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NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Saurabh Dube

DISCIPLINES AND SUBJECTS : ANTHROPOLOGY, HISTORY, MODERNITY

It is a pleasure and honour to deliver the 14th KS Mathur Memorial Lecture. I thank the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society and Professor Sukant Chaudhury for the invitation. This oration and occasion carry for me a special charge, at once affective and academic, emotional and intellectual. Hopefully, this would soon become clear.

Born to anthropologist parents, I grew up in Sagar (central India), Delhi (old and new), and Shimla (north India). My earliest years were imbued with a lingering sense of how terrains (or, times/spaces) of the "vernacular" and the "cosmopolitan" ever overlapped yet only met each other in curious, quirky, and contradictory ways. In such meeting(s) and mating(s) of the "vernacular" and the "cosmopolitan", of Sagar and Lucknow, who occupied an important place? Actually, it was Professor KS Mathur, or Mathur Uncle to me. A friend of my parents – he called my father, Bhai Saab and my mother Bhabhi-ji – Mathur Uncle visited Sagar every now and again, staying at our home. He was a figure of immense import toward my childhood imaginaries. In the mornings of those visitations, I vividly recall Mathur Uncle's blue brocade dressing gown and the manner of holding a tooth brush in his mouth, as he walked around the house.

A confession or two, now: while I received my own blue dressing gown – when one could actually be got in my size – from the beginning I was firmly told not to mimic Mathur Saab's trick of toothbrush in the mouth: You see, unlike him, I dribbled the toothpaste on the floor, an unseemly sight and worse. In the evenings of those visits, Professor Mathur and my father smoking cigars, as they consumed their libations and chatted, seemed the substance, soul, stuff of friendship. This is what I mimicked with the chocolate cigars that were got for me from Delhi or Bombay (I forget now). Mathur Uncle bore a gentle persona, an inimitable style of speaking, which suggested the essence of Lucknow *adab*. Also, I reckon that I was drawn to him because he was short like my mother, unlike the tall and larger than life persona of my father.

An abiding memory of the Mathur family is of my mother and I staying with them at their Bungalow in the Lucknow University campus. This was

SAURABH DUBE, Distinguished Professor, Centre for Asian and African Studies, El Colegio de México

after a memorable train journey from Jabalpur to Lucknow, which opened me to all sorts of sensory and olfactory delights. And it was during this visit that pink rasgullas were secured for all, especially for a small Saurabh. Despite their beguiling colour, the rasgullas were somehow bereft of the wetness-moistness that is the mark of the sweet. This led Mathur aunty (Mrs. Vimla Mathur) to quip, "*aaj hum log rasgulley nahin sirf gulley kha rahe hain*!" Could there have been a funnier moment in my very young life? Somewhat later, seeking my vocation in research and teaching, I was trained in history but drawn toward anthropology, also encountering Mathur Uncle's work on caste in a Malwa village and other related studies. I was very proud that I shared an intimate bond with him. And so I am more than gratified to be delivering this lecture in the memory of Professor Mathur. Thank you, again.

As evidenced by Professor KS Mathur's village studies and his wider body of writing, in speaking of anthropology my reference is to cultural-social anthropology and sociology, at large. In India, since at least the 1950s these disciplines have developed together raising important issues of the genealogy of academic disciplines, which cannot be discussed in this essay. My point now is that in this talk I shall refer to sociology-anthropology conjointly under the term social anthropology, including also ethnography. Here, I focus on anthropology, history, and modernity, especially delineating the arena of historical anthropology.[1]

The talk has four sections. I begin by briefly outlining my understanding of modernity and historical anthropology. The second part raises a few questions around formative orientations of anthropology to time and temporality and of history to culture and tradition. The third part considers, respectively, important developments in study of pasts and communities, colony and empire, and nation and nationalism on the subcontinent, which form part of the dynamic between the two enquiries. These developments have variously emphasised practice, process, and power and often brought together perspectives of gender and sexuality, postcolonial and subaltern studies. The concluding section widens the address of the talk by turning pithily to disciplines of modernity.

I

Before proceeding any further, it is important to confront the elephant in the room, that category of categories, modernity. Here is a thumb-nail sketch of how I approach and apprehend modernity. Now, upon my reading, modernity is not the sole product of, say, Cartesian dualities or a singular Enlightenment predicated upon aggrandizing analytics or the imperial endeavors of the British, the French, and the Dutch after the eighteenth century or, indeed, all of the above. Rather, the modernity of the Enlightenment (with its acute interplay between race and reason) came only after the modernity of the Renaissance (with its interleaving of metaphysical instrumentalism and mercantile capitalism), quite as the constitutive violence of modernity of later

colonialisms was preceded by modern genocides of the empires of Americas at large. The point is that the processes of modernity since the sixteenth century need to be approached as being constitutively contradictory, contingent, and contested: protocols that are incessantly articulated yet remain also critically out of joint with themselves.

I am suggesting that the Janus-faced nature of modernity, its decisive split-ness, is made up of processes that are enmeshed with each other. Dispensing at once with heroic histories and dystopian totalities, at stake are recognitions and requirements of checkered narratives. Thus, modernity is made up of formative conjunctions between: the Renaissance and mercantilism; "the Age of Discovery" and deaths by genocide; births of democracy and expropriations of settler-colonialisms; reason and race; science and slavery; industry and colony; technologies and traditions; Enlightenment and empire; secularized religion(s) and seductions of state; figures of disenchantment and enchantments of modernity; liberty and gender; egalitarian spirits and hetero-normative assumption; and critical theory and modern scholasticism. These are only a few examples, taken from my wider discussions of such questions.[2]

The point is that it precisely these procedures that emerge expressed by subjects of modernity, some of whom are modern subjects of course. Here, my reference is to historical actors who have been both *subject to* the processes of power and meaning of modernity, but also exactly *subjects shaping* these procedures. That is, the two meanings of the term subject. Widening the address of modernity, the subjects who have fashioned while being subordinated to its processes include indigenous nations/communities, the bearers of blackness (at "home" and in "diasporas"), and other subaltern and marginal – peasant, artisan, worker-class, migrant, destitute – peoples, all of different sexualities across the world. Needless to say, such subjects have diversely articulated (gendered and sexualized) modern processes of colony and post-colony, empire and nation, and slavery and settler-colonialism. Accompanied by middle-class and elite actors, all these subjects have registered within their measures and meanings the formative contradictions, contentions, and contingencies of modernity in non-Western and Western theatres.[3]

At stake are subjects of modernity that are subjects-at-large of settler-colony and sexuality, slavery and desire, gender and empire, exhibitory-orders and nation-regimes, race and heritage, capital and memory. It is keeping such processes and subjects in view that I now change gears, turning to the relationship between anthropology and history. This disciplinary relationship has been difficult and contradictory. But the alliance between these enquiries has also been passionate and productive. Over the last five decades, the interchanges between these disciplines have acquired new meanings in theoretical and empirical studies.[4] Here, archival materials (normally used by historians) have been read through anthropological perspectives, ethnographic sensibilities. Meanwhile, field work (conventionally the method of social

anthropology) has been combined with historical analyses. This has served not only to bring together but to open-up the very meanings of the "archive" and the "field". The blending has produced novel narratives of historical anthropology.

How are we to understand historical anthropology? Is it a form of knowledge principally involving archival research *and* field work? In this manner, are field work and archival research themselves approached as already known methods that subsequently find productive combination in this interdisciplinary terrain? Is historical anthropology, then, only an enquiry that conjoins the methodologies and techniques of two taken for granted disciplines? My own efforts involve approaching historical anthropology in a manner that *rethinks* its constituent enquiries: history and anthropology as well as their wider interplay. But there is rather more to the picture. For I also widen the range of the term discipline. That is, I consider the enquiries and knowledges of the human sciences as intimating not only modern disciplines but as disciplines of modernity. Such emphases extend in their own ways to disciplines and subjects of literature, critical thought, and postcolonial theory.

II

In conventional commonsense, history is concerned with questions of time and temporality, while social-cultural anthropology concentrates on culture and tradition. At the same time, two points stand out here. First, neither time nor temporality is the exclusive prerogative of the historian, each finding diverse expressions in anthropological-sociological practice. Indeed, studies in social anthropology have opened up the taken for granted nature of time and temporality, by exploring how different populations, groups, and communities understand and experience time and history differently. This is a question to which I shall return. Yet, ethnography has also made a clear distinction between "traditional" communities and "modern" societies. Here, the former, traditional communities, are seen as characterized by myths and rituals, while the latter, modern societies, are understood as defined by history and rationality. This is to say that social anthropology has often spatially segregated time and temporality, such that tradition, myth, and ritual are projected as static and unchanging, while the modern, the historical, and the rational are comprehended as dynamic and ever-transforming. Second, the concepts of culture and tradition might have been central to social anthropology, but they also have been variously present in history-writing, especially as received ways of understanding and explanation. Acting as short-hands in historical narratives, culture and tradition have carried formidably contradictory meanings. If all this sounds difficult, let me now further clarify these statements.

In different ways, time has been central to the anthropological enterprise. Consider the development of evolutionist anthropology in Victorian Britain and its colonies such as India, South Africa, and Australia. Today,

there is wide acknowledgment of the epistemic violence, which is the violence of knowledge, that attended the birth and growth of modern anthropology. Here were to be found historical sequences, based on evolutionary principles and racist presuppositions, which understood cultures in terms hierarchical stages – hierarchies and stages of civilizations, societies, and peoples that were primitive or savage and civilized or modern. Clearly, evolutionary and racist understandings of history and time were central to such social anthropology.

Evolutionary anthropology was replaced by functionalist and structural-functionalist paradigms in the discipline in the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, were the earlier hierarchically-ordered, evolutionary mappings of cultures and societies – invoking the "savage" and the "primitive" – entirely removed from the discipline with the emergence of fieldwork based "scientific" anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century? It is worth pursuing this question.

First, the apparent ruptures of functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropology with evolutionist principles on the grounds of their speculative procedures had wider consequences. This involved an innate suspicion toward, the placing of a question mark on, history as such within the discipline.[5] Now the practice of social anthropology could proceed in contradistinction to the writing of history.

Second, these tendencies combined with the influence of the French sociologist Durkheim in the shaping of structural-functionalist tenets. Such conjunctions led to pervasive presuppositions that societal arrangements were better understood by overlooking their historical transformations. All this involved analytical oppositions between "synchrony" and "diachrony" or "statics" and "dynamics". Here, statics or synchrony was given much greater importance over dynamics or diachrony concerning the method of anthropology.

Third and finally, these emphases were further bound to wider social anthropological tendencies toward seeking out continuity and consensus, rather than change and conflict, in the societies being studied. Such ambivalence toward time and change in culture and tradition was implicitly based on broad oppositions, which we noted earlier: namely, oppositions between Western societies characterized by history and reason, on the one hand, and non-Western cultures held in place by myth and ritual, on the other.

Such premises came to underlie the ethnographic enterprise. Thus, key procedures of anthropological practice frequently presented a timeless "tradition" of the natives, the tribals, and the indigenous, such that these people were always located in a lasting present, an "ethnographic present". They were without a past or a future: Or, the present was their past and their future. It only followed that the assumptions of the discipline came to sharply separate the dynamic time of the ethnographer's society from the static temporality of anthropological objects.[6] Together, in widespread ethnographic

understandings, change and transformation were rarely internal and usually entered "native" societies in external ways.

The Dutch anthropologist-critic Johannes Fabian has pointed to the repeated ways in which anthropological inquiry has understood its object as the other through measures turning on temporality. Here, the ethnographic object of enquiry, the primitive-native, is denied the "coevalness [or simultaneity] of time" with that of the anthropologist subject, the ethnographer-scholar.[7] In other words, the (observing) subject or the anthropologist and the (observed) object or the native are precisely separated through time to inhabit distinct temporalities. Here, the historical time of the former, the anthropologist is always ahead of the mythic time of the latter, the native. Such temporal divide has meant that not only anthropological objects but ethnographic practice have emerged as being, what we might call, *out of time*. On the one hand, the fact that anthropological writing itself takes place in time was ignored, since the time of the modern subject and the objective time of scientific knowledge were both taken for granted, rather than requiring understanding. On the other hand, the temporality of anthropological others – their time/timelessness – could only emerge as being external to and always behind the time of the writing of ethnography.[8] All of this has defined what we might call the "savage slot" and the "native niche" of anthropology, which have shaped the discipline.[9]

None of this is to deny that such schemes have been attended by challenges and exceptions within the discipline. Indeed, for a very long time now, anthropological understandings have displayed various approaches toward temporality and history, from willing ignorance to formative ambivalence to constitutive contradiction to imaginative understanding. All of this is exactly related to the formations and tensions of anthropology as a discipline of modernity. The immediate point is that approaches to time within the ethnographic enterprise require staying with longer. The constant presence of time within anthropological enquiry indicates the persistent influence of evolutionist understandings on contemporary anthropology. At the same time, beyond purely disciplinary considerations, they reveal pervasive "meta-geographical" projections.[10] Turning on time, such projections carve up social worlds into enchanted terrains of tradition and disenchanted domains of modernity.

I noted that just as time and temporality have been differently present at the core of anthropology so also the writing of history has variously involved ideas of culture and tradition. First, processes of the institutionalization of the historical discipline in the Euro-American world in the nineteenth-century meant that history-writing emerged as bearing the flag of the nation and empire. This is to say that histories were often national-imperial histories. Not only was the discipline often ethnocentrically inward-looking, but it was shaped by sharp distinctions between the civilized and the backward – concerning peoples and nations. Second, it followed that in Western countries

the historical accounts that were undertaken of distant, colonial, territories frequently presented such pasts as footnotes (or appendices) to the history of Europe. Third, several histories construed in colonized countries and newly independent nations were themselves often written in the image of a progressive West, albeit using unto their own purposes the oppositions of European modernity.[11] Fourth and finally, important strands of history-writing in the West and elsewhere could express hermeneutic, historicist, and counter-Enlightenment impulses, but their relationship with an exclusive, hierarchical Western modernity was double-edged. Such histories acutely articulated notions of culture, tradition, and the folk, generally of the nation. They critically questioned thereby the pretence of an aggrandizing reason that they saw as the leitmotif of the Enlightenment, particularly of the French variety. Conversely, such articulations of hermeneutic, historicist, and counter-Enlightenment tendencies themselves could not escape the developmental schemes of a somewhat singular history centred on Europe.[12]

What about more contemporary history-writing on India? Here, too, the notions of culture and tradition are often expressed in tendentious ways. If this is true of historical accounts that are principally un-reflexive about their presuppositions, they no less pose problems for history-writing that actively espouses these categories. Consider the collective subaltern studies project and its reconstruction of the forms of culture and consciousness present in the initiatives and movements of subordinate groups. There were key departures here, but difficulties in subaltern studies also contain links with the place of culture and tradition within the project.[13] Here, culture often appeared as an *a priori* element rather than as a critical category in the writing of history. On the one hand, cultures of subalterns remained somewhat static frameworks of belief and behaviour, ironically corresponding to an earlier anthropological notion of culture as an "entire way of life". This is to say largely unchanging and broadly homogeneous blueprints of thought and action, which underlay the passivity and resistance of subordinate groups. On the other hand, a preoccupation with the autonomy and agency of the subaltern was articulated by dualities between resistance and domination and the subaltern and the elite. This meant that meaningful practices of subordinate groups before authority appeared as simply opposing domination. Thus, cultures and traditions of the subalterns were placed outside the productivity of power. It is precisely such issues that have emerged as critical questions in the recent transformations of anthropology and history, and it is to these departures that I now turn.

III

Key expressions of historical anthropology are acutely present in recent reconsiderations of history. Three overlaying emphases have played a salient part here. Each of these has challenged the presumption that there is only one

true version of history, which can be found through the correct presentation of events and facts. To begin with, it has been admitted that there are different forms of historical consciousness. In other words, distinct groups and communities understand, express, and experience history differently. And these different forms of historical consciousness vary in their degree of symbolic elaboration, their ability to pervade multiple contexts, and their capacity to capture people's imaginations. Second, it only follows from this that history does not just refer to events and processes out there, somewhere, but that it exists as a key resource – a crucial resource at the core of shifting understandings of social worlds. This is why people fight for what they consider as their history, including living and dying in the name of the past. Third and finally, there has been the raising of critical questions considering how history writing has emerged tied to the modern nation, why histories are so often national histories: for example, history of India or Pakistan, of France or Britain, of the US or Germany. Similarly, there have been important questions raised about how history is so often imagined as needing to follow development and progress, especially of a Western kind. Together, in approaching the past and the present, such efforts toward newer forms of history-writing have often bound two impulses: the impulse to cautiously probe and affirm social worlds and the impulse to carefully narrate and describe them. Now, there is nothing "postmodern" about such search for alternative histories. For, the endeavours have taken truly seriously requirements of evidence and fidelity to facts. Yet they have also sieved historical evidence through critical filters and shaped facts unexpected. Here are facts that speak in the uneasy echoes of limiting doubt rather than deal in dead certainties.[14]

The emphases outlined above have *not* turned to oppositions involving cyclical notions of the past as characteristic of the East and linear conceptions of history as constitutive of the West. Nor have they approached the assertive appropriations of the past in historical and contemporary worlds by submitting to views that each of these visions is equally true. Rather, they have precisely tracked expressions of history as made up of conflict-ridden processes of meaning and authority.[15]

The explorations have traced the variability and mutability that can characterize the perceptions and practices of the past of historical communities. They have extended to tracking the uses of the past and their contending validities in the making of social worlds, especially the play of power in the production of history. Such writings have variously combined historical field work and ethnographic archival research. Unsurprisingly, they have not only explored the persistence of oppositions between myth and history in authoritative understandings. They have precisely placed question marks on pervasive projections of the West and nation as history, modernity, and destiny– for all people and each community.[16]

No less than history, the acute rethinking of community has lain at

the core of historical anthropology. Consider groups belonging to adivasi and dalit populations. Here, key questions have been raised regarding persistent presumptions of community as intimating a tightly bounded entity – one tending toward consensus in its expression; involving primordial tradition; and as broadly opposed to modernity. This questioning has had compelling consequences. On the one hand, communities have come to be understood as active participants in wider elaborations of colonialism and empire, state-formation and modernity, and nation and nationalism. On the other hand, there have been explorations of the many meanings of community shaped by its members, as providing substance to their differences and identities. Together, these developments have involved examinations of the crucial location of community within wide-ranging processes of power alongside its own internal divisions as expressed in terms of property, gender, law, and office.[17] Moreover, such efforts have been strengthened by incisive accounts of communities as questioning and contesting dominant projects of meaning and power, including those turning on religion and caste and empire and nation.[18] Finally, there have been diverse efforts to write greater heterogeneity into the concept of community. Indeed, recent rethinking of the category has derived further support from the critical exploration of the antinomy between community and state. These moves have queried the analytical binaries of modern disciplines. Such writings further suggest that prudent procedures in historical anthropology are afoot in the rethinking not only of community and history but also of colony and empire and nation and nationalism.

Colony and empire are not new to anthropology and history. At the same time, the critical crossovers, the mutual mixing between the disciplines in recent times have led to newer expressions of these categories and processes.[19] Indeed, innovative work in historical anthropology has built on and broken with prior anthropological and historical analyses that debated the complicities between anthropological practice and colonial projects, constructed detailed accounts of economic systems and social structures spawned under empire, and tracked the responses of the colonized to processes of colonization.

What are the shifts in the study of colony and empire that have been made possible by current intersections of history and anthropology?[20] To begin with, these transformations are keenly manifest in astute refusals to treat the pasts of colonies as mere footnotes and appendices to the history of the metropolis, the European home country. Recall that this pervasive tendency projects the latter, the metropolis as providing the former, the colony with Western civilization and European governance. Rather, recent writings have explored the intimate linkages between the metropole and the colony. Such explorations have carried forward earlier examinations and contemporary discussions of imperial histories and colonial cultures as deriving from interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. They have crucially considered the mutual shaping of European processes and colonial practices,

imaginatively analysing also how developments in distant margins could influence changes at the core of the metropolis.[21]

Moreover, current work in historical anthropology has acutely questioned colonialism as a homogeneous project, a monolithic endeavour. It has variously explored the critical divisions between different agents of colonialism, diverse agendas of empire. Here are to be found discussions of the representations and practices – and the boundaries and contradictions – of imperial agents, settler communities, and evangelical missionaries in colonial locations, which is to say a focus not only on colonized populations but on colonizing peoples.[22] At the same time, intimations of the plural articulations of empire have informed understandings of the transformations of caste and kingship, community and kinship, environment and nature under colonial rule.[23]

Finally, diverse dimensions of colonial cultures have found critical expression in historical anthropology. At stake are varied, overlapping cultural forms entailed by colony and empire, which have themselves been diversely explored within the field. The explorations have covered the politics under empire of art, popular representation, museums, and consumption.[24] They have further extended from tracking the numerous modalities of knowledge and power as expressed in colonial discourses and practices[25] through to tracing imperial articulations of space, crime, and the body.[26] The critical spirit of such work has been extended by two other developments. In the first place, writings in history and anthropology that have focused on the forceful work of gender as variously influencing and shaping colonialism's cultures, including the terms of sexuality and race under empire.[27] And, in a similarly critical move, the manner in which not a few of the analyses discussed above have rethought the past and the present of the social scientific disciplines, especially keeping in view their linkages with colony and nation.[28]

Critical conjunctions between anthropology and history have played an important role in reformulations of approaches to nation and nationalism, state and modernity. Conventional wisdom presents nations and nationalisms as always there, as ancient, as primordial. Now, important writings have questioned presuppositions regarding nations and nationalisms as primordial, innate entities. They have queried also the ways in which widespread portrayals of the past can be differently yet intimately bound to authoritative, biographical portraits of nation-states and nationalist endeavours. In such questioning a key role has been played by acute recognitions that nations, nationalisms, and national cultures are historically and socially constructed processes. This is to say that although nations and nationalisms are among the most important features of modern times, they nonetheless display attributes of what Benedict Anderson has called "imagined communities."[29] Following such recognitions, there have been astute studies of the historical construction of nations, nationalisms, and national cultures as projects and processes of power. Here ethnographies and histories have come together with sociological discussions

and literary explorations not only to question familiar understandings of these categories but to do this by tracking their varied creations.[30]At the same time, other related endeavours have highlighted the importance of tracing the ways in which the ideological practices and pedagogical performances that construct nation and nationalism acquire a forceful presence in the world, assuming pervasive worldly attributes.[31]

These emphases have been accompanied by analyses stressing the distinctions and differences at the core of nations and nationalisms, particularly considering their subaltern expressions, anti-colonial manifestations, and gendered dimensions. The subaltern studies project and associated scholarly developments have led to rich explorations of the idioms and trajectories of wide varieties of subaltern endeavours. Against the tenor of nationalist propositions and instrumentalist projections concerning the politics of the lower-orders, these analyses have shown that in the broader terrain of anti-colonial politics subaltern ventures followed a creative process of drawing upon as subverting the ideas, symbols, and practices defining dominant nationalism. Such initiatives articulated thereby a supplementary politics with distinct visions of the nation and particular expressions of nationalism that drew upon yet went beyond the aims and strategies of a generally middle-class leadership.[32] Unsurprisingly, extending the terms of these discussions, it has been emphasized that middle-class anti-colonial nationalisms embodied their own attributes of difference and distinction. The endeavours translated and transformed the images of the sovereign nation and the free citizen through forceful filters of the subjugated homeland and the colonized subject.[33] With distinct accents, other critical approaches have unravelled the presence of gender and the place of women in formations of nation and articulations of nationalism. The focus has involved, for instance, the mapping of the nation in terms of domesticity as the gendered formulation of the homeland as a feminine figure – the idea of Bharat Mata. It has extended to the ambivalent terms of participation of women in nationalism and the ambiguities attending their definition as citizen-subjects.[34] In this way, the lens of gender has helped to incisively explore the attributes of authority and difference at the heart of nations and nationalisms – in their dominant and subaltern incarnations. These different yet interconnected emphases have clarified that across shifting contexts and terrains, nations and nationalisms have articulated wide varieties of historical practice and disciplinary power. Similarly, formations and elaborations of modernity are increasingly discussed and debated today as contradictory and contingent processes of culture and power.[35] All of this is indicative, once more, of the productive possibilities opened up by historical anthropology and its ongoing transformations.Revealed thereby have been emergent genealogies and mutating histories that have defined – through space and time – the making and unmaking, the continuities and shifts, of imperial imaginaries, colonial formations, national dispensations, and modern worlds, at large. This brings me to the last section of this lecture. Here I spread my

wings wide, very wide, to discuss disciplines of modernity.

IV

What does it mean to rethink history and anthropology as *disciplines of modernity*, bearing the archival tracks of its protocols and procedures?[36] Beginning with the Enlightenment and Romanticism, historical and anthropological knowledges each appeared as mutually if variously shaped by overarching distinctions between the "primitive/native" and the "civilized/modern." It followed that the wide-ranging dynamic of empire and nation, race and reason, and analytical and hermeneutical orientations underlay the fraught emergence of anthropology and history as institutionalized enquiries in the second half of the nineteenth century. And so too, across much of the twentieth century and through its wider upheavals, it was by attempting uneasily to break with these genealogies yet never fully even escaping their impress that these enquiries staked their claims as modern disciplines. This entailed especially their discrete expressions of time and space, culture and change, tradition and modernity. Unsurprisingly, the mutual makeovers of history and anthropology since the 1970s have thought through the formidable conceits of both these knowledges while reconsidering questions of theory and method, object and subject, and the archive and the field. As we noted, the newer emphases have imaginatively articulated issues of historical consciousness and marginal communities, colony and nation, and empire and modernity. Yet, such valuable departures have often also been accompanied by an uncertain reproduction of the oppositions between power and difference, authority and alterity, even as the haunting antinomies between the "savage/native" and the "civilized/modern" have found mutating expressions within emergent hierarchies of otherness.

All of this underlies anthropology and history as constitutively contradictory, necessarily split, and formatively contended disciplines of modernity. As archive and practice, these disciplinary formations have at once inscribed and unraveled modernity's traces and tracks. Indeed, abiding antinomies between static, traditional communities and dynamic, modern societies have played a crucial role in exactly these scenarios. Three points stand out. First, underlying the disciplinary formations of anthropology and history, the broad binary alluded to above has articulated other enduring oppositions between ritual and rationality, myth and history, community and state, magic and the modern, East and West, and emotion and reason. Second, as salient imprints of developmental-temporal projections of universal-natural history as well as singular-spatial pathways of an exclusive-Western modernity such antinomian procedures and oppositions have not only sought to name and describe but to objectify and reshape the subjects of their desire and despair. Third, the actual elaborations of the pervasive separations between enchanted/traditional cultures and disenchanted/modern societies have imbued them with

contradictory value and contrary salience, including ambivalences, ambiguities, and excesses of authority and alterity. These contending attributes simultaneously straddle rationalist and historicist, progressivist and romantic, and analytical and hermeneutical dispositions; post-Enlightenment thought and non-Western scholarship; and the actions and apprehensions of subjects of modernity, at large. All this suggests that anthropological and historical knowledges, far from being easily autonomous academic enquiries, emerge densely embedded in the world, that is as *worlded*. They are, in a word, disciplines of modernity.

Notes

1 The text of this talk is derived from my distinct discussions – in the English and Spanish languages – across the last three decades. Some of these are indicated in the notes ahead. The essay has retained the informal style of the oral presentation.

2 See especially, Saurabh Dube, *Disciplines of Modernity: Archives, Histories, Anthropologies* (London, New York, and New Delhi: Routledge, 2022).

3 Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity: Time/Space, Disciplines, Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

4 See, for example, Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Brian Axel (ed.), *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview, 1992); Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Historical Anthropology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Saurabh Dube, "History, anthropology, and rethinking modern disciplines", in Mark Aldenferer (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 1-40. See also, K. S. Singh, *The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and his Movement*, 1874-1901 (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1966).

5 I register the distinction between the "functionalism" (of Malinowski) and "structural-functionalism" (of Radcliffe-Brown) as analytical procedures, but I also consider together the shared orientations of these traditions to temporality in the practice of anthropology. George Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 233-441.

6 Not only anthropological but historical writing also can set up a sharp separation between the principally dynamic time of modern subjects and the relatively static temporality of all others. Hans Medick, "'Missionaries in the rowboat?' Ethnological ways of knowing as a challenge to social history", in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 41-71.

7 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

8 Here I am engaging and extending the critical arguments of Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

9 On the notion of the "savage slot" of anthropology see, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Anthropology and the savage slot: The poetics and politics of the otherness," in Richard Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe:

School of American Research Press), pp. 17-44. On the "native niche" of the discipline see, Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time: Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

10 Saurabh Dube, "Anthropology, history, historical anthropology", in Dube (ed.), *Historical Anthropology*,

11 On this issue, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the artifice of history: Who speaks for 'Indian' pasts?", *Representations*, 37, 1992, 1-26; and Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and connection: Rethinking colonial African history", *American Historical Review*, 99, 1994, pp. 1519-1526.

12 The critical edge of my arguments notwithstanding, there is much to be learnt anew from all these different tendencies of history-writing. Specifically, the distinct entwining of hermeneutical and analytical impulses in different modes of historical endeavour requires especial attention.

13 Dube, *Stitches on Time*, particularly chapter 5.

14 See especially, Peter Redfield, *Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Dube, *Stitches on Time*.

15 Shail Mayaram, *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004); Yasmin Saikia, *Fragmented Memories: Struggling to Be Tai-Ahom in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Dube, *Stitches on Time*. See also, Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

16 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). See also, Ashis Nandy, "History's forgotten doubles", *History and Theory*, 34/1 1995: 44-66.

17 Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994);Saurabh Dube, *Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Rowena Robinson, *Conversion, Continuity, and Change: Lived Christianity in Southern Goa* (New Delhi: Sage, 1998); Veena Das, *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Prem Chowdhry, *The Veiled Woman: Shifting Gender Equations in Rural Haryana 1880-1980* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Malavika Kasturi, *Embattled Identities: Rajput Lineages and the Colonial State in Nineteenth-Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, and Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002). See also, Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

18 Ishita Banerjee-Dube, *Religion, Law and Power: Tales of Time in Eastern India, 1860-2000* (London: Anthem Press, 2007); Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press,

1997); Dube, *Untouchable Pasts; David* Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); See also, Anand Pandian, "Securing the rural citizen: The anti-Kallarmovement of 1896", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42, 1, 2005, 1-39.

19 For a detailed discussion see, Saurabh Dube, "Terms that bind: Colony, nation, modernity", in Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Postcolonial Passages: Contemporary History-writing on India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6-14.

20 Elsewhere, I have discussed the tensions between the somewhat singular renderings of colonialism in postcolonial scholarship, on the one hand, and the innate analytical privilege accorded to continuities between Indian regimes and British rule in influential historical work (as represented by the writings of Christopher Bayly, for example), on the other. Rather than merely taking sides, such tensions are productive to ponder. Dube, *Stitches on Time*. See also, C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

21 Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Other studies in this domain include: Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004); Antoinette M. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

22 Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labour, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, C.1800-1947* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). See also, Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

23 K. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999);Pamela Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ishita Banerjee Dube, *Divine Affairs: Pilgrimage, Law and the State in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2001); David W. Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: The Nattukottai Chettiars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar, c. 1850-1940* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003); Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (London: Anthem Press, 2002); Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and*

Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forest, Frontiers and Wildness in Western India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ann Gold and Bhoju Ram Gujar, *In the Time of Trees and Sorrows: Nature, Power, and Memory in Rajasthan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

24 Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); A. R. Venkatachalapathy, *In Those Days there was No Coffee: Writings on Cultural History* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006); Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

25 Martha Kaplan, "Panopticon in Poona: An essay on Foucault and colonialism", Cultural Anthropology, 10/1, 1995, 85-98; Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Richard S. Smith, *Rule by Records: Land Registration and Village Custom in Early British Panjab* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

26 Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Mathew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Ian Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, C. 1756-1905* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*; Satadru Sen, *Disciplining Punishment: Colonialism and Convict Society in the Andaman Islands* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

27 For instance, Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

28 An important role has been played here by the probing of disciplinary links with the colonial archive. Dube, *Disciplines of Modernity*; Tony Ballantyne, "Rereading the archive and opening up the nation-state: Colonial knowledge of South Asia", in Antoinette M. Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 102-121.

29 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

30 Pandey, *Remembering Partition*; Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). See also, Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (New

Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

31 Consider the emphases of, for instance, Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Christopher Pinney, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*(London: Reaktion Books, 2004); Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*; and Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin, 1998).

32 The literature is vast. At the same time, major tendencies in the work on popular nationalism within subaltern studies and related intellectual endeavours are discussed in Dube, *Stitches on Time*; and Dube, "Terms that Bind", 14-20.

33 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

34 For instance, Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Anupama Roy, *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2005).

35 Elaborations of these issues are contained in Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Saurabh Dube, *After Conversion: Cultural Histories of Modern India* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2010); Saurabh Dube and Ishita Banerjee-Dube (eds.), *Unbecoming Modern: Colonialism, Modernity, Colonial Modernities*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2019); Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2010).

36 For wider discussions of these questions see, particularly, Dube, *Disciplines of Modernity*. See also, Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

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Debal K. Singha Roy

AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION, LAND REFORMS AND CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

Against the backdrop of transition of agrarian society of India from colonialism to post colonialism and thereafter to post neoliberalism this paper endeavours to explin the broad processes of transition in the agrarian social structure in India as has taken shape with the introduction new agrarian policies and land reforms. It elucidates the interlinkages between the land reform and economic development within the framework of agrarian questions. The paper is presented in six interrelated sections. Section I is conceptual one discussing in brief the basic concerns of agrarian questions. Section II discusses the historical trajectory of agrarian transition in India . In section III the emerging facets of peoples movements and land reforms are discussed fovusing on West Bengal. In chapter IV and V the emerging aggarian scenario and agrarian social stracture at the grassrotts of West Bengal are presented. Section VI is concluding one.

Keywords: *Land reform, agrarian question, peoples movements, capitalism, operation barga.*

I. The Conceptual Backdrop:

Capitalism has emerged out of industrial revolution, got its scope expanded with the expansion of industrialisation. It argued that traditionally capitalism has evaded direct investment in agriculture due to several traditional barriers like those of limited cycle of production and profits, limited scale of operation, dependency on weather etc. However over the centuries both capitalism and agriculture have changed their forms and directions of transitions within the newly emerged techno economic eco-systems. Hence to overcome the barriers of traditional agriculture capitalism has focused on agribusiness by way of controlling the pre- and post-production activities, even the production process through mechanization of agriculture. In recent years corporatization through expansion of capitalism in agriculture has brought new dynamics therein by way of affecting the lives and livelihood of agricultural work force and the agrarian questions therein.

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The agrarian question which was initially raised by in 1899 by Karl Kautsky, as to "What is the relationship between the structure of agriculture and the quality of life for producers and rural communities, or how does capitalism take hold of agriculture in wake of increasing corporatization of agriculture in Europe at that time, has acquired added significance among the academia in context of corporatization of agriculture under economic neoliberalism in the contemporary world (Kautsky, K.1899). Terry Byres (1995), Bernstein (1996) and many other have refreshed the agrarian question debate. Importantly they have focused on the poor and the developing countries. To Byres (1995) agrarian question is concerned with the 'continuing existence in the countryside of poor countries of substantive obstacles to unleashing of the forces capable of generating economic development, both inside and outside agriculture. It represents a failure of accumulation to proceed adequately in the countryside – that impinging powerfully upon the town; an intimately related failure of class formation in the countryside, appropriate to that accumulation; and a failure of the state to mediate successfully those transitions which we may encapsulate as the agrarian transition (Byres 1995: 509).

To Byres (2003) agrarian transformation is a perquisite for growth and development of a country, and that social class differentiation within the peasantry will produce capitalist farmers, and that this category of farmers will bring about capitalist development by generating surplus and developing markets. To him agrarian transformation would be facilitated by land reforms which may be conceptualized from the 'social justice' and 'productivity perspective'. He points out that in short term redistributive land reforms, though appear just, very small farmsizes are counterproductive when seen from the angle of the need for an 'unleashing of theforces capable of generating economic development'; that with the economies of scale of capitalist agriculture, linked to investments in new technology and machinery, larger farms become more productive by far than small farms, and that high-growth capitalist economy as both historically progressive and also as potentially leading to better conditions for the erstwhile peasants who may, eventually, find a better future in the modern non-agricultural economy than that offered by farming miniature plots within a stagnant, backward, agrarian economy (Byres 2003, cf. LERCHE, J. 2013 382-83).

Bernstein (1996) however argued that the agrarian question of labour has, classically been linked to the struggle for productive land reforms against feudal lords, which would benefit parts of the peasantry, and that now land reform is no longer an attainable goal in the wake of present-day capitalist development. With the arrival of neoliberal globalization, Bernstein (2006) further argues that now main agrarian issue has been the struggle by 'the peasantry' is against the international corporate food regime and that the foundation upon which the classical perspective on the agrarian question was based has changed and that political economy the 'agrarian question of capital'

has been either been solved or bypassed (Bernstein 2006, 450–1), that the pre-capitalist peasant and landlord classes have, by now, been almost universally transformed into capitalist farmers, petty commodity producers and 'classes of labour', and all are existing within capitalist social relations (Bernstein1996, 42–3, cf. LERCHE, J. 2013: 386). McMichael (2010) also argues that today the main struggle of the peasantry is the struggle 'against the international corporate food regime., and that in the wake of WTO agreements, the liberalization of agricultural trade, the rolling back of the state from its prior role of supporting national agricultural development has become a reality. Herein the 'class specific contradiction among peasants are getting transcended, and all types of peasant agriculture are becoming uneconomical (cf. LERCHE, J. 2013: 385)

India has been a land of enactment of rigorous land reform laws, green revolution induced capitalism in agriculture, and arrival of economic neoliberalism. As against these backdrops agrarian question is whether land reform has been able to unleash the agrarian work force capable to generate economic development? Whether it has given the peasantry the required capacity to accumulate and further reinvest in agriculture? What has been the role of the state in promoting such transformation? Has the relevance of agrarian question come to an end in the wake of economic neoliberalism? Do the agrarian transformations resolve the old agrarian conflict and bring about cross class/caste/ ethnic alliances at the grass roots?. This article will address these questions

II. Agrarian Transition in India

The agrarian society of India has borne witness to distinctive patterns of transition during the periods of colonialism, post colonialism and post economic liberalism. The colonial administration prominently introduced the intermediary system of land ownership through the Permanent Settlement of 1793 for the assured collection of land rents. Besides Zamindari, it also introduced Ryotwari and the Mahaldwari systems. The Zamindari covering 57%, Ryotwari covering 38% and the Mahalwari covering 5% of the privately owned agricultural land. These became the major land tenure systems by the middle of the 19th century colonial India.(NCA 1976: 76).Through these processes in all areas the colonial rulers produced layers intermediaries and unequal patterns of landownership. Furthermore by bringing in colonial industrial products, machines and technologies they also destroyed the traditional village and cottage industries of colonised India. However these neither paved the way for capitalist development in agriculture, in strict sense of the term nor industrialisation in the country. Rather these brought in sustained poverty, and unemployment and livelihood insecurity for the vast segments of rural and agrarian population. The plights of the rural poor was aggravated further with natural calamities like floods, draughts and manmade famines.

Land reforms and its failure: Post Independent India experienced the introduction of radical land reforms through the process of planned development of the country with centralised planning, control and command economy of the state, and increasing aspirations for a socialist society. Founded on a welfare state philosophy it emphasised on development with justice during the periods of early independence. The land reform, as initiated in the first Five Year Plan itself and introduced by all the Indian states and union territories, envisaged for the abolition of Zamindary/intermediary system of land ownership, per household ceiling restriction on landholding, distribution of surplus vested land among the landless, tenural security of tenants and sharecroppers and consolidation of land holding

However, the form and extent of implementation of land reform was not uniform in all the states in India. Vested interests,political pressures, lobbing by the land lords and their alliance with the local police and administration, lack of political will of the state to implement theselaws on the one hand, and lack of knowledge about these laws among the intended beneficiaries, lack of theirorganisational strength and collective mobilisation on the other made the most of the provisions of land reform ineffective in most places. The land owner also took the benefits of the loopholes of land reform laws to evade land reforms and to terminate the sharecroppers and tenants from the land easily. Though intermediaries were abolished, large scale malafide land transfers, eviction of share croppers and tenants from land emerged to be important agrarian concerns(Singharoy 1990).

Radical Peasant movements: As against these backdrops as the rural poverty, unemployment, landlessness and livelihood security of vast section of rural people became rampant in late sixties radical peasant up rise, widely known as the Naxalbari movement, took place in the Naxalbari police station of Darjeeling District of West Bengal to identify, forcefully confiscate, occupy and distribute surplus vested lands among the land less poor by the radicalised local committee of the CPI(M). This movement quickly spread in many part of India including Orissa, Bihar, present Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra getting its support base among the landless rural poor, small peasants, and among a section of middle class and urban intellectual. Though this outburst of radical agrarian movement was seen as the law and order issue by the state, movement also compelled the state to rethink its land reform policy.The government revitalised the land reform in 1970s and formulated a national guideline to bring down the per household ceiling restriction in land holding to 17 acres, to ensure tenurial security by making land tenure of tenants hereditary, to ensure fast distribution of surplus vested land, and to attach the rural poor peasants with the programme implementation of land reform programme at the grassroots (NCA 1976: 76).

Green Revolutions: While radical peasant movements and its rapid

spread shook the process of agrarian transition in the Eastern and some parts of southern and western states in India in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the agrarian drama of Northern and some parts of southern India started unfolding diverse transition. The conventional agricultural technology was unable to meet the challenge of the rapidly worsening food shortage. In 1964 India borrowed as much as 10 million food grains from USA. The Food problem became so grave that many foreign experts predicted that million would starve in India to death in 1970. It was in the midst of such dire warning that India evolved in 1965 the new strategy of agricultural Development, widely popularised a the Green Revolution (Maheswari 1985:76). The Ford foundation and Indian agricultural scientists led the process for intensification of agriculture through extensive use of advanced agricultural technologies, especially in Punjab, Western UP, Haryana, and selected areas of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The theme of land reform which figured prominently in the first decade after independence later receded into the background. When the Green Revolution arrived the policy makers quickly persuaded themselves that new technology had the key to the problem of slow economic growth and economic inequalities in the rural society; but within few years this proved to be an illusion as the Green Revolution remain confined to few pockets of northern and southern states and small number of crops and selected farming. However Green Revolution brought phenomenal changes in the form and extent of use of modern technologies, agricultural productivity, commodification of agriculture and also produced class differentiation in the pre-existing agrarians social structure. It produced courageous rich farmers who invested in modern agricultural technologies, got indulged progressively in the accumulation of profits and its reinvestment in agriculture. Scholars started intensively discussing the changes within the framework of changing modes of production in Indian agriculture from pre-existing feudal to semi feudal, or pre capitalists or capitalistic ones. The elements like pre-existing social organisation of production and change therein, change in the labour processes, and decline of family farms etc. Are put in place to illustrate these arguments. While the modes of production debate remain inconclusive, the dominant argument of social formation in Indian agriculture occupied a prominent place till late 1980s.

Economic Neolibralism and Farmers Agitation: India experienced a phenomenal shift in its economic policy since early 1990s with the adoption of structural adjustment programme. It paved the way for liberalisation of India economy going away from the previous paths of import restriction and export promotion and control and command economy. The age-old agricultural policy related to agricultural subsidies in water, electricity, fertiliser, and other technologies took a reverse turn. The corporate intervention in agriculture became a reality. Experts asserted that with the GAT and GATTs under with neoliberal globalization, governments were to compromise in exercising its

power to implement policies on agriculture. Farmers' movement especially the Karnataka Rajya Rayutu Samgam (KRRS) came out against the government policies on globalisationof agriculture. It embarked on a series of protests during the 1990s under the leadership of Nanjundaswamy. They organised rally at the Boat Club in 1992 against the Dunkel Draft, attacked agribusiness multinational corporation (MNC) Cargill's office in Bangalore in 1992, and launched the Beeja Satyagraha campaign (freedom to save seeds). It further launched the global campaign, Operation Cremate Monsanto in 1998, where farmers' movements from France and Indonesia joined the KRRS in burning Monsanto's GM seeds in field trials. It organised the Bandi Yatra (Cart March) where farmers' movements of the country jointly threw away imported goods into the sea from the port in Mumbai as a symbol of protest against free trade agreements (FTAs). The Intercontinental Caravan (ICC)organised by the KRRS in 1999 was a landmark event where 400 farmers from India, along with representatives from other movements travelled across Europe staging protests at different sites, with slogans like "our resistance is as transnational as capital" (Featherstone 2003: 405). These were global campaigns, designed and planned solely by Nanjundaswamy to resist globalisation.(52). The Bharatya Kishan Union from Western UP, Punjab and Haryana supported most of the initiatives of the KRRS. However the Swatkati Sanghatana in Maharastra supported vehemently the initiatives of the Indian state for economic liberalisation.

Importantly West Bengal showed a contradictory trend. The United Left Front government of West Bengal was conventionally known for its anti-globalisation stunt. However it took pro corporate stand by taking initiative of acquiring huge plots of agricultural land for Special Economic Zone in Nandigram and for the Tata Motor Factory in Singur. The All India Trinamool Congress of West Bengal launched prolonged campaign against the ULF initiative. Gradually anti-globalisation movements became people's movement in West Bengal and it brought down 35 years of unbroken Communist rule in West Bengal in 2011.

III. Land Reform and Operation Barga and Peoples Movements in West Bengal

West Bengal has got a long history of peasant movements and land reform. The demands for 'Land to Tillers' and two third of the produced as share of the share croppers were first propagated by All India Kishan Sabha in mid 1930s. Importantly the demands for two-third of the produce as share for the share croppers, who were forming more than 45% of the agrarian household in undivided Bengal, was endorsed by the Famine Commission 1938. Gradually the demand for two third (tebhaga) share for sharecroppers became very popular among the share croppers. As a Kishan Shaba supported candidate own the election from the Dinajpur district of West Bengal in 1946, demands for land to the tillers and two-third share for the share croppers got phenomenal

momentum in that area. Under the leadership of Bengal Kishan Sabha sharecroppers harvested and stacked the ripe paddy in their own court yards as against the will of the land lords. With the complaints of the land lords as the police came to arrest the sharecroppers and confiscate the stacked paddy, the sharecroppers objected to it. With brutal police action and firing on 14th of February 1947 in the Khanpur village of Dinajpur District of undivided Bengal 14 sharecroppers were killed and hundreds were injured. This movement spread quickly in many parts of Bengal. Though this movement was crashed as a law and order issue of the colonial state and administration, many of the ideas of land reform as emerged out of this movement were incorporated in the land reform programmes of Independent India .

The West Bengal Land Reform Act 1955 endorsed 60% share for the share croppers. It also spoke for the abolition of intermediary system of land ownership, ceiling restriction to 25 acres per household and distribution of surplus vested lands among the land less. However most of the noble provisions of these land reform act remained in the law book only till late 1960s. The aspirations and expectations of the Tebhaga Movement remained mostly unfulfilled. In the existing gap between enactment of land reform laws and their implementation, the powerful landowners took recourse to malafide land transfer. Eviction of sharecroppers went unhindered. The notified vested lands remained in the possession of the big land owners. All these resulted into continuing concentration of the agricultural population to the lower stratum of agrarian hierarchy (Singharoy 1990:60-61).

While the economic condition of the poor peasantry was deteriorating, the political happenings of West Bengal took a new turn in late 1960s. In February 1967 the fourth general election brought the 20 years unbroken rule by the Congress to an end , and an alliance of 14 political parties came to the power with two Communist parties-CPI and CPI(M) as its major constituents. Importantly the CPI and CPI (M) promised for the rigorous implementation of land reform laws. However aftercoming into power these parties started following the routinized approach for the implementation of land reform laws. The CPI (M) Darjeeling District Committee expressing disagreement with the routinized strategy of the Left Front Government radicalized their ideology and started to organize the peasants on a militant footing. They initiated direct action by the peasantry for identification, confiscation and distribution and taking possession of lands through their local Peasant Committees. These got lots of popular supports from the below especially among the rural poor, unemployed, poor peasant, sharecroppers and also among a section of educated middle class urban intellectuals. In the process as the authority of local administration gradually started getting ignored, they started aligning with the local *jotedars* (big land owners) to prevent the 'unlawful activities' of the quickly grown Peasant Committees. Police set up several camps to block their activities and started regular patrolling, indiscriminate arrest and harassments

of the poor peasantry. As the police intensified their activities in Naxalbari Thana of this district on 24th May 1967 local peasantry confronted the police with local arms like bows, arrows and clubs etc. On that eventful day 11 peasants and one police personal were killed and hundreds were injured. This Naxalbari movement spread like wild fire across Bengal, and in many parts of India quickly (SinghaRoy 2004:84-85).

The Naxalite adopted the strategy of Guerilla warfare, declared several liberated areas, Red zones. On 1st May 1969 the political organization of the Naxalbari movement was formed with the name called the 'Communist Party of India (Marxist-Lenist). The Gapiballvpur area of Midnapur district emerged to be a strong hold of this movement. It formed Orissa, Bengal, and Bihar Coordination Committee and initiated extremist actions through guerilla warfare and annihilation of class enemy programme. However in March 1971 with the collapse of the United Front Government governor's rule was imposed in West Bengal and this movement was crashed quickly in West Bengal, though this movement went underground and continued in many parts of India including in West Bengal in radical form (For details see SinghaRoy 2019).

In the wake Bangladesh war of independence and formation of a popular Congress government in West Bengal in 1972 the land reform programme of West Bengal was radicalised keeping in view the guideline issued by the central government. However the process of implementation of land reform entered into a new phase with the formation of United Left Front government 1977 in West Bengal. It paved the way for strict implementation for land reform. It quickly identified the surplus vested land, distributed *patta* (surplus vested lands) among the land less and semi land less people and stood for a movement for the Operation Barga. Through the Operation Barga it ensured 75 % produce to the share croppers, right to inheritance for the tenants, mass mobilization for the implementation of land reform under ULF leadership at the grass roots.

The ULF government was very successful in bring 1682193 cultivators under the Operation Barga Programme covering 31% of the cultivators of the state in 2001. According to West Bengal Development Report by 2004 about 1.39 million acres of land have been acquired by the ULF government of which 1.4 million acres were distributed among 2.74 million *pattadars* (known as beneficiaries) in West Bengal. Overall the land reform programme (both tenant registration and land distribution) is estimated to have covered 41.3 % of the rural population of the state by 2002. However the average land received by *pattadar* is rather small, only 0.39acres per house hold. Importantly of the total *patta* distributed 37.1% has gone among the Schedule Caste, 19.3 % among the Schedule Tribes and 43% among the others. So far as the certificate for *Barga* is concerned 30.5% has gone to the Schedule Castes, 11% to the Schedule Tribes and 58 % to others (Government of West Bengal 2004: 47-49).

Importantly the agenda of land reform that was a priority in 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and in early 2000, has gradually shifted into background in the wake of globalization and the economic neoliberalism. It was amply clear that the ULF government was against globalization and the Structural Adjustment Programme of the then Central governments. However since early 2005 the ULF government started showing interest in the private investment in the state. It approved proposal for especial economic zone in Nandigram in and Tata Motor plant in Singur.

In 2006 the seventh United Left Front (ULF) government created the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, and a new car factory for Tata Motors was proposed for Singur in the Houghly district, requiring close to 1,000 acres of land. Local peasants organized protests under the auspices of the Krishi Jamin Surakha Samiti (Committee to Protect Agricultural Land). The Trinamool Congress Party (TMC), which was the main opposition party at the time, took a lead in organizing the peasants in their struggle. Large sections of participants in Singur movement were peasants, including the owner cultivators, share-croppers both registered and unregistered, landless agricultural labourers and village artisans. Participants in the movement were mostly from the TMC, along with the poor agriculturalists who has been traditionally UF supporters. The agitation took the form of large-scale mass mobilizations and succeeded in generating a wide public and media reaction against Tata Motors. In the wake of increasing opposition and hostility against the Tata Motots' Nano factory, the factory was relocated to Gujarat by the Tatas. The movement against the Tata factory created a political divide between agriculture and industry and between rural peasants and urban workers, undermining the ULF government's support base.

The TMC under the leadership of Ms Mamata Banrejee has replaced the 35 year old ULF government of West Bengal in 2011. Over the years, institutionalized mass mobilizations have remained an integral strategy of the TMC. It has also simultaneously expanded its support base among the lower-caste groupings, religious minorities and women by initiating a variety of development initiatives. The Assembly election of 2021 demonstrated the mass appeal of its ideology and aspirations. In this context the TMC, has, for now, displaced the Left: the key fulcrum in this emerging political landscape is populist appeal rather than left–right political contention (SinghaRoy 2022).

IV. The Emerging Agrarian Scenario of West Bengal

Though the TMC has been successful in returning the land among the peasants of Singur, land reform has not remained a core agenda for the TMC in West Bengal as land reform has reached to a saturation stage there. Land reform, however has made significant impacts on the agrarian social structure of West Bengal. The agrarian society is also simultaneously experiencing increasing population pressure. While land reform has brought decentralization

in land holding, increasing population pressure has contributed to declining land man ratio of the state. In the following section we shall be discussing emerging agrarian scenario of West Bengal.

