During survey of the study areas and discussion with the SSA officials it has been found that many new schools are opened by the government without proper infrastructure. Eventually such schools are the ones which become defunct. Instead, the government should consolidate the existing schools for quality education rather than opening new ones.
- During interaction with the teachers, it has been found that many of the teachers both regular and contractual were not provided any training. Majority of them did not have any clear idea about the SSA programme. Officials also informed that training depends on release of grants by the government which many times the government fail to do so. Therefore, effective ways must be devised to achieve the target with limited resources. Stances of untrained teachers are a result of lack of resources.
- One common grievance that was reported during field survey is the delay in disbursement of salary to SSA teachers from the state government. The regularized teachers and the contractual teachers perform the same task under one shelter but while the regularized ones get their salary on time the contractual does not. The common excuse is that the government does not have funds. The government must understand that without incentive none will be sincere and dedicated in their work. While it may not be feasible on the part of government to regularize all the contractual SSA teachers at least the government should try to provide their remuneration on time to boost their morale.
- During field survey it was found that the officials rely on school records to assess the performance of the students. Reports can be deceptive at times. Therefore holding tests for students by the officials to examine their performance in language and other basic subjects could go a long way in terms of measuring and ensuring good quality education at the elementary level.

The observations and conclusion provided above is a result of the study and findings based on the two study areas opted. Every area has their unique socio economic and political gaps and as such further similar studies are required at a broader level to translate the broader trends of observation in policy terms to achieve the target of universal elementary education.

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India's Maritime Diplomacy: Emergent Challenges and Opportunities

Dr Aashish Kumar Bariyar¹

Abstract: India's maritime diplomacy has emerged as a crucial component of its foreign policy, driven by its growing economic and military capabilities. The country's strategic location in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has made it a vital player in regional maritime security and consequently, India's maritime diplomacy focuses on building partnerships, promoting regional cooperation, and enhancing maritime security in the IOR. Through its maritime diplomacy, India aims to promote a stable and secure Indian Ocean region, while advancing its own strategic interests. The country's naval diplomacy has shifted from being a 'Net Security Provider' to a 'Preferred Security Partner,' allowing it to build stronger relationships with regional nations. Through its maritime diplomacy, India seeks to promote a rules-based international order, ensure the security of its maritime interests, and foster cooperation with its maritime neighbours. This paper explores India's maritime diplomacy, examining its historical evolution, key policies, strategic objectives, and challenges; highlighting India's initiatives and efforts in maritime security, naval diplomacy, and regional collaborations.

Keywords: Maritime, geo-strategic, navy, Indian Ocean, doctrine, strategic autonomy

Introduction

India's geographical positioning along the Indian Ocean has historically rendered it a maritime nation with deep-rooted maritime traditions. In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, maritime diplomacy has become central to India's foreign policy, especially given the rising importance of the Indian Ocean as a global trade hub and strategic arena (Brewster, 2021). This paper explores the evolution, strategies, and significance of India's maritime diplomacy, analyzing its role in regional stability, security, and economic development. India's maritime diplomacy is driven by the country's growing recognition of the Indian Ocean's significance in its economic, strategic, and security interests (Pant, 2018). The Indian Ocean region (IOR) is crucial for India's prosperity, with maritime connectivity, ocean management, and ocean governance being key factors (Kapoor, 2015). India's maritime diplomacy seeks to promote its national interests while contributing to regional stability and cooperation among nations in the IOR (Mohan, 2012). The country's Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR) vision, introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, highlights India's commitment to ensuring security and stability in the region.

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SAGAR posits the security of the IOR as a collective responsibility of littoral countries, emphasizing transparency, mutual trust, and a rules-based international order (Rajagopalan, 2017).

The Indian Navy plays a significant role in India's maritime diplomacy, engaging in various activities to build partnerships and foster cooperation with regional navies (Scott, 2012). These efforts include bilateral and multilateral naval exercises, capacity building, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (Brewster, 2014). For instance, the Indian Navy has participated in the Malabar Exercise with the United States and Japan, and the Milan Exercise with multiple IOR nations (Pant, 2018). India's maritime diplomacy is also focused on building relationships with regional partners and enhancing maritime security cooperation (Mohan, 2012). The country has been assisting island nations like Maldives, Seychelles, and Mauritius by providing aerial and maritime vessels for better surveillance of their territorial waters (Brewster, 2014). Additionally, India has offered custom-made ships and patrol boats to its maritime allies and partners (Rajagopalan, 2017). India's maritime diplomacy has several key dimensions, including Exercise Milan, a multilateral naval exercise that brings together navies from around 50 countries to enhance maritime cooperation and security. The country has also established the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), a multilateral facility for information sharing and dissemination to enhance maritime domain awareness.

Evolution and growth of Maritime Diplomacy in India

India's maritime diplomacy has a rich and complex history, shaped by various factors including colonial legacy, geopolitical dynamics, and economic transformations. India's engagement with maritime affairs dates back to ancient times, with maritime trade routes connecting India with Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and beyond (Misra & Muni, 2010). Under colonial rule, maritime diplomacy was primarily driven by British interests. Post-independence, India sought to redefine its maritime strategy, balancing regional security concerns with pursuit of maritime sovereignty (Harshe, 2018). In the Cold War period, India's maritime focus shifted towards safeguarding its maritime borders and asserting regional influence. The 2000s marked a turning point with increased recognition of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, leading to formalized policies such as the Indian Maritime Doctrine (India Maritime Doctrine, 2004).

During the British colonial era, India's maritime strategy was primarily driven by colonial interests, with a focus on protecting trade routes and maintaining control over the Indian Ocean (Panikkar, 1945). Early thinkers like K.M. Panikkar emphasized the need for India to develop its own naval capabilities to secure its interests in the region. His works highlight the importance of maritime power in shaping India's foreign



policy and security (Panikkar, 1945). After independence in 1947, India faced significant challenges in establishing a strong naval force, with an initial focus on continental security and limited naval expansion (Thomas, 2012). However, the launch of INS Vikrant, India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, marked a significant step in enhancing naval capabilities (Baruah, 2017). This development demonstrated India's commitment to building its naval power and securing its maritime interests. Further, the economic reforms of 1991 transformed India's maritime outlook, expanding its maritime interests and trade significantly (Mohan, 2012). India began to engage more with its neighborhood and revived ancient maritime connections, both political and commercial. This shift in focus towards the maritime domain was driven by the recognition of the Indian Ocean's strategic importance for India's economic and security interests.

In recent years, India's maritime diplomacy has become more proactive, with initiatives like SAGAR emphasizing regional cooperation and security (Modi, 2015). The country has expanded its naval diplomacy efforts, including multilateral exercises like the Malabar Exercise with the US, Japan, and Australia (Pant, 2018). India has also focused on capacity building and humanitarian assistance in the region, solidifying its position as a 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' (Rajagopalan, 2017). The Indian Maritime Strategy (2007) and the Maritime India Vision 2030 are key documents that outline India's maritime vision and objectives (Indian Navy, 2007; Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, 2021). These documents highlight the importance of maritime security, cooperation, and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean region. India's maritime diplomacy has evolved significantly over the years, shaped by historical events, geopolitical dynamics, and economic transformations. From its colonial legacy to its current proactive stance, India's maritime diplomacy continues to play a crucial role in shaping its foreign policy and security interests.

India's Maritime Diplomacy- a politico-strategic context

India's maritime diplomacy is shaped by its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region (IOR), which is critical for the country's economic, security, and geopolitical aspirations. The IOR is a vital conduit for global trade, with over 80% of India's trade by volume and 95% by value passing through these waters (Kapoor, 2015). Given the region's significance, India's maritime diplomacy seeks to promote its national interests while contributing to regional stability and cooperation among nations in the IOR (Mohan, 2012). The strategic context of India's maritime diplomacy is influenced by the growing presence of China in the IOR, which has raised concerns about Beijing's intentions and its impact on regional security (Pant, 2018). The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is a geopolitically vital area where global powers like the US, China, and

India navigate competing interests (Chinoy, 2019). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has a significant maritime component, with the development of ports and infrastructure in the IOR, which India perceives as a challenge to its regional influence (Brewster, 2014). In response, India has sought to strengthen its maritime partnerships with regional countries, including the United States, Japan, and Australia, through initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) (Rajagopalan, 2017).

India's maritime diplomacy is also driven by its commitment to ensuring the security of its sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and protecting its maritime interests (Scott, 2012). The country has been actively engaged in promoting regional cooperation and security through various multilateral forums, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) (Mohan, 2012). These initiatives reflect India's efforts to promote a stable and secure IOR, which is critical for its economic and security interests. It could therefore be inferred that the strategic context of India's maritime diplomacy is shaped by its interests in the IOR, the growing presence of China, and its commitment to regional security and cooperation. India's maritime diplomacy seeks to promote its national interests while contributing to regional stability, which is critical for its economic and security aspirations.

Policy Framework of India's Maritime Diplomacy

India's maritime policy framework is a comprehensive approach that seeks to promote the country's maritime interests and security in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). The framework is guided by the country's maritime doctrine, which emphasizes the importance of maritime security, cooperation, and sustainable development (Indian Navy, 2007). At the heart of India's maritime policy framework is the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative which seeks to promote collective cooperation for natural disasters, search and rescue, and regional integration through blue economy promotion (Rajagopalan, 2017). This initiative reflects India's commitment to ensuring the security and stability of the IOR, which is critical for its economic and security interests. India's maritime policy framework also emphasizes the importance of maritime security cooperation with regional countries. The country has been actively engaged in promoting regional cooperation and security through various multilateral forums (Mohan, 2012). These initiatives demonstrate India's efforts to promote a stable and secure IOR, which is essential for its economic and security aspirations. India's maritime policy framework is a comprehensive approach that seeks to promote the country's maritime interests and security in the IOR. The framework is guided by the country's maritime doctrine and emphasizes the importance of maritime security, cooperation, and sustainable development. The key policy framework of India's Maritime Policy include:-

SAGAR: Launched in 2015, SAGAR underscores India's commitment to regional security, economic connectivity, and environmental sustainability (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015). SAGAR, which stands for Security and Growth for All in the Region, is India's policy or doctrine of maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Announced by PM Narendra Modi on March 12, 2015, it aims to enhance cooperation in the region, leveraging India's central location and capabilities for the benefit of all nations in the Indian Ocean Region. This initiative focuses on several key areas, including security, capacity building, collective action, sustainable development, and maritime engagement. It seeks to promote regional stability, safeguard maritime territories, and facilitate economic trade and cooperation. By doing so, India aims to counter challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and natural disasters, while also promoting sustainable development and blue economy opportunities. The SAGAR vision is crucial in the context of the Indian Ocean region, where China's growing influence through initiatives like the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route and the String of Pearls strategy has raised concerns. India's SAGAR initiative is designed to promote a rules-based international order, ensure the security of its maritime interests, and foster cooperation with its maritime neighbours.

Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004): This provides guidelines for maritime strategy, emphasizing Indian interests, naval modernization, and regional cooperation. The Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004) is a policy document that outlines India's maritime strategy and vision for the Indian Ocean region. It emphasizes the importance of the sea lines of communication and the need to protect India's maritime interests, including its shipping, trade, and energy security (Indian Navy, 2004). The doctrine highlights the role of the Indian Navy in safeguarding these interests and promoting regional stability, while also addressing emerging challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and environmental degradation (Indian Navy, 2004). By providing a framework for India's maritime security policy, the doctrine guides the development of the Indian Navy's capabilities and operations to ensure the security of India's maritime domain. The Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004) serves as a foundational document outlining India's maritime strategy and vision for the Indian Ocean region. This doctrine underscores the significance of safeguarding India's maritime interests, including its shipping, trade, and energy security, which are crucial for the nation's economic growth and development (Indian Navy, 2004). It highlights the pivotal role of the Indian Navy in protecting these interests and promoting regional stability. By emphasizing the importance of a secure maritime environment, the doctrine addresses emerging challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and environmental degradation, which pose significant threats to India's maritime security (Indian Navy, 2004). Furthermore, the Indian Maritime Doctrine provides a comprehensive framework for India's maritime security policy, guiding the development of the Indian Navy's capabilities and operations. It outlines the navy's primary



objectives, including ensuring the safety of sea lines of communication, protecting offshore assets, and providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Indian Navy, 2004).

Maritime India Vision 2030: The Maritime India Vision 2030 is another key component of India's maritime policy framework (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, 2021) which aims to refurbish the maritime sector with over 150 initiatives across ports, shipping, and waterways. The vision emphasizes the importance of sustainable development, technological innovation, and private sector participation in promoting India's maritime growth (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, 2021). This is a comprehensive and ambitious initiative aimed at transforming India's maritime sector into a global leader. This vision outlines a roadmap for the development of India's ports, shipping, and waterways, with a focus on enhancing efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness. The Maritime India Vision 2030 is built around several key themes, including port infrastructure development, logistics efficiency, shipbuilding and repair, inland waterways, sustainability, and global cooperation. The vision aims to promote India's maritime sector by investing in infrastructure development, encouraging private investment, and fostering innovation and technology.

One of the primary objectives of the Maritime India Vision 2030 is to increase India's port capacity and efficiency. This will be achieved through the development of new ports and the modernization of existing ones. The vision also aims to improve logistics efficiency by reducing turnaround times, increasing the use of technology, and promoting multimodal transportation. The Maritime India Vision 2030 also places a strong emphasis on sustainability and environmental protection. The vision aims to promote the use of clean energy, reduce carbon emissions, and encourage sustainable practices in the maritime sector. Furthermore, the Maritime India Vision 2030 seeks to promote India's maritime sector globally. This will be achieved through increased cooperation with other countries, participation in international maritime organizations, and the development of India's shipbuilding and repair industry. Overall, the Maritime India Vision 2030 is a comprehensive and ambitious initiative that aims to transform India's maritime sector into a global leader. By investing in infrastructure development, promoting sustainability, and fostering innovation and technology, the vision aims to promote India's economic growth and development and can help India become a major player in the global maritime industry, enhancing its economic growth, and improving the lives of its citizens. The vision's focus on sustainability and environmental protection will also contribute to an eco-friendlier and more responsible maritime sector.

India's Role in the Indian Ocean Region

The Indian Ocean region (IOR) is a vital component of India's strategic environment, with the country being a major maritime power in the region. India's role in the IOR is shaped by its geographical location, economic interests, and security concerns. The country's presence in the IOR is driven by its desire to ensure the security of its sea lines of communication (SLOCs), protect its maritime trade, and promote regional stability. India's maritime strategy emphasizes the importance of a secure and stable IOR, and the country has taken several steps to enhance its maritime capabilities. The development of its naval forces, the establishment of coastal surveillance systems, and the expansion of its maritime infrastructure are some of the key initiatives that India has undertaken to strengthen its maritime security. India's naval forces are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and are capable of undertaking a range of tasks, including anti-piracy operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. India has also been actively engaged in promoting regional cooperation and security through various initiatives. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is a key platform for regional cooperation, and India has been playing a leading role in promoting the organization's objectives. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is another important initiative that brings together navies from the region to discuss maritime security issues and promote cooperation. India's participation in these initiatives demonstrates its commitment to promoting regional stability and security.

India's role in the IOR is also shaped by its relationships with other countries in the region. The country has been strengthening its maritime partnerships with countries such as the United States, Japan, and Australia. These partnerships are critical to promoting regional stability and security, and India has been working closely with its partners to enhance maritime cooperation and security. The Malabar exercises, which are held annually between India and the United States, with participation from Japan and Australia, are a key example of India's commitment to promoting maritime cooperation. India's role in the IOR is significant, as it seeks to balance its economic and security interests with its commitment to promoting regional stability and cooperation. By playing a proactive role in the region, India aims to ensure the security of its maritime interests and promote a stable and prosperous IOR. The country's maritime strategy is guided by the principles of SAGAR which emphasizes the importance of collective cooperation and security in the region.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD): An alliance involving the US, Japan, Australia, and India, aimed at maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific (Mohan & Raghavan, 2020). The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is a strategic forum comprising four countries: the United States, Japan, India, and Australia. Its primary objective is to promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, ensuring stability and

security through cooperation and dialogue. The Quad was initially formed in 2007 but remained dormant for several years. It was revived in 2017, reflecting the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region in the global strategic landscape. The Quad is an informal strategic partnership, with no permanent decision-making body or secretariat. The Quad's focus areas include maritime security, infrastructure development, health security, climate change, critical technologies, cyber security, and space cooperation. These areas reflect the Quad's commitment to promoting regional stability and security, as well as addressing common challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region. The Quad's significance lies in its ability to promote a rules-based international order and stability in the Indo-Pacific. By fostering cooperation and dialogue among its member countries, the Quad helps to deter aggression and promote a free and open region. The Quad's efforts also contribute to countering China's growing assertiveness in the region, promoting a balance of power that supports regional stability.

Malabar Exercise: A trilateral military exercise with the US and Japan, emphasizing maritime interoperability. The Malabar Exercises are a multilateral naval war gaming exercise that originated in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between India and the United States. Over the years, it has evolved to include Japan and Australia, making it a quadrilateral exercise. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, foster mutual understanding, and address shared maritime challenges in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific region. The Malabar Exercises have undergone significant changes since their inception. From a bilateral exercise between India and the US, it expanded to include Japan in 2007, and later Australia rejoined in 2020, making it a quadrilateral exercise. This expansion reflects the growing importance of maritime cooperation among these nations. The exercises are significant as they enhance maritime security, deter conflict, and promote a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region. By participating in the Malabar Exercises, India, the US, Japan, and Australia demonstrate their commitment to regional stability and security.

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS): The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is a multilateral maritime security initiative that brings together navies from the Indian Ocean region to promote cooperation, understanding, and stability. Established in 2008, IONS has grown to include 35 member countries from the Indian Ocean region, providing a platform for navies to engage in dialogue and cooperation on maritime security issues (IONS, n.d.). IONS aims to foster a collaborative and cooperative approach to maritime security in the Indian Ocean region, addressing common challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and natural disasters. The symposium provides a forum for member countries to share best practices, exchange ideas, and develop common approaches to maritime security (Rajagopalan, 2017). India seeks to be a dominant maritime power in the Indian Ocean, working to secure its maritime interests and

foster regional stability. India's proactive approach includes military presence, economic partnerships, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at preserving freedom of navigation and access to vital sea lanes (Chinoy, 2019). The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), established in 2008, exemplifies regional cooperation, providing a platform for navies of littoral states to collaborate on security concerns like piracy and maritime disaster response (Mohan & Raghavan, 2020).

India's Maritime Diplomacy – a path fraught with challenges

India's maritime diplomacy plays a crucial role in promoting its national interests in the Indian Ocean region. However, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of its maritime strategy. These challenges can be broadly categorized into traditional and non-traditional security threats, with piracy and maritime terrorism being among the most significant (Kapoor, 2015). Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and other parts of the Indian Ocean region disrupts trade and threatens the safety of seafarers. Despite the Indian Navy's active involvement in anti-piracy operations, the threat persists (Scott, 2012). Maritime terrorism also poses a significant challenge, with terrorist groups seeking to exploit the maritime domain to carry out attacks (Pant, 2018). The threat of terrorism is particularly concerning given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region, with its busy shipping lanes and critical infrastructure. Environmental issues, including climate change, also impact India's maritime diplomacy. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ocean pollution threaten coastal infrastructure, disrupt shipping routes, and impact coastal communities (Mohan, 2012). The effects of climate change are particularly pronounced in the Indian Ocean region, where many countries are vulnerable to its impacts. India must address these challenges through a comprehensive approach that combines environmental sustainability with maritime security.

Geopolitical rivalries in the Indian Ocean region also complicate India's maritime strategy. The growing presence of China in the region, through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), poses a significant challenge to India's maritime interests (Brewster, 2014). China's increasing military presence and infrastructure development in the region have raised concerns about its intentions and impact on regional stability (Rajagopalan, 2017). China's 'String of Pearls' strategy and the development of its blue-water navy have introduced a new dimension to India's maritime strategy. China's initiatives like the construction of port facilities in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), and Djibouti threaten India's regional influence (Chinoy, 2019). These developments induce a strategic recalibration in India, emphasizing strengthening naval capabilities, regional alliances, and maritime security frameworks. India's maritime diplomacy must navigate these complexities to ensure that its interests are protected and its influence in the region is maintained. Furthermore, India needs to strengthen maritime security cooperation



with regional countries to address common challenges and promote regional stability. India must work closely with its regional partners to develop a shared understanding of the challenges facing the region and to promote a coordinated response to these challenges. India must adopt a comprehensive approach that combines military readiness with diplomatic efforts and environmental sustainability. By fostering cooperation and dialogue among regional countries, India can promote a rules-based international order and ensure the security of its maritime interests (Rajagopalan, 2017).

Conclusion

India's maritime diplomacy is a vital component of its broader strategic framework. It reflects evolving security needs, economic ambitions, and regional influence aspirations. While facing challenges from regional rivals and infrastructural limitations, India's investments in naval modernization, regional partnerships, and diplomatic initiatives aim to safeguard its maritime interests and promote stability in the Indian Ocean. As geostrategic dynamics shift with China's rise and other global powers' interests in the Indo-Pacific, India's emphasis on maritime diplomacy will invariably become more pronounced to secure its national security and economic growth.

It however remains to be seen that the success of India's maritime diplomacy will depend on its ability to navigate the complexities of the region, including the growing naval assertiveness of China, the dynamics of QUAD and the evolving security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. By adopting a comprehensive strategy that combines military readiness with diplomatic efforts and economic cooperation, India can effectively address these challenges and promote its national interests. India's maritime diplomacy will also play a critical role in promoting regional cooperation, sustainable development, and the protection of its maritime interests. As India continues to grow and assert its influence in the Indian Ocean region, its maritime diplomacy will be crucial in shaping its future as a major power. By prioritizing its maritime interests, promoting regional stability, and fostering cooperation with other countries, India can ensure a secure and prosperous future for itself and the region. Ultimately, India's maritime diplomacy will be a key determinant of its success in the Indian Ocean region, and its ability to navigate the complexities of the region will be critical in promoting its national interests and ensuring the security of its maritime domain. As the region continues to evolve, India's maritime diplomacy will play a vital role in shaping the future of the Indian Ocean region and promoting a more stable and secure world. In retrospect, India's strategy in dealing with maritime challenges and China's naval assertiveness should be comprehensive and multi-faceted. By combining military readiness with diplomatic efforts and economic cooperation, India can ensure the security of its maritime interests and promote a more stable and secure region. The success of

India's maritime strategy will depend on its ability to navigate the complexities of the region and promote a rules-based international order.

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Inner Line Permit and Scheduled Tribe Status Demands in Manipur

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Abstract: In recent years, identity consciousness among the people of Northeast India, especially in Manipur, has grown significantly. Key factors include the concept of single citizenship and the ongoing migration into the region. After Manipur attained full statehood in 1972, concerns over migrants and outsiders sparked several movements. The demand for the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system and Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Meitei community are central to these efforts. Since January 1, 2020, Manipur became the fourth northeastern state to implement the ILP. The paper explores the socio-economic and political factors driving these identity-based movements in Manipur.

Keywords: ILP (Inner Line Permit), Indigenous People, Scheduled Tribe Status and Meitei/Meetei.

Introduction:

Identity consciousness is a global phenomenon that often manifests in the form of identity politics. According to Cressida J. Heyes, "Identity politics typically concerns the liberation of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context." Movements such as the civil rights movement, LGBTQ+ liberation, anti-racism campaigns, and ethnic-based movements are key examples. In India, the idea of unity in diversity is a cornerstone of democracy. North East India, sharing borders with Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Bhutan, and Nepal, holds strategic importance. The porous borders contribute to a steady influx of migrants seeking social, economic, and educational opportunities. Manipur, located in this region, is home to various ethnic communities. The Meiteis, indigenous to the area since 33 A.D., have long coexisted with other groups such as the Tangkhul, Kabui, Maring, Mao, Anal, and Chothe each with distinct identities and self-governing systems. During British rule (1891–1947), these groups were categorized under broader labels such as Naga and Kuki and later granted Scheduled Tribe status. Today, the Scheduled Tribe population forms about 35.12% of the state's total (2011 Census). With rising migration and resource pressure, the Meitei community seeks constitutional protection to preserve their identity, land rights, and cultural heritage.

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Ethnicity As Viewed Under the Indian Constitution

Northeast India is home to a rich tapestry of ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, and identity. However, from an outsider's perspective, the entire region is often viewed as a single unit, overlooking its diversity. The region is characterized by its multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural composition. Over time, this diversity has given rise to various ethnic-based political aspirations, identity politics, and at times, conflicts. While this paper does not delve into ethnic conflicts, it is important to understand the roots of identity consciousness in the region.

During British colonial rule, administrative policies such as land alienation and the introduction of a new land revenue system facilitated the influx of outsiders who later settled permanently in the region. This period marked the beginning of identity consciousness among indigenous communities, largely driven by economic concerns and the need for social survival. After independence, however, these demands evolved to become more political in nature.

The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War triggered another wave of migration into the region, especially affecting states like Tripura, where the indigenous Tripuri population became a minority. Assam witnessed a major anti-foreigner movement from 1979 to 1985, demanding the deportation of migrants who entered after 1951. Manipur too has seen several movements, including calls for the implementation of the Inner Line Permit system and the demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Meitei/Meetei community.

Ethnicity, by nature, is complex, and every community possesses layered identities. While the Indian Constitution protects religious and linguistic minorities under Articles 29 and 30, it does not define "minority" based on ethnicity. As per the National Commission for Minorities Act (1992), only six religious groups are recognized as minorities. The Meitei, although not officially recognized, inhabit less than 10% of Manipur's geographical area and lack constitutional land protection. As the sole custodians of a unique and ancient culture, the Meitei deserve recognition as an ethnic minority in India.

Definition Of Indigenous Population In The Context of Meitei People

Across the world, indigenous peoples have long sought recognition for their identity, traditional way of life, and rights over ancestral lands and natural resources. While international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Bank recognize the concept of "Indigenous Peoples," there is no universally accepted definition. However, common markers include self-identification as a distinct ethnic group, shared ancestry, a deep-rooted connection to land, and a



common language and culture (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014, p.34). Terms like tribal people, aboriginals, or first nations are often used interchangeably with indigenous peoples.

In India, the Constitution does not explicitly use the term “Indigenous Peoples.” Instead, it refers to “Scheduled Tribes,” a term developed post-independence. Yet, by international standards especially those set by the UN and ILO the Meitei community of Manipur aligns with the criteria of an indigenous group. The Meitei have a long and documented history dating back to 33 A.D., as recorded in *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur. Over 74 kings ruled the land until 1955, shaping a rich cultural and political legacy.

Despite undergoing significant changes, especially during the early 18th century Hinduization under King Pamheiba, Meitei society has retained many unique traditions. Rituals surrounding birth, marriage, and death are still practiced, and the community continues to believe in its divine pantheon and traditional customs. As Sanajaoba (1988) explains, tradition is not static; it is a dynamic process, continuously interpreted by each generation.

Today, the Meitei community maintains a distinct cultural identity rooted in centuries of history, values, and practices. In this context, the Meitei can be regarded as an indigenous group, deserving recognition and protection of their unique heritage and rights.

Movement For Inner Line Permit System and Land Distribution System in Manipur

Manipur, a small state nestled in Northeast India, was once an independent kingdom with its own sovereign administration. Ruled by its kings, the state operated through traditional institutions and community-based customary laws. Migrants or outsiders were strictly regulated. While a few did settle in the region, they typically assimilated into local society without conflict. There was no notable anti-outsider movement during the monarchy because the traditional governance structure balanced local customs with external influences.

This harmony changed after the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, when the British annexed the state. The hill areas came under direct British administration, while the plains were governed indirectly through a king. For administrative convenience, the British created a clear divide between the hill tribes and the valley people. They introduced land revenue systems that served colonial economic interests and allowed



controlled migration. A "Foreign Department" was established to monitor and regulate the entry of non-Manipuris.

A major shift occurred after Manipur merged with the Indian Union in 1949. The dissolution of the Foreign Department led to unregulated migration. Migrants began arriving from across India and neighboring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal. The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) further enabled unrestricted migration between the two countries, which significantly affected the demographic composition of Northeast India, including Manipur.

The rising influx of migrants posed a serious threat to indigenous communities, especially the Meiteis, in terms of land ownership, employment, and cultural preservation. Before Manipur became a full-fledged state in 1972, many top administrative, legislative, and judicial positions were held by non-Manipuris. This imbalance gave outsiders undue influence and encouraged more migration into the region.

By the 1980s, anti-outsider sentiments intensified, inspired in part by the anti-foreigner movement in neighboring Assam. In Manipur, local student organizations such as the All-Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) and the All-Manipur Students Coordinating Committee (AMSCOC) led mass protests. They called for the identification and deportation of illegal migrants and pushed the central government to act. A memorandum of understanding was eventually signed with the Government of India, recognizing the urgency of the issue.

This period also saw heightened public awareness. Insurgent groups like the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) supported the anti-outsider movement, often invoking pan-Mongoloid identity and ethnic pride. Cultural expressions such as banning Hindi films and reviving the traditional Meitei script, Meitei Mayek, reflected a broader desire for cultural preservation and autonomy.

When government responses remained inadequate, a second wave of protests erupted in 1994. The focus shifted to the rapid settlement of migrants in Imphal and other parts of the state. These new settlers, many of whom did not integrate with local communities, were perceived as a threat to the indigenous way of life, particularly that of the Meiteis.

Amid these concerns, the demand for the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system gained momentum. Originally introduced by the British under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1873, the ILP is a travel

document required by Indian citizens to enter certain protected areas. It also restricts non-locals from purchasing land in these areas.

Unlike neighboring states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland, Manipur did not have ILP protections. In response, civil society and student groups organized mass movements, and in 2012, the Committee on Inner Line Permit was formed. The Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System, Kangleipak (JCILPS), cited alarming statistics—such as claims that 71% of voters in the Jiribam subdivision were migrants. In 2015, the Manipur Assembly passed the Protection of Manipur People Bill to regulate the entry and stay of non-locals and preserve the indigenous identity.

The bill defined a "Manipuri" as someone whose family name appeared in the National Register of Citizens (1951), the Census Report of 1951, or the Village Directory of that year, including their descendants. This demand gained urgency with the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), which excluded ILP-protected areas from its jurisdiction. Protesters feared that without ILP, CAB would provide legal status to illegal immigrants in Manipur. One student lost his life during the protests. Ultimately, on January 1, 2020, the ILP system was extended to Manipur, making it the fourth northeastern state to come under its protection. However, activists continue to push for more effective guidelines and implementation.

Land rights have become another pressing concern. After independence, all land was legally placed under government ownership, with constitutional protections for Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities. Articles 19(d) and 19(e) of the Indian Constitution provide freedom of movement and residence, but also allow for reasonable restrictions to protect tribal interests. Non-tribals are barred from purchasing land in tribal areas a rule reinforced by the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960.

However, this Act does not apply to the hill areas of Manipur, where tribal communities reside. Section 158 of the Act restricts land transfers by Scheduled Tribes to non-tribals without prior permission. The valley, home to the Meitei population, is not covered by these protections. Since Meiteis are not classified as Scheduled Tribes, their lands are open for purchase by outsiders, leaving them increasingly vulnerable to land alienation.

This issue is further complicated by India's federal structure. Land is a State subject under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. Article 371C provides special administrative provisions for Manipur's hill areas. Still, tribal customary laws prevail in these regions. Among the Kukis, village chiefs hold control over all land, while the Nagas follow more democratic systems. Meiteis, however, have no similar legal or customary protection.



Over time, the Meitei population has declined in relative numbers. In 1951, Meiteis made up 59% of Manipur's population. By 2011, this had fallen to 44%. Other indigenous groups in Manipur benefit from dual protections as Scheduled Tribes and as religious or linguistic minorities. Despite their rich history and cultural legacy, Meiteis remain without such safeguards.

In response, the Meitei community has actively demanded Scheduled Tribe status. The Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee of Manipur submitted memoranda to both the central and state governments, arguing that the Meitei/Meetei people have lived in Manipur since time immemorial. They were listed as a tribe in earlier records, including the 1931 Census. However, when the official list of Scheduled Tribes was notified under Article 342(1) of the Constitution in 1950, the Meiteis were excluded.

This exclusion has left the community without constitutional protection, making them more vulnerable to the pressures of migration, land loss, and cultural erosion. The demand for Scheduled Tribe status is not merely a political aspiration; it is a call for survival, justice, and the preservation of a unique cultural identity deeply rooted in the land of Manipur.

The Committee claim that:

- The indigenous Meitei/Meetei who are original inhabitants of Manipur since time immemorial were recognised as one of the tribes of Manipur in successive government records including that of 1931 census.
- But the indigenous Meitei/Meetei community was indiscriminately left out of the Scheduled Tribes prepared under Article 342(1) of the Indian Constitution in 1950 on an indisputably inauthentic and unjustifiable basis. Since then, the community has been victimised without any constitutionally safeguards to date. As a result, the Meitei/Meetei have been gradually marginalised in their ancestral land i.e. Manipur. Their population which was 59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951 has now been reduced to 44% as per 2011 census.

The Following List of Points Is Intended to Promote Uniformity Among All Indigenous People.

