D.V. Prasad

CONTESTING IDENTITIES AS ADAPTIVE STRATEGY: A STUDY ON PANIKA OF MADHYA PRADESH

Abstract

The criteria for identification of a tribe is always a debatable issue with the dynamic interaction of ethnic communities and the mainstream population. Population growth coupled with an expansion of agriculture led to the mobility of different ethnic groups across their ethnic boundaries and settled in fertile plain areas. As a result of prolonged contact with neighbouring groups, indigenous communities started emulating peasants' lifestyle, economy, belief systems, customs and traditions to avoid subjugation and to avail the benefits of the mainstream. In India, too, tribal communities are facing an identity crisis as some scholars are trying to assimilate them into the Hindu fold. At the same time, others argued in favour of a distinct identity based on cultural survival. The Panika community in central India was not exceptional as they face an identity conundrum of tribe and caste. With the impact of acculturation, Panika's cultural practices are in the process of transformation and integration with the beliefs and practices of neighbouring tribal communities such as Gond, Dhulia, Baiga, and caste groups such as Kewat, Thakur, Yadav, etc. The cultural emulation is evident from the worship of gao gossain (common village deity) and performance of agricultural festivals, that is, bidri, haryali, jawara, Lakshmi puja, Govardhan puja, Sant Kabir worship, and so on by the Panika.

Furthermore, social institutions such as Satsang (religious gatherings), Chaukarthi (ceremonial performances), gotra (caste-based clan and lineage), etc., are the outcome of their continuous interaction with neighbouring communities. The gradual peasantisation entices them to absorb the little and great traditions in local contexts, an adaptive strategy. Under these circumstances, the present study tried to understand the contesting identities of Panika based on their current socio-cultural, political and religious practices. It argued how this neo-identity assists in the social adaptation of Panika in the neighbouring dominant group's socio-cultural set-up.

D.V. PRASAD, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi, E-mail: dvprasada@gmail.com

Introduction

The external invasions since the advent of the Indus valley civilization led to the immigration of diverse cultural groups into India. The prolonged cultural contact of foreigners with the inhabiting indigenous population led to the emergence of complex regional systems, eventually spreading to various parts of the country. Thus, India has become a melting pot of diverse cultures and traditions. As a result of state formations, local customs get metamorphosed and assimilated into the invading or dominant cultures. In central India, state formation with the establishment of migrant settlements was encouraged by the Mughals and led to the development of trade routes through forests, the recognition of significant tribes as dominant communities, and the rise of new cities with tribal and non-tribal populations. This resulted in a claim of high status in the local hierarchy, such as Santhals with Kshatriya, Gonds with Rajputs and Bhils with Kshatriyas and Marathas (Singh, 1978, p.1228). The intensive acculturation led to the creation of new institutions such as private property, economy, patriarchy, conflict resolution and religion. This acculturation process was visualized as the absorption of tribes into the Hindu fold and treating them as a part of Hindus (Bose, 1941). Bailey viewed this change process as a tribe-caste continuum in 1970, whereas Surjit Sinha (1965) exemplified it during his study on Hill Maria and Bhumij of Central India.

In line with the established view, scholarly works undertaken by Bose (1967), Sachchidananda (1970), Mahapatra (1976), and Behura (1978 & 1983) demonstrated that the acculturation process among the tribes led to total assimilation observed through traditions, rituals, festivals, social hierarchy and lifestyle. Social norms and operating social institutions are not uniform as each group has its traditional style among different tribal communities.

Contrary to the assimilationists' view, Pathy (1992), Shah (1992), Xaxa (2005) and others argued that mere imitation of a few cultural traits is not sufficient to treat ethnic groups as castes. Besides their cultural emulation, the majority of tribal groups still depend on the forest for the collection of roots, tubers, and minor forest produce and retain cultural survivals such as principles of social organization, origin myths, customary law, etc. The characteristic features of castes, such as purity and pollution, hierarchy, and civic and religious disabilities, are not strictly adhered to by the tribal communities (Xaxa, 1999). In a discourse on the concept of tribe in the National Tribal Policy draft, Srivastava (2008, p.29) supported this argument by stating that assimilation is neither ethically correct nor empirically possible. However, it is a fact that among non-dominating groups, most of the changes occurred at the group as well as individual level as a result of acculturation. Unlike unidirectional change, Berry proposed different strategies of adaptations such as assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization that are resorted to by migrating groups to seek accommodation in plural societies for their survival (1992, p.1-17). Even the minor differences among diverse ethnic groups

can be overcome by sharing local customary practices and traditions to redefine their collective identities (Kumari et al., 2021, p.144). However, identity is viewed as a social, cultural, and political relationship that is often constructed to serve the interests of the dominant class, caste, and other social and cultural groups (Nayak, 2021, p.512).

These considerations are tested in the case of the Panika community, which migrated from Varanasi and Mirzapur of Uttar Pradesh and settled in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and parts of Odisha. Based on their settlement among tribes and castes, Panika adopted the cultural traits along with the mode of production, life cycle and annual rituals, food habits, dress patterns, etc. It is not obligatory on their part to rely entirely on caste communities, especially for socio-economic and ritual purposes that are characterized in the rural *Jajmani* system. They are more inclined towards absorbing tribal character into continuous association with neighbouring majority population groups such as Gond, Baiga, Agaria and Dhulia.

Various names are known as Panika in different parts of India, i.e., *Pan* in Orissa and Chotanagpur; *Panika*, *Chik* and *Ganda* in central provinces. In Madhya Pradesh, the Panika community is recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in Chhatarpur, Panna, Rewa, Satna, Shadol, Umaria, Sidhi, Tikamgarh, Sevda and Datia. However, they were classified into other backward classes in other districts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. According to Russel and Hiralal, Panika belonged to south Mirzapur and described themselves as emigrants of *Bahmandeva* from *Rewa* eight or ten generations ago. Later, they migrated to other parts of the country with various names such as *Pan*, *Panwa*, *Paur*, *Pab*, *Panika*, *Chik*, *Barika*, *Ganda*, *Mahant*, *Sawasi*, *Tanti*, etc. In Mirzapur, they are known as *Panka*, *Panika*, *Pankiya* and *Kotwar*. Out of these, the last name denotes their traditional occupation, i.e., village watchman. It means keeper or porter of a castle (Russel & Hiralal, 1916).

Panka or *Panika* is taken from '*Panik*', an elastic bow (Crooke, 1896). From their physical appearance, Dalton (1872) opined that they belonged to Aryans or Hindus rather than their Dravidian origins by stating that they were the remnants of the Aryan colonies. But based on their exogamous divisions or lineages, Risely (1891) stated that the *Pans* have convincing evidence of the Dravidian origin. Though they lost their totemic sept in Mirzapur, their appearance in central provinces indicates their connections with Dravidians like Majhawars. The folklore collected by Risely states that the first men of Panika were created from *Pani* (water) by *Parameswar*, and appointed him as a water carrier. One day, *Parameswar* sent him to bring the fire. While searching for it, he met Majhawars and shared their food. After returning to *Parameswar*, he taxed him for sharing food with degraded people. He denied the charge, but the Almighty gave him a blow on his back and vomited a significant amount of rice and pulse. Since then, Panika was thrown out of heaven and was lowered down in the social hierarchy went down in the social

hierarchy (Russel & Hiralal, 1916).

The present study divided Panika into two major groups based on territoriality and belief system. The first and original Panika who hails from Kashi and follows animism is Kashipuri or Sakat. Panika came from Mirzapur and followed Kabir's preaching, known as Kabirpanthi Panika. Traditionally, Panika people were engaged in water-carrying tasks and acted as village messengers. Due to historical reasons, every village consists of at least one Panika household to disseminate important information among villagers. The long association with the neighbouring communities has influenced them to imitate the cultural traits of other dominant groups, such as Gond's economic system, marriage pattern, fairs and festivals, folk music, dance, customs and traditions.

In this context, the study is based on Panika habitations, i.e., Bhejari and Thali *Gram Panchayats*, as these Panchayats are inhabited by both groups - Sakat and Kabirpanthi Panika. The study villages come under Pushparajgarh *Tehsil* in the district of Anuppur in Madhya Pradesh state. To locate their present identity, the study examined the worship of *Gaogossain*, *Thakurdeo*, *and Thakurain* and the performance of *Bidri*, *Haryali*, *Khajalayya*, *Kitcharahi*, *Jawaara* and also magico-religious practices to understand the Panika communities' specific cultural habits and how accommodative they are. Additionally, it also examines in what sense they can adopt these rituals and what are their social institutions, such as *Satsang* (religious gatherings), *Chaukarthi* (ceremonial performances), *Gotra* (caste-based clan and lineage), *Samaj* (intra-village council) and *Pal* (inter-village council), as well as the role of patriarchy and how they are played in the domain of socio-political context. The paper tries to understand these contesting identities based on the economy, social structure, ideological system and customary practices through historical and ethnographic analysis.

The study is a qualitative anthropological study and aims to understand the contesting identities of Panika based on their present socio-economic milieu. The primary data was collected through intensive qualitative anthropological techniques, mainly through observation, key informant interviews, questionnaires, and formal and informal interviews. Detailed focused group interviews with older people as crucial informants were conducted to elucidate historical narration such as myths and legends, traditional council and social and organizational structure. The focus was also on the traditional ritual performers and priests to understand the absorption of belief systems with the neighbouring religions.

Study Area and People

According to the 2011 census, the total population of Panika who are recognized as Scheduled Tribe in Madhya Pradesh constitutes 97,767,

representing 49,546 males and 48,221 females, with a sex ratio of 973. Whereas, Panika inhabiting in Anuppur (earlier part of Shadol) district with nearly 30% of the total State Panika population comes to 29,060 having 14,506 males and 14,554 females who live in close proximity with tribal as well as non-tribal caste groups. Keeping in view of their numerical preponderance, the Panika of Bhejari and Thali *Gram Panchayats* of Pushparajgarh *Tehsil* of Anuppur district in Madhya Pradesh was selected. Bhejari *Gram Panchayat* consists of three main villages, i.e., Bhejari, Behpuri and Nunghati, representing the mixed population of castes and tribes, including Sakat and Kabir Panika. Similarly, Thali also consists of three villages, i.e., Thali, Bharni and Sendurkhar. Out of which, Sakat Panika mainly inhabiting in Bharni. Bhejari main village is situated on the Amarkantak-Shadol main road, whereas Thali is situated within a two to three-kilometre radius of Bhejari. Rajendragaon is the nearby *Tehsil* at 18 kilometres from Amarkantak, and the district headquarters, Anuppur, is at 50 kilometres. According to the 2016-17 village census, G*ram Panchayat* of Bhejari consists of a 3,790 population with 870 households, and Thali has a 1499 population with 794 households. The population details of the study *Gram Panchayats* are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Demographic Details of Bhejari and Thali *Gram Panchayats* 2017

Village	Households	Population	Thali	Households	Population
Bhejari	470	2276	Thali	169	822
Behpuri	170	675	Bharni	608	608
Nunghati	230	839	Sendurkhar	17	69
Total	870	3790	Total	794	1499

Source: *Gram Panchayat* Census, 2017

The Panika of Behpuri follows the Kabir sect, which prohibits the consumption of alcohol and non-vegetarian food; the rest of the Panika live in Bhejari and Bharniare. Sakat Panika follows the lifestyle of tribal and other caste communities such as Gond, Baiga, Dhulia, Chandravamsi, Ahir, Nayak, Baniya, Baniya and Brahmin communities. The Panika hamlets are located in a radius of one to three kilometres. Living close to other tribal and non-tribal families has greatly impacted Panika beliefs and customary practices, ultimately leading to the imitation of great traditions of Hindu and religious sects.

Table 2: Distribution of Tribal People and Caste Communities in Study Area, 2017

	Tribe			Caste	
Village	Name of the Community	No. of Households	Village	Name of the Community	No. of Households
Bhejari	Gond	500	Bhejari	Chandravamsi	70
Thali	Gond	200	Thali+Bhejari	Thakur	07+03
Bhejari&Behpuri	Panika	220	Thali	Yadav	04
Bharani	Panika	50	Thali+Bhejari	Chamar	02+06

Bhejari	Dhulia	25	Bhejari	Baniya	14
Bhejari	Baiga	14	Thali	Baniya	07
Bhejari	Agaria	03	Bhejari	Dwivedi	04
Bhejari	Ahir	20	Bhejari	Rajaka	
Bhejari	Manjhi	04	Bhejari	Julaha (Tylor)	01
Bhejari+Thali	Banjara	03+10	Bhejari	Nai (Barber)	02

Source: *Gram Panchayat* Census, 2017

Based on fieldwork observations, no one from the Panika community converses in their mother tongue; instead, they could speak the local language admixture of Hindi and Chhattisgarhi. They use the *Devanagari* script for inter-group and intra-group communication. They can understand the *Gondi* and *Baigini* due to their proximity to Gond and Baiga for several years, but they cannot speak fluently like the natives.