*Declining Land-man ratio and Increasing Marginal***Holding:** Over the decades land man ratio has significantly declined in West Bengal. According to the NSSO report 2018-19 the average per household land holding has been to the extent of 0.17 hectare, and excluding the land less household this is 0.19 hectare only as against the national average of 0.51 and 0.56 hectare respectively. In West Bengal land less households comprise 11.6% household as against the national average of 8.2% of the total households (See Table 1)

Table 1: Land man Ratio in West Bengal

State/Group of NE States/Group of UTs	Average area (ha.) owned per household	Average area (ha.) owned per household excluding landless households	percentage of landless rural households
West Bengal	0.170	0.193	11.6
all India	0.512	0.558	8.2

Source: NSSO 2018-19

Related to the declining land-man ratio, there has been the proliferation of the marginal holding in West Bengal. As shown in Table 2, in 1970-71 marginal landowning household comprised 61.2% of the rural households covering an area of 24.8% of the operational area of the state. In 2018-19 the proportion of marginal cultivators has increased to 97.5% of the household owning 79.5% of the operational area rural West Bengal as against the national average of 83.5% and 34.5% respectively. The small, semi medium and the medium cultivators form 2.2%, 0.4% and 0.01% of the households and cover 15.2%, 0.4% and 0.6% of the lands of the state. There is no large cultivators in West Bengal. While at the national level the small, medium and the large cultivators cover significant areas (For details see table 2

Table 2 Changes in percentage distribution of operational holdings and area operated by size categories of operational holdings in rural areas in West Bengal and at all India Level

State	Year	marginal		small		semi-medium		medium		large	
		No of Holding	Area Operated	No of Holding	Area Operated	No of Holding	Area Operated	No of Holding	Area Operated	No of Holding	Area Operated
WEST	*18-19*	*97.5*	*79.5*	2.2	*15.2*	.4	*4.7*	0.01	*.6*	*0.0*	*0.0*
BENGAL	*91-92*	80.7	40.0	13.4	30.7	5.0	22.1	0.9	7.3	0.0	0.0
	70-71	61.2	24.8	22.8	28.9	2.9	31.1	3.0	14.6	0.1	0.6
INDIA	*18-19*	83.5	*34.5*	9.9	24.9	4.8	22.0	1. 5	14.7	0.2	3.9
	12-13	75.4	29.8	10.0	23.5	5.0	22.1	1.9	18.8	0.2	5.8
	91-92	62.8	15.6	17.8	18.7	12.0	24.1	6.1	26.4	1.3	15.2
	70-71	45.8	9.2	22.4	14.8	17.7	22.5	11.1	30.5	3.1	23.0

Source: NSSO 2018-2019

Significant Presence of Sharecroppers: Despite the predominance of marginal holding, share cropping has remained an integral part of agricultural operation in West Bengal. As shown in Table 3 below,tenant holding comprises 29.5% of the total holding of the state occupying more than 22% of the operational holding of therein, while these are to the extent of 17.3% and 13% respectively at the all India level.

Table 3: Percentage of tenant holdings and percentage of area leased-in West Bengal 2018-19

State/Group of NE States/Groupof UTs	percentage of tenantholdings	percentage of area leased-in tototal area of the operationalholding
West Bengal	29.5	22.3
all India	17.3	13.0

Source: NSSO 2018-19

Casualization of Work force: Decline in work participation in secured domain of activities, and increasing participation in insecure domain, not getting sufficient work, seasonal migration etc are important indicators of casualization workforce. In agriculture these widely reflected in declining in the category of cultivators and increasing in the category of casual agricultural labourers.

West Bengal has shown significant decline of the category of cultivators and increase of the category of agricultural labourers contributing to casualization of workforce. Table number 4 shows that in 1951 the cultivators constituted 49.67% of rural household, while in 1971 it declined to 43.7%, 1991 it declined to 38.40%, in 2000 to 19.18% and in 2011 it further declined to 14.72%. On the other hand agricultural labouers who formed 18.97% of rural household increased to 35% of the rural household in 1971. Work participation in agriculture as labourers is characterized by casual and seasonal nature of work This increase is linked to large scale eviction of sharecroppers from their land who ultimately joined the rural workforce as agricultural labourers. In 1981 the agricultural labourers formed 32.9% of the labour force and in 2011 they formed 29.31% of the agricultural labour force. The marginal decline ofthe agricultural labourers was largely caused by the land distribution and the Operation Barga programme of the government of the West Bengal. However the proportion of agricultural labourers have remained significantly higher her in West Bengal than the category of cultivators in last two decades.

Table 4: Occupation wise Distribution of Rural Workers in West Bengal

Occupation	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	Total(000)	%
Cultivator	49.67	51.40	43.07	41.28	38.40	19.18	5117	14.72
Agri. Lab	18.97	20.24	35.00	32.95	32.27	24.97	10189	29.31
Non Agriculturalist	31.36	28.36	21.93	25.77	29.33	55.85	19451	55.96
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	34757	100

Source: Census of India: 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Table 5: Annual Growth Rates of Rural Workers (Occupation wise) of West Bengal in Different Census Decades

Occupations	1951-61	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-01
Cultivators	4.65	-1.19	1.99	3.44	-1.01
Ag. Lab	5.11	8.18	1.77	4.15	3.93
Non Agriculturalist	2.80	-1.95	4.85	6.44	24.27
All	4.15	4.94	2.54	4.44	8.00

It is important that due to declining man-land ratio, and phenomenal proliferation of marginal cultivators, a huge chunk of rural workforce has shifted from agriculture to non-agriculture sector. In West Bengal theproportion of non-agriculturist in the rural workforce has increased from 31.36% in 1951 to 55.96% in2011. In the period between 1961 and 1991 there was a decline of work participation in non-agricultural sector. This is mostly because of the land distribution program and Operation Barga program of the government of West Bengal.

Along with the shifting of labour force from agriculture to non-agriculture sector there has been thephenomenon of further casualization of workforce in the form of increasing quantum of marginal workers and declining of the quantum of main workers in West Bengal. As shown in Table 6 the main workers who formed 30.23 % of the workforce in 1991, in 2011 they formed 26.3% of the workforce. For the male workers it has declined from 50.56% to 43.52% during the same period. For female work participation as main workers has marginally declined from 7.96 % to 7.90 % during this period. So far as their work participation as marginal workers are concerned in 1991 only 1.9% of the workers were the marginal workers(getting less than 180 days of work in a year), it increased to 12.15% in 2011. For the male workers it increased from 0.74% to 13% and for female from 3.29% to 10.9% during the same period. This figure indicate a quantum increase of unemployment, underemployment and poverty for a section of agricultural workers in West Bengal who are living at the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy.

Table 6: Percentage of Main and Marginal Workers by Sex in West Bengal

Year	Main Workers			Marginal Workers		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1991	30.23	50.56	7.96	1.96	0.74	3.29
2001	28.75	47.32	8.86	8.03	6.91	9.22
2011	26.43	43.52	7.90	12.15	13.0	10.9

Source: Census of India, West Bengal, GOI

Migration: For long West Bengal was known as a favourite destination of the migrant workers from Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan and from many other states. However in recent years it has emerged to be a major senders in other states. 'Owing to squeeze on farm incomes, migration towards urban centres within the state as well as outside

the state has seen a quantum jump. Consistent decline of job opportunities in conventional centres like Kolkata, Asansol, Durgapur and others have started pushing away the inter-state migrants to other states. Based on the analysis of the 1991, 2001 and 2011 scholar points out that West Bengal has gone from being a net recipient of migrants to a net sender of migrants As per 2011 census West Bengal has 6.1 cores of working-age of 15-59 years population that comprises 67% of state's populationas against the national average of 63% . Importantly 34.4% population (31.4 million) in West Bengal experienced spatial mobility according to the 2011 Census. It is higher than the last two decades and of the total migrants, 92.4% (29.1 million) are intra-state (intra-district 22.8 million and inter-district 6.2 million) and remaining 7.6% (2.38 million) are inter-state. In recent years interstate migration has significantly increased especially for the employment reasons as 'the state is failing to create enough jobs for its own working-age population. Due to limited industrial growth in the state, people are moving out to other states even if states are far away' (Ansary, R., And Siddiqui, M. Z. 2021:102)).

Poverty and Indebtedness**:** However there have a steep decline of rural population living below the poverty line in West Bengal from 38.2% in 2005 to 22.5% in 2011-2012 (Govt of India 2021). According to Niti Aayog in 2022-23 nearly15.15% of the rural population (head count ratio), 42.26% of the rural population of the state (intensity ratio) were multi-dimensionally poor (Niti Aayaog 2021)

In West Bengal though a good section of people has been able to come above the poverty line, they have not been capacitated for surplus generation in the agrarian society. This has been reflected in the outstanding loans of the marginal cultivators in rural West Bengal

In West Bengal (See Table 7) the average amount of outstanding loan per agricultural household is Rs 26, 452 as against the national average of Rs. 74,121.

Table 7: Average amount (Rs.) of outstanding loan per agricultural household and percentage of indebted agricultural households

State/Group of NE States/Group of UTs	average amount (Rs.) ofoutstanding loan peragricultural household	percentage of indebted agricultural households
West Bengal	26,452	50.8
all India	74,121	50.2

Source: NSSO 2018-19

In West Bengal 50.8% of the agricultural households are indebted as against the national average of 50.2% (See Table 8) . Importantly 91 % of the marginal cultivators, 7. 4% small, 1.4% semi medium, 0.1% medium are indebted as against the all India level 63.6% marginal , 18.4% small, 12% semi medium and 5.4% medium and 0.6 large cultivators are indebted. As the sizes

of land holding decreases proportion of household with indebtedness also increases in West Bengal .

Table 8: Incidence of Indebtedness based on size of land possessed

State	% of Marginal Indebted	% of Small Indebted	% of Semi-Medium Indebted	% of Medium Indebted	% of Large Indebted
9. West Bengal	91.1	7.4	1.4	0.1	0
All India	63.6	18.4	12.0	5.4	0.6

Source: NSSO 2018-19

Table 9: Percentage distribution of amount of outstanding loans by sources of loan

State	Institutional sources						Non institutional sources				**All**
	scheduled commercial Bank	regional rural bank	co-operative society	co-operative bank	SHG (bank	Other institutional Agencies	Agricultural moneylender	Professional moneylenders	Relatives and friends	Other noninstitutional agencies	
West Bengal	42.7	2.8	9.4	5.7	12.4	5.6	0.8	7.5	7.7	5.6	100.0
all India	44.5	8.1	6.7	3.9	3.2	3.2	6.5	14.0	5.7	4.5	100.

Source: NSSO 2018-19

In rural West Bengal 78. 6% loans are taken from institutional and remaining 21.4 taken from non-institutional sources against the national average of 66.4% institutional and 33. 6 % non-institutional sources. It appears that non institutional sources of getting loans are active both at the state and the national level

Growth Rate in Agriculture

West Bengal has experienced significant degree of mechanization and green revolution since early 1980s onward in many areas of the state and in major crops production. West Bengal's growth rate in agriculture is 5.26% as against the national average of 3.3% in2020-21, and it contributes 22.2 % of the state GDP as against 18% of the national average. Agricultural sector is growing in West Bengal. The gross state value added of agriculture and allied sector at current prices was Rs 11710585 lakh in 2011-12, it has increased to Rs 27083612 lakhs in 2020-21 showing a constant growth in this sector(GOI 2021:28). So far as the food grain production is concerned in the year 2019-20 a grain with an average of 2904 kg per hectare which is far above the national average of 2343 kg per hectare

Table 10 Change in Agricultural Production in West Bengal (Lakh MT)

Crops	1980-81	1986-87	1988-89	1999-00	2000-01
Rice	74.66	84.63	133.16	137.6	124.28
Foodgrains	82.82	96.26	143.67	148.46	138.15

Source: Economic Review, various issues, Government of West Bengal

West Bengal however has not given birth to the capitalist agriculture because of predominantly tiny sizes of land holding, high level of population concentration and gradual withdrawal of the large farmers form the process of commercialisation of agricultural activities. Our empirical data collected from four villages with 450 households of South DinajpurDistrict of West Bengal will strengthen this points

V. Emerging Agrarian Social: Structure at the Grassroots

South Dinajpur is located in the northern part of west Bengal. It is surrounded by Bangladesh Border from three sides. It has altogether 28% SC, 18% ST, Muslim 25%, Christian 2% population. The emerging agrarian social structure of the selected villages of this district has acquired stability after prolong tension and conflicts surrounding the implementation of land reforms. These villages have emerged to be occupationally diversified. Spread of literacy has been very high there with 100% rate of literacy among 8 years plus population. These villages are characterized by phenomenal access to ICTs, migration and a high degree of politicization of collective initiatives. Occupationally 98% of these village households belongs to the category of marginal and small cultivators including 18% sharecroppers holding Bargadar status under the Operation Barga programme, 22% cultivators cultivating lands under contact system**.**

Of the 450 households of these villages76 households have got directly impacted by the implementations of the land reform programme. Of these 76 households13 households were to give up surplus lands under celling restrictions. Initially they were under the rubric of six joint families. Due to land reform and several other reasons the number of these families have increased with decreasing sizes of land holdings. Similarly the numbers of families holding lands under Operation Barga and under the Patta distribution programme have also increased around doubly due to partition of their families. Currently of the total 36 households of these villages are the recipients of surplus vested lands(patta) (see Table 11) It has been but natural that sizes of per family land holding declined with the division of the families and the resultant division on land holding.

As it not economically viable to keep agricultural implements and required cattle to plough the land as self-cultivator, there has been an increasing phenomenon of getting the land cultivated through the contract system. An important sections of the marginal, small and medium cultivators employ contract cultivators (Chuktidars) for land cultivation as far as possible. Most of the contract cultivators use the family labour to work in their farm as owner/ semi owner cultivators. They employ advanced biotechnology and hired modern technology to get maximum out put from these pieces of land and usually get a higher yields

Table 11. Number of Households impacted by land reforms, and land cultivation under contract system

Sizes of land holding	Subjected to Land ceiling	Operation Barga	Got Patta (Surplus Vested lands	**No of Household impacted by land Reforms**	Taken land under Contract System	Give land under contact System	**Total**
Below 1 ha		11	36	**47**	20	7	**74**
1-2 ha		16		**16**		3	**19**
2-4 ha	2			**2**		-	**2**
4-7 ha	11			**11**		5	**16**
Total	13	27	36	**76**	20	15	**110**

Due to caste and cultural factors upper caste seldom participate in land cultivation. They predominantly employ either the hired labourers or contract sharecroppers for the for their land cultivation. Furthermore they have got associated with non-agricultural activities both within and around the village to further their economic interests. Many of the old big land owners are engaged in money lending at a higher rate of interest

While the small and medium upward looking land owners look for long term gain by investing in education of their children and buying commercial properties out side the village and investing in business, the hardworking enterprising marginal cultivators find an immediate gain and status enhancement in investing in village lands and maximizing opportunities out of it.

Relation between land Reform and Economic development: Whether land reform induced agrarian transformation has been able to unleash agrarian workforce to generate economic development both inside and outside agriculture?

For Large and Medium Land Owners: As the ceiling restriction has brought down higher land holding and concentration in land holding, the presence of large landowners owning 10 acres or more land has virtually disappeared from the scene in these villages. The medium category landowners are engaged in land cultivation employing hired labourers and contractual share croppers. Some as self-cultivators also employ modern technologies to a limited extent. Their previous status as jotedars are no more with them. Land reforms have converted the feudal land lords into petty producers. However it has brought down the scope of expansion of agriculture by their investment as most of them feel demotivated because of land reform. Even though they are engaged in agriculture, they see it as a source of 'side income'. These petty producers invest their proceeds in agi-business and in other business to generate profit from multiple sources. They stand far away from capitalist development in agriculture.

For the marginal and the small cultivators: They are not homogenous group in substantive terms as these are consisted of self-cultivators, non-

cultivation owners, share croppers, contractual cultivators, cultivators cum-service holders cum businessmen, marginal cultivators cum agricultural labourers etc. Many of the small cultivators have been able to generate surplus from business and been able to purchase land from other willing land owners. Though many of them hire casual labours, employ modern techniques on hiring basis, they only belong to the domain of petty producers. They have not been able to be the flag bearers of capital agriculture.

For landless: Land transfer among the landless has not been able to break the barriers of their marginality and below subsistence status. They are unable to go for capitalist or commercial farming due to tiny size of their land. They have come above the poverty line but not above to the extent to generate surplus. Since many of them have become migrant laborers, their dependency on landed gentry has reduced considerably. However they have emerged to be dependent on the political leader to become beneficiaries of the development schemes.

In general the agrarian scenario is characterized by phenomenal decline of patron-client relationship, the emergence of contractual relationship among the agrarian workforce, use advanced agricultural technology. However these has not been able to stop and substantiate use of the economic distress of agrarian labour force due increasing population pressure on agriculture, declining land man ratio, declining capacity of agriculture to produce employment and increasing inability to accommodate the over supply of supply of agrarian labour force. These have resulted into the shifting of rural work force to nonagricultural sector like trade, construction, manufacturing, transport etc and migration of a huge chunk of rural work force to urban areas both inside and outside the state.Though migration brings some immediate relief for the migrating members, these does not bring in a sustaining development agrarian society of rural Bengal as a whole.

VI. Conclusion:

The state of transition of agriculture in West Bengal come closure to Byre's (1996) observation on agrarian question. We find substantive 'obstacles to unleashing of the forces capable of generating economic development, both inside and outside agriculture; and this scenario represents a failure of accumulation to proceed adequately in the countryside and lack of class formation in the countryside, appropriate to that accumulation (Byres 1995: 509). It also comes closer to his observation that that in short term redistributive land reforms, though appear just, very small farm sizes are counterproductive when seen from the angle of the need for an 'unleashing of the forces capable of generating economic development'

Whatsoever agrarian transformation has taken place, it has neither contributed to the spectacular growth and development, nor to produce capitalist

farmers out of peasantry who would pave the way for a capitalist development in the countryside.

Poor peasants of West Bengalfought against the feudal land lords, the Zamindars and Jotedars and other intermediaries and big land owners for the implementation of land reforms. Now that land reform has reached to a stage of saturation in West Bengal, any further initiative to bring down the ceiling restriction would only be further demotivating for the farming community and would be counterproductive for the society as as whole as it bring further fragmentation in landholding.

West Bengal experiences the predominance of marginal and small holding many of which are uneconomical individually. The state has failed to bring land consolidation through cooperative farming so that these could have been viable for faster economic growth and development through introduction of advanced agricultural technology and intensification of land cultivation. Initiatives for the expansion of non-agricultural avenue of employment has also been very weak so as to accommodate the surplus man power within the rural ambience itself replace by way of by providing gainful employment

For Bernstein (1996) andMcMichael (2010) in the wake of neoliberal economic globalization, and WTO agreement struggle of the farming community has shifted against the international corporate food regime. Though this is true for agriculturally developed regions of the country, for an area that is predominantly characterised by petty producers aspirations, struggles and priorities of the agrarian work force are substantively different. Here a large chunk of the agrarian population are dependent on the state for support for land cultivation, agricultural subsidy, old age and widow pensions, for the social developmental initiatives like free rice, employment guarantee schemes, financial and other supports for children's education and varieties of other requirements.

To get benefits of developmental initiatives and state sponsored support system, they are to remain attached to ongoing political process by becoming active supporters of political dispensation mostly whom are in power. On the part of the political party as well there is also the need and urgency to keep the support base intact and expanding. Herein politics of populism and developing cross class alliances come into play very obviously. There has further emerged mutual interdependency among the agrarian categories. The landless labourers, marginal cultivators and the lower castes are no more dependent on upper castes land owners for information about the wider world or alternative avenues of employment due to their increasing access to ICTs. Old hostilities between the erstwhile jotdars and sharecroppers cum labourers are reduced with increasing interdependency among them because of overlapping economic and social concerns.

The agrarian population's encounter with the forces of globalisation takes place through variety of channels. They, the youth of the agrarian society, become consumers of ICTs, users of new and social media products, messages and information, adherents of global consumerism, global branded and duplicate fashion clothes, shoes, body attires, especially the youth. There has been phenomenal penetration of ICTs especially mobile phone, social and new media, new flow information, images and idea samong the people.Commutation to the cities and migration outside the village has added more to it as these have changed their world view.

Importantly the agrarian society now experiences increasing fluidity in social life in the wake of increasing quantum of migration, economic diversity, penetration of ICTs and social media and incapability of agriculture to accommodate the available workforce in agriculture and to satisfy their aspirational world view. The fast spread of consumerism and political populism have added more to it. Since livelihood security based on agarian economic structure has emerged to be a questionable proposition for the vast section of people, they look for non-agricultural economic options for the fulfilling of social needs.

The agrarian transition as engineered through thr initistives of land reform has widely produced casualization of workforce,fragmented landholding, shifting of labourforce towards the non-agricultural sector and migration with an increasing degree of economic and social uncertainty. Land distribution was of paramount importance to augment the process of social justice. However land consolidation, bringing the marginal cultivators under cooperative farming, developing new avenue of non agricultural employment in rural areas were of equal importance to address immediate agrarian concerns. In the absence of such initiative workers are pushed to move out of agrarian set up and also getting simultaneously pulled by urban areas and in agriculturally developed areas in other states where capitalism has paved the way for further economic development. Influence of capitalism is all encompassing. It's capacity to influence the life and livelihood of workforce goes beyond it'simmediate area of operation. In this sense agrarian question needs to address the issue of agricultural development in relation to its related areas and sectors too.

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Nita Mathur

EDUCATION AMONG URBAN POOR: ISSUES OF DEPRIVATION, EXPECTATION AND CHOICE

This article locates urban poor's discourse on education in the larger framework of school choice and expectations from education. It employs the framework of struggle for recognition framework to develop an understanding of their sense of deprivation, expectation from education and choice of school. This is not to diminish the significance of the other ideas around expectation, deprivation, and school choice. Rather, it is accepted that the framework of struggle for recognition juxtaposes with ideas centered around notions of identity, livelihood security, aspirations, and capabilities and in doing so offer a basis for making sense of their experience, expressions, and decisions that otherwise seem ambiguous. This article begins with an introductory note on the origins and basic idea of the struggle for recognition followed with a discussion on the notion of poor and the importance of education among them. Subsequently, it explores how education informs their struggle for recognition with emphasis on market-driven forces and intersubjectivity.

Beginnings of philosophical interest in the subject of recognition can be located in the writings of Montaigne (1958), Rousseau (1762), Fichte (2000) and others who noted that far from remaining contented with the lives that we have, our concern lies with constantly re-fashioning ourselves with the intent of casting an enviable impression on others often at the cost of masking the real self. At least two trends in the understanding of recognition emerge. The first one rests on an atomistic conception of human beings. Represented by Rousseau, it maintains that human beings lead isolated and individuated life bereft of dependence on social relationships and social situations. The second rests on relational conception of human beings. Represented by Fichte, later developed by Hegel, it prioritizes recognition in the development of self-consciousness, agency and freedom. More specifically, the latter presents, as McQueen (2015:10) writes, "an inter-subjective or dialogic conception of the subject: we can only understand ourselves through our interactions with others. It is not just that others help me make sense of myself, but rather that others are in the same way *constitutive* of the self. The other, as it were, is contained within and is an essential condition of, the subject." It is the intersubjectivity and relational nature of human beings which makes for a more realistic

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understanding of the idea of recognition and its play in everyday life of people. Majority of them follow the idea that one of the most significant ways of gaining recognition in society is education.

The present article draws from interviews with 50 informants (both men and women in equal numbers) and insights obtained with discussions with teachers who deal with poor students as also academics who engage with the theme closely. The strategy to identify poor households was at first to restrict the scope to those covered under the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category (i.e. have annual income of less than Rs 8,00,000/-, and are not covered under the category that brings protective discrimination with it). Expectedly, such people would have EWS certificate. However, it was noticed that there were many households with annual income much less than Rs. 8,00,000/- who do not have an EWS certificate for the reason that they belong to the Scheduled Caste category, therefore, exclusion of those belonging to the Scheduled Caste or any other reserved category cannot be treated as a sufficient criterion for identification of the poor. The most appropriate way out of the maze was to limit the criteria of identification of the poor as those with annual income of less than Rs 8,00,000/- notwithstanding their social category or eligibility for gains from protective discrimination.

Unpacking the 'Poor'

Multiple approaches and strategies have been proposed to reach a common measure of poverty (see Grusky and Kanbur 2006). The most common and perhaps one of the earliest markers of poverty is economic hardship assessed in terms of income levels (Townsend 1979, Sen 1983, Smeeding 2016). Criteria defining poverty have been reviewed and revised many times in the few decades. The emphasis on income level for assessment of poverty has been hugely favoured by international and domestic agencies. Rowntree's use of income or living standards to measure poverty in Anglo-Saxon countries way back in 1901 has been used in more than 100 countries and for Europe as a whole (see Smeeding 2016). Booth's idea of the poverty line for London (1903) has become an internationally acclaimed concept for estimation of poverty. In fact, "the World Bank" has revised the international poverty line in September 2022 from $ 1.90 to $ 2.15 per person per day using 2017 prices. While income level macro-economic indicators reigned poverty studies in 1970's, 80's and 90's, a fairly large number of studies challenged it squarely. Satterthwaite (2004) reminds us, "It might be assumed that poverty lines establish how many people have inadequate incomes to afford basic needs. But most poverty lines do not do so because they are not based on any study or data of the income level that individuals or households require to afford non-food essentials (including safe, secure housing, basic services including water and sanitation, health care, keeping children at school…)". He makes a case for widening the scope of poverty definitions to incorporate asset bases, housing conditions and

tenure, access to services, the laws and respect for civil and political rights. These aspects, other than income or consumption, are expected to present new possibilities for poverty reduction and simultaneously call for more intense engagement of local governments, community organizations, and local NGOs. The widening of poverty definitions also marks a shift in 'the official perception of 'poor people' as 'objects' of government policy to 'poor people' as citizens with rights and legitimate demands who have resources and capabilities that can contribute much to more effective poverty reduction' (p.4). Further, far from defining poverty in terms of lack of income, skeptics have argued for inclusion of access to health, education and other social services in assessment of poverty (see Haveman 2009, Boltvinik 2000).

Indicators of poverty play a crucial role in identifying the poor not just for statistics that sleep in reports and documents but as feed to policies and programmes for their welfare. Most welfare states in the present day treat lack of economic resources as a crucial indicator of poverty. Studies on poverty, however, abound in indicators, definitions and approaches to developing a comprehensive indicator that can measure its level and changes therein. Mood and Jonsson (2016) sieve out three approaches that predominate scholarly literature on poverty. The first one, well-summed up as absolute income poverty, defends income 'deemed necessary for living a life at par with others, or that makes possible an "acceptable" living standard¾defined as the goods and services judged necessary, often on the basis of consumer or household budget studies'. The second is relative poverty which identifies poor as those whose income lie below the median income of the country. The third one embarks on lack of consumer products and services necessary for acceptable living standard. Taking the capability approach as point of departure Sen (2009) argues for dismissal of income-centric approach to poverty in favour of what people can do and be rather than on what they have, or how they feel. Placing Sen's capability approach in the context of empirical applications Hick and Burchardt (2016:89) conclude, 'However, if the income-centric perspective fails to identify those individuals who experience capability deprivation; if it fails to capture the richness and breadth of the deprivations that people face; and if it fails to point toward the relevant policy solutions to remedy deprivations in what people can do and be, then this complexity can, it is argued, be justified, and the capability approach can be used in order to understand the problem of poverty'.

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of views and subjectivity in defining poverty, an overall consensus on their living conditions characterized by vulnerability, despair and disempowerment, social injustice as also livelihood insecurity, unfair access to healthcare and education has emerged (see Narayan 2000). Poverty has remained a key concern for policy makers and analysts alike as also academic researchers worldwide because of both its scope and social consequences including social exclusion, sense of vulnerability, social

exclusion, and multiple disadvantages (see Hills et al. 2002). A substantially large number of measures have been adopted to estimate the size and magnitude of the poor across the world. In India, poverty line was the most popular and reliable measure of poverty even as estimation of poverty gap occupied the imagination of the state for several decades. In assessment of poverty in India, "United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)" considered various deprivations experienced by people across health, education, and standard of living, developed the "Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)" and estimated that the incidence of poverty fell from 55.1 per cent in 2005/06 to 16.4 per cent in 2019/21 (UNDP 2022). There is no denying that education has asignificant role to play in promoting economic mobility and consequently reducing poverty. Further, the poor may not be able to make the most of reforms-led growth unless they are equipped with skills and education to do so (see Document of "the World Bank," Report no. 22323-IN, 2002).

Approaches to Understanding Importance of Education among Poor

Several studies on education, especially those that treat education as an investment in society's human capital,have accorded a prominent place to the poor. The idea that government spending on education lowers poverty, accelerates growth, and improves people's sense of general well-being has gained currency (Becker 1964, Goldin and Katz 2008, Woessmann 2015, Tilak 2005). Three perspectives framing the concern for importance of education among the poor come to light: the first sees education as a human right, the second sees education as a means of enhancing people's capabilities, and the third sees education as a means of advancing people's capabilities.

The goal of the rights-based approach is to guarantee everyone right to education (RTE). According to McCowan (2010), however,in providing valuable guarantees, the RTE falls short in terms of its detail. More specifically, at least two deficiencies are prominent. First, it ignores multiple forms that education can take (as in the configuration of learning in informal and non-formal contexts) in favour of excessive emphasis on school as the sole site of learning. Second, it does not factor in disparity of prestige in educational institutions that are likely to deepen socio-economic inequalities in the long-run. These are confounded by problems of quality of education, teacher absenteeism, and overall learning environment in schools. Apart from the necessity of prioritizing meaningful learning, the right to education must also take into account positional factors like certification and the demonstration of prestige among various educational establishments. The right to education has not been fully realized if children belonging to underprivileged communities are restricted to institutions that do not offer opportunities for advanced study or preparedness for well-paying jobs. A common result of poor school infrastructure, inadequate resources, and teacher absenteeism is a general

lack of motivation to continue with education. This is often exacerbated by unfavorable home study environments, parents' lack of formal education, and family obligations.

Amartya Sen's human capabilities approach intricately links development, education, and quality of life. It places human development within the context of each person's capabilities, or what they are able and unable to do. Education is thought to be a way to increase a child's potential and variety of options. Afundamental ability that influences the growth and development of other abilities is education. Human freedoms are expanded by the availability of educational opportunities and the development of educational capabilities (e.g., the ability to read and write). The ability to make thoughtful and reflective decisions is fundamental to human agency, which is also at the core of the capability approach. The presumption is that education performs a crucial role in human development. Human capital approach, however, falls short of gauging the full scope and potential of university curriculum. Alternatively, an approach to curriculum with emphasis on human development and capabilities formation is the need of the day (Walker 2005, 2012, 2020).

It is important to consider the substantive freedom of people to make decisions in life and the ability to live the kind of life they value in order to fully realize and comprehend the relevance of the capabilities approach to education. Education must foster the qualities that will enable children to think critically, creatively, and with the acumen to make wise decisions. The line between freedom and choice represents the learning objectives of education.

In the words of Crespo (2007: 60-61):

> "In order to situate education within the capability approach, it is necessary to recognize the simple but important fact that the educational process normally occurs within institutions, that knowledge is achieved through written and visual material, that pupils are guided by teachers, and that generally students are educated by having an intense social interaction with others. The school environment, therefore, entails diverse factors that may condition the acquisition of knowledge, the development of reason and, therefore, our present and future human freedoms. Education can certainly contribute to the expansion of capabilities, but, under certain conditions, it can also function with the opposite result."

It is commonly acknowledged that engagement in civic life and the development of human capital both lead to better economic conditions and better participation in society. Nonetheless, the disadvantageous state of poverty endures despite everyone having a legal right to an education. The belief held by poor families that there is a negative correlation between education and employment prospects is one of the causes.

Households' Struggle for Social Recognition

Persons belonging to poor households have jostled for acceptance of their integrity in society since long. They ground beliefs about their own integrity and respect in day-to-day interactions. Their fight for recognition is two–pronged. It involves both, assertion of demand for social fairness and equitable access to economic and political resources and a tussle with social relations, processes of identity construction, and a sense of self. The jostle for acceptance in defining social identities and positive social interactions can be linked to Hegel's theory (1977) that a person becomes self-conscious when other people acknowledge them as independent entities. The relationship between mutual recognition and social relationships is where the struggle for recognition is played out.

The issue of the struggle for recognition can well be placed within the general framework of social interactions and reciprocal recognition. Social groups that have experienced disdain for their accomplishments tend to assert claim to resources and economic transfers that would benefit them. Education is often treated as a means to both effect and make use of resources and economic transfers for betterment of poor's life. In fact, education is presented as a panacea for hardships that come with poverty. A fairly large number of informants held the view that education would equip them with the capability of understanding the nature and scope of their deprivation and suitable strategies to leap over it. This may be appreciated in light of the fact that many of them tend to confine their aspiration from life to securing a livelihood; and remain unaware of the possibilities of alleviating their condition afforded by the state and/or civil society. While keeping the significance of education outside the purview of discussion, critical issues here are those of context, quality and the efficacy of education in making a positive impact on poor people's life.

With the 86th Amendment of the Indian Constitution, children aged 6 to 14 are now recognized as having a fundamental right to education on the one hand while on the other the state is vested with leadership role to ensure that children receive fair, free, and required education. The pressure to conform, among others, has compelled the government to accord greater emphasis on policy approach centered on statistics rather than goals of equal educational opportunity and a uniformly high-quality public education system.One of the fall-outs of such an arrangement is enviable statistical data pertaining to enrolment of children in schools which does not match adequately with their performance and human capital of the country. The gap between statistics pertaining toeducation and employment is wide. The issue is worsened by teachers' disregard for the struggles that the poor face and the long history of socioeconomic inequality, as well as their conviction that children from poor families are incapable of learning and will therefore perform poorly in school. Policy frameworks continue to ignore disparities in experience, quality, and

educational processes(Sarangpani2018, Sharma 2021).

The poorhave the ability to create a new narrative of equal recognition through consumerist lifestyle choices or by participating in educational programs that train them for well-paying jobs. They shared the belief that spending money on children's education was more crucial than on ostentatious consumption. The decision between education and conspicuous consumption is meaningless for those at the bottom, who are barely able to make ends meet. For them, securing a meal remains a primary concern. Many of those who could think beyond securing meals, stated that they would rather pay for their children's education than satisfy their own needs for clothes, cell phones etc. Apart from health crises, holidays and other events requiring financial and social commitments are the biggest barriers to spending money on children's education. Several informants claimed that while these events may yield short-term benefits, they ultimately have no lasting value.

Following case studies exemplify these ideas:

Case 1: Sanket, an informant who makes a living as office clerk on daily-wage basis, explained thateducation raises awareness of matters that are significant to them, such as government programs, job security, and employability. He stated that an educated person is able to, for example, understand and make use of programmes and guarantees that are extended by the government . It gives one the wisdom to navigate life enabling them to be a part of mainstream society.

Case 2: Harish, a research scholar from a poor background. His parents don't read or write. His father sells vegetables, and his mother stays at home. Harish had a very impoverished upbringing. He has been helping his father pursue his vocation. Alongside, he continued going to school with a firm belief that education would provide a way out of poverty and abject living conditions. He received the best grades in every subject he took in school. At the time of writing this article, he is working towards a doctorate while also teaching at a University of Delhi college.

Case 3: Mother of twelve year old girl, Muskan,said that when her daughter grws up, she would wanther to be free from constraints that come with lack of enough resources to meet one's aspirations and expectations from life. She did not want Muskan to reflect on the past which is filled with financial constraints and denial of simple wants. She believed that education would ease her daughter's life which is why she nudged her tofocus attention on studies. She aspired to be recognized as mother of an educated child.

Case 4: Rahul, whose mother is a tailor and father an electrician, is a floor polisher. He recalled that his parents had put in a lot of effort to provide him with the means to support himself. He argued that the only way the poor could escape poverty was through education. An educated poor person has a

better chance of acquiring a decent job and being respected by others than an uneducated one. The prevailing sentiment was, 'Parents want to see their children make enough money to live the kind of life where basic needs are met and there's extra money to spend on fun things.' They would be able to establish themselves in society as a result.

Recognition in the community is reserved for those who possess exceptional skills that are indispensable to the success of the group. Lack of recognition leads to low self-esteem, which is typified by insecurity and doubt about one's ability to face life's challenges. As long as they are deprived of equal access to the institutional order, their self-deprecation grows stronger. Lack of education is used as a justification for poor people's exclusion from institutional order. They view education as a means of achieving their subjective goal of becoming accepted members of society with an equal right to take part in institutional order.Higher education is thought to give daughters a sense of individuality and independence that will likely give them the courage to face their affines, which could lead to arguments and a troubled marriage. Paradoxically, a number of parents agreed that their daughters should receive an education but opposed having educated daughters-in-law within the family.

Education and Market Forces: Issue of Choice and Constraints

The education sector has been subject to market forces. The challenge that market forces pose to state-run machinery is the matter of concern (Kumar 2016, Nambissan and Ball 2010, Raina 2020). As education becomes more commercialized, market forces that prioritize capital accumulation and profit maximization supplant values, ethics, and the sense of personal development and refinement. The ways that poor families respond vary: some choose to send their children to work instead of attending school, while others choose to pay for private education instead of the free education provided by state-run institutions. The idea that limited financial resources serve as a barrier to education was corroborated by informant narratives. In a family of four, Sunder Yadav, a security guard, is the only source of income. He described struggles brought on by early family obligations and a lack of funds for his own educational pursuits. Even though he values education, his meager income belies all his efforts to give his children an education. Sunder is an example of many informants who recognize the value of education but are limited by their financial situation. Many people give up on schooling because they feel pressurised to start earning money fairly quickly. Interestingly, approximately 90 per cent of informants expressed (i) a strong desire to send the children to school for which they curtail family expenditure; and (ii) optimism about the benefits of education. They believe that the degree and type of employment is the primary determinant of an individual's educational success. The most favored type of work is still in the public sector, which is followed by skill-based or self-owned businesses. Its underlying theory is that education promotes

the development of human capital, which raises labor returns and raises household income. A consistent rise in income causes consumption expenses to rise, which raises the household's standard of living. In order to achieve this growth trajectory, a household must set aside a sufficient portion of its income for educational expenses. However, providing enough funds for education can be challenging for poor families that are struggling to make ends meet.

Low representation of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in higher education, keeps them away from high-paying jobs. Several studies highlight the enduring impact of class, gender, and parental educational background on opportunities to gain access to education and prepare ground for the formation of human capital (Haveman and Smeeding 2006, Apple 2007, Assari 2018). It would be worthwhile to develop policies and plans that enable children from poor households to jump over the fence of obstacles and join (Lynch 1995, 1999, Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, Davies and Hentschke 2005, Ball 2009).

A dismal fallout of the interface between education and market forces is the emergence of stratification in schooling system in the country. There is noticeable rise in private schools that cater to the poor. More specifically, these are imagined as public schools for those who cannot afford the fees of better-established public schools that children of middle class and upper class families attend. Newly established 'low fee private school' (LFPS) in India are projected as responding to the growing demand of poor families for good-quality private English medium education. They are envisaged to bridge the wide gap between depressing state-run schools and upscale private schools (Nambissan 2012). According to Jain and Dholakia (2009), there is a claim that these schools outperform their state-run equivalents and fulfill the desire of poor households for competitive education. Tooley (2007, 2009) arguesthat children belonging to poor households were prepared to pay for their education in low fee private schools since they were less expensive yet offering better quality education than state-run institutions. Kingdon (2000) draws the conclusion that there is a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in private schools based on data from the National Sample Survey (NSS). The counterargument posits that these educational institutions encourage inequality and deal a systematic blow to India's public education system (Jain and Saxena, 2010). According to Nambissan (2012, 2021), advocacy groups' portrayal of LFPSs as an affordable and practical way to help the poor realize their dreams is actually a plea in favourof market-oriented policies and the neo-liberal rhetoric. This argument gives discrimination against poor familiesa safe haven. Further, large number of the corporate players in the low-cost school market are concurrently providing the middle class and upper class segments of Indian society with a qualitatively distinct educational package.

Some parents want to send their children to private schools, completely

unaware of the well-reasoned unfair treatment they receive. My examination of the interview data revealed two factors that contributed to the decision to attend a private school: the expectation of receiving a high-quality education and the expectation that success in life can be attained through English language proficiency. When private schools are too expensive, they contentedly make do with LFPSs. Manju is a 48–50 year old attendant who works in a government office for a daily wage. She is a widow who struggles to support her two daughters. She took on debt in order to pay for her daughters' LFPSs. Significantly, she manages moneylenders, skips meals, and expresses no regret about sending her daughters to private schools. According to her, her daughters would be able to compete with their middle-class counterparts if they were to acquire 'quality education,' be well-groomed, and be able to read, write, and converse in English. She wants the daughters to have a 'good life' meaning they should not be constrained by their financial situation, in exchange.

A majority of informants desired to send their children to private schools because they expected their teachers to be more accountable. Projecting LFPSs as a fair educational space for the poor is a morally justifiable way to divert the greatest resources into the hands of the wealthiest.It's interesting to note that one informant justified optimism about government schools by stating that graduates had a higher chance of finding employment in the public sector. This may be explained by the improved knowledge base that results from competitive educational processes in schools and the institutional tendency in the public sector to accept applicants from their own schools.

Conclusion

There are a large number of initiatives undertaken by international agencies as also the state to incorporate an increasing number of children across the country within the fold of education. On the one hand and enhance the quality of education on the other. The World Bank Group partners with India in employing an exhaustive and inclusive life cycle approach for education to prepare youth for future jobs. A key focus is strengthening teacher performance and improving governance and quality assurance systems in schools and colleges '. (worldbank.org/en/epf/india/what_we_work/human-capital/education)

Schultz (1961) treated education as an investment and returns from it as a type of capital. Despite the fact that since education becomes an integral part of the person who receives it and that cannot be sold or bought or treated as property, Schultz referred to it as human capital for the reason that it renders productive service of value to the economy. In essence, the human capital theory education can contribute to productive capacity of human beings. As Figueroa (2015:11) explains, "on the one hand, human capital is as important as machines and technology in the production process; on the other hand, higher human capital implies higher labor productivity and higher incomes

for workers; higher human capital also requires higher schooling years, which give workers the basic capacity to learn skills."

The focus at the current juncture, so far as social discourse on education is concerned, has veered around formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and performance on the macro aspects of education. It is unfair to segregate the macro or societal aspect of education from the micro or individual engagement with education. What is imperative is to develop a discourse which sets education free from market forces and in doing so disables its commoditization. Additionally, it is imperative to move beyond the human capital approach in favour of watering moral and ethical concerns in education discourse. Bell and Stevenson (2006) suggest that schools and colleges, should arrive at a consensus on basic values that inform both the educative process and the leadership of it in such a way that ethical dimension acquires a place of prominence with emphasis on cultivation of humaneness, compassion, and responsiveness to new ideas. As Apple (2013:12) argues, 'Thus, the answer to the question of whether education can change society is "yes" if and only if it overtly challenges class and capitalism. Other challenges, hence, either become less significant or are only valued for their "ancillary" role of directly acting on capitalist relations and structures….understanding class relations and economic dynamics and structures is fundamental to dealing with the ways in which our societies operate.' For this reason, the social function of education policy is of critical concern. At the level of the individual, investment in education and training is made with the objective of enhancing earning potential (Mincer 1974, Fevre et.al 1999).

The Indian government's pledge to implement the social justice and equality enshrined in the nation's Constitution has undergone several policy changes. Education was declared a Fundamental Right by the 86th Constitutional Amendment of 2002. The simultaneous expectation of egalitarianism and welfare state However, opportunities are limited and viewed differently due to a variety of factors, including neoliberal ideology. According to Raina (2020)the Act was designed to increase the state's obligation to educate children in India, but rather than doing so through a public, universal elementary education system, it opted to outsource the expansion to the private sector. This intention was belied by the act's focus on quantitative expansion rather than qualitative improvement in a "universal" government school system. Every child was enrolled in the system, norms were established, and a token space was created for children from economically disadvantaged social groups (EWS) who chose to co-opt private schools within the framework of a market society based on private education.

Within this framework, education is viewed as an independent public good subject to the whims of policymakers. In addition to making education vulnerable, it also makes democratic social order impossible to maintain. If this were the case, highly educated nations would be devoid of inequality and a model of well-intentioned democracy. It is imperative to recognize that

educational goals and expectations, enrollment in and success within educational institutions, and the outcomes of education are inextricably linked to societal processes. This includes the contemporary imperative to situate education within a relational framework. Well-rounded understanding would be made possible by examining the relationship between education and socioeconomic factors that influence daily life. Undoubtedly, education is intricately linked to the entirety of our comprehension of society. The social struggle for recognition is sparked by the marginalization of the poor. Their rights and integrity are being compromised, which feeds their sense of impending injustice and outrage. The fight for the recognition of the poor must be viewed in the context of real and perceived deprivation, disrespect, and contempt that govern their normative conception of who they are and what they are capable of. Interviewees consistently stated that there is a complex intersubjectivity relationship between social recognition and education. Intersubjective recognition served as the primary motivator for parents to educate their children, in actuality. The parents I spoke with associated education more with a sense of recognition and being valued as a contributing member of society than with privilege or prestige. More precisely, an examination of the narratives provided by informants revealed that education fosters both self-respect and the courage and ability to engage in debates and opinion-sharing pertaining to public issues as an equal participant. Strengthening moral responsibility and perseverance in the face of oppression are natural outcomes.

It would be worthwhile to incorporate people's perspective and agency in conversation about education and democratic order, failing which the understanding would be far removed from people's lived experiences and remain barren in nature and scope. By examining the micro-perspective, this paper strengthens the stability of development, economic returns, and policy in the field of education. It argues in favor of examining people's goals and expectations for education as well as their struggles and resistance to it. It is critical that projections of agendas and policies regarding education, as well as evaluations of the role of the state and its contribution to education, take into account people's intersubjectivity in decision-making.

Some questions that arise are: Whether and in what way does education inculcate a sense of appreciation for criticism and alternative thought? How and in what way does education generate preparedness to accommodate diversity? Does education prepare an individual to generate economic capital or engage with equitable access to resources? These questions address key concerns of democratic social order. It is envisaged that, issues of hierarchies that have plagued the arena of education would calm down when the ultimate objective of raising individuals for responsible citizenship is upheld.

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Simpul Behera

INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRIBAL RELIGION AND ECONOMY: ANALYSIS OF KANDHA TRIBE OF ODISHA

Abstract

As far as Kandha of Kandhamal are concerned, their supreme deity has always been Dharni Penu- the Earth Goddess. Like the ancient Egyptians who used to be known as the children of the Sun God, these indigenous people of Odisha are also identified as the children of the Dharni Penu. The famous meriah festival of the region unites the community in celebrating the glory of Earth Goddess and in the process ascertains the unique cultural identity of the Knadha in the region. The main objective behind this grand ritual at one point of time used to be the blessing of the mother for a rich harvest. But with the passage of time, the tribal sentiment associated with Dharni Penu has undergone some change. Blame it market rationality, the crop that was once a gift from the goddess has now become a commodity for sale in the market. This shift, however, happened due to increasing integration of tribal community with mainstream society. Further, as the caste Hindus began to migrate in large numbers to the plains of Kandhamal, the religious practices of the Kandha underwent profound changes because of this interaction. This paper examines the establishment and evolution of relationships between caste Hindus and the tribe over time. The study adopted the political economy framework to understand the changing situations with a historical perspective. It also discusses in detail certain aspects of Kandha livelihood, socio-economic transformation, and economy during different periods starting from the earliest eras to the arrival of British and now in post-independent India. Finally, the paper concludes that their sustainable ritual based economy should be the way ahead.

Keywords: *ritual, religion, economy, society, Kandha*

Introduction

Most of the sociological or social anthropological studies of Indian villages point out very clearly the convergence of three sectors in the village community: economy (land), politics (power and authority) and religion (village rituals). These sectors intersect at the village (micro) and regional (macro)

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levels, where the interests of various social groups also meet and interact. Historically, over the years after the entry of the British and the establishment of colonial power, the weight of the forces emanating from outside the village gradually diminished (Pathy 1995). However, in some cases, outside forces continue to influence the local population in the villages even after the independence which has been the root cause of social conflicts and unrest (Mohanty 2017). An understanding of rural society will be incomplete without the consideration of these aspects.

The present paper aims to gain insight into the situation where the interaction of religion and economy poses a problem that has a historical origin. It is about the case of the Kandha tribe inhabiting Kandhamal district in Odisha. The case of Kandha is especially important as it has been complicated by the incursion of castes into the tribal area which was traditionally administered by the Kandha chieftains (*mutha*) even before the entry of the British. Their economy was uniquely strong due to growing turmeric besides the cultivation of rice which is their staple diet, and the cultivation was distinctively associated with religion with which the non-tribes interfered. The Kandha has been very possessive of their land and jealous of their autonomy. They rebelled against the British in what is referred to as the Kandha Rebellion in 1846 and they vehemently resisted the interference of the British with the *meriah*- human sacrifice[1] to their deity whose worship was indispensable for the cultivation of turmeric (Behera 1989). Although the non-Kandha entered the Kandha region and scrumptiously occupied their lands and interfered in their religion the Kandha did not offer much resistance. But the arrival of the British triggered powerful resistance against the British and the non-tribes. The Kandha continued to fight for their land against the castes that immigrated to their territories and usurped their lands even before and after the independence.

This paper also addresses larger theoretical questions with regard to ritual and its transformation in its ideology, performance, and roles over a period of time. This study aims to investigate the extent to which the dynamism of economic power influences the evolution of religion. It tries to find out whether religious ideology or religion is an autonomous entity, as any would tend to think. This needs to be interpreted from an anthropological perspective.

Anthropologists have contributed in a unique way to theories of the operations and meaning of ritual studies, politics and economy over a wide comparative range. The more recently throughout the cross-disciplinary field of ritual studies, the importance of ritual in the works of Geertz (1960,1973), Sahlins (1963, 1972) and Turner (1967, 1969) was found among the social and cultural anthropologists. Later, the treatment of ritual in Marxist tradition can be noted in Godalier's (1975) work Comaroff (1985) and Bloch's (1986) work. Although, anthropologists have focused largely on the comparative study of the small-scale so-called 'primitive' religions of the technically less developed peoples, many others have also examined aspects of the major universalistic

religions[2]. In the Indian anthropological study, there are few anthropologists and sociologists have examined the rituals and specific religions on the basis of political and economic aspects of it. The work of Dube (1959), Vidyarthi (1963, 1978), Marriot (1972), Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976), Sinha, et, al (1976), Dirks (1994), and Srinivas (2003) have well examined the politics and economy as a process of ritual.

There is no holistic ethnographic account of the Kandha people available (Chaudhury 1989) except Bailey[3] (1957, 1960, 1970). Whereas some accounts like Boal (1997, 1999), Jena et. al., (2002), Hardenberg (2006), Pfeffer (2010, 2014), Berger (2015), and Gangte (2017) exclusively discussed the human and buffalo sacrifice of Kandha, tribe-caste interactions, and economic transactions in different parts of the state. While Pfeffer, Berger, Hardenberg, and a few other scholars of Germany are largely focusing on the ritual, shared socio-cosmic idea, and gift exchange using the concept of 'New Kinship' of the tribal people of this region, Hardenberg et al. (2017) have developed cultural studies approaches to resources and elaborated concepts such as "resource complexes" and "resource cultures."

However, even in Bailey's work and others like Pfeffer, they have turned to ritual as a window to look at the cultural process by which people earn and live their lives and later transform it. But no one combined the three—religion, economy, and politics—to understand the holistic view of the tribe Kandha. This paper endeavors to comprehend the historical relationship between religion, specifically ritual, and economy. Hence, it focuses on the ritual *meriah*, the production of turmeric, and the market of both the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Later, analyze the change and transformation in Kandha in particular and in society as a whole.

Conceptual Framework

Many theories about the nature and origin of religion try to account for the persistence of faith and ritual. They also explore reasons for the changes that religions have undergone in the course of their history. The present study, as part of the holistic tradition of anthropology, suggests that the whole is greater than its parts. The study views religion as a component of the social system, akin to other elements, and recognizes the interconnectedness of all parts, where each influences the other to the same extent (Behera 2021). Therefore, we cannot comprehensively study religion in isolation, as it is not an independent entity. To study the dynamic nature of religion and market, the present study tries to adopt the political economy framework from a holistic perspective.

In this regard, history has a very significant contribution to make. Bayly (1983) mentioned that there are detailed speculations about the relations between the state, traders, and society. Political groups determine the area of

change, according to Bayly. In the present case, the pre-colonial state and the new economic groups, or the burgeoning middle-class, interfered with Kandha society in such a way that irreversible changes in Kndha way of life took place. This perspective endeavors to scrutinize the evolution of Kandha society through the interplay of politics and economy across various eras. The 19th-century traders and middlemen that migrated to the region during the colonial period have played an important role in changing socio-economic and political life in Kandhamal, especially in the Balliguda area. Taussig (2010) demonstrates the effect of capitalist culture and market organization on human affairs. The market uses human beings and their products as commodities for buying and selling (Taussig 2010). Furthermore, the impact of the capitalist economy on small-scale societies diminishes as time becomes less significant. Karl Marx has derived his concept of "commodity fetishism from the analysis of commodities as both a thing and a social relation". According to him, man and society are market-driven, and Taussig (2010) argues that the capitalist markets change the concept of money as 'devil', besides changing social relations as those who possess money are the devil's agents.

However, in Kandhamal, the commodification of goods has led to the acquisition of market value for items that previously held no value, and the forced introduction of new social relations has altered the previously established values of these relationships. The Kandha, having discovered commercial turmeric, sought to sell it in the market, only to find themselves ensnared by the local merchants, particularly the non-Kandha. They approached the Kandha, moving from door to door, making friends, and playing on their emotions to buy turmeric. The Kandha took the buyers as their well-wishers, superior to them, and as such had the moral obligation to serve their needs. Relationship with non-Kandha made the Kandha more conscious of the potential financial gains. When the land became a commodity after the colonial period, it became very valuable, which was not the case earlier. It brought about a significant change in the lives of Kandha when the non-Kandha settled in Kandhamal.

The existence of God or other spiritual entities in Kandha society cannot simply account for the rituals they perform. Religions show enormous variety in types of belief, degrees of belief, kinds of ritual procedures, spiritual concepts, and symbolic imagery. The relationships that religions have with the social, economic, and political structures of the communities in which they practice also vary greatly. People may perceive any religion as excessively elusive. Any simple affirmation of divine presence and revelation will not do; an assertion has to stand the test of evidence. Metaphysical problems emerge at every turn. All that may be possible in a theory of religion may be interpreted as a demonstration of the nature and meaning of rites and beliefs for those who hold and practice them and of their value for people in the context of their lives. As part of the interpretation, the theory must deal with non-rational as well as rational elements in belief patterns and practice.

Area and methods

The field study is being conducted in the Kandhamal District on a continuous basis till-date since 2014. Another fresh round of field work has started to fill the critical gap on 2022. It starts with micro-level observations and moves to a regional-level analysis of the interconnections among the ritual, politics, and economy of the Kandha tribal society. Therefore, the study concentrates on Rajaghara, a Kandha village located in K. Nuagaon Tahasil/ Block of Balliguda Sub-Division in the Kandhamal district. The revenue village of Kanjamendi, located three kilometres away from Rajaghara village. The former is a Kandha village, while the latter is a multi-ethnic settlement. The village represents a typical Desia Kandha population in the foothills that they practices both settled as well as shifting cultivation. They also have close contact with the urban dwellers and non-Kandha in Kanjamendi village and Nuagaon town. The village of Rajaghara contains both Desia Kandha and Pano, a Scheduled Caste group. The other group of people, Patra, a Khatriya, stays mostly in the village Kanjamendi, who play an important role in Kandha society. All of them speak Kui, including the non-tribal Pano and Patra. In total, there are 87 households in Rajaghara, distributed in three hamlets: Gastusahi, Nediraha, and Nua-Rajaghara. Of the 87, the households that belong to Kandha are 67, while the remaining 20 are in Pano. By religion, 73 have stated to be Hindu, and the remaining 14 identify themselves as Christians. In total, there are 341 people in Rajaghara, comprising 174 males and 167 females.