1. The Indian Constitution permits positive discrimination to uplift marginalized groups and achieve real equality.
2. Regular review of reservation and minority provisions is essential to ensure fairness and relevance over time.

3. These provisions should be implemented uniformly—either extended to all indigenous groups or adjusted to reflect equal treatment.
4. Ensuring equal status for every indigenous group in Manipur can help reduce ethnic tensions and promote social harmony.
5. Both central and state governments must take proactive steps toward inclusive and balanced development.

Conclusion:

Single citizenship and demographic imbalance have been some of the factors for identity crisis among the indigenous inhabitants of Manipur. Various demands have been put forward for Constitutional safeguards of the indigenous people in the state like ILP (Inner Line Permit) system and Scheduled Tribe Status. The demands made by the indigenous people to safeguard their indigenous right are considered lawful and acceptable under international law. The States all over the world are expected to act in compliance with the international law. Adequate constitutional safeguards will ensure protection of the future of indigenous people like Meitei/ Meetei.

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Louboldan: The Processes of Jhum Cultivation in Kuki Society

Dr. Lamkholal DOUNGEL¹

Abstract: This paper explores Louboldan commonly referred to as Jhum cultivation as a deeply embedded socio-cultural and economic practice among the Kuki community of Northeast India. The term 'Lou-boldan' comprised of two words 'Lou' means Jhum or agricultural land and 'Boldan' means the processes or methods of jhumming. Far beyond a mere agricultural technique, Jhum cultivation forms the basis of the Kukis' traditional lifestyle, influencing their economic sustenance, cultural expression, religious practices, social organization, and community rituals. By documenting the various stages of the Jhum cultivation cycle and their associated practices, this study highlights how this indigenous method encapsulates the Kukis' sustainable living, community bonding, and cultural preservation.

Keywords: Jhum cultivation, Louboldan, Kuki Community, Traditional, Socio-Cultural Practices, Northeast India, Sustainability

1. Introduction:

Jhum Cultivation is an age-old agriculture practice of the tribal people living in the hilly areas. It is the mainstay of the tribal economy. This practice is extensively prevalent in Assam and in other parts of the North-East India. Jhum cultivation, known locally among the Kukis as Louboldan, is a slash-and-burn method of agriculture that has been practiced for generations. While often dismissed as primitive by modern agricultural standards, Jhum cultivation in Kuki society is a highly ritualized and organized process integral to the community's way of life. This paper seeks to present a comprehensive ethnographic account of jhum cultivation among the Kukis, analysing how each stage of the cycle reflects traditional knowledge systems, environmental ethics, and social cooperation.

2. Methodology

This research is primarily based on ethnographic and qualitative data collected through participant observation, oral history, and interviews with Kuki elders and cultivators. Secondary sources include traditional folktales, songs, and previous ethnographic studies on Kuki agricultural practices.

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3. Jhum Cultivation in Kuki Society:

Jhum cultivation is an integral part of Kuki society. Jhum cultivation is more than a means of subsistence for the Kukis. It is the cornerstone of their tribal economy and the backbone of their socio-economic, religious, cultural, and political life. Many tribal songs, folktales, rituals, and festivals such as Chapphou Kut, Mim Kut, etc. originate from this agrarian practice. The cycle of cultivation not only ensures food security but also defines community rhythms, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and symbolic interaction with the natural world.

4. Different Stages of Jhum Cultivation:

Jhum cultivation involves several distinct stages. These stages and practices may vary across societies, locations, and depending on the types of crops cultivated. However, this paper confines itself to the general and commonly observed practices of Jhum cultivation among the Kuki tribal society. In Kuki society, Jhum the traditional mode of cultivation—is not undertaken whimsically but follows a systematic and orderly process, beginning with Louvet (the selection and allocation of a site) and culminating in Changlhoh (carrying home the produce). Traditionally, the Kuki tribes have several recognised stages of jhum cultivation. From the initial clearing of vegetation (Louvat), through the drying (Chapphou), burning (Lhouhal), sowing (Changtu), and successive rounds of weeding (Changham Lho and Lousem Lho), to the harvest (Chang-at), threshing (Changvoh), and storage (Changlhoh), every phase reflects the community's respect for nature, their collective labour, and ancestral knowledge. Each step is not only an agricultural task but also a cultural event marked by rituals, festivals, and cooperative spirit, making Jhum cultivation a holistic process that sustains both the land and the life of the community.

4.1 Loumun Chan/Louvet: Loumun Chan or Louvet is the first step towards jhum cultivation. Once a suitable site is identified, the owner marks the area with a label of sign known as dang- tah, signifying their claim over the Jhum plot for cultivation. The customary practice of dang- tah serves as a visible indicator to others in the community, informing them that the area has already been claimed and prompting them to seek other locations for their farming needs. It must be noted that the first step mentioned here is preceded by an annual meeting of the village in the beginning of the year including, which is convened by the Haosa (Chief) and his cabinet (Semang-Pachong), wherein each head of the family member participates to discuss all important matters of the village including the selection of areas for cultivation.

4.2 Mato-Sat, Angahna ding le Alhahna ding sattoh masah: This marks the first practical step in the process of Jhum cultivation. Being a form of slash-and-burn agriculture, the process begins from the base

or starting point of the proposed cultivation area, traditionally referred to as Mato-Sat. This involves the clearing of trees and forest vegetation to prepare the land for cultivation.

4.3 Louvat: This refers to the full-scale process of clearing the designated Jhum area, starting with Mato-Sat (the starting line) and continuing until all forest vegetation in the selected site has been cut down. The series of activities involved in slashing the jungle are collectively known as Louvat.

4.4 Chapphou: The phase that follows Louvat in the Jhum cultivation process is known as Chapphou. The term 'Chapphou' means to expose the cut-down forest vegetation to the sun, allowing it to dry thoroughly in preparation for burning. After the labour-intensive phase of clearing the jungle, this stage offers a brief period of respite for the cultivators, as they wait for the vegetation to dry completely. During this short period of rest, the villagers take time to observe and celebrate their ritual festival called Chapphou Kut. The festival derives its name from this specific phase of jhuming, Chapphou, and serves as a prayer for blessings upon their jhums.

4.5 Louhal: Lhouhal is a combination of two words: Lhou and Hal. Lhou means jhum, and Hal means to burn. Thus, Lhouhal literally translates to "burning the jhum." This event is carried out with meticulous preparation. Before burning the jhum, a six-foot-wide strip surrounding the jhum area is thoroughly cleared to prevent the fire from spreading beyond the designated jhum plot. This cleared boundary, known as Meilam, acts as a protective barrier. The act of Lhouhal is a significant community event, involving the collective effort of all able-bodied men in the village. Together, they ensure the controlled burning of the jhum, carefully preventing the fire from spreading to nearby areas and causing damage to the forest.

4.6 Vamnit: Following the burning of the jhum, it is customary to refrain from visiting the site immediately the next day. This is observed as a day of mourning, reflecting a sense of solemn respect for all that has been reduced to ashes. The burning process not only consumes the Chapphou (dried vegetation) but may also inadvertently lead to the destruction of various reptiles, insects, and other living organisms inhabiting the area. This period of abstention symbolizes an acknowledgment of the natural life sacrificed during the process, serving as a moment of reflection and reverence for the interconnectedness of all living beings. It is a reminder of the delicate balance between human subsistence and the surrounding environment. Through this observance, the community pays homage to nature's resilience and expresses gratitude for the land that sustains them.

4.7 Buhsah–Construction of small temporary hut: Buhsah is the term is derived from two words: ‘Buh’, meaning hut, and ‘Sah’, meaning to build—together signifying the construction of a jhum hut. These huts are an essential feature of jhum cultivation, as the fields are typically located far from the cultivators' homes. Built to serve as temporary shelters. Buh provides a space for rest, protection from wild animals, and refuge against adverse weather conditions, such as heavy rain or scorching heat. In essence, the Buh functions as a substitute for a house, ensuring the safety and comfort of cultivators during their work in the remote jhum fields.

4.8 Mangse, Mang nung thet/Mangchom: This is another crucial stage in the Jhum Cultivation cycle. This step involves clearing the leftover debris or remains after the initial burning of dried vegetation. The remnants are gathered into piles and subjected to a secondary burn, ensuring the jhum field is thoroughly cleaned and prepared for the next phase of cultivation. This stage is essential for maximizing the field's readiness, as it removes all unwanted residues and creates a more suitable environment for planting. Mangchom highlights the meticulous effort and traditional knowledge embedded in the jhum cultivation cycle.

4.9 Changtu/Poitu: The Sowing Stage in Jhum Cultivation: Changtu is a significant stage in the jhum cultivation cycle, marking the point where rice seeds are sown into the prepared soil. This phase symbolizes the beginning of the cultivation process and alongside rice, which is the primary crop, other crops are commonly intercropped to maximize the yield and diversify the harvest. These include maize, cotton, chilies, yams, and a variety of other seasonal crops that complement the cultivation cycle. The practice of multi-cropping during Changtu not only ensures efficient utilization of the land but also provides nutritional and economic benefits to the cultivators. By planting a mix of staple crops and cash crops, jhum farmers secure food for sustenance while generating additional income from marketable produce. This approach also supports soil fertility, as the variety of crops grown together helps maintain a natural balance in the soil.

Changtu reflects the ingenuity and sustainability inherent in traditional agricultural practices, as it combines food security, resource optimization, and cultural heritage into a single, well-organized stage of cultivation.

4.10 Poinung Lho: This is the initial clearing phase in Jhum Cultivation. Poinung Lho marks the first phase in preparing a jhum field, where unwanted plants, weeds, and undergrowth are cleared to make the

land suitable for cultivation. This stage is critical, as it lays the foundation for the entire jhum process by removing obstacles and creating space for further preparation.

During Poinung Lho, cultivators use tools such as machetes and sickles to cut down the dense vegetation. The cleared plants are often left to dry under the sun, preparing them for the subsequent stages, such as burning and soil preparation. This meticulous clearing process not only improves accessibility to the jhum field but also ensures that harmful weeds and invasive plants do not compete with the crops for nutrients during cultivation.

As the initial and labor-intensive step, Poinung Lho demonstrates the effort and precision involved in traditional jhum cultivation, setting the stage for a successful agricultural cycle.

4.11 Changham lho: Since a single round of clearing unwanted weeds is insufficient, this Changham lho marks the second phase of weeding in the jhum field. Another round will follow to ensure the field is thoroughly cleared of all unwanted vegetation. This is the second and another round of clearing the Jhum field from unwanted weeds.

4.12 Lousem lho: The casual weeding of the Jhum field just before the harvesting season is known as Lousem Lho. This marks the third and final round of clearing unwanted weeds from the field. Unlike the earlier, more intensive weeding stages, Lousem Lho is a lighter and selective process aimed at ensuring that the crops mature without competition from residual weeds. This final stage helps in maximizing yield, preventing pest infestations, and making the harvesting process smoother.

4.13 Chang-at: Chang-at is the specific term used for harvesting rice paddy in traditional Kuki agricultural practices. The term is derived from two words: "Chang", which refers to standing paddy, and "at", meaning to cut. Thus, Chang-at literally signifies the cutting down of ripe paddy stalks during harvest. Traditionally, harvesting is done using sickles or other hand tools, with family members and community members often working together.

4.14 Phol Bol/Sem: Phol Bol or Phol Sem refers to the preparation of a designated area specifically meant for harvesting activities, particularly threshing. Phol simply refers to the threshing floor, where grains are separated from the stalks. In addition, Pallam, a raised stage structure is also constructed for winnowing, allowing for the removal of chaff from the grains. This stage of preparation is crucial in traditional Kuki

agricultural practices, ensuring a clean, organized space for community participation and efficient grain extraction.

4.15 Changvoh/Changchil: Changvoh or Changchil refers to the traditional practice of threshing paddy, an essential harvesting activity in rice cultivation. The day begins with great enthusiasm, as family members, neighbours, and sometimes the entire village come together to participate in this labour-intensive yet festive occasion. The process involves separating the grains from the stalks using various traditional techniques that have been passed down through generations. Traditionally, threshing is done by beating the paddy stalks against a hard surface, trampling them under the feet, or using wooden flails, depending on the area and available resources. Beyond its agricultural significance, Changvoh/Changchil also fosters a sense of community and cooperation. It is often accompanied by songs, folk chants, and a shared meal, reinforcing the cultural and social bonds among the people.

4.16 Changlhoh (Louva kon inlanga kipoh): This marks the final stage in the year-long cycle of jhum cultivation. It involves transporting the harvested grains from the temporary storage site in the jhum field to the designated barn at home, ensuring their safe preservation for future use.

5. Conclusion:

Jhum cultivation, or Louboldan, summarizes the Kuki community's adaptive resilience, ecological consciousness, and socio-cultural vibrancy. As modernization and external developmental pressures challenge the relevance of shifting cultivation, it is imperative to reassess and appreciate the traditional knowledge systems it embodies. Future policies and research should engage with indigenous practices like Louboldan not merely as economic activities but as holistic worldviews that can inform sustainable development.

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Manipur's Ethnic Divide: Inside the Meitei-Kuki Conflict

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Abstract: This study examines the ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities in Manipur, focusing on the violent outbreak of May 3, 2023. Manipur, once known for its cultural diversity and relative harmony, has seen its inter-community relations strained by growing ethnic nationalism, competing political ambitions, and territorial disputes. The Meitei demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, government actions against illegal migration and poppy cultivation, and marginalization of tribal communities have further intensified tensions. Using qualitative methods and secondary sources, this research analyses the historical roots, socio-political dynamics, and immediate causes of the conflict. The study concludes that lasting peace requires inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders, equitable hill–valley development, effective management of illegal immigration, and negotiated solutions to sensitive issues such as poppy eradication and ST demands. Long-term peacebuilding must also foster inter-ethnic trust through education, cultural exchange, and inclusive political representation to ensure justice and coexistence in Manipur.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict, Meitei-Kuki Relations, Manipur Violence, Inter-Ethnic Relations, Peace building

Introduction

Manipur, a beautiful and captivating state in northeastern India, is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant art form, and a rich culture. Though small in size, Manipur has made a name for itself globally, producing top tier sportspersons and playing a vital role in enriching nation's cultural and athletic heritage. Often referred to as the "Jewel of India," it offers a unique experience of diverse ethnic communities, where hills and valleys, along with their various languages, traditions, and customs blend to form a vibrant cultural legacy.

1.1. Ethnic Composition and Regional Dynamics of Manipur

Manipur is inhabited by three major ethnic communities the Meitei, the Nagas, and the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes. The state's geography is distinctly divided into two regions: the central valley and the surrounding

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hills. While the valley constitutes roughly 10% of Manipur's total land area, the hills encompass the remaining 90% (Directorate of Economic & Statistics Government of Manipur Lamphelpat, 2021).

The Meitei, who form the majority population, predominantly reside in the valley region, while the surrounding hill areas are home to a diverse range of tribal groups. These hill communities are generally classified into two major ethnic categories: the Nagas and the Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups. Traditionally, these three communities shared a history of coexistence and mutual cultural exchange, contributing to the rich and diverse heritage of the state.

Supporting this view, Senjam (1996) highlights two traditional sayings *Chingburoi Tamburoi* and *Haoringjel Nairingjel* which reflect the dual nature of the past relationship between the hills and plains. The first conveys sentiments of love, friendship, and mutual understanding, while the second suggests elements of distrust and animosity. However, S. Mangi emphasizes that the relationship was predominantly shaped by *Chingburoi Tamburoi*, symbolizing trust and mutual respect. Similarly, Gangte (2013) argues that the Meiteis, Nagas, and Kukis, despite their distinct identities, share common origins, as seen in their historical cohabitation, political evolution, and cultural exchanges.

However, despite this historical harmony, underlying differences in identity, territory, and political aspirations have occasionally surfaced, creating friction in inter-community relationships. Their long-standing ties are now challenged by competing demands and changing socio-political dynamics (Lourembam, 2025).

Over time, the Meitei, Naga, and Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities in Manipur have developed divergent socio-political aspirations, which have increasingly come into conflict with one another. The Meiteis primarily emphasize preserving the territorial integrity and unity of the state. In contrast, the Nagas seek the unification of all Naga-inhabited areas across state and national boundaries into a single political entity often referred to as "Greater Nagalim." On the other hand, the Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups are pushing for the creation of a separate administrative arrangement that would grant them greater autonomy and recognition.

These aspirations are inherently incompatible, as none of the hill regions in Manipur are inhabited exclusively by any single ethnic group. The Naga demand for integration creates anxiety among the Kuki-Zo-Mizo communities, who fear marginalization and loss of land, while the Meitei community worries about further territorial fragmentation and the erosion of the state's integrity. Similarly, the call for a separate administrative setup by the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes is seen as a threat to the Meitei vision of a united and undivided Manipur, while the Naga community views it as potentially undermining their own

demand for integration of Naga-inhabited areas (Lourembam, 2025). These competing visions of identity, autonomy, and territory have led to increasing tensions and a breakdown of inter-ethnic trust and cooperation.

1.2. Fragile Inter-Community Relations

Ethnic conflicts are a common feature in multi-ethnic societies, where differing identities, interests, and historical grievances often collide. Manipur, with its complex mosaic of ethnic communities, remains particularly prone to such tensions and confrontations. The state's social fabric has witnessed repeated fractures, especially during the last decade of the twentieth century, which was marked by several violent ethnic clashes. The most prominent among them was the Naga-Kuki conflict, which ranged from 1992 to 1998 and led to widespread violence and displacement. In 1993, tensions escalated between the Meiteis and the Muslim community, resulting in violent confrontations. This was followed by a clash between the Kukis and Tamils in the border town of Moreh in 1995. Subsequently, the Kuki-Paite conflict erupted between 1997 and 1998, further deepening ethnic divisions (Singh, 2006).

These conflicts reflected long-standing grievances over land, identity, representation, and access to resources. Each episode of violence not only resulted in loss of lives and property but also hardened community boundaries and eroded trust. More recently, in 2023, the Meitei-Kuki conflict broke out, becoming one of the most intense and tragic instances of ethnic violence in Manipur's recent history. This pattern of recurring violence underscores the fragile nature of inter-ethnic relations in the state and highlights the urgent need for sustained peacebuilding efforts, inclusive dialogue, and political solutions that acknowledge the aspirations of all communities.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to examine the complex dynamics of the Kuki-Meitei Conflict in Manipur, focusing on the historical, social, and political factors leading to the 2023 violence. It relies primarily on secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, government reports, and credible news coverage, to provide a balanced understanding of the conflict's causes and progression. A contextual and thematic analysis is used to identify recurring grievances, patterns of discrimination, and community perceptions.

3. Meitei and Kuki ethnic Conflict

3.1. The Outbreak of Violence on May 3, 2023

On May 3, 2023, an intense ethnic conflict broke out in Churachandpur district, Manipur, involving the Meitei and Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities. The violence erupted during a solidarity march organized by the All-Tribal Students' Union Manipur (ATSUM) as a protest against the Manipur High Court's directive to the state government to recommend the Meitei community's inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list. The protest, which reflected widespread opposition to the Meitei demand for ST status, triggered counter-blockades by some valley-based groups. What began as a march soon escalated into widespread violence, including gunfire on the streets of Churachandpur, where armed groups reportedly used advanced weapons. Numerous reports emerged of Meitei homes being burned in Torbung and nearby areas, which are predominantly inhabited by Kukis. In response, sections of the Meitei community initially tried to defend their localities, but the situation soon spiralled out of control, leading to retaliatory actions against Kuki settlements in the valley and foothill areas. This resulted in further arson, destruction of property, and displacement of civilians, thereby escalating the conflict to unprecedented levels and drawing in wider participation from both Meitei and Kuki communities. The unrest led to a tragic loss of lives and large-scale displacement. Thousands of homes were destroyed, and religious sites, including temples and churches, were vandalized and set ablaze. Many people sustained injuries, and several were reported missing. As noted by Shimrah (2023), the extent of brutality was unprecedented, revealing the deeply entrenched animosity between the two communities.

3.2. Understanding the Roots of Manipur's Ethnic Conflict

To gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur, it is essential to examine the historical ethnic divisions and the broader underlying causes that have shaped current tensions. Ethnic conflicts, by nature, are complex and fluid phenomena. They do not arise from a single issue or event but are instead the result of multiple, interwoven factors that evolve over time. Each conflict has its own specific historical, social, political, and economic dimensions, making it unique in its origin and manifestation. Manipur is no exception to this rule.

In the context of Manipur, ethnic conflicts have demonstrated a particularly dynamic character. The state's multi-ethnic composition and history of political fragmentation mean that the causes of conflict are rarely static. Instead, they vary according to changing political developments, shifting alliances, economic disparities, and perceptions of identity and representation among the different ethnic groups. Despite this



complexity, there are certain overarching and recurring issues that have contributed to the persistence of conflict across time.

3.3. Broad Underlying Causes of Ethnic Clashes in Manipur

These general underlying causes include historical grievances over land ownership and access to resources, uneven development between the hill and valley regions, political marginalization of certain communities, and the growth of competing ethno-nationalist movements. Such conditions have bred mistrust and competition, and they continue to fuel ongoing tensions. Understanding these root causes is crucial, as it provides a foundation for analysing not just the surface-level triggers of violence, but also the deeper structural and historical issues that must be addressed in any long-term resolution strategy.

The reasons for the ethnic violence in Manipur can be traced to a complex interplay of historical, socioeconomic, and political factors that have unfolded over decades. These tensions are deeply rooted in longstanding grievances and clashing aspirations among the various ethnic communities that inhabit the state. Manipur's inter-ethnic relations have always been layered and multifaceted, shaped by divergent identities, cultural differences, and competing political narratives. A key element contributing to the unrest is the uneven development between the hill areas and the valley region. The hill communities, in particular, have often expressed a strong sense of being marginalized and excluded from the mainstream political and economic processes of the state. This perception stems from limited infrastructure, inadequate access to education and health services, and a lack of political representation.

The exclusionary development pattern has created a significant divide between the communities, with many in the hill districts feeling alienated and left behind in the state's overall progress. This growing resentment among hill dwellers has intensified their grievances and added fuel to inter-community distrust and dissatisfaction. Additionally, the emergence and spread of micro-nationalism in the region have further complicated the situation. As various ethnic groups have become increasingly assertive about their unique identities, histories, and rights to land and self-governance, competition for territorial and political claims has escalated.

This rise in ethnic assertion has coincided with the proliferation of armed insurgent groups and ethnically aligned factions, each advocating for their own political objectives and territorial ambitions. Over the decades, these groups have entrenched divisions by promoting exclusive narratives and demanding separate homelands, which has significantly undermined efforts toward communal harmony and peaceful

coexistence. Collectively, these factors have created a volatile and deeply fragmented socio-political environment, making the conflict both enduring and difficult to resolve (Meitei, 2023).

4. Key Factors Intensifying Meitei–Kuki conflict

4.1.Immediate Triggers and Heightened Meitei–Kuki Tensions

The immediate cause of the conflict may have been the High Court's directive to the Manipur government and the subsequent peace march. However, tensions between the Meitei and Kuki communities had been building for some time. They should be understood in the context of several interconnected issues. These include the illegal influx of migrants, the War on Drugs, the government's strict policies against poppy cultivation in forest areas, and the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. These tensions were further fuelled by resentment within the Kuki community, which viewed the state government as Meitei-dominated and perceived its policies as anti-Kuki, anti-tribal, anti-minority, and anti-Christian (Shimrah, 2023). In the months leading up to the violence, certain government actions were also seen by the Kuki community as discriminatory, heightening their sense of insecurity.

4.2.Illegal Migration and Land Encroachment

Amid these growing grievances and mutual suspicions, another critical factor deepening the divide was the issue of illegal migration and its impact on land and resources. The influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar into Manipur has raised concerns among the Meitei and other tribes about the coexistence of indigenous communities. The Meitei community strongly opposed the Kuki's encroachment on forest land and the rapid establishment of new villages in the foothills of Imphal Valley, leading to confrontations over land disputes in areas like the Kobrou Hill Range, Thangjing Hill, and other foothill regions (Shimrah, 2023). Chief Minister Biren Singh's government claimed that illegal migration was a pressing issue and took actions such as detaining hundreds of illegal migrants and suspending the Free Movement Regime with Myanmar. These measures angered the Kuki community, deepening their sense of marginalization and intensifying tensions. The identification of alleged intruders and subsequent eviction orders further fuelled the conflict, as forced evictions led to clashes between villagers and authorities. The Kuki community perceived the government's actions as being directed at them due to their affinity with refugees from Myanmar. The government countered these allegations by claiming that out of 291 encroachers removed between 2017 and 2023, 160 were Meitei, suggesting that Kukis were not exclusively targeted. Despite this, the Kuki community feels disproportionately affected, fuelling their discontent (Das, 2023).

4.3. War on Drugs, withdrawal of Peace Agreement, and Rising Tensions

Another major issue was the Government's war on drugs campaign in 2017, where the Manipur War on Drugs campaign fought against illegal poppy cultivation in the hill districts. The Kuki community was disproportionately affected as they had more land under poppy cultivation. The destruction of poppy fields and arrests were viewed as threats to their livelihood, escalating tensions. It provoked widespread protests, particularly in Kuki-dominated areas; some turned violent—for instance, the April 27, 2023 protest in Churachandpur. The state government described these protests as anti-government. It blamed Kuki militant groups, including the KNA and ZRA, for fanning unrest and sheltering illegal migrants and drug trafficking.

Earlier, on March 10, 2023, the Government led by Biren Singh unilaterally withdrew from the tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups, causing the Kukis to react in anger and raising questions on the peace negotiations going ahead. (Das, 2023). These developments further deepened mistrust and heightened the sense of insecurity within the Kuki community, adding yet another layer of tension to the already fragile inter-ethnic relations

4.4. The Meitei Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status

Another significant contentious point in the conflict is the demand for Schedule Tribe by the Meitei community. The demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status by the Meitei community is based on their claim that they are the original inhabitants of Manipur. The flooding and assimilation of outsiders threaten their land, culture, and identity. They claim that granting them ST status will help to preserve their language, customs, culture, and ancestral territory. However, tribal opposition to this idea stems from the Meiteis' predominance in socio-political spheres as they feel it will undermine their political representation, threaten their land rights, and diminish the benefits of their reserved status. They perceive the demand as a danger to their existence and an attempt by the Meiteis to seize more control over the state. (Meitei, 2023).

Taken together, these interconnected issues reveal that the violence in Manipur is not the result of a single trigger but a culmination of layered grievances, competing identities, and perceived injustices. Each factor whether it is the Meitei demand for ST status, the crackdown on poppy cultivation, the handling of illegal migration, or land encroachment has amplified mistrust and hardened ethnic divisions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for shaping meaningful dialogue and crafting solutions that address both the immediate and structural causes of the conflict.



5. Conclusion

The Manipur ethnic conflict underscores how historical grievances, competing political aspirations, and socio-economic disparities create enduring tensions in a multi-ethnic society. While the immediate trigger for the 2023 violence was the Meitei demand for Scheduled Tribe status, the roots of the crisis lie in deeper structural issues. Uneven development between the hill and valley regions, contested claims over land and resources, and unresolved challenges like illegal migration have long fuelled mistrust. The War on Drugs campaign, which disproportionately affected the hill areas, further aggravated feelings of marginalization and injustice.

These issues have been compounded by strong ethno-nationalist sentiments. The presence of ethnically aligned militant groups and competing territorial aspirations has fragmented social cohesion, making reconciliation and durable peace difficult. Addressing this conflict requires a multi-pronged approach. First, inclusive dialogue must bring together all stakeholders—Meiteis, Kukis, Nagas, civil society, and state and central governments. Second, policies ensuring equitable development between hills and valley are essential to reduce socio-economic disparities. This includes better infrastructure, access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for all. Third, managing illegal immigration with stronger border control, modern surveillance, and proper identity checks is crucial. Verified refugees should be accommodated in temporary shelters, while land and forest laws must be enforced transparently. Fourth, sensitive issues such as poppy eradication, insurgency, and the demand for ST status should be resolved through negotiated settlements, ensuring all voices are heard. Finally, long-term peacebuilding must focus on fostering inter-ethnic trust through education, cultural exchange, and inclusive political representation. Recognizing the legitimacy of each community's fears and aspirations is key to building coexistence, justice, and lasting peace in Manipur.

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Manipur Rural Development in the Digital Scenario

Kshetrimayum Reena Devi¹

Abstract: This paper explores the digital transformation in Manipur Rural areas. From top to bottom, all the stakeholders are much more accessible in disseminating information than paper work that becomes more efficient in its working in the present digital scenario. Everyone grasp the opportunity of skilling ourselves to be a smart and active citizen that the rapid expansion of information enables us to access any updated information using mobiles through internet. As the world is viewed as a single community linked by telecommunications, connected via social media or email, technology is the backbone of modern globalization. The study explores the working of Panchayati Raj through digital platform under the Digital India Programme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It also explores how far the people in rural areas are enabled to access information in the Digital platform. The Digital India Programme enhances citizen of India, digitally empowered to maintain relevance and competitiveness in the Digital world. It has improved the e-governance processes promoting transparency and accountability through mandated delivery of government's services by bridging the rural and urban divide.

Keywords: Rural Development, Digital Transformation, Digital India

Introduction:

From top to bottom all stakeholders are much more accessible in disseminating information than paper work that becomes more efficient in its working in the digital scenario. Today, everyone grasps the opportunity of skilling ourself to be a smart and active citizen that the rapid expansion of information enables us to access any updated information using mobiles through Internet. As the world is viewed as a single community linked by telecommunications, connected via social media or email, technology is the backbone of modern globalization. The study explores the working of Panchayati Raj through digital platform under the Digital India Programme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It also explores how far the people in the rural areas are enabled to access information in the digital platform. The digital India Programme enhances citizen of India, digitally empowered to maintain relevance and competitiveness in the digital world. It has improved the e-governance processes promoting transparency

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and accountability through mandated delivery of government's services by bridging the rural and urban India divide.

The pandemic covid-19 has accelerated the digitalization process in education, health, industries, business and enterprises, government offices and employees using many applications. Role of digitalization in rural development helps in improving living standard of people in rural areas. It also fosters the rural connectivity, improving economic development, healthcare accessibility and educational opportunities. For the convenient of administration, the local stakeholders including individuals, local communities should be trained, equipped for the successful democratic participation at the grass root level. The women and children welfare schemes and benefits are also digitized to ensure transparency in the 'Digital Era. Digital literacy rates have been increased bridging the gender gap through digital platform. Digitalization in Manipur rural areas have multi-dimensions, but in this paper, it covers the working of local government such as MNREGS and impacts of digitalization in the rural areas for the development. It has many benefits and provides opportunities to the people in the rural areas.

Many reforms have made in the administration and empowering the local government for the successful democracy in the democratic approach world. Digital transformation in Rural Development tends to bring participative, transparent and responsive system. Its role is very important in our daily life which makes tasks faster and more accurate. In rural areas, internet penetration enables the people changing attitudes, awareness and lifestyle. In the present scenario, digital awareness and knowledge of information between the rural and urban youths rapidly narrowed and the gap is closed.

Rural Transformation Through Technology:

Integration of digitalization into business process improves its efficiency and consistency. It saves the time to work efficiently for the specific task and free from contradiction. It makes firm and fix everything secure. Digitalization reduces paper usage, saves resources and promotes a clean environment. Keeping records in the digital form becomes more efficient in the works of multiple stakeholders which is quick and easy.

To alleviate poverty, the government has taken up many programmes and initiatives. In the present e-governance, problems and challenges of delay in public services, unemployment, housing, sanitation, education, crime against women and children, domestic violence etc can be addressed through extensive use of ICT. Making faster and transparent in government service delivery with accountability and responsibility, people could participate in the decision making and government processes. Bridging the gap



of digitalization, every citizen is ensured to reach the government services impacting the Rural Development in the rural areas.

The 'Digital India' programme launched in 2015 transforms India into a digitally empowered. Every citizen utilizes it enabling them to access information with mobile phone and broadband connectivity. Through skill development programmes, citizen is grasping opportunity empowering themselves with knowledge of digital economy. At the central, state and local government level, shaping the progressive e-governance strategy implementation of ICT speed up to promote e-governance on a massive scale. Under Digital India programme, it requires the basic infrastructure for successful implementation of e-governance service delivery from government offices up to Panchayats.

Working Of Panchayati Raj Institution in the Digital Scenario:

As 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) institutionalized PRIs as 3rd tier government, powers are devolved entrusting local self-government with decentralized planning, delivery of public services and local development. To strengthen PRIs an innovative project has been taken up through geo-spatial data. Space based Information Support for decentralizes planning at empowers communities at panchayat level.

65% of Indian population live in the rural areas that the rural development is the cornerstone of India's growth strategy. In various field like agriculture, water management, disaster preparedness, healthcare, education and infrastructure, many initiatives have been taken up by ISRO to address its challenges. To enhance the efficiency and sustainability of Rural Development, it has launched satellite data and geospatial tools. It has contributed Agricultural and Food Security, aquaculture, horticulture, Digital Agriculture Mission, water resource management, disaster management and preparedness, rural connectivity and infrastructure, land and property management, Bhuvan panchayat portal etc to the Rural Development.