Panika's social organization consists of clans, family, marriage, economy details and political organization of two groups that are mentioned below to understand the present status of the community under study.

Social Organization

Historical antecedents, inhabiting geographical conditions and intermingling with neighbouring ethnic groups and cultures make the distinct social organization of tribal communities. Thus, every tribe constituted several units and institutions (Das, 1953). Similarly, Panika from the study area is divided into consanguine and affinal clans. They follow clan exogamy strictly. For example, *the Sonvani* clan had three consanguine clans, i.e., *Sone*, *Kowra*, *and Kartaha,* where inter-caste marriages are strictly prohibited. They should select marriage partners of other clans, such as *Tandiya*, *Parwar*, *Gwaal*, *Mongri*, *Sooti*, *Baajra*, *Kulariya*, etc., but not of their consanguine clans. Similarly, for the *Bhaghel* clan, *Tendro* and *Bakshal* are consanguine and select spouses from *Sonvani*; for *the Tandiya* clan, *Holkar* and *Alamsahi* are consanguine and select spouses from other ones.

Table 3: Inhabiting Clans of Panika in the Study Area

Village	Existing Clan Groups
Sakat Panika of Bhejari	*Sonvani, Tendro, Tandiya, Parwar, Bhaghel, Dhariya, Kasture, Karayat, Pitaniya, Dharwe, Panadiya, etc.*
Kabir Panika of Behpuri	*Mongre, Bhaghel, Bhimte, Kewara, Parwar, Pandiya.*
Sakat Panika of Bharnai	*Bajra, Mongre, Panariya, Sarivan, Sonwani, Tandiya, Parwar, Karayat, Bhaghel.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Marriage with the maternal uncle's daughter was common earlier, but now there is less inclination towards such alliances due to awareness of inbreeding. Levirate and sororate marriages are minimally practised. Widow remarriage is allowed with the permission of the traditional council. This

principle of social structure is the same in the case of other tribes such as Gond, Dhulia, and Baiga. No intra- and inter-community hierarchy is practised. Sakat is considered slightly superior to Kabir Panika since they have converted to other religious faith and do not strictly follow clan exogamy. Kabir Panika accepts the Sakat girl, but it is not vice-versa. They gather in formal council meetings, marriages and other ceremonial occasions and exchange food. They observe parallel-cousin and cross-cousin marriages. Joint family is on the decline among the Panika. Though they live in nuclear families, cultivation is undertaken jointly. The rule of residence is patriarchal, and monogamy is the predominant form of marriage. Primogeniture is the rule of inheritance in the study area.

Rites of Passage

The social development of Panika is marked by ritual observances during birth, marriage and death. During childbirth, *Nagada*[1] is beaten to mark the birth of a girl or boy child in the Panika family. It is a practice observed in North India to express their happiness to neighbouring households or villagers. Since childbirth is considered a polluted activity, the expecting women are kept in separate rooms. On the eleventh day, the mother is given a ceremonial bath and can move into the main bedroom. On the 13th day, they observe *Baruha.*[2] Depending on the economic status, it is celebrated by inviting relatives. No ceremony is observed while naming the newborn child. However, the well-off families take the child to Amarkantak and celebrate the event or invite Brahmin to their residences to complete the ritual. It is a common practice in the area to invite Brahmin priests and recite the story of Lord Satyanarayana. For a male child, the first solid food is given in the fifth month, and for a female child, it is given in the fourth month. Both Panika groups are following the same procedure of inviting their respective priests, such as *Doshi* for *Sakat* and *Mahant* for Kabir Panika.

In betrothal, Kabir Panika follows tribal customary practices. Groom's relatives initiate the marriage proposal by visiting the prospective bride's house with five coconuts, *paan* leaves and betelnut, along with cooked food such as *Puri* and *Sabji*. The groom's parents, along with his *Jeeja* (paternal uncle) and elderly persons of their lineage, visit the bride's house and stay for a night for marriage negotiations. The acceptance of the marriage proposal is expressed by the consumption of cooked food brought by the groom's relatives; otherwise, as a symbol of rejection, the bride's relatives do not touch that food. In case of acceptance, the elders fix the bride price and the date for marriage in the presence of *Mahant.*[3] there itself. Bride price is given in the form of clothes by Panika, i.e., generally, 15 to 20 *sarees* are demanded by the bride's side to distribute among their close relatives. Besides this, they also take rice, *dal* and oil to feed the groom's side relatives on *Baraat* (marriage procession). The Betrothal process is also similar in the case of Sakat Panika with slight variation,

wherein *Sian*[4] and *Doshi*[5] initiate the process and offer *mahuwa* as a mark of acceptance of the proposal, whereas Kabir Panika avoids alcohol.

The Panika marriage process resembles the Gond marriage ceremony which is officiated by their *Sians* (council members) and *Doshi* (priests). *Tel* (smearing of oil), *Mandap* (erection of pandal), *Baraat* (marriage procession), *Bhavat* (dance with drum beats) and *Vidhai* (farewell to the bride) are the main parts of marriage. *Doliya*[6] assist Panika in completing the marriage ceremony through their traditional *Biraha*[7] songs and music. On marriage day, Brahmin conducts only the main ritual in *Mandap*, whereas Doshi performs the remaining rituals. In the first instance, *Doshi* conducts a small ritual to test the bonding of the groom and the bride by dropping two paddy seeds in a water container. If they come closer, they believe that the nuptial bond is stronger; otherwise, it is considered inauspicious. The custom is observed by Gond, Baiga, and Dhulia also. Sakat Panika also invites Brahmin priests to conduct marriage rituals. For this, Rs. 250/- *Dakshina* (honorarium) is given along with two brass vessels, clothes, half kilogram *dal* and two kilograms of rice. Though Brahmin is invited, the presence of *Doshi* is essential from *Mangini* (betrothal) to *Bidhai* (sending bride to groom's home).

In the case of a funeral, Kabir Panika buries the dead body near their residence or field, irrespective of their age and sex. While burying, they keep the head towards the north, and the legs are kept towards the south. Pollution is observed for ten days. After ten days, they perform *Chaukarthi* at the burial ground wherein areca nut, coconut and incense sticks are offered to the soul and the same is performed at the respective house. This is known as *Mangaldahan*. After one year, they observe *Barakki.*[8] for the peace of the soul. Sakat Panika cremates the older people and buries the children in the earmarked graveyard. Sakat also observe *Dasgatra*[9] on the tenth day and invited Brahmin to *Gangasnan.*[10].

Economic Interdependence

Historically, Panika has pursued the traditional occupation of carrying messages. However, with the growing population, they depend on agriculture, wage labour, animal husbandry, carpentry, and milk vending. All the Panika households in the study area have land and subsist on agriculture. They have also adopted cultivation methods of caste communities like making *Tarahdena* (nursery bed), *Rupai* (replantation), *Nidai* (weed-out), etc. Instead of mixed cropping like tribals, they have a penchant for mono-cropping. They depend on *Lohar* (blacksmith) for agricultural tools, whose services are reciprocated in kind during harvest time. Nowadays, they purchase iron tools in weekly markets by paying money. The cultivation of land is a joint family venture. Individual farming is undertaken in the event of separation of the family on account of marriage or dispute, wherein joint family cooperation is mandatory to execute significant works in the agricultural fields. For the sale of agricultural

produce, they depend on caste communities known as *Galla,* an informal buyer who generally belongs to Baniya, Gupta and Laman or Banjara. Panika approach them to sell part of their harvest whenever they require money.

The service of Agaria is based on *barter* exchange, wherein all the villagers depend on them for making agricultural implements. Agaria repairs a plough butt before the onset of monsoon, and in return, wheat and paddy are accepted at the time of harvest. The charge for making one plough butt is 14 *Kurai*[11] wheat and one *Supa*[12] paddy or *kodo* or *kutki*. Other implements such as sickle, axe, adze and other carpentry tools are also made in exchange for money.

In Bhejari, Rajaka (laundryman) extends his services to all the villagers during the pollution period. During the birth of a child, a girl's menstrual cycle and the funeral, the laundryman cleans the polluted clothes and accepts money, rice, vegetables etc., in return. The services of *Nai* (Barbar) are also utilized during *Baruha* and *Dasgatra* in the form of shaving of head and beard by the bereaved family members and their nearest kith and kin. Furthermore, those who have made a vow to offer the first hair of the children at Amarkantak also hire the services of the *Nai* community. *Dhulia* (basket-making community) provides bamboo articles to the villagers, but cash is paid instantly after availing of their services.

The *Ahir* (Yadav) takes the villager's cattle for grazing. The charge for grazing one cow or buffalo for one year is one and a half or two *Khaadi*[13] of paddy in Behpuri. If a Panika family has 05 cows, they must pay for 200 kilograms of paddy in a year. At *Kanyal*[14], they give one and half *Supa*, *Kodo* or *Kutki* to *Kharighar* (Agaria), *Ahir* (Yadav), and *Vazir* (village messenger) instead of their services.

Samaj **(Intra-Village Council):**

Panika adhere to their traditional council, which is known as Panika *Samaj*. There is no permanent headman at the village level; instead, they are governed by *Sians*. Generally, each village has five to six *Sians,* and their selection is based on heredity. They resolve disputes in the village. Panika, irrespective of age and sex, follow the word of *Sian*. Punishment is awarded by a person who breaches the council rule, ranging from arranging a feast to ex-communication. If anyone breaches the rule of eating non-vegetarian food or consuming alcohol, they face the wrath of *Sian* in the form of a social boycott for one or two years. Later, the guilty are allowed to rectify their deed by offering a community feast only upon the mercy of *Sian*.

Pal **(Inter-Village Council):**

A group of an average of 15 to 20 villages constitutes *Pal,* wherein the *Sians* of the concerned *Pal* villages are the members, and they elect one chief

known as *Bahuran*. Three *Pagbandha* (expert) *Sians* assist him. Currently, the *Sarpanch* of Bhejari officiates *Bahuran* of the concerned *Pal* and is assisted by *Pagbandha Sians* from nearby villages such as Bharani, Barasot (Harratola) and Bhejari.

Table 4: Composition of *Pal* in the Study Area

Sl.No.	Village name	Members
1	Bejhari	2
2	Harratola	2
3	Podi	2
4	Lalpur	2
5	Bijouri	2
6	Pamara	1
7	Bharani	2
8	Thali	1
9	Dunia	1
10	Dakiyatola	1

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Another *pal* ranges from Medakhar to Aachalpur in Pushparajgarh *Tehsil* of Anuppur district. Panika inter-village council deals with inter-village disputes and resolves them through traditional mechanisms. The respective clients bear the expenses like *Mahuwa*, a feast for the present members of *Pal*. Otherwise, contributions are made on common ground issues such as the observance of village festivals. Generally, every year they assemble at one place and discuss the developments of their council. Collective decisions are mandatory for *Pal* meetings. Generally, adultery, elopement, organization of *Guddi puja*[15] or any other matters involving more than one village come under the purview of the *Pal* council. They impose fines in cash, which is used for council maintenance and feasts.

Origin Myths

Though Panika has its origin legends of creation, the impact of Hindu mythology is evident throughout their narration. According to their verbal traditions, nothing existed in the universe in the beginning. Only the supreme god known as *Adipurush* was present. He was alone in the universe and started thinking of creating the world. He created seven continents of the earth through a divine lamp. Simultaneously, the Almighty also created his *ansh* (part) *Kalniranjan* and prayed for 64 *yugas* (age of the world) to create human beings, plants and animals. For this, a place at Mansarovar in Himalaya was selected and created another *ansh Ashtangi,* a daughter of *Adipurush*, for the creation of the world with *Kalniranjan*. As per the instruction of *Adipurush*, *Ashtangi* came to meet *Kalniranjan*. After seeing her beauty, *Kalniranjan* forgot his aim and swallowed *Ashtangi*. Inside the stomach, *Ashtangi* started praying

again for not fulfilling his vow of creation.

Then Almighty sent another *ansh, Jagjheet*, who fought with *Kalniranjan* and removed *Ashtangi* from the abdomen of *Kalniranjan*. After that, *Kalniranjan* did *tapasya* (penance) for 70 *yugas* for the *Beeja* (procreation seeds) to create the universe. The *Adipurush* said that the requisite seeds are with *Kurum* (divine turtle), who had 16 heads and 64 legs and resided in *Paatal* (underground). *Kalniranjan* destroyed three heads of *Kurum*, and from the fourth one, the universe with Sun, Moon, Stars, and the environment emerged. Then *Kalniranjan* decided to have intercourse with *Ashtangi* for creation. However, he could not find the genital parts throughout her body. Then he used his big toe and pressed the lower abdomen. From the hole made by *Kalniranjan*, nearly 27 lakh *Jeev* (organisms) came out along with several rivers, forests, etc.