This paper is based on data collected through extensive fieldwork. Techniques such as interviews, observations, and focus group discussions have been used to collect data. The study also uses oral narratives on the experiences of various rituals, particularly *meriah*, and related market information as a crucial source of data. Most of the information have been collected from the field by means of in-depth interviews with Kandha, non-Kandha officials, and other relevant stakeholders. The study has collected information on the political and economic activities of the Kandha from other villages, with a particular focus on Rajaghara village, to ensure the authenticity of the data.

***Meriah*, Turmeric and Market Economy**

There are many studies on the tribal economy and way of life, including the effects of large dams, industrial enterprises, and development projects on tribal communities; however, there are none that address the relationship between the tribal religion and economy. However, it is important to note that Agrawal (1980) based on his study in the Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh argues that there are no separate categories of "religion" and "economy" in the Hindu universe. He uses the category "religio-economic" for it and said the *jati* relations are both economic as well as religious and these operate at different levels of the network. Considerably, he the study analyse the religion and economy as separate category as well as a category which serves the

purpose of human life. As previously said, it involves both the ritual *meriah* and the production of turmeric in Kandha, as well as other economic factors that contribute to changes throughout time.

The emergence of turmeric as a resource was rooted in international trade[4]colonialism and state-building. Turmeric is an indigenous root crop that the Kandha used and collected in the hills even before the entry of the British to Kandha lands (Boal 1999: 25). But its specific connection with *meriah* comes to light only through the writings of colonial government and the literature in this regard claims that Kandha practised the *meriah* and placed the flesh in the turmeric field to increase the colour of turmeric and productivity of the soil. Kandha were indeed producing turmeric for a long time. What is clear from the literature is that the colonial government was more interested in possessing the forests for timber and other forest wealth. They found two groups, Kandha and Pano, as a hindrance to their mission, while the Patra and others showed interest in the colonial efforts to subdue Kandha. They successfully entered the Kandha lands on the pretext of suppressing the *meriah*. Kandha economy was vested in the forest since the people lived in the jungle. Neither the Kandha were interested in the politics of the princely kingdoms, nor were they interested in trade and business of the East India Company or the Indian business community. As stated by MacPherson;

"The Kond economy was a primitive agricultural one. It produced rice, oils, millets, pulse, fruit, tobacco, turmeric, and mustard. Konds also raised buffaloes, goats, pigs, and poultry" (1865: 63).

The British learnt about the Kandha, forest and their wealth through the non-Kandha. In this regard, both Patra and Pano interpreted Kandha's life for the British, whereas Pano were protective of their own life on one hand, as they knew the brutal side of the Kandha: killing and sacrificing; the Patra on the other hand maintained to remain in good books of the British by reporting the 'crimes' of the Kandha. They tried to gain the favour of the British by contriving a strategic way, one that terrified the Kandha and weakened them. The British could have access to the forest surreptitiously if they had the Kandha, as they were ferocious in dealing with wild animals; additionally, the Patra demonstrated the harsh nature of the Kandha to the British. Furthermore, the Patra sought to establish a clear distinction between the Kandha and the Pano. Due to their inherent need for proximity to authority and their eagerness to acquire education through Christian missionaries, the Pano were susceptible to persuasion and attraction, which could lead them to disengage from the Kandha. Patra also provided the British with additional information about the timber and other useful resources available in this dense forest. The British knew that this could give little potential to enhance India's general economy, but they kept timber marketing a secret while promoting turmeric as reckoning the tribe as having agricultural culture. Hence, they started addressing the tribe as an agricultural community. But it was the

update that has been given to them by the plain land people with whom Kandha has a cordial relationship.

"Despite its permittivity, Kond agriculture was capable of "resulting in no small share of rural affluence". The extent to which a Kond community enjoyed such affluence depended on "the capricious climate," most notably local weather and animal activity, which varied across communities from year to year" (van den Bosch 2007: 203).

The Patra were well aware that only the ritual had the ability to bring together and regulate the unruly Kandha. They were aware of the method by which they gained access to the Kandha region. The Patra recognised the festival of *meriah* but they never attempted to suppress this as their belief system also supported the virtues of self-immolation and self-sacrifice to gods and goddesses. Perhaps, they valorised the religiosity of Kandha, and their uncritical view indicated their approval of such practices. Kandha observed the manner in which the Patra of the Balliguda and Nuagaon region upheld the royal affiliation and attended to the tribal deities, thereby embracing Hinduism. Kandha perceive the religious beliefs of the higher Patra or King as closely aligned with their own religious system. This was one manner in which they aligned themselves with the dominant religious framework. However, the Pano, who is considered akin to a sibling to the tribe, is not brought closer than they are presently due to their categorization as untouchable and their exclusion from the Hindu realm. The Pano, similar to the Patra, are unable to acquire the land of the Kandha due to their subordinate status and reliance on the Kandha for their livelihood.

The alternative perspective regarding Patra's proximity to Kandha can be traced back to a mythological narrative whereby the mother goddesses manifested in a visionary encounter with their priest, expressing dissatisfaction with the way the Kandha celebrated the festival[5]. Consequently, the Patra assumed the roles of both their religious leaders and political leaders. This alliance resulted in remarkable, albeit slow, transformations in the social and economic circumstances of the Kandha, accompanied by political sway. Currently, the Patra have assumed the role of counselors to the Kandha, providing guidance on several matters, including the *meriah* celebration. In the past, they would request permission from Patra to arrange the ritual. However, they are currently looking for a favorable day for this reason. Additionally, Patra determines the dates for the celebrations in various *muthas* to prevent any conflicts. In the pre-colonial era, the Patra were considered their monarchs. Over time, the Patra dynasty gradually assumed a position of uncontested authority, wielding significant influence in various aspects of community development. This included their engagement in agricultural practices and techniques, active participation in markets, religious initiatives, and involvement in local political affairs. Kandha holds the belief that Patra, being the superior offspring of the land, possesses a higher comprehension of

ceremonial and political administration. The mother goddess expresses great satisfaction with these individuals. The Patra community residing in the hill region has intentionally minimized the importance of the *meriah* celebration, perceiving it as a regressive tradition. In an effort to align them more closely with Hinduism, they try holding the Pano and their children at bay.

On the hill, the Pano and Patra worked as traders like Teli (oil extractors) and Sundi (distiller) (who carried the bundles of salted fish, cheap cotton garments and cosmetics from one weekly market to another). In course of time, Patra stopped such itinerant trade as they accumulated sufficient wealth to start a business in small towns down the hills and entered into wider economic structures. Now, they are also financiers for the Kandha advancing loans and getting the lands of Kandha mortgaged or undertaking *benami* transactions with fewer formalities as they know the mind of the Kandha very well: how their money paid back; how to keep them in their control; how to extract money from the Kandha. The Pano continue to walk around the Kandha villages with the exchange of goods with what they purchased in the nearest market like Balliguda. The local markets are now in the hands of Teli, Sundi and even Patra, while Pano remain in the business of bullock and buffalo buying and selling.

It is clear from above that the Patra's motive to associate with the Kandha through religion and maintain friendly relations implies controlling the economy of Kandha and taking the upper hand over them. Another important implication is to keep the Brahmin away from the Kandha by bearing the priest at the Hindu temples, particularly at Pattakhanda of Mahasingi. The Patra are also temple priests of *Kali* or *Durga Maata* in Kandhamal even though they are non-vegetarians and belong to Kshatriya *varna*. These temples are where Patra are priests and permit the sacrifices of goats and chickens, and if it were Brahmin priests, such sacrifices would not have been allowed. Thus, by holding a key position in the Kali temples and by not discouraging the Kandha to give up the sacrifices or organising *Kedu* festivals they can successfully prevent the entry of Brahmin priests. As already discussed, only after the worship of Mahasingi, the Kandha are allowed to celebrate *Kedu* at different places, since this place in Mahasingi has gained a reputation as the main place of worship. Furthermore, the paddy cultivation of Kandha by clearing the jungle and levelling the ground is taking place under Patra of Mahasingi. According to the information collected in Rajaghara village different Patra were sent to every *mutha* suggesting the *mutha* heads organise the ritual on the auspicious day suggested by him for high productivity and improved economy of that place. They may directly contract with others like Teli who could buy and sell the products in the plain or take products from the village down the hill for sale. In this kind of interaction and control of the economy of Kandha, the Pano are kept aside who have been in association with the Kandha for ages as intermediaries between the Kandha and others.

The hypothesis is also developed by Leeson (2014), applying his economic theory about human sacrifice to Kandha, argues that it is a method of protecting property rights by which the practice enhances the security of the property. It prevents resource accumulation and few people or the community itself plundering others. What it means is the following. Human sacrifice does not allow the wealth of the community for a long time and it helps maintain the same structure for a long time. The surplus could induce hierarchy in society. Therefore, in the name of ritual, the members spend away whatever surplus is available through the sacrifice. He makes this argument against economic irrationality (cf. Hunter et al 1957:59). Applying the economic formula, he makes his point clear about the rationality of Kandha.

According to Leesons' logic, the expenditure incurred on the *meriah* practice would have ruined the Kandhas' wealth. Acquiring a victim from within the society would harm itself and buying it from outside obviously would have been very hard, treacherous and exorbitantly expensive. However, if the Kandha had practised the *meriah*, they must have done that in a very calculative and judicial manner. It is unlikely that the Kandha resorted to this practice to that extent there was such a need for the colonial government to determine eliminating this practice if it were not the scheme of Patra. Since turmeric and *meriah* have a close connection indeed, it is still in conspiration, why does turmeric suddenly get attention? Why does it become so important for Kandha to produce? While their economy was mostly hunting and gathering.

Unusual Demand of Turmeric in Kandha Land

Why turmeric was so important for Kandha? Of course, turmeric had great value when both Indian princely states extended their rule over the Kandha due to its medicinal and ritual importance which had been used very frequently on ceremonial occasions. Afterwards, it assumed the market value during the colonial regime. The non-Kandha Hindu caste groups only discovered the unique production style of the Kandha through shifting cultivation. They also found that the Kandha had excellent knowledge of the cultivation of turmeric. To take advantage of the increased market value, the non-Kandha Hindus and Pano undertook the role of middlemen. Later, with the entry of the colonial rulers into the area, this production was brought to a different level. As the flora and fauna were exploited more and more, the British government began to suppress various rituals of Kandha associated with turmeric[6]so that the Kandha could focus on the production only, without losing their time, money and energy on these 'wasteful rituals'. The rulers supported the knowledge of Kandha, and the tribe felt the turmeric must be having an excellent value outside their society. As they began to concentrate on their development, they realised that they needed cash, and it could be obtained through turmeric. The government officers got access to Kandha's hills on the pretext of suppressing *meriah* with the aid of non-Kandha. They tried to loot

the Kandha hill, the valuable timber and other necessary raw material. But neither Kandha nor anyone else tried to protest against the British soldiers or protected the Kandha from their exploitation. No one has recognised the contribution of the Kandha in the turmeric market, either in the Indian market or in the international market. As the Kandha began to move towards a market economy, it broke the social-economic structure of the tribes. Kandha, who had never seen the market came into the city. By this, Kandha's political scenario began in association with the non-Kandha caste community. This way they got into the hierarchy of political, economic as well as religious life of the world around them.

As the Kandha's product, turmeric, gained popularity in the plains, the mediators, the Pano, lost their position and even became redundant as a result of the Kandha's exposure to the cash exchange market and their direct interactions and business dealings with non-Kandha traders and businessmen. Hence, the other non-Kandha like Patra, Teli, Khauda (blacksmith) and Sunari (goldsmith) etc., visited the Kandha villages and provided necessities like oils, sickles, axes, hoes, clothes, ornaments, aluminium pots and so on. Hadi, who make baskets with reeds and bamboo and Kumbar of Kanjamendi, used to sell their items of baskets and pots. Some hawked soaps, eateries, hairpins and sarees, dhotis etc., by going around the villages. They exchanged their items either for cash or in-kind, that is, grains or forest products.

Kandha's Economic Change and Religion

Given the preceding discourse, it might be imperative to consider the Kandha's economic transformation and its correlation with the current issues they were confronting. As the Kandha are in transition from food gathering to food production, and in either case, the natural needs of survival are met. Their conceptualisation of life can be seen as an integrated relationship of spiritual and natural worlds, and in this regard, the spiritual relationship has taken a dominant role in organising the natural world wherein the Kandha have been dependent on the former as much as they depend on the latter. However, their relationship is viewed as a metaphysical relationship and verbalised in the metaphoric sense of mother-child relationship- spirit as the mother, who has power and authority over the child. They are in mutual obligatory relationships; the mother has to protect and nurture the child by meeting its needs and the child also has to take care of the mother with respect and satisfy her in all respects. The productivity of soil which is the main means of living to satisfy the Kandha's natural needs, the exchange of the products of the soil is basically to meet the same needs only. Therefore, the Kandha never think in terms of surplus or savings for tomorrow. The *salap* of the sago tree and fruits of various trees and animals are meant for meeting their natural needs only, but not for sale or savings. In this regard, turmeric is also considered to have more 'use value'[7]in the beginning, but later, it has acquired more

'exchange value' than others, for it has special significance among the non-Kandha for its ritual as well as medicinal value. But this exchange transaction is only in line with the traditional primitive mode of production: sacrifices are made in exchange for blessings and productivity of the soil.

The turmeric obtained the 'exchange value' more with the entry of the British who brought in the Forest Laws and encouraged the Kandha to grow more turmeric by cutting down the forest and killing animals such as elephants, tigers, antelope etc. Not only turmeric but also the skins, tusks of the elephant and spices had export value; the Forest Department opened up Depots for collecting these items from the Kandha on cash payments. Further, some Kandha also sold these items to non-Kandha either in the towns or others such as Pano or people who visited them at their villages in the hills and paid either in cash or in-kind such as clothes, pots, pans, axes, knives etc. What is important here to note is that a large majority of Kandha individuals were quite unaware of the value of the coins, or currency and also simple calculations. Mostly, whatever was handed over to them they used to take home in good faith, neither did they have the capacity to argue if they thought that they were being cheated. They lived as powerless, physically or mentally, and the non-Kandha was endowed with more articulating and convincing capacity. In these exchange practices, they had been exploited by not getting proper value for the items that they sold.

As the Kandha started depending on industrial or manufactured goods more and more, there was a demand for more cash. Therefore, they had to produce more that brought them cash, but their metaphysical means was to please the *Dharni* goddess and other divine beings such as ancestors as described before in connection with the rituals of shifting cultivation. The ideas of divine intervention besides their hard labour made them accept the gods and goddesses and rituals of Hindus such as *Doli*, *Holi*, *Akshya Tritiya*. The worship of Maa Laxmi during the month of *Margasira* while observing *Mana Osa Gurubar* which is popular among the Odia populations is most important. In this worship, the panicles of paddy are collected and arranged nicely along with other ritual objects and worshipped every Thursday during the month.

It is also believed that the loss of money due to misfortunes is due to Maa Laxmi's departure from home for some reason. As long as she is worshipped, she will bless the family with wealth but she will leave if once she is dissatisfied by taking away all the wealth with her. In contrast, as per Kandha's traditional belief, as already stated, misfortune is the result of casting an evil eye or sorcery with the help of a deity who is befriended by a bad person of the community. Again, to get the favours and increase of wealth etc., the deity has to be revered and worshipped very regularly and some even go to the extent of offering their own blood flowing from the self-inflicted cut. As the deities are not there in the house one has to either forest grove field *Dharni* post or shrine etc., to worship and re-establish harmonious relations with the deities

through sacrifices.

The Kandha who never cared much either for cash or wealth have understood that the non- Kandha are after these two things that are giving them power and authority in society. They have also started thinking that the source of wealth or cash is the blessings of deities besides their hard work. The Kandha accepted the equation that non-Kandha have drawn between the deities: the earth goddess *Dharni* is nothing but the mother goddess whom the non- Kandha worship as Durga or Kali or Parvati. Other goddesses are similar to the goddesses of the Hindu religion. So, when the Kandha began to worship Maa Laxmi, they started considering *Dharni* and Maa Laxmi as equal and same. As *Dharni* could be brought into their house, they could bring Maa Laxmi who was another form of *Dharni* and worshipped her like any non-Kandha. Such worship, it is believed, would increase their wealth.

Either in the past or now, the Kandha are known for their lack of interest to save their cash or give serious thought about the future. As soon as they got some cash, they drank it away or would have lavish eating. They try to work hard but save little towards the end, depending more on the favours of benign deities by offering sacrifices and organising rituals. Unlike the peasant labourers in Columbia and mine workers in Bolivia of South America, Nash (1972) and Taussig (2010), who find the cash in the capitalist economy as Devil in the Catholic worldview, here we find the Kandha's cash and prosperity transcending to the spiritual world of blessings of the goddess who could be Maa Laxmi or *Dharni* who should be satisfied with sacrifices. Since the earth belongs to the goddess and her permission is sought whenever a piece of land is brought under cultivation and hence more turmeric can be granted only by her so that they can earn more cash for meeting their natural wants and desires. Thus, few of the Kandha are now found in this kind of traditional pre-capitalism following the non- Kandha.

The socio-economic differences that emerged gradually after colonialism can be found in Rajaghara, where out of 87 households, 33 households (39 percent) earn less than Rs. 10,000 per year i.e., nearly 40 percent of the households are Below Poverty Level (BPL). The rest of them earn between Rs. 11,000 and Rs. 50,000. If that BPL is considered proletariat, they work as wage labour particularly slack agricultural season though most of them possess land less than 5 acres which are hardly sufficient for them to live on; they have to depend on labour. They are engaged in various activities such as road lying, construction etc. They work hard to earn but do not save much. Few households, i.e., about 12 households that earn between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 50,000 are in a better position than the rest. These are households that try to become members of the Panchayat or any other Committees also outside the village. While the traditional leadership depended on inheritance, they now participate in the constitutional democratic electoral system on competition which requires lobbying inside the community as well as outside with the non-

Kandha too. The positions give them honour and prestige which the Kandha aspire. Thus, there is a sort of class difference within the community.

In the above scenario, the economy of Kandha, the proletariat, exchanged their labour for the cash wages fixed by the non-Kandha who largely engaged them. However, in the village they worked either for cash or kind or most often an exchange of labour by working in each other's lands; in the towns they invariably worked for cash and bought food materials in the market run by the non-Kandha, exchanging cash with which several of them were not familiar. The government in the post-independence era set up institutional arrangements for the growth of turmeric and purchase of it and also a collection of minor forest produce for better prices where the goods are exchanged for cash with proper accounting.

A light on Change and Transformation

Before the colonial period, the Kandha lived in and around the forest entirely depending on it by food gathering and hunting. In other words, they were at the mercy of nature and also suffered from the vagaries of seasons (Chaudhury 2004). They lived in an intimate relationship with nature and used very simple technology to exploit their environment. Such relationship has been well preserved in their mythology and folklore. They learned to exploit nature with divine intervention, which, in other words, they acquired the required knowledge by experience. As a part of the story of the mother goddesses, they tell how they originated from *Tari Penu* and *Tada Penu* etc., wherein, they justify their worship as she is the mother who takes care of them through replenishing the fertility of the soil and the forest sources and blesses them with abundant means of living (Chaudhury 1989). So, they felt the need of satisfying her with the most precious offering, a human being that signified their utmost devotion and later on, it was substituted with buffalo.

The second phase of Kandha life is a gradual change in the late pre-colonial era adapting to shifting cultivation. Later, as they observed non-Kandha such as Patra, they also encountered another set of related beliefs along with settled agriculture. As a result, they revised the earlier beliefs with appropriate logic in response to the new ideology, technology and social conditions. New all Kandha rite came in as a mediator between nature and Kandha in a more organised manner with a specialist like *Jani*. With this, the interaction and relationships between the nature/deities became more complex in that the demands of the nature/deities increased with the increased needs of Kandha due to increased interference of the global political economy. In the process, the mass society of Kandha gradually distanced itself from nature and moved towards the non- Kandha society while *Jani* maintained the original proximity

with nature. Now, it could be understood how the Kandha who were depending upon forest and forest products and, later on, became a settled agricultural society leaving their traditional world and agricultural practices behind.

So far, the Kandha were fulfilling their needs and the needs of their community. At this point, the Kandha assumed the economic model of existence and the situation shifted from self-interest, or serving one's own interests, to serving the needs or wants of other communities. This further illustrates how the formerly self-centered Kandha evolved into self-critical and other-focused individuals. It indicates that they evaluate themselves against others and have a strong desire to belong to the other dominant community. However, they also recognize that they should not lose their tribal identity because it affords them certain privileges. They also recognize that worshiping the mother goddess is necessary because it gives them a distinct identity and unites them all, fostering social solidarity and unity. They simultaneously glanced around, seeking identification with the same deities as the dominant non-Kandha community, and realized that their mother goddess did not need any more killing people to get her satisfied. Since the aforementioned provides a general framework, it is crucial to concentrate on the specifics of the interaction between Kandha and non-Kandha. In this context, we will take note of Bailey's highly pertinent observation:

"The Kandhamal are a high tableland, sharply cut off on three sides from the plains around by a precipitous range of mountains, and inhabited by an aboriginal people called konds. They are still today the most numerous elements in the population. But at least three hundred years ago Oriyas (A native of Orissa, of any caste, is called an 'Oriya'. His language also is 'Oriya'. In the Kandhamal there is also an Oriya caste.), who are Hindus, began to push up from the plains and established from field settlements in the hills" (1957:7).

With the entry of others, Kandha who were self-centric initially got worried to make contact with the people of the plain. But at the same time, they also felt that it would help get their needs met. The basic need at that time was salt and clothes. And as part of the forest economy, they had started improving their technology of cultivation. The hill slopes were cleared with the help of these middlemen and regulated sequence of activities and cleared up the pathways in the forest and brought either side of the footpaths under the cultivation and named such areas as *podu*. As it had a primitive way of cultivation which required more time to make it more productive. While their needs were met, the Kandha continued to meet the need of the outsiders by exchange of forest produces for salt, clothes, iron implements and it also resulted in the growth of the economy of the middlemen and other outsiders. This was an introduction of the market into the Kandha area. By this interaction, slowly, shifting cultivation got developed with the system of community and collective ownership.

Kings of the princely states were interested to be in contact with the Kandha for the forest products and control of the predatory bands that were stealing the crops at the foothills; they were not concerned with the social and political organisation. They did not even interfere with methods of exploring the material world of the Kandha. The only way to contact these people was through the middlemen and so the kings appointed their representatives, Patra, who maintained a friendly relationship with the tribal people. In this regard, Bailey states,

"The administration can scarcely be said to have extended to the villages. The civil functionaries were concentrated in the cities and larger towns; the judicial administration was equally centralized, courses of law being established only in the same local officials having their headquarters in the towns who were responsible for the patrolling of the main routes" (1960: 164-165).

Not only the king's representatives but also other non-Kandha immigrants maintained very cordial relations with the Kandha, respecting the tribal customs and practices of the Kandha. Such a strategy helped them to exploit the tribal people by selling clothes and other commodities at escalated prices. In such a situation, there was a gap in the area of communication as the tribal people did not know Odia. The Pano could fill this gap as they were the first caste to get into the Kandha area and learned the Kui language of Kandha and took up the role of mediator or intermediary between the Kandha and the non-Kandha merchants and others as well. They became a part of the Kandha community and even married their women.

The increased interaction with the Pano and the king's representatives made the Kandha readjust and redefine their needs and increased participation in the market with the increased area of shifting cultivation. A variety of crops were also grown, to suit the demands of the market. In course of time, shifting cultivation carried on communal or collective ownership and the use of labour changed to individual ownership of land with the land being distributed to individual households. In this way, the systems of terrace and wet cultivation developed with the emerging trends of private ownership of land. Increased use of inputs, increased use of labour, and the active role of the market changed the entire social, economic and political life of Kandha. Further changes occurred after 1836 AD when the British extended their authority over the tribal areas. As Bailey states the situation in 1957 as follows:

"The Oriyas who arrived in the Kandha villages were the newcomers; they have taken the best land of Kandha. The religion and language were different from those of the native habitats. They took concubines, but rarely wives. They live in separate villages. They claim and derive the adjective sita, by which they distinguish themselves from Konds, from a word meaning 'the learned ones' or 'the knowledgeable ones'. Oriyas assert that before coming to

the Kond lived like 'beast of the jungle' and knew nothing of the proper cultivation of rice. It was the Oriyas, they say, who taught the Konds to wear cloths, while once they had gone naked. Finally, like settlers elsewhere, the Oriyas shock off metropolitan control and retained only the loosest ties with Hindu Rajas on the plains. The relationship of the two races is till typical of settlers frontier. But the movement has been stopped for more than a hundred years. Although, the Oriya villages throw off small suburban settlements, there is no longer a drive from the edge towards the interior of the tableland" (1957:7).

With the existing relationship and market connection, the tribe who depended on the forest for food were now resorting to the collection and gathering of minor forest produce only to supplement agricultural produce. They were cultivating small pieces of land and making themselves fit the new conditions that the plain area people had created, but continue to depend upon their primitive agricultural implements and methods of cultivation. They were raising mostly one crop during the monsoon and sometimes went for a second crop in the winter.

Here, if we examine how the economy changed over a period of time from the forest base to agriculture, there is a change in the socio-economic life of Kandha groups that practiced agriculture than the ones who continued to depend on the forest. In all the groups, the association between Kandha and forest has started breaking though they consider this as the main resource and faster in some cases and slower in some other. Turmeric is considered to have substantial impact on the economy of the Kandha tribe where there is influence of the Patra and other non-Kandha through turmeric trade. Through this and other means as stated above they could possess the lands of Kandha and sold them to others. In this regard, Bailey notes the following:

"If there no-one buys land from the warriors (i.e. Patra), how were they able to meet such contingent costs as deaths, marriage or the need to buy plough cattle without selling land? The most probable explanation- assuming that rites, which are the main expense, were conducted on the same scale- is that estates were not reduced to the margin of disintegration, not because everyone was richer in the old days, but because the joint-family was still a flourishing institution. So long as partition does not take place, the devastating effect of multiple inheritances is avoided and contingent costs fall upon estates of a size sufficient to meet them. The principle is the same as when a slump may eliminate a small business and be survived by big business." (Bailey 1957: 92)

Finally, it can be said that, the relationship between Kandha and non-Kandha was an economic one. The non-Kandha who entered the Kandha-region sprawled the market system and got immensely benefited. They took interest in the Kandha's economy through the production of turmeric and acted as

middlemen in the process and got themselves richer and became a lucky community.

Conclusion

In this paper, the subject of how to see religion in relation to anthropology is posed. One way to look at it is how religion helps sustain the social structure; however, this method doesn't seem to be the best one to use when analyzing the dynamic aspects of rituals or religion. Alternatively, it is considered that the political economic approach with its dynamics nature would be able to answer the question of religion as it changes along with the political economy; each of them become cause and effect. Here as the study of Kandha society makes clear about close link between political economy and religion where religion is not causing problem but having invisible power and a contribution and at the same time it gets influenced. It also tried to demonstrate that the present lies in the past and the anthropologist has to decode events of the past for getting insights into the present. As far as the present situation in Kandhamal is concerned the history, interconnections among the land, ritual, ethnic identity, economy and politics have to be taken into consideration when attempts are made to solve the conflicts and tensions for better governance and harmonious living. The relationship of religion and market is crucial is to understand the social function of the society like Kandha. It is true that society and the local community are never fully isolated and autonomous from other influences, both in the present and the past.

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Notes

1 Meriah is not a Kondh term, but the British applied it to denote human sacrifice prevalent among them. The term Meriah was perhaps a corrupt form of the Kondh term 'Mervi' which refers to the Kondh god Mervi Penu, a brother of the Earth Goddess Tari Penu, for whom human sacrifice was to be observed. The Kondhs believed that human sacrifice would give them good crops and protection against all diseases and natural disasters (Chaudhury 1989).

2 Following the lead of Tylor's (1871) theories, Frazer (1890), Otto (1958), James (1933, 1940), among others, stressed the primacy of religious ideas as the basis of religion, born out of pseudoscientific explanations or emotional experiences.

3 F.G. Bailey's entry into the ethnography scene about the tribes of Odisha marked a dramatic change, with his writings in 1957, 1960, and 1970 based on the most reliable and authentic information he collected during his anthropological fieldwork. The shift of theory and interest came down to Asia and India in a specific, extended case study method, sanity, on the issues of the clan, conflict of interest, and tone of conflict exhibited in his study among the Kandha and neighbour warriors as well as the Pano caste. He emphasizes village-level politics, the exchange of the political system with a new form of the economic system, and extensively talks about the changed social system. Land in the market, political complexity, affluence of others, political caste, transecting the village boundaries, village council, and multiplex roles are his gifts to the world of anthropology. He holds a fine understanding of the relationship between caste and tribe; the comparison he draws with huge statistical data provides immense value for the research.

4 A Brief Backdrop of Spices' Trade History of spices dates back to 6th century BC, if not long, long before that. Spices from the Asian continent were carried by caravan to ports of the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf and thereafter to the market places of Athens, Rome, and other cities, where they were sold at exorbitant prices. During 1497 and 1498, British, Italian, Portuguese navigators undertook voyages to Asia in search of spices. Vasco da Gama of Portuguese landed in Calicut (Kozhikode, now) in Kerala on May 20, 1498, reported about the Malabar region, the inexhaustible land of spices in India. Since then the Portuguese started trading directly with India. Between A.D. 1605 and 1621, the Dutch managed to drive the Portuguese out of the Spices Islands achieving a monopoly in spices trading. However, in A.D.1799 the Dutch East India Company went bankrupt due to many reasons and the Dutch ports of Malabar Coast were taken over by the British. By the end of the eighteenth century, the United States entered the scene of world spices trade (especially pepper), the most remunerative trade of the time.

5 According to some other version the priest of the earth goddess had a dream in which he saw a person with physical features - hairs on their ears – similar to that of a Patra. The goddess informed him that a person with such physical features should worship her as she was not satisfied with the worship of the Kandha. Then, the people went in search and found out that the Patras were having such features. So, they requested them to come and organize the worship of their Goddess (Behera 2014:79)

6 In the account of Boal, he talks about the exploitation of the British and Ronal Hardenberg expresses his idea while talking about meriah suppression.

7 Marxist concept. See Taussig (2010: 130-133)

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Bhagyashree Mishra & Ashish Saxena

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES OF KALPWASIS: A STUDY OF MAGH MELA AT PRAYAGRAJ

Abstract

The Present Research paper extends a sociological analysis of the tradition of Kalpwas in Prayag. Prayag is known as the most sacred place of Hindus and the King of all Pilgrimages (Tirthraj). Although the Kumbh Mela is organized at four holy places, the kumbh mela held at Prayag has its own special significance. At Prayag, Magh mela (can be said as a mini form of kumbh Mela) is celebrated every year in month of Magh, at the bank of holy confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati and it is only Prayag where the practice of Kalpwas can be seen in the month of Magh. Kalpwas means Religious Spiritual Migration for the upliftment of the soul. The Practice of Kalpwas performed here has its special importance in creating the sacred complex of Prayag and its cultural landscape. It is worth noting that the notions of tradition and sacred activities regarding kalpwas, are influenced and regulated by various aspects especially social and religious. In the present study an attempt has been made to see how the practice of kalpwas is socially constructed during sacred space and sacred time in Prayag and how the beliefs and Rituals Performed by the Kalpwasis create a Sociological Understanding.

Keywords: *Prayag, Kumbh Mela, Magh Mela, Kalpwas, Sacred Space, Sacred time*

Introduction

Throughout history, from ancient civilizations to modern era; from simple society to complex society, sacred centers have exerted a powerful attractive force on their believers. These centers serve as religious focal points where people of different backgrounds converge. Hindus have a long-standing tradition of pilgrimage to their holy deities. This tradition is believed to be ancient and enduring among the Hindu community. Multitudes of sacred places spread across the length and breadth of this land, attract millions of pilgrims every year. Visiting these places is one of the most significant events in the religious life of the believers. These places preserve a religious myth that

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appeals to the pilgrims. By visiting these places, the religious person achieves spiritual satisfaction and creates a lasting memory. Religions assign spiritual significance to specific places that are connected to the divine. The holy land becomes a destination for pilgrimage and its believers visit these places to affirm their faith in that sacred context. One such place is Prayag, which is regarded as a pilgrimage site in Hindu Sanatan Religion. Millions of pilgrims gather here every year in the month of Magh to celebrate Magh Mela.

Prayag is known as the *Tirtharaja* (King of all pilgrimages) and is believed by the Hindus to be the holiest place among all pilgrimages of them. According to Hindu mythology, the land of Prayag is regarded as the generative organ of Goddess earth. With the land between the holy confluence of Ganga and the Yamuna (*Sangam*), Prayag is seen as the mythical center of the universe (Dubey 2001)**.** Kumbh Mela in Prayag is held every 12 years and Magh Mela, which can be abbreviated as Mini Kumbh Mela, is held every year in Prayag on the bank of Sangam in the Magh month. The Magh Mela of Prayag has its own distinct feature, because the tradition of Kalpwas can only be seen in Prayag during the month of Magh. According to Hindu Panchang, Magh month is known for its religious, spiritual significance. The present study attempts to explore the construction of Kalpwasi's social and religious identity during sacred space (*Prayag*) and sacred time (*Magh* month*)*.

Magh mela is a Hindu religious festival and a large human gathering on earth in which millions of pilgrims gather at Prayag during sacred time to carry out Kalpwas (A month-long ritualistic stay). Devotees congregate here to perform religious rituals, such as *Pitra tarpan* (offering water to their ancestors), performing spiritual practice, taking Holy dip, meeting with spiritual Saints, listening religious lectures, *bhajans* and *kirtans*, Meditating, offering *daan* etc. within the framework of scriptural authority. Magh mela held on the vast open sacred sandy site of the rivers, is perhaps the most sanctifying attractive event in the cultural life of the country. The remarkable notion that distinguishes this fair from the common run of religious fairs is its long duration, lunar and solar astronomical astrological correspondences. It starts from the Makar Sankranti i.e. when the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn. Thousands of pilgrims, belonging to all strata of society and speaking different languages and ascetics of various religious orders from all regions of the country flock to Prayag and dwell in tents and huts on the sands for Kalpwas within the sacred precincts. A miniature spiritual India is represented on the dry flood plain between the Ganga and Yamuna during the shivering cold at Magh. Mela owes its origin to ritual baths at holy confluence of rivers since the later Vedic age. The Anusasanaparvan of Mahabharata refers to the living institution of Magh snan where it is said "Those who bathe with the restrained mind and observing rigid vows at Prayag in the month of Magh is cleansed of all their sins and attains heaven." (Shukla and Kumar 2019)

The first historical reference to the religious festivals at Prayag is mentioned by Chinese traveler Huen Tsang in the period of Emperor Harshavardhan, who gave a vivid description of the sacred occasion in his travel accounts by saying it as an 'Age - long festival' in A.D 643. Tulsidas (A.D 1532-1623) has praised the significance of Magh in eloquent terms.

माघ मकरगत रवि जब होई। तिरथपतिहि आव सब कोई॥

देव दनुज किन्नर नर श्रेनी। सादर मज्जहि सकल त्रिवेनी।

He describes that all the sacred places, gods, demons, semi - divinities, and pious men assemble in Prayag and take bath at Triveni when the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn.

Magh Mela: A field view

Magh mela is organized in 641 hectares and the total mela area is divided into 6 sectors. These 6 sectors are 1,1(A),2,3,4,5 respectively. Here, around 14 Ghats of around 6050 running feet are built. The total available land for Mela is around 649.87 hectares, out of which 487 hectares of land is available for settlement. *Acharya bada*, *Dandi bada*, *Khak chowk* and *Prayagwals* are the prominent sects of Magh Mela. Apart from these, there are some other institutions that are allotted in Mela. There are six main bathing festivals of Magh mela. The mela begins on *Paush Purnima* whenKalpwasis start their Kalpwas, second is *Makar Sankranti*, third is *Mauni Amavasya*, fourth is *Basant Panchami,* fifth is *Maghi Purnima*, when most of the Kalpwasis end their Kalpwas. The last one is *Mahashivratri* after which the Mela comes to an end.

Theoretical framework

Kalpwas is a term derived from two words, '*Kalpa*' means 'transformation of self through inner determination' and '*vas*' means 'religious spiritual migration' (Chaturvedi 2016). It means Kalpwasis perform Kalpwas to worship God and uplift their souls. Kalpwas is a religious practice that offers an accessible alternative for gaining religious merits during the month of Magh. Durkheim defines ritual as the totality of practices concerned with sacred things and by which religion is made visible and tangible. In the same way Kalpwas as a ritual is considered as sacred performance and reaffirms the beliefs of Hindu Sanatan Religion. As Durkheimian theory of religion says that believers of any religion celebrate their religious festivals because through it they attach themselves to their highly respected tradition and awake certain ideas and sentiments that connect the present to the past, analogously Kalpwasis celebrate kalpwas because they follow the tradition of their ancestors and they believe that they are attached to it as a highly respected tradition and

they leave it with a spirit of moral well-being (Durkheim 1915). The concept of the sacred is related to 'purity'. Devotees often observe kalpwas as a means of gaining purity through rituals like tonsure (*mundane*), *snan* (holy bathing), and *daan* (charitable offerings). These rituals preserve special auspicious meaning during the month of Magh on account of performing it at sacred places which enhances the power and value of devotees through connecting them with the divine.

The identity of a Kalpwasi is supposed to be considered as socially constructed. Berger and Luckmann (1966) proposed the concept of social construction of reality and argued that people or groups interacting in a social system create, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other's actions that eventually become embedded in the institutional fabric of social identity. Likewise, Kalpwasis by interacting in their group, became, over time, habituated into reciprocal roles played by Kalpwasis in relation to each other. When their reciprocal interaction becomes institutionalized, it creates their religious identity.

Gazing at Prayag as a pilgrimage site in an anthropological context, L.P. Vidyarthi (1961), opined three dimensions of sacred space as geography, performances, and specialists, which constitute a complex called 'sacred complex'. This complex is an intricate and interdependent grouping of sacred centers followed by regular or periodical but specific performances by specialists. Kalpwas at Prayag, as a sacred performance, represents one essential component of the sacred complex of Prayag. According to Vidyarthi, this component also helps in tracing the socio-cultural, economic, and religious aspects of the sacred complex.

Kalpwasi's social identity and their sensory experience

Kalpwas during Magh mela at Prayag is one of the world's largest congregations of men and women who stay at this place to take holy dip at Sangam and perform sacred rituals. The camps set up by godly Hindu pilgrims near the holy confluence of Prayag in the month of Magh for temporary stay and devotion to God are called 'Kalpwas'. Many devotees, particularly elderly couples, vow to participate in Kalpwas during the month of Magh. The Kalpwas becomes a melting pot of various elements of Hindu belief system and presents unified imagery of Hinduism which is realized in the form of common understanding over sacred geography, sacred rituals, and sacred literatures. It can be observed that the Kalpwas is basically held at the confluence of sacred geography on sacred time. Kalpwas involves sacrifice of comfort and luxurious life devoted to God during the month of Magh in Magh mela at Prayag. When Kalpwasis come to mela, their only aim is to attain salvation (*Moksh*) and for the attainment of salvation, not only Purity of body but also purity of soul is a precondition. Kalpwasis believe that by performing some Rituals, they can purify their soul and attain salvation.

The pilgrims who commit to take possession of Kalpwasi's social identity, commit to shoulder several religious rituals. They must live on the bank of the Ganges for a whole month, eat simple and satvik bhojan (*Ann*) and perform several religious activities to cultivate their spiritual being. Kalpwasis are easily remarkable and distinguishable by their daily routines and by the areas they occupy at Mela site. Thus, they differentiate themselves from non Kalpwasis of Mela. There is a tenacious shared identity with Kalpwasis seeing each other as a part of the same single group (Shankar, et al. 2014). This Social identity defines what is expected from a Kalpwasi and shapes their experience and negotiation of physically demanding environmental conditions. They also concluded that cold can be interpreted and experienced in relation to group member's social identity. It is revealed that shared identity of Kalpwasi with other pilgrims lead to forms of mutual support that made it easier to cope with the cold and it impacts upon participant's ability to endure cold conditions. By performing the sacred performance i.e. Kalpwas, the Kalpwasis build their sacred world and give meaning to their great Hindu Sanatan culture. A great contrast can be clearly visible where we see that Kalpwasis consider some things, performances, directions etc. as sacred and they avoid *tamasic bhojan* and luxury life as profane i.e. impure. All the rituals that they perform during Kalpwas are on the clear specification of sacred and profane. These are also mentioned about the different ceremonies dealt with *Grihya Sutra*. There is a clear specification of use of right and left. The opposition between right and left, even numbers vs odd numbers, vegetables vs meats, four directions i.e. East/West/North/ South, give attention to the opposition of pure and impure. (Das 1991)

Methodology

Out of all the Kalpwasis, attending the Magh Mela 2023, 220 Kalpwasis were selected through simple random sampling. Interviews were strategically conducted from the selected Kalpwasis from all the 6 sectors to span the diversity of age, gender, and social category. The resulting sample contained 134 Male and 86 Female with an age range of 45-70 years. To generate an in-depth, multi- faceted understanding of the lifestyle of Kalpwasis in their real-life context, ethnographic observation and a few case studies have been undertaken.

Social category of Kalpwasis

Among the selected Kalpwasis, 47.2% are from the General category, while 29% are from OBC, 21.8% are from SC, and 1.8% are from ST category. Although it is believed that Kalpwas is open to all irrespective of caste and class, the observation reflects the inclination of high caste towards performing Kalpwas more than others. The reason behind this is that Brahmins have been involved in religious

Social category	Frequency	Percentage
General	104	47.2
OBC	64	29.1
SC	48	21.9
ST	4	1.8
Total	**220**	**100**

Source: The Author (Primary Data)

activities since ancient times and they are intrigued in performing such a religious activity because they consider themselves as a part of their great tradition. In terms of caste, the analysis shows that not only the devotees of the priestly caste perform Kalpwas, but also of other castes, take an interest in carrying out this highly respected tradition. It reveals that members of other castes have been attracted towards the tradition of Kalpwas by encountering other religious people. With the knowledge of the history of Kalpwas and its religious importance, people of other castes also perform Kalpwas to empower themselves religiously. Majority of Kalpwasis (27.2%) are illiterate, 21.8% are educated up to primary level, 24.5% are up to high school level, 12.7% are graduates and 5.4% are post graduates. This somehow shows an inverse interconnection between religiosity and educational level, because those who are more educated, less inclined towards the tradition of Kalpwas than the less educated devotees. A possible reason for this is that the Kalpwasis who have more education tend to think more scientifically and rationally, and therefore have less interest in performing these kinds of religious activities.

Case study 1

Mangri Devi (59 years), a resident of Goorpur in Prayagraj belonging to SC community has camped with the upper castes in Acharya Nagar, engrossed in Bhajan, worship, and performs her month-long religious rituals. She said, "I have been performing Kalpwas for 10 years and never had any problem or faced any sort of discrimination here." She is inspired by her guru ji. She revealed that through worshiping and singing bhajans while being in the company of her guru ushered in peace and a sense of fulfillment in her faith increased.

Age of Kalpwasis

Age Groups of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
45-50	7	3.1
51-55	4	1.8
56-60	77	35
61-65	117	53.1
66-70	15	6.8
Total	220	100

Source: The Author (Primary Data)

Analysis reveals that majority of the Kalpwasis belong to 61- 65-year age group followed by a lot of Kalpwasis belong to 56-60-year age group. The reason behind this may be most of the Kalpwasis decide to perform Kalpwas after completing their household responsibilities and when they feel free from their family and professional duties. Since to get Kalpwas here, it is very crucial to be free from the worldly responsibilities, to be calm and to move towards spirituality. And these age groups are more suitable for any Kalpwasis for performing Kalpwas at the holy confluence of Sangam.

Case study 2

Rakesh Pathak and his wife stayed here for Kalpwas in the Shivir of Golakwasi pandit Janardhan Pathak at sector 4 of Mela area. It is his third year of Kalpwas. He is a resident of Pratapgarh. He is a retired lecturer from an intermediate school. He has been coming many times to Prayag to see Magh Mela but after a long time he started to commit Kalpwas. He says that old age is suitable for doing Kalpwas. Because at this age one is free from one's responsibilities. He said "*Kalpwas should not be done until a person becomes free from his / her responsibilities*".

Marital status of Kalpwasis

Out of all selected Kalpwasis, 75.4% are married, 3.6% are separated, 2.7% are unmarried, 9.5% are widow and 8.6% are widower. Analysis mentions that majority of the Kalpwasis are married, who perform Kalpwas than other category Kalpwasis. The reason behind this is that for those who are married, it becomes convenient for them to perform Kalpwas because there are a lot of strict rules regarding Kalpwas that need at least one person for the easily performing of Kalpwas. If two persons are there i.e. husband and wife then it becomes convenient for one Kalpwasi to perform Kalpwas. On the other hand, those who are separated/ unmarried/ widow/ widower, all require a person with them who may be a relative, neighbor or anyone. So, it is found that married persons are frequently performing Kalpwas. Moreover, one prominent reason could be that Our Hindu holy scriptures also give preference to the married couples for any sacred religious ceremony to be performed.

Social background of Kalpwasis

Type of Area from where Kalpwasis have come	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	149	67.7
Urban	71	32.3
Total	**220**	**100**

Source: The Author (Primary Data)

Above table states that 67.7% of Kalpwasis come from rural areas while 32.3% of Kalpwasis come from urban areas. The analysis shows that most of the

people from rural areas come to perform Kalpwas. One reason for this could be that the countrymen are of religious tendency, so they are more inclined towards religious and spiritual traditions like Kalpwas, while on the other hand the people from the urban areas are of less religious tendency than and think of more logical and scientific way, so they believe less in the tradition of Kalpwas.

Motivational forces to perform Kalpwas

Out of all the selected Kalpwasis, the highest percentage (41.7 %) of Kalpwasis have come here with the inspiration of their *Panda*(a sacred specialist), 21.7 % inspired by their tradition, 10% inspired by their relatives, 16.6% with the inspiration of their neighbors and 10 % randomly planned to perform Kalpwas. These things show that Panda has a very close relationship with ritual of Kalpwas. Even nowadays most of the Kalpwasis are performing Kalpwas with the help of their Panda. "Panda-Yajman" type refers to the hereditary relationship and mutual obligations that have come to exist between the Panda and Yajman families to clan castes of different parts of India whose members always come to their Panda for taking religious assistance to perform Rituals. It is also reflected in the work of Vidyarthi where he gave the instance of Panda - Yajman relationship and revealed that Gayawal priests / Pandas provide an effective mechanism to identify and regulate "Priests- sacrificers" (Yajmans) system from generation to generation. Such mechanisms are (1) Inheritance of lineage designations and hereditary nicknames (2) Maintenance of record books containing genealogical details of all their Yajmans. This relationship is based on their mutual obligations.

Food practices during Kalpwas

Food habit of Kalpwasis is regulated by several strict rules. During Kalpwas, there are many rules and restrictions related to their food habits, which a Kalpwasi must follow. But with the time, variations are being seen regarding their food habits. According to holy scriptures, a Kalpwasi should take *Ann* (Bhojan)once in a day, take rest only once in a day at night and intake only *falahaar* (fruits). The food that they take, should be of *satvik* nature. There are a lot of restrictions in the food materials they should take, variations are found here too. Out of all selected Kalpwasis, 86 % of the Kalpwasis believe that they should avoid some vegetables specially Onion, Garlic, Brinjal, Carrots, Reddish, Cauliflower, *Masur Daal* (Red Lentils), *Urad daal* (Black Gram Split), Mustard oil etc., and 14 per cent of Kalpwasis believed in avoiding only onion, garlic and mustard oil and they don't consider any other restrictions regarding food. A very few Kalpwasis consider masur and urad daal in Ann and avoid it during Kalpwas. They believe that a Kalpwasi should follow rules and restrictions by their convenience and capacity. Most of the Kalpwasis take food once in the evening because they believe that if they take food in afternoon, then they would like to feel taking rest. However, taking rest in afternoon is restricted

during Kalpwas. 80% Kalpwasis consider *kuccha bhojan* (raw food) in the fruit diet, in which *peanuts*, *makhana* (fox nuts), *Til ke laddu*(sesame balls), Tea and fruits etc. and 20% Kalpwasis consider Roti (Wheat), Sabzi (Cooked Vegetables), Daal (Lentils)and Chawal (Rice) etc. in Pucca food. Here it is necessary to know the difference between Kuccha and Pukka food. Most of the scriptures and Kalpwasis also have faith in the belief that fried roasted food is pukka food and apart from that the food which is not oily and fried, that is kuccha food. Here too, diversity can be seen in the views of Kalpwasis. The important thing to understand here is that the kuccha bhojan or pukka bhojan, is not a universal and equal assumption but this concept is different in terms of individuals, groups etc.95 % Kalpwasis use Gas fuel as the medium of cooking and 5% Kalpwasis use *stoves* or *Chulha* for preparing food. Most of the Kalpwasis use steel utensils while remaining use aluminium, copper, or other potteries for preparing the food. On special occasions, (Makar Sankranti, Basant Panchami,etc.), most of the Kalpwasis take some special food such as *Poori, Kachori, Kheer, Halwa* etc.

Dressing pattern of Kalpwasis

Holy scriptures recommend Kalpwasis to wear pure silk or wool, white or yellow coloured and simple and sober clothes during Kalpwas but a lot of changes can be seen regarding the dressing pattern of Kalpwasis with the time and their convenience. 81% of the Male Kalpwasis wear dhoti kurta or pants and do not consider Jeans and T-shirts suitable for Kalpwas because of their age and social perception. 82% women Kalpwasis believe that Saree should be worn during Kalpwas and they should not wear any other type of modern apparel. 18% female Kalpwasis were seen wearing maxi or gowns and they believe that this dress is comfortable for them. Some of the Kalpwasis were also of the opinion that there is no restriction regarding wearing dress during Kalpwas. Majority of Kalpwasis i.e. 90% believe that a Kalpwasi should wear yellow, red, or light coloured dress during Kalpwas and 10% of them believed that there is no any restriction regarding colour of the dress, that a Kalpwasi wear during Kalpwas. Out of all selected Kalpwasis, 40% believed in wearing cotton clothes and 33.3 % believed in wearing clothes of mixed material and a very few of them (26.7 %) believed that there is no any restriction regarding the material of dress that a Kalpwasi wear. Nevertheless, one very identical notion among them was that every Kalpwasi wear woolen clothes to avoid excessive cold. During January-February, the cold is at its extreme level. The afternoon of this weather is normal and from the evening the cold starts to intensify again. In such a situation, Kalpwasis wear light, pure silk, and cotton clothes in the afternoon, but in the evening, when the cold increases, they wear more warm clothes to avoid cold.

Perception of origin and relevance of Kalpwas

Most of the Kalpwasis believe that Kalpwas means living in hardship,

living life of penance, and performing religious activity. Moreover, many of them also believe that Kalpwas means meditating on God. Considering Kalpwasi's perception regarding history of origin of Kalpwas then it has been found that its history can be traced from the period of 'Emperor Harshvardhan' or through the great myth of '*Samundramanthan*'. A very few Kalpwasis are those who don't have any idea about the historical origin of Kalpwas. One Kalpwasi living in sector 3 of Magh Mela, named Bhupendra said that "We don't know much about kalpwas, our Panda ji will give you all the information because he has complete knowledge". These things reveal that the concept of kalpwas has become inherited into the sacred specialists rather than individual devotees. Most of the pilgrims strongly believe that the aim of their Kalpwas is to 'groom their next life' and many of them believe that through Kalpwas their present life will be improved. A few Kalpwasis believe that by performing Kalpwas, they feel happy and peaceful. It reveals that most of the Kalpwasis think in the same way about tradition of Kalpwas that the root of it lies with a fundamental notion of the rebirth of our Sanatan Hinduism that even after this life a life exists.

Duration of their stay

Out of all the selected Kalpwasis, 27% stayed for 40 days in Magh Mela for Kalpwas. After this, 25% for 35 days, 20% for 45 days, 10% for 30 days, 10% Kalpwasis for 42 days and 8 % for 50 days. It is believed that some Kalpwasis stay in Prayag from Paush Purnima to Maghi Purnima. Some believe that it is necessary for Kalpwas to stay from Sankranti to Sankranti. All such Kalpwasis who stay from Purnima to Purnima or Sankranti to Sankranti, have a stay of 40 days for Kalpwas in Magh area. But some Kalpwasis believe in the *Trijata Snan* (bath). These are mostly the same Kalpwasis who have come here from the areas near Prayagraj like Soraon, Pratapgarh, Holagarh, Gonda etc. There is a belief among them that Kalpwas should be considered incomplete without taking Trijata Snan. Trijata Snan is in the name of the demon named Trijata who served Sita ji, the wife of Lord Rama and got his blessings that there would be a bath in the name of Trijata and without doing it, Kalpwas would not be considered completed. Those Kalpwasis who go back after taking Trijata Snan, stay in Prayag for more than 40 days. The percentage of those Kalpwasis is the lowest i.e. 8% who go back after taking a bath on Mahashivratri, so they stay for about 50 days.