To transform Indian Agriculture, the Department of Agriculture and Pharmaceuticals has *Launched Krishi Decision Support System* (KRISHI- DSS) on 16th August 2024. It empowers stakeholder that integrate geospatial and non-geospatial. It brings a revolutionary change in agriculture ensuring self-resilience and sustainability. As it is beneficial to humanity, it promotes rural livelihood and sustainable agriculture by mitigating various challenges droughts and flood. Drought Early Warning Systems in Agriculture Support minimize crop and yield loss, reduce food shortage and insecurities, sustain National and States GDP from agriculture, minimize soil degradation and desertification processes, maintain ecosystem functions, provide irrigation and preserve surface and groundwater resources, avoid famine and livelihood insecurities.



For the fishing community also, ISRO has developed mobile apps which integrate satellite technology for their safety navigation and communication like Map My India NAVIC Message Receive App, Nabh Mitra Network and App for sub-20-meter Boats and Sagarmitra SAR Emergency Messaging App)

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) launched in 2014 promotes holistic development that covers production, post-harvest management, and marketing. To promote holistic growth in horticulture, The Clean Plant Programme (CPP) was launched in 2014-2015. It ensures high productivity, sustainability and improve farmer incomes strengthening India's horticultural sector.

As a part of the *Atma Nirbhar Bharat*, the *National Beekeeping and Honey Mission* (NBHM) was launched with the objectives of the "Sweet Revolution". It promotes scientific beekeeping practices and high-quality honey. Madhu Gandhi Portal (2021) digitize the registration of beekeepers and colonies ensuring honey traceability.

Transforming Rural lives, Gram Panchayat is empowered with flagship initiatives. Geo MGNREGA monitors MGNREGA assets integrating RS and GIS for geotagging. Geoportal like Bhuvan Panchayat Geoportal visualize, analyse, monitors tools for land use, water resources and infrastructure providing geospatial data and satellite imagery for planning and governance. It is a web-based platform operating seamlessly across platforms bringing transparency and accountability.

Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) digitize the land record that coordinates for accuracy and reduce fraud ensuring authenticity. Transforming rural governance and resource management in India, it ensures efficient planning, transparency and sustainable development aligning with the goals of Digital India and inclusive growth.

Space Technology plays an important role in Rural Development that GSAT satellites connects remote areas through high-speed internet through digital inclusion. Many applications enable the rural areas such as Telemedicine provides for healthcare in rural regions connecting villages to specialized urban hospitals, R- learning platforms for education creating virtual classroom and e-governance digitizes service delivery. Satellite technology enables the All-India Radio (AIR) to broadcast programs promoting awareness on rural issues like health, agriculture and disaster preparedness. It not only transforms rural India; it also bridges developmental gaps and empower the rural people making an equitable and resilient India.

Article 243G and the 11th schedule assign 29 functional areas to PRIs for planning and implementing schemes for economic development and social justice have various democratic efficiency, convergence



equity. Article 280(3) (bb) and (c) provides Finance Commission recommendations on panchayat finances state Panchayat Acts: customized for state specific needs enabling decentralized planning. Digital Transformation in The Working of Panchayati Raj with Reference to MGNREGA and Women and Children Welfare Scheme, Manipur Rural Development:

In the context of Manipur, the working of Panchayati Raj Institution under 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which was introduced on 24th April, 1993 is crucial for institution for rural self-governance. “The Panchayats “entitled in Part 9 of the Constitution allows the devolution of powers and responsibilities to Panchayats, which is essential for local governance. 29 subjects enlisted in 11th schedule empower PRIs to manage local importance such as Agriculture, Drinking Water, Rural Housing, Education etc. at the grass root level.

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan launched on 21st April, 2018 introduced training support for Elected Representatives (ERs) and functionaries which focused on aspirational districts and Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs). It increased Capacity Enhancement Component Growth more than 10,6%. It strengthened local governance capacity. It also improved Panchayat performance through better training, resources and support. Cabinet approves continuation of Revamped Centrally sponsored scheme of Rastriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). The total financial outlay of the scheme is Rs. 5911 crores. It will help 2.78 lakh Rural Local Bodies to achieve Sustainable Goals. From 2022-2025, 23.14 lakh elected women have been trained which focused on decision making, financial literacy, legal awareness and leadership.

In the decade of Institutional Empowerment (2014-2024), Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) introduced in 2015-2016 for holistic planning at the grassroots converged 29 subjects from 11th schedule with schemes like MGNREGS, NRLM. Under such Central sponsored schemes in Manipur also it strengthens local self-governance and accurate land data empowers PRIs to formulate evidence-based policy. In the context of Manipur, it enables transparent implementation of schemes like MGNREGA, PMAYG and Jal Jeevan Mission. The Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI) developed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj with the support of reputed research institutes, as a crucial tool assess the extent of devolution to Panchayats and identify areas for empowerment.

According to the most recent PDI report compiled by the India Institute of Public administration (IIPA) for the year 2021-2022, overall trends of devolution has been increased from 39.9% to 43.9% between 2013-2014 and 2022-2023 indicating a positive trend towards decentralization. The Capacity Enhancement surged from 44% to 54,6%. Functionaries from 39,6% to 50.9% reflecting significant investments in infrastructure and recruitment of officials. Financial devolution also increased from a national average of

32-05% to 37.04%, suggesting a better flow of funds to Panchayats. It measures overall health of local governance and helps in policy making where reforms are necessary and where are excelling. The PDI provides actionable insights for further strengthening Panchayats and empowering local governance. It also provides transparency into how Panchayats function, helping citizens hold their local government accountable. It is used as a roadmap to strengthen the Panchayats system and ensure effective service delivery at the grassroots level. The PDI as a pivotal tool in evaluating the progress of decentralization and local governance in India it ensures better service delivery to the rural population promoting a more inclusive and democratic local governance system.

MNREGA enhances the livelihood of rural households providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wages to every rural household whose adult members are registered. In the past, those adult members are entries through demand form manually in Matri Roll (that is attendance sheet). However, all these works are digitized monitoring through portal. In the worksite, one photo session is taken before the work start in the morning, one during the work and one at the end of the work. Its working hour is 8 hours per day. Presently the worksites are geotagged that can be accessed using NMMS (National Mobile Monitoring System). While in the inspection, gender mismatched can be identified however individual person can't be identified easily. So, eye biometric based technology will be upcoming to overcome this barrier according to the interview of one of the Panchayat Secretary. And the payment of the job card holder is also totally digitalized through ABPS (Aadhaar Based Payment System). It brings transparency monetarizing more than 2/3 lakhs in Manipur.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Grameen (PMAYG), a housing scheme is also digitized in all the process from selection up to payment. The spots are surveyed by taking photo with geotagged location and registrations are digitized through portal for beneficiary. However the location of construction cannot be beyond 10m, so it is surveyed with geotagged of its location before providing benefits and the location variation is not allowed. Its payment is also done through ABPS. It is done by surveying level by level through inspection on spot.

The State Finance and 15 Finance (changing central sponsored scheme from time to time) is financing for PRIs to finance developmental work in the ratio 90:10. Beneficiary Secretary is responsible for the honorarium of the stakeholders of PRIs. It is also digitized with digital signature with no leakages. Rural Development Department act as a nodal in bringing transparency and taking all initiatives monitoring in different parameters. Thus, PRIs play a vast important role in examining basic facilities through Digitalization.

Welfare for women and children:

The women and children's friendly panchayats work for the welfare of women and children. A dramatic change has been witnessed in the rural areas. The communication can be easily accessed that has fundamentally altered the reach, efficacy and effectiveness of ASHAs, Anganwadi workers and ANMs (Auxiliary Nurses and Midwifery). Nowadays ASHA workers as well as Anganwadi workers and Supervisor have created WhatsApp group and communicate for the activities they have to perform spreading awareness about the new government schemes, the date of regular check for the pregnant women and for neo-natal care and well as information about immunization drives.

POSHAN Abhiyan launched in March 2018 aims at improving nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. It focused on the first 1000 days of a child's life by providing health and nutritional services in an intensive manner.

In Manipur, there are 43 ICDS projects (Integrated Child Development Service Projects). Under Child Development Project Officer, workers and helpers works through Supervisors of Social Welfare Department. *Poshan Tracker* is a mobile based app to monitor their works that digitize their activities. Workers and helpers use this app daily reporting their daily activities. Pregnant women are registered by them in the *Poshan Tracker* all their details and reports about vaccination timely. For the first-born child, pregnant women are given rs 5000 by PMMVY (*Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana*) benefit and home visit is performed by workers for their timely report of their health conditions. They submit reports of the child birth also and distribution of nutrition's are also reported in the *Poshan Tracker*. Celebration of *Poshan Maah* and *Poshan Pakawada* giving awareness of sanitization, health care, clean environment activities, adolescent girls etc are also reported through digitalization. Enrolment of children from 0 to 6 years are also digitized through *Poshan Tracker* monitoring the caring of children healthcare with nutritious food.

Conclusion:

All reports are digitized from various line departments in hierarchical form from Block line department to Nodal officer and to the Panchayat Secretary and then to the BDO- District Nodal Office and again at the State level Nodal officer for verification and finally reported to Central Ministry. All these responsibilities and accountabilities are liable to bring more advancement and accuracy. The last decade has redefined PRIs not just as administrative bodies, but as vanguards of local democracy, participatory development and social inclusion. With increased digitalization, gender empowerment, fiscal devolution and alignment with

national missions, PRIs are strengthening in determining the success of India's grassroots – driven development model.

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Panchayati Raj and Women's participation in Arunachal Pradesh: An Evaluation

Dr. Gomo Karbak¹

Abstract: Women are a vital part of Indian economy, constituting one third of the national labour force and a major contributing to the survival of the family. It is an established fact that the poorer the family, the greater its dependence on women's income. Gender analysis of most social and economic data reveals that women in India continue to be relatively disadvantaged in matters of health, nutrition, literacy and productivity. Keeping in mind the importance of women as human resource contributing to development, their participation in democratic processes was envisaged. As a first step, representation of rural women in political processes was ensured by a specific provision incorporated in the Constitution of India through the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992. The significant provision of this Act is reservation of one third of seats for women in all positions in local bodies. The provision is not only addressed the strategic needs of women but also tried to provide them space in local development activities. Keeping in view, the present paper is an attempt to measure the extent of women participation in the rural developmental activities and to understand, if any, the factors that hinder their participation.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj, Women, Arunachal Pradesh, Political Participation

Introduction

The 73rd Amendment Act 1992 provides a paradigm shift in emancipating the women and improves the status of backward classes and other weaker sections. It also provides an opportunity to the rural masses to participate in the decision-making process as well as in the formulation and implementation of the village plan. Thus, consequent upon the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992, Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly which receive the assent of the president of India, with effect from 30th April 2001, promulgated the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act 1997, by replacing the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) Panchayat Raj Regulation, 1967 (Regulation No. 3 of 1967). The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act 1997, thus, comes into effect from 14th November 2001. The relevant rules such as election, delimitation of constituencies and preparation of electoral roll have been notified, paving the way for holding the

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Panchayat election at the earliest possible. The state election commissioner has been constituted and started functioning to his discretion.

Hence, keeping pace with Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997, Arunachal Pradesh conducted the first ever general election or 8th election, since the promulgation of the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation, 1967, to constituted new Panchayat bodies, Panchayati Raj Election was held on 2nd April 2003 throughout the length and breadth of the state for electing 136 Zila Parishad, 1639 Anchal Samiti Members and 6485 Gram Panchayat Members. In this election, out of 136 Zila Parishad, the numbers of elected women in this tier were 45, which constitute 33%, in Anchal Samiti 577, which constitute 35% and in Gram Panchayat 2561, which constitute 39%. In the last Panchayat election held on 26th May 2008 the total numbers of women elected members in 16 districts are: 7347, women got elected 3181 in GPM, which constitute 43%, 649 ASM out of 1779, which constitute 36.4% and 59 in ZPM out of 161, which constitute 36.6% respectively.

Participation

Participation of the people in any developmental activities is the means to achieve its ends. Hence, "it is increasingly realized that development is for the people, and as such an essential element in the development process should be people's participation". "Development cannot be planted from above and outside, the desire for it must emanate from within or essentially from those who need to be raised from lower rungs of socio-economic order to the higher ones". People have to make aware of their needs and proper incentive provides for the optimum utilization of their own resources and potentialities to achieve their needs by being a major party of their own development. "If people take active interest and play a positive role in solving their own problems and meeting their own needs, they will definitely acquire the power that was gradually usurped by the government and retained by it by default till date".

Participation like most development related concepts is an amorphous, Plastic Jargon that can assume quite different meanings in political usages and is, "ideal for manipulative purposes". The concept – participation, cannot be generalized as there are various modes or styles of participation. A citizen participates in politics by any of these various ways – by taking interest in politics, by casting his votes, by working in the electioneering process, by influencing the decision-making process in the party of his choice, by joining the rally of the citizen's forum, protesting or supporting a decision of the government and in various other ways.

Etymologically, participation has its origin in Latin word 'participate' which means 'taking part'. A simple dictionary meaning of participation is 'the act or an instance of participating, a taking part, a sharing, as in benefits or profits' receiving or having a part of something'. Encyclopaedia of psychology describes participation as: (i) "taking part or involvement in any activity" and (ii) "greater involvement of persons in decision which affects them directly".

In a democracy, the meaningful participation of the people is a means for the sharing of political power in society. It is possible in a democratic system of governance where the people are associated with both the policy formulations and execution process of the government. Thus, sharing of power by the people is regarded as the key variable in democracy that affects the well-being of the common man.

However, it should be remembered that, participation is not secure for development through a legalistic framework, like the election process in the Panchayati Raj, where the people are associated with appointed officials for the development at local level. This sort of participation may be of temporary in nature and related to a specific work also. The general participation of the people takes place without going through a legalistic framework. It implies the involvement of people in development affairs on a regular basis. People's participation, thus, becomes an end in itself and a permanent resource in the development process.

"Despite the ceaseless experimentation with participation and the ushering of voluminous literature, there seems to be no consensus as to the definition of participation". It has become an umbrella term for a supposedly new style of development intervention and a central plank on which an alternative development strategy is to build. However, there seems to be an agreement as to centrality of participation "as an indispensable feature" and that participation can play a vital role in development by stimulating people's initiatives and mobilizing their resources.

At the operational stage of a development project, "participation implies a systematic management system and a value that aspires to involve the people in each of the following phases of the programme or project cycle such as in, decision-making, implementation, benefits and evaluation". Ultimately, it is expected to empower the people by opening "the gates of local governments and by ensuring a more equitable sharing of power and a higher level of political awareness and strength for the disadvantaged people".

With the passage of time, however, it became evident that the concept of participation was probably overburdened with lofty promises and rhetorical goals, and participatory development strategies have largely failed to live up to expectations. In many instances, it was observed that participatory initiatives failed to address the real socio-economic situations in most of the rural areas, which have only served the interests

of the ruling regimes and their allies in the rural areas. “The critics also warned that participation may in fact be used as an effective tool of control and centralization of power by the central state”.

Nevertheless, participation continued to be at the core of development activities and since 1970s, numerous rural and community development projects, concentrating on specific target of population such as the poor, marginal and landless peasants, the industrial workers, the squatter population, vulnerable rural women and malnourished children have been launched. Thus, in the context of backward tribal areas like Arunachal Pradesh, participation is an important key variable for the development of the state as a whole.

Since, the “participation” has become the core of developmental activities, measuring of the extent of people’s participation in the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions is necessary. Hence, keeping in mind the importance of women as human resource contributing to development, their participation in democratic processes was envisaged. As a first step, representation of rural women in political processes was ensured by a specific provision incorporated in the Constitution of India through the 73rd Amendment act, 1992. The significant provision of new Panchayati Raj Act is reservation of one third of seats for women in all positions in local bodies. The provision not only addressed the strategic needs of women but also tried to provide them space in local development activities. Hence, by keeping the importance of women participation in the developmental activities and in the decision-making process into account, the present paper is an attempt to measure the extent of women participation in the process of decentralized planning initiated by Panchayati Raj Institution in Arunachal Pradesh.

Participation of Women

Women constituted about 50 percent of the country’s population. However, they are the largest excluded category in almost all aspects. They have been denied their rights and liberties by the male dominated Indian society for which their social, economic and political status has remained relatively low. For centuries they have been discriminated in all walks of life and treated as “second class citizens”. However, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. 1992 opened a new chapter in the history of democratic decentralization in India by devolving power to the people and gives opportunities to women folk to participate actively in the decision-making process. Under this new provision, a new type of leadership in the form of women have emerged on the scene, as the Act provides for reservation of seats for women in all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Not only have they emerged as Gram Panchayat, but also in Anchal Samiti and Zila Parishad. But, how far the constitutional provisions have been translated into reality? Hence, this paper is an attempt to measure the extent of women participation in the decision-making process and developmental activities by benefiting the constitutional provisions.

In the present study it has found that women who are elected as Zila Parishad and Anchal Samiti members participated in the planning and implementation of different developmental programmes. However, in case of women who are elected as Gram Panchayat Members are rarely participated in the planning process. It is due to the fact that instead of them they send their husband in the meeting because most of them are uneducated. They do not know anything about different developmental schemes and other related provision due to which they have no idea to take any decision and hence escape from the Panchayat meetings. In fact, most of them suffer from lack of awareness, experience, knowledge, skill, low level of education, lack of exposure, influence of family and social outlook. Hence, the above stated reasons are responsible for negligible participation of women. In this tribal state the patriarchal system is still prevailing due to which, the family members do not encourage the women to go outside by leaving their responsibility of household management. The male members hold that the job of the women is to cook and serve and the governance is not their job. Thus, the patriarchal influences and traditional norms of this society also hinder the path of women's participation in the governance. A case study of West Siang district reveals that:

Table No. 1 Do the women really participate in the planning process?

Respondents	Yes	No	Grand Total
Common Villagers	24(23.07)	80(76.92)	104(99.99)
Local intellectual	28(26.92)	76(73.02)	104(99.99)
Panchayat Leaders	36(40.44)	53(59.55)	89(99.99)
Govt. Officials	3(30.00)	7(70.00)	10(100.00)
Total	91(29.64)	216(70.35)	307(100.00)

In this study we found that, 29.64 per cent of the respondents hold that women do actively participate in the planning process especially those who are elected as Anchal Samiti Members and Zila Parishad Members. However, they pointed out that, the women who are elected as Gram Panchayat Members do not participate in the planning process. Instead of them they send their husband in the meeting because most of them are uneducated. They do not know anything about different developmental schemes and other related provision due to which they have no idea to take any decision and hence escape from the Panchayat meetings. On the other hand, majority of the respondents which constitute 70.35 per cent hold that women participation is totally negligible. It is due to the fact that most of them suffer from lack of awareness, experience, knowledge, skill, low level of education, lack of exposure, influence of family and social outlook. Hence, the above stated reasons are responsible for negligible participation of women. In the study

area, still patriarchal system is prevailing due to which, the family members do not encourage the women to go outside by leaving their responsibility of household management. The male members hold that the job of the women is to cook and serve and the governance is not their job. Thus, the patriarchal influences and traditional norms of this society also hinder the path of women's participation in the governance. However, the participation of women is gradually increasing in compression to succeeding years. This fact can be drawn from the following table:

Table: 1 the total percentage of women elected representatives in 2019 Panchayat Election in West Siang District are as follows.

Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM)	:-	ZPC	Male	1
	:-	ZPM	Male	9
	:-	ZPM	Female	5
			Total	15
			Female %	33%
Gram Panchayat Member (GPM)	:-	GPM	MALE	204
	:-	GPM	FEMALE	137
	:-		Total	341
			Female %	40%
Gram Panchayat Chairperson (GPC)	:-	GPC	MALE	52
	:-	GPC	FEMALE	41
	:-		Total	93
			Female %	39%

From the above table it can be draw that the elected representatives of women in Gram Panchayat and Gram Panchayat Chairperson is more than their reserved seats and in Zila Prishad seats the women is represented their reserved seat of 33 per cent only. Thus, it can be analysed that more participation of women is seen in the seats of Gram Panchayat Members. Some of the women in Gram Panchayat Members are got elected from unreserved seat which shows their interest to become a leader of their village, However, elected as a Panchayat Members is not an end in itself? Beyond, it is necessary that they must take active participation in the decision-making process as well as in the process of formulation and implementation of various developmental programmes. In fact, it has found that majority of the women, no doubt has got elected as Gram Panchayat but their participation in decision making process is negligible. Hence, due to the fact, the

author finally tried to recommend certain measures to encourage women participation in the various developmental activities as well as in the decision-making process.

Concluding observations:

While summing up, it can be concluded that women usually do not take active part in the decision-making process as well as in the formulation and implementation of developmental programmes. Though some of them do participate, but not by their own initiative, rather whenever they are called by the officers with few exceptions. It is due to the fact that most of them are engaged in agricultural activities. Another reason is that they are suffering from lack of awareness of various rural developmental programmes. Further, it has also found that apart from their busy schedule they are not encouraged by the Panchayati Raj representatives to participate in the planning process.

However, it should be remembered that the best solution to encourage the women participation in the developmental programmes does not rest with the role of group of individuals; rather it also needs self-initiatives and interest. Thus, the lack of participation of the women in the developmental programmes is not exclusively the responsible of the Panchayati Raj representatives, though to some extent there requires the encouragement of the Panchayati Raj representatives and family members. At the same time one's own initiative is equally required for the effective implementation of any developmental programmes. In fact, the main reason behind the less participation of the women in the planning process in the state is due to lack of awareness. Hence, in order to make full participation of women in the planning process following are the some of the important recommendations:

- Rigorous awareness campaign such as, workshop, demonstration, seminar, symposium etc. are to be conducted in the rural areas in order to make full participation of the women in particular and people in general. Besides, there is also need for launching more and more awareness campaigning in favour of women's empowerment. Mass media, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Political Parties, Self Help Group (SHGs) has a significant role to play in this context. These groups should generate awareness about the significant of women's empowerment so that the process of political participation of women will be real and in its true sense.
- Further, in order to encourage the participation of women there should not be any social obligations. Women representatives should be support by the family members and society as a whole. Husband should not put any restriction and they should not attend the Panchayat meeting instead of their wife, rather the husband should encourage and support the cause of their wife to make them active participation in any programmes.

- In order to make women participation more effective, efficient and successful there is a need of vital changes in traditional, social attitude and patriarchal values of society. There is also need for positive attitudinal change and mental make-up of the male folk in favour of women's participation. They should be given appropriate training to improve their knowledge base and capacity level relating to their rights, responsibilities and duties in the functioning of Panchayat bodies. They should be made acquainted with the procedures of Panchayati Raj rules, regulations and financial management.
- The formal reservation seats for women in Panchayati Raj structures and election etc, is not a significant condition for their effective participation unless and until it is supplemented by the measures which help in solving the socio-economic pressures inhabiting them. The same can be realized by mobilizing women through interpersonal communication and by enhancing educational facilities at their doorstep.

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Solidarity Committee for the Migrant Workers: An Effective Step in Addressing Human Rights Issues in West Odisha

Dr. Padma Lochan Barma¹

Abstract: This paper explores the distress-driven seasonal migration of over two lakh laborers from West Odisha to brick kilns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, examining the underlying causes such as poverty, shrinking forest resources, and systemic exploitation. It details the severe human rights violations faced by migrant workers including physical abuse, bonded labour, and denial of education and healthcare and the exploitative role of Sardars (middlemen). In response, a group of concerned citizens formed the Solidarity Committee for Migrant Workers at both the destination and source regions in 2013. The paper evaluates the Committee's efforts to intervene, rescue victims, secure compensation, and advocate for systemic change through legal and grassroots action. Despite significant achievements, challenges such as breaking the entrenched middlemen nexus, securing legal protection, and ensuring sustainable alternatives persist. The study emphasizes the need for sustained, rights-based activism to combat forced labour and ensure dignity for migrant workers.

Keywords: Migrant Labour, Human Rights Violation, Brick Kilns, Solidarity Committee, Forced Labour, West Odisha Migration

Introduction

Every year between *November–December to May*, more than two lakh labourers from West Odisha are migrating to *brick kilns of Telangana and Andhra* under distress conditions. This may be arising out of various factors rapidly shrinking forest resources, non-availability of livelihood opportunities, recurrent droughts, high level of corruption, lack of education & awareness, industries etc. The problems arising out of this are numerous. Whatever the phenomenon is going on in Odisha is out of the formal system of Government rules and regulations. Middle men or the *Sardars* are playing a key role in this human trafficking. Their job is to go to villages in the lean season, meet the vulnerable, advance some money and make contract informally for the next season to work at the brick kilns. The *Sardars* not only violate the existing laws only but also venture to infringe basic human rights of the migrant workers in the process. Labourers are meted out inhuman treatment throughout the various layers of their movement and the rest when they settle for brick making at the brick kilns for months by compelling them to work from dawn to

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dusk, even more at times. Women workers are usually exploited, children are engaged in hazardous works depriving them from going to schools, providing poor and un-hygienic working conditions coupled with economic exploitation and mental and physical tortures. Number of cases of deaths, disappearances, physical assault even cutting hands are done by the goons and *goondas* of the brick kiln owners to create a fear psychosis among the brick kiln workers. Of late such cases are pouring in both print and electronic Medias and have become a regular and common phenomenon.

Under such circumstances that few concerned human loving people at the destination (Hyderabad) heard the suppressed and silenced voices of the migrant workers of the Western Odisha. They strongly felt the need of an organization that can work as the safety nets to safeguard their basic human rights interests and thus formed the Solidarity Committee for the Migrant Workers at the destination on *13 December 2013* aiming at securing minimum wage and healthy working conditions of the working class. Whatever violation of human rights cases propped up there, they tried their best to deal with and rescued number of victims and sent them to the source safely. However, dealing with such cases they faced lot of troubles as they did not have any agency to make contact and implement the rest at the source. Knowing this few

Members of the *Solidarity Committee* rushed to the *Kantabanji* – notoriously known as the *Dadsa Capital* and met likeminded people to work for the migrant workers at the source. Thus, *Solidarity Committee at the source* was formed to effectively deal with the violation of human rights cases by maintaining regular rapport with the destination.

In the above backdrop the paper shall make an attempt to study the working and working processes of the Solidarity Committee since 2013 to the present and how to some extent succeeded in tackling issues relating to human rights both at the source and the destination and safeguarding the interests of the working class and hopes so in near future.

The Background

There is a long history of migration in *West Odisha* that can be traced back to the *Great Famine of 1918-19 & 1965-66* where death tolls were 80 and 81 per mile respectively. People died like flies and insects¹. During 1918-19 people of this region had migrated to *Assam tea gardens* for their survival. The *Great Famine of 1965-66* forced people to leave their native places for *Raipur, Durg and Nagpur* for immediate livelihood opportunities to sustain their lives.

The causes of this can be ascribed to:

- a) to shun the wraths of starvation and
- b) to escape from the extreme practice of *untouchability*².

It shows that migration was earlier confined to the *dalits/SCs*, only being the most vulnerable. To add to this, the Western region inherited a *feudal system* which was *caste-ridden and highly exploitative*³.

In 2006-07, Government of Odisha implemented a revolutionary act called MGNREGA to provide 100 days of job to each rural BPL family. After years of its working, it was found to be an 86.66% *failure* as none of the families got 100 days of jobs and whoever received were not without much delay³.

However, of late we are witnessing the people from other strata of this region migrating to neighbouring *Andhra and Telangana* to work in brick kilns. Since 1980s, it is on the rising curve and percolated to the other sections of the *OBCs, tribals, and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)* who were never before. Among the *STs*, it was largely confined to the *Gonds & Sabars* only.

Presently two *PVTGs*, known as *Bhunjia and Paharia*, have started migrating under severe distress condition owing to *rapidly shrunk forest resources and scarce availability of livelihood opportunities*, that who once used to be very keen to preserve their distinct culture⁴ and tradition by maintaining distance from the caste people and withdrawing to interior pockets.

Now there are *horrible stories of gravest human rights violations*. A local NGO writes in its mouthpiece, *Makarkheda*, that in 2005, of the total migrant workers migrated to different destinations of the country:

- 14 persons (9 males & 5 females) died out of *severe physical torture* and other related incidents.
- 7 persons (5 males and 2 females) disappeared from the *SCs, STs and OBCs*⁵.

As per the study conducted by the *district administration*, it reveals that 88% people are migrating to far-off places under *distress condition* and 12% are *voluntary* and remain there for *six to seven months*. Out of this, 50% are *STs* and the rest from the *SCs & OBCs*⁶.

Yet Government has to confess that migration is occurring due to prevalent distress conditions. There are such innumerable instances of *gruesome inhuman stories* which we learn from the mass media. One such story is of two migrant workers of the *Kalahandi district*.

The Initiative

Numbers of studies have been conducted since then to highlight the issues of migrant workers in *Andhra and Telangana*. Students and teachers of the *Central University of Hyderabad* and certain concerned union leaders not just studied the entire exploitative system but engaged themselves in intervening in certain areas where the migrant workers' basic human rights are grossly violated. They took up the matter to the concerned authorities to bring out some redressal.

But hurdles cropped up as they lacked proper information of the migrants' whereabouts, their mode of contract, office information etc. Further, *language* was a big problem of communication for them. There was *no local understanding* of the workers' viewpoints on the part of the intervening agency. And there was *no reliable agency* to contact and exchange communication.

Thus, the need of an agency was felt to effectively deal with such causes. A team was constituted under the leadership of *Dr. T. Mahapatra Sengupta* and *A. Krishna*; these members travelled to West Odisha *Kantabanji*, a main *human trafficking junction*, from where vulnerable migrant workers start their survival journey to different destinations of the country.

This is why experts often describe *Kantabanji* as the *Dadan capital*, as everything of *Dadan* moves and stops here. When they reached at *Kantabanji*, on *13th December 2013*, a meeting was convened under the initiative of the *Zindabad Sanghathan* and *BP Sharma*, leading advocate at the Veterinary Hospital, *Kantabanji*. Local intellectuals and activists were invited. Our good friends from *Hyderabad* appraised everything to the people of *Odisha* and expressed severe concern as there was *no agency at the source* to deal with the infringement of inherent rights of the migrant workers.

They proposed for a committee to be set up and it was *unanimously accepted by all* by a voice vote. It was named as the:

Balangir-Nuapada District Solidarity Committee for the Migrant Workers to work at the source.

Objectives:

1. To deal with the cases of human rights violations of the migrant workers both at the source and the destination.
2. To work for the implementation of the Inter-State Migration Act, 1979 in letter and spirit;



3. To create awareness and educate on the existing labour laws of both the state of Odisha and Telangana;
4. Liaisoning between the officials, public representatives, brick kiln owners and the migrant workers to bring into the negotiating table to settle the issues arising out of the migration processes;
5. To interlink with such other organizations that are committed to the same objectives to put pressure on the government for policy change to suit and improve the socio-economic condition of the migrant workers;
6. To develop an alternative model to the existing exploitative system to break the present nexus of officials (police, railway officials, labour department), Sardars, and brick kiln owners.

The Organization

It is an informal committee of activists, academicians, legal professionals, media personalities, union leaders, and social workers. This is purely a non-political, non-profit and non-registered organization having specific goals as mentioned above. It mobilizes funds from within.

Interventions

It started with small interventions in the initial stage to address the immediate problems of the migrant workers at the railway station, by:

- Meeting with the Sardars
- Informing the police stations
- Going to the labour office
- Making contact with the villages
- Highlighting the issues related to distress labour, torture, exploitation of any kind, and violations of other human rights

When the Solidarity Committee was formed in the year 2013, its scope was broadened and its network was strengthened.

Areas of Human Rights Violations

The Committee in its study found the following areas of basic human rights violation:

1. No formal registration at the source while leaving home
2. Only verbal contract between the two parties
3. Engagement of middlemen/Sardars who siphoned off a major share of the...
4. Inhuman deportation in four-wheelers and in trains,
5. Physical torture by the police in the trains itself,
6. Willful concealment of working place,
7. 14 to 18 hours of uninterrupted work in unhygienic and unhealthy working environments,
8. No government fixed prices followed at the destination,
9. No social security measures,
10. Abuse of women and children at the workplace,
11. Sexual exploitation of young ladies,
12. No toilet facilities,
13. No first aid provision,
14. No contact with the outer world,
15. Unhealthy insufficient accommodation to a family (5x7 feet Width & Length),
16. Insufficient provision of water and light,
17. Schools are there but no Odia teachers,
18. *Kheri* (weekly fooding cost) ₹300/week to a family of four or five and many more behind the screen,
19. Excessive economic exploitation¹⁰.

Initial Encouraging Achievements

1. The Odisha Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board was formed for the first time on 3rd January 2004 under u/s 18 of the BOCW (RE & CS) Act, 1996.
 - It was reconstituted subsequently on 14.01.2008, 02.08.2011, 20.07.2013, and 14.01.2014 respectively and published in the Odisha Gazette No. 449, Cuttack, 1st March 2014 by the Labour & ESI Department.
 - In its chapter – I, of 2 B, D & E, it defines *beneficiary* as a building worker registered under section 12 and does not include migrant workers as construction & other workers—though it defines very comprehensively.
 - It was on the earnest effort of the Solidarity Committee that the Chairman of the Board S.J. Subash Singh, by accepting the demand, included migrant workers/Dadan construction & other workers in the list and they became eligible for all sorts of financial assistance.