As a result of this act, much bleeding was thereof blood started flowing from where *Kalniranjan* had placed his big toe. Then, He cut his nose and placed it there. Thus, he managed to stop the bleeding. Then, three sons, Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar *Bagawan,* were born out of their union. When the three children were educated, they asked about creating other things. *Ashtangi* did not reveal the secret but hinted about *Sindhumantan* (churning out the sea) for world creation.

Before the *Sindhumantan*, *Ashtangi* became a sixteen-year-old adolescent girl with divine powers. In disguise, she had intercourse with Brahma and gave birth to Gayatri. Similarly, she met Vishnu and Shankar and created Lakshmi and Parvati. She kept their origin a secret and hid them inside the sea. Afterwards, three sons initiated the task of ocean churning, and with this, the stomach of the divine turtle was broken, and first, the four *Vedas* came out. Subsequently, Gayatri, Lakshmi and Parvati also came out. Then *Ashtangi* advised her three sons to marry them accordingly. This origin myth reveals the combination of tribal myths and insurrections of *Sindhumantan* creation of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The origin myths of Gonds also run on similar lines with variations of nomenclature and context. In Gond mythology of creation, it is Mahadeo and Parvati; in Baiga, Nanga Baiga; in Agaria, Lohgandi Raja is responsible for creating the earth, sky and human beings (Bhagvat, 1972).

Similarly, among Panika, it is believed that *Kalniranjan* and *Astangi* are responsible for the creation of the earth. In both legends, the prime god is venerated as Lord Shiva. However, still, Panika origin myths have retained some ideas or traits that are not related to Hindu myths.

Belief System

The Panika venerate *Adidadi* (*Ashtangi*) as their chief deity, followed by *Dhuladev*, *Dhulhadevi*, and *Raatmai*, besides village deities such as

Thakurdeo, *Thakurain*, *Jagjawara* on auspicious occasions. *Medwasi*[16] is located on the outskirts of Bharani village. If the marriage procession reaches their outskirts, they offer a coconut to ensure the event's success. Further, praying at *Medwasi* before sowing to protect cattle from diseases is essential.

Gaogossain is a typical worship place located at the centre of the villages. The *gaogossain* is considered as *Thakurdeo* structured in erected *Sarai,* a wooden pole amid the combination of three *Ghari* trees. It is a typical village temple where *Kalash* (small earthen pots), oil lamps, small tridents (Symbol of goddess Durga), *and Chameta* (iron handlers) are kept at the base of the wooden pillars. All the villagers, irrespective of their social background, offer worship at this place on significant festive occasions. *Gaogossain* of Behpuri and Bharni also follow the same tradition.

In Bhejari, one cement altar is arranged close to *Gaogossain,* which is believed to be the abode of the village god *Bhaisasur*. During *Dusserah* and *Navratri*, they offer worship with coconut and incense sticks and perform *Hawan*. But in Behpuri, *Bhaisasur* is located on the border of agricultural fields. Once in three years, they celebrate a grand festival and offer animal sacrifice. However, Kabir Panika now offers coconut and incense sticks instead of animal sacrifice. At Bharni, it is *Bhagesur* worshipped similarly to *Bhaisasur*.

***Choura* or *Madia* (Sacred Zone):**

This is a village sacred zone where different sacred spots, such as *Midley*[17], *Katahi*[18], *Baghesur* and *Thakurain* exist. Near this place, one megalithic stone is erected under the shadow of the Peepal tree. Several sacred objects like stools, *Chameta*, tridents, earthen pots, etc., surround it. During *Chait Navratri*, all the villagers collectively celebrate *Jawara* at *Choura*. For this, the villagers contribute cash and ingredients for *Prashad*. Two to three *gunia* or knowledgeable persons are allotted to look after the seeds sown on the surface of the *Midley*. They take care of the seeds by giving water, worshipping this nursery bed continuously, and protecting it against stray animals. Villagers take care of their food and other requirements during these nine days. On *Ashtami* (8th day), they offer *puja* and sacrifice a goat or cock; on *Navmi* (9th day) and carry all budding plants in a procession and immerse them in the nearby *Talab* (pond). Apart from this, other agricultural and environmental conservation festivals such as *Bidri*, *Haryali*, *Khajalayya, Kitcharahi, and Cherchera* are celebrated by both groups, along with other tribes and castes in the village.

Like Gond, Panika also worships their ancestors soon after harvesting their crops. It is popularly known as *Navakhai* or *Navakhana*. It is observed on the day of *Pitrapaksha* in August-September. On this auspicious day, they perform *Hawan* at their house. They also prepare *Roti*, *Puri*, *Sabji* (curry), *Dal*, *and Chaval* (rice) as *Prashad* and offer this to their ancestors.

Panika does believe in the existence of spirits. In case of accidental or unnatural death, such as suicide, the soul becomes a spirit for up to twelve years, known as *Bhoot* or *Pret*. In such cases, *Mahant* or *Doshi* controls them through worshipping *Thakurdeo*. *Jaaduphuke* (beating with a broomstick) is a local magico-religious practice wherein betel nuts, betel leaves and coconut are offered to *Thakurdeo*, and chantings are recited to get rid of such spirits. Kabir Panika practises no animal sacrifice for magico-religious practices. Worship of *Thakurdeo* during magical practices is common among Gond and Baiga too. Even Panika approach *Baiga Gunia* for magical treatment, but they pay money to purchase liquor and chicken.

Besides their beliefs in tribal deities and spirits, Panika also worships Hindu gods and goddesses such as Kali or Durga, Lord Shiva, Bhagawan Ram, and Ganesh and observe Ganesh Chaturthi, Ramnavmi, Holi, Dussehra and Diwali. They also worship cows during Lakshmi and Govardhan *puja*.

Lakshmi *Puja*:

All communities from the study area observe it on the next day of Diwali. For this, one adult member of the family keeps *upavaas* (fasting). In the evening, when the cows return to the village, they offer worship to Goddess Lakshmi and light the lamps in front of the houses. They also distribute the *Prashad* made with *Saklakaanda* (wild tuber). Family members prepare *Diya* (lamp) with wheat dough and pour oil to lighten the lamp before their clan deity, i.e., Baba Maharaj and Goddess Lakshmi. The next day morning, those who have been fasting eat that left-over *Diya*.

On the same day, all the villagers assemble at the earmarked place, burning dried cow dung cakes and offering *puja*. It is a very auspicious day. Villagers both go outside the village and are willing to do any work. On this day, a unique bath is given to the cows, and their horns are decorated. The *Ahir* (cattle herder) inaugurates the *puja* by offering worship to their *Kuladevta* (clan deity) by keeping *Chahur.*[19]. Later, they dibble the cow dung cake and prepare their cattle for the event.

During this festival, two children aged 5 to 6 years and above from each family keep *vrat* yearly (vow) and complete 12 such *vrat* in twelve years. From the thirteenth year, the *vrat* is intended to guide the younger ones towards a better future. On this auspicious day, women and children observe a fast. The women and men of the village assemble at one auspicious place, known as *Khari Khadaad*, with a glass of cow milk, a bowl of rice and incense sticks on a plate, and rice incense sticks on a plate. At first, they offer worship to the dried cow dung cakes. The selected calf is brought to this place, and the two *Ahirs* hold the legs in a stretched manner. The boys who are doing *vrat* carry a coconut and *Noi*[20] and are asked to come one by one and crawl under the calf. After crossing for the first time, the boy whispers in the calf's ear,

'*bolo*'. 'The boys in the queue perform this act three times. Once they cross under the body of the calf, they start *Maun vrat*[21] and are not supposed to talk to anybody, including their parents. The women feed the raw milk to the boys following the *vrat*. Soon after, villagers keep the coconut, rice and coins in one place and take their respective cows and oxen for grazing. Ahir collects the *puja* material. The event is attended by many people where *Ahirs*, in their traditional attire, entertain the villagers through dance and songs.

After completion of this task, the children take the cows for grazing at the nearby place. On this day, they should not beat the cow and only use *Noi* to control them. In the evening, when they return, the same calf is brought there, and they are asked to cross it twice in another place. Later on, the children proceed to their respective houses. Before entering the concerned house, their elder or younger sisters wash their feet and take their blessings. Then a special *Kichidi*[22] is prepared by their family members and kept in front of the cow so that one side is for the cow and another is for the children.

When the children venture into the forest to graze cattle, both men and women sing songs of *Karma* and *Dadaria* while dancing in tune with the drum beats. In the evening, *Ahir* goes door to door and entertains the villagers with anecdotes and jokes. On this occasion, each household offers one *Supa Dhaan*[23]and cash as a token of gift. The children who complete twelve years of *vrat* visit Amarkantak or any other pilgrimage site for a sacred dip. On their return, family members invite Brahmin priests to recite the story of Lord Satyanarayana in their house to achieve future peace and prosperity.

Chaukarthi (Ceremonial Performance)

It is a kind of ceremonial gathering practised by Kabir Panika during *Janmauti Chauka* (birth), *Bihadra Kankan Chauka* (marriage) and *Chalwa Chauka* (death), where *Bhajans* are sung to remember Sant Kabir. At *Chaukarthi, bhajans* are sung with simple musical instruments such as *Tabla*, *Harmonium*, *Jhaanj*, *Shank*, *Vijayghanta* (bell), etc. People from outside the village also participate in it. People offer voluntary donations in the form of money, and thus collected money is spent for tea, snacks and *Dakshina* to *Mahant*. It is similar to the collective observance of village festivals by the neighbouring Gond and Baiga. *Chaukarthi* is very cost-effective and organized with minimum expenditure.

Chaubisa

In case of a happy event or success, Kabir Panika organizes *Chaubisa* at their house. It is a continuous process of singing folk songs day and night. It is followed by *Bandara*, where *Prashad* is distributed to all the participants. The *Prashad* is being prepared by the concerned persons holding *Chaubisa* at their house and distributed to all the villagers irrespective of caste or creed.

Satsung

It is a holy gathering to commemorate Kabir sect norms of behaviour. It is observed once a week, fortnight, or month. Altogether 15 to 20 *Satsungs* are organized every year. *Satsung* lasts for two to four hours. The youth organize the event as per the directions of their *Sians*. The items such as coconut, *betel* leaves, betel nut, incense sticks, *Kalash* (a small earthen pot filled with water), lamp and *Prashad* are offered during *Satsung*. Nowadays, they keep *Satsung* every Monday evening, and it continues till 10'o clock at night.

Mahant is a religious practitioner for Kabir Panika, assisted by *Diwan,* and His presence is essential in performing life cycle rituals such as birth, marriage and death. Besides that, they also perform the village festivals, *Satsung* and *Bhajans*. The sects headquarter is located at Dawakeda near Raipur, which is presided over by Head Priest. The sect's Head Priest selection is already mentioned in their *Granth*. They read sacred verses such as *Kabir Sagar* and make the community aware of their rules and regulations from time to time. Due to their sacred status, they play a vital role in council meetings and dispute resolution. *Prakat Diwas* (Kabir Jayanti) is a chief festival for Kabir Panika. Mahant maintains the link between Kabir followers and the community. He is a custodian of the religious texts and performs their *puja* before they are taken out for *Satsungs* and other auspicious occasions.

Like *Mahant*, *Doshi* performs marriage ceremonies, *Dasgatra*, worshipping gods and goddesses at *Gaogossain* for Sakat Panika in the presence or absence of a Brahmin priest. *Pathari*[24] do visit Sakat Panika once in three years and perform *Akhadrar*[25] praising their glory and accepting gifts in the form of cash or kind.

Conclusion

From the above data, it is clear that with the impact of the acculturation process, Panika has adopted their cultural traits from neighbouring tribes and castes, which is evident from the worship at common village sacred centres, i.e., *Gaogossain*, *Choura*, *Kharikhadaad*, tribal deities such as *Thakurdeo*, *Baisasur*, *Thakurain*, *Jagjawara and* village festivals like *Bidri*, *Haryali*, *Khajalayya*, *Kitcharahi* and *Jawaara*. They worship Hindu gods and goddesses such as Kali or Durga, Lord Shiva, Bhagawan Ram, and Lord Ganesh are worshipped, and Lakshmi *puja*, Govardhan *puja*, Dussehra, Diwali, Ram Navami, Chait Navratri, etc., are celebrated.

With the impact of the Kabir sect, new social institutions such as *Satsung* (religious gatherings), *Chaukarthi* (ceremonial performances), *Mahant* (priesthood), etc., came into existence among Kabir Panika. However, some of the Panika are practising their traditional occupation, evident from at least one Panika household in each village who works as a village messenger.