Religiosity of the Kalpwasis in Magh Mela

All the Kalpwasis have their own deity (*Kuldevta*) and 70 percent of them have Kuldevta as Laddu Gopal. Even after this, there is a resemblance among all the Kalpwasis that during Kalpwas they worship Goddess Ganga and Tulsi in the form of Lord Vishnu. It is found that Kalpwasis worship nature as a symbol of God followed by worshiping their Kuldevta. When pilgrims come to

the Mela area, they camp in the form of thatched huts for up to a month. After that they plant Tulsi (Basil) and Jaw (barley) as a symbol of prosperity in front of their thatched hut and worship them daily. Some people also plant Peepal and Banana saplings along with these. Most of the Kalpwasis stay in pavilions of their Religious Gurus. When Kalpwasis start their kalpwas, it is mandatory daily to take a sacred bath in river Ganga, Yamuna or at the Sangam preferably thrice a day. First bath at sunrise, followed by Surya namaskar and offer prayers to Tirtharaj Prayag, Lord Vishnu and chant 108 names of Lord Vishnu. During Magh month, they must keep all their inducements at gulf and exercise control over anger, greed, attraction, jealousy, and all other forms of human accretions. Kalpwasis are compelled to fast, surviving on a single meal a day. This maintains their health and helps them to achieve physical purity. They give alms and offer food grains and till to the needy as charity and it is believed to bring prosperity to the giver. Some believe that the charities they perform in their life will come back to them in their next life. Kalpwasis don't accept any gift offerings during the period of their Kalpwas. They sleep on the ground. They don't consume intoxicants (such as betel and tobacco) during Kalpwas. They don't use oil or soap for cleansing of their body and clothes. They stay within the ranges of the Magh mela during their Kalpwas. They occlude faith in God. They eat only austere food and drink Ganga water. They must take a bath in water mixed with white sesame (*til*). On the special bathing day such as Makar Sankranti, they give away white sesame. At the end of Kalpwas, Kalpwasis took up the Tulsi and Jow plant, which they had planted outside their tents for submission in the waters of river Ganga. Before departing, the Kalpwasis give suitable offerings including food to the pilgrim priest and obtain his blessings. It is believed that those who fulfill the requirements of Kalpwas, earn a passport to *Vaikuntha* - the residence of Lord Vishnu. Many of them spend a month at Magh Mela every year continuously for 12 years. After completion of 12 years of Kalpwas, they perform a ritual called '*shaiyyadaan*' in which they donate beds and all other things that they want to offer.

Kalpwasis who complete twelve consecutive years of Kalpwas are believed to have completed the cycle of Kalpwas. Moreover, they may discontinue kalpwas if they so want, but many of them use to come year after year, after 12 years of Kalpwas. This releases Kalpwasis from further birth and rebirth and brings huge merits for them, however after shaiyyadaan, Kalpwasis must sleep on the floor for the rest of their lives and live without any comfort, in their Sanyas ashram. It is believed that through Kalpwas one becomes able to eliminate one's sins. The first day when they start Kalpwas at Paush Purnima, they eat only '*khichdi*' so that they could be prepared for ascetic life during Kalpwas. When their Kalpwas becomes finish, they eat '*besan ke kadhi pakode*'. Prayagwals Pandas get up the whole responsibility of their Kalpwasis. They have their whole genealogy (records) of names, address, and all information of their Kalpwasis. Every Kalpwasi have their own panda or Tirth Purohit by contacting whom they complete their Kalpwas. When they initiate their Kalpwas, they take a

'*sankalp*' of not leaving this place till whole Magh month and of strictly following the rituals of Kalpwas. Before starting Kalpwas, they shave their beard and moustache and donate it to their Tirthpurohits and prohibit shaving during the whole Kalpwas. This ritual is known as '*Chhaur*'. All their rituals are completed by these Pandas of ghat so these are called *'Ghatiya Panda*'.

Conclusion

The concept of 'purity' is very essential and in fact central to Hinduism. People often take pilgrimage to gain purity by cleansing themselves of sins committed. The various rituals which are associated with cleansing oneself of sins like snan, daan, etc. take a special meaning during Kalpwas because it is being held as a sacred place during sacred time. By journeying these places and performing the associated rites, pilgrims obtain religious merits which help them in transforming of their life. Sacred is the aspect which separates out a space from other spaces, and it is a break in the otherwise homogeneous space. This sacredness is not chaotic, it is very much there to be seen and experienced for a religious person; the whole cosmos is a real living thing; expressing something that transcends it. At Prayag the confluence of two rivers looks magnificent and the belief that Amrit had fallen there instills mystery and awe, as it seems to be an invisible divine source. The religious person hence wants to be a part of the sacred, to participate in this reality, to be a part of this divine power. For him it is through that they connect to God, as God created it. Kalpwas is a spiritual quest, unifying divinity, and humanity. It develops a two-way relationship between the pilgrim and divine. Thus, it can be said that during Kalpwas, an attempt to be in the divine presence and reintegrating of the mythical time is reactualised by staying at Prayag (a sacred space) during the month of Magh (sacred time). It is precisely the reintegration of this original and sacred time that differentiates one's behavior during the event from his behavior after it. In a gathering like this the sins and faults of the individual and even of the community are believed to vanish or are consumed by fire. It is necessary here to understand that it is the 'original time' or the festival time during which this bathing has significance. Therefore, one of the functions that pilgrimage serves is to understand our cultural heritage allowing a harmonious relationship between man and the sacredness embedded in a place. Cultural landscapes are cultural properties that represent the combined works of nature and man. Through a deep attachment man can transform the materialist entity into a cosmic reality at a place. Homogeneous space is converted into a specific place and acted upon by human action and belief system i.e. interaction between human beings and nature over time it becomes a cultural landscape. Kalpwasis made this cultural landscape of Prayag through the act of Kalpwas.

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Mothi George

ENSLAVEMENT, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE: INTERPRETING THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC

Abstract

African American music represents a glorious chapter in American culture and is profoundly linked with African American social history. The music styles like spirituals, Ragtime, blues, Gospels, and Hip-hop form part of the unique cultural products of the nation. The life of African Americans has gone through various momentous events like Enslavement, racism, emancipation, civil rights movements, and the recent Black Lives Matter movement. The history of music is also the history of the musicians and social, political, and cultural movements closely linked to people's lives. The paper briefly explores and elucidates the critical milestones in the evolution of African American music from the early periods of Enslavement to recent times.

Keywords: *African American music, Enslavement, Atlantic slave trade, Emancipation, Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter movement.*

Introduction

In the five hundred years between 1400 to 1900, Africa witnessed four enslaved person trades-the Trans-Saharan slave trade (enslaved people taken from the South of Sahara to northern Africa), the Red Sea slave trade (enslaved people taken from the inland of Red Sea to the middle east and India), the Indian Ocean Slave trade (enslaved people taken from Eastern Africa to the Middle East or India) and the Trans- Atlantic slave trade. Considered as the most extensive and elaborate maritime and commercial venture, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade took enslaved people from West Africa, East Central Africa, and Eastern Africa to the European colonies in the Americas (Nathan Nunn, 2008). The slave trade is always remembered for its barbarism, unspeakable and inhuman treatment, and total deprivation of around twelve million African people. It is a fact that it remained a neglected area of study and research mainly due to its deep connection with Western imperialism and a lack of proper methodology to analyze highly complex and mostly vague quantitative data. However, the sweeping political, economic, and intellectual changes that

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hit the European and North American societies and, most notably, the rise of independent African countries triggered a sudden surge of interest in this field of study. During the first world war, scholars started to critically asses the fundamental assumptions of imperialism, and post second world war saw a new direction and approach given to studying the Atlantic Slave Trade. (Herbert S Klein 2010). The study uses historical analysis to trace the movement of African musical culture from the shores of Africa to America. African - American music, or Black music, has roughly evolved through the periods of Enslavement, which saw the birth of negro spirituals, the Great Migration (1916-30), the civil rights movement (1945-1968), and the more recent Black Lives Matter campaign (2012 onwards). The paper is divided into three parts. The first part briefly deals with the Atlantic slave trade, the second part examines the stages of development of African American music in the pre-modern era, and the last section deals with the modern age, which saw the establishment of African-American music in the cultural base of America.

Music is an essential constituent of every culture representing its fundamental values and qualities and is linked with other components of culture like economics, polity, religion folk, and festivals. The traditional African society had a religious and aesthetic structure that was vibrant and elegant influenced by social and formal structures. It was on this foundation that African-American music emerged. The theoretical basis of the emergence of African-American music can be analyzed under theoretical formulations like survivalism, syncretism, and non-survivalism. The dominant theme till the 1930s considered African music a degraded form of original European music. This view was set aside mainly by anthropologist Melville Herskovits, the founder of scientific Afro-American studies. and his works. He gave theoretical support to the idea that African culture survived and thrived in America (Simpson 1973:1). The theory of survivalism by Herskovitz provides the idea with that preparation and adaption to the different life challenges apply to African cultures surviving the transatlantic trade and slavery. There was a live cultural transplant from Africa to America. Apart from adaptation, the other features of survivalism include resilience and the significance of community and networking. Another theoretical exposition worth mentioning is the theory of syncretism or reinterpretation by Richard Watermen, which emphasizes merging different cultures to create a new form. It envisages flexibility and malleability in the cultural realm. Ultimately, the merging of cultures or the superimposition of one culture on the other leads to the birth of new artistic forms like African-American music and identities. Jackson's theory of non-survivalism is less popular and discussed, which is simply the opposite of survivalism. It puts forward the dependence on external agencies and individual resilience rather than community support and networking (Jackson, George Pullen 1932,1933). Another approach, also known as the compromise theory, specifically dealing with African-American music's evolution was propounded by the Austrian musicologist, Hornbostel. He elaborated on the aspects of cultural continuity

that ensured the survival and adaption of African music. He also interestingly dealt with the classification of musical instruments used in African-American music highlighting the blending of African and European culture. He also pointed out that the rhythmic form in African-American music originates in the polyrhythms and syncopation of African music. He argued that African and African-American pieces of music were rhythmically, melodically, and harmonically distinct, sharing only a common "way" of singing (Hornbostel E, M. Von 1926:748-753). In the context of the development of African-American music, the theory of survivalism and syncretism seems to provide an analytical and theoretical foundation for a good understanding of the growth of African American music in the background of the slave trade and enslavement. It is to be understood that African music was never wholly transferred to America. Northern Africa was ahead of other countries in mathematics, science, and shipping. Music, musical instruments, and dance also showed significant development. Musical styles like heterophonic, in which a melodic line and its different forms are played simultaneously, and the more popular call and response style, in which the main singer calls out words and a group of singers repeats them are examples. Polyrhythm used by drummers formed the foundation of African American music (Burten W Peretti 2009:8). Mellonee V Burmin has identified three essential aspects of black music, firstly, sound quality, which can be seen in call and response with different vocal and instrumental elements; secondly, the type of delivery surrounding body movement, dress, and presentation style and, finally, mechanics, which includes improvisation involving personal interpretation (Mellonee V Burmin,1985).

Philip Curtin, in his work 'The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census', gives the total number of the slave trade to Europe, the Atlantic, and America from 1440 to 1860. He estimated that around 9.5 million people moved in the Atlantic slave trade of which 175000 went to Europe and islands off the African coast. (Philip D Curtin 1969). It was followed by a set of studies that looked into complex and intense issues related to the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of the slave trade. The cultural dimension is one of the significant areas of analysis and research. Interestingly, the nearly three hundred and fifty years of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade also tell the story of the blossoming of a rich culture that grew and flourished amid this and European colonialism. Atlantic slave trade and African- American music are closely related. It transferred African music and its values to the American shore. Musical styles like spirituals, Ragtime, the blues, Jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel, and hip-hop are the treasured cultural products of the country. The instruments used in this music, like banjo and drums, and the forms of music, like call and response and the immersive approach to singing where an entire song is presented to the student repeatedly, have close connections with African music. All these developed and flourished amid harsh racial discrimination, crushing poverty, and other numerous challenges, showcasing the community's resilience and creativity. Music is an essential component of culture and is

closely related to the other ingredients of culture, like economics, politics, religion, arts, folk, and ceremonies. The rich treasure of music from the slave trade can be found in the four continents of Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa (Brown D 2016). Thus, African-American music is profoundly involved in American social, economic, and political history. Africa, often described as the primitive 'dark continent,' was home to the first human settlements with a diverse cultural and social life. People migrated in response to changes in climate, food availability, and trade and commerce.

Enslavement

The period from 1790 to 1860 is considered the high point of the slave trade in America. Between 1650 and 1860, approximately ten to fifteen million enslaved people were taken from Western Africa to the Americas. In their book 'The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave Breeding Industry,' Ned and Constance Sublette view slavery not as unpaid labor but as the treating of people as property, traded goods, collateral, and capital. Of the over twelve million enslaved people transported to the Americas, only around four to five lakhs made it to the USA. Sublette notes that apart from producing cotton, sugar, tobacco, and rice, they enslaved people or slave breeding, so much so that Thomas Jefferson estimated an annual increase of four percent in Virginia's capital by the birth of black children. In 1860, enslaved Americans were worth four billion dollars, more significant than two hundred and twenty-eight million dollars' worth of gold and silver, and values of southern farmland worth 1.92 billion dollars. So, for the enslavers, it was everything (Ned & Constance Sublette, 2015). Historian Edward Baptist, in his work 'The Half, Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism,' categorically states that slavery was the cornerstone upon which the United States was transformed into a modern, industrial capitalist economy. Enslavement could change a person into cash in no time. He argues that enslaved people helped the USA to produce around two billion pounds of cotton, an essential component in the Industrial Revolution, a year to become a global superpower (2014:3). Isabel Wilkerson, in her work 'Caste: The Lies That Divides Us,' considers the institution of slavery as the conversion of human beings into currency, into machines to aid the profitmaking of their owners. She sees slavery as an American innovation created just for the benefit of the dominant race (Isabel Wilkerson,2020).

The European powers' Enslavement and colonization of western Africa started around 1400. The Portuguese traders brought around twelve thousand people as part of trade between 1475 to 1540 (Ray A Key,1982). The demand for enslaved people was limited in Europe. So, they sent these people to their colony Brazil, and used the enslaved people to transform Brazil into a significant sugar-producing settlement. The rising demand for enslaved people from America was felt for the first time on the African coast in the second half of the

sixteenth century (Philip D Curtin 1969). David Eltis estimates that around seven hundred thousand Africans were taken to America between 1580 to 1640 (2000:9). The place of origin was a determining factor of value and demand, and Africans from the Gold Coast were the most preferred, while the Biafrans were the least preferred. By the seventeenth century, stiff competition emerged for the Portuguese from the Dutch, French, and English.

The enslavement process was perfected by systematically transforming individuals into human commodities and later into machines that would plant and harvest sugar, rice, and tobacco crops. Violence played a major role in this process. It was used scientifically to test the limits of someone's capacity to suffer or the limits up to which it is possible to discipline the body without taking out the life. The physical and psychological trauma of the violence endured during Enslavement and the travel in the slave ship made many of the captives not good enough for work. The physical condition of the people was terrible, and the agents had them washed, shaved, and applied oil to their bodies to make them look healthy (Stephanie E Smallwood, 2007). Orlando Patterson described slavery as a social death (Orlando Patterson, 1982).

People had to begin their lives from the start and create a culture and music that suited the local environment. Whatever memories and practices they had, slowly diminished, mainly due to the mixing of different cultures of African groups and the influence of the powerful new surroundings they were put into. One of the positive outcomes was the emergence of new blended music styles, like Brazilian Folk music originating with mixing African and American cultures. Music was the essential feature of community life in North Africa, where most enslaved people came. Historian R.F Thompson has pointed out five essential features of North African dance and music, which include firstly, the importance of rhythm as missionary musicologist A.M Jones notes, 'Rhythm is to the African, what harmony is to the European' (Jones A M 1959). The second feature was the use of multiple meters which play different rhythms simultaneously. The third one was the distinct and separate contributions of musicians and dancers in performance. The next one was the style of call and response in singing, led by a leader and followed by a chorus. The final one was the clever use of songs and dance to express and release their rising tension, disappointments, and frustrations of Enslavement (Robert Farris Thompson 1984).

Spirituals and Black Face Minstrelsy

The spirituals were a musical form that evolved from slave work songs. It is said to have originated about a century before the abolition of slavery and reached its full glory between 1830 and 1865(Johnson, James Weldon, and Johnson J Rosamond 1937). Slave work songs that lament and protest reflected the life filled with hard work and great difficulty on the plantations. Slave spirituals are often recognized as the initial forms of African-American music.

The spirituals became the base on which musical forms like the blues, gospel, Jazz, and the protest songs of the 1960s later evolved. Spirituals developed out of the pain and misery of thousands of people who were forcibly transported to a foreign land and stripped of their identity to become enslaved. Slave work involved long hours of agonizing and humiliating work. Singing songs was a way to pass the time, relieve the boredom of a tough job, and increase strength and endurance. Slowly, work songs and spirituals also evolved to communicate with one another. Work songs formed a prominent part of forced labor and musical culture, especially in southern America. Enslaved people worked in plantations, factories, and ports. Work songs mainly came from plantations.

The owners found silent workers dangerous and feared conspiracy. So, for them, singing songs during work will eliminate dangerous thoughts and improve productivity. For sociologist and historian W.E.B Du Bois, spirituals were 'sorrow songs' reflecting the intense sorrow of the enslaved community. He commented on the ability of Africans to transform trouble into songs (1903:250-264). The enslaved people were made to attend church mainly to hear carefully modified Christian teachings to justify slavery. During the Sunday service, they sang hymns, and later on, their personal life and fate slowly started getting reflected in their songs. They stayed back after service to participate in singing songs that took the common theme of repentance and deliverance and incorporated them into a genre that would become the most significant influence on American music. Most spirituals expressed hope for redemption in the life after and were sometimes profoundly personal. Although most enslaved people embraced Christianity, they did not form part of the official church. The important development that shaped African-American music was the establishment of the black autonomous churches. Racism by the white-controlled churches gave birth to the African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. These churches emphasized freedom in the present life rather than heavenly freedom. Reverend Richard Allen, who essentially created AME, published a volume of Methodist hymns in 1801(Milton C Sernett 1997).

There was a style of 'moaning' in singing that came out of the melismatic singing of Africa and the Caribbean. Frederick Douglas says, "The songs of slaves represented their sorrows rather than their joy like tears were a relief to aching hearts" (2005:12). They also created their spirituals which contained coded messages about hope and escape plans. The spirituals took themes from the Old Testament, like the exodus, which narrated the story of Moses, who, by Divine inspiration led Israel's people out of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. They drew themes heavily from the Old Testament and, to a small extent, from the New Testament, especially the sufferings, crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ, with less emphasis on the birth of Christ (Yolanda Y Smith 2010). There was a promise in the spirituals that freedom and justice could be attained here itself. Songs like

"No more driver's lash for me

No more pint o' salt for me

No more hundred lash for me

No more mistress' call for me" are good examples.

Dr. James Norris, in a documentary titled" Slave Songbook: Origin of the Negro Spirituals," narrates that these songs were everything for the enslaved people. They had to sing about their condition of being sold and getting separated from their family. They had to sing to keep their flame burning and intense. The songs had twin effects of diverging from the strenuous work and forming the base of African-American music. The spirituals strengthened the enslaved community to sustain itself. It acted as a means of education and worship and helped resolve their march toward freedom and social change (Yolanda Y Smith 2010). John Lovel identifies the enslaved people's obsession with freedom, their desire for justice, and their tactic for battle as the three significant social implications of spirituals (Lovel John, 1939).

Blackface was first introduced in the late 1830s as minstrel shows and later became America's most popular form of entertainment. It began as a musical comedy program in which white performers painted their faces and visible body parts black by applying burnt cork and grease paint to look like black people. It used white performers' offensive replicas of African American speech, music, and dance (Cole, Catherine M, and Tracy C Davis, 2013:7-12). Minstrels involve singing, dancing, and skits, with the master of ceremonies leading, followed by a group of minstrels. William Henry Lane, popularly known as Master Juba, the solitary African American minstrel dancing talent became a sensation before the Civil War. Charles Dickens, in his 'Notes on America,' wrote about the 'lively young negro' as 'the greatest dancer known' (1850:100). He is considered the pioneer of modern tap dancing, combining Irish and black patterns. The huge success and acceptability of Master Juba, even by the white people, was a big incentive for the later African American musicians despite the explicit racism. (Burten W Peretti 2009). Before the Civil War, the minstrels were famous in the northern cities. Later, they moved Southwards. Minstrel groups gained popularity as the Civil War drew to a close. Georgia Minstrels, started in Macon, Georgia, in 1865, had fifteen of his former captives as troupe members, and of all the minstrels, Callender's Georgia Minstrels became the most successful. Although the post-war minstrels continued to have the customary racial component, they successfully portrayed the fast-changing social conditions in America, primarily through the skits that showed the dangerous and treacherous city life compared with the peace and tranquility that prevailed in the rural South.

Post-civil war America saw rapid industrialization, immigration, racial violence, and class tensions. Urbanization saw the development of new

institutions and ideas and the arrival of people from Eastern and Southern Europe, especially into the northern states. New forms of worship, language, politics, and food habits came with them. New leisure and sporting institutions like saloons, dance floors, boxing, and baseball developed. A new consumer class emerged with the arrival of departmental stores and amusement parks. The outlook of women, especially young women, changed with the introduction of bicycles and telephones, giving them new ideas and avenues of recreation and mobility. These women came out of the shadows of their mothers, joined college, and participated in sports, music, and dance. The presence of African American members in the minstrels coincided with the development of commercial popular music. The decade between 1860 and 1870 saw the secularization of popular music with a steep decline in religious passion and interest and a decrease in the number of church-goers among black males. The decade between 1890 and 1900 witnessed some significant developments as artists emerged from the minstrel tag and created their performances. The invention of the phonograph and the emergence of new styles like cakewalk and Ragtime gave African Americans a prominent place in popular music. The wax cylinders of Thomas Edison and shellac disks of Emile Berliner made recordings possible for three minutes. The period also saw the legal sanction for segregation as the US Supreme ruled 'separate but equal.' The African American musicians were targeted and attacked violently, like the killing of jazz clarinetist Big Eye Louis Nelson in New Orleans by a mob of white racists. By 1880, Minstrel shows were replaced by Vaudeville which dealt with racial tensions but was moderate. It consisted of jokes, coon-songs, juggling, songs for entertainment, and dance.

Ragtime and Blues

Ragtime became prominent in 1890 and remained in mainstream music until 1920 before giving way to Jazz. John Edward Hasse defines Ragtime as a dance-based vernacular American music featuring a syncopated melody against an even accompaniment. It drew the nation's attention for almost two decades while representing America at the beginning of the twentieth century. The period of Ragtime saw the widening of life opportunities for black people as they moved out of the South. As a generation born after emancipation, they wished to put the difficulties endured during the period of Enslavement behind them and decided to move on in life. American society saw significant changes like rapid urbanization, immigration, and the development of a vast transportation network (John Edward Hasse 1985). An unlikely star of this period was the piano occupying the central position in the field of music. It became a central component in middle-class families and white families. It attained status symbol and dignity.

The African American middle class who mastered the piano and wished to use their talents by performing at concert halls soon discovered the enormous

challenge of racial discrimination and had to satisfy themselves by performing at pus or taverns, stage, and touring shows. 'Louisiana Rag,' composed by Theodore Northup, is considered the first piano composition using Ragtime. The real hero of the rag was Tom Turpin, whose composition 'Harlem Rag' is considered a masterpiece in the piano rag. One influential African American ragtime musician, Scot Joplin, joined with music publisher John S Stark to produce the hugely popular 'Maple Leaf Rag' in 1899 (Conklin, Michael 2014). The ragtime era also saw rising assertiveness and protests against racial injustices. Ragtime presented a group of impressive and dignified African American musicians whom everyone, irrespective of race, liked. Middle-class whites, college students, and wealthy middle-aged whites became big fans of Ragtime. One of the essential significances of Ragtime was that it allowed African musicians to enter commercial music in an era of rampant racism. Rags were played in restaurants, carnivals, dance halls, and unique restaurants where dances like cabaret brought close contact between all races and genders and revolutionized the nightlife in urban areas. The Great Migration was another big event that transformed America's social and cultural life. Southern migrants transformed religion, culture, and, more significantly, music. Blues, Jazz, Gospel, Hill Billy, and country music spread during this period (James N Gregory 2005).

Although the origin of Blues could be more precise, historians typically connect it with the plantations in the Mississippi Delta and Atlantic tidewater regions and with the travel singers or the songsters who used to visit the plantations. David Evans notes that blue songs emerged in the deep South's rural, urban, and suburban areas, especially New Orleans and Memphis (Evans, David 1987). Blues music was the product of African and European influence during slavery. The critical European influences are found in the Instruments used, like the Acoustic Guitar, modified harmonic sequences, strophic form, which deals with the repetition of lines, and most importantly, Rhymes introduced to America through European music and poems. The notable African influences are the call and response, the pentatonic scale, the slide taken from the sliding technique of the diddley bow, an African tradition, and the form of singing. The earlier blues were known as the Delta Blues. The blues portray the transformation of an enslaved African into an African American citizen. It developed as a personalized style of musical expression with underlying themes of leisure and personal perspectives of life experience (Alan Lomax, 1993). Scholars describe blues as an artistic creation portraying difficulties of poverty and racial tensions. It is also described as the voice of the enslaved people who struggled to find an identity in the middle of freedom, the industrial revolution, and, more importantly, Jim Crow segregation. The Africans during this time had more time for leisure, reflect on their life and learn playing instruments like the Guitar, piano, and banjo. In its initial stage, blues lacked a decisive structure and form and evolved. Blues Famous early blue artists include Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Robert Johnson, Bunk Johnson, B B King, John Hurt, Skip

James, and Muddy Waters. Blues did not find much favor from the devout church-going Christians, as they criticized blues as dirty, perverted, and vulgar and even called it the music of the devil. The provocation seems to be the honest representation of sexuality, love, and relationships by the blues. A good example is the famous song by Bessie Smith, 'Need a Little Sugar in my Bowl.' The Great Migration has also been reflected in Blues music as freedom and the need for work made people, including women, especially singers, travel.

Jazz and the Gospels

A fresh musical direction appeared in America at the beginning of the twentieth century. The word Jazz became popular by 1913, but this music, famed for its loudness, audacity, and riot, was active in New Orleans at least ten years earlier. Jazz developed during the World Wars when the USA became a world power. Jazz also helped the black community achieve respectability and prosperity in society. It possessed a unique pulsating vigor and was daring and random. A song would be performed in different ways, making it appealing. Jazz arose as a fusion of several musical cultures of different peoples: African Rhythm and European harmony and instrumentation like piano, clarinet, saxophone, and Guitar. (Garry Giddins & Scott DeVeaux, 2015). The need to consolidate the new world's inhabitants unified many different traditions into one culture. The mixing process resulted in first the appearance of Ragtime, blues, and proto-jazz and then Jazz in the conventional sense.

Jazz is rousing rhythms and pleasing live music always evolving and moving. Considering its social structure, Jazz is presented to a participatory audience, like the call-and-response type. With this direction, perhaps no other form of music can be compared or even confused with any other genre. The inventiveness, as well as the passion that jazz compositions are filled with, has no boundaries. It is easy to hear and recognize this extraordinary music that expresses human feelings from boundless joy to uncontrollable anger. It elegantly blended the vitals of musical styles that existed in America then. Jazz took syncope from Ragtime, sensuality, and tonality from Blues and has emotional depths, spirituality, and desire. This blend produced a remarkable result that perfectly accompanies the twentieth century's dynamics and hectic American life. The music always involves dances that are quick tapping and slapping (Collier, James Lincoln,1978). New Orleans Jazz is considered traditional. The term describes the style of musicians who played Jazz in New Orleans from 1900 to 1917 and those musicians who played and recorded in Chicago from 1917 to the 1920s. Initially, the first jazz bands to perform in New Orleans restaurants, small groups of black musicians began touring different cities for better pay. Thus 1917 marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of Jazz but this time in Chicago. It is well known that the birth of Jazz as a musical movement took place in the USA in the late 19th century (Ted Gioia, 1997).

By the turn of the century, Spirituals slowly gave way to the development of the gospel. Most churches started to prefer the European singing style in unison rather than the exited heterophony of church choirs to refine their parishioners. Chicago became the epicenter of gospel music. As African Americans migrated to the northern cities, they carried their form of worship and music with them. Interestingly the Lincoln Memorial Programme on August 28, 1963, is considered a watershed moment in the annals of African American music. The meeting had the best talents in African American music, including Mahalia Jackson. Of all the styles that preceded, gospels contained the essential ingredients of the civil rights movements, like fellowship, the essence of concern, and the drive towards integrity and change. It also significantly influenced African Americans' secular music life and culture during the Great Depression and the years after the Second World War. The rise of the Pentecostal church also played a role in developing gospels. Thomas A Dorsey, widely regarded as the father of Gospel music, used the music of spirituals, traditional worship, blues, Jazz, and Swing to develop Gospel music. He facilitated the transition of the African American Church and forged a relationship between the divine and secular music that was emerging in the African American culture. Gifted with organization and business skills, he made gospels a commercial success and played a significant role in promoting the career of Mahalia Jackson. There was a clear division in the attires and styles of singing between male and female gospel singers.

Rhythm &Blue, Rock N Roll, and Freedom Singers.

The Gospels' massive success and the electric Guitar's popularity paved the way for the emergence of new styles of music like Rhythm and Blue and Rock 'N' Roll. All these styles were non-religious and showed the new affluent kind of life. Jazz and Blues remained prevalent throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Sometimes during the 1940s, Blues, and Country Rock blended to give birth to Rock N Roll. Artists like Ray Charles, Big Mama Thornton, and Fats Domino pioneered this movement and succeeded despite record labels and radio stations reluctant to play back artists. Rock N Roll relates to exciting talents like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Buddy Holly. It was considered a music anyone could play and dance to. The popularity of Rock N Roll was further boosted by Sam Philipps and his Sun Record, which launched the musical genius, Elvis Presley (Louis Menand, 2015). The civil rights movement used music to further harmony, courage, and group feelings. These songs provided the moral foundation for the freedom struggle and helped express and sustain the movement. Martin Luther King Jr and the SLCC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) promoted freedom songs as an essential element to enthuse his followers. The SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee) also used music for the same purpose. The song 'We Shall Overcome' owes its origin to the black worker Lucille Simmonds 'We Will Overcome' is an excellent example of music's importance in the civil rights

movement (Raymond Arsenault, 2009).

Into the Modern Era.

The decade between 1970 and 1980 saw the rapid rise of the African American middle class, and it also witnessed a reverse migration towards the South. The community also became politically active, with the mayors of Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Cleveland being African American. Modern African American music was dominated by a phenomenon called Michael Jackson. His album 'Thriller' released in 1982, is considered the biggest commercially successful record album ever released. His style was a mix of Funk, disco, salsa, glam rock, and glittering costumes, along with the peculiar personality of Michael Jackson himself (Nelson George, 1984). The success of a few musicians created a wealthy class, although most blacks still lived in poverty and the shadows of rampant inequality. The prosperity of the black community depended greatly on the success of the music business in the post second world war. Businessmen started showing interest in popular music, and recording companies like Chess, Specialty, Sun, Atlantic, and King helped flourish black performers, especially new ones. Another style of music that burst into the scene in the 60s was Funk, which originated in West Africa. It is seen as the abridgment and elaboration of Soul music. James Brown and his high-energy performances, elegant hairstyles, and clothing proved a big sensation and success. Considered to have evolved through jazz improvisation, Funk gave Black American music a new spectrum, mixing high and low-note rhythms. The other prominent stars include Sly and the Family Stone, Kool and the Gang, and Stevie Wonder (Rickey Vincent, 1996). One significant cultural and societal impact of funk music was the intense feeling of African American urban separatism, which rejected the integration of the communities. The white community was not sympathetic as they had reservations about black separatism. The 1980s saw the rise of Disco, which had its European origin but still played an essential role in shaping African American music. Disco's popularity was short-lived as whites regarded it as the music of bold African Americans. Bruce J Schulman believes that the movement against Disco was an organized white backlash against black social unification and also against gay rights. It is also a fact that the decline of Disco can be attributed to the rapid rise of new musical styles promoted by recording studios (Bruce J Schulman2001).

With the decline of Disco, another style that took the field of music by storm was Hip Hop and Rap which came to prominence during the 1970s. The African American and Caribbean-American youth of New York and especially the socially and economically backward region of Bronx molded Hip Hop. It is said that hip-hop popped out from the house parties in the Bronx, and soon, it became a sort of underground cultural movement only for domestic distribution. The main features included visual art or graffiti, dance like Breakdance, and

Freak, a vigorous couple dance. With its popularity on the upswing, the music spread to the radio. It soon became a rage among millions of young Americans who used it to express their identity and politics, creating a lively multicultural community nationwide. Rap was a strong statement of the new urban black youth culture. It challenged the middle class's behavioral, social, and aesthetic norms. The lack of a good quality of life proved to be a stumbling block for the young generation to get a good musical education, and they, with the aid of technology, started deriving their styles of music. The intense stress on tuneless, highly rhythmic speech distinguished Rap from other styles (Nelson George, 2005). The leading proponents include Kool Herc (Clive Campbell), Grand Master Flash (Joseph Saddler), and Afrika Bambaataa (Kevin Donavan). The early famous and commercially successful tracks include Rapper's Delight and The Message, in which The Message established social realism, a new trend in Rap music that portrayed the South Bronx's sad situation. Gangsta Rap, another Rap style that narrated the issues faced by urban communities, became controversial as it was criticized for favoring hostility and violence, insulting women, and misogyny. Music and culture of Hip Hop have lately shown great diversity and have now found their place in American popular culture.

Music was vital for 'The Black Lives Matter' protest movement, which peaked in 2020, and aimed to make the rulers or oppressors socially uncomfortable, thereby bringing social change (Iorio, D. 2017). Some examples are songs like 'All Right' by Kendrick Lamar, 'Chains' by Usher, 'Don't Shoot by Games, and 'Be Free' by J Cole. Contrary to the earlier protest movements, the Black Lives Matter movement happened when there was a great awareness of state violence and injustice. Daphne A Brooks views that the protest music portrays new social issues like the prison-industrial complex, globalized wealth inequality, and the violent expenditure of women and children (Daphne A Brooks 2016). 'Freedom' by Beyonce examines slavery and its effect on the present generation apart from representing police barbarity (Phelps-Ward, R., Allen, C., & Howard, J. L. 2018). In her 'Americans,' Janelle Monae uses sarcasm and pointed phrases to focus on topics like racism, homophobia, sexism, classism, nationalism, police brutality, and immigration. Another song that kept the movement alive was the single 'Alright' from the album 'To Pimp a Butterfly' by Kendrick Lamar. The chorus 'We Gonna be Alright' was sung enthusiastically, portraying the protest against police brutality (Torrey, Jessica 2021).

Conclusion

African American music gives voice to the significant ideas of the life of African Americans. While, Enslavement, exclusion, and civil rights rulings are seen within the context of the interracial relationship, African American music clearly shows the mixing of African, European, and American cultures. It represents the marriage and continuous interaction between African and

non-African cultures. Back in the 1800s, while Black face minstrelsy openly showed racism and white domination, African American musicians took center stage in the American cultural scene by the twentieth century. Musicians like Scott Joplin, Louis Armstrong, Michael Jackson, and the latest singers used music to gain recognition and visibility in American society. It is interesting to see that the different styles of music that emerged at various times had a close connection with the social and political situation that prevailed at those times. Music was the medium through which African Americans conveyed their protest and brought change. Although there are criticisms that much of the African identity is sacrificed for commercial success, the history and evolution of African American Music shows that despite mixing cultures, African music's cultural identity is preserved and cherished.

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Amlan Lahiri

CLASH OF INTEREST AND ACCRETION OF DISSENT GROUPS WITHIN THE MATUA MAHASANGHA IN WEST BENGAL

Abstract

The proposed study aims to determine how the Mahasangha members ostensibly exploit the structural principles already in place in their organisation to forge political coalitions in support of their personal agendas. The existence of many interest groups inside the Mahasangha is seen as a defining characteristic that dates back to Sri Guruchand. Normally, these interest segments are broken up into various groups, but they may not always work as a stable unit because one group may presume to combine with others in a different situational setting. These interest groups are dynamic in nature since they do not follow any rigid rules and are not constrained by any one political or ideological tenet. They appear to be very adaptive in terms of their claims, demands, or aspirations. Matua Mahasangha interest groups frequently adapt to both the current socio-political context and emerging conditions.

Keywords: *dissent groups, interest articulation, matua psyche*

Introduction

The Matua Mahasangha, a Hindu Vaishnavite sect established by Harichand Thakur in the 19th century, is renowned for its dual identity: as a religious movement deeply rooted in devotion and as a vehicle for social activism championing the rights of the lower-caste Namasudra community in Bengal. Over time, this organization has evolved into a multifaceted entity, embodying both religious fervor and socio-political mobilization.

Central to understanding the contemporary dynamics of the Matua Mahasangha is an exploration of its internal factionalism, which has gained prominence in recent years. This study delves into the intricate web of interests and alliances within the Mahasangha, shedding light on how different factions navigate the organization's structure to advance their agendas. The evolving nature of these interest groups, marked by fluidity and adaptability, poses significant challenges to the traditional leadership and religious authority of the Mahasangha.

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Drawing upon insights from Oberschall (1973) and Olson (1965), this study employs a multidimensional framework to analyze factional dynamics within the Matua Mahasangha, emphasizing diverse interests and rational calculations driving individual behaviors (Oberschall, 1973; Olson, 1965). Through qualitative methods, it aims to uncover complex dynamics of dissent and adaptation, contributing to understanding the organization's transformation and implications for religious authority, socio-political mobilization, and community identities in West Bengal. Integrating Weberian perspectives enriches by examining organizational structure, leadership, and authority within the Mahasangha, using Weber's concepts of charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational authority to explore legitimacy and decision-making processes (Weber, 1947).

The sect being studied on this occasion is called Matua, and it is a part of the Hindu Vaishnavite tradition. Matua sect is known for its adherence to Guru Harichand Thakur and his biographical sacred book (Sri SriHarlilamrita), as well as its worship of gods and loyalty to its own philosophical viewpoint; those are all regarded as essential elements of the sect. Like other tiny Vaishnava sects in Bengal, the Matua sect arose in east Bengal in the later part of the nineteenth century (such as Balahadi Sampraday, Kartavaja, and Kishori Bhajan).It stood out from the other small sects because it originated from and was closely associated with the Namasudras' organised social activity. The group was founded by Harichand Thakur (1811/12–1878), a Namasudra Vaishnavite from the Gopalganj neighbourhood of Faridpur. Harichand Thakur and his disciples were "Matta" (absorbedly engaged) with "Haribol" to do virtue-based rituals while eschewing Vedic conduct and behaviour. As a result of their actions, Harichand's opponents—particularly the Brahmins and Kayasthas—referred to them as "Matto," "Mautta," and finally "Matuya." This word has been approved by Harichand Thakur. He stated, "Bhinna sampraday mora Matuaakhyan," which translates to, "We are a different community, specifically "Matua." The people who adhere to or respect his non-Vedic directives, visions, and philosophy are now referred to as Matuas. The cult developed its organisational clout and theological coherence under his son Guruchand (1846), when it became linked to the Namasudra social protest movement, which had its beginnings in 1872.The Matua sect established for its members a basic religion of personal devotion that did not require the mediation of a master, rejecting all Brahmanical ceremonies and the congested Hindu pantheon. They claim to be unique since adherents come from lower classes in Bengal. This organisation has never claimed the support of the vast majority of 'Hindu' people. 'They have, nevertheless, played an important role in the formation and spread of much of what is known as Hinduism.' (Bandopadhyay 2011, pp. 91-95)

The social structure of the Matua sect is very similar to that of clans and lineages. Parentage and filiation form the foundation of the power system.

Clan and family dynamics are crucial in sectarian activity. The process of passing down the guru-sisya parampara is done in a unique way. A person joins a sect by receiving a special holy verbal formula (Mantra), and the person from whom they get it becomes their immediate guru. However, he only transfers the mantra of renouncers to the receiver. The image of the renouncer is homologized with the divine. A crucial aspect of the Matua sect is the descent and filiation of disciples.The metaphor of descent's capacity of consolidation and the concept of fictive kinship are key terms and focal points of Matua Mahasangha. An essential subject for sociological examination is the significance of lineage in the Sangha's organisational structure. Since Matua Mahasangha's establishment, an extensive network of political connections has been evident. The putative structure of the Matua Mahasangha has taken on new form as a result of the overt and covert criticism of Brahmanic doctrines and cladistics in Bengali political development before and after the partition and in regional politics, in addition to the demographic preponderance of their significant existence. The Matua Mahasangha has its own tenets and organisational objectives, much like any other religious group.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This research is based on ideas of interest groups, factionalism in social movements, and collective action. It also incorporates advances in political sociology and organisational theory, as well as important works by Anthony Oberschall (1973) and Mancur Olson (1965). According to Oberschall's theory, social movements are complex webs of interest groups that constantly establish, break, and reorganise their coalitions in response to shifting sociopolitical conditions (Oberschall, 1973). comprehension the Matua Mahasangha, which consists of several interest groups navigating the organisational structure to accomplish different goals, requires a comprehension of this viewpoint.

Olson's theory of collective action emphasises how people make decisions based on logical assessments of their own benefits, which might occasionally conflict with group objectives (Olson, 1965). This lens is essential for examining factionalism in the Mahasangha, as members may put their own or their group's interests ahead of the organization's larger goals. It makes clear why factions cooperate or clash while balancing the interests of the group and the individual. The study uses qualitative approaches to uncover intricate dynamics of dissent and adaptation by integrating these theories and providing a strong framework to explore factional dynamics in the Matua Mahasangha.

By emphasising leaders whose power originates from their own magnetism, exceptional traits, and perceived divine inspiration, Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority advances this analysis (Weber, 1947). Characteristics of weak leadership, in which leaders who lack institutional support or administrative abilities rely on their own charisma, are explained within the Matua Mahasangha by charismatic authority. When charismatic

power wanes or is tested, this reliance on charisma instead than formal frameworks may provide instability. In sum, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive approach to analyze how factional dynamics unfold in the Matua Mahasangha, shedding light on the interplay of personal motivations, organizational goals, and leadership challenges.

1.2. Methodology:

This study examined the dynamics of factionalism within the Hindu Vaishnavite sect of Matua Mahasangha in West Bengal, India, using a qualitative research methodology. In order to have a deeper understanding of factional conflicts, qualitative methodologies were selected in order to explore the individual experiences, motivations, and subjective interpretations of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study used a number of techniques, including focus groups to get opinions from a range of participants, semi-structured interviews with members of various factions, and document analysis of old and new sources about the Mahasangha. Participant observation at political and religious gatherings also helped to shed light on the internal conflicts inside the organisation. Triangulation employed several data sources to assure the dependability of findings, and thematic and narrative analyses were employed to discern recurrent themes and analyse participant narratives (Flick, 2014; Riessman, 2008). Informed consent, participant anonymity, confidentiality, and other ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the study

Clash of interest and accretion of dissent groups within the Matua Mahasangha:

Clash of interest and accretion of dissent groups within the Matua Mahasanghain West Bengal among its member has been considered as a faction, which has been constituted either informally or formally within the Mahasangha. The nature and dynamics of factional rivalry within Mahasangha have been noted to be a phenomenon that frequently transcends official boundaries.

The process that leads to the creation of long-lasting warring groups is known as factional genesis. 'Internal opportunities, external threats, and objective or perceived economic, social, and political interests are among the variables linked together by an originating process' (Rastogi 1970, p. 14).

This study attempts to investigate how Mahasangha members appear to exploit the organisational structure to build political coalitions that serve their own interests. The presence of different interest groups within Mahasangha is considered to be a common marker that existed since the time of Sri *Guruchand.* At present these interest segments are divided into certain groups, but may not always function as a stable body, as each segment can

assume to be merged with others in a different situational context. These interest groups are dynamic in nature as they do not conform to any hard and fast rule and are not confined to any definite ideological or political plank. Even in respect of their claims or demands or objectives, they are seen to be quite flexible. Interest groups in Matua Mahasangha generally adapt themselves to the existing socio-political ambience and also emerging circumstances.

The factional conflicts within the Matua Mahasangha in West Bengal are a significant phenomenon that often transcends formal organizational boundaries. According to Anthony Oberschall's framework on social movements, these movements are complex amalgamations of various interest groups that continuously form, dissolve, and realign their alliances in response to prevailing socio-political contexts (Oberschall, 1973, p. 6). This perspective is crucial for understanding the dynamics within the Mahasangha, where multiple interest groups maneuver within and around the organizational structure to achieve their objectives. Faction within the Mahasangha, predominantly composed of younger members, seeks to modernize the organization's communication strategies and outreach efforts to attract a broader youth demographic. This faction might face resistance from older, more conservative factions concerned about preserving traditional practices and values within the community.

An interplay between perceived threats, internal possibilities, and a range of economic, social, and political interests leads to the establishment of long-lasting warring groups inside the Mahasangha. The presence of different interest groups within the Mahasangha has been a common characteristic since the time of Sri Guruchand. These groups, however, do not always function as stable entities; rather, they are dynamic and can merge or separate based on situational contexts. This flexibility in their development and operation is consistent with Oberschall's idea that social movements are dynamic networks with diverse interests, rather than monolithic entities. Mancur Olson's theory of collective action provides a critical lens for analyzing the behavior of individuals within these interest groups. Olson posits that individual's act based on rational calculations of personal benefit, which can sometimes conflict with the collective good (Olson, 1965, p. 8). This insight is vital for understanding the factionalism within the Mahasangha, where members might prioritize their personal or subgroup interests over the organization's broader goals. This behavior often leads to collaboration or conflict among factions as they navigate the trade-offs between individual benefits and collective goals. The interest groups within the Mahasangha are dynamic, as they do not conform to rigid ideological or political rules and are not confined to definite planks. They exhibit a high degree of adaptability, modifying their claims, demands, and objectives in response to the existing socio-political environment and emerging circumstances. This adaptability ensures the survival and influence of these factions, allowing them to remain relevant and effective in navigating internal and external challenges.

2.1. Beyond the Directives: Negotiation and Influence within the Mahasangha

Within the Mahasangha, small groups of dissenting members strategically influence the organization. These groups, driven by shared interests, hold meetings to rally support for causes they deem important. This fosters a common understanding and agreement on how to pursue collective goals, even if it goes beyond the directives of the Mahasangha's central authority. These dissenting members, who consider themselves the Mahasangha's intelligentsia, plan campaigns that involve lobbying political parties, media, and other influencers. They carefully weigh the costs and benefits before taking action. Similar to social movements described by Oberschall (1973, p. 5), these groups adapt and evolve based on the social and political climate. Despite their small size and unclear ideological distinctions from each other, their fluidity allows them to merge with other factions depending on the situation. This enables them to effectively challenge the Mahasangha's established order and influence its course of action. This phenomenon resonates with Oberschall's framework, which depicts social movements as intricate networks of diverse interest groups that adapt and evolve based on the socio-political landscape. Similarly, within the Mahasangha, groups coalesce around shared concerns, holding meetings to rally support for their causes. These activities cultivate a sense of collective understanding and pave the way for a consensus on how to pursue collective interests, potentially deviating from the directives set forth by the Mahasangha's highest governing body.

The dissenting members' perception of a shared interest might lack sufficient context. Additionally, the size of these dissenting groups is relatively small, and their ideological distinctions from each other are often unclear. This fluidity, however, proves to be an advantage. The lack of rigid ideological boundaries allows these factions to adapt and merge with other groups depending on the situation. This adaptability empowers them to effectively challenge the established order within the Mahasangha and influence the organization's course of action.

2.2.1. Context Specific Nature of Dissenting Group

These dissent groups are very much contextual in nature. Imagine the Mahasangha as a large community. Within this community, disagreements often run in families, creating a long-standing pattern. These family groups act like smaller social units, with shared values passed down through generations. The culture surrounding the Mahasangha also plays a big role. It shapes how these family groups think and behave, similar to how unwritten rules guide a community. In India, the *guru-shishya* system (teacher-student) emphasizes complete respect for the teacher. This deep respect for authority can make it difficult to challenge established ideas within the Mahasangha.

Inner circles within the Mahasangha mirror the *guru-shishya* model. The leader has a close group of advisors and supporters who lack independent political power. Interestingly, even people outside this inner circle might act like temporary disciples on specific issues, despite the gap in status and their own existing followers.

A year after independence, Baruni Mela—which had its start at the birthplaces of Harichand and Guruchand Thakur in Orakandi village of Gopalpur, which is now in Bangladesh—was moved to Thakurnagar. Over 50,000 pilgrims, primarily Matuas followers, bathed in the sacred Kamanasagar tank, which is next to the Harichand-Guruchand Thakur temple in Thakurnagar, North 24 Parganas. The week-long festival was organised to mark the '*BaruniMela*' observing the birth anniversary of *Harichand Thakur*. A member of dissent circle asserted that, the *Mela* introducer Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, despite his political affinity with the Indian National Congress, hardly took any initiative for taking political advantage from the *Mela* or its followers, his successors made efforts to take political advantage with a view to develop the area as established by Pramatha Ranjan Thakur. Soon after a large number of people of the sect from East Pakistan were compelled to cross the international boundary for their rehabilitation. But presently, the *Mela* has been virtually transformed into a gathering for political campaign by the political parties to fulfil the ruling party's political aspirations. The influence of Matua Mahasangha as a religious agent amongst its non-politicised members may be different from the politicised Matua Mahasangha.

Olson's theory of collective action elucidates the rational calculations of individuals within these groups, acting based on personal benefits that may conflict with collective goals (Olson, 1965, p. 3). This is evident in the transformation of the Baruni Mela from a purely religious gathering into a platform for political mobilization, driven by the pragmatic interests of faction leaders seeking to leverage the festival for political gain. The initial reluctance of Pramatha Ranjan Thakur to exploit the Mela politically contrasts with his successors' strategic use of the event to enhance political influence, highlighting the rational, benefit-driven actions described by Olson. This dual identity of the Matua Mahasangha, balancing religious influence with political entanglements, reflects the complex interplay between individual interests and collective action within the organization.

2.2.2. Politicisation and Interest Articulation in Mahasangha

The Matua Mahasangha has been undergoing considerable changes. It is taking on two key functions in two entirely distinct fields. Even though there is controversy regarding who should be the leader, the Mahasangha is still performing its basic function. It serves as a gathering place for families in the neighbourhood, focused on religious activities and ceremonies passed down through generations. This gives members a sense of comfort and familiarity.

The Mahasangha is likewise expanding and taking on new responsibilities in a completely other domain. It is increasingly involved in politics as MatuaMahasangha is playing a role of marginal political agent. This demonstrates that the Mahasangha is adapting to the changing environment around it, and it may even alter how it interacts with those outside of the community.

The Matua Mahasangha is facing challenges with its current leadership structure. The ongoing dispute might be better addressed by creating two distinct leadership roles. One leader could focus on the Mahasangha's traditional role as a spiritual and cultural center for the community. This leader would oversee religious practices and ceremonies, maintaining the core identity of the Mahasangha. The other leadership role could be more political in nature. This leader would represent the Mahasangha's emerging involvement in issues like social activism or political advocacy. This separation of roles allows the Mahasangha to address both its spiritual duties and its growing political voice.

After the demise of PramathaRanjan Thakur, intra-family rivalries and outside political interference became a sustained phenomenon which accentuated intra-group rivalries, that left its effects on peripheral groups and subgroups of Mahasangha and, organisational faction has assumed some stable consequences over the MatuaMahasangha.Intra-family rivalries and external political interference have intensified intra-group rivalries within the Mahasangha, leading to organizational factionalism. This phenomenon can be explained using Oberschall's framework, where factions within a movement continuously form, dissolve, and realign based on internal and external pressures. The reduced rigidity of the Mahasangha's organizational structure due to clashes of interest reflects Olson's theory of rational actions by individuals or groups prioritizing their benefits over collective cohesion.

It has been observed that the clash of interest in Mahasangha to a certain extent has reduced the rigidity of the organisational structure. The uncompromising attitude among its members on different issues challenges the ideal nature of MatuaMahasangha at present. The ideological narrations of Matuaismas given by Harichand–Guruchand and religious compulsion (as directed from the authority structure) became the main point for expressing dissent.

2.3. Participation in Politics: Moral Obligation Sensed by MatuaBhaktas during the time of P.R. Thakur

When P.R. Thakur founded Thakurnagar (on 3 March 1948) after purchasing the land from Smt. JanadKumariDasi, he was identified as the prime leader and soul of MatuaMahasangha in Bengal. Even though different groups within the community might have shared political goals, their actions also strengthened each other's religious beliefs. In this context, Sinhary's

(2017,p. 148) observation is worth mentioning. He observes that, 'being a leader of Dalit, Thakur who had migrated from east Pakistan fought for the inclusion of a couple of Dalit in his Sangha from within Indian territory. But unfortunately, he failed to do so due to the upper caste dominance in political decision making. He was a pragmatic man who took the correct decision at the time of partition and supported the ruling Congress party to ensure the proper settlement of Namasudra refugees' (Sinhary 2016).

During the time of PramathaRanjan Thakur, the Matua Maha Sangha had more or less stood in the corner and did not play any prime role in determining the electoral behavior of the members. Pramatha Ranjan Thakur and other Namasudra leaders in West Bengal were more aligned with Congress because they were more interested in Nehru's strategy of providing a juridical answer to social justice issues. Caste did, in fact, play a significant role in the first election in independent India, which was conducted in January 1952, PramathaRanjan Thakur, a leader from the Namasudra community, won elections for the West Bengal Legislative Assembly twice on a Congress party ticket. In 1957, from the reserved seat of Haringhata, and in 1962, from the reserved constituency of Hanskhali. He helped Namasudra families—refugees from violence—in finding new residences in various areas of India, where they might get land and rebuild their lives.

The followers of Matua Mahasangha had great trust in Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, and they adhered to his electoral decisions, believing it was their religious duty to do so. When people viewed an action as morally required, they felt a strong sense of responsibility to carry it out. This suggests that those who see political participation as a moral duty feel a significant obligation to be involved. But even, that time also, the peripheral group was not numerically fragile and its voting behavior merged with localised issues, and factions can be seen within different political parties. Therefore, they always found an alternative choice of political preferences. They did not view political engagement in accordance with Mahasangha to be an expected act. Instead, they saw it as a righteous conduct.

During this period, the Namasudra community was split on political issues. One group, led by Pramatha Ranjan Thakur backed the Congress party. The other, the Depressed Classes Association led by Birat Chandra Mandal (from the Namasudra community), leaned more towards the Hindu Mahasabha. This shows the deep divisions within the Namasudra community regarding Partition in 1946-47 (Bandopadhyay, Chaudhury, 2014, p. 4).