Out of 6030 registered by the Solidarity Committee at the source, 3500 are migrant workers working in different parts of the country in brick kilns.

2. *There was no such organization to deal with such cases. It is the only of its kind at present having its network in Odisha and Telangana.*
3. Because of the regular and continuous petitions to the Brick Kilns Owners Association, Telangana by the Solidarity Committee, two ST families of the deceased Nabin Dharua & Hari Dharua (who died at the work place) of the village Sarmuhan of Belpada Block of the Balangir district got Rs. 3.5 Lakhs as compensation recently.
4. To draw the attention of the Government and the concerned stakeholders and to create awareness in the society, a one-day workshop was organized at the Lion's Public School, the Dadan capital town Kantabanji, in association with the Odisha Gabesana Chakra.
5. In the last four years, as many as 500 migrant workers who were being meted out physical and mental torture by the agents of the brick kiln owners in Andhra & Telangana and kept under bondage were rescued by the constituent members of the Solidarity Committee.

- Moreover, around 200 migrant workers were helped in being issued Bonded Labor Certificates by the Mandal Revenue Officers (MRO) at the destination.
 - On this basis, certificate holders were entitled to receive Rs. 20,000/- from both the Governments of Telangana and Odisha, along with Indira Awas and were linked to livelihood opportunities.
6. A three-day Sampark Yatra was organized in Telangana state from March 15 to 17, 2017 to undertake a socio-economic study of the migrant workers and their work conditions, and to understand and assess onsite living conditions and minimum wages prevailing there.
- This was done jointly by the:
 - Solidarity Committee for Brick-Kiln Workers of Telangana State
 - Solidarity Committee for Brick-Kiln Workers of West Odisha
 - Telangana Vyavasaya Vruthidarulu Union, Hyderabad
 - Members visited various worksites, took on-the-spot reports, and found all those far from satisfaction.
 - The brick kiln owners, district administration, and middlemen were apprised and requested to improve the socio-economic lot of workers.
 - As a result, a consensus emerged to have a tripartite dialogue and agreement to end the middlemen system and stop all forms of exploitation.
 - A bi-lateral meeting was held at Kantabanji on 02.10.2017 at 11 AM between owners and migrant workers, organized and facilitated by the Solidarity Committee, to establish a labour exchange centre on Maharashtra's Mathadi Model.
 - If materialized in letter and spirit, this would lead to:
 - Provident fund,
 - Bonus,
 - Gratuity,

- Employee compensation,
 - Leave with wages,
 - Worker's HRA & LTA,
 - Free medical treatment,
 - Paid holidays, and
 - Corpus fund for the overall welfare of migrant workers.
- For the first time, brick kiln owners' association with its President, Secretary, Treasurer, and other members attended the Kantabanji conference to explore the above model.
 - Meanwhile, a new development has taken place: a Sardars/middlemen association has been formed.
7. Since the Committee started intervening in 2013 by adopting different measures in this human trafficking especially in Balangir and Nuapada districts—there is a decline in the total scenario of human rights violations of the migrant workers.

Challenges Ahead

The big challenge before the Solidarity Committee is to replace or break the ongoing middlemen system.

- It is not easy as there is a strong nexus among the owners, middlemen, officials, and politicians—who are very powerful, and their lobby is strong in the power corridors.
- Meanwhile, there are life threats to the members of the Committee who work day in and day out.
- Cases were registered in the police station against Trilochan Punji and Raghu (active members).
- However, on public pressure, cases were withdrawn, but members still face danger.

Another problem is the scarce fund to deal with legal complications and organizational matters. It is always managed by the members and its constituents.

Conclusion

Whatever challenges may come, in its path to safeguard the basic human rights of the migrant workers of West Odisha, the Solidarity Committee will not stop working on its objectives in the coming days—within the constitutional framework of India.

- The strength of the Committee lies in its noble objectives to provide:
 - Social justice
 - Overall welfare to the labourers of the unorganized sector (as enshrined in Chapter III of the Constitution).
- Another area of its strength is that it is non-dependent on outside funds and works through networking with other people's movements.

However, the Committee requires to broaden its base to end modern-day slavery of the marginalized persons.

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Strategic Alliances: Decoding Gujarat's Public-Private Partnership Framework

Dr. Madhu Thawani¹

Abstract: Gujarat stands as a pioneering state in India's public-private partnership (PPP) landscape, demonstrating a sustained commitment to leveraging private capital and expertise for critical infrastructure development. This article delves into the historical evolution and contemporary status of Gujarat's PPP model, tracing its origins from a sector-driven approach to a comprehensive, institutionally backed framework. It explores the core rationales behind the state government's embrace of PPPs, including fiscal prudence, the immense resource requirements for ambitious growth targets like Vision 2020 and subsequent visions, the pursuit of innovative service delivery, and the strategic reallocation of government funds. A detailed examination of the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act (GID Act) and the role of the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB) highlights the robust legal and institutional scaffolding. Furthermore, the article analyses the significant impact of initiatives like the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summits in attracting investment, supported by updated data on PPP projects across various sectors including ports, power, roads, railways, water, and urban development. While acknowledging the foundational success, it also incorporates recent developments and continues to underscore Gujarat's enduring leadership in this crucial development model.

Keywords: Public-Private Partnership (PPP), Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB), Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act (GID Act), Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summit (VGGIS), Infrastructure Development, Economic Growth, Fiscal Prudence

Introduction

Gujarat's economic success story is inextricably linked to its foresight in infrastructure development, a domain where the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model has been not merely an option, but a cornerstone strategy. This evolution from a nascent, sector-specific approach to a holistic, institutionally anchored framework has set Gujarat apart as a national leader in leveraging private capital and expertise for public good. The state's consistent pursuit of this collaborative model has allowed it to build world-class

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infrastructure at an accelerated pace, attracting investments, fostering industrial growth, and improving the quality of life for its citizens.

The genesis of Gujarat's PPP journey can be traced back to the early 1990s, a period of economic liberalization in India. Initially, private sector involvement was often driven by specific sectoral needs, particularly in the burgeoning port and power sectors, where the state government recognized the limitations of its own financial and technical resources. Early examples include the development of private jetties and captive power plants, which, while successful, were largely ad-hoc arrangements.

However, the realization of the sheer scale of investment required to propel Gujarat into a leading industrial and trade hub, coupled with the inherent limitations of the public exchequer, quickly necessitated a more formalized and overarching approach. The state leadership understood that achieving ambitious growth targets would demand a significant acceleration of infrastructure development that conventional government funding alone could not sustain. This critical shift in strategic thinking culminated in the enactment of the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act, 1999 (GID Act).

This landmark legislation, a pioneering effort in India, provided a clear and robust legal framework for private participation in financing, constructing, maintaining, and operating a wide array of infrastructure projects. It moved beyond piecemeal arrangements to establish a transparent, competitive bidding process (as outlined in Section 9 of the GID Act), ensuring fairness and efficiency in selecting private partners. The Act even allowed for a comparative bidding or Swiss Challenge route for unsolicited proposals (Section 10), demonstrating flexibility while maintaining transparency. This legislative foresight provided much-needed legal sanctity and predictability for private developers, significantly de-risking their investments. The subsequent Gujarat Infrastructure Development (Amendment) Act, 2006, further refined and strengthened this legal foundation, addressing practical challenges and adapting to evolving requirements. This continuous legal and policy refinement has been crucial in maintaining investor confidence.

The Core Rationales for Gujarat's Embrace of PPPs:

Gujarat's deep and sustained embrace of PPPs was driven by several pragmatic and visionary rationales, reflecting a keen understanding of economic realities and strategic planning:

1. **Fiscal Prudence and Resource Optimization:** The state government recognized that ambitious infrastructure development targets, particularly those outlined in its Vision 2020 (which aimed for significant economic growth and industrialization) and subsequent growth strategies, would require

monumental financial outlays. PPPs offered a critical mechanism to share the financial burden, preventing excessive strain on state finances and maintaining fiscal discipline. By attracting private capital, the government could strategically reallocate its own limited funds to crucial social sectors like education, healthcare, and rural development, or utilize them for viability gap funding (VGF) in projects where private returns might be inherently lower but public benefit was high. This strategic deployment of public funds ensured that essential social infrastructure did not suffer while economic infrastructure flourished.

2. **Addressing Immense Resource Requirements for Ambitious Growth:** Gujarat's aspiration to become a global manufacturing and trade hub demanded world-class infrastructure across all modes of transport, utilities, and urban amenities. The sheer volume of investment needed for this scale of development, estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars over the years, far exceeded the state's budgetary capacity. PPPs became indispensable to bridge this funding gap, enabling the simultaneous execution of multiple large-scale projects that would otherwise have been delayed for years or even decades. This rapid deployment of capital was key to accelerating project implementation and realizing growth targets.
3. **Pursuit of Innovation, Efficiency, and Superior Service Delivery:** Private sector involvement brought not just financial capital, but also invaluable benefits in terms of efficiency, innovation, and advanced management practices. PPPs enabled the state to tap into specialized expertise, cutting-edge technologies, and streamlined project management techniques that might not always be readily available within government departments. This collaboration led to higher quality infrastructure, often completed within stipulated timelines and budgets, and more efficient service delivery for citizens and industries. The competitive nature of PPP bidding also incentivized private players to bring their best solutions to the table.
4. **Strategic Reallocation of Government Funds for Social Development:** By offloading a significant portion of infrastructure financing to the private sector, the Gujarat government gained greater fiscal flexibility. This strategic advantage allowed it to dedicate public funds more intensely towards critical social sectors like education, skill development, healthcare, and poverty alleviation programs. This holistic approach ensured that economic growth was balanced with social development, leading to more inclusive prosperity for the state's population. It demonstrated a nuanced understanding that while economic infrastructure is crucial for wealth creation, social infrastructure is fundamental for human capital development.

Institutional Scaffolding: GIDB's Pivotal Role:

Central to Gujarat's unparalleled PPP success is the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB). Established under the GID Act, 1999, GIDB functions as the apex authority for infrastructure development in the state. Its mandate is comprehensive and multi-faceted:

- **Facilitating Fund Flow:** GIDB actively works to attract higher fund flow into infrastructure sectors, engaging with both domestic and international investors and financial institutions.
- **Promoting Private Participation:** It is the primary body for conceptualizing, structuring, and facilitating private sector participation in infrastructure projects, acting as a single point of contact for developers.
- **Coordination:** GIDB ensures seamless coordination among various government agencies, streamlining approvals, clearances, and inter-departmental cooperation for PPP projects, significantly reducing bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Project Facilitation:** It assists in developing project concepts, undertaking rigorous pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, preparing detailed project reports (DPRs), and continually monitoring project implementation to ensure adherence to timelines and quality standards.
- **Policy Advocacy:** GIDB also plays a crucial role in advising the government on policy reforms to further enhance the PPP ecosystem.

GIDB's "single window" approach and its role in providing advisory support, conducting transparent bidding processes, and adhering to strict evaluation criteria have significantly de-risked investments for the private sector. This robust institutional mechanism has fostered a predictable and conducive environment for PPPs, earning Gujarat a reputation for governance effectiveness.

Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summits: Catalysts for Investment:

The Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summits (VGGIS) have played a truly transformative role in showcasing Gujarat's investment potential, particularly for PPPs. Initiated in 2003 by then-Chief Minister Narendra Modi, these biennial summits quickly evolved into premier global platforms for business networking and investment attraction. While not all Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed at these summits translate into immediate implemented projects (a common challenge globally, with reports

indicating that some projects are shelved due to various factors including financial troubles, economic slowdown, and approval delays), the summits have undoubtedly generated immense interest, fostered a pro-investment climate, and led to substantial on-the-ground investments, many directly through the PPP route.

The summits provide a critical forum for government and private sector representatives to interact, understand investment opportunities, and forge partnerships. The sheer volume of investment commitments, often in the range of several lakh crores of rupees, at each summit highlights their continued significance in attracting capital for infrastructure. For instance, the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024 reportedly garnered MoUs amounting to an estimated ₹47 lakh crore, with a significant portion earmarked for infrastructure and industrial development, underlining the immense potential for future PPPs and the state's sustained appeal to investors. The summits not only facilitate investment but also serve as a powerful branding exercise for Gujarat, projecting it as a dynamic and investor-friendly destination.

Sectoral Investment:

Gujarat's PPP model has profoundly impacted various critical sectors, attracting significant private capital and transforming the state's physical landscape:

- **Ports:** As a maritime state with India's longest coastline (1,600 km), ports have been a natural stronghold for PPPs. Gujarat's non-major ports collectively handle a substantial portion of India's cargo. Private sector investment in these non-major ports is estimated to be well over ₹20,000 crore across various projects like container terminals, specialized berths, and integrated port-side infrastructure. The Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) has successfully facilitated partnerships, leading to Gujarat's non-major ports handling approximately 26% of India's total maritime cargo traffic in FY 2022-23. Mundra Port, developed by Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd., stands as a prime example of successful private investment, transforming from a small port into India's largest commercial port with investments running into thousands of crores, highlighting the scale achievable through PPPs.
- **Power:** PPPs have been instrumental in augmenting power generation and distribution capacity, significantly contributing to Gujarat's energy security. While specific overall PPP investment figures for the entire power sector are complex due to varying models (e.g., Independent Power Producers - IPPs), private sector participation in thermal, renewable (solar and wind), and transmission projects has been substantial. This has led to Gujarat's robust power infrastructure and stable supply, which is

critical for industrial growth. For instance, private sector companies have invested several thousand crores in establishing large-scale solar parks and wind farms through competitive bidding, with government support for land and evacuation infrastructure. This includes projects like the Charanka Solar Park, which saw significant private investment.

- **Roads and Highways:** Gujarat boasts an extensive and well-maintained road network, significantly enhanced by PPPs. Private investments in road projects are estimated to be over ₹15,000 crore over the last decade, primarily through BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) and HAM (Hybrid Annuity Model) structures. Projects like the Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway (a greenfield project), part of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), involve an estimated investment of ₹3,500 crore, with substantial private participation. Similarly, the six-laning and strengthening of key national highway stretches, such as parts of NH-8 (now NH-48) connecting Ahmedabad to Vadodara, have seen individual private investments in the range of ₹1,500-2,000 crore per project, contributing to an overall significant private capital infusion. The upcoming Namo Shakti Expressway and Saurashtra Expressway also underscore the continued reliance on the PPP framework for large-scale road infrastructure.
- **Railways:** While mainline railways are largely under central government control, Gujarat has pioneered PPPs in specific areas like railway station redevelopment. The Surat Multi-Modal Transport Hub (MMTH), a landmark PPP project, has an estimated cost of ₹3,800 crore, attracting substantial private sector investment for commercial development and modernization of the railway station and surrounding area. This model is being replicated across India, with Surat leading the way.
- **Water Supply and Management:** PPPs have played a crucial role in improving urban and rural water supply and sanitation projects. Significant private investments, ranging from ₹200-500 crore per project, have been made in water treatment plants, distribution networks, and sewage treatment plants in major urban centers like Vadodara, Rajkot, and Surat. These partnerships have improved the efficiency of water management, reduced non-revenue water, and enhanced civic amenities. Efforts also extend to bulk water pipelines, a key PPP area for ensuring widespread water access, exemplified by the Saurashtra Narmada Avataram Irrigation (SAUNI) Yojana, which, while primarily government-funded, has seen private sector involvement in infrastructure construction.
- **Urban Development:** Gujarat has been a national leader in urban PPPs, with the India Infrastructure Report 2023 identifying 33 PPP projects in urban areas. These include not just water but also integrated municipal solid waste management systems (with private investments of ₹500-

800 crore per major city), and efficient urban transport systems. The Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) in Ahmedabad and Surat, developed partly through PPPs, has seen substantial private sector operational investment, improved public transport accessibility and reduced congestion. The focus on smart city initiatives in Gujarat also heavily leverages private sector innovation and financing.

- **Emerging and Megaprojects:** Gujarat continues to innovate with PPPs in futuristic and large-scale projects. GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City), India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) located near Ahmedabad, is a testament to a unique PPP model. It has attracted investments exceeding ₹13,000 crore to date from private financial institutions, real estate developers, and businesses setting up operations in the IFSC, showcasing the success of creating a conducive environment for private capital in a niche sector. The Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR), a planned smart city spanning 920 sq. km (larger than Singapore), is another ambitious project. It is projected to attract private investments in excess of ₹20,000 crore in its initial phases for industrial, residential, and social infrastructure development, demonstrating the state's long-term vision for private collaboration in greenfield urban development.

Recent Developments and the Path Forward:

Gujarat's PPP model is not static; it continually adapts to new challenges and opportunities, reflecting a dynamic approach to governance. Recent developments and strategic priorities include:

- **Focus on Integrated Urban Planning:** There is a strong push for integrated urban planning and decentralized urbanization through new growth hubs, reducing pressure on existing metropolitan areas and creating new investment opportunities for PPPs.
- **Expansion into Social Infrastructure:** While economic infrastructure has been the primary focus, there is an increasing inclination to explore PPPs in social infrastructure projects, potentially including healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and affordable housing, to enhance public welfare.
- **Continued Emphasis on Large-Scale Connectivity:** The state remains committed to large-scale connectivity projects, such as the upcoming Namo Shakti Expressway and Saurashtra Expressway, which will further rely on the PPP framework to connect remote regions and enhance logistical efficiency.

- **Diversification into New Sub-sectors:** The Gujarat Tour Development Company Ltd (GTDC) proposing to undertake infrastructure development for tourism and aviation through PPPs indicates the state's willingness to expand the model into new and specialized sub-sectors, leveraging private expertise for tourism growth.
- **Focus on Green and Sustainable Infrastructure:** With a growing emphasis on climate change mitigation, future PPPs are likely to increasingly incorporate green building standards, renewable energy integration, and sustainable water management practices, aligning with national and global environmental goals.

Conclusion:

Gujarat's journey in infrastructure development stands as a compelling testament to the transformative power of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. From its nascent, sector-specific beginnings in the early 1990s, the state meticulously cultivated a comprehensive and robust framework, anchored by the pioneering Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act, 1999, and the pivotal Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB). This strategic evolution wasn't merely about attracting capital; it was driven by pragmatic imperatives: the need for fiscal prudence, the daunting resource requirements to meet ambitious growth targets like Vision 2020, the pursuit of innovative service delivery, and the strategic ability to reallocate government funds towards crucial social sectors. As evidenced by the substantial private investments across ports, power, roads, railways, water, and urban development, initiatives like the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summits have served as powerful catalysts, translating vision into tangible assets. The state's non-major ports, for instance, now handle a significant portion of India's maritime cargo, powered by private investments running into tens of thousands of crores. Similarly, extensive road networks and modernized urban amenities, like the Surat Multi-Modal Transport Hub and comprehensive solid waste management systems, showcase the efficiency and scale achievable through collaborative efforts. Furthermore, mega-projects such as GIFT City and Dholera SIR underscore Gujarat's forward-looking embrace of PPPs for future-ready urban and financial infrastructure. In essence, Gujarat's PPP paradigm is more than just a financing model; it's a holistic approach to governance that prioritizes long-term sustainable development. By de-risking investments, ensuring transparency, and fostering an investor-friendly ecosystem, Gujarat has not only built impressive physical infrastructure but also cultivated a culture of collaboration that continues to drive its economic ascent. This enduring commitment positions Gujarat not just as a leader in India's infrastructure narrative, but as a blueprint for accelerated, efficient, and inclusive development globally.



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Synergies Between Artificial Intelligence, E-Commerce, And Sustainable Finance: A Case Study of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL)

Srikanth Kashaveni¹

Abstract: This research examines the synergistic relationship between artificial intelligence (AI), e-commerce, and sustainable finance within the context of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), one of India's largest Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies. The study investigates how HUL has leveraged AI technologies to enhance its e-commerce operations while simultaneously advancing its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives. Through a comprehensive analysis of secondary data spanning 2020-2024, this research reveals that HUL's strategic integration of AI across its digital ecosystem has resulted in significant improvements in operational efficiency, customer engagement, and sustainability metrics. The findings demonstrate that AI-driven e-commerce platforms can serve as catalysts for sustainable finance initiatives, creating a virtuous cycle where digital transformation supports both business growth and environmental stewardship. Key outcomes include HUL's achievement of 30% digital channel demand growth, 98% CO2 emissions reduction (compared to 2008 baseline), and the empowerment of 1.4 million digital retailers through AI-enhanced platforms. The research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital transformation in the FMCG sector and provides insights into how multinational corporations can align technological innovation with sustainability goals.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, E-commerce, Sustainable Finance, Digital Transformation, ESG, FMCG, Hindustan Unilever

Introduction

The convergence of *artificial intelligence (AI)*, *e-commerce*, and *sustainable finance* is transforming business models in the *FMCG sector*, driven by rising climate concerns and evolving consumer preferences (Deloitte, 2021; PwC India, 2023). Companies now recognize that integrating digital technologies with *ESG goals* creates both operational efficiencies and sustainable value (EY, 2022; Accenture, 2022).

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) exemplifies this shift through its AI-led digital transformation, combining *e-commerce innovation* with strong sustainability outcomes (HUL, 2023). With over 50 brands in 16 categories and a presence in 9 out of 10 Indian homes, HUL leverages AI to enhance customer engagement, supply chain efficiency, and ESG impact (HUL, 2024).

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This study highlights how *AI acts as a catalyst for sustainable finance*, shifting ESG efforts from cost centres to growth drivers by enabling *new revenue models, resource optimization, and stakeholder transparency* (KPMG, 2022; EY, 2022).

While prior studies often treat AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance separately, this research fills a gap by showing their *synergistic integration* in a real-world FMCG case. It is especially timely amid growing *digital transformation trends* and increasing *ESG regulatory pressures* (World Economic Forum, 2023; SEBI, 2022).

1. Research Objectives

The study aims to explore how Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) has leveraged the integration of AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance to improve operational efficiency and ESG outcomes between 2020 and 2024.

- *Primary Objective:* To analyse the combined impact of AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance on HUL's performance.
- *Secondary Objectives:*
 - To examine AI's role in enhancing HUL's digital transformation and customer engagement.
 - To assess how AI-supported e-commerce contributed to sustainable finance and ESG targets.
 - To propose a strategic model for FMCG firms aiming to integrate these three domains.

2. Literature Review

AI has been pivotal in optimizing FMCG operations, improving forecasting, supply chain efficiency, and consumer targeting (Accenture, 2022; EY, 2022). HUL's AI hub and smart factories, like the Tinsukia unit, have driven automation and sustainability outcomes (World Economic Forum, 2023).

E-commerce has transformed FMCG distribution, with HUL's digital sales doubling and 40% of its ad spend now directed toward digital media (HUL, 2023). Platforms like "Shikhar" demonstrate how AI-enhanced B2B tools empower retailers (ET Brand Equity, 2022).

Sustainable finance now relies heavily on data analytics. AI improves ESG data quality, reduces audit times, and supports responsible investment (World Economic Forum, 2021; PwC India, 2023). HUL's 98% CO₂

reduction and ESG transparency illustrate effective implementation.

Few studies investigate how AI can integrate both digital commerce and sustainable finance, especially in FMCG firms like HUL, presenting a unique research opportunity (KPMG, 2022; Harvard Business Review, 2021).

3. Research Gap

Although AI's role in digital transformation and ESG is acknowledged, little research connects these elements holistically within FMCG. There is a lack of empirical case studies (especially from India) that show how AI-integrated e-commerce platforms advance sustainable finance in companies like HUL (EY, 2022; Deloitte, 2022).

4. Methodology

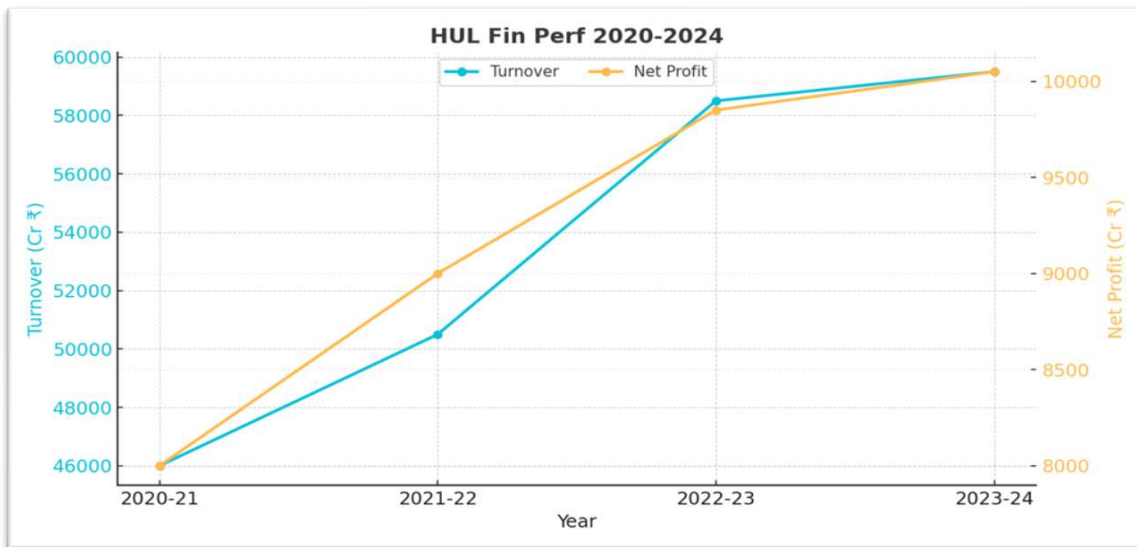
This study adopts a qualitative case study method using secondary data from HUL's annual reports, ESG disclosures, and industry publications. The analysis includes trend evaluation of financial, operational, and ESG metrics from 2020 to 2024.

- *Data Sources:* HUL reports, BRSR filings, investor presentations, and academic literature.
- *Tools Used:* Trend analysis for performance metrics, thematic content analysis for strategic alignment, and triangulation to ensure reliability.
- *Limitations:* Results may lack generalizability beyond HUL, and the sole use of secondary data restricts insight into internal strategies.

5. Analysis

5.1 HUL's Financial Performance and Digital Transformation

HUL's financial performance from 2020 to 2024 demonstrates the positive impact of AI-driven digital transformation on business outcomes. The company's turnover grew from ₹45,311 crores in 2020-21 to ₹59,579 crores in 2023-24, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7.5%. This growth occurred despite challenging market conditions, including post-pandemic recovery challenges and inflationary pressures.

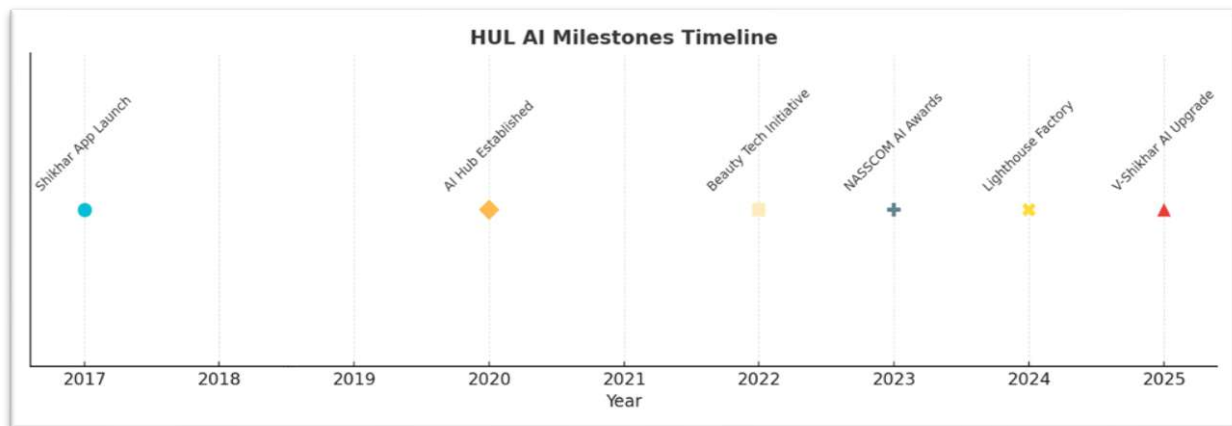


Source: HUL Financial Performance: Turnover and Net Profit Growth (2020-2024)

The company's digital channel demand showed remarkable growth, increasing from 15% in 2020-21 to 30% in 2023-24. This expansion was accompanied by strategic investments in e-commerce capabilities, with e-commerce growth rates ranging from 25% to 40% annually. The digital transformation strategy contributed significantly to overall revenue growth, with e-commerce now representing 7% of total sales. HUL's profitability metrics remained stable throughout the transformation period, with EBITDA margins averaging 24.0% and net profit margins maintaining approximately 17.2%. The company's ability to maintain profitability while investing heavily in digital capabilities demonstrates the efficiency gains achieved through AI implementation.

1.1 AI Implementation and Technological Integration

HUL's AI implementation strategy evolved systematically from 2017 to 2025, with each phase building upon previous achievements. The Shikhar app launch in 2017 established the foundation for digital retailer engagement, while the 2020 AI hub establishment centralized consumer insight automation.



Source: HUL AI Implementation Timeline: Digital Transformation Journey (2017-2025)

The company's AI initiatives have achieved significant measurable impacts. The Beauty Tech AI integration resulted in over 5 million consumer trials, with an average conversion rate exceeding 2.5%. The AI-powered enhancement of the Shikhar platform enabled retailers to generate customized video advertisements in under one minute, democratizing marketing capabilities for small businesses.

Manufacturing operations have particularly benefited from AI implementation. The Tinsukia factory's recognition as a World Economic Forum Lighthouse site demonstrates how AI can optimize production processes while supporting sustainability objectives. The facility's AI-powered vision systems achieved 85% faster changeover times, significantly improving e-commerce readiness.

1.1 E-commerce Growth and Channel Transformation

HUL's e-commerce transformation reflects broader industry trends toward digital commerce adoption. The company's digital advertising spends increased to 40% of total advertising expenditure, representing a threefold increase from previous levels. This investment has supported the development of sophisticated digital marketing capabilities, including personalized content delivery and real-time consumer engagement. The Shikhar platform's growth illustrates the potential for B2B e-commerce in the FMCG sector. The platform now connects 1.4 million Kirana stores across India, enabling digital order placement and inventory management. The integration of AI-driven features, including predictive analytics and personalized recommendations, has enhanced platform effectiveness and user satisfaction.

Quick commerce has emerged as a significant growth driver, contributing one-sixth of HUL's e-commerce sales. This channel's rapid growth, particularly in convenience-driven categories such as personal care and food products, demonstrates the importance of adapting to evolving consumer preferences.

1.1 ESG Performance and Sustainability Metrics

HUL's ESG performance improvements demonstrate the potential for AI-driven operations to support sustainability objectives. The company has achieved remarkable progress in environmental metrics, including a 98% reduction in CO2 emissions compared to 2008 baseline levels. Water usage has decreased by 47%, and total waste generation has been reduced by 58%.

ESG Metric	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	Improvement
CO2 Emissions Reduction (% vs 2008)	97%	98%	1%
Water Usage Reduction (% vs 2008)	48%	47%	Maintained
Waste Reduction (% vs 2008)	55%	58%	3%
Water Potential Created (Trillion Litres)	2.6	3.2	0.6
Shakti Entrepreneurs Empowered	150,000	160,000	10,000
Digital Retailers Connected (Million)	1.0	1.4	0.4
Sustainable Sourcing Tea (%)	75%	79%	4%
Sustainable Sourcing Paper & Board (%)	90%	94%	4%

Social sustainability initiatives have also shown significant progress. The Shakti program has empowered 160,000 rural women entrepreneurs, while the Hindustan Unilever Foundation (HUF) has created water potential of 3.2 trillion litres. These achievements demonstrate how AI-enabled operations can support broader social development objectives.

1.2 Synergistic Value Creation

The integration of AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance at HUL has created synergistic value that extends beyond individual domain contributions. AI-powered supply chain optimization has simultaneously reduced costs, improved efficiency, and minimized environmental impact. The company's digital transformation has enabled more accurate ESG reporting and stakeholder engagement, supporting its sustainable finance initiatives.

The convergence of these domains has facilitated the development of innovative business models, such as the AI-enhanced Shikhar platform that connects sustainability objectives with commercial success. By providing small retailers with digital tools and sustainable product options, HUL has created a virtuous cycle where business growth supports environmental and social objectives.

1.1 Competitive Advantages and Market Position

HUL's integrated approach to AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance has created significant competitive advantages. The company's digital capabilities enable rapid response to market changes and consumer preferences, while its sustainability credentials attract environmentally conscious consumers and investors. The recognition of HUL's AI initiatives, including the NASSCOM AI Gamechangers Award 2024, demonstrates the company's technological leadership in the FMCG sector. This recognition, combined with strong ESG performance ratings, positions HUL as a preferred partner for stakeholders seeking both commercial returns and positive impact.

2. Findings

2.1 Strategic Integration Success

The research findings reveal that HUL has successfully integrated AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance into a cohesive strategic framework. The company's systematic approach to digital transformation, beginning with the Shikhar app launch in 2017 and culminating in comprehensive AI implementation by 2025, demonstrates how gradual integration can achieve transformative results.