However, the gradual growth of the Panika population led them to resort to other allied occupations such as agriculture, carpentry, masonry, wage labour, etc. Thus, gradual peasantisation forces them to share the minor as well as significant traditions of their neighbouring tribal as well as caste communities to enjoy the fruits of development and modernity.

Out of four theoretical propositions Berry (1992) put forward, Panika from the study area embraced the integration option by maintaining cultural integrity with the original society and utilizing every option to become an integral part of the larger societal framework. Thus, Panika has developed a new identity by adapting to the local traditions for their survival. Adopting cultural traits is also extended to non-dominant groups such as Dhulia, Ahir, and Agaria. For example, *Sians*, *Samaj* and *Pal* exist in almost all the villages with little variations in nomenclature. Similarly, *Gaogossain*, *Medwasi*, *Thakurdeo*, *Thakurain*, *and Bhaisasur* are familiar to all the villagers. *Doshi* and *Gunia* in the village render religious services to other communities along with Panika. Tattooing on the bodily parts, the practice of local dance forms like *Dadaria*, *Karma*, *Suva* and *Saila*, worship of Hindu gods and goddesses, festivals, customs and lifestyle led to crucial new identities for socio-cultural adaptation. Finally, Panika from the study area demonstrates Naik's (2021) theoretical assumption that identity is not static. However, a social, cultural, and political relationship is often constructed as an adaptive strategy for survival.

Notes

1 Big-size musical drum

2 Also known as mundan, where the first hair of the child is removed

3 Priest of Kabir Panika

4 Headman of the village

5 The Priest of Sakat Panika

6 Chamar caste people who carry drums and play on a payment basis during auspicious occasions in the village

7 Knowledgeable singers commonly sing native marriage songs

8 Annual rite in memory of dead ancestors

9 Funeral rite observed on the tenth day after death

10 Bathing in flowing waters to remove death-related pollution

11 It equals two kilograms

12 Winnowing fan

13 Equaling 20 khurai or 40 kilograms

14 Thrashing platform

15 The local version of Gudi Paduva practised by Gonds to mark the beginning of the new year

16 Familiar sacred spot worshipped by all villagers

17 A kutcha house at a sacred place where seeds are sprouted as a part of the Jawara festival

18 Iron nail-ridden swing used by possessed individuals

19 Flowers brought by Ahir to purify the houses during no moon day, i.e., Deewali

20 Made with the tail hair of the cow

21 Silence vow

22 A kind of dish made with rice and lentils

23 Winnowing pan full of paddy

24 Traditional singers

25 Recitation of clan songs

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Swati Akshay Sachdeva and Lhamu Tshering Dukpa

IDENTITY IN FLUX: APPREHENDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TIBETAN REFUGEES IN INDIA

Abstract

The Tibetan identity in exile is typically construed as a cogent, coherent and monolithic identity drawing meanings from its religious and historical moorings. By foregrounding on the mixed methods approach, the paper problematizes the premise of a consistent and congealed identity among the Tibetan refugees in the Indian Himalayan region by contrasting experiences of Tibetans in homogeneous and heterogeneous environments. Additionally, by taking cognizance of the salience of intersectionality, the study examines the lived experiences by underscoring everyday contingencies of generational differences, spatial situatedness and cultural affinities with the host country determining the very contours of their identity.

Keywords: *Indian Himalayas, Identity, Refugee, Tibetan, lived experiences*

Introduction

The age of globalization, migration, mobility and constant movement problematises the surerity of an invariant, stable and ossified 'identity' (for e.g. ethnic identity). The idea that (ethnic) identitities remain unchanged or completely insulated (read unaffected) from external circumstances or changes remains an outdated one (Hall 1994: 225; Hall 2000: 8; Lawler 2015; 3). Extant works of literature indicates how ruptures and divergences have gradually undermined the supposed 'immutability' and 'monolithic' characterizations of identity (Ibid).

In contemporary times, the rhetoric of a monolith and a stable identity becomes problematic because of the multiplicities of vectors that influence and impinge upon identities (Crenshaw, 2017). In a similar strain, it becomes plausible to advance the premise that identity is intersectional and is contingent upon factors like spatial organisation, cultural disposition; socio-historical

SWATI AKSHAY SACHDEVA, Professor, Head, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Sikkim, Email: sasachdeva@cus.ac.in; **LHAMU TSHERING DUKPA,** Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok – 737102.

contextuality and generational difference which contribute to the perception of identity (Chimienti et. al, 2019: 2-6; Vijver et. al, 2015: 2). Given such backdrop of the possibilities of 'shifting' or 'protean' identities, the present paper attempts to assess the identity dynamics of Tibetan refugees who have settled in India.

Analogous to other identities in diaspora with a shared socio-historical past, the collective histories of displaced Tibetans is an important attribute to consider when assessing the dynamics of Tibetan identity. The Tibetan identity in diaspora is hinged on the collective experiences of coerced migration when Tibetans fled to India because of the incursions led by the Peoples Republic of China when they invaded Tibet in the year 1950 (Mishra, 2014: 14). Post PLA's onslaught, thousands of Tibetans fearing cultural deprivation and repression of one's identity embarked on an exodus with their spiritual leader, the 14th Dalai Lama. On 31st March 1959, the Dalai Lama arrived at Chutangmu, (India) navigating through the treacherous terrains of Himalayas accompanied by his followers (Subba, 2011: 131-132). Many Tibetans considered the PLA incursion and oppression as a direct attack against their culture coupled with a conscious attempt to obliterate their identity. Also, apart from the collective histories of departure from their homelands, it would also require considering other important axes or variables that could possibly influence the 'Tibetan identity' in diaspora. In a similar vein, works of literature have expounded on identities in diaspora or refugee identities by including conceptualizations such as generational differences and cultural assimilation with the host country (Chimienti et. al, 2019: 2-6; Sachdeva & Surjyajeevan, 2021: 11-12; Vijver et. al, 2015: 2; Subba, 2002: 132-133). For example, Chimienti et. al in their work mention the differences in terms of experiences of the first and subsequent generations of migrants in Europe. The second generation are not always considered to be belonging to the country they were born in and are commonly thought of as foreigners often subjecting them to discrimination (2019: 2-6). Similarly, Subba also iterates on the generational differences of Tibetan refugees in India but observes the variances in terms of aspirations harboured by the old and the younger generations because of the latter's access to secular education and other amenities rendering them to be oriented more towards material success and survival than sheer identity and cultural concerns (2002: 132-133). Similarly, Routray in his work on the Tibetan refugees settled in India inform about the challenges confronted by the Central Tibetan Administration while reconciling generational differences of Tibetans born in India and Tibetans fleeing from Tibet to India and their respective interpretations of Tibetan identity (2007: 87).

Apropos to the 'tibetan identity', the presence of the Central Tibetan Administration established for self-governance and preservation of socio-cultural identity of Tibetan refugees also needs to be acknowledged for its salience and influence. Although the CTA is committed for 'free democratic administration',

it also sought to create multiple policies implementing measures to preserve Tibetan culture and identity in exile founded on the aspirations to return back to Tibet (Mishra, 2014:14). For Anand, the establishment of CTA has successfully created Tibetan community-in-exile enabling them to maintain a discrete national identity among disparate groups from various parts of greater Tibet' (2000 : 271). He further articulates the Tibetan identity as 'Tibetanness' which he contends should be understood by considering the circumstances of diaspora coupled with their belongingness to a discrete place (2000: 284). Contrarily, Giles & Dorjee, Bentz and Diehl's foregrounded the challenges encountered by two millennia old Tibetan civilisation struggling to maintain their culture and identity (Giles et. al, 2005: 138-157; Bentz, 2012: 80-107; Diehl, 2002: 1-269). Additionally, the works analyse the challenges confronted by Tibetans and the tensions that arise in acknowledging their refugee label and diasporic status. Similarly, Basu highlights how places and identities are transformed by refugees negotiating their belonging in an alien country over time (2018: 212). He attempts to analyze the identity negotiations as refugees while coming to terms with their status as a "permanently exiled" diasporic group (2018: 212). Refugee identities are seen as historically and culturally constituted and are born out of the constant movement and homecoming practices of refugee groups in varied local settings (2018 : 212). However, political determinations for preserving Tibetan culture and identity is replete with challenges as multiple factors viz. socio-cultural assimilation and integration of the refugees with the host society impedes the reification of the same. Similarly, Anand informs that 'a unified homogenous Tibetan-in-exile identity is more of a rhetorical device and imaginary construct than some verifiable reality' (2000 : 271). In a similar strain, Houston & Wright in their work inform about the multiplicities of experiences of Tibetan refugees and their perceptions of identity and nationalism when living amidst varying social milieus viz. McLeod Ganj, India; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Boston, USA (2003: 217-230). They further contend that Tibetan refugees negotiate their refugee identities in multiple ways i.e. either by accepting citizenship of their host countries or by abiding to the Tibetan cause which would in turn maintain their international relevance (Ibid). Such studies unfixes the monolithic Tibetan identity in diaspora rhetoric wherein all perceptions, interpretations and meanings of identity is sourced from the nationalistic idealism perpetuated by political organizations or key spiritual figures. In a similar vein, Falcone and Wangchuk in their work on the Tibetan refugees in India disrupts the contention of a singular idea of 'Tibetanness' or Tibetan identity and instead hints at the possibilities of multiplicities of Tibetan identities influenced by contingencies like intersubjectivity and histories (2008: 192-193).

Considering such works and the salience of the axes of generation and degrees of cultural assimilation and its possible nexus with identity, the study problematizes the premise that the 'Tibetan identity' can be characterized as a homogenous and immutable entity by foregrounding on the lived experiences

of Tibetan refugees residing in India. The study therefore employs conceptual categories viz. intergenerational differences i.e. first and second generations determined by their arrival as refugees or their birth in India, their spatial organisation of the settlement and lastly their socio-cultural, racial proximity, and linguistic affinity with neighbouring communities. The paper primarily seeks to apprehend the configurations of Tibetan identity and its key defining features.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

To fulfil the primary objective of the study, viz. the apprehension of the multiplicities of Tibetan identity in India, the research employs the mixed methods framework which allows for a flexible approach to apply the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative research, the study espouses the Heideggerian Hermeneutic phenomenological framework (Heidegger, 1999 : 10-12). Heideggerian Phenomenology, conversely, diverges from the epistemological concerns of pure phenomenology and advances the thesis of 'being-in-the-world'. Heidegger supplants metaphysics of subjects intending objects as it advances the premise of perceiving the world and all its entities as simply 'present-at-hand' or *'vorhanden'* bypassing the question of the being of beings (Ibid). Similarly, for the Tibetan refugees, identity is not disclosed as an object that is unfamiliarly conspicuous and extended in space which requires imposition of meanings. Conversely, the meaning of identity is illuminated by beings who harbour preliminary understanding of beings viz. humans or *Dasein* (Ibid). Heidegger posits that *Dasein* possesses a preconceptual understanding of 'being' and is always already amidst the world (Inwood, 2019: 13-16). The special nomenclature accorded to *Dasein* denotes the conflation of the world with *Dasein* (Ibid). Similarly, the worldliness of the Tibetan refugees constitutes an integral element when examining identity as multiple factors such as intergenerational differences, the specificities of historical junctures and collective temporal experiences which constitutes their being in the world. Particularly, the 'Tibetan identity in exile' is invariably steeped in historical socio-political polemics, the significance of their homeland and the binaries of home and host countries which collectively contributes to the intersubjective imaginations of Tibetan identity in exile. Considering the interplay of such variables and its influences on identity, it would be implausible to insulate the stream of experiences from its worldly engagements. In alignment with the Heideggerian principles, the study repudiates the Cartesian subject/object dichotomies because such binaries would disengage individuals from the worldliness receding them to the realms of abstracted subjectivism. Similarly, Schimdt elucidates Heidegger's premise that subjects do not commence with intending objects imposing meanings (Schmidt, 2013: 51). Rather, all objects in toto are situated in contextual spaces saturated with pre-ordained meanings (Ibid). Hence, the lived experiences of being in the world gains primacy as it is engaged in everyday worldliness (Ibid). The study employs the method of

hermeneutics to analyse lived through experiences, their subsequent meanings and salience apropos the Tibetan identity in exile. Hermeneutics or the ability to interpret constitutes an imperative element of Heidegger's existential thesis. Heidegger characterizes *Dasein* or *being-in-the-world* as a ubiquitous presence (Dahlstrom, 2013: 92-94). Heidegger uses hermeneutics to extract 'meaningful' accounts of lived experiences (Ibid). Moreover, Heidegger considers interpretation as a foundational essence of Dasein owing to their ability to 'understand' its own being which ontologically partitions it from other beings (Ibid). For Heidegger, the hermeneutic circle figures as a principal tool to coalesce Dasein's temporal existence of future, past and present to apprehend the structures of being-in-the-world (Giorgi, 2007: 67-68). As per Giorgi, Hermeneutics affords the *Dasein* to illuminate the being of beings or phenomenon under investigation (Ibid).