Soon after the CPI (M) led Left front came into power in 1977,graduallyit was found that the political decision of Thakurnagar did not reach the followers in an effective manner. Many Left leaders, like Brinda Karat, Biman Bose and SubhashChakraborty had visited Thakurnagar and other places to seek support from two croreMatuas. Kapilkrishna Thakur in his book on Matua movement

and marginalized section in Bengal "*MatuaAndolan o BanglarAnunnotoSamaj*" in 1994, mentioned that, 'MatuaMahasangha is closer to Marxism that focuses on the significance of hard work and self-emancipation. It is also an all-encompassing philosophy and you will find Matuas among *Krishak* and *Shramik*' (Thakur 1994).

Unanimity or consensus especially in the field of political affairs or selection of the candidate, may not be possible at central level organisational decisions since it gets restricted owing to the weakness of central authority, intra-familial feuds and peripheral dissent over the different political affiliations. Moreover, dissent at a peripheral level and less unanimity at the central level are clear reflections of perpetual political differences within the MatuaMahasangha and less efficacy of family leadership to keep Mahasangha as the strong agent of power lobby.

With the passage of time after 2011, the feeling of 'Thakurbari' diminished, and it has been realised by the followers that preferred candidate from Thakurbari would hardly be of any use to them. Approved candidates from Thakurbari are found to be neither necessarily committed to Matua Mahasanghanor sincere to community problems. Thus, the process of political participation and intervention in Matua Mahasangha may create conditions in which religious supremacy in everyday life and intra-group interaction is dismantled, paving path for a new sectarian and political equation with the state and political parties.

Dissent at the peripheral level is found not because of the weakness of the central body and lack of leadership but it has been accentuated by changes in occupational and economic activities particularly at the village level and suburban areas. These peripheral groups, influenced by their unique local contexts, form factions that dissent from the central leadership's decisions, aiming to better address their specific economic and occupational needs.

2.4. Emergence of Disagreement in Matua Mahasangha

After the demise of Pramatha Ranjan Thakur (1990), the peripheral group started behaving differently in response to local conditions and demands. Therefore, multiple factions grew within the organisation even with direct interference of political agencies on organisational matters. That had a lasting effect on the authority structure and cohesiveness of Matua Mahasanghaas well. The frictions in authority at the familial frontiers put stress on the effectiveness of organisational structure.

Presently the old conception of Matua Mahasangha being a familial sect based organisation has been contested by many sections of its members. These new tendencies tend to break the structure of organisational frontiers. The structural realignment of various groups and subgroups within Matua Mahasangha has turned flexible in terms of their traditional perception about

the dominant society. Presently, upper caste dominance and refugee rights are no longer significant to the new generation. They rather take the Matua identity as an agent of political bargaining. Although the religious frontiers remain undisturbed. Mancur Olson's theory of collective action further elucidates this phenomenon, as members rationally pursue their interests, leading to the fragmentation of the traditional, unified identity of the Mahasangha (Olson, 1965, p. 2). The younger generation's shift away from concerns of upper-caste dominance and refugee rights towards using Matua identity for political leverage signifies a strategic adaptation to contemporary political opportunities. This realignment maintains the religious core of the Mahasangha while transforming its socio-political role, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual interests and collective organizational identity.

2.4.1. Development of Local Matua Community Psyche

In this study, it was observed that though MatuaMahasangha has evolved as sect but it also reflects elements of a community life. At that level, the local Matua psyche is more predominant than Matua per se. Thus, the local Matua community psyche was used to identify the sub periphery group. In terms of socioeconomic status and ceremonial contacts, the local Matua community psychology is a neighbourhood social group made up of anywhere from 10 to 50 families.

Even though they observe religious rites and functions and have similar beliefs, they have less attachment to Thakurnagar. This group determines whether to endorse or repudiate sectarian choices made at a given election or other similar events. Thakurnagar's power in social and political decision-making is eroding in comparison to this outlying local "Matuaas a community psyche." The Matua community in West Bengal, traditionally known for its allegiance to Thakurnagar's guidance, appears to be asserting its own voice in the political sphere**.** This is evident in recent events, such as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's outreach to Matua voters (Chowdhury .S, 2024). While Thakurnagar might have held significant sway in the past, political parties are increasingly recognizing the independent influence of the "Matuaas as a community psyche." This suggests a potential power shift, with the community itself playing a more active role in determining its political affiliations, independent of centralized pronouncements.

Emerging generations of Matua have posed new quests that are different from those of the old leaders. Such voices drew their sustenance from different local contesting values alongside and everyday life of Matua people in Bengal. Therefore, this upcoming young generation emerging from sectarian rivalries constrain and move away from the dominant paradigm that is cohesive Matua consciousness as it seems when released from Thakurnagar. Matua Mahasangha is now set to reconcile with the inclusion of sectarian ideas as a social collective for a community and is trying to negate cohesive supra political

identity.

2.4.2. Family Conflict Identified with Personal loyalties

Family friction within Matua Mahasangha is being identified with personal loyalty to the sectarian values and other personal attachments to existing political culture.

1. Sharp separation between family-run authority structures and the outer circle of participation.
2. The unuttered gap between religious value and organisational preferences that create segments around the inner as well as the outer circle.
3. Such a culture of faction develops because of their subjective non-ideological preferences than any organisational ethos and values.

Subjective preferences frequently conflict with sectarian ideals and prospects within the overall signs of group behaviour. Therefore, constitutional principles of Matua Mahasangha can never transact beyond the factional boundaries. Factional feuds became effective especially in the selection of candidates either in panchayat or in the legislative assembly.

The organisation uses charts and official rules, rank, and precedences to more clearly illustrate the hierarchy in order to assume a larger role in the public realm.

But all these appear to have temporal significance. The formal routinisation is suppressed by informal factionalism and segmentation of preferences. Therefore, ritualisation of sectarian rules and values appear to have lost significance.

It has already been mentioned that the factional groupism within Matua challenges its very stability and survival. But in spite of such fragmentations among the Matua bhakta (Matua devotee) irrespective of rank and position the bonds and patronage still prevail. The bhaktas expressed unquestionable loyalty to Baroma Binapani Devi.

This study indicates a pattern in which one type of network got prominence in the sectarian life of MatuaMahasangha for about a decade (till Kapilkrishna Thakur). Afterwards, that prominence was eclipsed by family feuds. Presently less-dominant networks remain more effective. Ideological issues are now matter of secondary importance despite the fact that in its official journal (*MatuaMahasanghaPatrika*) ideological underpinning is highlighted with top priority.

2.5. Multilayered Complex Networking in Mahasangha

There are some key personalities, who have formal networks and

relations with other individuals and institutions. These personalities include prominent family members, ex-bureaucrat, politicians and others having their own networks and shared common interests. They often use Thakurbarilobby for vested interests and vice-versa. As power centres, they also serve to mobilise dissenters for expressing dissent.

Presently MatuaMahasangha is a multilayered body and encircled with complex networks of informal groups, with family members at the centre. Exercise of power in Mahasanghahas been marked by the fact that it has now to a great extent run informally and personally. It was found that family members of Mahasangha keep themselves engaged in inner conflicts with other members to gain better favour from the ruling government and political party in power and thereby to achieve greater control over MatuaMahasangha.

Many family members and close key personalities preferred to take advantage of their relationship with influential political persons and in getting the things done. Now personal influence and connection have become so important that there is an apprehension among the Matuabhakta and sect leader that nothing can be accomplished without regular sectarian activities and protest.

Owing to the partial collapse of authority structure some influential members within the Sangha, run a parallel mechanism. Such people meet once a week or month to discuss and pursue their matters of interest. Such networks of parallel arrangement sometimes encompass and overlap organisational rules and regulations as observed by family members of MatuaMahasangha. Such a group often takes major political or organisational decisions through which rivalries and faction percolate. However, majority of bargaining, negotiation and decision making take place at ThakurbariMandir premises.he Matua Mahasangha's current state, characterized by informal networks, parallel power structures, and evolving generational perspectives, illustrates the complex interplay of social movement dynamics and collective action theories. Oberschall's and Olson's frameworks provide a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the fluid, adaptive, and often contentious nature of organizational behaviour within the Mahasangha, highlighting the continuous negotiation between tradition and modern political realities.

Apart from such a parallel arrangement, a small number of prominent individuals are playing a key leadership role in Matua sampradaya for the last two and half decades. Personally, they are quite familiar with most of the Matua bhakta. Even organisation shows reverence for them. But some of them are not well accepted by the organisation rather identified as deviant teacher of Matua Mahasangha. Normally such people do not adhere to the organisational rules and institutional directives. These groups of *Gosain* live in different places but exert considerable influence over the common devotees and act as preservers of Matua dharma through autonomous kind of existence. But the new generation is less

inclined to accept the *Gosain* culture that forms the base of the theocracy. The new generation is ready to take sectarian identity but mainly for political gain.

2.5.1. Lack of Leadership Charisma

During the field work it has been found that unlike Kapilkrishna Thakur (Second *Sanghatdhipati* of Mahasangha) Manjulkrishna Thakur (*Saha Sanghatdhipati*)has lost importance in Mahasangha due to his whimsical behavour in Sangha as well as in politics and thus he has been ignored by the dominant factional group in MatuaMahasangha. Being a victim of political bargaining and political indecision, he has been branded as indecisive, lacking charisma, having less religious credentials in contrast to his father and elder brother. Weber defines charismatic authority as deriving from the extraordinary personal qualities or supernatural powers attributed to a leader, which inspire devotion and obedience among followers (Weber, 1947, p. 328). Initially, figures like Kapilkrishna Thakur embodied such charismatic authority within the Matua community due to their perceived exceptional qualities and ability to articulate the aspirations of their followers.

When Manjul Thakur was appointed Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Refugee Relief & Rehabilitation, distressed Matuabhaktas had found some hope and they felt that, age-long refugee and rehabilitation problems would be solved. People had very high expectations, perhaps they assumed that their *Choto Thakur* (Manjulkrishna Thakur) will do something for them. But actually, it has happened that Manjul Thakur became too arrogant and hardly he met any poor and distressed Matuabhaktas. When someone went to him with certain official problems (ration card and other) he sent them to respective official and did not take any steps to solve the problems, as reported by the *Sebayat* Gopal Thakur. Local *dalapati* Sanjay Biswas said that due to his rude behavior 'our *Choto Thakur* lost his credential and acceptability among Matua Bhaktas'. After demise of Kapil Krishna Thakur who was elected in the 16th LokSabha elections from Bongaon constituency in Trimanool Congress (TMC) ticket, Manjul krishna Thakur expected that following seat would be given to him or to his son he also expressed his desire in media to contest in by poll election**.** The decline of charismatic authority can occur when leaders fail to sustain or adapt to changing circumstances. Weber notes that charismatic authority is inherently unstable and can diminish over time if the leader's actions or decisions are perceived as inconsistent or lacking in moral authority (Weber, 1947, p. 333). In the case of Manjulkrishna Thakur, his erratic behavior and controversial political alliances contributed to a loss of charisma among Matua devotees who expected principled leadership.

But due to his lack of acceptability among the Matua masses, sections of Matuabhaktas stood against him and they had sent an open letter to Mamata Banerjee to re consider her decision to select Manjul Thakur as an MP candidate in Bongaon by poll election 2015. Mamata Banerjee sent Joytipriya Mallick

(who was the MLA, elected from the Habra Constituency and present "Minister for Food and Supplies") to *Baroma* BenaPani Devi to know her decision in this regard. In closed door meeting with Baroma at Thakurbari , Mr Mallick said to the media that *Baroma* gave her blessing to Mamtabala Thakur to win the by poll election. Therefore Bongaon seat was given to Kapil Krishna's wife Mamtabala Thakur for MP candidate.

Manjul Thakur and his youngest son Subrata joined the Bharatiya Janata Party shortly after Mamtabala's name was declared in the 2015 campaign. Manjul Thakur also resigned from his position as minister of the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department. He said that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) party and government were acting in a "whimsical" way.

He said that 'No person with a principle can remain in the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Mamata Banerjee is arrogant. She never lets me work for the welfare of refugees. She has no principles. After the Saradha scam, people are taunting Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders. It was no more possible for me to continue in TMC.' During the interview he also added that 'My elder brother Kapil Krishna Thakur, who never wanted to join politics was forced by his wife Mamatabala Thakur'. He also added that, 'my brother died an unnatural death not at our residence Thakurbari but at the home of one SukeshAdhikary who is close to Mamatabala at Ballygunje and I asked for CBI investigation as the Matuabhaktas want to know the truth behind his death'. He claimed that when Mamata Banerjee visited his mother Binapani Debi multiple times, they changed their allegiance from the CPI(M) to the Trinamool Congress (TMC). He also accused that, 'the Trinoomul Congress Party is trying to divide our organisation, for that reason Mamata Banerjee is fielding my sister-in-law Mamatabala Thakur, as its bypoll candidate from Bongaon'. He also added that, 'Mamatabala, who has studied only up to Class III, is a resident of Maharashtra and never visits Thakurnagar.'

Later, Subrata Thakur was handed a BJP ticket to run in the Bongaon constituency against his aunt, Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate Mamatabala Thakur. However, Mamatabala won the Bongaon poll by a landslide, handing BJP candidate Subrata Thakur a humiliating defeat. The Bongaon Lok Sabha seat is made up of seven assembly segments, including Gaighata, where Thakurnagar is located. The CPI (M) fielded Alakesh Das, who received more than 4 lakh votes and finished second in the 2009 and 2014 elections. Following the death of the TMC MP Kapilkrishna Thakur in 2015, a by-election was held, with his wife, Mamatabala Thakur, being elected. In this by-election, the CPI (M) finished second with 3.28 lakh votes, slightly ahead of the BJP's Subrata Thakur, who received 3.14 lakh (Indian Express, 2015)

2.5.2. Politics and the creation of division among the Matuas

News which came out in *The Times of India* (24 January, 2015)

mentioned that, 'Politics divides Matuas: Community Confused; *Boroma* Tries To Hold Flock Together', news mentioned that, 'Mamatabala Thakur had called a press meet at sridham in Thakurnagar, where Binapani Devi openly blessed her daughter-in-law Mamatabala, whom Trinamul Congress has declared as its official candidate for the Bongaon by-poll, and also said she did not have any relation with her son Manjulkrishna Thakur, who resigned as minister from Trinamool Congress (TMC) Government and joined the BJP. A section of Matuas who were followers of Kapil Krishna group claimed that Baroma's blessings had "brightened" the electoral success of Mamatabala Thakur'(*The Times of India* 24 January, 2015).

The February 13 LokSabhaby-poll (2015) was required due to the death Kapilkrishna Thakur.

At least 20 armed police officers were stationed in the courtyard of the Harichand–Guruchand Thakur shrine, creating a tense mood in the normally serene and kirtan-filled Thakurbari. Police officers stationed themselves outside the 96-year-old Boroma's home, Binapani Devi, the community's spiritual leader, to watch over her during her trying times. The ruling party supported Mamatabala Thakur, the widow of Kapilkrishna, and Subrata Thakur, the grandson of Boroma, whose father Manjulkrishna just defected to the BJP, as the rival candidates for the seat.The issue became complicated and left a lasting impact on every common Matuabhakta. There is no doubting that Baroma has the greatest number of Matua supporters, but many of them are unhappy with the disputes within the Thakur family, which could split the Matua votes, according to Nikhil Biswas, a Thakurnagar resident and member of the All-India Matua Mahashangha. The 95-year-old Binapani Devi responded, "I do not have any relation with my elder son and my blessings are always with my daughter-in-law," to questions from reporters regarding Manjul Krishna's defection to the BJP. Binapani Devi responded, "There is no other option," when asked why she was supporting Mamata Banerjee (The Telegraph 15, January, 2015).

Manjul krishna Thakur later declared that it was a "mistake" for him to join the BJP. He asked Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal, to pardon him and allow him to rejoin the party. In a press release, 12 May 2015, he said, 'Earlier I had applied to the party Trinamool Congress leadership to take me back to the party fold'. Irrespective of such perceived branding or propaganda of being indecisive, lacking charisma, being whimsical and having less religious credentials, Manjulkrishna Thakur still remains to be the central figure in Matuaorganisation next to the *Baroma*, particularly in religious matter, as mentioned by Sunil Das local bhakta in Thakurnagar. *Baroma* was often portrayed as being above the fray of any factional competition and conflict within the MatuaMahasangha, despite her support to Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal and chief of Trinamool Congress (TMC).

It is strongly perceived by some factional leaders that in Sangha,

Baroma was referred to as an ultimate arbitrator as she wielded unquestionable authority over the MatuaMahasangha and millions of *Matua* devotees all over the world. Schism and factions occurred out of a conflict over the issue about whether the supreme body would have the right to choose anyone from the family or get involved in direct politics? Familial disputes over the issue of supreme autonomy, authority and organisational tactics including the question of leadership made the chasms in different segments of MatuaMahasangha much wider. Such controversy acquired political overtones and factional feuds became a regular state of affairs inside MatuaMahasangha.

It has been found during the fieldwork that actual schisms within the Mahasangha obviously have their own particular cause in a particular source of discontent and specific occasion to demonstrate dissension by withdrawal. General theorising has been held back by the emphasis in the historical account on the motivation of factional leaders. 'If the notion of motive is to play a part it must be considered within the context of a discussion, about the circumstances under which such motives develop and translate into actions' (Bruce 1985:593).

In general analysis of genesis and development of schism, one respondent said that there is the heterogeneity of class interest, which is one of the preconditions for factionalism and schism. The second precondition is the difference of interest between ideology and sectarian sustenance in adverse socio-political situations. This precondition is very interesting since the dichotomy between two contending alternatives creates a greater chance of internal disagreement. When the Matua Mahasangha was registered (1988), one could identify displaced regional identity and class position as two objective conditions behind the split in Matua Mahasangha.

The role of beliefs is producing different propensities to the schism which are intimately linked to those aspects of ideology which are concerned more with overarching questions of authority.

In the case of Matua Mahasangha, ideology was a very crucial aspect for lower caste sectarian movement. But the verdict of ideological supremacy was kept aside when the question of earnestness and seriousness came into the path of its actual practice.

At present, it has been noticed that, while faction membership was not synonymous with lineage links, the majority of people belonged to the same faction as other members of their lineage, particularly brothers and first cousins. Factions and schism among the Thakur family began between two brothers. Later they turned into the largest faction in Matua Mahasangha, although both these lineages and followers felt that they were supported by *Baroma* for real cause of Matua Mahasangha.

Indeed, the majority of followers indicated that they first accepted Thakurnagar's authority because they believed Manjul Krishna Thakur, the

younger brother, had no reason to openly oppose his elder brother's wife, Mamatabala Thakur, who subsequently won election as a Member of Parliament.

In Thakur family, the general relationships with affinal and consanguineal kinsmen outside the household are facilitative and are available to those who wish to use them. Such type of involvement may be safely ignored although siblings are expected to avoid getting involved in such disputes publicly. Political understanding among its members is quite unknown to them. The strength of relationship among its family members varies along the amount of favour exchanged, and the notion of deceptiveness and frailty of relationship turns common among the core siblings of Matua Mahasangha.

2.6. Intra Familial Feud Become a Medium of Narrow Political Agency

Due to intra-familial dissent, Thakurbari's identity politics have been reduced to a bitter family quarrel and sibling rivalry. It all started with the death of Kapilkrishna Thakur, the head of the second MatuaSanghapati. Family rivalry became public on November 5, 2014, when Mamatabala filed a FIR against Subrata Thakur at Gaighata Police Station, significantly to the embarrassment of the organization's grand lady and Matua guru Binapani Devi. Mamatabala filed a police complaint against Subrata and his crew, stating that they led the siege on her family and vandalised Thakurbari. She further stated that Subrata Thakur was pestering her family with terrible consequences.

Along with Kapil's family, a number of other Thakurbari residents organised a protest in front of the police station, calling for the quick arrest of Subrata Thakur and his allies. However, Subrata Thakur labelled the allegation as a plot by his aunt Mamatabala Thakur and a few others to force him out of Thakurbari and damage his reputation so that he won't be able to get a Trinamool ticket from Bongaon. Personal ambition fueled by the Matuas' dedication and devotion lay at the heart of this conflict. The Left attempted in vain to achieve what the Trinamool Congress (TMC) did in using the Matuacard for the first time. As the BJP is becoming more and more prominent, Thakurbaria candidates have more freedom to select, but Raju Singh stated that the Trinamool cannot afford to lose the Matua vote bank in the Bongaon by-poll. Consequently, there is now division in the community as a result of the struggle for Matua votes. This led to the emergence of two distinct groups within the family domain.

Mamatabala Thakur asserted that Manjulkrishna Thakur and his younger son Subrata Thakur were attempting to seize her belongings ever since her spouse Kapilkrishna died. Furthermore, she claimed that a significant amount of the donations made to the Harichand Thakur temple were demanded by Manjulkrishna and Subrata. When Manjulkrishna Thakur was asked if Subrata's prospects of winning if he is nominated as a BJP candidate would be

impacted to some degree by his mother's blessing being with his sister-in-law? In response, Manjulkrishna stated, "I think my mother will bless her grandson too if he is made the candidate. My mother is elderly and some people are trying to influence her" (The Times of India 16, January, 2015). However, "K. D. Biswas, who had run for the BJP in the previous (2014) Lok Sabha election from Bongaon and finished third in the count of votes cast for him, stated that Matua supporters would express their displeasure if a member of the Thakur family was selected as the party's nominee" (The Telegraph, January 15, 2015).

Manjulkrishna Thakur was a minister in the cabinet of Trinamool government till he joined BJP along with his son Subrata. "During the last Parliamentary elections, the Gaighata Assembly segment gave Trinamool 21,700 more votes than the BJP. Quite a slim margin even under the nationwide BJP wave, I think that the ruling party might actually get unsettled", said Kamal Ghosh, a member of the MatuaMahasangha. K D Biswas, the BJP's nominee against Kapilkrishna Thakur, garnered a phenomenal 2.44 lakh votes, and his party had a roughly 16% increase in membership. The Matuas have not been entirely persuaded by the BJP's prospective candidate. The two crore Matuas have been fighting for their unfulfilled citizenship rights since Boroma's husband, P R Thakur, was a Congress MP and minister. "The Matuas have suffered for 67 years. There's no more time to waste. A dissident member of Matua Mahasangha named Ujjal Biswas warned that "we will be pushed back by another five years if the Citizenship Act of 2003 is not revised now."

'It's routine for candidates to raise this issue up during elections, but, will Delhi understand that most of us are not eligible for even a domestic cylinder connection, a ration card or a BPL card', said Samar Pal. 'We are calling it a '*Kala kanoon'* and need it repealed, but, we are not sure if these members of Thakurbari will do anything about it. They are only switching political affiliations for personal gains', said Pratik Samanta.

The parliamentary poll results (2019) thus provide an agenda for political action to rework the existing relations of power in Bengal politics and society which the Trinamool Congress's proposed development programmes did not accomplish. Identity politics and community solidarity for the reason of common cause were regarded as an important source to analyse recent poll results in Bangaon and other places like Nadia, 24 Parganas etc.

The BJP released their eleventh list of candidates for the forthcoming LokSabha elections on March 26, 2019. They stated that the party's nominee for the West Bengali constituency of Bongaon is Shantanu Thakur. Binapani Devi's grandson is Shantanu. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his campaign for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections on February 2nd, starting in Thakurnagar, which is an area of the Bongaon constituency. Before addressing the gathering, NarendraModi met Binapani Devi. On March 5,Binapani Devi passed away at SSKM Hospital in Kolkata. Even before her funeral pyre Baroma

was dragged into a political scuffle between her heirs with separated political loyalties.

Boroma died away on Tuesday, March 5, and the community has been at strife over when their beloved matriarch will be cremated since Wednesday morning. Some of Mamatabala's devotees and followers wanted the final rites to be performed on Wednesday, but Manjul Krishna Thakur, the younger son of Boroma, requested that they be performed on Thursday instead, since hundreds of her followers from outside the state were travelling to Thakurnagar to see her one last time. The controversy was settled through a series of meetings presided over by Gosais, devotees, and members of the All India Matua Mahashangha. In the end, it was decided that Boroma's death rituals would take place on Thursday morning.Prime Minister Narendra Modi mourned the Matua leader's loss and praised her as "an icon of our times." He also talked about his February 2019 trip to Thakurnagar to ask the Matua matriarch's blessings.

'Boro Ma Binapani Thakur was an icon of our times. A source of great strength and inspiration for several people, Boroma's rich ideals will continue to influence generations. Her emphasis on social justice and harmony will never be forgotten, last month, I had the honour of seeking the blessings of Boro Ma Binapani Thakur at Thakurnagar. I will always cherish the interaction I had with her. We stand in solidarity with the Matua community in this hour of sadness' (Twitter, NarendraModi, 5th March, 2018). Mamata Banerjee conveyed her condolences and declared that the late matriarch would be remembered with an official funeral and gun salute. "The loss of Matua matriarch Boro Ma Binapani Thakur pains me deeply." My condolences to her family & my brothers & sisters of Matua Community at this moment of grief. It was a great opportunity for me to meet Boro Ma last November, on the centenary of her birthday,' (Twitter, Mamata Official, 5th March, 2018).

The Matua matriarch had been the sole unifying factor for the sect, but after her demise her household appears to be conflict-ridden. Family strife increased, and the community's political position is now a constant factor. Shantanu, the grandson of Boroma, has publicly denounced and accused the leaders of the Trinmool Congress (TMC) and his aunt of being responsible for Binapani Devi's demise. The daughter-in-law of Binapani Devi, the Bongaon MP, responded to the accusation by telling local media that Shantanu Thakur was politicising Boro Ma's death in an effort to capture power. The two warring factions live in the same compound but in different houses they had performed the *Sradha*(last rites ceremony) differently. MamataBala claims it was Binapani Devi who herself had appointed her to carry on with the work of the Mahasangha. Shantanu declared in the open that he will never "contest elections." He even ran on a platform of "politics free Thakur family," promising to work towards improving the Matua community but to never "play an active part in electoral politics."

What makes the situation attention-grabbing is that both Mamatabala Thakur and Shantanu Thakur factions know that they will be able to exert political clout and be attractive to political powers only if they can control the MatuaMahasangha, over which Binapani Devi held sway.

After the BJP revealed Shantanu's name, he mentioned "The Matua community demanded that I should contest the LokSabha election. Only for them I made a decision to contest from Bongaon." Shantanu stated that the community was unhappy with Mamatabala Thakur's actions since she has been fighting against the Matua group. "She has finished the movement of immigrants, which is the foundation of the Matua community." Arabindo Biswas, spokesperson for the All India Matua Mahasangha, stated that Shantanu would run for politics in order to safeguard the Matua community.

"Matuas feel that someone should represent the community at the floor of parliament and there is no better one than Shantanu Thakur," Biswas said. "His (Shantanu Thakur's) decision to contest election proves that all these years he has just lied. People are watching and they will answer on Election Day," Mamatabala Thakur mentioned.

Not everyone in the Mahasangha shared the sentiments of Shantanu Thakur, but he did represent the dominant view. The political campaign in Thakurnagar was centred on two major issues: justification of Citizenship Amendment Bill 2003 and depoliticisation of the MatuaMahasangha, making it free from the grip of the ruling party Trinamool Congress (TMC)).

The rift ultimately led to a division within the masses and split them into three warring factions. The majority being anti-ruling party and desirous of achieving higher political gain through BJP as they have been advocating core issues of citizenship right, which the Matua community has aspired for long. The others were divided into two groups: one in favour of the ruling party Trinamool Congress (TMC) and against any form of involvement from Manjulkrishna Thakur's family. The other one, the smaller one, wanted to depoliticise the MatuaMahasangha, making it free from all sorts of political involvement and interventions. During the political campaign for parliamentary election 2019, they had decided to stay away from both BJP and Trinamool Congress (TMC). Poll results showed that Shantanu Thakur had secured 48.85% vote compared to 40.92% by his aunt Mamatabala Thakur. In LokSabha polls, Shantanu Thakur appeared to have taken an upper hand in the election by winning the Bongaon seat, where the Matuas form 67% of the voters.

Poll results reflected that a major section of Matua masses may have wanted to secure their citizenship rights prior to securing any other developmental goals for the larger Matua population. Development alternative for the Matua people, as forecasted by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, hardly made any dent among the distressed Matua population, to whom citizenship right became a prime concern.

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) issue intensified an existing political break up among members of the community. Two Matua factions owing adherence to the BharatiyaJanata Party and Trinamool clashed publicly on 3 October 2019, Wednesday, when they went to organise rival NRC-related campaigns at Thakurnagar. Faction based persisting tussle is now going on in manifesting itself in the NRC issue. The quarrel started in front of the '*NaatMandir*' when Shantanu Thakur was organising a pro-NRC campaign.

A group led by Mamatabala Thakur and her associate SukritiRanjanBiswas also started campaigning against the NRC in the same place. In an interview, Mamatabala Thakur said that 'her purpose was to raise the voice in opposition to the NRC and we want to make sure that the Matua community is completely aware of this NRC issue because many may be susceptible to the problem arising out of it'. Shantanu Thakur said that, 'we wanted to clear all misunderstanding that may relate with NRC'. He claimed, 'the rival faction was deliberately misguiding the Matua People and as a result of clash police were sent to Thakurbari at *Natmandir* courtyard to restrain the conflicts'.

Spokesperson of the All India Matua Mahasangha, ArabindaBiswas, said that, 'this unwanted incident was an attempt by Mamatabala Thakur to malign MP Shantanu Thakur's image and try to politicise platform of Matua Mahasangha that may badly affect our age long demand of Citizenship right'. He also clarified that, 'though we respect Mamatabala Thakur because she is a member of the Thakur family but she is implicated in a bad conspiracy against Mahasangha and Shantanu Thakur'. Both factions asserted they had filed complaints at local Police Station.

Sukriti RanjanBiswas, first rank leader of Mamatabala's faction and president of the Joint Action Committee for Bengali Refugees (JACBR), said that 'provisions of the CAA 2019 caused the problems for Hindu Refugees. Clause 2.1(b) and 3(c) of the 2019 Act has made it possible to identify first hand refugees as "illegal migrants" and secondly disenfranchise their children born on Indian soil. Section 14(a), created by the same amendment, rationalised the process of mandatory registration of citizens, which was till then limited to the state of Assam'. Biswas also recalls his participation in a protest campaign at Kendraparain Thakurnagar, two weeks after the Matua community's first hunger strike against CAB in 2003. Over the subsequent fifteen years, the community launched several protests for citizenship right, including a hunger strike in Delhi in 2011 and another in Kolkata in 2015.

In an interview Sataur Modak, who is presently the Secretary of Mamatabala Thakur and earlier was a close associate of Manjul krishna Thakur, said that, 'Modi did not remember the displaced people throughout his tenure and then started running to Thakurnagar when the LokSabha polls 2019 were around the corner. Instead of solving existing problems he multiplied problems

through the NRC. Now, he is spreading lies by saying the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill will solve all the problems of the displaced people, whereas it will be almost of no use to any of them.' He also clarified that the 'Bill will create great difficulties for those who have arrived earlier from Bangladesh and settled in as they will have to affirm their Bangladeshi origins'. He adds, 'If this act will be implemented, no Matua will become a citizen.'

2.7. Conclusion

This study reveals consistent shifts in factional affiliations in Mahasangha based on conflicts of interest and disputes that frequently arise between near kinsmen, including siblings. It is due to familial connections are multifaceted, and disagreements between close relatives are frequently more intense than those between non-relatives.

There are some important features which were observed during the fieldwork:

a) A sporadic factional congregation which is generally common within Mahasangha, is formed spontaneously when family members from Thakurbari suffer from strong emotions and without proper planning take their grievances and demand to the streets to vent out their anger.

(b) Sectarian ideology-based congregations are rarely seen and are mostly episodic.

(c) Political issue based congregations are quite common and have clear-cut articulations that may represent the interest of the primary organisation.

(d) Small associational groups are explicitly formed within Mahasangha with members other than the family members overtly to represent the interests of MatuaMahasangha.

(e) Faction is an integral part of MatuaMahasangha. Localised interest is the prime cause for which the factions arise and persist.

(f) Each faction performs like a quasi-group and may dissolve if the goal of group formation is achieved.

(g) Each faction has its own political stand and they have own point of view about the performance of MatuaMahasangha.

(h) Members of each faction maintained their relations with the faction leader through personal contact. Personal contact plays a vital role in sustaing schism rather than ideological differences.

The overlapping and factional nature of the MatuaMahasangha is a source of its very stability and survival. But it is also a recipe for gridlock

because the multiple power centres and factions tend to neutralise one another. Paralysis is normal, innovation and strategic decision making is abnormal. The power blocks within MatuaMahasangha are widely dispersed, and the result is that the organisation rarely begets strategic decisions without first consulting with the political agencies. That may identify a broadly recognised threat to the survival of the organisation.

Faction within the Mahasangha is the result of ideological, philosophical, and personality disagreements among its constituent members, that might or might not be monetarily or politically motivated. They are discernible in a number of sociopolitical settings. Factional structure refers to the roles that individuals play within a group, as well as the psychological predispositions that promote this pattern, are referred to as the factional structure. Morphological relationships between factional members tend to represent thematic variations of the enclosing group's social structure. The factional dynamics within the Matua Mahasangha reveal intricate patterns of conflict and cooperation among its members, which are influenced by a variety of socio-political factors and organizational intricacies. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from scholars like Anthony Oberschall and Mancur Olson provides a lens through which to understand these complexities. Anthony Oberschall's framework on social movements emphasizes that such movements are not homogenous entities but rather complex amalgamations of diverse interest groups that continually form, dissolve, and realign alliances in response to socio-political contexts (Oberschall, 1973). This perspective is crucial for interpreting the Matua Mahasangha, where multiple factions maneuver within the organizational structure based on varying interests and objectives. The fluidity and adaptability of these factions, as observed within the Mahasangha, reflect Oberschall's notion of dynamic networks constantly reshaping strategies and alliances to address external pressures. Mancur Olson's theory of collective action further enriches the analysis by highlighting how individuals within interest groups act based on rational calculations of personal benefit, sometimes diverging from collective goals (Olson, 1965). This rational self-interest can explain why factions within the Matua Mahasangha prioritize personal or subgroup interests over broader organizational objectives, leading to conflicts or collaborations depending on perceived benefits.

In conclusion, the framework of rational self-interest offers valuable insights into the dynamics of factionalism within the Matua Mahasangha. By focusing on individual and subgroup interests, this perspective elucidates why factions within the organization often prioritize their immediate gains over the collective goals of the Mahasangha. This prioritization can lead to both collaborations and conflicts among factions, depending on their calculations of perceived benefits. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the intricate interplay of power, strategy, and competing agendas within religious and socio-political movements like the Matua Mahasangha. Moving

forward, further research could look deeper into how these factional dynamics influence the organization's governance, leadership dynamics, and its role in shaping community identities and socio-political mobilization in West Bengal.

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Somen Rath, Avitoli G Zhimo and Mercy Kipgen

AGENCY, AESTHETICS, AND COMMODIFICATION OF SAORA ART

Abstract

Art represents the human experience, and anthropologists approach the study of art like any other aspect of human existence. Agency is a vital concept in the anthropology of art, referring to the capacity of people and things to act in the world. Art objects possess ritual agency as social agents, capable of mediating social agency. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study Saora's art through Alfred Gell's theory of art and agency. Every tribe in India has its own distinct identities embedded in its cultural traditions, which speak of its diverse and colourful vibrancy while conveying shared values and aesthetics. These art forms encompass many utilitarian and decorative media, including cloth, wood, paper, and metal. For the present study, mural art and wall paintings known as Ittalan, Idital, Anital, or Dital inside the house of LanjiaSaoras are considered Saora Art. The paper seeks to elucidate the aesthetic and socio-religious aspects of Saora Art and examine its agency. It also aims to analyse the commodification of the Saora art and its impact on the agency thereof. Further, it assesses the implementation of government policies and NGOs' efforts to safeguard and upliftSaora Art and artists.

Keywords: *Saora, Art, Idital, Icons, Agency, Agency, Commodification*

The impulse of humans to express their thoughts and imaginations through visual or other sensory means dates back to the discovery of the red hand stencil in archaeological sites in Spain where the Neanderthals lived. These ancient arts, preserved in glacial caves, offer insight into the culture and ideas of pre-existing ancient civilisations, including their cognitive experiences, anxieties, and emotions. Art is a vivid means of expressing these cultural aspects, and its meaning is subjective and varies based on individual perception of aesthetics, which is influenced by factors such as age, gender, cultural cognition, and phenomenological experiences. Art creates forms symbolic of human feeling and picks up where language leaves off (Langer, 1953). Art is defined through the complex interrelations between individual intentions, interpretative context, and attributive definitions that make sense of the spatial existence of an object,

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meaning-encoded functionary skills, or ritualistic performances. Art represents the human experience, and anthropologists approach the study of art like any other aspect of human existence. Anthropologists take a holistic approach to any given topic, situating it among the broader context of a culture—its "language, environment, economy, religion, family life, governance and so on" (Plattner 2003). All of these details are implicitly and inextricably embedded in the products of a culture, which cannot be fully understood and appreciated without some awareness of them. Gell (1998) argued that art is defined by its distinctive role in advancing social relationships constructed through an agency. "Agency can be ascribed to things without this giving rise to anything particularly recalling the production and circulation of art". In this paper, an attempt has been made to study Saora art through Alfred Gel's theory of art and agency.

Art and Agency

Alfred Gell has used the term agency, but he is one of manywho have used it. It is pertinent to note that Giddens saw an intimate connection between agency and power. For Giddens (1984: 9, 15),the agency does not refer to people's intentions but their ability to act. Agency is the ability to act in particular ways where more than one course of action is possible. One ceases to be an agent if one can no longer make a difference.

The idea of art objects as social agents has been introduced previously (Layton 1981: 43; Wolff 1981: 24-25). Appadurai (1986:4) wrote, 'In many historical societies, things have not been so divorced from the capacity of persons to act'. Alfred Gell's theory of art and agency significantly contributes to the anthropology of art. According to Gell, the agency is a vital concept in the anthropology of art, referring to the capacity of people and things to act in the world. He argues that art objects possess ritual agency as social agents capable of mediating social agency. Gell defines agency as the capacity to initiate causal sequences, which are events caused by acts of mind, will, or intention. He suggests that an agent is the source or origin of causal events, independent of the state of the physical universe.Gell's theory of art and agency is complex, highlighting several forms of agency that art possesses, including psychological, physical, aesthetic, and semiotic. Art is a system of action, an agent like a person or subject that can persuade and fascinate their viewers (patients), where art is both the source and the object of "social agency." He explains that art's ability to mediate social agency is based on indexes and material elements that drive inferences, responses, or interpretations. For Gell, the anthropology of art is the theoretical study of social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency. Gell's theory is grounded in a biographical (anthropological) frame of reference, where social relationships are part of the relational texture of social life. According to Gell, social relations only exist insofar as they manifest in actions. Therefore, performers of social actions are referred to as "agents," and they act on "patients" (social agents in the "patient" position concerning an agent-in-action) (Gell, 1998).

Art in Anthropology

The nineteenth-century anthropologists were involved in the study of art and material culture. The alluring interest caused by novelty and the exoticism of otherness caused friction in deciding the ethical obligation of the researchers from an ethnocentric perspective. In Britain, the evolutionary theory began to come in for strong criticism. Characterising societies in terms of traits and their ranking according to typologies based on the movement from simple to complex forms was seen as an impoverished theory based on an inadequate method. It was argued that evolutionary theory failed to place cultural traits in the context of society. It could not show the interrelationship between components in the present and demonstrate the truth of its hypotheses based on the available data. The term "art" in the museum is associated with the more highly valued collections of classical civilisations whose objects are part of European heritage. The arts of classical civilisations were positioned in a trajectory that led to European fine art and was associated with the connoisseurship and value creation processes of the art market (Proimos, 2006)

Many renowned social anthropologists like Robert Redfield, Verrier Elwin, Franz Boas, Sheldon Nodelman, Robert Adams, Gregory Bateson, William Buller Fagg, and Robert Layton have done intensive works on ethnological art. The term "ethnological art" as a substitute for primitive or tribal art has been adapted following the coinage of terminology made by Haselberger (1961). Most researchers have included motifs, styles, technology, functions, etc., in their treatment and exercise on art forms, features, and functions. Ethnological art represents society with its multi-dimensional facets. At the same time, this overall methodology may be modified to some extent, and thereby, the art objects can be used as markers of social, cultural, economic, and religious attributes. The 1960s also saw the growth of interest in visual anthropology, a renewed interest in material culture, and anthropological archaeology development(Kubler, 2008). Franz Boas, in his book 'Primitive Art' (1927),argued against the idea that the art produced by non-Western cultures is primitive and inferior to Western art. Boas also critiques the idea that primitive art is "pure" and untainted by Western influence. He shows that many non-Western cultures have been in contact with Western cultures for centuries and have incorporated Western elements into their art. Overall, "Primitive Art" is an important work that challenges the idea of cultural superiority and highlights the value of studying and appreciating the artistic traditions of all cultures.

Raymond Firth maintained a strong interest in indigenous art throughout his life. Firth (1936) studied the indigenous art of Maori and New Guinea and found that it was an essential part of their social and cultural life. He believed these artworks were not merely decorative but deeply embedded in these societies' cultures and traditions and played crucial roles in social interactions, religious rituals, and political systems. Forge was another British

anthropologist who focused primarily on art. At the centre of his analysis of Abelam's art is the relationship between style and meaning, concepts that link his work to art history interests and the symbolic anthropology of the 1960s. Levi-Strauss defined art as an ordering system of signs and communication, like language, that forms a hierarchical structure that forms the foundation ofsociety's core beliefs (Wiseman, 2007).

Anderson (1993) explores how artworks can convey cultural recognition by combining tangible elements to create meaningful cultural symbols that evoke sensory responses closely linked to the geographical and historical context. While it is widely accepted that visual art shares similarities with ritualistic ceremonies in symbolising cultural beliefs, Layton's argument that artworks serve as ritualistic symbols has further reinforced this notion of the presentational paradigm. (Anderson & Field, 1993).

Tribal Art In India

Verrier Elwin (1955) was an early scholar who recognised the significance of tribal art in India. He methodically recorded the wall paintings and associated rituals within this tradition. Elwin's documentation of these ethnographic details provides valuable insights into the study of Indian tribal culture. In the 1960s, J.L. Fischer recognised the significance of tribal art, particularly rock art in India, and put forth hypotheses for comparing Indian rock art in his article 'Art Styles as Cultural Cognitive Maps'.Wakankar and Brooks also attempted to compare rock art and tribal art, precisely that of Korku, Warli, Gond and Saora tribes, with decorated ceramics from Central India in their book, "Stone Age Painting in India" (1976). They highlighted the images of Saora wall paintings in their book and urged researchers to undertake a comparative study of rock art and tribal art.

Before the 1960s, researchers analysed artwork by integrating it into evolutionary or diffusionist hypotheses, creating cultural types associated with areas, tribes, or schools. However, in the post-1960s, there was a growing interest in understanding symbolic expression and exploring meaning beyond symmetrical features. This led to an interdisciplinary approach combining anthropology, archaeology, art history, and aesthetics to identify core cultural practices. Tribal aesthetics are unique in their adaptation to the socio-ecological culture and religious ideologies of the members and can be characterised by the following features:

- The transmission of knowledge from one generation to another through folk art, folk songs, folklore, customs, and rituals exemplifies the lived reality and social structure.
- Due to its basis in mythological characters, the origin and authorship of this tradition take time to ascertain.

- The portrayal of relationships, communal harmony, and the decision-making process in a functional society is depicted with great flexibility without relying on complex multimodal administrative authority.
- The tribal aesthetic vividly depicts unity and incorporates cultural elements into everyday life, as affirmed through rituals and institutions.
- These traditions also serve a cathartic purpose, entertaining and promoting conformity in accepting behavioural patterns while educating society members about their cultural heritage and social identity.

The remarkable diversity of tribal art in India showcases a harmonious blend of cultural traditions and communal solidarity rooted in profound philosophical beliefs. The transmission of tribal art through oral traditions takes on various clandestine forms, including architecture, dance, handicrafts (such as decorative crafts and wood sculpting), oral literature (including drama and poetry), music, painting, textile weaving, and embroidery. Storytelling plays a significant role in tribal art, shaping the cognitive framework and aesthetic presentation. Tribal paintings are deeply influenced by their unique cultural and ecological contexts. Here are some examples of well-known tribal paintings from different states in India:

- The Kalamkari paintings, created using natural dyes, are renowned among the local tribes of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. These paintings intricately depict mythological Puranic deities, showcasing exceptional penwork. Over time, Kalamkari evolved with the patronage of the Mughal sultanate.
- Originating from Mithila in Bihar, Madhubani paintings portray the folklore and daily life of tribal communities, incorporating stories of historical and mythological significance.
- Pattachitra, a cloth painting from Odisha, revolves around the mythological importance of Lord Jagannath. It is believed that the Savara tribe initially worshipped the deity, and later, the monarch king brought the deity to the Puri Jagannath temple. These paintings, with their creative motifs, date back over a thousand years and depict simple mythological themes.
- Phad painting from Rajasthan is a folk art form done on scrolls, depicting narratives of local tribal deities. These paintings, carried by Priest-singers known as Bhopas, represent the mobile abode of the tribal deities.
- Pithora Paintings, originating from Gujarat, emerged as mural paintings within the Bhilala and Rathwa tribal communities. They are ancient ritualistic depictions centred around a single central theme, often representing a divine vision.

- Saora Paintings from Odisha are renowned for their repetitive motifs, inspired by religious pantheons and cultural traditions. This traditional art form carries sacred meanings, with involvement from Shamans who represent various themes for different occasions.
- Warli Paintings from Maharashtra are famous for their ornamental designs, featuring simple motifs that portray everyday life discourses. These paintings often revolve around joyous activities and celebrations of festivities.
- The North-Eastern tribes of India are celebrated for their exquisite wood sculpting and bamboo work. Totemic poles, masks, and engravings in vibrant colours represent the guardians of respective tribal communities. Bamboo craftsmanship ranges from miniature detailed art to comfortable and decorative furniture (Sharma, 2015).

Regarding Indian tribal art and aesthetics, folk art reflects daily lifestyle through visual art, performance through songs and dance, and oral literature. Folk art comprises painting on several media for decorative purposes or religious performances. Verrier Elwin[1] (1902-1964) was one of the first scholars to realise the importance of Saora art. He systematically documented the wall paintings and the rituals associated with this tradition. His contribution to the documentation of rich ethnographic details is valuable for studying the tribal culture of Orissa. Several series of articles and books have been published by anthropologists on Saora and their culture in the 'Adibasi', an Orissa tribal museum journal.

Sitakant Mahapatra (1991) unequivocally underscores the critical function of art in tribal communities by interconnecting ritualistic customs with religious observances aimed at appeasing the gods. A lucid clarification has been given regarding the magico-religious customs that entail summoning spirits or forces for the betterment of society. Dinanath Pathy (2009), an eminent art historian and painter, has lucidly illustrated the different styles with minor differences in art forms within the Saora art. He described the Saora painters, their techniques and materials, stylistic features, and design concepts in Saora art.

For the present study, the mural art and wall paintings known as *Ittalan* (*Id* - write, *Kitalan* - wall)(Elwin,1951), Idital (Elwin,1955; Mahapatra,1991), *Anital* (Chandragiri) inside the house (Mahapatra,1991) of Lanjia Saoras are being considered as Saora Art along with the depiction of the similar on other material forms in the contemporary period. Every state and union territory across India has distinct identities embedded in its cultural traditions, which speak of its diverse and colourful vibrancy while conveying shared values and aesthetics. These art forms encompass many utilitarian and decorative media, including cloth, wood, paper, and metal.

Situating the Saora tribe

The Saora tribe is an ancient tribe in India, mentioned in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit literature. They are also known as Savara and Sora and are one of the oldest significant tribes in Odisha. They are concentrated in the Gajapati district and Gunupur Subdivision of Rayagada, and their population in Odisha was 534,751 according to the 2011 Census of India, with a sex ratio of 1023 females per 1000 males and a literacy rate of 54.99%. The LanjiaSaoras are one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India and one of the 13 PVTGs found in Odisha. The Saora worship countless deities and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent, through their religious practices. They have no belief in a supreme deity and make wall paintings or icons called *Ittalan, Idital, Anital* or *Dital* inside their houses to flatter and please their gods and ancestors. These icons contain sketches of humans, animals, plants, hills, forests, trees, moons, suns, tigers, birds, etc. and are simple but challenging to understand. This art form is frequently found in Odisha's RaghurajpurRayagada, Gajapati, and Koraput districts.

Odisha exhibits the highest diversity in its scheduled tribe population, comprising 62 tribes. The captivating Saora art captures the attention of observers, drawing them into its world. The allure and enchantment experienced by onlookers can only be easily explained byexamining the underlying cultural and belief systems. Saora iconography has captivated numerous researchers, ethnographers, visual artists, and ethnomusicologists from around the globe. Saora art, also called*Ittalans* by Elwin, is alternatively known as *Anitals* and *Iditals*, depending on the region. The striking wall paintings are referred to as *Iditals*. In essence, Saora art represents a house within a house, functioning as a sacred space for benevolent spirits and a barrier against malevolent spirits. This adorned wall art serves as a propitiatory practice to maintain balance in the metaphysical and theological realms, ensuring the well-being and happiness of the community (Rath, 2019).

Fieldwork among the Saora

Anthropology provides a comprehensive framework for investigating the processes and the reasons behind artistic expressions. Anthropologists employ various methods to study art, including observation, interviews, focus groups, and site assessments. The anthropological exploration of art encompasses ethnographic studies and investigations rooted in physical anthropology and archaeology. Examples of such investigations include the examination of Upper Palaeolithic cave paintings and Aboriginal rock paintings. These anthropological techniques also apply to analysing artistic creations and sporting events. This could involve excavating and evaluating artefacts from ancient societies, interviewing theatrical performers, or attending games and matches. Studying art, music, and sports requires the same holistic and wide-ranging approach as any other anthropological inquiry.

The first author conducted fieldwork in Puttasing village in the Gunpur block of the Rayagada district in 2019. The focus of this study was the LanjiaSaora tribal community, specifically chosen for their adherence to the traditional practice of Saora Art. Puttasing, serving as a cultural centre for Saora Art, provided valuable insights into the dynamics and preservation of this ancient art form. An ethnographic study utilised a mapping technique to identify spatial arrangements, housing patterns, gardens, forests, roads, paths, and village boundaries. The purposive and convenience sampling method was employed to select informants/respondents for interviews and focus group discussions. The informants included individuals, regardless of age or gender, actively involved in Saora Art. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, involving approximately 25-30 participants in this preliminary study. The case study approach was instrumental in collecting data on socio-religious rituals related to Saora art, documenting exceptional cases of wall paintings observed during the study, and gathering folklore and myths associated with other Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Odisha.

Finding and Discussions

Saora art / Ittalans

The captivating nature of Saora's art captivates the observers' gaze, preventing their attention from wandering elsewhere. The sheer magnitude of attraction that mesmerises onlookers can only be adequately explained byexamining the underlying cultural beliefs. Saora iconography has fascinated researchers, ethnographers, visual artists, and ethnomusicologists worldwide. Referred to as *Ittalans* by Elwin, Saora art is also known as *Anitals* or *Iditals*, with variations based on the region. The exquisite wall paintings produced by the Saora community are called*Iditals*. In essence, Saora art represents a house within a house, serving as a sacred space for benevolent spirits while simultaneously acting as a confinement for malevolent spirits. Therefore, this embellishment of wall art serves as a propitiatory practice to maintain balance in the metaphysical and theological realm, ensuring the happiness and well-being of the community (Rath, 2019).

The essential nature of symbolism in any form of art is crucial for exploring the essence of the art itself. Examining the framework using Cartesian units and arranging it comprehensively is imperative, forming a thematic map visually representing the subject matter. In Figure 1, the symbols presented serve as illustrations of how they are employed to unveil the theme of the painting. The interplay and significance of their combination contribute to the overall composition, resulting in a complete and vivid depiction. To comprehend Saora's paintings, one can approach them from the following perspectives that shed light on their intended purposes:

- Icons for appeasing spirits (tutelary spirits, nature spirits and other

underworld spirits).

- Icons for the promotion of health and welfare (averting and curing illness, diseases and epidemics)
- Icons for fertility and harvest (to increase the fertility of the soil, to produce good crops, an offering of first-grain fruits, vegetables and pulses)
- Icons for childbirth (for easy delivery)
- Icons for the dead (mortuary ceremony)
- Icons for the welfare of the village (representing shrines and deities)
- Icons for festivities (Dolapurnima, Dusshera and MargasiraGurubara)
- Icons for those who have been abroad (working in the tea gardens of Assam)
- Icons for marriage and birth anniversary (marriage of Kudanmaran to tutelary spirits and Anjuman paintings).

Verrier Elwin (1955) identified and categorised sixty distinct types of *Iditals* into seven groups based on their purpose. Through a primary ethnographic study conducted in Puttasing, Odisha, remnants of KarjaIdital, IldaisumIdital, and a collection of photographs capturing Iditals that were once present were discovered. Additionally, intriguing reconstructions of certain ideals were found, depicting a combination of all the gods. These reconstructions were not intended for worship but represented an amalgamation of the Saora religious Pantheon. One such example is the *Anjuman Idital*, which portrays the name-giving ceremony of a child. Another ceremony called Tinjuman, although similar to Anjuman as it involves naming a child, differs in that it is performed for a child born in a distant location.

Fig. 1. *Anjuman Idital* depicting the name-giving ceremony in the Saora community.

(Picture: Somen Rath, June 2019)

1. In this depiction, the birth of a child is represented symbolically, with the house resembling the protective environment of the mother's womb. Before birth, the child is under the guardianship of the gods, and the sacred peacock acts as a guardian, warding off any malevolent spirits.

2. The Sun god, Uyungsum, holds significant reverence during the name-giving ceremony and is considered the progenitor of the stars and the earthly realm. His presence signifies that the child is born with his blessings.

3. As part of the welcoming ritual into this world, seven dancers perform to the rhythmic beats of the Dagudu, an indigenous drum-like musical instrument. Gathering seven dancers is a common practice, often representing the sacred significance attributed to the number seven in ceremonial dances.

4. Additionally, a bull and an elk are considered sacrificial offerings to the Sun god, signifying the child's naming. The hunted elk is carried

on a bar by individuals, while women bring grains as offerings to the deity.