Key evidence of successful integration includes:

- *Financial Performance:* Turnover growth from ₹45,311 crores to ₹59,579 crores (2020-2024) with maintained profitability margins.
- *Digital Transformation:* Digital channel demand growth from 15% to 30% with 40% annual e-commerce growth rates.
- *Sustainability Outcomes:* 98% CO2 emissions reduction and 47% water usage reduction compared to 2008 baseline.
- *Stakeholder Impact:* 1.4 million digital retailers connected and 160,000 rural women entrepreneurs empowered.

2.2 AI as a Catalyst for Sustainable Finance

The findings demonstrate that AI technologies serve as powerful catalysts for sustainable finance initiatives. HUL's AI implementation has enabled more accurate ESG data collection, enhanced sustainability reporting, and improved stakeholder engagement. The company's AI-powered systems have contributed directly to environmental improvements through optimized resource utilization and waste reduction.

Specific AI contributions to sustainable finance include:

- *Environmental Monitoring*: Real-time tracking of emissions, water usage, and waste generation.
- *Supply Chain Optimization*: AI-driven logistics and inventory management reducing environmental impact.
- *Stakeholder Engagement*: Enhanced communication and transparency through digital platforms.
- *Impact Measurement*: Improved accuracy and efficiency in ESG reporting and verification.

5.2 E-commerce Platform Innovation

The research reveals that HUL's e-commerce platforms have evolved beyond traditional transaction processing to become comprehensive ecosystems supporting multiple stakeholder groups. The Shikhar platform's transformation from a simple B2B ordering system to an AI-enhanced business enablement tool demonstrates how digital platforms can create shared value.

E-commerce innovation outcomes include:

- *Retailer Empowerment*: 1.4 million Kirana stores connected with AI-powered business tools.
- *Consumer Engagement*: 5 million+ consumer trials through Beauty Tech AI integration.
- *Operational Efficiency*: 85% faster changeover times in manufacturing through AI optimization.
- *Market Expansion*: Quick commerce representing one-sixth of e-commerce sales.

5.3 Sustainability Performance Acceleration

The findings indicate that AI-enabled operations have accelerated HUL's sustainability performance improvements. The company's environmental metrics show consistent improvement, with some indicators achieving near-complete transformation compared to baseline levels. The integration of AI with sustainability initiatives has enabled more precise monitoring and optimization of environmental impact. Sustainability acceleration evidence includes:

- *Carbon Footprint*: 98% reduction in CO2 emissions (vs. 2008 baseline).
- *Resource Efficiency*: 47% reduction in water usage and 58% reduction in waste generation.
- *Circular Economy*: Plastic neutrality achieved and maintained since 2021.
- *Social Impact*: 3.2 trillion litres of water potential created through HUF initiatives.

5.4 Synergistic Value Creation Model

The research identifies a distinctive value creation model where AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance reinforce each other to generate superior outcomes. This model demonstrates how digital transformation can simultaneously drive business growth, operational efficiency, and sustainability improvements.

The synergistic value creation model includes:

- *Technology Integration*: AI systems supporting both commercial and sustainability objectives.
- *Platform Leverage*: E-commerce platforms enabling stakeholder engagement and impact measurement.
- *Stakeholder Alignment*: Sustainable finance principles integrated into business operations.
- *Innovation Acceleration*: Digital capabilities enhancing innovation speed and effectiveness.

5.5 Competitive Differentiation

The findings reveal that HUL's integrated approach has created significant competitive differentiation in the FMCG sector. The company's recognition through industry awards and its strong ESG ratings demonstrate how the integration of AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance can enhance market position. Competitive differentiation manifests through:

- *Industry Recognition*: NASSCOM AI Gamechangers Award 2024 and World Economic Forum Lighthouse factory status.
- *Market Leadership*: 19 brands crossing ₹1,000 crore revenue mark with strong digital presence.
- *ESG Excellence*: Industry-leading ESG ratings and sustainability credentials.
- *Innovation Capability*: Rapid product development and market response through AI-enabled insights.

6. Implications

- *Theoretical*: Contributes to digital transformation theory in FMCG by showcasing how AI and sustainability can work together to create value. Highlights ESG as a strategic driver, not just compliance.
- *Practical*: Offers guidance for businesses on using AI to optimize both profits and ESG metrics. Also helps sustainability managers enhance reporting accuracy and stakeholder trust.
- *Policy*: Encourages regulators to design policies that simultaneously promote AI adoption and

sustainability. Emphasizes the dual value of digital and green policies.

- *Industry:* Shows how FMCG firms can meet evolving consumer and regulatory expectations by investing in AI and sustainability. HUL's Shikhar platform is a prime example of digital ecosystem development.

7. Future Scope

- *Longitudinal Studies:* Track long-term business and ESG outcomes from integration efforts.
- *Comparative Analysis:* Compare strategies across FMCG and other sectors to find best practices.
- *Quantitative Modelling:* Create predictive models to estimate ROI and synergy effects.
- *Stakeholder Impact:* Study how different groups (e.g., employees, retailers) are affected by integration.
- *Technology Evolution:* Explore how emerging tech like generative AI further enhances synergy.
- *Regulatory Impact:* Assess how AI, ESG, and data privacy regulations shape integration success.

8. Conclusion

This study shows that integrating *AI, e-commerce, and sustainable finance* creates synergistic value for FMCG firms. HUL's 2020–2024 case demonstrates how this integration can enhance business growth, reduce environmental impact (e.g., 98% CO₂ reduction), and empower digital retail networks (1.4 million retailers). AI acts as a backbone, improving efficiency in operations, marketing, and ESG reporting. The strategic rather than tactical adoption of these tools has helped HUL achieve both commercial success and sustainability leadership. The findings underscore that such integration is a pathway to *long-term competitive advantage* and ESG excellence.

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The Global rise of Incredible India with reference to Manipuri Sportswomen

Tenzing Singh Ngasham¹ & Dr L. Muhindro Singh²

Abstract: The term incredible India has close inter-related with games and sports. In this hot topic, the Manipuri sportswomen have taken a significant role to put the name “India” globally again and again in the history of games and sports. The shinning of Mary Kom in London Olympic 2012 and Mirabai Chanu in Tokyo Olympic 2020 is a clear example. Manipur has been producing a remarkable number of world-class sportswomen so far. Besides all these things, women sportspersons have many obstacles to succeed, including the wage gap, recognition, discrimination, television coverage, etc. This paper aims to examine the capabilities, problems, and challenges faced by the sportswomen in order to bring achievement for the nation at the international level. It also analyses the relationship between governmental sports policy and sportswomen.

Keywords: Games, Sports, Manipuri sportswomen, Mirabai Chanu, achievement, problem.

Introduction

Traditionally, sports have played a vital role in Manipuri society. As early as 33 AD, during the reign of King Pakhangba, people actively participated in indigenous games such as Sagolkangjei, Khongkangjei, Mukna, Yubi-Lakpi, Hiyang-Tanaba, and Kang-sanaba. Later, with the British occupation in 1891, modern sports began to emerge in the region. Influential figures like Sir James and Sir Churachand Maharaj, K.C.S.I., C.B.E., played a major role in blending traditional passion with contemporary sports (Singh, 1990).

Despite its small size, Manipur has made an extraordinary impact on both the national and international sports arenas. MC Mary Kom made history as the first Indian woman boxer to win an Olympic medal in 2012, while Mirabai Chanu won a silver at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, becoming the first Indian athlete to secure a medal on the opening day of the Games (Kshetri, 2021). Because of such achievements, Manipur has earned the title “The Powerhouse of Sports in India.” The journey began in 1984 when Pangambam Nilkamal became the first Manipuri Olympian. Since then, the number has steadily grown, with 19

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Olympians to date (Manipur MyGov, 2021). Many of them women who continue to elevate India's presence on the global stage.

Objective of the study:

1. To analyse the contributions of Manipuri sportswomen to promote India globally.
2. To examine the problem and challenges faced by Olympian Mirabai Chanu.
3. To analyse the effectiveness of government policies, schemes, programme, etc.

Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected through interviews and testimonials from Manipuri athletes, coaches, and officials to capture their personal experiences. Secondary data will include government policies, sports archives, media reports, and academic works on figures like Mary Kom and Mirabai Chanu. Content analysis will be used to identify key themes such as achievements, challenges, and the impact of sports policies.

Contribution of Manipuri sportswomen:

Manipuri sportswomen have significantly shaped Indian sports by breaking barriers, setting records, and inspiring future generations. Over time, their dedication especially in the Olympics has elevated both Manipur's and India's global reputation. Moreover, Manipur's deep-rooted passion for sports, reflected in its athletes' achievements, makes the remarkable contributions of its sportswomen particularly inspiring and impactful in modern sporting history. As highlighted by Sengar (2021), here are some key examples of their remarkable contributions:

To begin with, in boxing, Mary Kom stands as a legendary figure. At the 2012 London Olympics, she made history by becoming the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal in boxing—securing a bronze in the 51 kg category. A six-time world champion (2002, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2018), Mary Kom's legacy remains unmatched in Indian sports. Moving on to weightlifting, Manipuri women have made tremendous strides. Thingbaijam Sanamacha and Nameirakpam Kunjarani represented India in the 2004 Olympics, followed by Ngangbam Sonia in 2012. Most notably, Mirabai Chanu etched her name in history by winning a silver medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in the 49 kg category. Furthermore, she broke the world record in Clean and Jerk by lifting 119 kg at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent on April 17, 2021. In the discipline of judo, Lourembam Brojeshori became India's first judoka to compete in the



Olympics, participating in the 2000 Games. She was later followed by Khumujam Tombi in 2008 and Sushila Likmabam in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics each carrying forward the legacy with strength and determination. When it comes to archery, Laishram Bombayla has been a consistent name. She is the only archer from Manipur to participate in the Olympics and proudly represented India in 2008, 2012, and 2016. Her back-to-back appearances make her the only Manipuri athlete to compete in three consecutive Olympic Games. In hockey, Pukhrambam Sushila Chanu has shown exceptional leadership. She captained the Indian women's hockey team at the 2016 Rio Olympics and again led the squad in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, proving her mettle on the international stage.

Lastly, in football, Ngangom Bala Devi achieved a historic milestone in 2020 by becoming the first Indian woman to sign a professional contract with an overseas football club Rangers FC in Scotland. Her achievement marked a turning point for Indian women's football and opened doors for many aspiring players.

Challenges faced by sportswomen

Understanding the challenges that girls face in sports starts with listening to those closest to the especially parents and community leaders. Their opinions often reflect deep-rooted cultural beliefs and can reveal the most significant barriers girls encounter in participating in sports within a particular area. One of the most glaring inequalities in the world of sports is the gender pay gap. Regardless of talent or dedication, female athletes consistently earn less than their male counterparts. For instance, in 2015, the United States won the Women's World Cup in football and received just \$2 million in prize money. In contrast, France took home a staggering \$38 million after winning the Men's World Cup in 2018 (Portsche, 2019). This kind of disparity exists across almost every sport where men and women compete.

Besides financial barriers, female athletes often face gender discrimination, limited resources, poor media visibility, and lack of community support. Additionally, many battle low confidence and emotional stress. Therefore, building a strong women's sports program requires more than infrastructure—it begins with acknowledging these challenges. Only then can lasting solutions emerge to support and empower future generations of sportswomen.

Case study on Mirabai Chanu:

Mirabai Chanu's silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics is more than just a sporting achievement it's a powerful reflection of her years of perseverance, disciplined training, and unshakable determination. Her

road to success, however, was anything but easy. Back in 2016, Chanu experienced a major setback when she failed to register a successful lift at the Rio Olympics. Later, an injury forced her to miss the Asian Games, adding to her professional and emotional challenges. Yet, she didn't give up. Instead, these moments became turning points in her journey.

Leading up to Tokyo, Chanu made a bold and strategic decision: to train in the United States. This move proved to be crucial. She later said, *"The decision to go to the US played a big role in me winning a medal."* Even though international flights were being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chanu was able to travel and train abroad thanks to the timely intervention and support from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Moreover, she credited the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) for being instrumental in her preparation. With access to world-class training facilities and resources, she was able to focus on refining her technique and building strength. *"TOPS helped me train to the best of my ability, and I had access to all the best resources,"* she told ANI after returning home (Business Standard, 2021).

At the Tokyo Olympics, all her efforts paid off. Chanu lifted a combined total of 202 kg 87 kg in the snatch and 115 kg in the clean and jerk earning India a historic silver medal in weightlifting. In addition to the physical demands, Chanu also faced emotional stress right before her event. Opening up about her experience, she shared, *"Of course, you feel tense. There are always doubts. But I tried to ignore them."* She explained that she was dealing with the discomfort of her menstrual cycle on competition day but chose to focus on her goal. *"I reminded myself that the menstrual cycle is something natural it can happen to anyone and I looked past it,"* she said with admirable calm and strength (Business Standard, 2021). Mirabai Chanu openly acknowledged that her journey to the Tokyo Olympics was anything but easy. Looking back, she described the experience as deeply challenging. *"It was quite challenging. Winning an Olympic medal was our dream,"* she said. After the heartbreak of missing out in Rio 2016, Chanu knew things had to change. *"I changed my training pattern,"* she explained. From that point on, she and her coach, Vijay Sharma, dedicated themselves completely to preparing for Tokyo. *"We made countless sacrifices, worked extremely hard, and this medal is the result of that commitment."* As the Games approached, Chanu also had to cope with the weight of national expectations. *"I was nervous the day before the event because every Indian hoped I would win a medal,"* she recalled. Despite the pressure, she remained optimistic. *"I was tense but also confident that I would perform well. I had faith in myself, although there was some anxiety."* Another key focus in her preparation was improving her snatch technique a category where China typically

dominates. *"We focused a lot on improving the snatch. China is very strong in that area, but I was able to challenge my opponents,"* she said with pride (Business Standard, 2021).

In the end, all the hard work, discipline, and belief paid off. *"The experience was truly fulfilling this dream I had for the past five years has finally come true, and all the hard work has paid off,"* she reflected (Business Standard, 2021). Mirabai Chanu becomes the second Indian weightlifter to earn an Olympic medal after Karnam Malleswari.

Mirabai Chanu under Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOP):

In May 2015, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports launched the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) under the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF). The initiative aimed to support athletes with strong medal potential for the 2016 and 2020 Olympic Games, focusing primarily on sports like athletics, badminton, boxing, archery, wrestling, and shooting.

One of the most inspiring success stories to come out of this scheme is that of Mirabai Chanu. As a TOPS premium athlete, she truly embodies how targeted support can transform an athlete's journey. Before receiving formal support, Mirabai faced several hardships. Coming from a remote village with no bus service, she had to depend on the kindness of truck drivers to reach her training center. These drivers, often transporting sand and stone, would give her a lift free of charge. *"They used to honk from a distance to let me know they were nearby. That's when I'd rush out, ready to leave,"* she shared, reports The Hindu (Laithangbam, 2021). Thanks to their generosity, Mirabai could also eat before training, as she didn't need to spend money on transport. Their support, though informal, played a vital role in her early development.

Later on, the backing from TOPS changed her life entirely. Over five years, the Indian government invested nearly ₹2.5 crore in her training and development. This included access to top coaches, advanced facilities, and international exposure everything she needed to compete at the highest level. Today, Mirabai Chanu stands as an Olympic medalist and a role model for aspiring athletes across India. Her journey from relying on truck drivers to climbing the Olympic podium demonstrates how community support, when combined with structured government aid, can lead to extraordinary achievements (Laithangbam, 2021).

Effectiveness of government policies and programs:

The year 1982 marked a turning point in Indian sports history. For the first time, the country proudly hosted the Asian Games, drawing national attention to the importance of sports. Until then, government policies

had given relatively little importance to this sector. However, since the Sixth Five-Year Plan, there has been a gradual yet steady increase in funding allocated for sports development.

Over time, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has emerged as a key player in promoting sports across India. In recent years, the government has introduced several innovative schemes and initiatives to encourage participation, develop talent, and create a more inclusive sporting environment. According to Pruthi (2019), the following are some of the most impactful programs:

(a) *Khelo India Scheme*: Launched in 2016, the Khelo India Scheme brought together three existing programs: the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA), the Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme (USIS), and the National Sports Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS). The goal of this merged initiative is to boost youth participation in sports through annual events and competitions.

In 2017, the scheme was further revised to serve broader national goals. It now promotes both “Sports for All” encouraging public involvement—and “Sports for Excellence”, nurturing high-performance athletes. The initiative also emphasizes how sports can drive community well-being, personal development, economic progress, and national pride.

(b) *Sports Talent Search Portal*: To tap into hidden potential, the government launched the Sports Talent Search Portal in August 2017, inaugurated by then Vice President Venkaiah Naidu. This digital platform allows young people across the country to upload their sports achievements. Once shortlisted, candidates are invited for trials, and those who succeed are given opportunities under the Sports Authority of India (SAI) programs. In this way, the portal bridges the gap between raw talent and professional guidance.

(c) *High-Level Committee for Women Athletes’ Grievances*: On International Women’s Day, March 8, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports set up a high-level committee dedicated to addressing the concerns and grievances of female athletes. Headed by the Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor (AS & FA), the committee is composed entirely of women including sportspersons, legal experts, senior ministry officials, and sports journalists. This initiative not only gives women athletes a safe space to voice their concerns but also ensures that these issues are handled by those who understand their challenges firsthand.

In summary, the Indian government’s commitment to sports has grown substantially since 1982. Through inclusive programs like Khelo India, talent-identifying tools like the Sports Talent Search Portal, and support systems like the women's grievance committee, India is building a stronger and more equitable sports culture for all.

Findings

1. Manipuri women have played a vital role in promoting India's image globally through games and sports.
2. Sports serve as powerful agents of globalization, fostering unity, integrity, equality, harmony, and peace.
3. Male athletes make a lot more money than female athletes.
4. Public recognition for athletes is limited; for example, Mirabai Chanu gained national fame only after winning an Olympic medal.
5. Greater recognition and rewards are typically given after athletes achieve success.
6. There is a need for world-class training facilities; Mirabai Chanu trained in the USA before the Tokyo Olympics, highlighting this gap.
7. The government actively supports athletes through initiatives like the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, which provided Mirabai Chanu with approximately 2.5 crore rupees for her Tokyo Olympics training.

Suggestions:

1. Providing a job security and health benefit scheme for women.
2. To provide world-class training facilities, kits, food supplements, and hygienic diet, etc.
3. To organize games and sports tournaments regularly, and to conduct sports exchanges with top-level countries such as the USA, China, etc.
4. To establish a national-level committee to evaluate whether the sportswomen policies and programs implemented by the government are effective or not.
5. To compare, analyse, and update the existing sports policy with the policies and programmes of top-level countries in sport, such as the United States, China, etc.
6. Women should be protected from bullying and encouraged to participate in sports.
7. Increase financial assistance during a sports career and pension benefits after retiring.
8. Give awareness, trial, and motivation to girls from the grassroots level to pursue sports careers like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme.
9. Academicians and scholars may identify the gaps in my paper and, in turn, build upon them to advance future academic research.

Conclusions:

Manipur has played a remarkable role in shaping India's sports legacy, producing 19 Olympians, 18 Arjuna Awardees, four Padma Shri recipients, and one Padma Bhushan awardee. From the beginning, Manipuris have shown a deep passion for sports. Yet, many sportswomen still face gender discrimination, financial hardship, and psychological challenges. Fortunately, initiatives like the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) which supported Mirabai Chanu with ₹2.5 crores and the founding of the National Sports University in 2017 have provided vital support. With continued government backing and inclusive policies, India can further strengthen its global sporting presence, as exemplified by champions like Mary Kom and Chanu.

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The Problem of Migration in Uttarakhand with Special Reference to District Bageshwar

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Abstract: In the State of Uttarakhand, migration has become a major socio-economic problem, especially in the state's steep and rural areas. The migration issue in the primarily rural and hilly Bageshwar district is the main subject of this study. A number of concerns, such as a lack of job prospects, poor healthcare and education systems, insufficient connectivity, and environmental issues, are contributing to the out-migration trend in Bageshwar. Village population declines, the loss of traditional means of subsistence, and sociocultural disintegration are the results of these problems. The study looks at the trends, causes, and effects of migration in the area using both primary and secondary data collecting. Additionally, it shows government programs designed to reverse the trend and encourage sustainable development in rural regions. The findings reveal that unless comprehensive policy interventions are implemented focusing on local employment generation, tourism development, improved public services, and infrastructural support the migration trend is likely to continue, further exacerbating regional imbalance and underdevelopment. This research underscores the urgent need for strategic planning and grassroots development to address the root causes of migration and ensure socio-economic stability in Bageshwar and similar districts of Uttarakhand.

Keywords: Migration, Connectivity, Underdevelopment, Socio-Economic, Public Services, Environmental issues, Healthcare, Education systems

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has been explained through various theoretical lenses. Ravenstein's Laws of Migration (1885) are among the earliest attempts to explain migration patterns, emphasizing economic factors as the primary motivators. (R.E 1885) More recent frameworks such as Harris-Todaro's Model of Rural-Urban Migration (1970) argue that migration occurs when there is a perceived gap in expected income between rural and urban areas. Todaro. H (1970). This theory has been applied to explain migration from rural regions of India, including Uttarakhand, where poor agricultural productivity and a lack of rural jobs prompt individuals to seek better economic prospects in urban areas. This theory is particularly relevant in explaining migration from Bageshwar, where push factors such as environmental degradation and limited infrastructure are prevalent. This study will explore the problem of migration in the state of Uttarakhand,

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specifically focusing on the Bageshwar district. Uttarakhand's challenging mountain environment and dispersed population remain the main obstacles to development and eradicating poverty, with over 66% of the population living in rural areas and over 80% in hill districts. Locals in places like Tehri, Bageshwar, Chamoli, and the Garhwal region face significant challenges, according to a report by the Uttarakhand Migration Commission. Majority of the rural population in the hills either survives on subsistence agriculture or migrates for better livelihood opportunities. In terms of infrastructure development, such as roads, irrigation, and electricity, the hill districts are still lacking. The hills and the plains have a growing income and livelihood gap as a result of the inter-district inequalities in infrastructure. The region's reliance on non-farm sources of income has also increased significantly. Out-migration from rural regions of the state's hill districts has become a significant issue, leading to a sharp fall in the population of numerous hamlets and villages. Significance of this Research - Migration in Uttarakhand has been a historical process. The demography and ethnography of Hill Regions in Uttarakhand has been influenced by a large in-migration from other parts of the mainland during 11th and 12th century and later years (Atkinson, 1822-88; Walton, 1910). Natives as well as migrants cleared jungles and developed farm land for cultivation through their hard labour over centuries. Atkinson, H. (1882). With the creation of Garhwal and Kumaon army Regiments during the British rule, local youth got regular employment on a large number for the first time in the region. This necessitated outmigration of local youth for few years who generally returned to their villages after the end of their service tenure. This initial exposure to outside world had a major influence on building acceptance of livelihood based on migration. The situation has changed substantially in recent decades with a large number of population out-migrating permanently along with families from the Hill Region of the State mainly to eke out their livelihoods and better future of their children. This has become a widespread phenomenon in hill districts, resulting in absolute decrease in population in few districts such as Almora and Pauri Garhwal and very slow growth in other hilly districts during recent decade. Stagnant socio-economic conditions of the hill villages is a major challenge for tackling the problem of out migration. Strengthening rural development and rural livelihoods has been considered as one of the key drivers for change in the rural areas of Uttarakhand, particularly in the hill districts.

Migration in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand, a state with difficult terrain and a predominantly rural population, has been the focus of several migration studies. According to Mehta and Sati (2014), migration in the state is driven by a combination of environmental, economic, and social factors. The mountainous regions, where agricultural productivity is low, have particularly high rates of out-migration. Sati (2016) highlights that out-migration in Uttarakhand is exacerbated by a lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, healthcare, and schools, which

hinders local development. With a population of 10.09 million in 2011, Uttarakhand is at 20th position among Indian states. According to 2011 Population Census, nearly 70 per cent of Uttarakhand population lives in its rural areas. The ten hill districts (generally referred as Hill Region) of the State account for 48.1 per cent of its population. Population in urban areas of hill districts substantially increased during the period. Thus, much of this growth in population in plain districts of Uttarakhand is contributed by migration from hill districts. In fact, there has been an absolute decline in population in two districts of Almora and Pauri Garhwal during the period 2001-2011 (registering a negative compound annual growth of -0.13 and -0.14 respectively). Other hill districts with very low growth in their population are Tehri Garhwal, Bageshwar, Chamoli, and Pithoragarh. Overall, the share of Hill Region in the population of Uttarakhand has declined substantially by about five percentage points from nearly 53 per cent in 2001 to about 48 per cent in 2011. Mamgain and Reddy conducted a detailed study on the socio-economic impact of migration in Uttarakhand. They found that the phenomenon of ghost villages is particularly prominent in the state, where large-scale migration has led to the depopulation of rural areas. Their research indicates that while remittances from migrants provide some financial relief to rural households, they are not enough to stimulate long-term local development or offset the socio-economic and demographic impacts of migration.

Impact of Migration

How have source areas been affected by out-migration? Neo-classical economics contend that migration raises the income and quality of life in the areas of origin in a number of ways. Employment and income prospects are further enhanced in the source locations by the demand for goods and services created by the remittances received there. Additionally, migrants bring new technology and information that they employ back home (Lewis, 1954; Fei and Ranis, 1964; Stark, 1991). But there are differing accounts of such favourable effects that surface from our field observations. The consumption pattern in the villages in Uttarakhand's hill region, which is primarily sourced from outside the area, has drastically changed as a result of migration. Like other parts of India, this region has switched from consuming coarse baranaja (twelve grains) to wheat and rice. Ragi and finger millet are grown by people, but their primary purpose is animal feed. Male juvenile alcoholism is pervasive and has grown to be a significant social issue. The socio-economic impacts of migration are profound and multifaceted. Studies such as Rao (2013) and Kumar et al. (2011) emphasize that the out-migration of working-age males has led to increased feminization of agriculture in rural India. In Uttarakhand, women are often left to manage both household and agricultural responsibilities, resulting in an increased workload and stress on women. Singh and Das (2017) highlight the generational gap created by migration, where younger people migrate to cities, leaving behind elderly parents who often lack the physical and financial means to maintain farms or households. This creates social



isolation for the elderly and weakens the traditional family support structures that were once integral to rural life. Migration also has a significant impact on the local economy. Pandey and Tripathi (2018) argue that remittances, while providing financial support to households, are insufficient for long-term economic development. In many cases, the money sent by migrants is spent on daily consumption rather than on productive investments such as agricultural improvements or local businesses. Negi and Joshi (2004) argue that environmental challenges such as soil erosion, deforestation, and water scarcity, combined with the fragile ecosystem of the region, have made traditional agricultural practices unsustainable. This has led to increased migration, as young people find it difficult to earn a livelihood from farming. The vulnerability of Uttarakhand's rural areas to climate change, which has led to unpredictable rainfall patterns, droughts, and landslides. These environmental risks are further compounded by the lack of adaptive agricultural practices, pushing people to seek livelihoods elsewhere. The deteriorating environmental conditions in districts like Bageshwar have led to the abandonment of farms, further diminishing local agricultural productivity and reinforcing the migration trend. This contributes to the economic stagnation of rural areas like Bageshwar. Several studies point to the role of environmental degradation in exacerbating migration from mountainous districts like Bageshwar. Almost all remittance receiving households (more than 91 per cent) spend remittance amount to meet their daily consumption requirements. More than 60 per cent of such households use remittance money for meeting education and health related expenses. Only over one-tenth of households use the remittances for paying the labour charges in their agriculture. There are about 5 per cent households who mainly use remittances for the education of their children. None of households use remittances in activities such as non-farm business development. Thus, remittances are hardly able to generate any multiplier effect at the village economy level except opening up of few grocery shops to serve the consumer demand. Moreover, the consumer items sold in grocery shops are mostly procured from outside the Hill Region.

Literature Gap

Although there is a wealth of literature on migration from rural areas in Uttarakhand and India, there is still little research specifically on District Bageshwar. Previous research has mostly concentrated on migration trends, leaving gaps in our knowledge of how migration interacts with local governance, gender dynamics, and environmental sustainability. The effectiveness of policy initiatives intended to decrease migration in the particular context of hilly regions like Bageshwar has also not been thoroughly assessed in many research.

Objective

The main objectives of the present study are-

- To educate the populace on the state's migration issue
- To educate people about the detrimental effects of migration on the preservation of their home cultures and cuisines.
- To educate the public about the government's development and employment plans through seminars and workshops.
- To disseminate knowledge at the grassroots level to encourage additional research on this issue

Hypothesis

The information this study provides about the multi-sectoral and developmental initiative started by the Uttarakhand government would help the people in the Bageshwar district with the migration issue. It will give potential answers to this issue.

Population Table: 1.2

Tehsil	Area(km2)	Population	Pop. Density	Sex-Ratio
Bageshwar	493.69	100103	203	1039
Kanda	293.56	26272	89	1127
Garud	373.75	68629	184	1157
Kapkot	1080	64894	60	1089

Sources: (According to 2011 Census)

Chief Minister Migration Prevention Scheme

The Govt. aided farmers with establishing polyhouses of 50 square metre and distributed hybrid seeds of capsicum to increase their income and prevent problem of migration in the district.

(Table of Various Govt. schemes under the year 2021-22)

No.	District Name	Tree Plantation for 50% Fruit assistance	80% Government aid for Poly house construction	60% Plant Protection Work aid
1.	Bageshwar	3917	37	605.50 (area in Hector)

Sources: Bageshwar Economic Report Data (2021-2022)

Research Methodology: The study is going to use surveying method and previous studies done in the area to explore the problem of migration. It will be based on primary and secondary source data. The primary data will be collected primarily on the population sample and secondly thorough the help of questionnaire.

Questionnaire: -

- What is the reason to migrate from the district?
- Would you prefer to stay in Bageshwar if you are being provided employment opportunities?
- Would you like to move permanently out of the village?

Relevance of the present study:

The present study will have a positive impact on the society and policy making in the govt. initiatives. It will aware the people about the issue of migration which have a negative impact on the growth of their regional identity, unique culture and cuisine. The study on migration in Uttarakhand, with a special focus on District Bageshwar, holds significant relevance to both society and policymakers due to the following reasons:

- **The effect on rural communities:** Migration has a significant effect on rural communities, especially in hilly areas like Bageshwar. Village depopulation, human capital loss, and the disruption of traditional farming practices are all clarified by this study. Social structures in rural areas are deteriorating as a result of these changes, and community cohesion is being weakened. This study helps local communities understand the long-term effects of out-migration on family life, agricultural practices, and social interactions by gaining an understanding of these processes.
- **Preservation of Cultural and Environmental Heritage:** This paper discusses how migration has led to the loss of traditional knowledge and methods for environmentally friendly farming and conservation. This is essential for maintaining the distinctive natural and cultural legacy of areas such as Bageshwar. This study highlights the importance of reviving historic knowledge systems

and incorporating them into contemporary sustainable development models for the benefit of society as a whole.

- **Informed Policy Formulation:** This study offers insightful information and analysis on the main drivers of migration, including environmental issues, inadequate infrastructure, and economic stagnation. Policymakers can create focused policies that address the structural problems of migration by using this evidence-based approach as a guide. Developing policies that seek to increase local employment possibilities, boost agricultural output, and fund rural infrastructure requires an understanding of these issues.
- **Rural Development Strategies:** State and federal policymakers can utilize the study's results to create all-encompassing plans for rural development. In order to create sustainable rural livelihoods, the study focuses on economic diversification, which includes encouraging high-value agricultural, processing, tourism, and small-scale industries.
- **Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Management:** The study's emphasis on environmental factors that influence migration is particularly pertinent to policymakers who are responsible for managing environmental deterioration and climate change. The suggestions for encouraging reforestation, soil and water conservation, and climate-resilient agriculture can be incorporated into government initiatives for sustainable rural development.
- **Reform of Social Protection Programs:** The study's analysis of current social protection initiatives, such as MGNREGA, sheds light on how well they work to combat migration. These findings can be used by policymakers to enhance or modify social security programs so that they better meet the particular requirements of mountainous areas. These initiatives could more effectively deter migration by generating more stable and fruitful job opportunities in the community.

Conclusion

The economic condition of the migrant's families is by & large better than those families in the village where from no migration has taken place. Economic, infrastructure, and environmental reasons all play a significant role in driving migration from District Bageshwar, which has significant socioeconomic and environmental effects on the area. Although remittances offer temporary financial assistance, depopulation,

agricultural degradation, and social unrest have serious long-term effects. Resolving the migration issue calls for an all-encompassing strategy that emphasizes fostering sustainable farming methods, enhancing infrastructure, and generating local job possibilities. Environmentally sustainable, inclusive, and socio-culturally appropriate rural development must be given top priority in policymaking. By tackling the root causes of migration and fostering economic diversification, Bageshwar can develop into a more resilient and self-sufficient district. A coordinated effort from the government, private sector, and local communities is essential to implement the necessary reforms and create a brighter future for the rural population of Bageshwar.