Considering the nature of the research and its theoretical underpinnings, the paper employs the hermeneutic circle to unravel the meanings of the phenomenon. The hermeneutic circle allows for an interaction of the whole and individual domains of understanding wherein the phenomenon can be examined from both aspects (Dahlstrom, 2013: 93-94). In consistency with Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of the *Dasein* in which *'Auslegung'* or interpretation figures as a prerequisite, the study initiates the circularity of hermeneutics by reading extant works of literature on identity, diaspora studies, identity in exile and experiences of Tibetan refugees coalescing it contextually with individual experiences of refugees which enables the researcher to extract a richer understanding of the phenomenon (Ibid). The following diagram represents a helical circle which comprises of the *Vorstruktur* (forestructure) representing the 'whole' which informs the phenomenon under study by taking recourse to topical body of works, the subsequent individual interviews demonstrating parts and the conflation of both the horizons of wholes and parts that informs and deepens the understanding of the phenomenon.

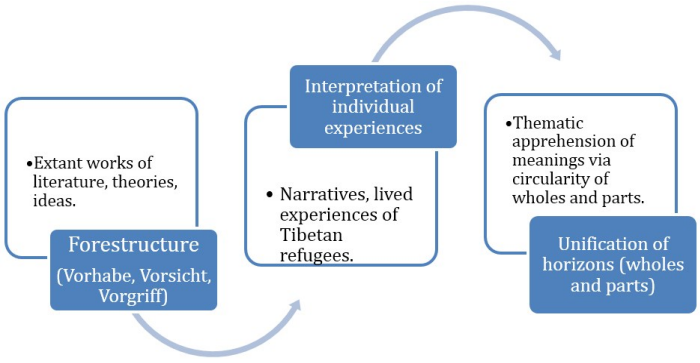

Figure. 1 demonstrates the broad framework of spiral hermeneutic circle espoused by the study to initiate the circularity of meanings and the fusion of wholes and parts (Dahlstrom, 2013).

For the quantitative research, the research employed the survey method and the process of data collection began with household survey using interview schedule to find the demographic structure, family size, occupational structure, income and expenditure, and to familiarise ourselves with the respondents.

Methods

The research employed interview schedule, non-participant observation, and informal discussion to unearth rich experiential accounts of the refugees. The spatial sites for the study was confined to 5 Tibetan refugee settlements viz., McLeod Ganj and Dalhousie (Himachal Pradesh), Ravangla (Sikkim), Darjeeling and Sonada (West Bengal); a total of 200 respondents were selected from these settlements. Further, these respondents were proportionately stratified between first-generation refugees who migrated to India with those who were born in India to refugee parents –'younger generation'. The fieldwork was conducted between 1st October 2018 and 30th May 2019. From each household, two respondents belonging to older and younger generations were interviewed. The upper age was fixed to below 40 and for the younger and age 40 and above for the older generation. In-depth informal discussions were carried wherever the chances of obtaining insights of lived experiences were probable. 30 case studies were conducted during the entire span of the fieldwork to substantiate the quantitative analysis using statistical exploratory technique. The interviewees were Tibetan men and women from various professions/backgrounds, the questions required an introspective analysis of their own identity.

Findings

Tibetan identity

Tibetans struggle to anchor themselves by adhering and upholding their socio-cultural practices and spiritual sanctity. Giles and Dorjee point out that in the formative years of exile, Tibetans in India devoted themselves to carrying out three important tasks (2005: 147)

> …establishing the Tibetan government in exile, rehabilitating Tibetan refugees and providing Tibetan children with Tibetan and modern education… Tibetans have adopted democratic systems, to preserve/promote (*Zin kyong pel sum*) their cultural identity (Ibid).

For the Tibetans, preserving their culture, language and religion is of prime importance as it defines who they are. The markers of identity considered in the following sections are ethnicity, religion, language, nationality and citizenship issues which were determined by the researchers post reading of relevant body of works. Deploying the analytical framework of the hermeneutic

circle, the following segments presents a thematic understanding of the phenomenon by engaging in meanings engendered by the circularity between 'wholes' and its 'parts' (Dahlstrom, 2013: 93-94).

Ethnicity and Religion

Ethnicity and religion plays a pivotal role on how the Tibetan refugees situate themselves when formulating the conception of identity in a socio-culturally distinctive world. Regmi pointed out that ethnic identity formation requires common descent, socio-culturally relevant physical attributes and set of attitudes and behaviours (2003: 1-11). Through these attributes, ethnic identities are replayed as ideologies, particularly in a racially homogeneous society. Often, these ethnic ideologies are in interplay with religious dogmas and practices. Oppong expounded the positive correlation between identity and religion in formation of identity (2013: 10). Considering prior works of literature (as forestructure), questions related to ethnicity and religion in connexion with identity were posed to the refugees. Quantitative analysis shows that 72.5 per cent (Figure 2) of the respondent stated that belonging to Tibetan race/ethnicity with the religious inclination towards Tibetan Buddhism is an important criterion in their very definition of being identified as Tibetan, whereas 22.5 per cent moderately disassociated Tibetan identity from ethnicity and religion as they opined that being Tibetan does not entail adhering to the same religion/ethnic group. One of the respondents pointed that there has been a misconception among various scholars for treating the Tibetan as one homogeneous ethnic group, as too with religion.

However, some scholars have erroneously construed Tibetans as a homogeneous ethnic group adhering to a uniform religion because various strains of Bon religion were practiced prior to the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. Furthermore, a handful of respondents disagreed with religious homogeneity as an indicator of Tibetan identity owing to their religious conversion and exogamous marital alliances. Evidently, 'identity in exile' elicited divergent meanings for refugees across generations. Here, the term 'generation' plays a categorical influence in forming differing contentions pertaining to identity in exile. Generation invokes 'time' or 'temporal situatedness' which further connotes socio-political histories, salience of erstwhile spatiality reminiscent of the past and its imprints upon present experiences. In the same strain, Stroinska suggests that subjects in exile share peculiar relations with time as they are oriented and anchored temporally to the longings of the past and apprehension for the coming times (2003:13). Additionally, the first generation exhibited a strong inclination towards observance of religious/ethnic factors while subsequent generations are more accommodative towards divergent religious practices and communities.Hence, temporal and spatial experiences co-constitute change in perception in varying degrees apropos the Tibetan identity.

To assess the deeper insights of the refugees and to understand the very conceptualisation and determinant of Tibetan identity questions associated to their personal values and moral standard were administered. The study found that 93 per cent of the respondents stated the importance of values and moral standards, as it helps them to maintain a unique identity discrete from others regardless of their dwellings. The younger generations too expressed similar view as they have been socialised by their parents and grandparents in similar line of thought. However, 7 per cent of the respondents (Figure 3) asserted their willingness to embrace new ways of life to ensure survival. .

Identity is lived through as an embodied experience wherein *'Daseins'* always possess an understanding of meanings generated in the world. The *Daseins* comprehend, navigate and make sense of the world only in their flux of engaged everydayness. Moreover, Henschen mentions Heidegger's conception of the *'das man'* which he articulates as the anonymous yet pervasive presence of societal norms or meanings already generated by 'the they' or *'das man'* (2012: 95-113). The eagerness on the part of some Tibetans across generations to underscore religion as an important determiner for identity vindicates the existential argument of beings thrown into the world of pre-existing meanings formulated and preserved by their forerunners. Additionally, 'mattering' or care *(sorge)* figures as a salient feature for Heidegger as it discloses things which concern the *dasein* (Dahlstrom, 2013: 42). Aho further views care as a perpetual activity oriented towards things that 'matter' or for which *'daseins'* exhibit 'care/concern' (2010: 83). Similarly, for some refugees, the urgency to preserve religious and ethnic purity does not constitute a prerequisite for the formulation of their identity while residing in foreign lands. By the same token, the nexus of ethnicity and religious values with 'Tibetan identity' is relegated in favour of a conception of identity that is fluidic and pragmatic to ensure survivability. 'Survivability' therefore manifests as 'mattering' to some respondents apropos their identity rather than the continuance of their traditional notions of identity (Aho, 2010: 83). Because of their 'thrownness' into the world or *'welt'* of pre-existing meanings, care surfaces when *'daseins'* are preoccupied in their everyday engagements (Aho, 2010: 11). This 'mattering' coupled with the extant 'forestructures' of meanings problematizes the postulation of essentialized meanings derived via experiences (Aho, 2010: 83). The disagreements articulated by the respondents substantiates the thesis of *'beings'* as interpretive embedded in the circularity of present/ past meanings contingent upon the givenness of contexts (Ibid). Complimentarily, 51 per cent of the respondents feel that maintaining the core philosophical principles of Tibetan ideology is essential. They expressed their need to safeguard their practices from external cultural incursion. They also feel that they need to fortify their practices against forces of changes emanating from external cultural incursion (Figure 3). The older generation views the philosophical elements based on logic as fundamental to all life forms. The teachings and philosophy are a part of their identity which they associate

with feelings and hence it remains constant. Whereas, 25.5 per cent claimed that it has changed moderately over the years following their interaction with the host society.

A small section of respondents on the other did not consider it necessary to preserve the philosophical principles of Tibetan ideologies. Such continuum of variations with regard to Tibetan identity signals an unceasing generation of meanings formulated with the imbrication of the past experiences fusing with the present and future concerns.

The variances of identity conceptions when situated in a broader context demonstrates the fragility of the notion of a concretized identity. The attributes of identity suggested by earlier works of literature are affirmatively conformed to by some respondents and repudiated by others. For instance, respondents who have renounced their cultural tapestry for survivability conceive of their identities as rejecting the anchorage of religious and ethnic allegiances. Generational differences within the community can be attributed as an important element for producing divergence of meanings apropos their identity. Vahali mentions Tibetan identity constructed vis-à-vis the Han Chinese wherein Tibetans seem to moor their identity in religion and principles of Buddhism thereby asserting their discrete identity (2020: 1-450). For respondents who have experienced persecution from close quarters, identity discloses to them as a means to sustain attributes that segregates them from others. When analysed from a broader context, this urgency to maintain cultural purity and binaries of 'we' vs. 'them' does not stem merely from the need to promote a discrete 'Tibetan identity' in foreign lands but to forge community bonds bounded by hope and solidarity to ensure return to their homelands. In a similar strain, Bruno informs about the salience of ethnicity as a determiner when considering identity in exile (2018: 157-205). Identity in exile is therefore perceived simultaneously as a site of refuge and as a reminder of reclaiming their lost homeland .

Language

Bloch and Hirsch observed that native languages are implicit in the construction, contestation and expression of identities among 'second generation refugees' (2016: 1-19). Language is a primary marker in defining a community's identity. Using language as one of the parameters, the study observed the inclination of the Tibetans toward their language, and assess its significance as an integrating force for their cause. The study found that 97.5 per cent (Figure 4), regardless of generational differences, feel that the ability to converse and express their opinions among themselves in Tibetan instils a sense of belongingness generating 'we-feeling' among the community members. However, few of them born to refugee parents mostly staying in Dharamsala (McLeod Ganj), Darjeeling, and Sonada differed in their opinion. They argued that the emphasis should be to maintain the spiritual teachings of their

forefathers. They believe that Tibetanness manifests in their religious practices by following the dharma. For them language is a medium for disseminating religious teachings to future generations.

Evidently, most Tibetans view language as an attribute directly contributing towards reinforcing their 'identity'. As emigres, they see language as a mobilizing force to preserve the differences that invokes feelings of group solidarity. Stroinska suggests the ubiquitous influence of language on identity which is corroborated by the narratives of the Tibetan refugees (2003: 13-15). The capacities to converse and articulate oneself in their indigenous dialect ameliorates feelings of alienation and insecurities for certain sections of Tibetan refugees in exile. However, for other refugees born and raised in India, their native language is less important than religious practices and tenets of spirituality while defining their identity.

Echoing the above narrative, an elderly caretaker at Dharamsala pointed out:

"Language is not a determiner of one's identity. One should stress on the principles and ideas of spirituality that determine one's identity".