5. The Kudanboi, a skilled practitioner, is tasked with creating the jataka, or horoscope, for the newborn child, which involves predicting their future. If any potential obstacles are foreseen, the Kudanboirecommends protective measures to mitigate them.

6. During this ritual, the Sepoys of Raudasum, the Chief Saora deity, stand guard to witness and ensure the smooth and proper execution of the ceremony. Any deviation from the prescribed rituals can have repercussions for both the child and the parents in the future. The Tree of Life is depicted in the artwork, symbolising the source of life. Just as a tree is rooted in the soil, the child is rooted in this world, seeking blessings from all the gods.

The nature of these paintings is fascinating to explore, as they intricately intertwine with ecological elements, social structures, and religious customs and beliefs. Saora art is not the only form of Indian art that exhibits such characteristics. Another renowned tribal art form, Warli, also features triangular anthropomorphic figures with stick-like limbs. Although Saora and Warli art emerged at different times in human evolution and history, several aspects of both traditions bear resemblances.The Saora wall paintings encapsulate elegance, charm, aesthetics, and ritualistic associations. These pictograms serve as literature and philosophy for the Saora people. One of the drawbacks of Gell's theory of art and agency is the lack of attention towards the creator's intention. In the Saora context, *iditals* hold a significant religious connotation and serve as a platform that brings the sacred performer to the forefront. Comprehending the role of a shaman or shamanin is imperative to grasp the genuine essence and importance of *Iditals*. Within the LanjiaSaora community, the shaman, known as *kudanmar* or *kudanboi*, plays a direct role in religious practices and is actively involved in creating*Iditals*. Without the shaman's intervention and guidance, the hidden meanings embedded within an *Idital* remain elusive. Among the dwindling population of *Kudanbois*, one such remarkable individual is Lakshmi Sabar, residing in Puttasing. Her classification of shaman aligns closely with Elwin's categorisation of shamans within Saora society.

- ***Raudakumbaran:*** They are married to tutelary beings and come to know about them and their activities in dreams and sitting trance. They are qualified to perform various rituals and deal with routine rituals.

- ***Raudakumboi***[2]: Shamanic practitioners characterised by their ability to enter a trance state (as indicated by the Saora term *raud* denoting fainting, trance, or spirit possession). They possess the capacity to officiate a diverse range of ceremonies, including the *Karja*[3]ritual.

- ***Guarkumboi***[4] **or *Gobgobkumboi*:** Female practitioners who share similarities with idaiboisprimarily focus on rites for the deceased due to the extensive duration of certain funerary ceremonies. However, they differ from *idaibois*by having personal tutelary spirits, exhibiting trance abilities, and assuming prominent roles in ceremonial practices, while *idaibois* serve as mere assistants. (It is expected that *guarkumbois* abstain from marriage and childbearing, while a *raudakumboi*can engage in such pursuits. A *guarkumboi* typically receives training and initiation from her paternal aunt, while a *raudakumboi* may be initiated by anyone, including the paternal aunt or the tutelary spirit through dreams.)
- ***Ildaboi*:**Shamanin without any tutelary. It refers to a shamanic practitioner lacking a personal tutelary spirit and unable to enter trance states through spirit possession.
- ***Regamboi***: Female counterparts of *regamarans*[55] who primarily engage in the procurement of remedies against sorcery practices.

The shamanic initiation process presents intriguing aspects for exploration when examining the roles of religious functionaries. Establishing a shaman within Saora society raises pertinent questions regarding the challenges and complexities of assuming such a position. Equally significant is the process of unbecoming, which sheds light on the social tensions and familial disruptions experienced by individuals when they lose their esteemed status as celebrated *kundanbois*.

Becoming Kudanboi: A Case Study

Every shamanin, during the onset of puberty, undergoes a remarkable dream experience that plays a parallel role in the experiences of other shamans. This transformative encounter culminates in her "marriage" to a tutelary spirit from the underworld, marking the beginning of her sacred responsibilities. This spiritual union typically does not impose restrictions on earthly marriages (although it may do so for *guarkumbois)*, as the Saora people do not hold a specific belief in the magical efficacy of chastity. Consequently, the shamanin often enters into a marital union with a human spouse after a few years. However, her relationship with her dream Lord remains equally significant. When conversing with a shamanin, it is not always evident which of her two husbands holds greater significance in her life. This dream experience may precede or follow formal training in divination. In some instances, a girl from a family with no prior association with shamanic practices may be called to the role through a dream, and it is the dream husband himself who imparts the knowledge and skills of the art to her.

Typically, a girl is affiliated with a family where the tradition of shamanin already exists, often with her mother or father's sister assuming

the role of shamanin. From an early age, the preparation of the young girl for her future life as a shamanin begins under the guidance of her family member. Consequently, the dream experiences encountered by the girl are not entirely unexpected (although they are conventionally regarded as a significant surprise), following a regular pattern influenced by mythology and social traditions.

The transformative dream that propels a girl into her shamanic profession and sanctifies it with supernatural endorsement takes the form of visits from a suitor from the underworld, presenting a marriage proposal along with its aesthetic and illuminating implications. This husband figure assumes a Hindu persona, exuding refinement and charm, possessing considerable wealth, and adhering to numerous customs unfamiliar to the Saora community. According to tradition, he appears in the depths of night, and upon his entrance into the room, the entire household falls under a spell and succumbs to a deep slumber resembling death. In nearly all cases, the girl initially rejects the proposal, recognising that the path of a shamanin is arduous and fraught with perils.

As a consequence, she begins to be burdened by nightmares wherein her divine lover transports her to the underworld or threatens her with perilous falls from great heights. A decline in her physical health is typically observed, and there may be instances when she temporarily loses her sanity, wandering with a dishevelled appearance through fields and woods. At this point, the family intervenes. Given that, in most instances, the girl has been undergoing training for a certain period, everyone is aware of what she is about to face, and even if she does not explicitly disclose the situation to her parents, they generally possess astute awareness. However, it is customary for the girl to confess to her parents that she has received the call, initially refused it, and now finds herself in danger. This confession immediately alleviates her guilt and enables her parents to act appropriately.Consequently, the parents swiftly arrange the girl's marriage with her tutelary spirit, solidifying her commitment to the shamanic path.

The Saora culture encompasses the practice of shamanic trance, wherein individuals undergo somnambulistic possession by supernatural entities, often preceding dissociative amnesia. Among the Saora tribe in Orissa, confident young men and women exhibit behaviours that may be classified as mental disorders, according to Western-trained mental health professionals. These individuals display inappropriate crying and laughter, memory loss, fainting spells, and report sensations of being bitten by ants despite the absence of such insects. Typically, these individuals are adolescents or young adults who feel little attraction to the conventional lifestyle of subsistence farming. They experience considerable psychological stress due to social pressures exerted by their relatives and peers. The Saora attribute these peculiar behaviours to the influence of supernatural beings desiring to marry these individuals. To resolve this situation, a marriage ceremony is performed

wherein the disturbed person is wedded to the spirits. Following this marriage, the abnormal symptoms subside, and the young person assumes the role of a shaman responsible for healing others. In society's eyes, they transform from being peculiar teenagers to respected adults possessing valuable skills acquired through supernatural encounters. These coping mechanisms serve as means of adaptation.

Regarding the initiation process, a girl initially trains alongside other shamans until she becomes proficient and experienced, as mistakes in this profession can have tragic consequences. Once adequately prepared, the young shaman establishes her practice and quickly gains prominence, becoming as sought after as her counterparts. Her duties are extensive and demanding. If she is a *guarkumboi*, she must attend every funeral within her designated service area. Additionally, she oversees or assists in Gaur or karja ceremonies and participates in lengthy name-giving rituals.

Lakshmi Sabar is the sole remaining *kudan* among the LanjiaSaoras of Rayagada. Other individuals who previously held significant power have either passed away or lost their abilities when their respective tutelary supernatural spirits departed from them. Before becoming a *kudanboi*, Lakshmi enjoyed a contented marriage with Pashto Sabar, a r*egemmar* (herbalist). Despite having dreams involving supernatural and tutelary spirits indicating her future as a shaman, she initially disregarded these experiences. However, after the tragic loss of her fourth son due to her failure to heed the spirits' call, she experienced profound emotional distress, nearly succumbing to madness before recovering. She embarked on the journey to become a shaman to protect her family from further misfortune. Given that her grandparents were shamans, it was highly probable that she would become the next and final Shaman of Puttasing. At 35, she successfully underwent the ritual of becoming a *kudanboi*. According to her, becoming a shaman can be hereditary or dependent on the appeasement of a chosen deity. Since then, she has served as a shaman, choosing not to convert to Christianity out of fear that such a conversion may anger supernatural spirits. Her family consists of three sons, their wives, two grandsons, and four granddaughters. Her eldest son is trained in Saora painting and is currently employed at OTEL (Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme Plus) Bhubaneswar.

Fig.2: An *Idital* from the house of Lakhami Sabar in Puttasing, Rayagada (Odisha). She is the last living Shaman *(Kudanboi)* in Puttasing village. (Photograph: Somen Rath 2018)

Commodification Of Tribal Art

In an increasingly interconnected world, the continuous flow of people, ideas, and technology has significantly impacted tribal art forms. As time progresses, noticeable changes have occurred in the art created by tribal societies, leading to concerns about authenticity in the contemporary period. Commodification is a process by which things come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value in the context of trade, thereby becoming goods and services; the exchange value of things is stated in terms of market prices (Cohen 1988). The packaging of cultural activities and artefacts for the market has been around for a while. It is pertinent to consider whether the commodification of artwork undermines its authentic traditional essence. The concept of traditional art has become blurred and subject to debate as different perspectives emerge regarding its definition and authenticity. Some argue that traditional art should remain unchanged over time, while others contend that modern forms, commercialised and marketed to a global consumer base, can also hold authenticity. Can authenticity be sustained over a long period? Cohen (1988) argued that authenticity has no objective quality as it is socially constructed and therefore negotiable.

Numerous agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, have actively participated in the promotion of India's tribal art forms. Their efforts focus on providing artists with better livelihood opportunities while ensuring

the preservation of traditional knowledge embedded within tribal paintings. While some tribal communities have made progress and can integrate with non-tribal communities, others still rely on assistance, waiting for support from administrative and political centres.To meet the market demand for aesthetically appealing artwork, workshops and training programs are being organised to impart the skills of tribal art to community members who are interested in learning as a hobby or a source of income. These initiatives aim to empower the community, improve livelihoods, and facilitate sustainable management of natural resources through communal engagement. They also focus on effectively marketing these products, ensuring that the artists or creators receive recognition and fair compensation to support themselves and their families.

They are considering the global demand for tribal artworks, even as souvenirs for tourists; a foundation-building approach has been adopted to merge technological innovations with indigenous knowledge. This approach aims to foster a pro-tribal environment that encourages the art form's development while preserving its authenticity.In Odisha, the "Idital Federation of LanjiaSaoras" has emerged, employing numerous unemployed youths by training them in Saora art. The federation has secured orders from major online platforms like Amazon and Flipkart, enabling these artisans to showcase and sell artwork. Moreover, government organisations such as OPELIP Plus (Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme), OTELP Plus (Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme), and TDCC (Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation) are actively involved in the production of various Saora art forms, including silk canvases, framed photos, clothes and ceramic vessels, among others (fig 3&4). OPELIP, in particular, is dedicated to improving living conditions and reducing poverty among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and other impoverished communities in Odisha. Their efforts align to enhance the livelihoods of these communities and empower them economically (Rath, 2019).The Odisha government facilitates skill training programs and offers dedicated platforms for creating*idital,* contributing to the socio-economic prospects of the Saora community (Jena & Prasad 2022). Additionally, initiatives such as the SCSTRTI (Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes Research and Training Institute) Bhubaneshwar and micro projects provide novel opportunities for the younger generation. The motivation behind opting for this profession among the LanjiaSaoras youth lies primarily in financial gain rather than preserving their traditional heritage, considering the significant demand for *iditals*. Scarcely, any idital painters remain unemployed within these villages, and the artists are also commissioned by state authorities to embellish urban walls with their artistry (fig 5). The state's interest in tribal art forms is a welcome step towards preserving "dying arts" and protecting the cultural heritage of the LanjiaSaoras, which are classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

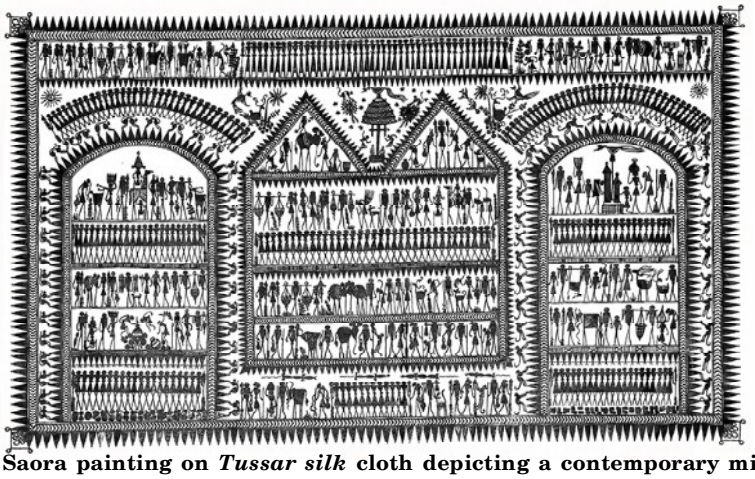

Fig 3. A Saora painting on *Tussar silk* cloth depicting a contemporary mixture of traditional Saora pantheon (without any particular religious ritual theme) is being sold at a handicraft fair (Bhubaneswar, Odisha).

Fig 4: Modern Saora painting on glass, sold by Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation of Odisha Limited (Bhubaneswar, Odisha). Photograph: Somen Rath.

Fig 5: *Idital* or a Saora Wall Painting photographed in Bhubaneswar (Odisha) as a part of city beautification.

With the increased commodification of the Saora art, it is crucial to secure the intellectual property rights of the art for its rightful owners. In 2019, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry received a proposal to secure a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Saora wall paintings, supported by the Odisha ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department and the Ministry of Textiles. This initiative aims to promote wall paintings at national and international levels, provide recognition and royalties to the artisans, and ensure the preservation of this unique art form. In safeguarding and preserving Saora paintings, it is imperative to acknowledge that their significance extends beyond their aesthetic value. These artworks, which embellish surfaces such as walls, frames, clothing, and objects, profoundly represent the Saora people's life cycle and cultural traditions.

Concluding Remarks

Art plays a significant role in studying anthropology, reflecting and guiding our understanding of human cultures. It is a human creation that embodies intentionality, imagination, creativity, and skill, although its definitions vary across cultures and historical contexts. The intentional nature of art highlights its potential as a cultural artefact, conveying meanings, values, and symbolic expressions.Alfred Gell's theory of art and agency has made notable contributions to the anthropology of art. However, his theory is not free from criticism. Layton (2003) contended that Gell's stance, which downplayed the significance of cultural convention in influencing the interpretation or 'understanding' of artistic artefacts, needed to be revised. Heoutlined two fundamental stages in Gell's theory of agency in art: one about the agency residing in individual artistic objects and the other considering the artist's oeuvre as a reflection of social identity (2003). Consequently, it becomes evident that artistic objects influence the minds of their recipients. An artwork maintains its prominent position as long as there exists a recipient, be it through its physical form, memories associated with it, or its representation within a network of agency. Notably, Gell acknowledges that art retains its agency through its relevance to the recipient. Layton further emphasises that agency emerges from an artwork's positionwithin a network of social relationships, and its isomorphy in both the internal and external aspects of the artwork. Furthermore, art does not merely symbolise social status; it constitutes an integral part of the larger corpus of cultural expressions. Layton also highlights the significance of sense and reference in art, as its potency lies in its ability to influence minds. Saora art, in particular, preserves its agency when there is a recipient. Although the recipient may have a limited understanding of its ritualistic aspects, they can still appreciate its aesthetic qualities, thereby honouring the artists and reflecting reverence towards the art form.

Art is fundamental in establishing cultural identity, embodying the deep-rooted beliefs and values that shape a culture. The Saora wall paintings

exemplify their close association with rituals. They serve as expressions of the Saora people's literature and philosophy. Studying art objects within their cultural context is essential, as the surrounding environment often holds significant importance and contributes to their overall meaning.With the advent of developmental interventions,traditional modes of subsistence have been impacted. The influence of emerging technologies and global markets has changed traditional occupations.The academic community must demonstrate a conscientious effort to preserve and sustain invaluable cultural traditions and art forms while ensuring the voices of the creators are not silenced. Conservation endeavours must encompass the physical and cultural ecology of ethnic tribal communities.Rather than imposing, there should be encouragement for tribal communities to embrace and nurture their ethnic heritage and skills, respecting their autonomy in making such choices. The significance of preserving traditions and ancient knowledge should be acknowledged even in the face of changes in religious beliefs without questioning the sincerity behind such shifts. It is vital to effectively protect tribal people and their cultures against external threats by recognising their traditional rights over land, water, and forests. This approach ensures the safeguarding of their rich heritage and way of life.Ensuring progress without compromising communities' rich culture and traditions is essential.

It is essential to recognise that when Saora art is produced solely for commodification, it loses its ritual agency. In such cases, tourists or consumers may be attracted to the aesthetics of the art without understanding the underlying intentions and symbolism embedded within the icons depicted. Consequently, the original intention of the creators becomes nullified or diminished. It would be unjust to solely focus on the art object while disregarding the creators' intentions and cultural significance. Artistic production should not be viewed merely as applied aesthetics but rather as an activity deeply rooted in an art world encompassing a complex network of social relationships. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge and honour the multifaceted human connections that have contributed to the creation of Saora art. By doing so, we can ensure that the cultural integrity and richness of Saora paintings are preserved and celebrated.

We askquestions regarding the responsibility of the academic community. Should their obligation lie with the administrative and sponsoring entities or with the people who have been the subjects of numerous documentaries, theses, books, and journals, often without consideration for their genuine needs? The goal is not to advocate biased promotion of any particular art form but to emphasise the importance of accountability. Accountability ensures an authentic and comprehensive representation of communities with accumulated indigenous knowledge, which finds expression through art.By acknowledging the cultural value embedded in tribal art and providing an inclusive platform, we can foster a holistic representation that

respects and preserves the indigenous knowledge and artistic expressions of the tribal communities.

Dedication

This paper is collaboratively written as a tribute to the late Somen Rath, a dedicated PhD scholar from the Department of Anthropology. Somen passed away on 22 May 2022 after valiantly battling brain cancer during his research journey. His work was centred on the Saora tribe in Odisha, where he studied their vibrant art tradition using visual methodologies.

Notes

1 Elwin's publications: *Tribal myths of Orissa* (1949), *The Tribal Art of Middle India* (1951), *Tribal Myths of Orissa* (1954), *The Religion of Indian Tribes* (1955), and *The Art of North-East frontier of India* (1959) are major resources for the present study.

2 First-grade female shaman, the counterpart of Raudakumbaran.

3 It is a kind of death ritual performed after funeral rites (Guar) to commemorate and honour those who have died in that period.

4 Female counterpart of Guarkumbaran (who performs funerary rites on the occasion of Guar, Kajra, and Lajap.

5 A person who prescribes various uncommon material ingredients against sorcery, body infection, tendency to commit suicide, and perform magical rites to control the danger of man-eating tigers

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Pragya Sharma

LIFEWORLD OF WOMEN IN A PASTORAL NOMADIC COMMUNITY: A CASE OF THE RAIKA

Abstract

Raika are semi-nomadic pastoralists of Rajasthan. Each year Raika in collective camps called deras starts on migratory journeys of distance up to 1000 kms. This paper aims to investigate the lives of Raika women. Fieldwork was conducted over 15 days in two predominantly Raika villages, Raika Ki Dhani and Manpur Bakdi, located in the Pali Sirohi region. To study Rebari women during both their settled and migratory phases, one migratory group and 45 sedentary families were examined using an ethnographic research approach.

Keywords: *Raika, nomads, pastoralists,women,lifeworld*

Introduction

Pastoralists are the people who derive a large part of their income on subsistence from raising livestock in conditions where major part of the animal feed is natural forage and crop residue, rather than specifically cultivated and stored fodder or fenced pasture (Sanford 1981:3).Uncertain and variable rainfall, and a socio-political squeeze on common grazing land account for the need to migrate with the flock (Robbin 1998:112).

Pastoralism is differentially associated with nomadic existence. But pastoral groups in India have their permanent villages to which they return after completing their grazing expeditions. Some of them combine pastoralism with agriculture. In Rajasthan there are several non-pastoral nomads such as trading nomads (*Banjaras, Ghattiwala Jogis,* and *Gowarias*), artisan nomads (*Gaduliya Lohars and Sattias*), and types of nomads who live by providing entertainment to other communities or by offering certain supernatural services (such as *Nats, Kalbelias, Jogis*). They are now in different stages of sedentarization.

Pastoral nomadic communities in Rajasthan have a unique way of life, centered around livestock rearing and seasonal migration. These communities play a crucial role in the socio-economic fabric of the region, adapting to the

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harsh climatic conditions of Rajasthan. Some of the prominent pastoral nomadic communities in Rajasthan are *Raika* (*Rebari* or *Rabari*) ,*Gujjar*.Pastoral nomads play a crucial role in the ecosystem management of arid regions, maintaining the balance through their migratory practices. Their deep knowledge of animal husbandry and the local environment is invaluable for sustainable development in Rajasthan. Supporting and preserving the unique lifestyle and culture of these pastoral nomadic communities is essential for the ecological and cultural richness of Rajasthan.

Husserl defines the lifeworld as a place distinct from and different to the more systematic observation and considered reflection that characterizes science (1970:132). It refers to the everyday, lived experiences and social realities of individuals, encompassing personal relationships, cultural practices, and social contexts that shape and give meaning to their lives.

The present paper focus on exploring the status and lifeworld of *Raika* women during sedentary as well as migratory part of life.

Theoretical Framework

Analyzing the status of *Raika* women and exploring their lives within the pastoral nomadic community can be understood through the lens of feminist ethnography and cultural ecology.

Feminist ethnography is an approach within anthropology and sociology that seeks to understand and document the lives and experiences of women and other marginalized groups from their own perspectives. It emphasizes the importance of gender as a central category of analysis and is committed to social justice and the empowerment of those studied. This approach lay stress on the importance of understanding women's experiences, roles, and agency within their socio cultural context, focusing on how gender shapes their lifeworld. Moreover it involves immersive, participatory research methods to capture women's voices, narratives, and daily practices. Visweswaran discusses how feminist ethnography challenges traditional ethnographic practices by incorporating reflexivity, considering power dynamics between researcher and subject, and emphasizing the importance of women's voices and experiences. The subject of feminist ethnography is wide-ranging, but the flexibility of its definition is crucial for capturing the diverse experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups (1994:48).

Cultural Ecology is a theoretical framework that examines the relationship between human cultures and their environments. It focuses on how cultural practices and social structures adapt to environmental conditions and how these adaptations influence human behavior and societal development (Steward 2016 : 12).This approach provides a lens to explore the intricate relationship between the *Raika's* nomadic lifestyle and their environmental adaptations. It examines how ecological constraints and opportunities influence

social structures, economic activities, and cultural practices, with particular attention to gender dynamics. This perspective considers how *Raika* women navigate their roles in animal husbandry, resource management, and familial responsibilities within a pastoral economy.

By integrating these perspectives, the framework highlights the interplay between gender, culture, and ecology. It explores how *Raika* women's lifeworld is shaped by their contributions to the pastoral livelihood and the broader socio-environmental context. This approach allows for understanding of the complexities and resilience of *Raika* women, acknowledging their critical role in sustaining their community's way of life amidst ecological and socio-economic challenges.

Profile of Raika Community

The *Raikas* are the main pastoral group in western Rajasthan, also known as *Rebari* or *Dewasi*. The term *Raika* was originally reserved for those *Rebaris* who served as camel mounted messengers to the royal courts of Rajputs. Mainly spreading from western Rajasthan to the Kutch region of Gujrat, the *Raika* / *Rebari* hamlets survive in a harsh climatic zone. (Westphal-Hellbusch 1975:126). According to Sharma, Hukumat-Ri-Bahi or the court records have entries, which prove that the *Raikas* were the confidants of the kings. They were entrusted with the task of carrying confidential mail from one state to other(1970:166). Elson while discussing about descent of Raikas says, their descendants (i.e. the descendants of Shamal, the first Raika and his wife, the celestial nymph) are said to have lived in Haryana until about a thousand years ago. Need for additional grazing land forced the Rebaris to leave their original home and they wandered through Rajasthan, Sindh and Gujrat, before arriving in Kutch. It is therefore evident that Raikas migrated to Marwar and Kutch regions only under pressure for finding appropriate grazing lands for their herds(1979:23).

Raikas are engaged only in sheep, goat and camel breeding, but they have traditionally herded and taken care of the livestock of other castes as well. Although a few Raikas are specialized camel herders, the community as a whole identifies itself closely with this animal. They combine camel and sheep in their herds in varying proportions. In Bikaner, Jodhpur, Pali and Kota certain Raika hamlets are observed having several camel herds, but flocks of sheep also exist in these hamlets. As we move towards Bikaner, camel herds are larger whereas sheep herds are smaller. In Pali camel herds are smaller but sheep are reared in large number. In Marwar, although the herds do have a couple of camels, which are the beasts of burden, the Raika mainly specialize in sheep breeding and tending. Raikas of Jalore and Sirohi are predominantly sheep breeding communities (Srivastava 1997: 18). Kohler-Rollefson, mentions an exclusively camel oriented Raika community in Pali which not only had a collection of memorable statue depicting camel mounted

ancestors but also self-made clay camels with which local children played.(1995:56)

According to their myth of origin, the first Raika was created by Lord Shiva or Mahadev (the great god) for the specific purpose of looking after the first camel that Parvati, the *ardhangini* (wife) of Lord Shiva, created from clay. The Raikas are divided into two large endogamous groups, the Maru Raika and Godwar Raika. Traditionally, the Godwars are reputed to have bred only camels, whereas Maru group breeds sheep. At present, however, both groups keep sheep as well as camel, and less frequently other cattle (Srivastava 1997: 20).

In Rajasthan, Raikas typically live outside the main village in their own hamlets, known locally as dhanis. These dhanis are sometimes located a few kilometers from the main village. Many Raikas own small plots of land, primarily to maintain village ties rather than for economic purposes, although they often practice a form of 'take-a-chance' cultivation. Each year after the rains, hundreds and thousands of shepherds embark on migratory journeys in collective camps, traveling up to 1000 kilometers and lasting up to nine months. They camp in a new location almost every day, moving at least two villages away for each new campsite. The smooth coordination of such large groups is possible because individual shepherds delegate many decision-making responsibilities to the camp leader, the Nambardar, or to a 'council of elders,' while retaining control over the day-to-day management of their own flocks. They return home once a year around the festival of Holi.

As it so happened, the nomadic way of life turned Raikas and their women folk sturdy, strong and agile. This physical constitution of Raikas prompted feudal lords and royalities to patronize them as messengers and runners between feudal states. They performed this function to the great satisfaction of feudal administration because of their acquaintance and familiarity with various migratory routes. Since the Raikas could never have a settled place of living, they still continue to be a nomadic tribe, although their general standard of living has declined due to lack of patronage by erstwhile feudal lords and royalities.

Research Method

The study has two objectives: First one is to analyze the status of Raika women and the second is to explore lifeworld of Raika women. An exploratory research design and qualitative methods were employed for this study, using non-probability purposive sampling. Fieldwork was conducted over 15 days in two villages predominantly inhabited by Raikas, Raika Ki Dhani and Manpur Bakdi in the Pali Sirohi Belt. To examine the lives of Rebari women during both their sedentary and migratory phases, one migratory flock and 45 sedentary families, who consented to participate, were studied using

an ethnographic research approach.

Various tools were utilized for this study. A semi-structured interview schedule served as the primary tool, supplemented by interview guides, interviews with key informants, and observation to study the sedentary life and general pattern of life of Raika women. This schedule was further supported by quasi-participant observation and interviews to examine their migratory patterns. Group interactions and focused group interviews were also employed to some extent. One migratory group of Raikas was studied in-depth through quasi-participant observation. Overall, a leisurological approach was adopted for a deeper understanding of the various facets of their lives. Every effort was made to share the respondents' leisure and free time to uncover the truth of their lives and achieve the closest reconstruction of the reality of Raika women.

Analysis

The status of women in the Raika community is deeply intertwined with their roles within the family structure, and it varies significantly based on the position they hold at any given time.

'Woman as a Daughter'

Girls are rarely sent to school and are expected to help with pastoral and household tasks. However, after marriage, their status increases when they visit their parental home, often being treated with higher regard than their brothers' wives.

'Woman as a Wife'

Marriage begins with the *muklava* ceremony, often when the girl is around sixteen or seventeen. Initially, she is referred to as a *bindni* (bride) and is tasked with numerous household chores and caring for family members. She must endure any sarcastic remarks in silence and maintain *purdah* (veil) in the presence of all elders. A married woman's status improves once she bears a child, especially a son, but failing to conceive can lead to divorce or her husband taking another wife.

'Woman as a Mother-in-Law'

A woman's status peaks when her son marries and brings home a *bindni.* She gains authority over her son, his wife, and any grandchildren.

'Woman as a Widow'

Widowhood is the most challenging phase, significantly lowering her social status and subjecting her to immense suffering. Remarriage is rare, especially if she has children. If childless or with only one child, she might

return to her parents' home, where remarriage is possible.

Daily Tasks of Raika Women

Daughters-in-law are responsible for most domestic work, including fetching water, cooking, cleaning, grinding grains, washing clothes, sewing, and caring for children. Occasionally, they receive help from their husband's unmarried sisters or their mother-in-law.

Role in Economic Activities

Raika women are known for their strong bargaining skills, often keeping their families free of debt. Their dominant role in household economics is significant, especially since men frequently migrate for pastoral activities, leaving women to manage the household and interact with the community.

Identification and Ornaments

Raika women are identified by their distinct attire and ornaments. Skirt (*ghaghra*) is typically a dress with eighty pleats, armlet (*chura*) is worn on both lower and upper arms, head dress (*ati*) is a conical headpiece. Ornaments are often made from *gillette* (an alloy of brass and zinc) due to financial constraints, though silver is preferred. Key ornaments include**,** *gokdo* which is a set of four bracelets, *kataria* refers to bracelets worn above the elbow, *payal* is an ankle ornament with jingle bells, *hansli* is a necklace, *nath* is a gold nose ring, *mandalia* and *badia* are thick wrist rings, *mundri* are finger rings ,*kandhara* is a waist chain ,*kada* and *bichhia* are foot ornaments. Married women are distinguished by certain ornaments like *chuda-* ivory or plastic bangles, *atia-*a conical headpiece ,*bichhia-*rings for the feet, *hansli-* a mandatory necklace.

Dress of Raika Women

Raika women prefer colorful garments, with the lower half covered by a long skirt (*ghaghra)* and the upper body by *kurti, kanchli,* and *odhni*. These are often decorated with beads and golden frills (*gota*). Widows wear maroon and black garments, while younger women occasionally wear sarees.

Dress of the Bride

During marriage, a bride wears colorful clothing provided by the groom's family, avoiding white and black. The bride's dress is adorned with golden frills, and she wears a mod, a decorative cardboard piece, on her head.

Leisure Time of Raika Women

Understanding the leisure time of Raika women is crucial to gaining a

comprehensive insight into their lifeworld. Leisure activities provide a window into their cultural practices, social interactions, and personal well-being. In the context of the *Raika* community, a pastoral nomadic group, leisure time is intertwined with their daily responsibilities and seasonal migration. By examining how *Raika* women spend their leisure time, we can better understand their social roles, coping mechanisms, and the cultural significance of their traditions. This exploration also highlights the resilience and adaptability of these women in balancing their demanding lifestyles with moments of rest and recreation.

Leisure Hours Available to Girls

55 girls below seventeen years of age have been included in this category. They were interviewed and their responses were recorded for this study.

Table No. 1:Leisure Hours Available to Raika Girls

S. No.	Leisure hours per day	Extent of Participation N=55	
		Frequency (f)	%
1.	<2	3	5.45
2.	2-3	22	40.00
3.	>3	30	54.55
	Total	**55**	**100.00**

Table No.1 shows that almost all *Raika* girls have more than two hours of leisure time. And, if we look to the numbers who have more than three hours of leisure, it compares well with boys and even exceeds their number. One of the main reasons for girls having more leisure time than boys is that in Raika community is they do not go to school. They do not also go on migration. They generally stay home and help elderly women in household chores, kitchen work and cattle care.

Table No. 2 : Priority of Leisure and Recreational Activities Amongst Raika Girls

Priority	Name of Activity	Extent of Participation N=55	
		Frequency (f)	%
1.	Group Oriented	13	23.64
2.	Quietistic	9	16.36
3.	Family Oriented	8	14.55
4.	Artistic and Cultural	7	12.73
5.	Hobby Oriented	7	12.73
6.	Games and Sports	6	10.90
7.	T.V. Viewing	5	9.09
	Total	**55**	**100.00**

Table No.2 shows that *Raika* girls prefer to indulge in group-oriented activities during their leisure time. They form homogeneous groups for past time activities. Quietistic activities and family oriented voluntary work are their second and third priorities respectively.

Group-oriented activities include chating, meeting friends, moving with friends, attending social gatherings like festivals and socio-cultural occasions like birth and marriage. They give second priority to quietistic activities, relaxing and walking. Among the family-oriented activities the most popular are talking and gossiping with the members of family keeping and playing with children, taking care of the old, helping mother and *bhabhi* in household chores, taking care of kids and so on.Another activity, which accounts for the participation of 12.7% *Raika* girls is artistic and cultural, which includes wide range of activities such as visiting and participating in the *melas*, enjoying fun, merrymaking and singing Rajasthani folksongs along with other women of the house.Leisure time activity which accounts for the participation of about 12.7% girl respondents is hobby oriented. Of this past time, they are fond of stitching their traditional coloured dress (*kurti*, *kanchli*, *odhni*, *ghagra*). Some are interested in making garlands of glass beads, flowers etc.They are also very fond of *char chunda* or *jhula khana* (to swing). Activities under the category of games and sports are reported by 10.9% of Raika girls. They are very fond of playing imitation games of wedding dolls. Some girls form bride's side and others the bridegroom's side. Bridegroom's side girls decorate a doll as a bridegroom and go to bride's house in procession. Girls of bride's side decorate the doll as a bride. Then they perform marriage rituals, imitating them to the extent they know, and thus play it as a game. Sometimes, small boys and girls become bride and bridegroom (*beend and beendni*) taking seven nuptial rounds, just to initiate a real marriage in a game.The category of audio-visual activities received the minimum favour from girl respondents, as only 9.1% reported this activity as their leisure past time. No girl was reported listening to radio, they only watch T.V., but that too rarely because, has been said earlier, only two T.V. sets are available in the whole *dhani,* and they are seldom allowed to go to owner's house to see it.

Young girls of 6-7 years of age assist their mothers in the household chores like cooking, grinding grains, giving fodder to lambs and so on and at other time they are free to idle away their time. Boys and girls play together till the age of 4-5 years, after which girls play in the company of girls only. They are married at an early age, but *muklawa* takes place at the age of 14-17 years. Till that time, a girl gets informal training in cooking, cattle rearing and other household chores. They are also taught lessons in submissiveness, which is greatly desired on the part of girls among *Raikas.*

Patterns of Leisure among Women

Daily work schedule of Raika women is very hectic. Their whole day just passes in fulfilling the demands of home and hearths. Moreover, they

have to look after the cattle and extend help to their male members in agriculture in case they possess any land. Thus, one is always curious to know whether they at all get any leisure time and if so, to what use or utility such hours are put to. For understanding leisure pattern of Raika women, 120 women above 18 years of age were interviewed and observed.

Table No.3 :Leisure Hours Available to Raika Women

S. No.	Leisure hours per day	Extent of Participation N=120	
		Frequency (f)	%
1.	<2	40	33.30
2.	2-3	60	50.00
3.	>3	20	16.70
	Total	**120**	**100.00**

Table No.3 shows, one third of the respondents have less than two hours or upto two hours of leisure everyday. Half of them get 2 to 3 hours of leisure time and less than 17% enjoy larger leisure time i.e. more than three hours. This last group mainly consists of older women. Thus, most of the younger women have a tight and hectic schedule with little time for leisure and relaxation.

Table No.4 : Priority of Leisure and Recreational Activities Among Raika Women

Priority	Activities	Extent of Participation N=120	
		Frequency (f)	%
1	Group Oriented	49	40.84
2	Family Oriented	21	17.51
3	Quietistic	16	13.33
4	Artistic and Cultural	11	9.16
5	Economic and Self Employing	10	8.33
6	Religious	9	7.51
7	T.V. Viewing	2	1.66
8	Deviant	2	1.66
	Total	**120**	**100.00**

Three most common means of recreation which *Raika* women enjoy and prefer to indulge in during their leisure in order of priority are group oriented activities then family oriented activities and the last quietistic activities. Among the group-oriented activities, the most popular are gossiping, meeting neighbours, a visit to relatives, attending social calls and socio-cultural occasions like birth, marriage and so on. Some other group oriented activities that *Raika* women enjoy are social gatherings sitting together in the afternoon and singing of group songs together. *Raika* as we know is a nomadic tribe, and the returning of *dang* to village is itself an occasion for them and they celebrate it together by singing songs. Second priority is given to family oriented

activities, which forms 17.5% of their leisure time engagement. It includes spending time with children, taking care of the old, keeping the kids, sitting with family members (specially with women of the household), telling tales to kids, singing songs for kids, gossip with family members, teaching children what is good and leaving them what is bad. Another activity, which provides recreation to 13.3% of respondents falls under quietistic category, which includes day sleeping staying idle at home, relaxing for sometime after the hectic schedule, just doing nothing except thinking about oneself. Artistic and Cultural activities provide recreation to 9.2% of respondents. This group includes the activities, which can be included in aesthetic. The concept of doing things, which have both beauty and utility is the keynote of folk aesthetics. It can be seen in the decoration of their dwellings. Their sensitivity to art and beauty is particularly evident in the way they decorate their homes with mandna, adorning the façade, walls, and floors. Their designs typically feature simple motifs such as flowers, animals, and birds. Occasionally, these motifs are combined to create intricate and fantastical designs. Sometimes, all designs are combined together and some fantastic designs are created. They also decorate walls with Goddess *Durga* during *Navratri,* and with *Sheetla Mata,* the protecting Goddess of children, on *Shetlaashthmi* day. *Paglia*, footprints design is also sometimes made on floor. According, to their tradition, the courtyard of a dwelling must never be left without a floor decoration after it has been cleaned and coated with cow dung. Another, leisure time activity falling under this category is decoration of hands and feet with *mehandi* (*henna*). It is regarded as symbolic of good luck for married women. A sticky paste is created by mixing a small amount of water with *henna* leaf powder and is carefully applied using a matchstick. This leisurely process results in delightful patterns that, once dried, leave red designs imprinted on the skin. The designs typically feature leaves, flowers, and similar motifs. The other leisure time activity, which accounts for the participation of 8.3% of respondents, is economic and self-employing. This category includes, making cow dung cakes and drawing *ghee* out of curds. *Raika* women also utilize their spare time in making p*apad, rabodi kari* (a dish. prepared by cooking *Bajra* or maize in buttermilk), preparing pickles, and cleaning the house with cow dung. Next came the activities, which can be included under the category of religious activities. It accounts for the participation of 7.5% of these women. Remembering *mat-pita, gurudev* (mother, father and the teacher), doing mental exercise for remembering God 'the Almighty' (*mala pherna*) singing *bhajans* and songs of *Pabuji, Ramdeoji* and attending singing sessions of *Pabuji's* episodes, which are generally held at night. It is quite surprising to note, that no Raika women in the area of study was observed visiting temples which is a frequent leisure time activity among women (specially old age women) of other castes.Two more leisure activities, which provide recreation to about 1.7% of respondents each are T.V. and deviant activities. The reasons behind less percentage of respondents watching T.V. is, the non-availability of sufficient number of T.V. sets in the village. Moreover

they can't see T.V. along with male members of the household or else in their presence they have to see it in veil, which is quite inconvenient for them. Deviant activities includes, taking *bidi & gutka*. These ill habits are found mainly among old women.

Conclusion

In the Raika community, patriarchal living is the prevailing family structure. Sons inherit their father's name, making the community both patronymic and patrilineal. However, what's remarkable is the dominant role of women within this social setup. Raika men often need to ask their wives for pocket money, and it's the women who decide whether men should share information with others through gestures or words. This dynamic can be attributed to the nomadic lifestyle of Raika men, who frequently migrate, leaving women in the village to manage household responsibilities and interact with various people.

Despite the conservative nature of Raika families, women serve as spokesperson for the entire community. Interestingly, there's a saying in village communities: "*siyani Rebarin janme bhola Rebari, aur bholi Baniyani janme siyana Baniya.*" This proverb suggests that intelligent and cunning Rebari women give birth to simple *Rebari* men, while straightforward *Baniya* women give birth to intelligent and shrewd businessmen.

Although *Raika* women typically adhere to *purdah* (veiling) practices and are primarily housewives, they step up to protect their families and community from external threats. Despite lacking formal education and not participating in voting during political elections, they collectively face challenges alongside their male counterparts. *Raika* women play essential roles within their community, even though they face restrictions in other aspects of life.

In communities where men frequently move due to herding activities, women naturally take on significant roles in family and social management. During men's absence, women supervise families consisting of elderly members, children, and nursing mothers. They protect their families from life's uncertainties and handle interactions with other families and social groups. Additionally, women who accompany male relatives on journeys to find fodder for herds play crucial roles in managing temporary camps. They collect fuel, cook, count cattle, settle disputes, and draw on their knowledge to interact with settled communities. Overall, *Raika* women exhibit a strong presence, balancing traditional pastoralism, social networks, and cultural practices while preserving ancestral wisdom in the face of modern challenges.

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Mohammad Swalehin

THE POWER STRUCTURE AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF TRANSGENDER FROM BOURDIEU'S PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The transgender community experience difficulties in society where heterosexuality is a norm and homosexuality is regarded as deviant. The transgender in India have their distinct power structure which is culturally defined. Foucault perceives power as 'ubiquitous' and outside agency and structure, while Bourdieu considers power as culturally and symbolically crafted, which may be re-legitimised in the course of the interplay of agency and structure. The resultant may be through what he calls 'habitus' or socialised norms that guides behaviour and thinking. The political and cultural power is usually centrally concentrated among transgender in India. The Gurus enjoy the culturally and symbolically created power among transgender. This paper tries to relate the Bourdieu's theoretical implication of cultural habitus and field and the concept of Gurus among transgender, a cultural and political connotation, and their identity in India. The objectives of this paper are: (a) to understand the problems faced by the transgender community, (b) to analyze the socio-cultural identity of transgender, and (c) to relate the Bourdieu's theoretical implication of cultural habitus and field and power structure of transgender community.

Keywords: *transgender, cultural identity, power structure, sexual violence, bullying.*

Introduction

The transgender face lots of difficulties growing up in a society where heterosexuality is frequently presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as deviant. The People around the world face violence and inequality and sometimes torture, even execution. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral aspects of our selves and should never lead to discrimination or abuse. It is well documented in exposing abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity worldwide, including torture, killing and executions, arrests under unjust laws, unequal treatment, censorship, medical abuses, discrimination in health and jobs and housing, domestic violence, abuses against children, and denial of family rights and recognition. There is need to advocate for laws and policies that will protect everyone's

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dignity.

Transgender term coined in the U.S. is used to include people whose lifestyles appear to conflict with the gender norms of society. In the use of the broad term, a gender person crosses the conventional boundaries of gender; in clothing; in presenting themselves; even as far as multiple surgical procedures to be fully bodily designed in their preferred gender role. Transgender is a term used to describe individuals who exhibit gender-nonconforming identities and behavior, or in other words, those who transcend typical gender paradigms (Ryan and Futterman1997). This broad category of people includes transsexual, cross dressers and gender benders/blenders. According to World Health Organization (WHO), Transgender is a term use for people whose identity and expression does not conform to the norms and expectations traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth; it includes people who are transsexual, transgender, or otherwise considered gender non-conforming. Transgender people may self-identified as transgender, female, male, trans-women or trans-men, transsexual, or, by a variety of indigenous term used in specific culture, such as *Hijra* (India), *Kathoey* (Thailand), *Waria* (Indonesia), or one of many other transgender identities. They may express their gender in a variety of masculine, feminine and or androgynous ways. In India there is wide range of transgender related identities which include the *Hijra, Kothi, Arvaniand, Thirunangai, Jogtas/Jogappas* and *Shiva Shakti* etc.

The Queer is a political and theoretical term and a reclamation of the word used as an insult. Politically it was associated with groups such as Queer Nation and is used as umbrella term to apply to individuals often associated with the categories lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). It generally indicates opposition to identity-based categories and signals a strong antipathy for "heteronormativity" (roughly: the taken-for-granted social and sexual arrangements in a heterosexual-centered world-view). *Queer Theory* roughly applies to theoretical work, typically informed by Foucault and Derrida that aims to study and "deconstruct" heteronormative ideology. The term *genderqueer* draws on the political force of *queer*. It is used as a term of self-identification by individuals who do not subscribe to the traditional binary division between male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine. An individual who self-identifies may claim both sexes and genders, neither, or a complex blend of them (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-trans/).

The transgender in India have their distinct power structure which is culturally defined. Foucault perceives power as 'ubiquitous' and outside agency and structure, while Bourdieu considers power as culturally and symbolically crafted, which may be re-legitimised in the course of the interplay of agency and structure. The resultant may be through what he calls 'habitus' or socialised norms that guides behaviour and thinking. The political and cultural power is usually centrally concentrated among transgender in India. The *Gurus* enjoy the culturally and symbolically created power among transgender. This paper

tries to relate the Bourdieu's theoretical implication of cultural habitus and field and the concept of *Gurus* among transgender, a cultural and political connotation, and their identity in India.

The patriarchal culture in India forbids the individual to deviate from gender conformity. They supposed to behave in a certain gender role and deviation may lead to punishment. The transgender often take refugee under the *Gurus* of transgender. The power of *Gurus* is not negotiable and questionable. The absolute power of *Gurus* may be relate to the cultural capital and field.

The study is aimed to define and describe the socio-political structure of transgender. They represent a community which needs to be framed together for their social and cultural activities. The role of *Gurus* of transgender is important in defining the social solidarity among transgender community. The social solidarity among them is politically designed to achieve social and cultural goals. The social power of *Gurus* among transgender community is authoritative to take decision on behalf of them. The study aims to analyse the concept of social power of *Gurus* of transgender from Bourdieu's Perspective. While Foucault sees power as 'ubiquitous' and beyond agency or structure, Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure. The main way this happens is through what he calls 'habitus' or socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005: 316)

Habitus is created through a social, rather than individual processes leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but that also shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. Habitus 'is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period' (Navarro 2006).

Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (Bourdieu 1984: 170). In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence and without any conscious concentration'.

Bourdieu's theory of 'fields', includes various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital (Gaventa 2003: 6). A field is a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural, etc. (Navarro 2006). People often

experience power differently depending which field they are in at a given moment (Gaventa 2003: 6), so context and environment are key influences on habitus.

'Bourdieu (1980) accounts for the tensions and contradictions that arise when people encounter and are challenged by different contexts. His theory can be used to explain how people can resist power and domination in one field and express complicity in another' (Moncrieffe 2006).

Methods and Objectives of the Study

The study revolves around the problem and issues of transgender. The study aims an attempt to investigate the socio-economic condition and problem of socio-cultural identity of transgender. The study is guided by three objectives as follows. (a) to study the problems faced by the transgender community, (b) to analyze the socio-cultural identity of transgender, and (c) to relate the Bourdieu's theoretical implication of cultural habitus and field and power structure of transgender community.

It is an ethnographic study. The analysis of empirical research is based on the designing of case study. The data is collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Analysis and Interpretation

The participant name is Chavanni Mai QadriKinnar (Pseudo name). She is 35 year of age. She is a Muslim by religion. She lives along with other transgender. She schooled up to VII standard in nearby school. She belongs to a family living in a nearby village in Aligarh. Her father was a skilled labour and works in a lock factory. Her mother is a home maker. She has two younger brothers and three elder sisters. Her grandfather was a renowned skilled labour in lock factory in Aligarh. She has three uncles and eight cousins. They all live together in ajoint family in Aligarh.

She was born as a male child at home. She was happily living in the family. Everyone loved her till the age of 10 years.

The problem unfolds when she felt comfortable to be with girls than boys. Her body did not sense to be a boy. She started loving girlish stuffs. She was behaving like a girl. She wanted to groom and dress up like girl. She felt to be a girl inside. She wrongly dwelt in boy's physical body. Apparently, she looked like a boy and inside felt and behaved like a girl.

She started behaving according to her sexual orientation which was not acceptable to her family. She has been beaten and threatened by the family members to behave boyishly.

She was bullied at home and neighbourhood. She was not allowed to

visit any of her relatives. The family members felt shame to accompany her in any of the family ceremonies. She was not allowed going outside. She was having bruised all over her neck and back. Her fellow students at school started bullying and make fun of her. She was mocked and thrashed many times at school. She has been physically and psychologically traumatised at school, neighbourhood and family. Once she felt to commit suicide but didn't dare to do so. Then people started taunted her to accommodate in her own grouping of transgender. She felt to be different and difficult to adjust in cis-gender category. She has been harassed at home, among peers, neighbourhood and in kinship. She has psychological dilemma to behave like boy or girl.

Her mother taunts her all the time. She felt like worthless. She developed acute psychological problems. She couldn't concentrate on any work. She was having hallucination. She screamed, cried out loud to ease her physical and psychological agony. She didn't find console. Many times she tried to run away from her home. She accepted her destiny and realise that she is a transgender.

She often hesitant to use male toilets in public, as toilets in India are limited to male and female and has no provision for third gender. She faces the problem of cultural identity and existence to accommodate in binary gender grouping.

She responded that there are many social, cultural, political, physical and psychological problems of transgender. The transgender face many problems like homelessness, harassment of transgender Students in Schools, psychological distress, dropping out of school earlier, leaving home and family, unable to find regular jobs, have fewer options than others, being ignored in the community and isolated, lack of family and social support, and migrate to other countries for seeking safer livelihood and acceptance, attempt suicide.

The transgender is being considered as the third gender. They have many social-cultural, economic, political problems in their life.

Once she met the *Guru* of transgender at the wedding ceremony in her neighbourhood. Everyone was talking about her in front of the transgender community. The *Guru* realised the pain she was going through. Since Gender isn't defined biologically but culturally.

On the next day, the *Guru* with other transgender persons came at her home to meet the family. They had discussion about her gender identity and finally her family decided not to give away her daughter to them.

She said, "I was a bit nervous and frightened to come in front of the Guru and other transgender persons. The Guru came close to me and put her hands on my head. When I saw the Guru and other fellows close to me I started getting shiver. However they started lovingly talking to me. They showed care and pamper. I felt melt down and pacified with their behaviour. I

was feeling so comfortable and relaxed. Once at that moment I wanted to be a part of their community. However my family rejected their proposal. The behaviour of my family remains same. They wanted me to behave like a boy. I was unable to express my sexual orientation to them. I was very comfortable to be a girl. Since I used to have the feeling of girl and wanted to remain same. I was unable to settle down with my family. Finally, I decided to flee away from my family and settle down with transgender community. The Guru and transgender community welcome me at their place. They were so cordial to me. They offer me some community work at their place. Everyone has their defined duties. They all care and concern about everyone. I felt like liberate and emancipated from the clutches of dual-gender identity. Here with them I can explore my sexual orientation and behave accordingly".

She was compelled to take refuge under the *Guru* of transgender, where she was welcomed and charmed. She gradually started accommodating herself in transgender grouping. Finally she felt console and pacified with transgender community.

It is there in the minds of the people to define Gender. There is a typical stereotype and mind-set of the people to treat anyone based on their gender identity. People don't culturally accept anyone beyond the male-female notion of gender.

She spent more than 30 years with them. She was managed to develop her own identity among them. She was the favourite of *Guru* and senior among them. Soon after the death of the *Guru*, she has been nominated by the council of the elders of transgender community as their *Guru*. She has become the *Guru* of transgender community.

The *Guru* is the highest elected and nominated representative of transgender persons in the community. *Guru* enjoys political, social and cultural power. She regulates the lives of transgender and gives them the protection and refugee. She looks after the issues and problems of transgender under his control living in definite locality. The highest authority of all transgender in Aligarh is the *Guru* named Haji Shamshad. She lives in Shahjamal, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.

The social structure of transgender community may be conceived from the authority of *Gurus.* Chavanni Mai, the *Guru,* enjoys the socio-cultural, political and economic privileges among the transgender community in general and society in particular. Chavanni Mai, the *Guru* of transgender, holds the political and social power among transgender persons. She started living in *Dargah,* to control and regulate the lives of transgender persons. In addition to it she also enjoys the position at *Dargah.*

She enjoys the social power and privileges due to her control over the *Dargah.* People from different faiths get the blessing from her. The people

across the faith have this belief that transgender blessings and curse have divine power and it affects the lives of the people. Chavanni Mai being herself as the regulator of *Dargah* has cumulative impact on people's belief that her blessings matters a lot for them. In seeking the blessings for their children, people offer some money to her. She feels proud to take refuge in *Dargah* and enjoys the authority. She responded that transgender s don't have economic problem as they have the blessing from God to bless or curse the people on some social and cultural events. She said that in weddings, births and other functions important for them to bless people and earn money from them, their presence on such social and cultural events belief to be auspicious. She replied that we are blessed one and don't have any economic problems.

The researcher found that her response to this indicator is subjective to her orientation, as she enjoys socio-political power and side lined the real issues of social, economic and political problems of transgender in general.

The cultural capital of transgender *Gurus* maybe conceived in Bourdieu's theory of 'fields'. The agency and structure of power of *Gurus* reflect social and institutional arenas in which they express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital among transgender. The notion of field is validated in relating the power acquired by *Gurus* of transgender through the network, structure or set of relationships reflected culturally among them.The *Gurus* often experience political power differently depending on which field they are living.

'Bourdieu (1980) accounts for the tensions and contradictions that arise when people encounter and are challenged by different contexts. His theory can be used to explain how people can resist power and domination in one field and express complicity in another' (Moncrieffe 2006).