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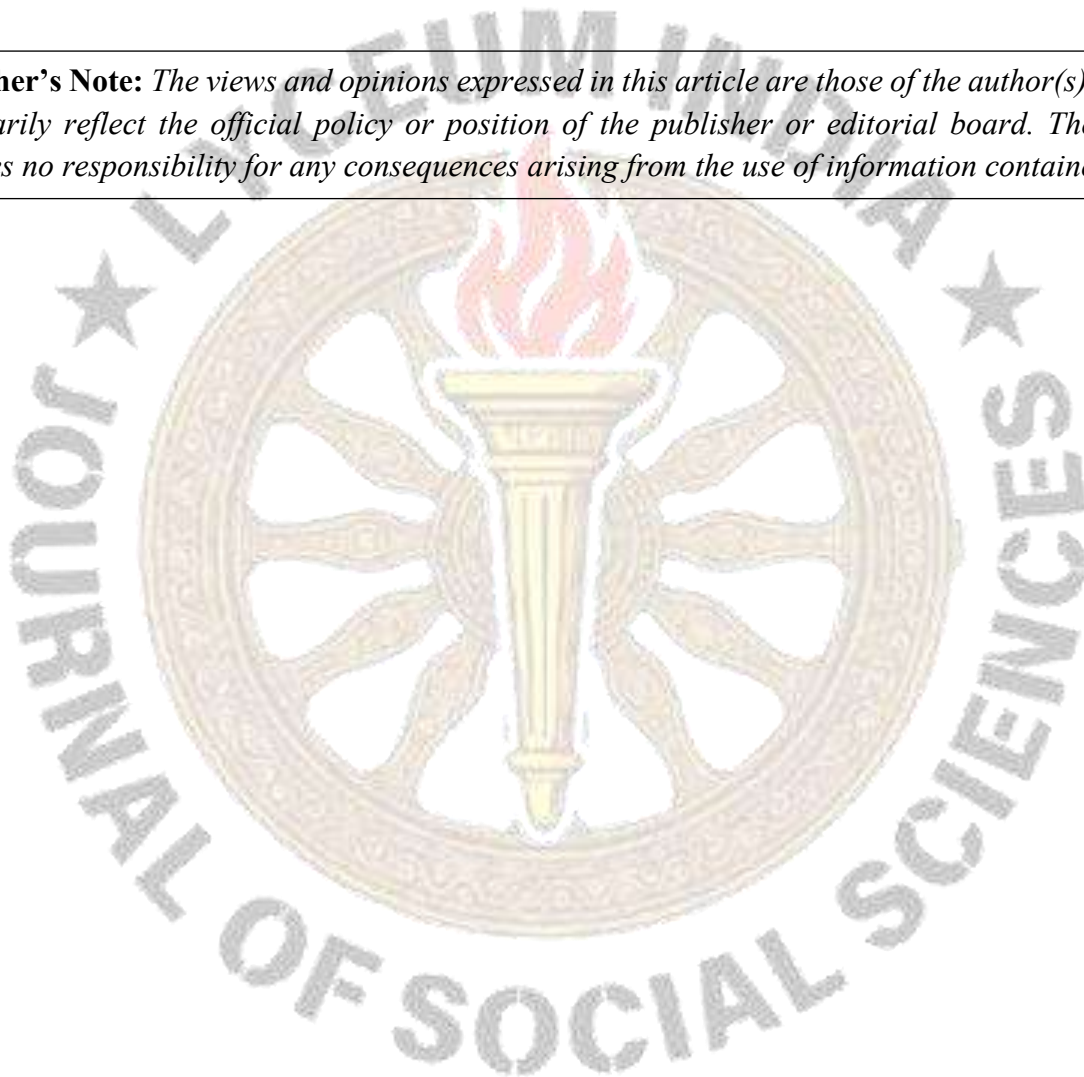
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Unveiling the Inequality: The Intersectional Analysis of Climate Change and Women in Manipur

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Abstract: Climate change is one of the most critical challenges of the twenty-first century. It impacts unevenly across social categories, including gender, class, caste, ethnicity, and geography. In the Northeastern Indian state of Manipur, these disparities are further intensified by ecological fragility, socio-political conflict, and entrenched patriarchal structures. This paper examines the gendered impacts of climate change in Manipur through an intersectional, ecofeminist and political ecology lens. It argues that women, particularly those from rural, tribal, and economically marginalized backgrounds, face disproportionate burdens in coping with climate-induced disruptions. Through an analysis of qualitative and quantitative secondary data, the study reveals how structural barriers such as landlessness, exclusion from decision-making processes and gendered socio-economic roles compound women's vulnerabilities to climate impacts. However, the analysis moves beyond narratives that portray women solely as passive victims. It concludes with policy recommendations that advocate gender-responsive climate governance and building resilience strategies to suit the changing socio-ecological realities of Manipur.

Keywords: Climate Change, Gender Inequality, Ecofeminism, Intersectionality and Patriarchy.

Introduction

Statistical indicators of climate change, such as the increase in global average temperatures, sea level rise, and the growing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, provide compelling evidence of its far-reaching impacts. However, these impacts are not distributed evenly across populations. Though often approached as a technical and environmental problem, its roots and ramifications are deeply political, reinforcing and exacerbating pre-existing systems of power and inequality. Manipur, a small state in the Northeastern part of India, situated in the Eastern Himalayas' foothills, is at the forefront of these cascading climate impacts. The state's socio-political landscape, marked by entrenched structural inequalities, militarization, and intra-community conflict over land and natural resources, further compounds its climate vulnerability. The region is characterised as a biodiversity hotspot with a fragile mountain ecosystem and an agrarian economy.

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Within this precarious context, it is the marginalised, particularly women from the tribal, rural and economically disadvantaged communities, who shoulder the disproportionate burden of climate disruptions. In Manipur, the tradition of women's political engagement and their acts of resistance against socio-political injustice is noteworthy. Historical movements such as Nupi Lan (Women's War) and the activism of women's groups like Meira Paibi have demonstrated women's critical roles in resisting colonialism, militarisation, and state repression. Yet, despite their activism, contemporary climate governance often overlooks the voices and experiences of women. Women continue to be excluded from the decision-making process and denied access to crucial adaptive resources. These exclusions are rooted in longstanding structural inequalities that mediate both vulnerability and resilience in climate-affected communities.

Understanding climate change through a gendered and intersectional lens is critical for formulating just and effective responses. Intersectionality, as theorised by Crenshaw (1989), underscores the importance of analysing overlapping systems of disadvantage, such as gender, class, caste, ethnicity, and geography. In the context of climate change, intersectionality helps us move beyond generalisations, allowing us to examine how differential exposure, access to resources, and adaptation capacities are mediated by power hierarchies. Complementing this, Shiva (1988) and Mies and Shiva (1993) draw attention to the parallel forms of domination that oppress both women and nature. It highlights women's traditional ecological knowledge and resource stewardship practices, positioning them simultaneously as victims of environmental degradation and as agents of ecological sustainability.

Political Ecology provides an analytical framework to understand how environmental degradation is not merely a biophysical phenomenon but one deeply entwined with power and politics. It elucidates how gendered institutions perpetuate access and control over natural resources, often reinforcing existing social hierarchies and marginalisation. As Robbins (2012) notes, state-driven development, militarisation, and market-led conservation efforts disproportionately displace and disempower indigenous and rural women. Finally, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach, as articulated by Rathgeber (1990) and Pearson (2000), offers a critical departure from earlier Women in Development (WID) paradigms for treating women as a homogenous group. Instead, it focuses on the structural roots of gender inequality, advocating for the transformation of institutional and cultural norms that marginalise women and recognition of women's agency in shaping adaptive and equitable solutions.

This study contends that gender-neutral or technocratic climate policies fail to address the fundamental causes of vulnerability, as they tend to overlook the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and other marginalised groups. Instead, a feminist political ecology approach, grounded in principles of justice,

participation, and local knowledge, is essential to ensure climate resilience efforts which do not reinforce existing exclusion.

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the gender aspects of climate change in Manipur. Grounded in feminist methodological principles, the research prioritises intersectionality, attentiveness to local context, and the amplification of women's voices often marginalised in mainstream climate discourse. The qualitative component is based on thematic content analysis of secondary materials, such as reports from NGOs and UN reports, which reveal recurring narratives in women's lived experiences, adaptive strategies, and climate vulnerabilities. The quantitative data, primarily from the Government of India Census 2011, National Sample Surveys, and regional climate vulnerability assessments, provide contextual information on socio-economic indicators such as land ownership, forest access, livelihood patterns, and exposure to environmental risks. Specific focus is given to how structural factors such as patriarchal norms, exclusion from land rights, traditional gender roles, and conflict-related insecurities shape women's exposure to and ability to respond to environmental stressors across hill, rural and urban settings. To interpret these patterns, the study draws on three key theoretical frameworks: Intersectionality and Feminist Political Ecology to interpret how overlapping structures of power shape women's experiences of climate change.

Climate change and women

A substantial and expanding body of literature affirms that the impacts of climate change are profoundly gendered and deeply stratified across lines of class, caste, ethnicity, and geography. Women, particularly those from rural, indigenous, and economically marginalised communities, experience disproportionate vulnerability owing to their social roles, limited access to resources, and systematic exclusion from formal decision-making processes as highlighted by Alston (2013), Dankelman (2010), and Nellemann et al. (2011). Despite their indispensable roles in agriculture, water management, and community resilience, women remain underrepresented in climate governance both globally and within the Indian context. This persistent underrepresentation reflects a broader oversight in mainstream environmental policy and research. MacGregor (2009) critiques mainstream environmental social science for its historical neglect of gender analysis, arguing that this oversight has led to the proliferation of climate policies that fail to recognise women's distinct needs, responsibilities, and adaptive capacities. It calls for a feminist

environmentalism that advocates for a transformative approach that challenges technocratic and male-dominated paradigms.

Empirical studies from diverse contexts illustrate the relevance of these frameworks. For instance, Omollo's (2010) study in Turkana, Kenya, demonstrates how climate stress intensifies food insecurity and displacement among poor pastoralist women. In rural Australia and across the Global South, Alston (2013) emphasises that many adaptation strategies fail because they ignore women's structural disadvantages, such as landlessness and exclusion from formal agriculture. Whyte (2014) demonstrates how indigenous women in North America are leading grassroots environmental justice movements grounded in cultural values of ecological stewardship. In Bangladesh, Tanjeela and Rutherford (2018) argue that women are frequently treated as passive recipients rather than active agents in climate adaptation efforts. Other scholars highlight women's roles as agents of resistance and transformation. In Nigeria, Onwutuebe (2019) links heightened female vulnerability to patriarchal land tenure and institutional exclusion. Similarly, Balehegn and Kelemework (2013) show that customary governance structures in Ethiopia reinforce male dominance, further marginalising women during climate crises.

Mellor (1992) and Shiva (1988) argue that environmental degradation and gender subordination share a common root in patriarchal systems that devalue both care and nature. Mellor articulates how patriarchy feminises the private sphere associated with nurturing, subsistence, and unpaid labour while masculinising the public sphere of policy and science. This division places disproportionate burdens of adaptation on women while excluding them from shaping institutional responses. Shiva's work, especially in India, critiques market-driven, technocratic solutions that erase indigenous knowledge systems and overlook the environmental roles of local women. Bina Agarwal (1992, 2010) made foundational contributions to the discourse on gender and environmental justice, critiquing the systemic neglect of women's land rights and emphasising the role of rural women's collective action in fostering more sustainable and equitable resource governance. Complementing this, Rao et al. (2021) argue that caste, class, and gender hierarchies co-construct climate vulnerability, and therefore, adaptation strategies must be intersectional and locally grounded.

Despite a growing body of international and national literature on gender and climate change, region-specific studies focusing on Northeast India and, in particular, Manipur, remain relatively scarce.

Impacts of Climate Change on Women in Manipur

Empirical studies and field-based narratives underscore how women, particularly those from tribal and economically disadvantaged communities, bear a disproportionate burden of ecological degradation. The



Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment (2010) projected significant climate vulnerabilities in Manipur across four critical sectors: water resources, forests, health, agriculture, and its allied sectors. These sectors not only constitute the ecological backbone of the state but also represent domains in which women play vital socio- economic and cultural roles. Consequently, climate impacts in these sectors directly affect women's livelihoods, health, food security, and daily survival. Das (2022) highlights that tribal women engaged in jhum (shifting) cultivation in the hill districts of Manipur are acutely affected by erratic rainfall, landslides, and forest fires. Chitnis (2017) recounts the experience of Lalzamien, a woman farmer from Churachandpur, who describes how shifts in precipitation patterns, such as the disappearance of the ai-ruo rains (November rains; in Hmar dialect, "ai" means crab and "ruo" means rain), once a key ecological signal for planting, underscoring the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems due to climate instability. The drying up of perennial springs in hill areas is a critical ecological concern. Historically used for domestic and agricultural irrigation purposes, these water sources have been severely depleted due to deforestation and changes in land use. The depletion of these sources has dire consequences for women, who are culturally and practically responsible for water collection. UN Women (2018), alongside Mary Beth Sanate of the Rural Women's Upliftment Society (RWUS), emphasises that women are now forced to walk greater distances, often through militarised and conflict-prone areas, to access water and fuelwood. In Saidan village, Churachandpur, the lack of adequate public water infrastructure has left women relying on unpredictable rainfall and rapidly depleting springs to meet their daily water needs. This situation increases their exposure to the risk of gender-based violence. What may appear as a logistical and infrastructural challenge is, in fact, a deeply gendered issue.

Meanwhile, as forests are increasingly designated as 'reserves', access to forest products is restricted. These conservation policies, although ecologically beneficial, often fail to recognise women's traditional roles in forest management. This institutional marginalisation, particularly in conflict-prone areas, exacerbates daily burdens and exposes women to higher levels of risk.

Most rural farmers in valley areas engage in paddy cultivation, a sector highly sensitive to shifting monsoon patterns and extreme weather. As Rao et al. (2017) observe, climate-induced droughts and flash floods have severely affected agricultural yields. Moreover, the feminisation of the labour force in rural Manipur is not matched by institutional recognition. Devi and Singh (2015) observed that, according to the 2011 Census, 42.59% of the female workforce in Manipur was engaged in sectors such as agriculture, handloom, and small-scale trade. Women constituted 44.46% of cultivators and 6.71% of agricultural labourers. These figures highlight the significant concentration of women in climate-sensitive sectors such as subsistence farming and allied rural occupations. Environmental disruptions including erratic monsoons, prolonged



droughts, and flash floods have severely affected crop yields, deepening food insecurity and income instability, particularly for female-headed households.

One of the most enduring challenges women faces is landlessness, a structural barrier that severely limits their ability to adapt to climate stress. Under both statutory and customary laws, women, especially tribal women in the hill areas, continue to be systematically denied ownership and inheritance of land. As a result, many women farmers are excluded from critical institutional support systems, including access to agricultural credit, crop insurance, subsidies, and state compensation in the aftermath of natural disasters. This exclusion is not incidental it is deeply political, reflecting systemic inequalities embedded in legal and customary frameworks that continue to marginalise women from resource governance and climate resilience efforts. As Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari (1996) argue in their feminist political ecology framework, "access to and control over resources are politically contested and socially mediated by gender, class, and ethnicity". In the context of Manipur, land allocation and forest management are typically controlled by male-dominated village councils and customary governance institutions and in some cases, by insurgent or militarised actors. Women's lack of voice in these governance structures reproduces their marginalisation, even as they bear the brunt of climate disruptions.

Urban centres such as Imphal and others illustrate how climate change intersects with informal economies and gendered precarity. Many women are engaged in informal and unpaid labour, which often goes unrecognised in official data and remains invisible in policy planning. As agriculture becomes increasingly unsustainable, a growing number of women are pushed into the informal economy, taking up small-scale vending, handicrafts, and domestic work. Yet these sectors offer little in terms of job security or social protection, leaving women highly vulnerable to economic shocks and with limited institutional support. The rising temperatures threaten the livelihoods of women working as street vendors, domestic workers, and market traders. For example, women in Ima Keithel (Mother's Market), one of Asia's largest women-run markets, face declining sales and harsh working conditions due to extreme heat and flooding. These women, many of whom are primary breadwinners, lack access to basic infrastructure such as cooling shelters, potable water, or any form of disaster relief. During climate-induced events, they are among the most at-risk groups to suffer financial and health setbacks without compensation or institutional support.

The climate crisis in Manipur is further complicated by internal displacement, driven by both ecological stress and ethno-political conflict. Recent ecological collapses in Manipur reveal how environmental degradation acts not only as a catalyst for internal displacement but also as an intensifier of gendered vulnerability. As Down To Earth (2025) reports, the torrential rains and flooding of May–June 2025 triggered devastating landslides in Ukhrul, Pherzawl, Noney, and Churachandpur districts, and inundated

parts of the Imphal Valley, displacing over 1,600 individuals and damaging more than 3,300 homes, many of them women and children. These events, magnified by deforestation, quarrying, encroachment of wetlands like Lamphelpat and militarised land use, transformed climate shocks into cascading crises.

Such disasters intersect with spatial and social inequalities. Moreover, when militarised zones and ethnic boundaries already restrict women's mobility, climate-induced destruction of infrastructure such as roads and bridges further severs access to essential services and increases isolation. Many displaced persons, particularly women and children, were forced into overcrowded and under-resourced relief camps, where poor sanitation, inadequate shelter, and limited healthcare services heighten the risks of disease and gender-based violence. Displacement is also closely linked to resource dispossession. As forested areas such as the Churachandpur–Khoupum and Nongmaiching hills are converted into reserves or militarised zones, women lose access to customary resources and are forced into high-risk foraging and labour. These areas, marked by insurgent activity and military presence, are dangerous spaces for women who must traverse them to gather basic necessities. According to Binalakshmi Nepram, founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network, over 20,000 widows in the state have lost their spouses to conflict. These women, already bearing emotional and social burdens, are now facing intensifying climate stress, which further destabilises their livelihoods and access to resources. The resulting exposure adds another layer of insecurity and trauma. In such contexts, displaced women experience what feminist scholars Crenshaw (1989), Shiva (1988), and Rocheleau et al. (1996) describe as “compounded precarity”, wherein both ecological and political structures jointly intensify marginalisation.

Across rural, urban and hill regions of Manipur, women are disproportionately affected by climate-induced precarity. These women face not only growing environmental uncertainty but also a persistent dual burden of productive and reproductive labour. Although the feminisation of agriculture and its economic contribution have intensified, it has not translated into greater institutional recognition or support. These gendered disparities are rooted in Patriarchal social structures that systematically restrict women's access to resources, mobility, education, and participation in governance.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that climate change in Manipur is not solely an environmental phenomenon, but a crisis deeply embedded in structures of gendered power. Structural inequalities entrenched in patriarchal norms, socio-economic marginalisation and customary practices render women particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. One of the paradoxical situations emerges in this context; while women are highly visible in economic activities and have historically led grassroots

political movements, they remain largely absent from formal decision-making processes and are systematically excluded from institutional frameworks.

The invisibility of women's contributions, despite their central role in sustaining households, local economies, and ecological practices, reveals a critical gap between practice and policy. This exclusion aligns with what Cornwall and Goetz (2005) term the distinction between "participation by presence" and "participation by influence", where women may be visible and vocal in public life, yet lack meaningful participation and power in shaping policy and governance.

This gap is especially noticeable in the ability to address the differentiated needs and capabilities of women. Climate policy in Manipur, as elsewhere in India, remains largely technocratic and gender-neutral, lacking mechanisms to incorporate women's knowledge, leadership, or lived experiences. The exclusion of women from planning and decision-making processes has led to what Alston (2013) terms "gendered silence" in climate policy.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this study affirms that the impacts of climate change in Manipur are profoundly gendered. Women, particularly those from rural, tribal, and economically disadvantaged communities, experience overlapping and intersecting vulnerabilities shaped by structural inequalities in land ownership, access to resources, and underrepresentation in institutional decision-making. It originates from entrenched patriarchal structures ingrained in cultural, social, legal and political institutions.

To build just, inclusive, and resilient climate responses, climate governance in Manipur must adopt a feminist political ecology approach that integrates intersectionality, recognises women's ecological knowledge, and actively dismantles patriarchal barriers to participation. Climate justice cannot be achieved through rhetorical gender mainstreaming alone; it requires institutional reforms that centre women's agency, leadership, and lived experiences. The recommendations of the study include:

- Institutionalising gender-responsive climate planning at state and local levels
- Securing land rights and equitable access to natural resources for women
- Integrating indigenous and rural women's ecological knowledge into adaptation strategies
- Increasing women's participation in environmental governance and the policy-making process
- Adopting intersectional, ecofeminist frameworks that address both material and symbolic exclusions

Ultimately, women must be recognised as frontline victims and central architects of sustainable futures. Manipur thus stands at a crucial crossroads. It must reconcile its rich traditions of women's collective resistance and entrepreneurship with the need to dismantle patriarchal barriers in climate governance. Only through intersectional, ecofeminist, and decolonial frameworks can climate resilience in Manipur be just and effective. The gendered nature of climate vulnerability in Manipur demands more than adaptation; it necessitates a transformative reimagining of environmental governance.

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Urban farmers in the Yamuna floodplains of Delhi: Villains or Victims in the discourse on environmental sustainability

Soma Patnaik & Alankar¹

Abstract: Urban farmers in Delhi are often portrayed as ‘villains’ by central and state pollution control boards, the National Green Tribunal (NGT), land control agencies like the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), as well as to some extent by the scientific community. They are criticised for encroaching on floodplains, disrupting the natural ecosystem—local biodiversity, even the natural course of the river. Targeted for alleged contamination of the river through ecological malpractice and the release of pollutants, their contributions to the local food chain are frequently overlooked. There is a glaring need to understand that these communities are ‘victims’. Trapped between tradition and modernity, they find it tough to adapt to sustainable agricultural practices, nor are they skilled enough to move on to other occupations. They are ill-equipped to handle the environmental pressures of climate change induced erratic rain, high temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns which affect crop production. There is little to no consideration to their plight as they suffer from displacement due to urbanisation projects in an ever expanding metropolitan Delhi—a factor which directly affects their livelihood. The central theme of this paper is to analyse the parallel discourses of victimisation and vilification of the community and to gauge a possible sustainable policy solution—incorporating the idea of ‘sponge city’ in Delhi, thereby aiding both the farming community as well as the environment.

Keywords: Urban farmers, sustainability, Yamuna, floodplains, political ecology, river pollution, climate change, Delhi, anthropogenic, urban agroecosystem, sponge city, carbon footprint.

1. INTRODUCTION

Delhi, the capital city of India, is today one of the fastest growing metropolises—spatially as well as demographically, and reputedly one of the most populated cities in the world. Historically, the city’s two most significant geographical features; *one*, Aravali hills and forests and, *two* alluvial deposits of river Yamuna, have shaped the ever-growing human settlements in this sub-region. In recent decades, growing urbanisation of Delhi is part of a particular political economy wherein the urban sprawl is also due to the decline in the quality of economy in the rural parts of India that propels the magnetic pull of urban informal

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economy consistently attracting countryside migrants to the city fold. Among many others one such group of rural Indians migrating to Delhi are those who keep settling, unsettling and resettling on the floodplains of river Yamuna in Delhi. These floodplains have always been dynamic ecological spaces (Baviskar 2011). Their transient nature makes them appear, disappear and reappear consistently in tandem with the seasonal ebbs and flows of the river. Such characteristic of this ecosystem has also built a fledgling relationship between floodplains and people who reside near the banks, notably cultivators, pastoralists, fisherfolks etc. It is notable that burgeoning urban population and expansion of Delhi has also simultaneously accelerated demand for food here which in turn has shaped urban agroecosystem, especially on these floodplains, in the last few decades (Das 2024).

River Yamuna's stretch through Delhi which is merely 1% of the river's total journey is very important for the city's various ecological requirements, including as a crucial source of drinking water supplies to the city dwellers. With the rapid pace of urbanization and growing population, there are grim speculations about the overall city becoming environmentally unsustainable. Just to take river Yamuna's criticality within the Delhi stretch, it has been declared polluted beyond redemption in most of the serious and notable observations especially from the scientific community (National Green Tribunal 2020).

Yet, river Yamuna's floodplains in Delhi have various other unique offerings, including fertile deposits which cater to excellent cultivable and farming spaces. As the river meanders through Delhi it leaves behind 97 square kilometers of floodplains which subsequently also serve as "nature's thermostat for the Capital" (P.A.R.I. Report UNDP 2019). Fact also remains, that over the last two decades, the agricultural cover in Delhi is rapidly falling, primarily due to urbanization, resulting in the fall of agricultural income viz-a-viz the overall GDP of Delhi (*Economy Survey of Delhi 2018-2019*). Given such a situation, the dynamic socio-ecological relationship between urban farmers and the Yamuna floodplains within the 21st century urban riverscape of Delhi needs to be contextualized and analyzed from a newer perspective. In this renewed understanding these urban farming and farmers may be reviewed and reimagined in contrasting imageries such as stabilizers of climate change or as supposed Yamuna polluters and encroachers; or may even be seen as collateral victims of modernity, climatic changes and environmental pollution. It is pertinent because this riverscape is shaped by both the natural course of the river and anthropogenic forces.

While a very small percentage of land in the National Capital Territory of Delhi is currently being used for agriculture, one should not discount the complexities of food security, ecological & environmental challenges and contestations within the discursive domains of modernity and globalization. Urban development plans in postcolonial Delhi have historically marginalized Yamuna farmers and their

agricultural practices, yet there is a strong argument for their integration into the city's future (Follmann 2016, Bhatia & Kumar 2024). On one hand, urban projects are incrementally taking away land available for agriculture; on the other hand, globalizing forces have pushed influx of distressed farmers from rural regions to cultivate these diminishing fields (Kumar 2023). Such a paradox may, perhaps, be justified by availability of better markets (Diehl et al 2015). Access to markets, however, might not be the only cause for such migration. The allure of other facilities like easy availability of inputs, quick transportation facilities, basic amenities and educational opportunities for their children may be other causes (ibid.)

Structured in three parts, this paper deliberates on the tensions surrounding Yamuna floodplain farmers. Section one critiques their portrayal as anti-modern "polluters" in populist state and media discourse. Section two evaluates their systemic marginalization by urbanization, climate change risks, and water pollution. Section three proposes policy interventions for an inclusive, sustainable Delhi that safeguards agrarian communities.

2. AS VILLAINS

It has been appropriately argued and well documented that one of the major rivers of north India, the Yamuna has tragically transformed into one of the world's most polluted rivers in the 21st century. There are also irrefutable scientific evidences which clearly inform that the particular stretch flowing through India's capital city Delhi is the most polluted; a merely 1% of the river's total journey of 1200 kms across northern India (Sharma, M. et. al 2024). Yet, there are ambiguities when sources of this pollution are taken up in popular discourse and accordingly tried to be plugged. The media and judicial pronouncements are, quite often, projecting farmers in the Yamuna floodplains as primary collaborators in environmental degradation. Since 2015 National Green Tribunal (hereafter NGT) has been giving judgments, prohibiting agriculture in the floodplains despite pleas from farmers that they are merely using borewell water for irrigation, and that, farming is their sole means of livelihood. The tribunal contends that Yamuna water is highly polluted with heavy metals and other toxic pollutants and that vegetables produced in such floodplains are highly detrimental to human health. The production and consumption of such produce should be restricted till Yamuna is restored to its former health. This conclusion may be just one of the supposed allegations on the urban farming community. One may examine the allegations on the farming community in two aspects—one, farming practices as consciously or unconsciously detrimental to environmental sustainability, and second, farmers being opposed to modernity and sustainable agricultural practices.

2.1.As Villains to Environmental Sustainability

Urban farmers along the Yamuna floodplains are frequently portrayed as antagonists to environmental sustainability, accused of exacerbating monsoonal flooding, depleting wetlands, and polluting both; the air as well as the river.

Urban farmers have supposedly contributed to the loss of wetlands in Delhi. These wetlands help in maintaining the natural ecosystems and biodiversity in the area. Reports by several state agencies and scientific research suggest that agricultural activities reduce the soil's water absorption capacity, increasing flood risks. Also, cropland expansion—from 164 acres in 1989 to 303 acres in 2019—has been linked to wetland loss (Venktesh R. Subiksha 2020).

It should be noted that though this is merely one of the causes of reduction in wetlands along with concretization, release of waste and other encroachments, yet it cannot be denied that it contributes to environmental degradation. One must also look at competing research which demonstrates that industrial discharge and untreated sewage remain the Yamuna's primary pollutants; a fact underscored when COVID-19 lockdowns briefly restored water quality (Sharma, M. et. al 2024).

Stubble burning by farmers in Delhi, Punjab, and Haryana draws annual judicial reprimand (e.g., M.C. Mehta PIL 1985), though systemic solutions remain elusive as well as other major and significant polluters like motorized transportation, dust and debris from construction activities remain obfuscated (Goyal et al. 2025; Kaur, S. 2024). Pesticides from floodplain farms are blamed for heavy metals like lead in soil and crops as per a NEERI study conducted in 2019 yet industrial sewage remains the primary pollutant as per various other research (Economic Times 2019).

Farmers contest these narratives, arguing that industrial discharge and urban waste dominate Yamuna's toxicity (Kumar 2023). Even among agrarian communities, proximity to the river stratifies blame—distanced farmers accuse riverside cultivators of pesticide runoff. This blame game approach reflects broader tensions between agrarian livelihoods and elite environmentalism. The extent to which urban farmers should be held responsible for the pollution and contamination of Yamuna river water is still up for debate. The difficulty behind measuring the actual source of Yamuna's pollution often leads to a politics of shifting the burden of responsibility.

The Yamuna's pollution should be primarily ascribed to reduced freshwater flow in the river (thus limiting dilution of pollutants), untreated sewage, and industrial waste—not agriculture. During COVID-19

lockdowns, decreased industrial activity and riverside use temporarily improved water quality, underscoring that farming contributes minimally compared to urban and industrial sources. Floodplain crops suffer most from this contamination, rendering the water unfit for irrigation or consumption.

This paradox mirrors Delhi's broader ecological crisis: the disproportionate blaming of marginalized agrarian communities for damage done by unchecked urbanization and industrialization. A sustainable way forward must reconcile these dualities, addressing all pollution sources while redeeming farmers' historical ties to the floodplains.

2.2.As Villains to Urbanisation and Modern Organic Farming

The framing of Yamuna farmers as opponents of urban development and organic farming requires a relook. On one hand they are regularly portrayed as obstacles to urbanization and modern agricultural practices, and yet this narrative oversimplifies their constraints.

Mediatized and bureaucratic framework depicts farmers as resistant to organic farming. Field evidence suggests their reliance on pesticides stems from economic pragmatism, not as normative or ideological opposition. Organic farming techniques and methods, often cost-prohibitive, clash with consumer demands for year-round vegetable variety—a byproduct of urban demands from markets (Kumar, 2023). Aligned to this should be seen sowing of winter crops in monsoon-season which further incentivizes chemical use to meet productivity targets.

Similarly, farmers are vilified as encroachers in legal battles with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), particularly under the Yamuna Riverfront Development Project. Cultivators from generations find their lands denotified from official records, thus turning them "unauthorized" and "illegal" overnight. Worse happens to tenant farmers, operating under informal tenures. They face abrupt evictions and crop destruction (Singhal 2023, Srivastava, 2024). These conflicts reveal a modernist bias against agrarian livelihoods in favor of urban biodiversity parks, framed in popular discourse as development and progress despite their displacement costs.

3. AS VICTIMS

Environmentalists, civil society activists and the farmers themselves, often focus on the flip side of the narrative, an alternative narrative where the urban farmers are victims. One may explore victimization in two aspects—one, as sufferers of climate change and water pollution, and second, as victims of the overpowering forces of globalization and modernity.

3.1.As Victims of Environmental uncertainties and Pollution

Another side of this farmers' predicament is that most tillers are not actual owners of these tracts of cultivable land on Delhi's Yamuna floodplains. Annually when monsoonal floods inundate this riverscape then tenant farmers report being excluded from crop failure compensation, if any, provided by the government. Moreover, the polluted and dilapidated Yamuna, destroys crops from both without (contaminated irrigation) and within (flood-borne pollutants) (Diehl et al., 2015). Where watermelons once were grown in abundance, blight and stunted growth now dominate (Tomar & Upadhyay, 2020). Follmann (2016) traces healthy cropping history on Delhi's Yamuna floodplain. He cites Punjab Gazette of 1912 and writes *'The cultivated crops include, but are not limited to, tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, pumpkins, melons, cucumber, carrots, onions, radish, spinach, coriander and other leafy vegetables. Maize is also common as kharif crop. Additionally, flower cultivation (e.g. roses and marigold) is found in some locations'*. Just about a hundred years later, as of today, the farmers unambiguously claim that the river that once sustained them now poisons their fields. Each year, during monsoonal inundation of floodplains, basic protections like flood evacuation systems and medical aid remain inadequate, reflecting systemic exclusion and institutional neglect of farmers and decline of urban welfare frameworks (Tabrez 2024). Farmers, caught between increasing climatic uncertainties and vagaries and institutional indifference, embody urban agriculture's silent crisis - their resilience weakening each season as megacity Delhi looks the other way.

3.2. As Victims of Urbanization and Modernity

Yamuna floodplain farmers in Delhi, struggle against burgeoning urbanization, biased government policies, judicial indictments and incessantly expanding modernity, often resulting in incremental land dispossession. Kumar (2023) describes this as "de-agrarianization," where over 2,000 hectares of farmland have been lost to urban infrastructure. In the last three decades such massive constructions have taken away floodplains like the Commonwealth Games Village, Akshardham Temple, promenades, parks, Delhi Metro rail tracks, yards and stations, Millennium Bus Depot, Delhi-Dehradun & Merrut Express highways and expanded road networks.