Such variances apropos identity markers can be attributed to the convergence of factors viz. space, temporality, one's thrownness to a given milieu and the *dasein's* ability to interpret. Keller mentions the precedence accorded to 'temporality' by Heidegger over other constituents viz. spatiality and contexts (1999: 157). In the case of the Tibetans, their *Faktizität* or facticity predominantly determines their temporal experiences apropos their identities (Heidegger, 1999: 10-12). The 'thrownness' or 'facticity' of Tibetan emigres proffers a site for the lived experience to manifest wherein they formulate meanings, interpret and revise their definitions of the properties of their identity occurring within the bounds of their spatial/temporal contexts. Their facticity or their set of circumstances (viz. statelessness, displacement and diaspora) produces multiplicities of transitional interpretations that either diverge or correspond in varying degrees. Case in point, the differences of beliefs with reference to language as an attribute of Tibetan identity is derived primarily from their facticity. The specificities of the context of Tibetan refugees constitute as their thrownness or facticity and their horizon wherein their world is disclosed. For instance, the respondents born to refugee parents in Dharamsala, Sonada and Darjeeling deem language simply as a means to an end (i.e. to reinforce Tibetan identity via adherence to one's religious practices). The generational difference therefore presents itself as a conspicuous determiner of the Tibetan identity. In a similar strain, Boyd informs about the noticeable tensions between the old and young generations and their differences in terms of receptiveness to embrace changes (2004: 101). Some Tibetans view language dismissively as a medium for cultural/religious diffusion while some view it as a chief determiner of their identities. They bypass the salience of

'language' attributing spirituality and their perception of identity as constitutive of their 'self'. Being denizens of diaspora, most Tibetans across generations have experienced displacement, political turmoil and identity loss which may be a consequence of their moorings to a common past but such an anchorage does not guarantee an invariable consensus of 'identity in exile' as the primacy placed on identity attributes varies in degrees of salience for the refugees.

Citizenship/Nationality

For the refugees, the question of citizenship is a contentious issue as they cannot lay claim of Tibetan identity because of an absent sovereign nor are they naturalised citizens of India. Thus, the Tibetan identity needs to be examined within the framework of nationality as citizenship entitlements. While remarking on the connexion between identity and one's birth in one's homeland, as shown in Figure 5, 97 per cent of the respondents feels that it is outmost essential factor to be a Tibetan by birth, born within the territory of Tibet; whereas, the remaining 3 per cent of the respondent slightly differed in the opinion and expressed that that one's homeland is not tantamount in significance to maintaining moral ethos and philosophical principles which was observed by generations of refugees born in India.

The apparent disjunction between birthplace and identity can be attributed to the experiences of Tibetans in exile and their collective encounters of 'statelessness'. The absence of tangible territorial boundaries and their residence in multiple host countries renders them to perceive their identities as disassociated from the need to be born in their homeland. The refugees in their everyday experiences of their 'facticity' causes them to revise their relationships and properties of citizenship and identity. However, such properties and its contours are contingent upon the facticity of the *dasein*. The way the world discloses while engaging in the mode of *'being there'* is different for varying sections of refugees. For instance, the first generations aspires to return to Tibet. In an excerpt from the interview, a 75 year old refugee in Ravangla states *"…Tibet is not the same, it is more barren, all the beautiful houses and gompas have been destroyed"*. He still longs to return to his homeland. For him, returning to Tibet is a reality which is postponed. A 60 year old man living in Dalhousie remarked that he never felt at home in India he expressed *"…Tibet is my first home and I always want to go and die there"*. He feels that he is in India due to the generosity of the Indian government. He also fears that such kindness might be revoked anytime by the state and its people. Similarly, Diehl alludes to the anti-assimilationist stance espoused by some Tibetans and his holiness concerning citizenship and identity which is buoyed by their belief in findng an amicable resolution to their problems (2016: 15). The younger generations, notwithstanding their awareness about their past history expressed their preference to stay in India. Figure 6, shows how the younger generation of Tibetans who are born in India have a strong sense

of belonging and attachment to their birth place, 72.5 per cent reported that the places where they were born and brought-up are integral part of their life and identity, whereas, 22.5 per cent reported that their birthplace constitutes an integral part of their identity. Only 0.5 per cent disagreed from this understanding of identity. The notion of identity realised through Tibetan nationality or attachment to imagined territories as championed by Anderson seems contradictory when juxtaposed with the experiential accounts of Tibetans born and raised in India (2006: 17-19). Contradictorily, 91 per cent of them still feel attached to the very idea of Tibet as homeland which demands a moral obligation, whereas only 9 per cent notionally agree (Figure 7). Field inquiry therefore upends the assumption that a collective 'Tibetan identity' can be explained simply by drawing nexuses between one's identity and the archetypal identity markers, viz. one's homeland. For example, the inter-generational variances problematizes the commonplace conception of linking one's identity with one's territorial sites viz. one's homeland. Primary findings demonstrating inter-generational differences signals the divergence in terms of ideologies pertaining to 'Tibetan identity' wherein owing to the lack of homogenization of ideas and the gradual integration to one's host country renders leeway for producing possibilities of disrupting the monolith nationalist identity and its socio-cultural moorings. The multiplicities of the meanings of identity therefore cannot be severed from one's facticity and existentiality as meanings are disclosed in such intersections. The hermeneutic circle demonstrates the understandings of diasporic identities as provisional as these interpretations are embedded in the everyday *'facticity* of *daseins'* which disclose varying meanings of 'sheer survivability' to maintaining one's ethnic/cultural purity.

Formulating Tibetan Identity and the Question of lasting Political Struggle

For Tibetans, identity is often the product of unintended consequences emanating from gradual interaction within and mostly outside the community. Within the community, it is observed that the older generation were inclined towards practicing the Tibetan way of life, and values whilst the younger generation expressed unwillingness to conform to the constraints imposed by the community. In one of the narratives, a respondent's outgroup marriage was disapproved by the community only to be excommunicated later. He recounts-*"…This rejection is temporary, eventually they will accept me and have to accept changes"*. This shows eagerness on the part of youths to be receptive to changes while expecting others to be open to same. The marital exogamy forged by the respondent can be viewed as an instance of internal community conflict when dealing with the ideal 'Tibetan identity' envisioned by his fore-bearers. Gyaltag explicates the myriad experiences of identity experienced by the youths and the older generations wherein the former challenges the latter concerning Tibetan identity and identity preservation (2003: 244-255). He mentions the younger generation's inevitable experiences

of interacting and integrating with the cultural practices of the host country consequently engendering intra community conflicts between the young and older generations (Ibid). Saklani, reiterates by mentioning the emergence of a Tibetan 'youth collective' distinct from their elderly community (1978:4). Change therefore figures as a pervasive presence for the Tibetan refugees apropos their identity. But cultural assimilation notwithstanding, not all refugees compromise their cultural identity. As Penny-Dimtri discussed, being recipients of financial assistance and opportunities from people across the globe, the Tibetans elicited envy from their less fortunate neighbours causing considerable conflicts between them and the locals of Himachal Pradesh (1994: 280-293). Such conflicts, to a larger extent, kindled in-group solidarity among the refugees rousing feelings of 'us' vs. 'them'. Additionally, discrimination and labelling of the refugees by the locals induced reification of a concrete identity. Contextually locating within the argued line of thought, the respondents were enquired about their views on being in India, 64.5 per cent (Figure 8) of respondents pointed that being in India allows for proximity to follow their spiritual leader; whereas the younger generation believes that India proffers them better socio-economic avenues which were not possible in Tibet. Whereas, 28.5 per cent differed moderately viewing India as a transient shelter hoping for their eventual return to Tibet. Many respondents. Some other respondents A 65-years-old woman in Dharamsala recounted, *"…In our society everyone is treated equally, when I heard of the caste system, I wondered how caste makes one lower or higher. In our society everyone is treated equally".* Taking the argument further, a 70-years old man from Ravangla narrated *"…Nothing has changed for us, we are Tibetans and we will remain so, whether we stay in Sikkim or any other part of India. We have a responsibility to preserve our culture and we are doing that."* Such determination has rendered the sustenance of lasting political struggle of the Tibetan refugees. They deem it necessary to support and be aware about the constant struggles experienced by the Tibetans and to be informed about developments as many of their family members/relatives are still in Tibet. Additionally, it promotes homogenization of ideas and beliefs projecting it as central constituents of 'Tibetan identity'. However, the rest placed primacy on their situation in India than maintaining a homogeneous identity. 90 per cent (Figure 9) of Tibetans in the Indian Himalayan regions supports the cause and believes that the struggle must kept alive until total freedom of Tibet is achieved from communist China. Relatively, 46 per cent of the respondents believe in keeping the political activism in India alive with the assertion that coming generation need to be politically informed as they are the future for Tibetan cause (Figure 10). However, 41.5 per cent of the respondent opined, the political struggle would significantly be impactful if staged in Tibet rather than in India. Whereas, 5 per cent of the respondents, belonging to the older generation, did not believe in such politically motivated activism. They are rather content staying alongside his Holiness believing it to be their moral duty to follow his decisions. In conjunction to the above

analysis, 62.5 per cent believe in sustaining political activism in India asserting that future generations needs to be politically aware as they are the successors of the Tibetan cause.whereas, 19.5 per cent beg to differ (Figure 11).

Generational Differences

Identity relies on everyday lived through experiences of Tibetan refugees as *daseins* which allow for the disclosure of meanings of identity. Considering their facticity, generational differences constitutes as an integral variable determining their identity beliefs.

Older Generation: Narrative accounts of the earlier generation of refugees revealed physical and psychological traumatic experiences. Many encountered sexual assaults and were deprived of their belongings (not necessarily by Chinese soldiers alone). Those refugees who crossed the Nepal border to reach Himachal Pradesh reportedly experienced more atrocities as compared to those who took the North-Eastern route, particularly, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. One respondent mentioned that to prepare for possible challenges he had joined the Indian army. Contradictorily, most of the earlier generation of Tibetans were more content staying in proximity with his holiness the Dalai Lama as he represents the embodiment of living God leading them to a righteous path. They further noted that there is no rational reason to return as many of their kin/friends are long gone and few of those left are settled in India. Nonetheless, they feel nostalgic about their homeland, saying- *"Though India is my home, Tibet will always remain my first home"*. This nostalgia is often mitigated by a pragmatic realisation that the past for which they yearn has become the shadow of the past with no solution in the future. Yet they are cognizant of the developments in Tibet as they interact with oncoming refugees. The older generations see the present situation as irreversibly gone awry but Tibet still is viewed as a source of solace in their imagination. For them, the preservation of their identity equals following the religious teachings, customs, language and morals. A teacher at Dharamsala recalls- *'For us, Buddhism is our way of life and Dharma is what differentiates us from others.'* Some described their culture as unique, because it has the blessing of his Holiness. The older generation particularly, feels that being a Tibetan is a privilege, as their society has relatively no hierarchical social organisation when compared to the host society, particularly around the Dalhousie and Dharamsala settlement areas. In a similar vein, Safran speaks of community assimilation to one's host country in terms of a continuum wherein the diaspora communities may integrate with their local cultures of the host country adopting their customs and lifestyle on one end while repudiating the same and mobilizing their community members to encourage retention of their indigenous cultures and religious practices (1991: 3). Furthermore, Gyaltag (2003) foregrounds the postulation of the degrees of cultural assimilation with one's milieus which in turn determines the retention

of one's cultural moorings. One can therefore interpret the multiplicities of stances expressed by the refugees with respect to their identity in a continuum wherein the anchorage to one's native culture and identity are contingent upon the community's integration for the maintenance of a common identity consciousness rooted in similarities of historical origins, social/religious and cultural experiences.

Younger Generation:

Many consider India their home preferring the Indian lifestyle/cuisines which are as popular as their own. Several respondents accepted the Indian way of life assimilating with the Indian culture asserting their concomitant responsibilities for India and their homeland. When asked regarding their perception of India as homeland or 'potential homeland', the youths responded that Tibet is partly their homeland because it is their parents homeland. They envision settling there, but since they were raised in India, they feel more at home here. They have experienced cultural freedom in India which enabled them to aspire for career growths which would have been unlikely in Tibet. Few of them argued that the younger generations are uninterested in adapting the Tibetan identity for political gains. Nonetheless, they connected with such issues via social media and exchanged their views. They also harboured a broader worldview in relation to inter-community marriages. It was observed that age itself is a factor among the refugees because it was difficult for the older generations to adopt to new socio-cultural environments. Thus, social displacement became more pronounced among older generation of refugees.

Regional Variance

Tibetan identity has been further problematized in relation to the challenges emanating from the widespread distribution of settlement areas. For instance, refugees settled in McLeod Ganj and Dalhousie areas are surrounded by communities who are racially, socio-culturally, religiously, and linguistically distinct from their own. These factors posed severe challenges in the process of their integration with the host society causing them to maintain their cultural identity. On the other hand, refugees settled in Ravangla, Darjeeling and Sonada find themselves in a socio-culturally homogeneous environment yielding a sense of psychological accommodativeness with similar food habits and belief systems along with the preponderance of Buddhist devotees in these regions. Thus, the level of differential integration in these settlements determines the crystallisation of their cultural identity– 'Tibetanness', creating challenges for the CTA objectives. Hence, it is imperative to understand the social experiences of the Tibetan refugees in different settlement areas.

Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada:

Taking into account the cultural affinity shared between refugees and the local inhabitants (Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepali communities), most respondents from the aforesaid regions reportedly experienced cultural proximity. The refugees also shared religious and cultural likeness with the Bhutia's of Sikkim documented to have migrated to Sikkim from Tibet. However, the expected hypothetical social bridges between them were not observable primarily because of the variances in perception. Whilst the refugees asserted their cultural purity because of their retention of age old cultural practices, the Bhutias on the other perceived the former as refugees thereby refraining themselves from forging social linkages. The inimical perception notwithstanding, acts of cultural assimilation were observed in both the communities. The Bhutia costumes worn in marriages for example are observed to be more Tibetanised. Exogamous marriages were also observed between the refugees and the local population as a common practice with more pronouncement of Nepali community owing to their demographic preponderance. A respondent married to a Nepali woman recounted… *"I am happy to have a Nepali wife, she is kind-hearted and takes good care of me'.* For him, Nepali women are socialised to show respect and look into the needs of husbands which he found lacking in his society. He further reasoned that due to the practice of patriarchy in Nepali culture allowed him to enjoy greater supremacy and attention from his wife. Nottmeyer informs that marital alliances between individuals from diverse ethnic communities' signals strengthening of social, cultural and economic integration (2015: 74-75). The respondent accommodates the local cultures whilst simultaneously repudiating some characteristics of his native community . Unlike some respondents who intend on preserving the purity of their identity, the respondent above deviates from the same for pragmatic concerns. However, other refugees criticized the caste structure of Nepali society. One of the respondents highlighted, *'In our society, everyone is treated equally regardless of their social divisions viz. commoner or nobility'.* Some of the respondents also mentioned that they disliked the treatment meted out to women in Nepali society. They further remarked on their community's egalitarian stance towards women as equals with more strength and command. One of the respondent's wife, who was a Nepali narrated-*'My husband is a good human being, he is religious and has concerns for me and others. We work together and he gives me enough freedom to be who I am, the luxury which other Nepali friends do not have.* Similarly, a 30-year-old Tibetan woman, married to a Nepali man represents the cultural synthesis of Tibetan and Nepali community and the efforts of the Tibetans to integrate themselves with the local population. In a similar vein, Wallendorf and Reilly in their work propose that the cultural assimilation transpires at differing levels ranging from adoption of food habits, the conjunction of structural assimilation, marital alliances and formation of identities (1983:293). Similar to the Tibetan refugees settled across India, the successive generations of the

exiled community experience differing levels of assimilation when residing in a host country. The 'Tibetan identity' therefore is considerably dependent on the generational contexts as it determines how individuals interact, perceive and construct one's identity. Also, the cultural assimilation of refugees in Darjeeling, Sonada, and Ravangla, transpires through social ties such as marriage and participation in other social obligations. Cultural adaptation and assimilation on the path of the refugees as well as the local population is being observed to ease the process due to the exhibited similarities along with racial affiliation creating a sense a oneness.

Dalhousie & Dharamsala (McLeod Gunj): Limited interaction was observed between the refugees and host communities, such as invitation in selected festivals and social occasions. Unlike the previous areas, intermarriage between the Tibetan and local community could not be ascertained, at least during the process of the study, however, this does not rule out the possibility. Nonetheless, the reason for such limited interaction could be due to the fact that the area serves as the head quarter of the Government-in-Exile and the abode of his holiness, due to which much emphasis is placed on preservation and adherence of cultural practices as per Tibetan tradition encouraging endogamous marriage. Few respondents also viewed intermarriage as a threat to preservation of Tibetan culture, arguing- *'the pure Tibetan race and culture is compromised when marrying people from different community, amounting to the loss of one's identity'.* Hence, when considering the 'Tibetan identity', the interplay of multiple factors such as group cohesion, solidarity, practical concerns, relationship with the host country (whether inimical/amicable), generational disparities, individual conceptions and indigenous ideologies of identity needs to be considered.

Preservation and Negotiation of Cultural Identity

The cultural heritage of Tibetan identity remained untouched until mid-20th century. Ideas of compassion and wisdom inspires many followers to embark on pilgrimages to Tibet, India and Nepal but considering the socio-political climate in Tibet, the possibilities of threat presents tremendous challenges. For Tibetans, there are two crucial aspects they consider necessary to preserve, viz. language and religion which they see as woven with the other for the diffusion of religious principles of Buddhism. Linguistically, Tibetan belongs to Sino-Tibetan family and uses non-hieroglyphic structure. Mountcastle however, refers to the foremost challenges to language becoming more evident due to the gradual institutionalization of Mandarin competency(1994) Nonetheless, with increasing interest among the Western and regional scholars and the conscious effort towards reforming education system, monastic and modern education, Tibetan language seems to be flourishing in exile particularly in India and Nepal. For them, language is not just a medium of communication but a feature of their cultural identity.

Language allows for the transmission and preservation of religious values, beliefs and tradition reviving longings to return to one's root. Yet contradictorily, a growing inclination towards English language due to its perceived ease in comprehension and global competency is also observed amongst the younger generation. Older generations felt that the younger generation are more attuned to western/materialistic way of life which is eroding the Tibetan way of life. Others argued that while it is important to preserve their cultural identity, integration with the host community is also essential for their survival. Learning the local language for example hastens the integration process. Some of the traditions were conceded by Tibetans fearing disapproval from the host society, e.g. fraternal polyandry. These are instances to integrate themselves with the host community. Respondents at Dharamsala stressed on human values as people deserve respect regardless of their cultural background. A teacher of Tibetan Philosophy at Dharamsala, opined '*... we have to respect the cultural difference. God is one, therefore religion and culture is one'.* He agreed that if religion could be preserved, humanity could be preserved, because Buddhism is a religion based on compassion. There were others who demonstrated universal outlook and pan human values. According to a Project officer at Ravangla, *'We are all same, there is no difference. We are all here today and some day we'll be elsewhere, the challenge is to make the most of this time'.* For them, universalism does not eliminate cultural differences but instead celebrates the cultural variety creating spaces for cultures to co-exist equally in rights and importance. Many respondents answered affirmatively when asked about their religious beliefs as coping mechanisms when embroiled in difficult situations with non-Tibetans. Respondents also asserted that the preservation of religion would consequently ensure the continuation of language. The refugees therefore negotiate their identity by sustaining compatible ties despite differences with the local population. Most respondents managed to keep the balance between rootedness and openness by linking their traditional values with the universal ones progressing from individuation to universalization When asked about the transformation apropos identity while residing in India, the respondents gave varying answers. About a half of them said with differing levels of assertion that their cultural identity remains consistent. A respondent from Ravanagla (Sikkim) recounts- *'Nothing has changed for us, we are Tibetans and will be in Sikkim or any other part of India.* Another respondent at Dharamsala, opined that '*…had we been in Tibet, maybe we would not have been so conscious, but now we are in a different part of the world and 'our world' needs to be protected and preserved.'* The respondents at Dharamsala shared that the presence of His Holiness in Dharamsala reminded of their purpose to preserve their culture notwithstanding their suffering. Respondents of the three-study area also acknowledged that education is the reason for the changes in the Tibetan society and mindset. The educated younger generation opined that considering the situation in Tibet, it is unfeasible to return and

they should instead use India as a gateway to other countries for a better life. Having born and resided in India, they felt that life here is good as they have access to most of the things. The only thing lacking is an Indian Citizenship but since they possess the yellow/green cards, it allows them to travel anywhere in India and overseas. The younger generation was not concerned with the question of 'Tibetan Identity', as per a young respondent at Dharamsala- "*clinging to your identity reduces your chances for growth and progress, everything is global, even one's identity"*. However, some respondents felt that the Government creates conditions for discrimination and hostility because they are viewed as immigrants sharing resources thereby becoming richer in the process. Some respondents in Sikkim echoed this view that- *"the Nepalis of the state feel that without the Tibetan presence in Sikkim, they would have captured the market*." This was not a general sentiment and it was observed that the Tibetans shared good relations with the locals.

The size of the Tibetan community, settlement structures, the vicinity of cultural objects all has a positive effect on preservation of culture and assimilation. Almost all the respondents were fluent in their language, even the younger generation could converse in their native language. Some respondents at Dharamsala mentioned that the proximity is a blessing in India to preserve their culture and identity. Tibetans abroad however, may have different situations. A boy from Darjeeling recalled his inability to understand the meaning of identity and his (re)introduction to Tibetan identity during his visit to Dharamsala to attend prayer sessions, participating in cultural shows surrounded by Tibetan classmates and teachers. He recounted the salience of language enabling one to forge bonds with one's community. His stay at Dharamshala strengthened his sense of relating to Tibetan identity. However, his relocation to USA rendered him to constantly confront questions of race and ethnicity. Understandably, India allows a conducive environment for identity rootedness while migration towards the West threatens culture loss. The salience and continuity of one's identity is largely determined by the articulation of consciousness generated by one's experiences of diaspora, the reasons for the exodus and the memory of the same. Given the dynamism of social interactions, individuals as interpretive beings and the vagaries engendered by time and space, the exiled community have established a central government body known as the CTA (Central Tibetan Administration) to ensure preservation of one's culture, customs, religious practices culminating as one's identity. Ahmad cites Gabriel Shaffer's insightful work on diaspora induced by statelessness. Statelessness thus represents the primary reason for Tibetans to depart from their homeland (2017: 36). Diaspora consciousness and the presence of Tibetan government in exile demonstrates the urgency of Tibetans to protect themselves from exogenous cultural forces but when considering identity as an embodied experience, the resistance against cultural assimilation becomes thwarted owing to individual preferences, gender, generational differences, shifts in attitudes and pragmatic concerns.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of 'identity' cannot be understood in a vacuity of spatial, temporal and cultural contexts. It is essentially contingent upon the existent zeitgeist of times, its antecedence and its possibilities for the future. In a similar strain, identity therefore is not an abstracted/disembodied entity that requires rigorous epistemological inquiries. The Tibetan refugees of India in their tryst with diaspora identities draw their understandings primarily from their social, cultural, economic and political situatedness. The empirical narratives of the refugees further vindicates the unviability of an examination of 'identity' from the mental realms of the subjects as these narratives are holistically shaped and influenced by simply 'being-in-the-world'. The absence of consensus of meanings apropos their exilic identity underscores the ontological salience of 'being'. *Beings* in exile exercise their preconceptual understanding to apprehend further meanings of identity as they are produced, circulated, accepted or repudiated while in the flux of their everydayness. This 'everydayness' therefore becomes the site to examine lived experiences of the Tibetan refugees entailing their context dependency viz. spatiality and temporality. Heidegger's hermeneutic circle allowed for a holistic appreciation of the meanings of identity wherein bodies of work expounding on the attributes of identity were juxtaposed with the meanings of identity understood and embodied by the refugees. The quintessential elements of diasporic identity viz. religion, language, ethnicity and socio-cultural norms often assumed to sustain a coherent identity were contested when contrasting it with the accounts of the respondents. For instance, generational differences produced incompatibilities in terms of how conceptions of their homeland-Tibet is understood and envisioned. The propensity to seek epistemological and overarching theoretical essence of 'identity-in-exile' bypasses the ontic contingency of 'being-there'. Case in point, the intergenerational differences of Tibetan refugees highlight the varying modes of being which was brought to manifest by their facticity into junctures of socio-political, cultural and historical realities. Furthermore, the illusion of an objective and uniform identity adherent with its constitutive attributes is contested by the dependency on its lived realities. The idea of a stable homogeneous identity has been problematized when juxtaposing narratives from across the Indian Himalayan region. The settlement camps in Dalhousie and Dharamsala comparatively asserted allegiance for a homogeneous identity than in places like Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada wherein identity was found to be notional and variant. For beings in exile, their identity is continually under revision, reinterpretation and is at best provisional. Since beings and their existential structure is intrinsically characterised by their understanding, identity assumes, discloses and reveals itself in many multiplicities of understanding. Tibetan identity in exile therefore does not manifest as an objective and invariable phenomenon with reified contours but instead is derivative of the experiences of beings concerned with the meaning of identities. Metaphorically, the helical structure

of interpretation or the hermeneutic circle also represents the perpetual 'becoming of identity' as the circle of interpretation never tapers to a final and immutable interpretation. For Tibetan emigres, their perceptions of identity varies primarily because of their horizons which is derivative of temporality. Horizons are constitutive of *'ecstases'* viz. past, future and present. They do not exist separately nor in any sequential ordering but is essential for the *dasein's* existential structure. Abandoning the subject vs. object methodology, the paper does not attempt to draw conclusive meanings of identity of ethnic communities in diaspora but engaged with multitudinous horizons of beings in exile, their existential structure, mattering, care and the prior horizons of Tibetan works of literature and identity which the researchers referred. The inevitable contingency of contexts and temporalities with reference to identity foregrounded motifs of survivability over allegiance to socio-political sentiments, religion or ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans. Archetypal identity markers viz. religious tenets, linguistic commonality and philosophical principles were relegated and deemed unnecessary by some respondents. These changes must be considered within broader contexts of modernity, cultural assimilation and one's socio-economic realities. Every interpretation therefore elicits a simultaneous examination of individual/group and structural concerns. To conclude, the hermeneutics of identity in exile allows for the possibilities of multiple 'provisional' representations of identity as opposed to the reductive bi-polar binaries of the idealist and pragmatic notions of identity.