According to her the transgender is a unique identity which possesses the divine power of blessing and cursing people. On the basis of which, they regulate their economic and political lives. Their presence on socio-cultural events like births and marriages is considered as auspicious. They bless the newlywed couples and infants at births in exchange of money. This way they regulate their socio-cultural and economic lives. She said there is no poverty among transgender community. They can earn money and enjoy life anywhere at length and breadth of this country. It was her interpretation of this social reality while responding to the questions under study. She was conditioned with the authority that he enjoys as a *Guru.* She was over-empowered regarding his thought of divine power of blessing and cursing people.

Bourdieu's advocacy of tensions and contradictions that arise when people encounter and are challenged by different contexts reflects in the retention of power of *Gurus* under study. The *Guru's* own interpretation of the social reality related to the problems of transgender is evident in his discourse. Chavanni Mai, the *Guru* of transgender, undermined their problems and

developed the narrative of divine power of transgender. This interpretation initiates a tension and contradiction in the practical live of the transgender.

Conclusion

The transgender is the blurred concept in the imaginations of the people. The people have stereotype mind-set about the transgender. The transgender community more or less become the centre of amusement for the people. The people mocked and called them by different amusing words and titles like *Hijra and ChhakkaHijra and Chhakka.* These become the abusing words in everyday life of transgender. The children mock and insult them during many occasions. The transgender community becomes the entertainment for the people. In wedding celebrations, the transgender community is often being called for dancing and singing.They are being mocked and sexually assaulted in many occasions during their performance at different ceremonies.

The prejudice attitude of people never emotionally or rationally compels them to think about this community. They struggled a lot for their rights to have dignified life.

In a significant judgement, the Supreme Court on 06, September, 2018 ruled that consensual adult gay sex is not a crime. The gratification of instinctual sexual derive is imperative for normal functioning of humans. Human Sexual orientation is natural and people have no control over it. The judgement, by Constitution bench of Supreme Court, has scrapped the British-era Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which deemed that gay sex is a punishable offence. Now, it is no longer an offence under section 377 to engage in consensual gay sex in private.

The decriminalization of part of Section 377 of IPC may satisfy their instinctual biological gratification but their problems and issues remain unaddressed. The research will explore the implications and social impact of decriminalization of consensual sex in their life.

It is clear that transgender individuals who basically have different sexual orientation, face discrimination, exclusion from the society, thus quite often, meet with obstacles to satisfy their needs. This exclusion and ostracism could vary from the simplest personal relations to the most general social ignorance, exclusion, ostracism, working simultaneously together, and can even violate the rights of life.

The study tried to unfold the complexities of transgender lives in their community. The centrality of the study focuses on the cultural power of Guru of transgender community. It is as attempt to delineate the construction of power of Guru among them and define them from Bourdieu's perspective.

Bourdieu's theory can be used to explain how people can resist power and domination in one field and express complicity in another. The agency and

structure of power of *Gurus* reflect social and institutional ground. This can be reflected in the discourse under study to reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital among transgender.Transgender live their life in difficult conditions and face stigma in their day to day life. Most of the transgender are poor and illiterate. The socio-cultural acceptance of transgender is still a problem. However the *Gurus's* interpretation of their lives is a contradiction and develops a narrative of tension among them. This narrative of contradiction and tension is challenged by many practical arenas which may reflect in the retention of power of *Gurus*.

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ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL CORRELATES AMONG RAI COMMUNITY: A STUDY FROM SIKKIM

Abstract

Sikkim, a Himalayan state situated in the Northeastern part of India has a unique blend of ethnicity and different ancestral origins that have shaped a quintessential Sikkimese culture that circumscribes all the realms of life. This study examines the association between ethnic identity and well-being among the Rai community with different ancestral origins (Indian, Bhutan, and Nepal) residing in Sikkim which is one of the most ancient Indigenous ethnolinguistic groups and the same has been compared in terms of different socio-demographic variables including age and monthly income. The study consists of 120 participants from the Rai community exclusively residing in Sikkim following the purposive sampling method. The study followed a correlational and comparative research design and used the Ethnic Identity Scale, and PERMA for measuring well-being. Results revealed no correlation between ethnic identity and well-being. However, ancestral origin significantly impacted well-being, with those from Bhutan exhibiting higher well-being than those from India or Nepal. Other socio-demographic factors showed no significant influence. The study can uplift minority groups' socio-political status and preserve their culture and knowledge through government policies.

Keywords: *Rai community, ethnic identity, subjective well-being, Sikkim*

Situated between Nepal and Bhutan, Sikkim is a small and beautiful state of India, which is renowned for its breathtaking scenery, abundant biological diversity demonstrated by a variety of eco-climatic conditions, and a broad range of elevations (Rawat & Tambe 2011: 1-12). Sikkim, a state in the Himalayas, is renowned for its multiethnic and multicultural character. The cultural complex of the Sikkim Himalayan region is a composite of several cultural cosmos rolled into one (Bhasin 2011: 1-20). This little state's unique cultural variability has been shaped by its remote location and mountainous terrain (Chakraborty & Chakma 2016: 61-79).

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Rai Community

The Khambu Rais or Rais (meaning King) are one of the most ancient indigenous ethnolinguistic groups of Nepal, the Indian State of Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills. They refer to themselves as Khambu or Khambas traces their migration from Tibet in some remote past. They identify themselves with the Kirati group or the Kirat confederation which includes the communities Limbu, Sunuwar, Yakkha Dhimal, Koche, Meche, and Hayu (Rai 2020). According to one version Kirats migrated from east via north Burma and Assam along the mid hills (lower mountains) with their pigs in ancient times (Chatterjee 1951). The percentage of Khambu Rai in Darjeeling district based on the 2001 census is 11.5, that is 1,92,672 which is the highest among all ethnic groups of the district and according to the 2011 census, the population of Rai community is 2,50000 in Darjeeling District.

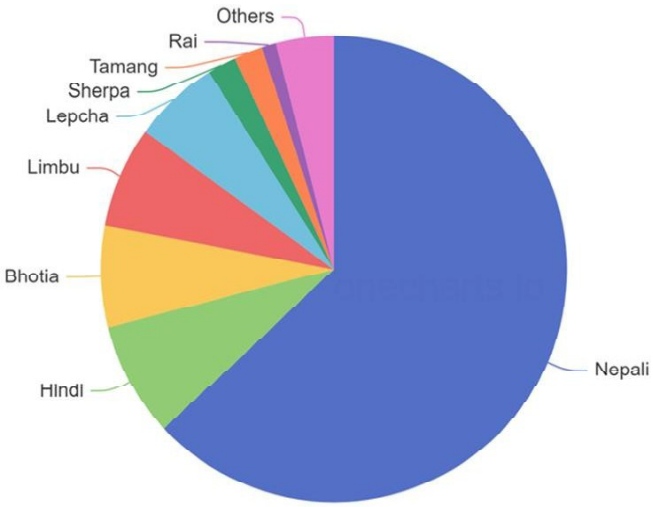

Figure 1: Sikkim State Language Census of 20

A Social Identity Theory Framework

With its rich cultural legacy and customs, the Rai community in Sikkim offers a unique context for investigating the connection between ancestry and psychological well-being. To fully grasp the depth of complexity that social cohesiveness and individual welfare have within this social context, one must attempt to unravel how cultural and ethnic linkages of the people define both individual and collective selves. It is also crucial, at this point, to explain the nature of these interactions using Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory (SIT). According to SIT, a person's identity and self-concept are mostly derived from their affiliation with social groupings, such as their ethnic or cultural communities. Ancestral roots and cultural customs, such as reverencing the natural world and ancestors, are crucial in determining group

identity within the Rai community. In addition to fostering a sense of continuity and belonging, these customs offer a foundation for interpersonal relationships and group cohesion. Collaborative cultures place considerable value on group membership and interdependence, which emphasizes the role social identity plays in determining overall well-being. Through the application of Social Identity Theory, the study aims to investigate if ethnic identity and well-being is related among the Rai community, offering significant perspectives on the function of cultural heritage and social identity in promoting social cohesiveness and resilience in this distinct community.

Ancestral Origin

Ancestral origin holds a profound significance in shaping an individual's ethnic identity and overall well-being. It serves as a vital link to one's cultural heritage, traditions, and values, influencing various aspects of life, from social interactions to psychological well-being. Ancestral origin is very important in the formation of cultural identity, sense of belonging, cultural heritage preservation, and psychological well-being (Liebkind 2006: 78-96). A person's sense of pride and cultural identity are strengthened when they embrace their origins. Additionally, origins act as a storehouse for cultural legacy, conserving customs, rites, and practices that have been handed down through the ages. Accepting andhonouring ancestor practices contributes to the preservation of cultural variety and enhances the human experience as a whole. Studies reveal a robust association between psychological well-being and a strong ethnic identity derived from ancestral origin. Significant effects of ancestral origin have been seen regarding self-identification, cultural adaptability, and interpersonal relationships. Similar cultural upbringings promote empathy and understanding, which strengthens links between neighbours (Morning & Saperstein 2018: 57-68, Peng et al. 2023: 208).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a term which is socially defined as a group or category of individuals who identify with one another based on shared ancestors, cultural experiences, and social experiences. These ethnic groupings are identified by a shared cultural history, origin myth, ancestry, language, clothing style, physical appearance, and so on. Cultural origins and ethnicity provide such groups with a feeling of distinctness and divergence from other cultures in the same city or nation. Ethnicity is also described as a set of cultural features used to identify and classify people who are perceived to be considerably different from others in the same social environment (Dindyal & Dindyal 2004: 27-33).

The psychological significance of ethnic identity among ethnic minority groups might be traced to the marginalization and inequality that these communities have faced (Okolie & Manyeruke 2024; Santos et. 2024: 1-25). In the face of rejection and marginalization, a strong ethnic identification assists

individuals in recognizing positive qualities about their ethnic group, so mitigating the effects of derogatory attitudes that are propagated in societal structure (Outten et al. 2009: 146-170).

Studies available on ethnic identity indicate that exploring and committing to one's ethnic identity is connected with improved psychological well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, particularly among people under the age of 40 (Chae & Foley 2010: 466–476, Smith & Silva 2011: 42). But identity of migrated individuals may encounter stressors of diminished social support networks, loss of status, and a general sense of threat to their ethnic identity (Lay & Nguyen 1998: 172-181, Dornisch et al. 2024).

Well-Being

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), psychological well-being is more than just the absence of mental illness; it is also a state in which individuals recognize their capacities, can cope with ordinary challenges, and can contribute to their community.

Well-being according to the PERMA model by Martin Seligman (2011) is predicted by five elements: (a) Positive Emotion, (b) Engagement, (c) Relationships, (d) Meaning, and (e) Accomplishment. Each element contributes to well-being, can be pursued for its own sake, and is independently defined and measured. The combination of PERMA elements promotes flourishing, which is the optimal functioning of individuals, groups, communities, nations, and society at large (Seligman 2011).

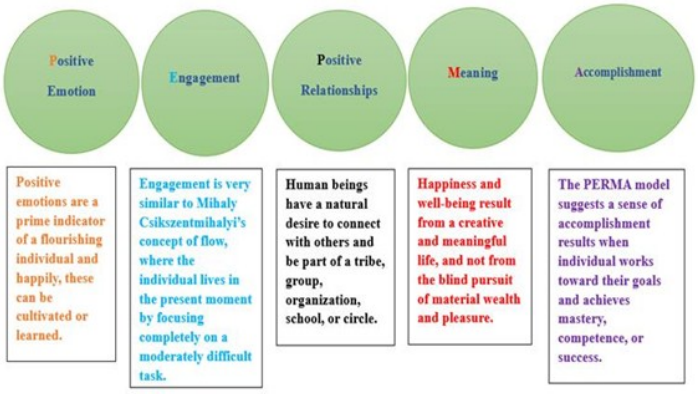

Figure 2: The five elements of PERMA model of Well-being

Numerous studies have discovered a link between ethnic identification and numerous elements of personal well-being across ethnic groups (Phinney et al. 1997: 165–185). Many researchers have interpreted these persistent connections as evidence of causal mediation, with high ethnic identification thought to protect ethnic minority populations from suffering (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor 2007: 282-294). Thus, high degrees of ethnic identification should,

by definition, be connected with personal well-being.

The findings of a study revealed that ethnic identification had a negative connection with distress, with higher ethnic identity being associated with less suffering (Yip et al. 2019: 1274). Moreover, John Turner and his colleagues at the University of Bristol developed self-categorization theory and shared that self-categorizing is a necessary component of social identity theory.

Self-categorization theory explains how the cognitive process of categorization, when applied to oneself, provides a feeling of identification with the social category or group and manifests in the array of behaviours we attribute to group membership: conformity, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and so on. Tajfel and Turner's (2004: 276-293) social identity theory proposes that individuals experience collective identity depending on their membership in a group, such as racial/ethnic and gender identities.

The greater identification with the in-group may symbolize a probable resource in dealing with threats from external factors, thus increasing in-group social support, but this may also present a source of threat if it hinders the process of adaptation (Oh et al. 2002: 511-526, Noh & Kaspar 2003: 232–238). Indeed, forging new social support networks and adapting to the cultural milieu of their adopted country has been related to successful acculturation (Utsey et al. 2002: 366).

Diego Henriquez and colleagues (2021) conducted a study on indicators of identity and psychological well-being in the immigrant population (Colombian migrants). According to their findings, collective self-esteem and ethnic identity have positive relationships with almost all dimensions of psychological well-being, whereas identity fusion with Colombia only had a positive relationship with the dimension positive relationships and identity fusion with Chile had a positive relationship with the dimension autonomy (Henriquez & Urzua 2021).

Timothy B. Smith and Lynda Silva (2011: 42) did a meta-analysis on ethnic identification and personal well-being in individuals of colour. After investigating the relationship between ethnic identity constructions and personal well-being among persons of colour in North America, they discovered that ethnic identity was more strongly related to positive well-being than to impaired well-being.

Several research findings appear to consistently point to the positive association between ethnic identity and multiple aspects of personal well-being across ethnic groups (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz 1997: 165-185). Many of them have interpreted these consistent correlations to indicate causal mediation, with positive ethnic identity assumed to buffer against distress experienced by ethnic minority groups (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor 2007: 282-294).

This study seeks to investigate the correlation between ethnic identity and well-being among the Rai community in Sikkim, India, while also exploring

potential variations based on factors such as socio-economic status, age, and ancestral origin. Given India's diverse cultural milieu, understanding how ethnic identity impacts well-being within this minority group offers valuable insights into cultural dynamics and individual perceptions of life satisfaction. By integrating ancestral origin into the analysis, the study aims to delve deeper into the influence of historical roots and cultural heritage on identity formation and sense of belonging.

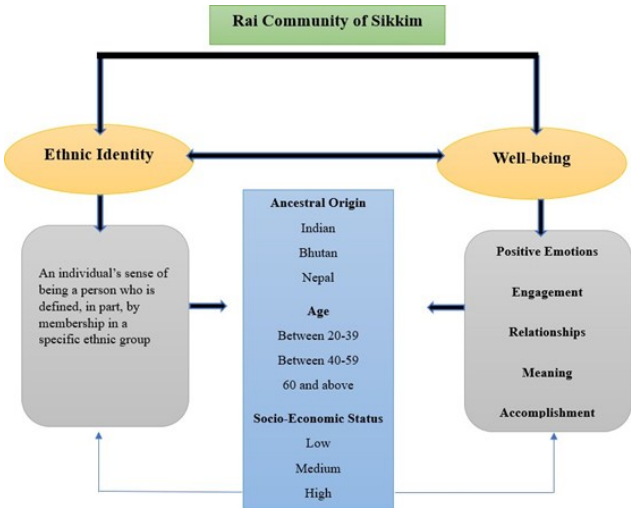

Figure 3: Framework of the Study

Objective

- To assess the association between ethnic identity and well-being among the Rai community in Sikkim.
- To examine how ethnic identity and well-being among differ significantly according to socio-economic status, age and ancestral origin of the Rai community in Sikkim.

Hypotheses

H1: Individuals high on ethnic identity would score high on well-being among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H2: Ethnic identity would significantly differ in different age groups among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H3: Well-being would significantly differ in different age groups among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H4: Ethnic identity would significantly differ in groups with different ancestral origins among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H5: Well-being would significantly differ in groups with different ancestral origins among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H6: There would be a significant impact of monthly income in ethnic identity among the Rai community in Sikkim.

H7: There would be a significant impact of monthly income in well-being among the Rai community in Sikkim.

Methods

This quantitative study used a survey method for the data collection, where the correlational and comparative research design was followed. The sample consisted of 120 participants from the Rai community of Sikkim state of India following the purposive sampling method.

The following inclusion criteria were taken for the selection of the sample:

- Only residents of Sikkim were considered for this study.
- Only participants with an ancestral origin in Bhutan, Nepal and India were considered.
- Only participants within the age range of 20 to 60 were considered.
- Only participants who are fluent in English or Nepali were considered for this study.

Instruments

Socio-demographic personal data sheet- Some of the relevant variables collected were age, gender, ancestral origin, level of education, nature of family, occupation, monetary source, and monthly income.

Ethnic Identity Scale: This scale is developed by Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez (2004). The scale measures three dimensions of ethnic identity, (a). Exploration, (b). Resolution, and (c). Affirmation. It is measured on a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1= "does not describe me at all" to 4= "describes me very well". The reliability of each domain in Cronbach alpha is .91, .86, and .92, for exploration, resolution, and affirmation respectively.

PERMA Profiler: This scale is developed by developed by Butler and Kern (2019). It is a general measure, developed for adults, which measures five dimensions: (a). positive emotion, (b). engagement, (c). relationships, (d). meaning, and (e). accomplishment, following Dr. Seligman's well-being theory. It is a 10-point scale ranging from 0= "never", "terrible", "not at all" to 10= "always", "excellent", "completely". The reliability for each dimension is as follows: Positive emotion (α=.86), Engagement (α=.57), Relationships (α=.81), Meaning (α=.86), and Accomplishment (α=.78). The validity for PERMA Profiler

in Spearman r is .81.

Procedure

A compilation of the consent form and demographic sheet was created. Participants were approached and rapport was formed. The questionnaire on ethnic identity and PERMA Profiler was then presented to the participants in a comfortable one-to-one setting. It was made sure that the participation was voluntary in nature and participants were assured of confidentiality of their responses. Each questionnaire was scored individually and the data was pooled in an Excel sheet.

Statistical Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the correlation between Ethnic Identity and Well-being. This study used ANOVA for the comparison of Ethnic Identity and Well-being among different age groups, ancestral origin and monthly income. Relationships between the proposed variables were examined with the help of the SPSS v25.0

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic details of the samples.

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	55	45.8
	Male	65	54.2
Age	Between 20-39	40	33.3
	Between 40-59	40	33.3
	60 & above	40	33.3
Ancestral Origin	India	35.0	35.0
	Bhutan	26.7	26.7
	Nepal	38.3	38.3
Level of Education	Never went to school	14	11.7
	Postgraduate	24	20.0
	Undergraduate	54	45.0
	School	28	23.3
Nature of Family	Extended Family	43	35.8
	Joint Family	24	20.0
	Nuclear Family	53	44.2
Occupation	Non- Working	37	30.8
	Working	59	49.2
	Student	24	20.0
Monthly Income	Low	11	9.2
	Medium	31	25.8
	High	78	65.0

Among the samples, the majority of the participants were males (54.2 per cent) and 45.8 per cent were females. 33.3 per cent of samples consisted of all three groups of age between 20- 39, 40- 59 and 60 above. Also, the majority

of the samples (38.3 per cent) have Nepal, 26.7 per cent have Bhutan as their ancestral origin in case of level of education, 45 per cent of the participants have an undergraduate degree, 23.3 have only a school degree and 20 per cent have a postgraduate degree. Furthermore, the nature of family has shown that 44.2 per cent of participants live in a nuclear family setup, and 20 per cent in a joint family setup, and terms of occupation, the majority of participants (49.2 per cent) belong to a working category, 30.8 per cent cent cent cent cent cent is non-working and 20 per cent belongs to student category. Finally, in terms of income, the majority of the participants (65 per cent) belong to a high-income category, 25.8 per cent from the medium-income category and 9.2 per cent of the samples belong to the low-income category.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations, and correlations between ethnic identity and well-being

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ethnic Identity	34.71	5.30	-						
Well-being	7.05	.96	.043	-					
Positive Emotion	7.05	1.13	-.006	.858**	-				
Engagement	6.59	1.13	.027	.716**	.554**	-			
Relationships	7.62	1.28	.006	.837**	.661**	.458**	-		
Meaning	6.83	1.15	.064	.854**	.721**	.574**	.630**	-	
Accomplishment	6.94	1.15	.107	.740**	.497**	.375**	.567**	.525**	

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows no significant correlation between Ethnic Identity and Well-being and the dimensions Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment ($p>0.001$), hence rejecting the first hypothesis **(H1)**.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Ethnic Identity

			Test of Homogenity of Variances		ANOVA	
Age Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
Between 20-39	35.38	6.242	2.083	.129	.513	.600
Between 40-59	34.20	4.810				
60 & above	34.55	4.798				

Table 3 shows a one-way ANOVA table that compares different age groups on ethnic identity, where, statistically no significant difference is found in ethnic identity among different age groups ($F(2,117) = .513$, $p= 0.600$). Hence rejecting the hypothesis **(H2)**.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in well-being.

			Test of Homogenity of ANOVA Variances			
Age Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
Between 20-39	6.7359	1.356	19.863	.000	2.693	.074
Between 40-59	7.2875	.651				
60 & above	7.1500	.640				

Table 4 shows a one-way ANOVA table that compares different age groups on Well-being, where, statistically no significant difference is found in ethnic identity among different age groups (F (2,117) = 2.693, p= .074). Hence rejecting the hypothesis **(H3)**.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Ethnic Identity

			Test of Homogenity of ANOVA Variances			
AncestralOrigin	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
Indian	35.14	6.182	1.712	.185	.276	.759
Bhutan	34.22	4.286				
Nepal	34.65	5.156				

Table 5 shows one-way ANOVA table that compares different Ancestral Origin on Well-being, where, statistically no significant difference is found in Ethnic Identity among different Ancestral Origin (F (2,117) = 2.693, p= .074). Hence hypothesis **(H4)** is not accepted.

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Well-being.

			Test of Homogenity of ANOVA Variances			
AncestralOrigin	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
India	6.790	1.164	2.720	.070	3.517	.033
Bhutan	7.377	.791				
Nepal	7.080	.811				

Group Differences				
Ancestral Origin	Mean Difference	Sig	95% confidence interval LL	UL
India- Bhutan	-.586	.025	-1.11	-.060
Bhutan- Nepal	.296	.363	-.220	.813
Nepal- India	.289	.325	-.189	.769

Table 6 shows one-way ANOVA that compares well-being with respect to different ancestral origins. The result reveals that well-being significantly differs among individuals with different ancestral origin, (F (2,117) = 3.517, p=.033). Variation in well-being is accounted for 5.7% of the variation in ancestral origin. The results showed that the comparison of well-being in the participants with an ancestral origin of India and Bhutan is significant, p=.025, where higher well-being is found in participants having Bhutan as their ancestral origin (M=7.37, SD=.791) than the participants with Indian ancestral origin (M=6.7902, SD=1.16411). On the contrary, Tukeys's HSD test for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of well-being was not a statistically significant difference between Bhutan and Nepal (p=.363) and between Nepal and India (p=.325). Hence hypothesis **(H5)** is accepted.

Table 7: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Ethnic Identity

		Test of Homogenity of ANOVA Variances				
MonthlyIncome	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
Low	38.27	5.061	.014	.986	2.946	.056
Middle	34.74	4.953				
High	34.19	5.341				

Table 7 shows one-way ANOVA that compares the effect of monthly income on ethnic identity. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in ethnic identity in all three groups (F (2,117) = 2.946, p=.056. There was no statistically significant difference between low and middle (p=.136), middle and high (p =.873), and high and low income (p =.044), hence rejecting the hypothesis **(H6)**.

Table 8: Mean, Standard Deviations and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Well-being

		Test of Homogenity of ANOVA Variances				
MonthlyIncome	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Statistic	Sig	F	Sig
Low	7.096	1.401	.617	.541	.106	.899
Middle	7.119	.918				
High	7.028	.924				

Table 8 shows one-way ANOVA that compares the effect of monthly income on well-being. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in well-being between at least two groups (F (2,117) = .106, p=.899. There was no statistically significant difference between

low and middle (p=.998, between middle and high (p =.899), and between high and low income (p =.974), hence rejecting hypothesis **(H7)**.

Discussion

The notion that subjective well-being is related to better self-reported health, longevity, and reduced pain is well known (Howell et al. 2007: 83-136, Diener & Chan 2011: 1-43), however the correlational finding of the present study suggested that there is no relationship between ethnic identity and well-being as per PERMA model. This could be because the PERMA model may not be capturing some of the factors that contribute to well-being that are unique to the particular culture (Khaw & Kern 2015: 10-23). This finding contradicts some previous results (Phinney et al. 2001: 493-510, Oliveira & Cabecinhas 2012: 33-42) which indicate that ethnic identity and other group orientations, which is understood as a sense of belonging and belonging to an ethnic group, has a positive correlation to helping individuals achieve subjective well-being.

Like many other ethnic groups, the Rai community is varied, with various subgroups having unique cultural traditions, beliefs, and socioeconomic origins. Ethnic identity is context-dependent and changing, not static (Seaton et al. 2017: 683-692). This flexibility within the Rai group is probably missed by the study's ethnic identification assessment metrics. The association between well-being and ethnic group identity may be impacted by factors including migration, intermarriage, and acculturation (Balidemaj & Small 2018: 712-730). A wide range of social and environmental factors, such as social support networks, access to healthcare, education, and career possibilities, also have an impact on wellbeing outcomes. It is important to contemplate if the research sufficiently accounts for these exogenous variables that might potentially skew the association between ethnic identification and well-being in the Rai community. Despite the absence of a direct correlation, the Rai community may possess cultural resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms that contribute to their overall well-being. Exploring Indigenous practices, community cohesion, and traditional healing methods could provide insights into alternative pathways to well-being within the Rai community.

The study results indicated that age and monthly income have no relevance to how connected an individual identifies. This could be because of environmental exposure around them influencing their development of personality and their identity. According to Ecological theory, development occurs within multiple, embedded contexts in which the individual exists (Bronfenbrenner 1989). The Cultural Ecological Model also suggests that a high proportion of ethnic minorities in a child's experience in their school and neighbourhood may contribute to making children feel more positively about their ethnicity (Coll et al., 1996: 1891-1914). Another factor could be the inclination towards acculturation as a driving force for the benefits the cultural adoption of other communities provides for people in weaker sections (Sesen

et al. 2024). Pursuing such action could be because minority group wants to adapt to their social surrounding, while they may, at the same time, be struggling to maintain their own ethnic identity, cultural customs and practices.

Studies generally show a U-shaped relationship between age and subjective well-being, though predicting this relationship can be complex (Blanchflower 2021: 575-624, Biermann et al., 2022: 100366). Adolescents' sense of purpose becomes more prosocial with age (Hill et al., 2010: 466-473). In collectivist cultures, people may prioritize communal happiness over personal happiness, enhancing their well-being. The Rais, influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, maintain traditional practices like worshipping nature and ancestors, fostering social connectedness and a sense of belonging, which outweigh materialistic pursuits.

This study examined the impact of monthly income on ethnic identity and well-being, hypothesizing that lower income might limit education and employment opportunities, potentially affecting community affiliation. However, findings indicate no impact of income on ethnic identity or well-being. High-income individuals may use their resources for community upliftment, while low-income individuals exhibit strong cultural devotion. Similar research (Wyshak 2016) supports the lack of correlation between income and subjective well-being, and some studies (Wyshak 2013: 230-232, Kessler et al. 2015: 593-602) challenge the belief that economic status significantly influences depression.

In the context of the Rai community in Sikkim, where ethnic identity likely serves as a source of pride, belonging, and social cohesion, the absence of significant differences across age groups and income levels suggests a relatively stable and resilient ethnic identity within the community. This finding may indicate that Rai individuals, regardless of age or socioeconomic status, maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage and identity, mitigating the potential erosion of ethnic identity that could result from acculturation processes. While the Acculturation Gap-Distress Theory primarily addresses intergenerational dynamics within immigrant families, its principles can be applied more broadly to understand the resilience of ethnic communities in maintaining cultural identity and well-being. In the context of the acculturation Gap- Distress Theory, where the Rai community in Sikkim showed no significant differences in well-being and ethnic identity across different age and income groups, it could imply that there is a relative lack of acculturation gaps within the community.

This suggests that regardless of age or income level, Rai individuals may share similar levels of cultural adaptation to the broader societal norms and values, thereby reducing the potential for intergenerational or socioeconomic disparities in acculturation and its associated distress. This suggests that the community has effectively managed potential acculturation

gaps, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and collective identity that promotes well-being and adaptation across generations and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The present study hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in well-being among the Rai community in Sikkim with different ancestral origin, where the findings suggest that individuals whose lineage is Bhutan are more likely to experience better well-being compared to those of Indian origin. It is in conjunction with previous studies that investigated the etiology of subjective well-being which showed that there are significant heritability estimates in the range of 40–50%. The remaining variance was accounted for by environmental influences unique to an individual (Nes et al. 2006: 1033-1042). Therefore, it could be argued that the social and environmental factors of Bhutan provide a protective buffer that helps the people of Bhutan cope with any potential problems, and thus possibly have helped the people of Bhutan to maintain a sense of well-being, despite any economic or geographic limitations (Biswas-Diener & Diener 2015). These findings underscore the multifaceted interplay of ancestral origins, cultural contexts, and contemporary influences on well-being outcomes within the Rai community. The higher well-being value of Bhutan-origin Rai people could be because of the cultural, socioeconomic, or environmental influences unique to Bhutan that promote better mental and physical health outcomes among its descendants within the Rai community. It also shows how specific cultural and historical contexts shape individual and community well-being (Allison 2024).

Whereas, Nepalese culture is a combination of Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Mongolian culture, meaning that is highly influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions (Khan 2022: 470-486), hence showing similarity with Indian culture contributing to the non-significant difference in well-being among the Rai people of Bhutan and Nepal origin. Also, the findings of non-significant differences in well-being among Nepal and Indian-origin Rai communities could be due to this uniform impact of South Asian cultural heritage on well-being outcomes, highlighting the need to discern more nuanced distinctions within this diverse ancestral landscape.

Conclusion

The study focused on investigating the relationship between ethnic identity and well-being among members of the Rai community, taking into account factors such as age, income, and ancestral lineage. Despite thorough analysis, the results indicate a lack of significant correlation between ethnic identity and well-being, regardless of all demographic variables, except for ancestral origin. Well-being is significantly found different among individuals with different ancestral origin, where Rai community with an ancestral origin of India, Bhutan and Nepal was compared and well-being was found to be significantly different in India and Bhutan ancestral origin, where higher mean

of well-being is found in people with Bhutan ancestral origin. This suggests that ethnic identity among the Rai community is intricate and resistant to straightforward hypotheses. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of ethnic identity requires exploration through alternative variables or qualitative methods. It is apparent that individual life experiences and social contexts significantly shape the concept of well-being.

Implication

Researches available on ethnicity usually validate the importance of ethnic identity during the formative stage for teenagers and young adults, but there is an absence of research on other age groups. The present study will contribute to developing an understanding of the importance of ethnic identity in older age groups and its implication on well-being specific to the Rai community. The findings of this study can also be useful in preparing a proposal to preserve the culture and language of different cultures; understanding the problem of minorities and suggesting ways to overcome them; formulating policies to uplift the conditions of the ethnic minorities and bring them at par with majority communities; and sensitize the public about different ethnic groups and their unique language and culture and avoid discrimination.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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C. Sathish

ROLE OF MINORITY REPRESENTATIVES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT: ANAYLSIS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS OF RURAL TAMIL NADU

Abstract

This article examines the role of minority representatives to rural development in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It explains the social forces that influence as well as challenge minority representatives to rural development. The quantitative and qualitative data unfolds that minorities conceptualization of rural development is only limited to rural infrastructure, sanitation, rural housing, environment, health care and education whereas they have failed to understand the concept of rural development from the integrated and multidimensional perspective in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram districts in Tamil Nadu. Education, freedom, social network and political party affiliation influence while patriarchy, lack of devolution of power, non-implementation of grama sabha resolutions and misconception about rural development pose challenges to rural development.

Keywords: *Minority, Role, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Institutions*

Introduction

The Constitution 73rd Amendment Act (1992) and Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act (1994) vested the responsibilities of village Panchayat in the areas of 29 subjects for rural development whereas the state government and district administration controls the functions, functionaries and funds in village panchayat. As a result, the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) exist as poor adjuncts to district administration and state government in India (Banerjee 2013). Rural development is a holistic approach to improve the social and economic condition of rural life without disturbing the local environment (Sherfilippi, Rios, and Child 2018). Amartya Sen strengthened the paradigm shift in development by offering an integrated theory of development. According to him, development should bestow freedom and remove unfreedom in society. He said development should not be judged by people's income but rather by

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their access to social and economic arrangements namely health and education, able to participate in public deliberations and scrutiny, removal of poverty and tyranny, economic opportunities and eradicating social deprivation (Sen 1999).

The purpose of rural development strategies are designed to uplift the historically marginalized and depressed communities like scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities in villages (Waghmore 2002) but the theory, policy and practice of rural development is a very complex concept because sustainability is the major criteria for analyzing the rural development practices. Rural development should have a socio-economic impact on their people and it should also empower the farmers to access the agricultural employment and income at the higher level (Van der Ploeg, Renting, Brunori, Knickel, Mannion, Marsden and Ventura 2000). However, at times rural development programs failed to uplift the standard of living of rural people. It is due to the lethargic approach of implementing agencies, lack of expertise in rural development and conservative attitude of rural masses (Hussain 2016).

Scholars in the field of rural development argue that it is a multifaceted concept which refers to the entire development of rural areas to achieve quality life for rural people (Singh and Shishodia 2016). The World Bank (1975) asserts that rural development is a plan of action to improve the economic and social life of rural poor. The fruit of development shall reach the needy and the poorest of the poor namely small scale farmers, tenants and landless. Rural development should also increase productivity and fulfill the basic needs of the people viz. shelter, food supply, nutrition, health, education and employment. In contrast, Chambers (2013) argued that rural development should enable the rural poor, namely rural men, rural women and their children to access their wants and needs. Further, it should also assist them to fulfil their livelihood options in rural areas to demand and control the fruits of development. Against this backdrop, this article examines the role of minority representatives to rural development and it also investigates the social forces that influence as well as pose challenges to rural development in Tamil Nadu.

Methods

The present study used a multi stage stratified random sampling method to conduct surveys from 170 minority[1] representatives in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram districts in Tamil Nadu and it is exploratory in nature. Qualitative data[2] is collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focused group discussions (FGDs) with the help of interview guides while the quantitative data is collected by interview schedule through survey method. IDIs are used only with village panchayat presidents and FGDs with the majority group members in village panchayat. Survey method is predominantly used to collect data from four levels viz. village panchayat ward members, village panchayat presidents, panchayat union ward members and district panchayat ward members in PRIs.

Administrative Sanction for the Work

The devolution of powers to village panchayat determines the role in developing the entire social system in rural society. The administrative sanction for carrying out works in village panchayat within rupees two lakhs is under the control of village panchayat. The District Collector is the sanctioning authority for the estimated work value costing more than two lakhs but not more than fifty lakhs in a village panchayat. The Director of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj is the sanctioning authority for the estimated works costing more than rupees fifty lakhs in village panchayat (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj 2007). This shows that the devolution of powers for village panchayats with regard to carrying out works are very limited and the greater devolution of power is vested with the Government of Tamil Nadu (Pal 2001 & Sathish 2020).

Religion and Gender Wise Representation of Minorities in PRIs

The table 1 shows that only Muslim and Christian are represented at four levels namely village panchayat ward member, village panchayat president, panchayat union ward member and district panchayat ward member whereas other minorities such as Sikh, Buddhist, Parsis and Jains are excluded from the PRIs. In Ramanathapuram district, Muslim men and Muslim women representation are greater than Christian men and Christian women in rural governance. Further, Muslim men are largely represented than Christian men while the majority (60 per cent) of Christian women are greatly represented than Muslim women in PRIs in Villupuram district. Besides, Christian men are more represented than Muslim men in Tiruvallur district. Similarly, a vast majority (94.1 per cent) of Christian women are largely represented than Muslim women in PRIs in Tiruvallur district. However, in general, minority men representation is higher than minority women in rural governance. A large proportion of Muslim representatives and Christian men representatives are from Ramanathapuram district while majority of Christian women are from Tiruvallur district in PRIs.

Minority Representatives Capabilities to Discharge their Duties in PRIs

Table 2 highlights that the majority (57.4 per cent) of village panchayat ward members are able to perform their duties in PRIs. This shows that the majority of village panchayat ward members' approvals are necessary for passing resolutions in panchayat and grama sabha meetings in village panchayats. In contrast, 42.6 per cent of village panchayat ward members reported that they could not perform their duties due to less devolution of power to them compared to village panchayat president and panchayat union ward members. Whereas, majority (75 per cent) of village panchayat presidents are able to perform their duties as village panchayat president in PRIs. This is due to the co-operation

and co-ordination of different sections of people in the village panchayats. Conversely, 25 per cent of village panchayat presidents regret that they are unable to perform their duties because the resolutions that are passed in the grama sabha meetings are not fulfilled by the higher authorities citing inadequate funds in village panchayats. With regard to panchayat union ward members and district panchayat ward member positions, a significant proportion of minorities are not able to perform their duties due to less numbers of representatives from their political party in higher level governance. The ruling party panchayat union ward members and district panchayat ward members have greater say in the policy resolutions and decision-making in higher level governances. Therefore, the independent candidate and the opposition party candidates have less say in decision-making in higher level governance.

Minorities Interaction with Higher Officials in PRIs

Table 3 shows that the majority (56.4 per cent) of village panchayat ward members have cordial interaction with higher officials, 23.4 per cent have neither cordial nor hostile interaction with higher officials in PRIs. 10.6 per cent of village panchayat ward members' interactions with higher officials are hostile while 9.6 per cent of them have not interacted with higher officials in PRIs. Besides, a vast majority 75 per cent of village panchayat president's interactions with higher officials are cordial whereas 15 per cent of them have not interacted with bureaucracy in PRIs. In case of panchayat union ward members, majority (53.3 per cent) of them asserted that their interaction with higher officials are neither cordial nor hostile. This shows that the minorities in higher levels of governance have healthy interaction with higher officials in PRIs. Moreover, the majority (61.8 per cent) of minority representatives have cordial interactions with higher officials but 11.2 per cent of them have not interacted with higher officials in PRIs.

Rural Development

The minority representatives' contributions to rural development are classified into rural infrastructure, sanitation, housing, environment, health and education (Sathish 2020).

Rural infrastructure

Within rural infrastructure, minority representatives' carried out the routine work of providing drinking water, laying new tar roads as well as cement roads, installing street lights and constructing *Oorani (*dug out ponds) in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram districts. Nonetheless, the Ramanathapuram district alone faces severe water problems during the summer season due to proximity to the sea, lack of rainfall and drying of ground water

and they largely depend on private water sources to fulfil their daily needs. Though the Muslim men and Christian men representatives' rural infrastructural activities are limited to conventional type and misconception about infrastructural facilities, there exists a difference between the Christian women and Muslim women representatives' in discharging their duties. Both the Muslim men and Christian men representatives focus more on fulfilling the basic needs viz. water, light and road facilities rather than other rural infrastructural activities. While Christian women representatives carry out the work with the help of different stakeholders viz. community leaders, village panchayat ward members, Self Help Groups (SHG), Block Development Officer (BDO) and District Collector (Sathish 2020), the Muslim women representatives are housed inside the four walls, on their behalf a male of member of their family, son / father-in-law / husband / relative carryout the panchayat activities. The proxy representation is less prevalent among Christian women while it is more predominant among Muslim women representatives due to patriarchy and socio-cultural factors (Teltumbde 2011, Sathish and Dasthagir 2014). FGDs also reiterate the prevalence of patriarchy against Muslim women compared to Christian women in village panchayats. Indian culture is largely influenced by patriarchy which prevents women representatives from the decision making process while the policy decisions are made by the male members of their family (Mohanty 1995). The educational empowerment, freedom and social network influence Christian women representatives while patriarchy poses challenges for Muslim women to rural infrastructure.

Sanitation

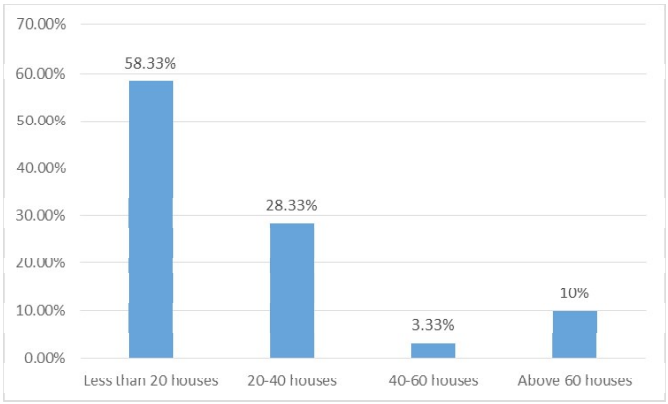
IDIs with minority representatives' reported that they have constructed individual household latrines (IHHL) through Nirmal Bharath Abhiyan (NBA)[3] in their respective village panchayats in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram district. However, it is found that minority representatives of Ramanathapuram district have constructed most of IHHL facilities in village panchayats compared to Tiruvallur and Villupuram districts. A probe into why these two districts could not construct more IHHL shows the misconception, social stigma, non-cooperation and people opt for open defecation (Marx 2016; Reilly, Dhanju, and Goel 2017; Poonkuzhali 2019). This finding is also validated by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation survey throughout India which found that 30 out of 32 districts are declared as open defecation free except Cuddalore and Villupuram districts in Tamil Nadu (Dutta and Bhaskar 2018). Additionally, an investigation into Open Defecation Free (ODF) at village panchayat level unveils that only 21.6 per cent of village panchayat presidents could achieve 100 per cent IHHL in all the households in village panchayats. Six Christian women representatives are the recipient of Nirmal Gram Puraskar award for achieving full sanitation coverage in village panchayats while Muslim women representatives have constructed only less than 20 IHHL to Below Poverty Line (BPL) households in their respective village panchayats.

Additionally, four Muslim men representatives and three Christian men representatives also attained 100 per cent sanitation coverage in their village panchayats. This shows that except Muslim women representatives, minority representatives as a whole took effort in improving the sanitation facilities in village panchayats however, misconception, social stigma and lack of people participation pose challenges in achieving sanitation coverage in Tiruvallur and Villupuram districts.

Rural Housing

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is funded by the Government of India and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. The grama sabha is the competent authority to prepare the list of BPL names in village panchayat and approves as well as records the complete list of BPL names in grama sabha minutes of the meeting. The beneficiaries are drawn from the list of BPL names approved by the grama sabha as per the order in village panchayats. Majority (60 per cent) of IAY houses for construction / upgradation are allotted for scheduled castes and tribes in BPL rural households whereas the remaining (40 per cent) is for other marginalized and deprived sections of BPL rural households. However, among (40 per cent), three per cent of IAY houses are allocated for physically and mentally challenged persons. Besides, (15 per cent) of the selected beneficiaries of IAY houses are from minorities in village panchayats (Indira Awaas Yojana 2015).

Figure 1 Indira Awaas Yojana Houses Constructed by Minority Representatives in Village Panchayats

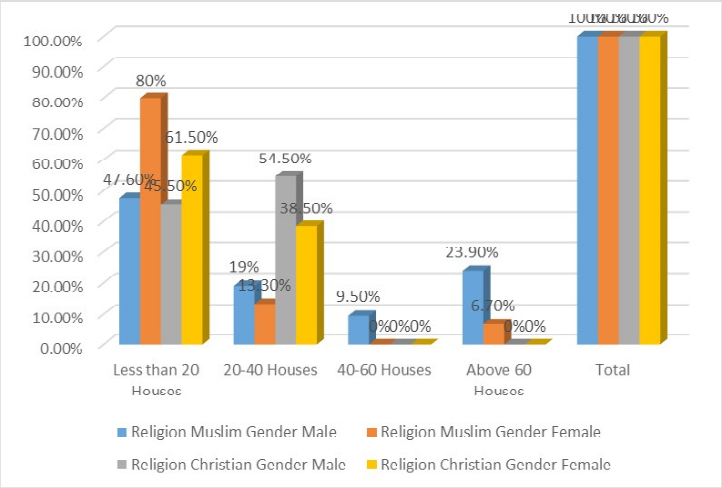


Source: Field Survey

The figure 1 exhibits the IAY houses constructed by minority representatives' in village panchayats. Majority (58.3 per cent) of minorities have constructed less than 20 number houses to the marginalized sections of

the people in village panchayats. Besides, (28.3 per cent) of minorities' have constructed 20-40 houses for the poorest of the poor in their panchayats. However, (3.3 per cent) of minorities have constructed 40-60 houses for the people from the BPL category in villages. In addition, (10 per cent) of minorities facilitated the construction of houses to marginalized sections of households in village panchayats. These findings establish the fact that minorities showed interest to mainstream the homeless marginalized sections of people by construction of houses. This is due to the support of the Government of India and Government of Tamil which augmented houses for village panchayats in Tamil Nadu (Mariappan 2013).

Figure 2 Religion and Gender wise Minorities contributions to IAY House Construction in Village Panchayats



Source: Field Survey

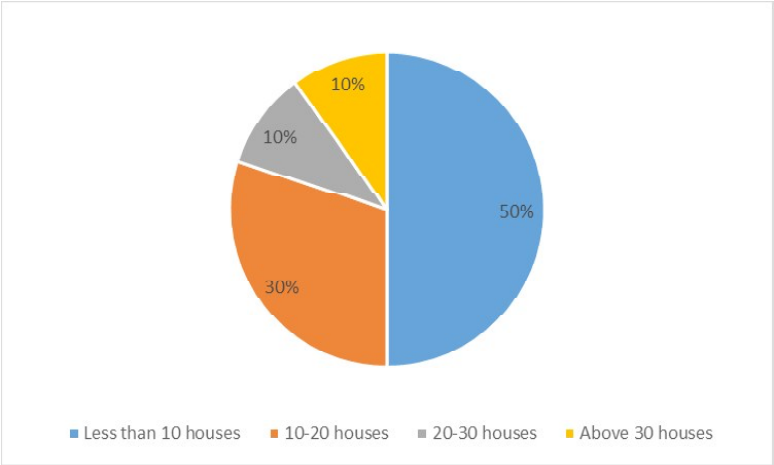
The figure 2 depicts that the majority (80 per cent) of Muslim women representatives have constructed less than 20 IAY houses in their village panchayats. This shows that Muslim women are largely dependent upon the male members of the family to perform their duties as village panchayat presidents. As a result, they are not able to construct more IAY houses compared to other minority representatives in village panchayats. Further, majority (54.5 per cent) of Christian men and 38.50 per cent of Christian women village panchayat presidents assisted in construction of 20-40 IAY houses in village panchayats while 23.90 per cent of Muslim men representatives constructed more than 60 houses for the marginalized in their village panchayat. FDGs bring to light that the Muslim men representatives hold significant positions at the village, taluk and district level in All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)[4] ruling party. Therefore, Muslim men representatives are in a better position to mobilize houses with administration for their panchayats. These facts show that ruling political affiliation influences

the construction of houses for the disadvantaged communities in their village panchayats.

Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme (CMSPGHS)

The selection of beneficiaries for CMSPGHS shall be from the BPL list which is prepared and approved by the grama sabha in village panchayats. Nonetheless, among the BPL names, the priorities are given to physically challenged, widows, destitute, transgender, women headed families and mentally challenged persons in village panchayats. In addition, the committee comprising of BDO, Deputy Block Development Officer (DBDO) and village panchayat president shall select the genuine list of beneficiaries for the construction of houses and the prepared list shall be approved in the grama sabha minutes of the meeting (Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme 2015).

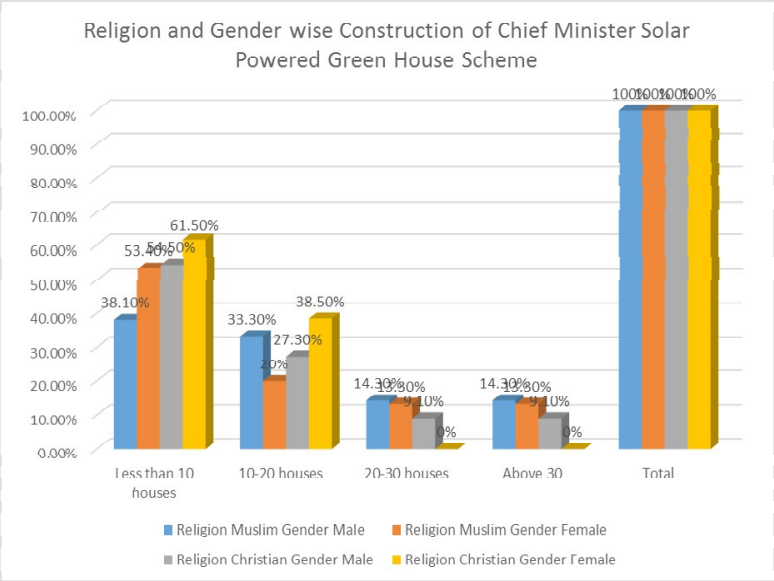
Figure 3 Minority Representatives Contribution to Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme in Village Panchayats.



Source: Field Survey

The figure 3 depicts that majority (50 per cent) of minority representatives' have constructed less than ten CMSPGHS (in other words it is called *pasumai vedugal*) for the BPL households in village panchayats. However, (30 per cent) of minority representatives' have constructed 10-20 *pasumai vedugal* to the poorest of the poor in their respective village panchayats. Further, (10 per cent) of minority village panchayat presidents have constructed 20.-30 *pasumai vedugal* to the marginalized sections of the households in village panchayats. In the above 30 house category, (10 per cent) of minority representatives' have constructed *pasumai vedugal* to the women, scheduled castes and tribes, widow, physically and visually challenged beneficiaries in village panchayats.

Figure 4 Religion and Gender wise Construction of Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme



Source: Field Survey

Figure 4 shows that the majority (61.50 per cent) of Christian women village panchayat presidents have constructed less than ten CMSPGHS for the deprived sections of people in village panchayats. Evidently, it is found that the Christian women village panchayat presidents in Ramanathapuram; Tiruvallur and Villupuram district panchayats have constructed less than ten *pasumai vedugal.* Similarly, (33.3 per cent) of Muslim men representatives have also constructed 10-20 number of houses in panchayats. Additionally, (27.3 per cent) of Christian men representatives in Ramanathapuram district, Tiruvallur district and Villupuram district have also constructed 10-20 houses in their village panchayats. Likewise, (20 per cent) of Muslim women representatives constructed houses for the destitute people in panchayats. Moreover, Muslim representatives have largely contributed for the construction of houses in village panchayats due to their AIADMK ruling political party affiliation.

Environment

IDIs with minority representatives' in village panchayats reveals that most of them have utilized the services of Makkal Nala Paniyalargal (Public Welfare Workers); SHGs, primary and middle school students, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and public participation to maintain a healthy village environment in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram district. However, they lament that public welfare workers are not adequate

to maintain a clean village panchayat environment due to the presence of a large number of households in the panchayats. As a result, they urge the government to increase the number of public welfare workers to maintain a livable environment. FGDs unveils that the village panchayat president failed to give much importance to tree plantation and free sapling distribution to mitigate environmental degradation and promote sustainable development. This is due to the lack of awareness about environmental problems and sustainable development amongst village panchayat presidents (Karuppaiyan 2002).

Health & Education

IDIs with minority representatives reveal that they are providing only basic facilities such as drinking water, light and toilet facilities in primary health centers; conducting awareness campaigns rarely on dengue viral fever, control of mosquitoes and health checkup viz, dental, eye, blood pressure and diabetes. Similarly, with regard to education they are fulfilling only the basic facilities such as drinking water, lights and sanitation facilities to the primary, middle and higher secondary schools in their panchayat. Further, only some of the minority representatives' have taken effort for the construction of class rooms, construction of school compound wall, constructed kitchen room, elevation of high school into higher secondary school, established science research room, constructed library building and school auditorium. Though the village panchayats in Tamil Nadu achieved the structural facilities with regard to health and education, there needs to be more effort on the part of minority representatives to be the bridge between the government and the people to deliver the quality health care and education to the needy people.

Rural Development an integrated approach: A way forward

Minority representatives' conceptualization of rural development are only limited to rural infrastructure, sanitation, rural housing, environment, health and education whereas they have failed to focus upon agricultural extension, rainwater harvesting, diverse livelihood options, poverty, irrigation, fisheries, vocational training, family welfare, youth welfare and employment generation in Ramanathapuram, Tiruvallur and Villupuram Districts in Tamil Nadu. As a result, this study corroborates with the World Bank (1975) and Chambers (2013) views that rural development is not only the development of the entire rural social system but it must also enable the poor to demand and control the overall fruits of rural development. Therefore, an integrated and multidimensional perspective of rural development is the need of the hour in Tamil Nadu village panchayat. As Escobar (2011:210) argues that "development echoes the social imagination of states, institutions and communities after the inclusion of women, peasants and nature into its repertoire and imaginative geographies"

The social factors such as educational emancipation, freedom, social network and ruling political party affiliation influence rural development while patriarchy, absence of devolution of power, non-implementation of grama sabha resolutions and misconception of rural development pose challenges to rural development. The comparative analysis of educational qualification for Muslim and Christian women representatives unfolds that Muslim women educational qualification is at primary and upper primary level while Christian women educational qualification is at upper primary, secondary and higher secondary level. As a result, Christian women with educational emancipation are able to perform and carry out rural development activities in village panchayats. Christian women have the freedom to interact freely and they have the support from their family members to construct their own social networks consists of SHGs, village panchayat ward members, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Member of Parliament (MP), BDOs and District Collector to bring in schemes and development to their village panchayats. The ruling political party affiliation influenced especially Muslim men representatives to construct more rural housing for the disadvantaged communities than others representatives. For mobilizing rural housing they require the support of district level and panchayat union level elected representatives and officials who are mostly from the ruling political party affiliation. Accordingly, Muslim men with AIADMK ruling political party affiliation used their political contacts to construct more rural housing for their panchayats.