Among farmers too exist further inequalities, wherein small-scale farmers suffer disproportionately while bigger farmers access distant markets via motor vehicles, smaller ones rely on rickshaws, limiting their reach (Tabrez, 2024).

Municipal authorities and DDA have even bulldozed crops under "vegetation removal" drives, replacing them with compensatory afforestation—a wasteful cycle (Kumar, 2023). Farmers also allege corporate-government nexus, citing bans on sugarcane (despite its health benefits) favoring soft drink lobbies (PARI Report 2019).

Media mostly presents lopsided coverage which exacerbates farmers' struggles; sensational reports on "toxic" injected vegetables trigger price crashes, harming entire farming communities (Diehl et al., 2015). Thus, urbanization and modernity marginalize Delhi's farmers through policy, market shifts, and misinformation.

4. Conclusion: Bridging the Gap – Urban Farming as a Futuristic, Just, and Sustainable Vision

The above discussion brings forth that while urban farmers along the Yamuna are partially to be blamed for river pollution, the ethical burden disproportionately falls on them despite systemic neglect and economic uncertainties and precarity. Rather than displacing these farmers and farms, a more sustainable approach would integrate them into urban ecological planning.

Delhi can do much better if we look at recent and successful concepts like 'sponge city' and 'urban agro-parks' which have reimagined and turned around cities in different parts of the world and are proving that agriculture and urbanization can coexist. We must recalibrate our policies to understand and recognize urban farming as an asset, not an obstacle.

The 'sponge city' model—which prioritizes water-absorbing green spaces—complements urban agriculture by enhancing flood resilience and groundwater recharge. This model proves ecology and urbanity can merge. Delhi's Yamuna floodplains, if transformed into agro-parks, could absorb floodwaters better than concrete, can cut carbon emissions by localizing food production and significantly empower farmers instead of pushing them into poverty.

Much better and humane would be that rather than evicting farmers, policies should incentivize organic farming, provide training in sustainable techniques, and integrate agro-parks into urban planning. Examples can be seen in success stories which are fructifying across countries like China, Singapore, South Korea & Germany (Pradhan and Janu 2020).

Urban farming should not be relegated into past as some nostalgia but must be viewed as smart, just, and necessary for Delhi's future. Such an outlook could ensure social justice, food sovereignty, and ecological sustainability, transforming Delhi into a model for humane urban development.

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21. People's Archives of Rural India (P.A.R.I.) Report, United Nations Development Programme. Big city, small farmers, and a dying river. 19 December 2019 at Big city, small farmers, and a dying river (ruralindiaonline.org) iii the following mainstream print media stories provide a glimpse of how farmers are portrayed in populist state and media discourse



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उच्च शिक्षा के विशेष संदर्भ में राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 की एक महत्वपूर्ण अंतर्दृष्टि

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शोध सार: यह शोध पत्र नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 के लिए संबंधित है, जो मुख्यतः शिक्षा नीति 2020 की प्रमुख विशेषताओं का वर्णन करता है। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 में भारत-केंद्रित शिक्षा प्रणाली की परिकल्पना की गई है, जो इसकी परंपरा, संस्कृति, मूल्यों और लोकाचार में परिवर्तन लाने में अपना बहुमूल्य योगदान देने को तत्पर है। नई शिक्षा नीति का उद्देश्य बिना किसी भेद भाव के प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को बढ़ने और विकसित होने के लिए एक समान अवसर प्रदान करना है तथा विद्यार्थियों में ज्ञान, कौशल, बुद्धि और आत्मविश्वास का सर्जन कर उनके दृष्टिकोणों का विकास करना है। इस शोधपत्र में शोधकर्ता द्वितीयक आंकड़ों के माध्यम से जो गुणवत्तात्मक स्त्रोतों पर आधारित है नई शिक्षा नीति की वास्तविक मूल विशेषताओं को दर्शाना चाहता है। उपर्युक्त विश्लेषित तथ्यों के आधार पर शोधकर्ता, इस शोधपत्र के माध्यम से अनेक सुझावों को प्रस्तुत करता है, जो भारतीय शिक्षा प्रणाली के लिए अति आवश्यक है।

मूलशब्द : राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020, डिजिटल युग, शिक्षार्थियाँ, ज्ञान, शिक्षा।

प्रस्तावना :

राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 (एनईपी 2020), जिसे 29 जुलाई 2020 को भारत के केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल द्वारा अनुमोदित किया गया था, भारत की नई शिक्षा प्रणाली के दृष्टिकोण को रेखांकित करती है। नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 ने पिछली राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 1986, की जगह ले ली है। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति प्रारंभिक शिक्षा से उच्च शिक्षा के साथ-साथ ग्रामीण और शहरी भारत दोनों में व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण के लिए एक व्यापक दृष्टिकोण तैयार करती है। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति का उद्देश्य 2021 तक भारत की शिक्षा प्रणाली को बदलना है और यह नीति 2020 भारत को बदलने में सीधे प्रकार से योगदान प्रदान करती है और भारतीय लोकाचार में निहित शिक्षा प्रणाली को देखती है। इसका उद्देश्य धर्म, लिंग, जाति या पंथ के किसी भी भेदभाव के बिना, सभी को बढ़ने और विकसित होने के लिए एक समान मंच प्रदान करना और सभी को उच्च गुणवत्ता वाली शिक्षा प्रदान करके मौजूदा जीवंत ज्ञान समाज को बनाए रखना और उसकी देखभाल करना है। यह भारत को वैश्विक ज्ञान महाशक्ति बनाने की दिशा में भी एक कदम है। इस नीति में यह परिकल्पना की गई है कि हमारे संस्थानों के समान पाठ्यक्रम और शिक्षाशास्त्र को, छात्रों में नैतिक कर्तव्यों के प्रति सम्मान की भावना पैदा करनी चाहिए और संवैधानिक मूल्यों, अपने देश और एक बदलती दुनिया के साथ एक संबंध पैदा करना चाहिए। इस नीति का दृष्टिकोण शिक्षार्थियों के बीच ज्ञान, कौशल, आत्मविश्वास, बुद्धि और कर्म के साथ न केवल विचार बल्कि मूल्यों और दृष्टिकोणों में भी विकास करना है, जो मानव अधिकारों, सतत विकास और जीवन का समर्थन करते हैं और वैश्विक कल्याण के लिए एक जिम्मेदार प्रतिबद्धता, जिससे वास्तव में एक वैश्विक नागरिक प्रतिष्ठित होता है। गुणवत्तापूर्ण उच्च शिक्षा का उद्देश्य, ऐसे व्यक्तियों का विकास करना होना चाहिए जो उत्कृष्ट, विचारशील और अच्छी रचनात्मक प्रवृत्ति के हों। यह एक व्यक्ति को प्रौद्योगिकी के एक या एक से अधिक विशिष्ट जैसे विज्ञान, सामाजिक

¹ असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर, शिक्षा शास्त्र, मेजर एस0 डी0 सिंह पी0 जी0 कालेज, मोहम्मदाबाद, फर्रूखाबाद

विज्ञान, कला, मानविकी, भाषा, व्यक्तिगत, तकनीकी, व्यावसायिक विषयों सहित क्षेत्रों में गहराई से अध्ययन करने और चरित्र, नैतिक और संवैधानिक मूल्यों, बौद्धिक जिज्ञासा, वैज्ञानिक स्वभाव, रचनात्मकता, सेवा भावना और 21वीं सदी के कौशल को आवश्यक सीमा तक विकसित करने में सक्षम बनाती है। नई शिक्षा नीति वर्तमान प्रणाली में कुछ मौलिक परिवर्तन लाती है, और इसमें मुख्य आकर्षण बहु-विषयक विश्वविद्यालयों और कॉलेजों हैं, जिसमें प्रत्येक जिले में या उसके पास कम से कम एक छात्र पाठ्यक्रम, शिक्षाशास्त्र, बेहतर छात्र अनुभव के लिए मूल्यांकन और समर्थन, एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रतिष्ठान शामिल है। नेशनल रिसर्च फाउंडेशन विश्वविद्यालयों और कॉलेजों में उत्कृष्ट सहकर्मी-समीक्षा कार्य और प्रभावी ढंग से बीज अध्ययन का समर्थन करेगी।।

नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 पांच स्तंभों पर केंद्रित है: वहनीयता, अभिगम्यता, गुणवत्ता, न्यायप्रियता और जवाबदेही – निरंतर सीखने की प्रक्रियाओं को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए। इसे समाज और अर्थव्यवस्था में ज्ञान की मांग के रूप में नागरिकों की जरूरतों के अनुरूप तैयार किया गया है, जिससे नियमित आधार पर नए कौशल हासिल करने की आवश्यकता को पूरा किया जा सकता है। इस प्रकार, गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा प्रदान करना और सभी के लिए आजीवन सीखने के अवसर पैदा करना, संयुक्त राष्ट्र सतत विकास लक्ष्य 2030 में सूचीबद्ध पूर्ण और उत्पादक रोजगार और अच्छे काम की ओर अग्रसर होना, नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 का उद्देश्य है। नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 ने पिछली राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 1986 की जगह ले ली है और 2040 तक भारत में प्रारंभिक और उच्च शिक्षा दोनों को बदलने के लिए एक व्यापक ढांचा तैयार किया है। नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 स्कूल और उच्च शिक्षा दोनों में महत्वपूर्ण सुधारों की मांग करती है जो अगली पीढ़ी को आगे बढ़ने के लिए तैयार करती हैं जिससे वे नए डिजिटल युग में प्रतिस्पर्धा कर सकें। इस प्रकार, नई शिक्षा नीति बहु-विषयकता, डिजिटल साक्षरता, लिखित संचार, समस्या-समाधान, तार्किक तर्क और व्यावसायिक प्रदर्शन पर अत्यधिक प्रभाव डालती है।

अध्ययन का उद्देश्य:

इस शोध पत्र का मुख्य उद्देश्य उच्च शिक्षा की मुख्य विशेषताओं पर प्रकाश डालना है तथा नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 से संबंधित प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक डेटा का विश्लेषण करना है। इसके अन्य मुख्य उद्देश्य निम्नलिखित हैं:

- नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 को पेश करना।
- नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 में उच्च शिक्षा की मुख्य विशेषताओं को देखना।
- उच्च शिक्षा में सकल नामांकन अनुपात में वृद्धि को दर्शाने के लिए।
- शिक्षा पर राज्य के खर्च को सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के 4% से बलपूर्वक देने के लिए।

अनुसंधान क्रियाविधि:

यह अध्ययन पाठ्य, आलोचनात्मक, मूल्यांकनात्मक, वर्णनात्मक, विश्लेषणात्मक और व्याख्यात्मक विधियों का उपयोग करते हुए प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक स्रोतों के माध्यम से उच्च शिक्षा के विशेष संदर्भ के साथ एक महत्वपूर्ण दृष्टिकोण के रूप में नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 के संपूर्ण अध्ययन पर भी ध्यान केंद्रित करता है। इसमें एमएलए हैंडबुक ऑफ रिसर्च के 8वें संस्करण का सख्ती से पालन किया गया है।

1. डेटा संग्रह:

शोध अध्ययन के लिए प्राथमिक एवं द्वितीयक स्रोतों से आँकड़ों का संकलन किया गया है जिसके आधार पर सम्पूर्ण प्रयत्न का विश्लेषण किया गया है।

प्राथमिक स्रोत:

प्राथमिक संसाधन नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 के मूल पाठ से एकत्र किए गए हैं जो भारत सरकार द्वारा जारी किया गया है।

माध्यमिक स्रोत:

एक माध्यमिक संसाधन एक स्रोत है जो नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 पर संदर्भ पुस्तकों सहित पुरानी या गैर-मूल जानकारी प्रदान करता है। माध्यमिक स्रोतों में जीवनी, लेखक के कार्यों के महत्वपूर्ण अध्ययन, शोध पत्र और शोध प्रबंध, शोध पुस्तकें, व्यक्तिगत साक्षात्कार, विकिपीडिया, ब्रिटानिका और अन्य वेबसाइटें शामिल हैं।

अध्ययन का महत्व:

1. वास्तविक तथ्यों पर आधारित इस अध्ययन के निष्कर्ष समाज के हित में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएंगे। इस अध्ययन क्षेत्र में पूर्व अनुसंधान की कमी के कारण यह शोध मॉडल इस अध्ययन के लिए प्रस्तुत किया गया है। शोधकर्ता इस वर्तमान अध्ययन के सभी पहलुओं को समझने का प्रयास करेगा। वर्तमान शोध नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 के नियम एवं शर्तों के अनुसार उच्च शिक्षा के सुधारों को समझने में मदद करेगा। यह शोध नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 के बारे में पाठकों के बीच जागरूकता पैदा करने का प्रयास करेगा। यह संदर्भ सामग्री भी तैयार करेगा और आगे के अध्ययन के लिए गुंजाइश प्रदान करेगा।
2. साहित्य की समीक्षा संबंध में, इसमें पिछले अध्ययनों की समीक्षा प्रस्तुत करने का प्रयास किया गया है, जो इस अध्ययन से प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से प्रासंगिक हैं। इसमें नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 और विशेष रूप से उच्च शिक्षा से संबंधित अध्ययनों पर किए गए कार्यों की एक झलक देखने को मिलती है।
3. पीएस एथन और शुभ्रज्योत्सा एथन के अनुसार उनके शोध पत्र "*भारतीय राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 का विश्लेषण: इसके उद्देश्यों को प्राप्त करने की दिशा में*" और "*भारत की राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020: गुणवत्ता, आकर्षण, सामर्थ्य में सुधार के लिए नवीन नीतियाँ बनाकर और निजी क्षेत्र के लिए उच्च शिक्षा को खोलकर आपूर्ति बढ़ाने के लिए और साथ ही बनाए रखने के लिए सख्त नियंत्रण के साथ इस तरह के उद्देश्य को प्राप्त करने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रही है।*"
4. हर उच्च शिक्षा संस्थान में गुणवत्ता फ्री-शिप और स्कॉलरशिप के साथ योग्यता-आधारित प्रवेश को प्रोत्साहित करके, संकाय सदस्य के रूप में योग्यता और अनुसंधान आधारित निरंतर प्रदर्शन, और निकायों को विनियमित करने में योग्यता आधारित सिद्ध नेताओं, और प्रौद्योगिकी-आधारित के माध्यम से प्रगति की।
5. स्व-घोषणा के आधार पर द्विवार्षिक मान्यता के माध्यम से गुणवत्ता की सख्त निगरानी, एनईपी-2020 के 2030 तक अपने उद्देश्यों को पूरा करने की उम्मीद है। संबद्ध कॉलेजों के वर्तमान नामकरण के साथ सभी उच्च शिक्षा संस्थान बहु-अनुशासनात्मक स्वायत्त कॉलेजों के रूप में उनके नाम पर डिग्री देने की शक्ति के साथ विस्तारित करेंगे या उनके संबद्ध विश्वविद्यालयों के घटक कॉलेज बन जाएंगे।
6. एक निष्पक्ष एजेंसी नेशनल रिसर्च फाउंडेशन बुनियादी विज्ञान, अनुप्रयुक्त विज्ञान और सामाजिक विज्ञान और मानविकी के प्राथमिकता वाले अनुसंधान क्षेत्रों में नवीन परियोजनाओं के लिए धन मुहैया कराएगी।

राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020: उच्च शिक्षा में सुधार

1. यह नीति ग्रामीण और शहरी भारत दोनों में प्राथमिक शिक्षा से उच्च शिक्षा के साथ-साथ व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण में परिवर्तनकाल के लिए एक व्यापक ढांचा है। इस नीति का उद्देश्य 2021 तक भारत की शिक्षा प्रणाली को बदलना है।
2. नई शिक्षा नीति को स्कूल स्तर से विश्वविद्यालय स्तर तक प्रणाली में औपचारिक परिवर्तनों को औपचारिक रूप देने के उद्देश्य से पेश किया गया है।
3. बदलते परिदृश्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए, अब से शैक्षणिक सामग्री, प्रमुख अवधारणाओं, विचारों, अनुप्रयोगों और समस्या समाधान के कोणों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेगी।
4. राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति से देश की उच्च शिक्षा प्रणाली पर सकारात्मक और दीर्घकालिक प्रभाव पड़ने की उम्मीद है। यह तथ्य कि विदेशी विश्वविद्यालयों को भारत में परिसर खोलने की अनुमति है, सरकार की एक सराहनीय पहल है। इससे छात्रों को अपने देश में शिक्षा की समग्र गुणवत्ता का अनुभव करने में मदद मिलेगी।
5. बहु-विषयक संस्थान शुरू करने की नीति कला, मानवीय जैसे सभी क्षेत्रों में नए सिरे से ध्यान केंद्रित करेगी और शिक्षा के इस रूप से छात्रों को सीखने और समग्र रूप से विकसित होने में मदद मिलेगी।

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The Sunlit World of Mariposa and Malgudi: A Comparative Study of Stephen Leacock and R.K. Narayan

Dr. Manoj Kumar Chaturvedi¹

Abstract: The Present research paper aims at highlighting the fictional places of both the writers Stephen Leacock and R.K. Narayan's Mariposa and Malgudi. These are the fictional places which depict the novelist's real insight vision what they thought and did to give proper shape and size to the novels of these novelists on one side Stephen Leacock has made famous the fictional place Mariposa in his novels which is situated in Canada, on the other side R.K. Narayan, an Indian chose Malgudi, a fictional place Tamil Nadu in India. Through these fictional places, one is in Canada and the other in India, the various aspects, similarity and dissimilarity will be searched out. It is worth mention here that like Malgudi, the Mariposa is also situated near railway station in Canada. Both the novelists have made wonder by their beautiful description and tried much to highlight these fictional places.

Keywords: Cosmopolitan, hinterland, Transcontinental, Topographic maps, Maritime express.

Introduction

Stephen Leacock's Mariposa and R.K. Narayan's Malgudi are two fictional towns which literary cartographers have anxiously scurried around to locate on two continental landmasses across the world. While many small towns in South India such as Yadavagiri and Nanjangud in historic Mysore, Malgudi on the fringes of the river Kaveri, or even an early Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu lay claim to being the birthplace of Malgudi, Narayan's multi-tempoed town, Leacock's imaginative construct Mariposa, has been absorbed with pinpoint precision into the latitudinal and longitudinal contours of Orillia, Ontario, Canada (50°N & 79°W). Here Leacock built his home "The old Brewery Bay" to which he escaped from his professional duties at McGill University for four months each summer, and to which he finally retired for the last eight years of his life.

Leacock's Affection for "The Old Brewery Bay"

Leacock was inordinately proud of his retreat and of its appellation – (the name he said, "made people thirsty by correspondence as far away as Nevada"). He even judged people by their response to such a

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name. If they liked the name “The Old Brewery Bay” they were alright, (and) could have anything on the place, but many who couldn’t appreciate it were outlawed, such as the “lady” who became “that woman” for presuming to suggest that Leacock change the name.

Geographical and Cultural Parallels between Mariposa and Malgudi

Both Mariposa and Malgudi are small satellite townships within a three-hundred-mile orbit of two larger, real, life metropolises: Montreal on the North American continent and Madras (Chennai) in the South of the Indian continent. Topographically, both little towns are located on hillsides at whose feet lie large expanses of water, in one case the river Sarayu, hoary with the mythic time deposits of India, and on the other lake Wissanotti, letting off Amerindian smoke signals. Strangely, both are creators of writers who themselves straddled two flourishing bi-lingual cultures, French and English in the case of Leacock and Tamil and Kannada in the case of R.K. Narayan. Mariposans and Malgudians both gravitated to these larger cities in search of richer economic and educational pastures, returning now and again to their resting ground for emotional sustenance, in fact or fantasy. In the warm sun of nostalgia both townships exude a colonial and more specifically Victorian atmosphere encrusted on the semi-agricultural base of their native lands. A sun-drenched humor-filled air accosts travellers to both Leacock’s Mariposa and Narayan’s Malgudi, as palpably as its typical small-town appearance.

Universality of Small-Town Experience

“I don’t know whether you know Mariposa” wrote Leacock, “If not, it is of no consequence, for if you know Canada at all you are probably well acquainted with a dozen towns just like it.” Similarly, Narayan’s Malgudi is a small town in south India writes C.D. Narasimhaiah. “But it is every Indian town, and we have known so much about them from his successive novels.” (Naik, 176)

Literary Construction of the Two Towns

While information about Mariposa comes to the reader through a dozen sketches (fifteen to forty pages long), of one book namely *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and a few brief wartime vignettes titled *Mariposa Moves On* appended to his *Happy Stories* as a postscript, Malgudi is discovered through narratives spread over eleven novels and eighty short stories, making it more of a backbone than a backdrop to the writer’s literary oeuvre. It is therefore to Leacock’s greater credit that Mariposa is as credibly and powerfully portrayed as Malgudi whose birthday has been inscribed with equal accuracy by the writer himself.

The Birth of Malgudi

On a certain day in September, selected by my grandmother for its auspiciousness, I bought an exercise book and wrote the first line of a novel as I sat in a room nibbling my pen and wondering what to write. Malgudi with its Railway Station swam into view already made, with a character called Swaminathan running down the platform peering into the faces of passengers, and grimacing at a bearded face – I remember waking up with the name Malgudi. (106)

Symbolism of the Railway: Malgudi

Narayan first pictured Malgudi, he says, not as a town, but just as a Railway Station consisting of a small platform with a banyan tree, a station-master and two trains a day, one coming and one going (ibidem). Out of this grew a complex and busy hinterland that has become one of the great fictional creations of our time. Malgudi's phantasmagoric train took its young hopefuls to Madras and beyond – an escape route to some and a magic carpet to many Whittingtons in search of gilded sidewalks. Malgudi was often a harbor and a "home" to prodigal sons – "home" being as Robert Frost says in "The Death of the Hired Man" – a place where "when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

Symbolism of the Railway: Mariposa

Mariposans too were just as spiritually attached to their Railway connection. They loved to hear the long-muffled road of the whistle of the Transcontinental, "thundering and pounding towards the north, with hemlock sparks pouring out into the darkness from the funnel of it," without stopping mostly at night. They felt that just being on the transcontinental route was as great a triumph as that of the European Maritime Express that travelled six hundred miles from Paris to Marseille -- both trains representative of the historic Empress! They loved the Transcontinental not only because it touched Mariposa – "the little town in the sunshine" but were beholden to it for the "cosmopolitan atmosphere of through traffic and the larger life." Only the Mariposa local actually stopped here but to the community it was the other whizzing past at breakneck speed of twenty-five miles an hour that gave them a standing among neighboring places. Many a Mariposan migrant to the city would wander down on a Friday evening to watch it puff out of the city station. To most such bystanders even the price of a ticket was out of reach, but that could not stop them from wishing they were on it!

The Train as a Symbol of Nostalgia and Return

They could dream of again being amongst the spruce thickets, shooting partridge, or seeing the black ducks in the rice marsh along the lake Ossawippi or fishing for green bass as it lazed in the shadows beside

Indian's island. The train carried homewards both the fashionably dressed golfers who would disembark a few stations away, and the lucky tribe of Mariposans who were actually deposited at home. The stuffed red plush seats and the wooden stove at one end of the box car was indeed a part of the fantasy of the "fastest most reliable, the most comfortable, nay, the most luxurious train that ever turned a wheel" -- offering a magic ride home that smelt of heaven.

From Particular to Universal: Mapping Fictional Towns

Leacock and Narayan are both aware that the route to the universal lay through the particular, and both are careful to give concrete details of street and place names to their respective townships, so that Mariposa and Malgudi are firmly embedded in one's consciousness, and one can walk through them blind fold. In fact, meticulous critics and scholars have added topographic maps to their commentaries. However, Leacock writes that he must "disclaim at once all intention of trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people." On the contrary "Mariposa is about seventy or eighty of them (little habitations) all the way from Lake Superior to the sea with the same square streets and the same maple trees and the same churches and hotels and everywhere the sunshine of the land of hope" (Leacock, xi). The mythical town therefore is as much on the ground as it is in the mind.

Concrete Geography of Mariposa

Leacock is careful to tell us that there are exactly seven summer cottages along the lake, clusters of maple or pine trees, or rushes of golden rod, and such other memorable details of vegetation. Wissanoti Lake with its steamer the 'Mariposa Belle' tethered to a wharf, shines bright and lucid in the morning sunlight. "Don't talk to me of the Italian lakes or the Tyrol or the Swiss Alps", says the narrator, an insider, as he pictures Mariposa's land-locked lake. On the main Street stands the Continental Hotel (Pete Robinson's) and the Pharmaceutical Hall, (Eliot's Drug Store). Two other concrete brick and mortar structures vying with each other for prominence along with other proud establishments are Smith's Hostelry and Mariposa House. The Exchange Bank and the Commercial Bank, as in any small town, are traditional business through the financial jugglery and managerial wizardry of two well-rounded, smooth shaven and stockily built, social pillars named Henry Mullins and George Duff.

Concrete Geography of Malgudi

We are also proudly informed that McCarthy's Block came into being in 1878, and that Netley's Butcher shop has been faithfully serving its customers since 1882. Where a cross street intersects Missinaba (or main) Street, fluttering "Old Glory" on its top most mast, stands the Post Office, the Fire Hall and the



YMCA. Leacock's device of comparing Missinaba Street with Piccadilly or Thread-Needle Street in London or wall Street and Broadway of New York adds a touch of humor and authenticity to such allusions. It also surfaces Leacock's own ambivalence and conflicting loyalty to monarchical England – the land of his birth – and to America, Canada's youthful neighbor whose democratic ways he admired so much. The unavoidable conflicts of a circumscribing Victorian England, and the vastly progressive continental vision of Canada, are apparent as Leacock is tossed between the magnetic charm of saying "We English" or "We Americans," making his humor, distinctly Canadian.

Detailed Cartography of Malgudi

Narayan also provides graphic details of Malgudi. It is "horizontally" divided by the river Sarayu. Many by-lanes branch off the arterial market Road of both sides, while Kabir Street, Vinayak Mudali Street, North Street and the road that stretches into Ellaman's, provide locations for various domestic and societal dramas. There is pre-eminently the twenty-foot statue of Sir Fredrick Lawley, the proper administration of the region" and who on account of the many tanks and dams he constructed, was immortalized by a grateful public in the center of Malgudi. Lawley is however mostly ignored, except by the birds who find him a useful perch, and the cattle lazing on the broad steps, who find him a silent companion. In the meantime, Malgudi has grown beyond this point, into Lawley Extension where over fifty new dwellings have come to stay. Fittingly, old roads such as Adam's Lane still shelter dilapidated septuagenarian men and houses. There is also the formidable presence of the Administration, in the shape of the Taluk Office, the Law Courts and the Municipal Chairman's Office. The Anand Bhavan Hotel adorns the Commercial part of Malgudi, together with an incredible eighteen taverns around the four corners of the city. There is the famed Town Hall Tower, and Peak House on top of the cliff on Mempi Hills. As in any living town here is also an old Slaughter house, a Central Jail as well as a fort area all designed to make Malgudi a living experience. Above all, visitors to both Mariposa and Malgudi on a summer afternoon are unlikely to forget the picture of empty streets asleep in the sunshine of deep and unbroken, peace.

Colonial Shadows and European Influences

Both Leacock and Narayan are conscious of the colonial past, and its Victorian shadow on their respective townships and reference is often made to its former British associations. For instance, apart from Lawley statue, there is the Albert Mission School and college, eminently commemorative of the good Queen's reign, and inextricably woven into the lives and careers of the Malgudians. Repeatedly mentioned is also European bric-a-brac, such as the Heidelberg Press, the Roll top table, and a Queen Anne chair strategically placed in the Truth Printing Press. An empire style seat of higher learning, namely the Presidency College

at Madras is mentioned with a queer admixture of awe and disbelief. While Gaffur the taxi driver stations his 1927 model Chevrolet in the middle of town and shark-like awaits his victims, he has for narrative company the petty sanitary inspectors and other officials strutting around wearing pith helmets to protect them from the sun in the manner of the white man. The inevitable advent of the twentieth century, into the dying nineteenth, is also later announced in the changed names of its streets, in the post-Independence scenario.

Humor Anchored in Tradition and Universality

Not Surprisingly David Cameron (1976) notes that Leacock's "attitude to humor is once again rooted in Victorian England and in fact his choice of material to cite reflects an attitude to humor which has distinct parallels in such writers as Trollope and Meredith." William Walsh (1977) too finds Malgudi a blend of the oriental and the pre- 1914 British era, and calls it an "Edwardian mixture of sweet mangoes and malt vinegar" (CLC, 28) at the same time stressing the universal quality of Malgudi saying "whatever happens in India happens Malgudi, and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere" (CA, 81).

English and French Legacies in Mariposa

Mariposa too looks back to the traditions of both England and France. There are references to the Privy Council, the YMC, the Salvation Army, and comparisons of Missinaba Street with Picadilly and Wall Street -- to the advantage of Mariposa -- baring itself to the Canadian sunlight ten thousand miles away! The French connection too is artistically woven in through the appetizing fragrance of French cuisine at Smith's "Gaff", a North American transposition of the Parisian Cafe. The presence of Alphonse, the French Chef in an ordinary Horsy like Josh Smith's injects rare sophistication. Alphonse's saturnine looks are compared to no less than those of Napoleon III. As the moves about conquering palates with his French sauce's concoctions, rumors fly that Josh's man was actually a French Marquis.

Culinary Satire and Hybrid Institutions

One of the most hilarious passages in Leacock narrates how Smith's Alphonse "queered" the recalcitrant Editor of the Newpacket with an "Omelette a la License," how judge Peperleigh was "put to the bad" with a game pie -- "pate norm and aux fines herbes" -- how the arrogant Secretary of the School Board was "silenced" with a stuffed "duck a la Ossawippi" while Dean Drone was "landed" with a "fried flounder, which even the apostles would have appreciated" (Leacock, 32-33). An organization such as the Knights of Pythias with its charter of temperance and the divided politics of conservative and liberal among the Mariposans was a natural carry over of European politics, emigrating to the new continent's colonial table,

delicately and highly sauteed in the satire and irony of hybridization. Leacock takes a swipe at human pride by slipping in a jack-in-the box outsider, to his list of genuine institutions, the “Oddfellows Association” being one such. Humorists have always maintained that you only pull the leg of something or someone you love. This purely Canadian invention certainly seems intended to upset the staid British applegate!

Leacock’s Imperialism and Artistic Philosophy

As an artist, David Cameron says, Stephen Leacock was an “unabashed imperialist” though he knew imperialism’s weaknesses. However, as Cameron notes “there is an imperialism of greed and conquest, exploiting for the money’s sake the weaker people of the world. Plain sense has long since learnt to hate it -- but there is also the humbler imperialism – the “empire mindedness” of decent people with nothing to gain by it in money -- (this) is an inspiration not a formula.” Leacock’s prose style, his felicity of word and phrase, his unparalleled sense of humor is akin to this Imperialism to which reader and writer become addicted. Leacock once said:

There is no trouble in writing a scientific treatise on the folklore of Central China, but to write something out of one’s mind worth reading for his own sake, is an arduous contrivance. I would sooner have written Alice in Wonderland, than the whole Encyclopedia Britannica. (xi)

I’d like to think that this statement means more than it says, the latter -- the world’s greatest collation of information, and the former a pre-eminent cornucopia of laughing wisdom and Leacock’s choice is revelatory of his value system.

“In art” Leacock once said, “one must judge a man by his best, never by his worst, by his “highest reach, not by his lowest fall.” It is thus obligatory for one to gather-in the widespread laughter and sunshine both of Mariposa and Malgudi, in order to make a barometric comparison of its warm sunlight.

Human Character as the Heart of Malgudi and Mariposa

While Malgudi remains for the reader a living presence, (having been compared to Hardy’s Casterbridge and William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha) R.K. Narayan has more than once stressed his own preoccupation with human character.

My main concern is with human character, a central character from whose point of view the world is seen, and who tries to get over a difficult situation, or who succumbs to it or fights it in his own

setting -- 1 value relationships very much, very intensely -- I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully. (Naik, 2-4)

Conclusion

Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* is also memorable as a portrait gallery of lovable characters," some irritating, some exasperating, some foolhardy, but all endearing. There is no signal plot structure here because it is not a novel at all. Events are subservient to the people he draws, and incidents are useful only in so far as they flesh out his characters, who weave in and out of these sketches in an interlocking fashion. Leacock's is not the plot of a community. Perhaps, as Northrop Frye comments: "General Canadian humor is based on a vision of society."