Patriarchy is mostly prevalent among Muslim women due to lack of educational attainment and unfreedom from their family members compared to Christian women in village panchayats (Sen 1999). It is pertinent to mention that even during data collection in most of the cases the interviewer was not allowed to meet Muslim women rather collected data from their male members of their family namely husband, son, father in law and son in law. This shows the level of patriarchy and cultural values that pose impediments for Muslim women to discharge their duties as panchayat representatives. Lack of devolution of power in carrying out the work also poses challenges, especially for the work that cost more than two lakhs, the district collector is the sanctioning authority (Ghatak and Ghatak 2002). Absence of devolution of powers, resources and lack of involvement of civil society organization posed challenges for panchayats in delivering health care services to people (Ray 2007). However, if panchayats can enhance their resources through tax revenues and other incomes, then expectation of devolution of power from the State Government shall end. This will also enable representatives to be accountable, independent, and deliver good governance in Tamil Nadu village panchayats (Sahasranaman 2012).

Non-implementation of grama sabha resolutions citing absence of funds and resources not only pose challenges to minority representatives in particular but also public in general show less interest in democratic

decentralization. Panchayats need to play a proactive role in identifying the sources of revenue for rural development (Dhar 2006). Rural development is misconceived by most of the minority representatives as a whole by providing basic facilities to people, the fruits of development will reach the poor and poverty will be eradicated. The above analysis establishes the fact that Ramanathapuram and Villupuram districts are backward compared to Tiruvallur districts. However, the Tiruvallur district is relatively better compared to other two districts due to the proximity of Chennai district which attracts employment opportunities especially for women and youth. This is also corroborated by Tamil Nadu Human Development Report which reveals that Ramanathapuram district is backward with regard to child development, poverty and food security while Villupuram district is also backward in terms of human development, gender inequality and food security (Government of Tamil Nadu 2017).

Table 1 District cum Religion and Gender Wise Representation of Minorities in PRIs

Districts	Religion				Total	
	Muslim		Christian			
	Gender		Gender		Gender	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ramanathapuram	35	33	19	13	54	46
	(64.8%)	(71.7%)	(35.2%)	(28.3%)	(100%)	(100%)
	(70%)	(78.6%)	(51.4%)	(31.7%)	(62.1%)	(55.4%)
Villupuram	11	08	09	12	20	20
	(55%)	(40%)	(45%)	(60%)	(100%)	(100%)
	(22%)	(19%)	(24.3%)	(29.3%)	(23%)	(24.1%)
Tiruvallur	04	01	09	16	13	17
	(30.8%)	(5.9%)	(69.2%)	(94.1%)	(100%)	(100%)
	(8%)	(2.4%)	(24.3%)	(39%)	(14.9%)	(20.5%)
Total	50	42	37	41	87	83
	(57.5%)	(50.6%)	(42.5%)	(49.4%)	(100%)	(100%)
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 Minority Representatives Capabilities to Discharge their Duties in PRIs

Interaction with higher officials	Position				Total
	Village Panchayat Ward Member	Village Panchayat President	Panchayat Union Ward Member	District Panchayat Ward Member	
Cordial	53	45	07	0	105
	(56.4%)	(75%)	(46.7%)	(.0%)	(61.8%)
Hostile	10	0	0	0	10
	(10.6%)	(.0%)	(.0%)	(.0%)	(5.9%)
Neither Cordial nor Hostile	22	06	08	0	36
	(23.4%)	(10%)	(53.3%)	(.0%)	(21.2%)
No interaction	09	09	0	01	19
	(9.6%)	(15%)	(.0%)	(100%)	(11.2%)
Total	94	60	15	01	170
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 Minorities Interaction with Higher Officials in PRIs

Duties	Position				Total
	Village Panchayat Ward Member	Village Panchayat President	Panchayat Union Ward Member	District Panchayat Ward Member	
Able to perform	54 (57.4%)	45 (75%)	06 (40%)	0 (.0%)	105 (61.8%)
Unable to perform	40 (42.6%)	15 (25%)	09 (60%)	01 (100%)	65 (38.2%)
Total	94 (100%)	60 (100%)	15 (100%)	1 (100%)	170 (100%)

Source: Field Survey

Notes

1. According to the India Census (2011), the minority constitutes 19.32 per cent of the Indian population. Minority refers to Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsis and Jains in India.

2. The qualitative data such as IDIs and FGDs are analyzed by using detailed descriptions, direct quotations, pictures, photocopies of material collected viz. minutes of the grama sabha meetings, pamphlets, notice and observations during the interviews from the field work. Coding is carried out to identify important categories in the data as well as its pattern and relationships through a process of discovery.

3. The NBA provides an incentive amount for the construction of IHHL by the Central and State Government.

4. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is a regional political party founded by M.G. Ramachandran in 1972.

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Kalpana Singh

MILLETS AS FUTURE FOOD: EMPOWERING RURAL AND TRIBAL WOMEN

Abstract

The potential socioeconomic impact of millet production on women in India is significant. Millets have played a crucial role in Indian diets since the time of the Indus Valley civilization, but in recent years, they have been unfairly stigmatized due to changing lifestyles. However, there is a growing recognition of the value of millets, especially in relation to climate change mitigation, sustainable development, and offering alternative livelihoods for rural and tribal women. The United Nations has designated 2023 as the "International Millet Year," acknowledging the vital role of India in this global initiative. India's agricultural sector is essential for the livelihoods of a large portion of the population, particularly the 82 per cent of small and marginal farmers, with 48 per cent being women. Rural and tribal women, who are integral to the agricultural workforce, encounter significant challenges, including labor-intensive work and the responsibility of caring for their families. The feminization of agriculture, as a result of male migration to urban areas, underscores the importance of supporting women in agricultural activities. Given India's diverse climates, there is enormous potential for millet production to contribute to the economic empowerment and social well-being of rural and tribal women. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the various dimensions of the lives of rural and tribal women, with a specific focus on how millets can serve as a "miracle food" for these communities and contribute to sustainable development. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of millet production and its potential benefits for women in rural and tribal areas.

Keywords: *Tribal, Rural, Women, Millet, Empowerment, Sustainable*

Introduction

The use of millets can serve as an opportunity for small-scale and marginal farmers to increase their income. Historically, agricultural reforms have prioritized crops that generate profit, leading to a monoculture and heavy use of chemicals. While the Green Revolution made India self-sufficient in food production, it resulted in income inequality and the decline of land quality due to excessive chemical use. This has led to the emergence of new diseases and

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health issues, particularly among the younger population. The shift towards fast food and unhealthy eating habits has further exacerbated these health concerns. Additionally, modernization has weakened the immune system through the consumption of refined sugar, flour, alcohol, and fat.

Furthermore, these unhealthy practices have spread from urban to rural and tribal areas, leading to negative consequences, particularly for women. The feminization of agriculture has resulted in a triple burden for women, impacting their health and overall well-being.

This study draws upon several theoretical backgrounds to inform its research and analysis.

1. Gender Theory: The study is informed by gender theory, exploring the role and status of women in rural and tribal communities, particularly in the context of agriculture and food production. It delves into the challenges and opportunities faced by rural and tribal women, emphasizing their empowerment through the promotion of millets as a sustainable food source.
2. Agricultural Sociology: The research is grounded in agricultural sociology, focusing on the social, economic, and environmental aspects of agricultural practices, especially as they relate to small and marginal farmers, rural livelihoods, and sustainable development. It considers the implications of agricultural policies and practices on rural and tribal women.
3. Sustainable Development Theory: The study delves into the principles of sustainable development theory, emphasizing the utilization of millets as a catalyst for economic empowerment and social advancement among rural and tribal women. It analyzes the convergence of agricultural methodologies, food security, and the promotion of women's autonomy through the lens of sustainable development.
4. Intersectionality: The research adopts an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the interconnected nature of gender, class, and ethnicity in shaping the experiences of rural and tribal women in the context of agriculture. It explores how multiple dimensions of identity intersect to influence women's roles in agricultural labor and food production.

By drawing on these theoretical backgrounds, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted implications of promoting millets as a "Miracle Food" for the empowerment of rural and tribal women, particularly in the Indian context.

This research focuses on how millets can bring about positive changes in the lives of women in rural and tribal areas, as well as indirectly benefit

urban women. The goal is to explore the existing conditions and propose inclusive development strategies in the upcoming sections.

METHODOLOGY

The research paper is primarily reliant on secondary data sources, drawing from a wide range of government reports from national and international organizations as well as various government bodies. In addition, it incorporates data from the NFHS-5 survey reports, regional studies, and agriculture-specific publications, with a particular focus on millet production. The aim of the paper is to examine the intersection of millets, the opportunities they present, and the role of women in this context. The data has been thoroughly analyzed to explore these interconnected themes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following study delves into the resurgence of millet-based farming systems as a response to food production challenges stemming from climate variability. Specifically, the study centers on the cultivation of finger millet in Odisha's Koraput district, a staple food for local tribal communities. Over the course of two years, the study examined the impact of different crop varieties and agronomic practices on finger millet production. The findings demonstrated that the adoption of the recommended cultivation package, featuring the improved variety 'GPU-67' and recommended agronomic practices, resulted in increased grain yield, profitability, and reduced labor requirements compared to traditional farming methods. Moreover, the study highlighted the improved household consumption of finger millet over time (Pradhan, Panda, & Bhavani, 2019). The study delves into the decreasing cultivation of minor millets in India in spite of their intrinsic advantages, including genetic diversity, adaptability to challenging growing conditions, and high nutritional content. It cites a United Nations global initiative centered on action research with the goal of improving the conservation and utilization of minor millets in India to bolster economic viability, nutritional well-being, and empowerment, particularly among women. The research underscores the need to integrate species such as finger millet, little millet, foxtail millet, and barnyard millet to enhance various aspects of livelihood (Padulosi et al., 2015). Additionally, the study emphasizes the significance of millets as a crop, highlighting their advantages for human and animal consumption, as well as their environmental sustainability. It mentions the Odisha Millet Mission, a program designed to promote millet farming to improve tribal livelihoods. The program has contributed to increased production, consumption, and processing of millet, as well as improved employment and livelihood among tribal communities in the Koraput district. It also suggests that the government should ensure that tribal people comprehend and benefit from such programs to further enhance their livelihood opportunities (Sahoo, Rana, & Samantray, 2024). The study

incorporates gender analysis throughout the agricultural value chain, with a specific focus on the roles of men and women, their resource access, and value addition opportunities. It emphasizes the challenges and contributions of women in finger millet-based value chains in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Odisha. The study proposes several strategies to enhance women's participation in the value chain, including the formation of women's clusters, establishment of millet-processing facilities, and the creation of forward and backward linkages (Jeeva et al., 2019). In conclusion, millets, ancient crops with high nutritional value and low agricultural requirements, are experiencing a resurgence due to health concerns associated with wheat and rice consumption. This resurgence presents abundant entrepreneurial opportunities in millet processing and value addition, offering potential for promoting rural livelihoods (Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2021).

MILLETS

Millets are named as – "Shri Ann". In Hindi it is called "*Mota Anaj*". Collective group of small seeds of annual grasses that are grown as grain crops. In India millets are majorly categorized into two parts (Based on size) namely: -

Major Millets: Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Mandua/Ragi)

Minor Millets: Foxtail Millet (Kakum), Kodo Millet (Kodon), Barnyard Millet (Sanwa), Little Millet (Kutki/Shavan), Proso Millet (Chenna/Barri)

Pseudo Millets: Amaranth (Ramdana/ Rajgira), Buckwheat (Kutku)

India has a vast history of using millet in our diet since the Indus Valley Civilization. Millet has also found its place in Kalidasa's legendary literary masterpiece "Abhijana Shakuntalam" for some ritual practices, Purandara Dasa's 'Ragi thandeera' (in Kannada), Kautilya's 'Arthashastra', in Mughal King Jahangir's favourite food too. Millet is found across the length and breadth of countries, with a vast diversity of preparing it, to celebrating it. But slowly it disappeared from our plate, diet, vision, taste and finally from the kitchen.

HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

The development of agriculture in India has been shaped by various historical and ideological factors. During the pre-colonial era, India's agricultural practices were aligned with local needs, but the influence of the East India Company led to a shift towards meeting the demands of colonial powers, particularly England. This Eurocentric approach continued after India gained independence, with conflicting ideologies regarding development. The first five-year plan focused on the primary sector, while the second plan

emphasized rapid industrialization, reflecting a capitalist outlook.

The introduction of the green revolution, led by Norman Borlaug and M.S. Swaminathan, brought about significant changes in agricultural practices through the introduction of high-yielding seeds, which increased food production and self-sufficiency. However, this also led to the widespread adoption of capitalist farming and mono-crop culture, which has resulted in negative outcomes over time. As we continue to navigate the challenges of feeding a growing population, it's important to consider the long-term implications of our agricultural practices.

MILLET IN CONTEMPORARY TIME

The decline in the consumption of millets in India can be attributed to several factors, including the prioritization of cash crops and the advent of capitalist farming. Additionally, the Green Revolution's emphasis on increasing production of rice and wheat to address food scarcity further marginalized traditional millet varieties and healthy eating habits.

Amidst these changes, there has been a noticeable shift in consumer preferences for diverse flavors, particularly post-pandemic. Geographical considerations, such as weather patterns, soil types, and irrigation infrastructure, play a crucial role in agricultural and farming practices.

From a geographical perspective, millets are resilient crops that can thrive in a variety of climates and require minimal water. They are also resistant to pests and necessitate fewer fertilizers. Furthermore, millets are environmentally sustainable and can withstand the adverse effects of climate change, making them an ideal source of income for small-scale and marginalized farmers in rural and tribal areas.

India's ranking of 111th out of 121 countries on the Global Hunger Index underscores the severity of its food insecurity. This index evaluates undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality. Consequently, it becomes evident that dietary patterns should be tailored to specific geographical regions and individual needs.

Despite the diverse production of millets across India, globalization, cultural exchange, and lifestyle changes have led to a homogenization of dietary preferences, often prioritizing taste over health. This is reflected in the rise of lifestyle diseases globally.

Millets are a rich source of nutrients, providing essential dietary components such as carbohydrates, protein, fats, and various vitamins and minerals. They are also gluten-free, catering to individuals with gluten allergies. However, compared to other food items with longer shelf lives, millets have a shorter shelf life, making the practical integration of millets into modern lifestyles a challenge.

In addressing these shifts in consumption patterns, it is essential to consider healthy alternatives that align with contemporary living requirements.

Major millet producers' states in India:

Rajasthan (27 per cent), Maharashtra (15 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (14 per cent), Karnataka (13 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (8 per cent), Haryana (7 per cent), Gujarat (7 per cent), Tamil Nadu (4 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (2 per cent), Others (2 per cent).

Major Millet production (India):

Bajra (60 per cent), Jowar (27 per cent), Ragi (11 per cent), Others (2 per cent)

Millet Production in the World:

India (19 per cent), United States of America (11 per cent), Nigeria (9 per cent), China (7 per cent), Ethiopia (7 per cent), Niger (6 per cent), Mexico (5 per cent), Mali (4 per cent), Sudan (4 per cent), Brazil (3 per cent), other countries (25 per cent).

The widespread availability of ready-to-eat (RTE) and ready-to-cook (RTC) millet products in urban markets can significantly impact urban lifestyles. RTE millet products, such as biscuits, papad, snacks, chips, pani-poori, noodles, and laddoo, as well as RTC products like idli mix, millet khichdi, upma, and pizza, have already made an appearance in the market but are limited in distribution. Spreading awareness about these products is crucial.

Changing people's eating habits and providing comprehensive knowledge about the usage of millets in daily diet, including their health benefits, proper cooking methods, and ideal consumption timings according to the seasons, is essential. Proper categorization of millet production into the stages of production, processing, transportation, storage, and marketing is necessary, with a focus on creating opportunities for women from rural and tribal areas in each stage.

India faces an annual food wastage of approximately fifty kilograms per person, with contributing factors including irresponsible eating behavior and a lack of cold storage facilities. Millets, in particular, have short shelf lives, ranging from two to three months for Bajra to just fifteen days for Ragi, necessitating the establishment of cold storage chains for storage, transport, and distribution. This presents an opportunity to address food wastage at the local level and create earning opportunities through the expansion of cold storage facilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the concept of "Work from Home (WFH)" across economic activities. Empowering women who are unable to leave their homes due to domestic responsibilities to work from home can

address unemployment and contribute to economic empowerment. Economic freedom is essential for overall freedom, and enabling women to earn money from home is a significant step in this direction.

RURAL AND TRIBAL WOMEN

The concept of a tribe is characterized by a network of families with a shared name and language, residing in a common territory, and typically not practicing endogamy. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a tribe represents a community that acknowledges the leadership of a chief during a primitive or less advanced stage of development, often tracing their lineage back to a common ancestor. In contemporary society, the line between tribal and rural communities is becoming less distinct, with no absolute boundary in terms of lifestyle, eating habits, and leisure activities. However, specific territory and livelihood remain distinguishing factors of tribes. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs recognizes traits such as distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness from the general population, and backwardness as key features of tribal communities.

Tribal lands have been gradually encroached upon for national development projects, leading to displacement. The resource-rich lands inhabited by tribal communities are essential for industrial development, resulting in their dislocation. This process originated in the colonial era and has persisted into post-independent India, driven by the demands of the capitalist economy.

The lives of tribal communities are uprooted by displacement, bringing them into contact with the rest of society. In the early years of independence, there were debates on the integration of tribals into the mainstream. Various viewpoints, such as isolation for preservation of uniqueness and complete integration with the mainstream, were discussed. A middle path, termed "Tribal Panchasheel," was proposed by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasizing selective integration.

The increased visibility of tribal communities and their voices through various forms of communication has led to greater awareness. However, substantial efforts are still required to translate this awareness into tangible improvements for them.

Women in tribal communities experience similar challenges irrespective of social categorizations. They bear a "triple responsibility" encompassing reproductive, productive, and community management roles. With increased migration, female labor dominates agriculture, yet social security remains inadequate. While government plans provide some relief, much more needs to be done to alleviate their hardships.

Five key indicators significantly affect women in tribal communities:

education, employment, health, political representation, and food security. Addressing these factors is crucial for improving the lives of tribal women.

Let's see the population of tribal and rural women in major millet-producing states in India:

Table 1.1 Rural and Tribal Population

State	Tribal Population	Rural Population	Multi-dimensionally Poor	Female Worker Population Ratio (Female WPR)
Rajasthan	8.90 %	75.13 %	15.31 %	37.6
Maharashtra	10.10 %	54.78 %	7.81 %	37.7
Uttar Pradesh	0.6 %	77.73 %	22.93 %	17.2
Karnataka	4.1 %	61.43 %	7.58 %	31.7
Madhya Pradesh	14.70 %	72.37 %	20.63 %	37.2
Haryana	-	34.88 %	7.07 %	14.7
Gujarat	8.60 %	57.40 %	11.66 %	30.7
Tamil Nadu	1.1 %	51.60 %	2.20 %	38.3
Andhra Pradesh	8.60 %	66.64 %	6.06 %	37.6
India	8.6 %	65 %	18.7 %	28.7

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND WOMEN

The current literacy rate for women is 65.46%, with an even lower rate of 49.35% among tribal females. This disparity is influenced by factors such as poverty, lack of parental engagement, and language barriers between teachers and students. Additionally, limitations in educational infrastructure and services in certain locations play a significant role in hindering access to education. To address these issues, women in rural and tribal areas require not only basic education but also digital literacy, including skills for utilizing e-commerce and internet banking platforms.

Rural and tribal women face limited employment opportunities due to lower levels of education and inadequate skills. This is exacerbated by factors such as land ownership limitations and occupational categories specific to tribal communities, which restrict their ability to explore alternative livelihoods. As a result, there is a need for skill development and diversified economic opportunities tailored to these communities.

The health status of women in rural and tribal areas is concerning, with high percentages of women experiencing low BMI, anemia, and hypertension. Contributing factors include limited health infrastructure, poor nutrition, and gender-based inequities, such as unequal access to food within families. Addressing these health challenges requires targeted interventions and improved access to healthcare services in these regions.

Efforts to promote gender equality have seen progress, particularly through the reservation of one-third of Panchayat seats for women. However, challenges remain in ensuring effective representation for tribal women and addressing the disparities in the implementation of welfare schemes. Overcoming these challenges requires action to mitigate bureaucratic hurdles, improve communication, and raise awareness about the rights and opportunities available to women in rural and tribal areas.

The interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is evident in the intersecting issues of responsible consumption and production, reduced inequalities, and good health and well-being. Addressing these complex challenges requires a holistic approach that integrates efforts across different SDG goals, from grassroots initiatives to broader systemic changes.

MILLET MARKET AND ASSOCIATED OPPORTUNITIES

The millet market is projected to grow from $9.9 billion in 2020 to $14.14 billion in 2028, with Asia and Africa being the biggest producers and consumers. In 2021, global millet exports reached $470 million, with India exporting millets worth $75.46 million in 2022-23. There is a need to enhance value-added millet products and improve their availability through local vendors, supermarkets, and eCommerce platforms. Currently, the share of millet exports is minimal, but efforts by major companies like Mayoora Foods, Navan Foods, LLC, Sydler India Pvt. Ltd., and Nestle S.A. are underway.

The challenge lies in making millet products more accessible and affordable, from snacks to ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook categories. Moreover, millet cultivation can address agricultural waste and provide fodder for animal husbandry, offering economic benefits to rural and tribal populations. To promote millet consumption, efforts should include integrating traditional and modern cooking methods, increasing availability in schools, workplaces, and malls, and offering affordable millet products. Additionally, initiatives focusing on animal husbandry and agricultural bioproducts can provide employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

It is essential to leverage government programs and policies targeting rural women empowerment and inclusive agricultural development. Addressing the challenges of rural migration and feminization of agriculture is crucial to achieving India's economic goals and UN Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the establishment of dedicated research institutes, such as the National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha, underscores the commitment to advancing women's roles in agriculture.

It's important to highlight several key government programs aimed at supporting the empowerment and well-being of women and vulnerable communities in remote areas. These programs include the Prime Minister's

Employment Generation Program (PMEGP), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Deen Dayal Upadhayay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY), Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK), National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), Jal Jeevan Mission, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), POSHAN Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Tribal Sub Plan, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh, Working Women Hostel, and many more.

In addition to these programs, it's crucial to emphasize the significance of Articles 14-16, Article 46, 330, and 332, as well as the support for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). While these initiatives are essential, it is imperative to ensure continuous evaluation, strong support, and widespread awareness of these programs. It is also vital to have public officials at the grassroots level who are sensitive to local culture, language, and needs. Furthermore, involving the public in the policy development process is essential for the successful implementation of these programs.

WOMEN IN MILLETS (SUCCESS STORIES)

1. Anjamma Nadimidoddi, a 63-year-old Dalit farmer from Gangwar village in Sanga Reddy district, has garnered international acclaim through her inclusion in the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) global case studies. Anjamma is a staunch proponent of achieving self-sufficiency in food, seed production, and cultivation.

2. Dr. Sharmila Oswal, known as the 'Proud daughter of the soil' and 'The Millet Mom', is an agro-water diplomat from MIT Harvard. She is also the founder of the NGO "Green Energy Foundation". Dr. Oswal has been actively involved in India's Millet Mission, promoting the benefits of regenerative crops and working towards a sustainable future.

3. Lahari Bai, a member of the Baiga Tribe in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, has established a small millet seed bank in her house. She recently represented her community as a millet brand ambassador in the G20 Agriculture Working Group Meeting, bringing attention to the importance of millet farming and consumption.

4. Shauravi Malik and Meghana Narayan are the co-founders of Slurrp Farm (Wholesome Foods), which was established in 2015 in New Delhi. Their initiative focuses on promoting nutritious and sustainable food options.

5. Sanjeeta KK founded OGMO Foods in 2018 in Chennai. The name 'OGMO' stands for the organic move, reflecting her commitment to providing organic food options to consumers.

6. Krishna Kantthawala, hailing from a traditional Gujarati business

family, is the founder of Smart Eleven, a Pune-based start-up that specializes in millet-based food products. His venture aims to popularize millets as a healthy food choice.

7. Shilpi Bhandari, a chartered accountant by profession, founded Boutique Foods with the goal of reintroducing millets to households across India. Her initiative focuses on creating awareness about the nutritional and environmental benefits of incorporating millets into the diet.
8. The list of individuals contributing to the promotion and cultivation of millets in India goes on, showcasing the widespread interest and efforts in this area.

COMMUNITIES IN MILLETS

In 1963, farmers from Gahat and Skrang initiated a biodiversity assessment experiment focusing on rice varieties. Currently, they have amassed over 2,000 rice accessions and are particularly interested in developing varieties with enhanced pest and disease tolerance in response to climate change. Moreover, there is a growing interest in establishing a community-managed seed bank to address seed storage concerns (King, Kumar & Padulosi, 2015). The revitalization of the Burlang Yatra, an Indigenous community seed festival in Odisha, India, not only serves as a platform for building relationships and promoting adaptation and responsibility but also offers valuable insights into community self-organization within a marginalized context (Saxena, 2020). In India, the National Food Security Mission has been actively promoting millet crops to bolster food security and sovereignty. The resurgence of millet cultivation in Nagaland and Odisha has been community-driven, particularly involving women, with the aim of creating new markets and empowering women as producers and processors. Qualitative research indicates that women play a significant role in millet cultivation and processing, although they bear disproportionate work burdens without equivalent financial gains (Bedamatta & Talukdar, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The history of millet stretches back through the ages, having been a staple in remote areas in its traditional form for centuries. With the advancement of medical technology, our life expectancy has seen a remarkable increase from 35.21 years in the 1950s to 70.42 years in 2023, marking a significant achievement. The data released in the National Family Health Survey – 5 provides encouraging insights into the empowerment of women across various indicators, including home-based production and increased accessibility to the nearest centers for women. It is essential to carefully categorize the entire process, favoring a flexible work process over rigid time divisions seen in today's automated factories. The social security measures implemented by the government for women have undeniably made a positive

impact, though it is important to recognize that women are not a homogenous category, particularly when considering rural and tribal women.

Women residing in rural areas, including those within tribal communities, often bear the weight of their societies, whether it be through their labor on farms, in forests, and within homes. With the world's largest population and an average age of 29 years, there is an opportunity to harness the demographic dividend by investing in human resources. Millets represent just one of the many viable options available, yet they hold significant promise. The efforts of the Indian government culminated in the celebration of 2018 as the "National Year of Millets" and 2023 as the "International Millet Year," signaling a commitment to highlighting the importance of this crop.

An empowered woman is key to creating an empowered society. Research has suggested that financially independent women tend to exhibit increased vigilance towards their children's health and education, and as their income rises, they focus on improving their standard of living. For too long, women from rural and tribal areas have been overlooked, and there remains a stark contrast between those who have left to pursue education and employment opportunities and those who remain behind due to various limiting factors. The resulting impact has often been inferior for those who have not been able to leave these areas.

It is crucial to bridge the gap between urban and rural, allowing this distinction to remain rooted in geography rather than becoming a source of stigma. Choices, not compulsion, should define the living circumstances of those within rural and tribal areas. Our focus should center on providing quality resources and opportunities to these communities, fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity within the nation.

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Lilika K Zhimomi and Papiya Dutta

NOT JUST ANOTHER FESTIVAL : REFLECTIONS ON AGRICULTURAL FESTIVALS OF SUMI NAGA

Abstract

This study investigates the significance of the two main agricultural festivals observed by the Sumi Naga tribe, an indigenous group living in the Zunheboto district of Nagaland, North East India. Agriculture is fundamental to the Sumi tribe's socio-cultural dynamics, influencing various elements of their economic and social life. The study explores the cultural, social, and economic significance of these agricultural festivals in the Sumi Naga community. Despite variances in practises and customs among clans, agriculture remains a unifying element among the Sumi Naga. Festivals offer a break from the year-round toil in the fields and encourage social harmony, feasting, and forgiving others while also praying for divine blessings on the forthcoming harvest. Using a functionalist theoretical framework, the study emphasises the interconnectivity and interdependence of social structures within the Sumi Naga culture. Festivals facilitate to maintain a feeling of identity, build social cohesion within the community, and preserve cultural legacy. Understanding the core of these events offers insights into the rich traditions and practises of the Sumi Naga people as well as their lasting ties to agriculture. The study emphasises how crucial it is to maintain these customs in order to safeguard the tribe's history, ethnicity, and cultural identity while fostering its continued growth.

Keywords: *Sumi Naga Agricultural festivals, Indigenous community, Socio-cultural dynamics, Cultural heritage, Social cohesion*

Introduction

Agricultural festivals hold profound significance in many indigenous societies, serving not only as a means to celebrate harvests but also as pivotal moments that reinforce cultural identity, social cohesion, and economic stability. Among the Sumi Naga tribe of the Zunheboto district in Nagaland, North East India, these festivals play a crucial role in sustaining their agrarian lifestyle and preserving their rich cultural heritage. The Sumi Naga, known for their historical chieftainship and association with headhunting, have long been recognized as an agrarian community where land and agriculture are

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integral to their socio-economic framework and worldview. For the Sumi Naga, land is perceived as a divine gift from God, intertwined with both spiritual and material significance, which helps shape their identity, sense of belonging, and communal life (Achumi, 2005). The Sumi Naga people are primarily engaged in agriculture, and their daily activities revolve around farming. Each day begins and ends with agricultural tasks, making it an intrinsic part of their existence. Despite some geographical and climatic variations, such as the division of the tribe into "*ghabo*" (hotter regions) and "*ajou*" (cooler regions), agriculture continues to unite the Sumi Naga across clan divisions. Historically, the tribe has been classified into the *Tuku* and *Swu* clans, with the *Swu* being regarded as the oldest and the progenitor of the various sub-clans. This connection to the land and agriculture is a shared cultural thread that binds the community, ensuring the continuation of their practices and rituals, including their agricultural festivals. These festivals are much more than a celebration of harvests; they are essential socio-cultural institutions. The two major agricultural festivals—*Ahuna* and *Tuluni*—mark significant moments in the agricultural cycle and act as symbolic representations of the tribe's relationship with the land. *Ahuna*, celebrated after the harvest in November, is a festival of thanksgiving and preparation for the coming agricultural cycle, while *Tuluni,* celebrated in July, coincides with the sowing season, representing the hope for a successful harvest. Both festivals involve elaborate rituals, communal feasting, and prayers, where the tribe seeks divine blessings for their crops and livelihoods.

Drawing on the functionalist theory, these festivals play essential roles within the Sumi Naga society by fostering social order, unity, and stability (Madgwick, 1936; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). Functionalism emphasizes the interdependence of social institutions, and the festivals reflect this principle by connecting various aspects of the tribe's social life. First, these festivals provide the community with a structured opportunity to take a break from the physically demanding agricultural work. This respite from labor enables the tribe members to come together, encouraging social cohesion through shared celebrations. The gathering of families and clans during these festivals strengthens interpersonal ties, promotes reconciliation, and encourages collective responsibility within the tribe. The feasts, rituals, and communal activities serve as bonding mechanisms, reinforcing the unity and harmony within the community. Second, the festivals serve as a conduit for preserving the tribe's cultural heritage. The rituals and ceremonies performed during these occasions act as cultural repositories, transmitting the Sumi Naga's traditions, customs, and values from one generation to the next. These festivals are a key avenue through which the tribe's younger members learn about their ancestral practices, cultural identity, and connection to the land. This passing of knowledge ensures the preservation of indigenous agricultural practices, beliefs, and the tribe's history, which is especially significant in the face of modern influences and the gradual decline of traditional ways of life

(Hutton, 1921). Third, the economic dimension of these festivals is equally significant. Since agriculture is the primary means of sustenance for the Sumi Naga, these festivals are intrinsically linked to agricultural productivity. *Ahuna* and *Tuluni* offer the tribe an opportunity to seek divine intervention for a bountiful harvest and protection from natural calamities. The festivals are believed to invoke God's blessings on the crops and agricultural practices, which underscores their functional role in the tribe's economic well-being. Through prayers and offerings, the tribe expresses gratitude for the past harvest while seeking assurances for future agricultural success. The functional value of these festivals lies in their ability to sustain the tribe's agricultural economy by aligning spiritual practices with farming cycles, thereby reinforcing the tribe's dependence on agriculture for their livelihood (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). Moreover, these festivals provide a platform for reinforcing communal solidarity. The collective participation in rituals, feasts, and cultural performances during *Ahuna* and *Tuluni* enhances social bonding and strengthens the social fabric of the Sumi Naga community. In this sense, these festivals serve as more than just religious or agricultural events—they are vital instruments of social cohesion and unity, fostering peace and reconciliation within the tribe. The communal nature of these festivals also ensures that every member of the tribe, regardless of age, gender, or social status, participates in the celebrations, further strengthening the collective identity of the Sumi Naga people.

The importance of these festivals is heightened by the challenges facing the Sumi Naga community today. As younger generations show less interest in agriculture and traditional practices, and as modernization encroaches upon indigenous ways of life, the festivals play a crucial role in maintaining the tribe's cultural resilience. The need to preserve and adapt traditional agricultural practices, including the use of indigenous agricultural implements, is essential to the tribe's long-term sustainability. Although the Sumi Naga continue to celebrate these festivals with fervor, there is a growing need to integrate modern agricultural knowledge with indigenous practices to ensure the tribe's economic and cultural survival. Thus, this paper aims to examine the cultural and socio-economic relevance of *Ahuna* and *Tuluni,* the two major agricultural festivals of the Sumi Naga tribe. By understanding these festivals' roles within the broader social structure of the tribe, this study seeks to highlight the importance of preserving indigenous practices and the enduring connection between the Sumi Naga people and their agricultural heritage. Through an ethnographic lens, this paper will explore the historical roots of these festivals, their role in shaping the social dynamics of the tribe, and the ways in which they have adapted to changing times.

Methods

The present paper is an ethnographical study of the Sumi tribe of Nagaland focusing specifically on the agricultural festivals as practiced by them

in the early days while highlighting its transition over the years. An exploratory research method was adopted wherein a personal interview was conducted backed by a Focussed Group Discussion to collect and verify the required information. The tools for data collection include an unstructured interview schedule, audio recorder, and FGD. The respondents of the study were divided into two categories- one, respondents for personal interviews, and second, respondents for FGD. Four elderly tribesmen from the Sumi community of Zunheboto district of Nagaland were extensively interviewed using an interview schedule and an audio recorder. After which FGD comprising of twelve elderly tribesmen also from Zunheboto district was conducted where the verification of the recorded data was done. The authors have also procured data from various written sources in the form of books written by the native researchers and authors, which has been duly acknowledged in the references.

Significance of Agriculture among the Sumis

The agricultural practices of the Sumi tribes like all the other Naga tribes are guided by Indigenous Knowledge Systems which have been in practice that dates back to the origin or the introduction of agriculture itself. As the land is considered a gift from God, the utility of land is carefully monitored. The Sumi indigenous people were originally nature worshippers. As pointed out by J. H. Hutton (1921) they were said to be 'Animists'. The people believed in the existence of a supreme God whom they referred to as *'Alhou'* (or *Timilhou*) who is considered to be the creator of life on earth, interfering little in the affairs of man. They also believed in the existence of *'Tüghami'* an evil spirit with a supernatural power that was said to have existed in various forms, beneficent only when propitiated otherwise harmful. Hence people often try to please it on every possible occasion to prevent it from incurring any harm. The farmers observe *gennas* time and again in an effort to propitiate the spirits(Nekha, 2015). And so, the completion of the rites and rituals provides a sense of security to the farmer allowing them to carry on with their agricultural activities with relief. Otherwise, any and all causes of misfortunes are implicated as the act of the evil spirit. Therefore, it was said that, before the commencement of any activities, rituals are performed to please the spirit so that it stays in their favour. This paragraph reveals how the Sumi tribal farmers live attached to agriculture, not only by physical engagement day in and out but also by investing spiritually and socially.

Like various other aspects of life, the yearly calendar followed by the Sumi tribe is entirely determined by the agriculture system and process practiced by them in *Jhum* cultivation(Chishi, 2009a). Sumis are predominantly an agricultural tribe, their way of life is mostly centred around agriculture either directly or indirectly. The yearly calendar followed by the Sumi tribe is divided based on the various stages of cultivation where the months are classified by the nature of work performed by them in *Jhum* cultivation.

Months of the year followed by the Sumi Naga

- *Liphi qhi*/December: The Sumi agriculture year starts with the month *Liphi qhi* / December because the first *Jhum* cultivation activity is performed in this month. '*Liphi'* refers to the "clearing of the paddy stalk" which was previously cultivated and '*qhi*' meaning 'month'. This operation is performed mostly by the womenfolk in the month of December.
- *Lu-u qhi*/January: On the second month, *"Alu iva"*('*Alu'* meaning 'field' and *'iva'* meaning 'clearing') is performed, i.e, the jungle is cleared for cultivation purposes. It is not absolutely known as to why the term *Lu-ü* is used to address the second month of a year, however, it is speculated to have derived from the word *'Alu'* meaning 'field' and *'aqhi'* meaning month, hence the term '*Lu-u qhi'*.
- *Suphu qhi*/ February: Millet or *asü* is one of the major crops cultivated by early Sumis. In this month *'asü'*(millet) is prepared for the seedling. Since this operation is done in the third month (February), the month is called *Suphu qhi*.
- *Lusa qhi*/ March: The term *Lusa* is a combination of two words *'Lu'* meaning 'field' and *'sa'* meaning 'cleaning/clearing'. The branches of the burned trees are trimmed, the unwanted leftovers are cleared and the seeds beds are prepared for sowing the paddy seeds this month.
- *Ghixu qhi*/ April: *'Ghixu'* is a combination of two words *'aghi'* meaning 'paddy' and *'xu'* meaning 'sowing'. On this month the seeds of paddy are sown in the field, therefore this month is called *Ghixu qhi*.
- *Moza qhi*/ May: *Moza* refers to the clearing of weeds in the field. Since the clearing of weeds is done this month. The month of May is known as *Moza qhi*.
- *Amuha qhi*/June: *Amuha* refers to the state of poverty or scarcity, which falls in the month of June. This is the period when the harvest of the previous year is all exhausted while the harvest of the current year is yet to be procured.
- *Ani qhi*/July: *Ani* means 'available' or 'sufficient'. It is the month when supplementary crops like cucumber, pumpkin, beans, corn, etc are harvested. It is also the month where the *'Tuluni'* also known as *'Anih'* one of the most significant festivals of the Sumi is observed. It falls in the month of July.
- *Saghi qhi*/August: *'Saghi'* literally means 'to bring'. On this month *Asü* (millet) and other vegetation are harvested and brought home, hence the name *Saghi qhi.*

- *Amutha qhi*/September: The tenth month is called *Amutha qhi* named after the 'first reaper', *'Amuthau'*. The *Amuthau* brings home the first paddy harvest after performing certain rituals that month, hence the name.
- *Ghile qhi*/October: *'Ghile'* means 'harvest' in the Sumi dialect. The paddy is harvested this month, thus the month is called *Ghile qhi*.
- *Ahuna qhi*/November: After all the harvested paddy is brought to the village, the Sumis observe an important festival known as *'Ahuna'* which marks the end of the current agricultural season and thereafter starts preparing for the next season.

As it is seen in the above description, the months of the year as followed by the Sumi Nagas were determined by the agricultural activities. Even now the farmers of the hill would be seen following this order in respect to agriculture. This shows how agriculture is engrained in the minds of the people.

Agriculture system and Social hierarchy

The social fabric of the Sumi indigenous community was found to be very tight-knit with agriculture. Even the administrative structures of the village to some extent were in a way determined by agriculture(Chishi, 2009b). For instance, the role of an individual during agricultural activities determined his/her position in the village. Furthermore, the size of land cultivated, and the number of livestock owned by a family also influence an individual's position in the village. In the early Sumi villages, the order of the village affairs was regulated by the elders based on the hierarchy that consists of the *Akükau* (the village chief) at the top, who is the head of the village: all decisions pertaining to the village administration or any issue concerning the village and its people are taken by him and his verdict is considered just and final. The next in line is the *Awou/Aruu* or the priest, who is responsible for performing all the major rites and rituals, especially during the agricultural period; he is a close aid to the chief who consults him in various crucial matters of the village. The next is the *Amuthau* also known as 'the first reaper' for he takes the first pick or cut, of any crop that is to be harvested. He takes charge in absence of *Awou*. His role is to perform rites during the first cut of the harvest. Then comes *Lapwu* (the burier), the one who performs funeral rites. Meat played a very significant role in the Sumi social settings and therefore a man referred to as *Ashiphu* was assigned to look after the arrangements and distribution of meat on occasions when animals are butchered for meat. Another significant member of the village who works as a close aid to the chief is the *Chochou*. He is known as the 'messenger' or 'announcer', he runs errands for the chief and also assists the priest during the rituals. Further, a group of an agricultural working crowd may be found in the Sumi villages consisting of mostly ten to

twenty households known as the *aloji* or the working group. The number of people in the working group in a village depends on the population of the village. The small village would have one or two groups with fewer members whereas big villages would have more groups with more members in each group. The tribal people have this system of working together as groups in the agricultural fields. The group functions during the agricultural season and also during the celebration of the festivals. Soon after the priest commences the agricultural work after the completion of rites at the beginning of the agricultural season, the group members would altogether work in the field of the chief of the village. After the work in the chief's field is completed they move to the next field belonging to their respective group, in this way they take turns to work in the field of each member, helping each other out until the completion of the cycle.

Agricultural rites and rituals

The Sumi's *achineh* ('rites' and 'rituals') may be broadly classified into two forms, one which is believed to be in its original form i.e, *Swu chineh,* and the other which is a simplified form – *Tuku chineh*. The chief priest of the *Swu chineh* is called *Awou* and the priest of the *Tuku chineh* is called *Arüü.* Before the coming of Christianity, the Sumi Nagas used to observe many agricultural rituals almost on each stage of cultivation right from the first agricultural activity (i.e. clearing of the forest for *Jhum* cultivation) till the harvest and the celebration of festivals during and at the end of the harvest. *Jhum* cultivation is the most common agricultural system practiced by the tribe. Though there are many festivals and events observed by the tribe throughout the year such as *Asüyekiphe chine*, *Vesavela*, *Ghixu chine*, *Tuluni*, *Saghini*, *Ghile chine*, *Ahuna, etc.*(Sumi, 2019; Yeptho, 1991); however, many of these have gone out of practice and only two festivals are most popularly observed by all till date, namely- *Tuluni* and *Ahuna*. These festivals have their own significance and are observed at different phases of agricultural activity throughout the agricultural year.

***Tuluni* festival**

Tuluni is one of the most significant festivals of the Sumis celebrated to mark the harvest of the first fruit. It is observed when there is an abundance of vegetation and therefore it is also known as *'ani'* meaning 'available' or 'sufficient' implying the availability of crops in bounty. The festival is observed during the last quarter of the moon in the month of *Aniqhi* (July). This festival is not only an agricultural festival but it has a social bearing as well. Social, in a sense that it brings together friends and foes under one roof enabling them to work out their differences and make amend. This festival also gives an opportunity to the young men to approach the parents of their love interest seeking the hand of their daughter in marriage.

The festival was said to originally observed for seven days. The *Awou* (the priest) proclaims the commencement of the festival by making an announcement which is followed by performing certain rites and rituals. The first day of the festival is called *Asuzani*. The term *Asuzani* literally means cleaning and soaking of *asü* (millet). On the first day, the millet is cleaned and soaked as a process of fermentation for wine preparation. Since millet takes longer to ferment it is soaked ahead so that it gets ready to be consumed by the day of the *Tuluni* feast. The second day is known as *Aghizani* meaning cleaning and soaking of rice. The rice is cleaned and soaked on this day as a process of fermentation for preparing rice wine to be consumed on the day of the *Tuluni* feast. The third day is called *Ashigheni* meaning 'meat butchering' where the livestock are butchered at different capacities (typically pork and beef). Each household who can afford would slaughter a pig or *Mithun*, and gift the meat to the chief, the priest, neighbours, the betrothed family, and also to their apparent foes and to those who have been hurt by them in the past. This piece of meat serves as a symbol of peace and reconciliation between the foes and therefore refusing the meat is regarded as a taboo, acceptance of which brings peace and harmony. On this day the households belonging to different working groups or the *Aloji* would also cut pork and beef, and distribute it to the *Akükau*, *Awou*, *Amuthau,* and other persons of influence who are considered affluent in the society. The people also exchange among themselves the harvest of the first fruit which includes meat as well, depending on the person's social status and capability. Further, the chief and the rich would give alms to the poor and old age in the form of rice, vegetable, and meat. It is made sure that each and every household in the village receives a piece of meat at the end of the day. The fourth day is called *Anighini*; the day of feast i.e. the day of *Tuluni* feast. This day is observed in multiple ways simultaneously. On this day the married couple performs a ritual by preparing liquor and meat which is thrown at the foot of the main post known as *Atsaphi* of the house as an offering to *Litsapa* (a spiritual entity). On one side, the betrothed maid's parents invite the groom-to-be and his friends for lunch or dinner where he is given the chance to impress the girl's parents with his charisma. On being successful, the parents of the groom are invited to the bride's house to initiate the process of marriage. While on the other side, the *Alojimi* (people belonging to a particular *Aloji*) dressed in their best traditional attire gather at an elderly person's house and compete with each other in various traditional games and activities such as folk songs, folk dances and traditional games such as *püxa kuxu* (Competitive jumping sport activity for women), akhetsu küzü (Top spinning), Angukupusu (Spear head kicking), Apukhu *kitiki* (Kick fight)*, Sholupah kitchhe* (Spearing a rolling object)*, etc.* Later that day the villagers gather at the house of the *akükau* where they partake in the mass *Tuluni* feast. The day ends with the elders singing folksongs, narrating tales of the past, and sharing their experiences with the young ones transferring traditions as they sit by the fireplace. The fifth day is called *Mucholani* (*Mucho* meaning

'men folk', *'la'* meaning 'pathway', *'ni'* meaning 'day') or *'Laghephe'* (meaning 'clearing the pathway'). On this day all the menfolk of the village gather early in the morning and clean the pathway of the village leading to the fields. The sixth day is called *Tupulani*. The term *Tupulani* is derived from the native word *"Tupu-ili"* meaning 'youth'. This day is regarded as the day of the youth. On this day the youths of the village both male and female get together and engage in various games and cultural activities such as *püxakuxu*, *angukupusu, akhetsu küzü, apukhu kitiki, etc*. They spend the day joyously merrymaking throughout the day. The seventh day i.e, *Tughakhani* is the last day of the festival. By this day all the rites and rituals are done with. And so, on the seventh day, no rituals are performed to appease the evil spirits. This day marks the completion of all the rituals and thereby shutting evil spirits from causing any harm in the village, hence the name *Tüghakhani* (*'Tügha'* meaning 'Satan', *'kha'* meaning 'block'/'shut' and *'ni'* meaning 'day'). This day marks the end of the observation of the *Tuluni* festival.

Ahuna **festival**

Ahuna is a post-harvest festival celebrated on the twelfth month of the Sumi agriculture calendar i.e, *Ahunaqhi* (November). It is celebrated after the harvest is brought home(Assumi, 2009). *Ahuna* is a festival of thanksgiving. It is usually observed during the full moon night. The term *Ahuna* is derived from the word *'Asupuhu' also known as 'Ahu'* which is a cylindrical vessel made of bamboo. On the day of *Ahuna* the rice is prepared in *Asupuhu* (cylindrical bamboo vessel), hence the name. The term *"Ahuna"* is also believed to have another derivation as expressed by many. It is believed that since on the day of *Ahuna* the rice to be cooked is taken from the upper surface of the storage, hence the term *Ahuna,* here *'Ahu'* means 'upper surface' and *'na'* means 'rice' in the native dialect. Although the festival is celebrated only for a single day its preparation takes a long duration and so the preparation starts ahead of a week or two. Preparation of cylindrical bamboo vessel *"Asupuhu"* is done ahead to be used on the day of the feast. On the day before the festival, the requirements of the festival such as bamboo mats, storage basket, bamboo vessels, bamboo mug, platter, etc. are prepared. On the day of *Ahuna,* all the male members of the village wake up early before the crowing of the rooster, wash their face and mouth with fresh cold water, with the belief that by doing so they would receive the blessing of long life from the *Kungulimi* (Angel). During the day the womenfolk soaks the rice, covers it with a plantain leaf, and put it into a bamboo vessel which is then cooked by placing it in a fire or charcoal. This cooked rice is called *Ahuna* ('*Ahu*' meaning 'bamboo vessel' and '*na'* meaning 'rice'). On this day all the utensils to be used must be newly made and all the old ones are kept aside. The liquors are brewed and drank from a bamboo vessel. After finishing the liquor the *Awou* performs a ritual by splitting the bamboo vessel horizontally into two parts, if the bamboo is cut clean it is believed to be a good omen, if not, it is believed that illness and bad health

would prevail in the coming year. Further, the bamboo is thrown up in the air, if the bamboo land with both the parts on the same side it is considered a good omen, but if the two parts land on the opposite side it is considered a bad omen. After partaking in the *Ahuna* feast the villagers or the clansmen gather at the elder's house at night and share their experiences and stories. They would reminisce the past glory and narrate folklores to the young ones. They spent the night joyously merrymaking, singing, and dancing. This festival marks the end of the agricultural season and the year as well, according to the Sumi agricultural calendar. Post celebration the villagers go to the river and clean their body, clothes, and tools and keep it ready for the next agricultural season.

Transitions observed

In the early years, the day of celebration depended entirely on agricultural activity. The Sumi Nagas being spread broadly in two regions; *ghabo* and *ajou,* those living in the *ghabo*/warmer region observe the festival earlier than those living in the *ajou*/colder region. However, with the change in climatic conditions and gradual transition of occupation from primary to secondary and tertiary, it was revealed that the day of observation of the festival has been decided to be held on a common day for Sumi all over. Hence, the community assigned the 8th of July (*Ani ghi*) and the 14th of November (*Ahuna ghi*) as the common day of celebration for *Tuluni* and *Ahuna* respectively. Although the festivals are no longer observed in their truest sense, they are still observed with colourful activities that exhibit the rich cultural heritage of the tribe. The activities that are being continued include folksong, folk dance, traditional games, and other cultural activities. People participate in these activities individually or in groups and compete with each other, with the winner being rewarded popularly with meat in the past and money in the present. All, young and old must wear traditional attire on this day, falling which would invite certain repercussions. In fact, though at present, *Tuluni* is observed only for a day i.e., 8th July, it has been made mandatory for all the Sumis to wear at least one piece of traditional attire for the entire week, defying which the defaulter would invite a penalty. All the activities occupy an important place in the celebration since they had a significant bearing on the lives of the Sumi forebears and are today regarded as a significant part contributing to the preservation and transmission of the cultural heritage. With the change in time, there has been a variation or rather a transition in the observation of these festivals. The festival is now celebrated more as a remembrance of the old practices or more as an obligation to follow the tradition. Further, with the coming of Christianity, the observation of these festivals has undergone tremendous change especially in performing rites and rituals. Performing rites and rituals on every occasion to propitiate the spirits no longer are continued; it has been replaced by a Christian prayer initiated by the priest on every occasion. The role of the traditional priest has been taken over by the Christian priest and so, at present with the decline of the

role, the traditional priests have ceased to exist in most of the villages. The festivals are now mostly organised by various cultural committees or groups with the aim of ensuring the continuation of practices through the celebration. In matters of traditional marriage leading from these festivals, some wait for the day to introduce their to-be-spouse to the parents. While many couples get engaged to their betrothed on the occasion of *Tuluni* as a sign of respect as well as acknowledging and reliving the age-old tradition. Further, the invitation of a son-in-law by the in-laws is one tradition followed by all. As many people have diverted from the traditional agriculture practice, the festival that started as a part of agricultural activity now has transitioned more towards social activity, bringing the community together under one platform. In the era of globalisation, the shift in the occupation from agriculture to the manufacturing and service sector is unavoidable. Further, with the advance in transport and communication systems, these festivals are no longer confined to the Sumi community alone. People from other tribes also take part in the celebration where the interchange of cultural items takes place establishing inter-tribal relationships and spreading the message of brotherhood, peace, and friendship ultimately realizing the significance of the festivals.

Significance of the festivals to the community:

- In the absence of written records and with the discontinuation of traditional learning systems, these festivals play the most crucial role in carrying forward the cultural and traditional knowledge and practices of the community to the next generation.
- All major indigenous festivals of the Sumi are directly associated with agriculture. The idea of sharing the historical accounts, such as their struggle and accomplishment helps instil among the younger generation the culture of hard labour and a sense of consciousness to carry forward the values.
- Unlike the early years, these festivals are now observed on a given common day i.e. eight of July for *Tuluni* and fourteen of November for *Ahuma.* This allows every member of the community to plan ahead and make the celebration possible for everyone to come together, gather with their fellow tribesmen and observe the festival irrespective of their occupation and location keeping the tradition alive.
- With the change in time and with the coming of Christianity, changes, as well as transition in these festivals, have been observed. However, the continued celebration of the festival allowed even some old and obsolete practices to be remembered and acknowledged.
- Lastly, these two festivals play a vital role in igniting the sense of belonging, of unity, of identity, of harmony, and of brotherhood among the tribesmen. It creates space for enhancing social harmony and

strengthening the cultural identity of the people of the community.

Conclusion

As evident in the above discussion, festivals form an important part of the life of a tribal community. It provides an occasion for exchanging values and beliefs among the members of the community. Truly, festivals connect people to their roots; establish cultural identity thereby offering a sense of belonging culturally, socially, and geographically(Sumi, 2019). Festivals are observed at different levels under various themes such as cultural, religious, social, political, recreational, etc. Although the practice of the festival may have lost its truest essence along the way, retaining the tradition of observing such festivals has become a necessity as an instrument of reminiscing and maintaining the rich cultural heritage and ultimately preserving the very identity of the community. Such events bring people together in one place which may not necessarily be at the chief's or an elder's place or anyone's home for that matter, however, what matters now is the intention, the spirit of integrity, and connecting people who share the common cultural root and origin. These festivals in their truest senses had an intense bearing on the conduct and values of the life of the people, which is somewhat lost over the years. However, the observation of such festivals even in their transitional state is still bringing people together under one roof sharing meals and exchanging gifts and also ideas and experiences, and the tales of the past glory that contributes to instilling basic moral values such as social solidarity, tranquillity, and cohesiveness among the community. Hence, the observation and continuity of these festivals are essential for understanding the history, origin, ethnicity, culture, and tradition of the tribe ultimately contributing to the growth and progress without compromising the precious cultural heritage and identity of the tribe.

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