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Transcending the Quagmire of Patriotism in Cosmopolitanism Discourses

Henry Vumjou¹

Abstract: Cosmopolitanism, an age-old thought, has garnered renewed interests among philosophers in contemporary times. However, these renewed interests landed into the quagmire of the never-ending debates on the kind of obligation owed to other individuals. There are philosophers such as Nussbaum who holds that a special obligation owed to others individuals in the form of patriotism is untenable with the ideal of cosmopolitanism. At the same time, philosophers such as Kant would allow patriotism as a tenet within cosmopolitanism itself. This paper argues that there is a way out to this debate. Following Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism, we can see cosmopolitanism as a practical approach to addressing global issues.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, obligation, patriotism, Appiah, Nussbaum

1. Introduction

Cosmopolitanism, in the minimal sense of the thought, assumes the world to be a single human community. There can be many senses to such an assumption. In the political sense, it is the assumption that the world is one political community (Chappell 2010, 17). In the moral sense, it is the assumption that the world ought to be a moral community. In the cultural sense, it is the assumption that the world is a single cultural community. Corresponding to the different senses of the thought a person can be a political cosmopolitan, a moral cosmopolitan, a cultural cosmopolitan or more (Brown and Held 2010). At the same time, cosmopolitanism can just be a trivial slogan. Anybody can assume that humanity is one single community or that humanity ought to be a single community and keep that ideal to oneself. The earliest known cosmopolitan, Diogenes the Cynic, was said to have developed his cosmopolitan conviction from a refusal towards local obligation, a sceptical response to customs and tradition and contempt for distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks (Nussbaum 2010, 27). Contemporary cosmopolitans emphasise the individual as the ultimate unit of moral concern and is entitled to equal respect and consideration irrespective of the state (citizenship) he/she belongs to (Brock 2015). As cosmopolitans, we owe obligation to all individuals.

The question yet remains, what is the extent and degree of obligation we owe to others? Should local affiliations not be considered even if we avow our responsibility to the world-wide community? This is the

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debate that mired cosmopolitan discourse. Within the cosmopolitans themselves, there are varying takes with regard to the affiliations between the local authorities and the global community. There are discrepancies among cosmopolitans regarding the relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. To some cosmopolitans, patriotism and cosmopolitanism are fairly compatible while to some others it becomes utterly incompatible – accepting one is tantamount to ruling out the other. Cosmopolitanism discourse is drowning in this quagmire. This paper argues that Appiah's proposal of partial cosmopolitanism offers a way out of this quagmire of patriotism debates, and shows the way forward for cosmopolitanism to address the issues of our times like moral relativism, cultural relativism and globalisation using the age-old thought.

2. Patriotism and National Boundaries

In 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', Kant proposes a 'league of nations' quite cosmopolitan in outlook. This league of nations will not be related in such a way as different nations come together within a state as it would imply a relation between a subordinate and a supreme authority. Kant then goes on to propose a 'federation of states' in which individuals will be affiliating to their own states but under the compassing authority of the moral law (Kant 2006, 78). This understanding places Kant among the group of cosmopolitans who view that cosmopolitanism does not mean the actualisation of a single world state. In other words, these cosmopolitans are not against submitting one's allegiances to a local authority such as to the state to which they belong yet at the same time they uphold the idea of being a world citizen.

The cosmopolitan outlook of Kant is fairly compatible with patriotism. For Kant the state is inevitable for a cosmopolitan ideal because the individual's freedom is guaranteed by the state (Kleingeld 2010, 15). So, it is a moral duty of a rational individual to affiliate oneself to a state. Kleingeld goes on to explain that the type of state to which a rational individual should be affiliated to is the state with a republican constitution. It will be the type of republic in which the rational free individuals – compatriots – would make laws for governing themselves. Thus, for Kant an individual must be patriotic because patriotism led to the emergence of the republic. However, the patriotism of the Kantian kind is peculiar. Kantian patriotism most significantly refers to a special obligation that citizens have toward their own republic as a political institution. In this sense, patriotism becomes a duty for a rational individual towards one's own political belonging. As such to affiliate oneself to the world-wide community prior to the local institution that one belongs to would become unacceptable to Kant. Patriotism becoming a duty for Kant is explained by his philosophy of cosmopolitan right (Kleingeld 2010, 15). For Kant, patriotic and cosmopolitan duties are

compatible, as Klingeld puts it “For if the republic is itself required as part of the enterprise of bringing about a ‘cosmopolitan condition’ of right, then doing one’s duty as a citizen of one’s own republic is in line with one’s cosmopolitan duty.” (Klingeld 2000, 313-314)

For Nussbaum, national boundaries are arbitrary. There is nothing absolute about them that warrants necessary obligation. She asked “what is it about the national boundary that magically converts people toward whom we are both incurious and indifferent into people toward whom we have duties of mutual respect?” (Nussbaum 1996, 14). For Nussbaum national or state boundaries are nothing but imaginary lines a cosmopolitan must overcome for the actualisation of the global community. Nussbaum (1996, 5) holds that “nationality is a morally irrelevant characteristic” for a cosmopolitan. For her, “conceding that a morally arbitrary boundary such as the boundary of the nation has a deep and formative role in our deliberations, we seem to deprive ourselves of any principled way of persuading citizens that they should in fact join hands across boundaries of ethnicity and class and gender and race” (Nussbaum 1996, 27). Affiliating oneself to local principalities can hamper one’s duty to transcend the petty biases of the local in order to realise the true obligation one has of the larger humanity. A cosmopolitan commitment is to “give our first allegiance to what is morally good” much more than our belongingness to one particular nation or country (Nussbaum 1996, 5). We can go on giving our allegiance to a local denomination or boundaries and never arrive at the good (the morally good). The reality is that human beings are all the same inside or outside of such imaginary boundaries. Thus, local affiliations can come in the way of one’s moral commitment towards the good of other human beings. As such, we may not be able to convince other people of the cosmopolitan reality; that we are all morally responsible to one another.

According to Nussbaum, one’s foremost allegiance ought to be to the moral good of all human beings. Patriotism is an allegiance to an imagined national boundary first rather than to the good. Therefore, patriotism and cosmopolitanism turn out to be, as we can see, utterly incompatible as far as Nussbaum is concerned.

3. Overcoming the Quagmire of Patriotism

For Appiah, national boundaries, imaginary as they may be, are germane to the formation of a state, a region, a demarcation etc. and without such boundaries there can be no such thing as patriotic feelings, no such thing as affiliation to a local authority. He went as far as saying that only because we can owe such an allegiance to the local authority in the name of patriotism, it becomes possible to have an allegiance to the worldwide community at large (Appiah 2002, 26).



The idea that patriotism and cosmopolitanism are held incompatible by Nussbaum is because of the failure to understand the modern nation and state as distinct entities. To understand this, Appiah holds, one has to distinguish the notion between nation and state. Yet by upholding this distinction does not mean subscribing to the Herderian notion that nations never pre-exist states. If states pre-exist nations this means that a state is arbitrary and not the nation. Appiah distinguishes the notion of the nation and the state to show that the nation is morally arbitrary, not the state (Appiah 2002, 27). He goes with Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as imagined communities sharing the same ancestry and culture. As such, the membership of the nation is different from the membership of the state. Appiah says that human beings exist under definite political orders called state smaller than what is called humanity. And within this political order the questions of public right and wrong gets largely argued out and decided. This cannot be done within a nation. Membership of a state is coerced or can be coerced but membership of a nation cannot be, it can only be imagined. Due to this Appiah says membership of the state then, is not morally as arbitrary as membership of the nation. Thus, he says that the cosmopolitan critique of liberalism's focus on the state is overstated: because the cultural variability that cosmopolitanism celebrates has come to depend on the existence of the plurality of states, we need to take states seriously (Appiah 2006, 28). Appiah is of the view that membership to the state can come close to membership of a cosmopolis – literal membership and not figurative one. He argues that membership to the worldwide community should be like membership to the nation in which the responsibility one owes becomes not coerced but out of free decision. This is because nations and states matter differently for Appiah. Nations matter because they matter to the people. In the moral sense, nations matter in the same sense as football or opera matter – as desirable things. They are desires of autonomous agents which cannot be undermined even if the desire cannot always come into fruition. On the other hand, states matter morally intrinsically (Appiah 2006, 28). States matter because they are necessary whether people have a concern for them or not. They regulate our lives through forms of coercion that will always require moral justification (Appiah 2006, 28). The state can coerce one to oblige because it is an instrument of coercion. The cosmopolitan obligation must be as strong as the obligation to the state but in such a manner that it comes out freely from an individual. Appiah went on to say that what can be hateful if coerced can be celebrated when it flows from the free decisions of the individuals or groups (Appiah 2006, 22).

Human beings thrive best in smaller circles. So, the partial cosmopolitan should champion not just the state but also the county, the town, the business, the craft, the profession, and the family – all of these are community among communities, circles within circles of human existence under the same moral concern (Appiah 2006, 29). Appiah reduces the cosmopolitan ethos into 'live and let live'. An individual can be a



patriot and a cosmopolitan compatibly as long as one values one's life equally as one value the life of others, or strangers regardless of one's attachment to any state or local authority. Cosmopolitanism is one form of owing responsibility to others just as patriotism is a form of owing responsibility to others and they can overlap. They can overlap in such a manner that one can say I am an Indian and a citizen of the world.

4. As Patriotic as a Cosmopolitan

Just as Kant has a peculiar rendering of patriotism, Appiah too has a different nuance to the concept of patriotism. One stark difference between Kant and Appiah here would be, for Kant patriotism is one's duty towards the state while as for Appiah patriotism can be the moral obligation one owes to the nation or a loyalty towards any particular grouping which has been mentioned (Kleingeld 2016, 19). The epitome of a cosmopolitan patriot for Appiah is his father Joe Appiah who saw no inconsistencies in the loyalties between smaller circles of human existence and the overarching humanity – between a nation and the world (Appiah 2006, xvi). Joe Appiah was a Ghanaian patriot who considered himself to be a cosmopolitan and who told his progeny that they are citizens of the world (Appiah 2006, 21). He loved his Ghana nation as much as he loved the world at large. Patriotism, for Appiah, is the feeling that we belong with a group of people. Are compatriots special? Joe Appiah would definitely agree. But such patriotic feeling one harbours does not necessarily hinder the commitment that we have for strangers in the world. Appiah justified this by saying that “our loyalty to humankind – so vast, so abstract, a unity – does not deprive us of the capacity to care for people closer by; the notion of a global citizenship can have real and practical meaning” (Appiah 2006, 26). By caring for our near and dear ones we are already playing a part in the commitment we have for the larger community – we are acting as a citizen of the world, fulfilling the responsibility we owe to the larger human community.

Patriotism is more than just owing a responsibility and the prerogatives one has to a state or nation alone. It is a sentiment. This sentiment is to the feeling of pride, emotional elation that we have when the national anthem is played or when the national team is winning. It is also the feeling of pain, shame, remorse etc at the time of calamities or disasters etc. Such a feeling is unique to a human individual and it is a value. However, valuing one's attachments does not mean undermining other's attachment. As Appiah highlighted, “you cannot have any respect for human diversity and expect everyone to become a cosmopolitan” (Appiah 2006, xviii). A cosmopolitan compatriot loves her nation and she acknowledges the love strangers have for their respective nation and respects this love that strangers have for their own nations. Patriotism of a partial cosmopolitan must allow room for diversity. Cosmopolitanism ought to value the different human forms of social and cultural life (Appiah 2006, 26). The ethos of cosmopolitanism

is not the homogenisation of the global world. It is rather to think of a world in which each one is firmly attached to a culture of his or her own and where everyone celebrates the differences of other cultures. Partial cosmopolitanism emphasises a universal concern towards others or strangers - rather than patriotism being incompatible with cosmopolitanism, patriotism without any concern for the cosmopolitan ethos becomes unjustifiable (Appiah 2006, xiv). For if one respects one's life one must also respect the life of others, professing respect for one's life is morally connected with professing respect for similar life forms.

There are two strands intertwined in partial cosmopolitanism: "One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance" (Appiah 2006, xiii). This approach is relevant in dealing with global issues such as border conflicts, refugees and migrants. Partial cosmopolitanism, at the core, offers a practical approach to everyday issues as compared to the kinds of cosmopolitanism that is stuck with theoretical patriotism debate. It challenges us to understand that the decisions we make, even those that seem to only help our local area such as protecting one's job, can actually be part of a bigger solution. We ought to look beyond immediate problems and recognize the full value of every human life, not just seeing someone who is suffering (Appiah 2006, 168).

5. Conclusion

Kant argued for obligation to the state while Nussbaum argued against it. We can see in Appiah the combination of the notion of responsibility to a nation and responsibility to a cosmopolis to come up with what he calls rooted cosmopolitanism. The world of a cosmopolitan patriot is a possible world where, as Appiah says, "people would accept the citizen's responsibility to nurture the culture and politics of their homes" (Appiah 2006, 22). This cosmopolitanism is different from the kind of cosmopolitanism that Kant and Nussbaum endorses, which is a rootless or impartial cosmopolitanism. Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism is a middle ground between impartial cosmopolitanism and extreme nationalism. It offers a way forward out of the quagmire patriotism debate, and provides a cosmopolitan approach that is practicable in dealing with global issues.



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भारतीय न्याय संहिता, 2023 का एक वर्ष का सफर

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शोध सार :-

यह शोध पत्र भारत के नये कानूनों (भारतीय न्याय संहिता, 2023 भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2023 व भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम, 2023) के लिए संदर्भित है जो भारतीय न्याय व्यवस्था में 1 जुलाई 2024 से प्रभावी हुए हैं, जिसने एक वर्ष का सफर पूरा कर लिया है इन नये कानूनों को भारतीय समसामयिक परिप्रेक्ष्य व भविष्योन्मुखी रूप में तैयार किया गया, जिनसे शीघ्र न्याय की अपेक्षा की गई, जिसके अर्न्तगत लोगों की समसामयिक आवश्यकताओं और आंकाक्षाओं के अनुरूप एक ऐसी कानूनी संरचना का निर्माण किया गया है, जो नागरिक केंद्रित होने के साथ नागरिकों के जीवन और स्वतंत्रता को सुरक्षित रखें यह नए कानून पुलिस को जवाबदेह बनाते हुए पीड़ित-केंद्रित हैं।

प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में यह देखने का प्रयास किया गया कि जिस नये कानून को लागू हुए एक वर्ष पूरा होने जा रहा है उसके किर्यान्वयन में कौन सी चुनौतियाँ सामने आ रही हैं, जिनको समय रहते जानना नये कानूनों के सफल किर्यान्वयन के लिये आवश्यक है, जिससे हमारी संसद द्वारा बनाये कानून अपने नागरिकों को शीघ्र न्याय की सुविधा प्रदान कर विश्व पटल पर अपनी पहचान स्थापित कर सके।

बीज,शब्द—आई0पी0सी0, सी0आर0पी0सी0, भारतीय न्याय संहिता, 2023 बी0एन0एस0, भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2023 बी0एन0एस0एस0 व भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम, 2023 बी0एस0ए0

प्रस्तावना

सभ्य समाज के निर्माण में सामाजिक न्याय महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखता है दुनिया के आज उन्ही देशों ने प्रगति हासिल की है जिन्होंने अपनी न्यायिक व्यवस्था को चुस्त दुरुस्त कर अपने नागरिकों को समय से न्याय प्रदान करने में माहिरता हासिल कर ली है ,इन देशों में कानून निर्माण व संशोधन की प्रक्रिया बहुत लोचपूर्ण देखने को मिलती है, दण्ड व्यवस्था में भी मानवीय मूल्यों का पूरा पालन किया जाता है न्यायालयों का भी यह प्रयास रहता है कि देश के किसी भी नागरिक को न्याय लेने में बेवजह समय व धन की वरबादी न हो तथा लोगों का न्यायलयों के प्रति विश्वास बना रहे, इसी लिये इन देशों के नागरिकों में सकारात्मक राष्ट्रवाद की भावना व राष्ट्रीय प्रेम अधिक देखने को मिलता है ,तथा नागरिक अपने देश के साथ हर परिस्थिति में खड़े रहते हैं, और आज इसी के बल पर इन देशों ने विकसित देशों की श्रेणी में पहचान स्थापित की है जिसमें न्यायिक व्यवस्था का बहुत बड़ा योगदान रहा है इसी के फलस्वरूप इन देशों में वकालत

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का पेशा सर्व श्रेष्ठ व सम्मानित श्रेणी में माना जाता है, भारत में इस पेशे को किस नजरीये से देखा जाता है और क्या क्या शब्दों का प्रयोग किया जाता लेखक को यह सब लिखने की शायद आवश्यकता नहीं है।

किन्तु वर्तमान भारत सरकार देश में न्याय व्यवस्था के सुधार पर विशेष ध्यान दे रही है जिसके क्रम में वर्षों से अंग्रेजों के द्वारा भारतीय नागरिकों को दण्ड व न्याय देने वाले छलावापूर्ण कानूनी संहिता को पूर्ण रूप से हटा दिया है जिसका पूरा श्रेय वर्तमान गृह मंत्री मा० अमित शाह जी को जाता है, बैसे भी भारतीय समाज वर्षों से अंग्रेजों के बनाये दण्डान्तमक कानूनी व्यवस्था से तृप्त हो इसको बदलने की आवाज, दबी जवान से उठाता रहा है किन्तु इसको बदलने की हिमायत स्वतन्त्र भारत कि किसी सरकार ने नहीं की यही कारण है कि स्वतन्त्रता के उपरान्त आये हमारे संविधान में 100 से अधिक संशोधन किये जा चुके हैं जबकि भारतीय दण्ड संहिता में 1860 से, 163 वर्षों में आई०पी०सी० में मात्र 75 के लगभग ही संशोधन किये गये जिसमें 1985 के उपरान्त आई०पी०सी० में कोई अधिकारिक संशोधन नहीं हुआ इससे पूर्व 1973 में अपराधिक प्रक्रिया संहिता सी०आर०सी०पी०, 1973 लाकर जरूर कुछ बदलाव किये गये जबकि अन्य संशोधन आंशिक ही रहे हैं, आई०पी०सी० की दण्डात्मक व भारतीय नागरिकों को कोर्ट कचहरी में उलझाए रखने की अंग्रेजियत मंशा से निजात दिलाने का प्रयास किसी भी सरकार ने नहीं किया। यह पहली बार है कि किसी सरकार ने अंग्रेजों द्वारा दिये कानून को उखाड़ फेंकने की हिमायत कर 2023 में न्याय व्यवस्था व पुलिस तंत्र को नए कानून उपलब्ध करा भारतीय नागरिकों को न्याय व सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी प्रदान की।

इन तीन पुराने कानूनों में बदलाव लाने हेतु भारत सरकार के गृह मंत्रालय ने 2019 से ही गहन विचार-विमर्श शुरू कर किया था जिनको लेकर प्रबुद्धजीवियों व विधि, वेत्ताओं के साथ कर्नाटक व केरल के पूर्व मुख्य न्यायाधीश वी०एस० मल्लिमथ की अध्यक्षता में गठित "मल्लिमथ" समिति जिसका अधिकारिक नाम "अपराधिक न्याय प्रणाली में सुधार पर समिति" था, इसका गठन 24 नवंबर 2000 में किया गया, साथ ही रणबीर सिंह समिति, राष्ट्रीय विधि विश्वविद्यालय दिल्ली में भी एक समिति का गठन कर अपराधिक न्याय प्रणाली में सुधारों का सुझावों के लिये नियुक्त किया गया था इन सबके द्वारा गृह मंत्रालय को 3200 सुझाव प्राप्त हुए जिन पर गृह मंत्री मा० अमित शाह जी ने सभी सुझावों संशोधनों पर सूक्ष्मता से विचार करते हुए इन तीनों कानूनों पर विचार, विमर्श करने के लिये 158 बैठकें कर कानून निम्न प्रक्रिया को पूर्ण कर भारत को नये कानूनों भारतीय न्याय संहिता, 2023 भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2023 व भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम, 2023 की सौगात प्रदान की। जिसको 25 दिसम्बर 2023 को मा० राष्ट्रपति महोदय के हस्ताक्षर के उपरान्त कानूनी जामा प्रदान कर पुराने कानूनों की जगह नये कानूनों को 1 जुलाई 2024 से लागू कर दिया गया।

विशेषताएं

सर्वप्रथम विशेषता में भारतीय न्याय संहिता का लक्ष्य महिलाओं और बच्चों के खिलाफ अपराधों और राज्य के खिलाफ अपराधों को प्राथमिकता देना है इसको बी०एन०एस०, 2023 के नाम से जाना जाता है जिसमें 20 अध्याय व 358 धाराएं हैं जिसने भारतीय दण्ड संहिता 1860 का स्थान लिया जिसमें 511 धाराएं व 23 अध्याय थे। इसी प्रकार सी०आर०पी०सी०, 1973 के स्थान पर जिसमें 484 धाराएं व 37 अध्याय थे भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2023

बी0एन0एस0एस0 ने स्थान लिया जिसमें 39 अध्याय व 531 धाराएँ हैं तथा भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम 1872 का स्थान पर भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम 2023 ने लिया है जिसमें 170 धाराएं व 12 अध्याय हैं।

महिलाओं और बच्चों की सुरक्षा को विशेष अध्याय—5 को प्राथमिकता से समर्पित :- नवीन कानून में महिलाओं और बच्चों के खिलाफ अपराध और उनकी सुरक्षा पर एक अध्याय—5 जो भारतीय दण्ड संहिता 1860 में राज्य के खिलाफ अपराध को समर्पित था उसे महिलाओं और बच्चों के लिए समर्पित किया गया है जिसके अर्न्तगत पूर्ववर्ती दण्ड संहिता 1860 में विखरी धाराओं जो महिलाओं और बच्चों के खिलाफ अपराध और उनकी सुरक्षा पर आधारित थी उन्हें एक साथ (धारा—63 से 99 तक) लाया गया है साथ ही 18 वर्ष से कम उम्र की बच्चीयों से दुष्कर्म पर आजीवन व मृत्युदण्ड की सजा का प्रावधान कर महिलाओं के साथ झूठे वादे कर दुष्कर्म को जघन्य अपराध माना गया।

दण्ड को मानवीय बनाने के साथ—साथ पुर्नर्वास पर जोर :- नये कानूनी प्रावधानों के अर्न्तगत प्रतिशोधात्मक सिद्धान्तों पर पुनर्विचार कर मौत, आजीवन कारावास, संपत्ति की जब्ती और जुर्माने के साथ बी0एन0एस0 की धारा, 4(च) की शुरुआत एक महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव का प्रतीक है जिसमें सजा का छटा रूप सामुदायिक सेवा को जोड़ा गया।

अपराधीयों को कठोर सजा का प्रावधान :- दण्ड को मानवीय बनाने का तात्पर्य यह नहीं है कि नई कानूनी व्यवस्था अपराधी को बेदाग छूट देगी बी0एन0एस0 के तहत 83 अपराधों में जुर्माना राशि बढ़ाई गई है तथा 23 अपराधों में अनिवार्य न्यूनतम सजा का प्रावधान किया गया है सामुदायिक सेवा के लिए दण्ड सिर्फ छह अपराधों में पेश किया गया है, और अनावश्यक 19 धाराओं को अधिनियम से निरस्त या हटा दिया गया।

आधुनिक न्याय प्रणाली व नई प्रौद्योगिकी से लैस :- नए कानून भारत में एक आधुनिक न्याय प्रणाली पर आधारित है जिसमें जीरो एफ0आई0आर0, पुलिस शिकायतों का ऑनलाइन पंजीकरण, एसएमएस जैसे इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मोड के माध्यम से सम्मन और लोक सेवकों व पुलिस आदि साक्षियों का श्रव्य—दृश्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक साधनों से गवाही के बिकल्प की व्यवस्था (बी0एन0एस0 की धारा—254(2)) साक्ष्य अधिनियम में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक साक्ष्य व डिजिटल साक्ष्य को प्राथमिकता तथा सभी जघन्य अपराधों के लिए अपराध स्थलों की अनिवार्य वीडियोग्राफी (बी0एन0एस0 की धारा—176(3)) जैसे प्रावधान जो अंग्रेजों के औपनिवेशिक का पूर्ण परिवर्तन व प्राचीनता का पुनरुद्धार और न्याय क्षेत्र में आधुनिकता की नई छलांग है और अब न्याय व्यवस्था केवल दण्ड पर आधारित न हो, बल्कि न्याय पर भी ध्यान केंद्रित कर रही हैं।

समयाविधि का प्रावधान :- नये अधिनियम में न्याय मिलने की एक सैद्धांतिक समय सीमा निर्धारित की गई जैसे कि पीड़ित को 90 दिनों के भीतर अन्वेषण की प्रगति की जानकारी देना 60 दिनों के भीतर आरोप पत्र व बहस पूर्ण होने के उपरान्त 30 जिसे अधिकतम 45 दिनों के भीतर निर्णय देने का प्रावधान किया गया है। (बी0एन0एस0 की धारा—258) ऐसा प्रावधान पूर्व अधिनियम की सी0आर0पी0सी0, 1973 में भी था किन्तु नये साक्ष्य अधिनियम से यह पूर्ण अपेक्षा है कि अधिनियम की मंशा के अनुरूप पीड़ितों को समय—सीमा से न्याय मिल सकेगा।

इसी प्रकार भारतीय नवीन कानूनी अधिनियम कई विशेषताओं से परिपूर्ण हैं जिसे गृह मंत्री मा०अमित शाह जी के द्वारा अनुभवी विधि वेत्ताओं द्वारा तैयार कर कानून निम्नाण की संसदीये प्रणाली को अपना एक जुलाई दो हजार चौबिस को नये कानूनों (भारतीय न्याय संहिता, 2023 भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2023 व भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम, 2023) को शीघ्र न्याय देने के उद्देश्य से समर्पित कर दिया गया, जिसे लागू हुए एक वर्ष पूर्ण हो चुका है ऐसे में स्वभाविक है कि एक वर्ष के दौरान वह चुनौतियां सामने आ चुकी होंगी जो इसके सफल क्रियान्वयन में आड़े आ रही होंगी जिनको जानने का प्रयास प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में किया गया है जो निम्नवत हैं—

1:-पुलिस विभाग की चुनौतियाँ— किसी कानून का पालन व समाज में लॉ एण्ड ऑर्डर बनाये रखने व लोगों से कानून का पालन कराये जाने की जिम्मेदारी पुलिस विभाग की ही होती है, और यह सब तभी हो संभव हो सकता है कि जब हम पुलिस को कानूनी रूप में प्रशिक्षित कर हाईटेक सुविधाओं से सुसज्जित कर तैयार करेंगे, और अगर हम चाहते हैं, कि नये कानून जल्द रचनात्मक प्रभाव दिखाएं तो इसके लिये जितनी जल्दी हो पुलिस को उन समस्याओं से निजात दिलाई जाये जो नवीन कानून लागू करने में आड़े आ रही हैं जैसे :-

- 1—पुलिस के पास आवश्यक इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों की अनुपलब्धता। जैसे— कैमरा टैबलेट, बाड़ी कैमरा मोबाइल आदि।
- 2—आधुनिक उपकरणों से सुसज्जित बर्दी।
- 3—फॉरेंसिक लेवों की कमी।
- 4—प्रशिक्षण का अभाव।
- 5—नवीन व पुराने अधिनियमों का दवाव।
- 6—आधुनिक सरकारी उपकरणों के अभाव में निजी मोबाइलों का उपयोग।
- 7—ग्रामीण दूरस्थ क्षेत्रों में सीटीटीवी कैमरों का अभाव।
- 8—समाज में निजी इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों के साक्ष्य देने पर संकोच करना।
- 9—जन सामान्य में नये कानून के प्रति जागरूकता अभाव।
- 10—पुलिस के पास हाईटेक उपकरणों से सुसज्जित व्हानों व पुलिस स्टेशनों का अभाव। आदि ऐसी कई चुनौतियों का सामना पुलिस को करना पड़ रहा है फिर भी उपलब्ध संसाधनों पर हमारी पुलिस कार्य कर रही है और आशा है कि जल्द ही इन समस्याओं से पुलिस को निजात मिल जायेगी।

2—न्यायालयों की चुनौतियाँ :- बैसे तो नये कानूनों के प्रति न्यायालयों ने अपने आप को तैयार कर शीघ्र न्याय देने के सिद्धांतों के पालन करने के साथ इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मोड के माध्यम से सम्मन और लोक सेवकों व पुलिस आदि साक्षियों का श्रव्य—दृश्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक साधनों से गवाही आदि नये अधिनियमों की मंशा अनुरूप कार्य करना प्रारम्भ कर दिया है, फिर भी कुछ चुनौतियों का सामना न्यायालयों को करना पड़ रहा है जैसे की :-

- 1- न्यायालयों के साहायक कर्मचारियों में नये कानून के प्रति प्रशिक्षण का अभाव।
- 2-स्थाई तकनीकी कर्मचारियों का अभाव।
- 3- इलेक्ट्रानिक व डिजीटल साक्ष्य सुरक्षित डाटा स्टोर का अभाव।
- 4-आई0पी0सी0,1860 व बी0एन0एस0,2023 दोनों कानूनों के प्रकरणों का एक ही कोर्ट में चलने से कार्य का दवाव।
- 5-नये कानूनों के प्रति अधिवक्ताओं को जानकारी का अभाव। आदि चुनौतियों का सामना न्यायालयों को करना पड़ रहा है।

3-किशोर न्याय बोर्ड की चुनौतियाँ:-

- 1- स्टेनों कर्मचारी की अनुपलब्धता।
- 2- स्थाई स्टाप का अभाव।
- 3- साहायक कर्मचारियों में नये कानून के प्रति प्रशिक्षण का अभाव।
- 4-स्थाई कम्प्यूटर आपरेटर की अनुपलब्धता।
- 5-4-आई0पी0सी0,1860 व बी0एन0एस0,2023 दोनों कानूनों के प्रकरणों का एक ही साथ चलने से कार्य का दवाव।

6- किशोर न्याय (बालकों की देख-रेख और संरक्षण) आदर्श नियम,2016 के नियम 6 के अनुपालन में किशोर न्याय बोर्ड न्यायालय व कारागार परिसर से दूरी बनाये रखने में न्यूनतम व अधिकतम सीमा न होने से कई जनपदों में 5से25 किलो मीटर दूरी पर संचालन बोर्ड की एक सबसे बड़ी चुनौती है जो नये कानूनों के शीघ्र न्याय देने के सिद्धान्त को प्रभावित कर रही है। जबकि किशोर न्याय बोर्ड का संचालन न्यायालय पर आश्रित है न्यायालय व अधिवक्ताओं तथा अभियोजन विभाग के सहयोग के बिना बोर्ड का संचालन संभव नहीं हो सकता।

उक्त आदि चुनौतियों का सामना किशोर न्याय बोर्ड को करना पड़ रहा है जिनका प्रभाव नये कानूनों के सफल क्रियान्वयन पर पड़ रहा है।

निष्कर्ष एव सुझाव :-

इस प्रकार नये कानूनों का एक वर्ष का सफर इसकी क्रियान्वित संस्थाओं का काफी खट्टे मीठे अनुभवों भरा रहा है, और जो चुनौतियाँ आ रही उनसे भी समय रहते निजात मिल जायेगी आशा है कि जैसे –जैसे पुराने कानून से सम्बन्धित प्रकरणों का निपटान होता जायेगा बैसे बैसे नवीन कानून न्याय पर अपनी पकड़ बनाता जायेगा फिर भी कुछ सुझाव नये कानूनों प्रगति में वेहतर कारगर साबित हो सकते हैं।

सुझाव : –

- 1– सर्वप्रथम भविष्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए देश के सभी शिक्षण संस्थानों में विशेष रूप से विधि के पाठ्यक्रमों में (एलएलबी0, एलएलएम0,आदि)भारतीय न्याय संहिता,2023 भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता,2023 व भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम,2023 को सम्मिलित किया जाना अतिआवश्यक है।
- 2– नये कानून में इलेक्ट्रानिक व डिजीटल साक्ष्य की विशेष प्राथमिकता को देखते हुए ग्रामीण व शहरी क्षेत्रों में पंचायतों व नगर पंचायतों द्वारा तथा निजी व्यावसायिक केन्द्रों ,निजी प्रतिष्ठानों ,ढाबों के सम्पूर्ण भारत को यूरोप सऊदी की तरज पर सार्वजनिक कैमरों को क्षेत्र के थानों ऑनलाइन जोड़ा जाये जिससे आवश्यकता पड़ने पर इलेक्ट्रानिक व डिजीटल साक्ष्य आसानी प्राप्त किया जा सके।
- 3–पुलिस को कानूनी रूप में प्रशिक्षित कर हाईटेक सुविधाओं से जिसमें विदेशी मॉडल पर आधुनिक उपकरणों के साथ बर्दी,बाडी कैमरा व कैमरा युक्त हैलमट आदि से पुलिस को सुसज्जित किया जाये।
- 4– अधिवक्ताओं को प्रशिक्षण प्रदान करने हेतु बिधिक सेवा प्राधीकरण, गैर सरकारी संस्थाओं तथा बार एसोसिएशन तथा बिधि महाविद्यालयों, विश्वविद्यालयों को सेमिनार व गोष्ठियों का आयोजन करना चाहिए।

आवश्यक सूचना :- इस शोध पत्र में दी गई जानकारी का उपयोग किसी भी कानूनी दस्तावेज़ में नहीं किया जा सकता है।

संदर्भ ग्रन्थ सूची

- 1–भारतीय न्याय संहिता,2023
- 2– भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता,2023
- 3– भारतीय साक्ष्य अधिनियम,2023)
- 4– भारतीय दण्ड संहिता 1860
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