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B. V. Sharma and M. Mariakumar

INVOLVING TRADITIONAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN TRIBAL AREAS IN INDIA: POTENTIAL AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Abstract

Not many scholars examined the question of whether or not the Traditional Medical Practitioners (hereafter T.M.P.s) constitute potential human resources to contribute to optimal health care of tribals living in remote areas. Research is also scarce on how and where the T.M.P.s could prove to be a highly reliable community resource in improving the tribals' health status. This paper explores to provide some understanding of the potential of the T.M.P.s to contribute to health care taking the case of the Savara, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PvTG) in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India. The findings of the study suggest that both for the reasons of presence of sizable number of the TMPs and the significant role that they play in the health care services in tribal areas and the inadequacies of the public health care in tribal areas, the collaboration between the TMPs and the public health machinery will prove to be fruitful. Further, it is concluded that any such collaboration will have greater acceptance by the community as the TMPs are not just seen as community functionaries, but also the ones who had accepted to follow certain ethics of the profession as a precondition to their practice.

Keywords: *Community participation, health care, public health, TMPs, Savara.*

Introduction

The health of many sections of the population in several countries all over the world and especially in South East Asia, Asia-Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa is far below satisfactory levels (Anderson et al., 2016). Social epidemiologists have rightly focussed on such vulnerable sections of world population to establish a direct correlation between spatial and social characteristics of a group and the pattern of disease and health distribution in a society (Albery et al., 2020). Further, the need to understand the mechanisms

B. V. SHARMA, Professor & Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India, **M. MARIAKUMAR,** Former Guest Faculty, Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India.

through which the patterns are produced is also sufficiently emphasized. It is noted that the reasons for the poor state of health in case of certain sections of various nations could be many, but the most important of all is the issue of access to biomedical health care.

In case of India, tribal communities especially have far worse health indicators than the general population (Executive Summary of the Report, 'Tribal Health in India: Bridging the gap and a roadmap for future,' jointly produced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Tribal Affairs of the Government of India, 2018). The habitation of most tribal people being in remote areas in hilly, forested or desert terrains, the access to health care is a major problem. Various parameters like illiteracy, personal hygiene, and sanitation, demanding physical environments and malnutrition make them more vulnerable to diseases. The distance from medical facilities, the lack of road connectivity and transportation, insensitive and discriminatory behavior by health staff, poverty and so on continues to be the primary factors for the high mortality and morbidly in these communities (World Bank, 2012). Ajay Tamboli (2017)[1] brought to light how the problems of health care get compounded in specific areas – the red areas - in the country due to extremist activities. Tribals primarily suffer from nutritional deficiencies such as low protein levels and/or energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies such as iodine. Loss of diversity of food for a variety of reasons is said to be causing the nutritional deficiency disorders among the tribals more now than in the past (Suparna et al., 2016). Gastrointestinal disorders (dysentery and parasitic infections) and malaria too are common among them. Tribal health is further compromised by social issues such as alcoholism, tobacco consumption, etc. (Mavalankar, 2016).

The efforts of Governments to improve the health status of tribals since independence is noteworthy in India but for various reasons proved to be inadequate. The Government of India (GOI) has committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but India is yet to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Mavalankar, 2016). Health parameters of the tribal population have always been a concern for India's march toward MDGs and now toward SDGs as well. Tribals suffer from extreme deprivation and economic underdevelopment. One of the key reasons identified for poorly designed and poorly managed health service in tribal areas, by a special committee on tribal issues constituted by GOI, was "near-complete absence of participation of people from the Scheduled Tribes or their representatives in shaping policies, making plans, or implementing services in the health sector." Report of the High-level Committee on Socio-economic, health and educational status of the tribals of India, GoI, 2014)

In the tribal areas, a particular strategy followed to address the issues of access to healthcare, is the organization of health camps in the community. The second is the *'chaata bazaar'* experiment, i.e., putting up of an umbrella (indicating setting up of a stall where information on health-issues can be

exchanged) by health personnel in the weekly markets. This strategy claims that its efficiency lies in disseminating information and facilitating health-encounters in a spot, which in all likelihood will be visited by the majority of the tribal people. This indeed proved to be of some help initially in some areas but was gradually discontinued in many areas. Similarly, some effort was made to use the services of traditional medical practitioners in some tribal pockets (Ajay Tamboli, 2017). Though some research has been undertaken in the area of mapping the numerical strength and services rendered by the ethnomedical practitioners in the tribal areas (Sharma BV and Majhi. J 2004; Majhi 2016) and areas of their potential contribution in 'Community-based T.B. Care' (Sharma BV 2002; Banerjee, A. et al. 2004), the knowledge gap in the field of community participation in health care is centred around the issue of whether or not the Traditional Medical Practitioners (hereafter TMPs) constitute potential manpower to contribute to optimal health care of tribals living in remote areas. Research is also largely absent regarding how and where the TMPs could prove to be a highly reliable community resource in the attempts to improve the health status of the tribals. The possibility of integration of biomedical therapeutics and subaltern therapeutics for evolving a suitable model for health care delivery in tribal areas is still not explored in any significant way. The possibility of evolving a system of referral practices among the different participants of health care delivery that suits their level of knowledge, mutual understanding of strengths and weaknesses and expectations of social recognition too needs some attention.

This paper explores to provide some understanding of the potential of the TMPs to contribute to healthcare, taking the case of the Savara, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PvTG) in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. It specifically discusses the scope and possible means of a partnership of TMPs with the public health machinery in Andhra Pradesh, India. The population of the Savara in the state of Andhra Pradesh according to the 2011 census is around 137613 and accounts for 5.02% of the total tribal population of the state. Their population in the districts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram is, 76.04% and 22.73%, respectively out of their total population in the state.

The health and educational status of the Savaras in the State is far from satisfactory. The absence of any named clans or lineages, their complex religious life, their exclusive practice of shifting cultivation and the practice of polygamy were the distinct cultural characteristics of this tribe. Their identity as Savara is firstly rooted in their distinct language and secondly in the religion that they followed (Elwin 1955; Krishna Rao, 1972). The harsh living conditions in inaccessible hilltops, the simple technology and sensitive dependence on nature has naturally made their religious life complex. *Jannodu* and *Desarodu* are the male religious specialists who supervise the rituals amongst them. The *yejjirodu*, and *kundan (kundan boi* for female) are primarily the magico-religious healers for the healing rituals relating to illness. Only in the recent past they have taken up horticulture and settled agriculture owing to the initiatives of the

Government of Andhra Pradesh (Sharma 2019). The other noteworthy change in Savara society relates to changes in staple food. Rice is now their staple food due to the introduction of cash crops in their fields and also because of the supply of rice through the public distribution system. Another significant change one can notice now in the socio-cultural life of the Savara is a shift in their religious belief system to *Akshara Brahma (*under the reform movement of Savara religion) and Christianity (Gopika J, 2018; Sharma BV & Gopika J, 2020).

The strength of the TMPs among the Savara

A mapping of TMPs was conducted during the months of January-February 2020 in three PHC areas of the ITDA, namely Kusumi, Donubai and Marripadu to estimate the current numeric strength of the TMPs. A total of 231 TMPs have been enumerated in 107 hamlets in these two PHC areas. Though the majority of the hamlets had one TMP, some had three or more TMPs also. The average number of TMPs per hamlet works out to 2.15. The distribution of the TMPs with respect to the hamlets where they are based is as follows:

Number of TMPs	No. of hamlets	%
One	53	59.53
Two	24	22.42
Three	20	18.69
Four	4	3.73
Above four	6	5.60
Total	107	100.00

These 231 TMPs reported to have treated about 2241 patients in a month; the patient load per month per TMP is 9.70. However, the data also shows that the most popular TMPs (who have a patient load of more than 10) who number about 121 in the three PHC areas themselves treat 1676 patients per month and that these TMPs have an average patient load of approximately 13.85 per month. The minimum number reported by any TMP in these three PHC areas is two and the maximum is about 45. The distribution of the average number of patients by the TMPs is as follows:

No. treated per month	Number of TMPs	%
Less than 3	30	12.98
4 to 6	51	22.07
7 to 9	29	12.55
10 to 12	68	29.43
13 to 15	32	13.85
Above 15	21	9.09
Total	231	100.00

The Role of the TMPs in Healthcare

The health care among the Savara is primarily provided by two types of specialists: magico-religious healers and the herbalists. As is in the case of other simple societies where personalistic etiologies prevail, magico-religious healers address all causality in general and comprehensive terms and not specifically refer to the illness. But paradoxically when ritual supplication and sacrifices are made, usually they are narrowly limited in scope, specific to a particular illness or to prevent a feared illness (Foster 1976). The herbalists, on the other hand, claim some specialization in the sense of providing specialized treatment for specific illness or health-related issues such as infertility (Madan Mohan 2010).

As beliefs of supernatural causation of disease and also belief in sorcery and witchcraft as direct causes of illness, prevail very much, the magico-religious healers will have a significant role to play in the Savara society. It was reported earlier (Elwin 1955; Krishna Rao 1976) that it is to the magico-religious healer, usually a woman called *Kundanboi,* to whom the Savara first approach for diagnosis of illness. Subsequently, on their referral, the sick person or his/her family members may consult a senior male healer called *kundan or yejjirodu. In case* the latter fails to reveal who caused the illness then the help of a herbalist is resorted to (also referred to as *yejjirodu*). If it is diagnosed by her that the illness is not caused by an ancestral spirit or evil spirit or a god/ goddess. The male magico-religious healers may follow a ritual act for the diagnosis of the illness. However, occasionally the smell of the patient, colour of the palm, eyes, tongue, etc., of the patient is also examined by some healers to identify the agent that caused the illness (Madan 2010).

The non-magico-religious healers – the health care specialists who treat illnesses by administering herbal and non-herbal products and those who treat musculoskeletal disorders through massages, exercises, etc., are also important and enjoy the continued trust among the Savara. The herbalists diagnose more often basing on symptoms suffered by the sick person and some examination of pulse, colour of urine, sputum, blood, etc., together with other bodily examinations. While magico-religious healers conduct healing rituals and sacrifices either at home or outside, depending on the nature of the illness, the herbalists normally treat at the residence of the patients.

The recent survey conducted in the three PHC areas revealed that out of 231 TMPs, 135 have specialized in one specific illness; 88 have specialized in the treatment of 2- 3 illnesses, and the rest eight treated all kinds of illnesses. The eight who reported treating all illnesses are, as expected magico-religious healers, though not all magico-religious healers reported of treating all illnesses. As many as 11 out of the 30 magico-religious healers enumerated thus also claimed specialization of treatment of one to three specific illnesses.

The data collected shows the popularity of the herbalists among the

Savara even today and some decline in the role of the magico-religious healing. This trend is directly related to the fact that many a Savara in this district has more recently changed their religious faiths to *Akshara Brahma (*under the reform movement of Savara religion) and Christianity (Gopika, 2018). This is an interesting development itself in Savara community. The change of faith did not undermine the indigenous knowledge regarding medicinal plants, though there are also religious beliefs associated with how and when the medicine works or fails. The 'irrational' elements of the medical practices seem to have been given up. In contrast, the 'rational' elements are being protected for, and the medicine is also associated with the identity and pride of these people as Savara. This strategy served the purpose as it is the animal sacrifices and the high expenditure involved in the magico-religious treatment, which was the rationale used for new religious faith. This shift to new religion/ faith seems to have affected the explanatory models of illness recognized by them to some extent. The continued trust in herbal medicine by the members of Savara following Christianity and also by those affiliated to *Akshara Brahma,* however, explains the position of the Savara that they uphold the value of indigenous knowledge regarding medicinal properties of some plants and animal products that they have inherited from their forefathers.

Experience (In years)	No. of TMPS	%
Less than 05	20	8.66
6 to 10	29	12.55
11 to 15	22	9.52
16 to 20	16	6.93
21 to 25	33	14.29
26 to 30	23	9.96
31 to 35	50	21.65
Above 35	38	16.45
Total	231	100.00

Many of the TMPs enumerated in the survey themselves reported to be following Christianity or *Akshara Brahma,* but they have acquired the knowledge of medicines from their grandfathers or fathers or other close kin before their death to preserve the knowledge and serve their community. The data on the experience of the TMPs enumerated in the survey too testify this. About 85% of the TMPs reported an experience of more than 20 years and a little above 17% reported more than 35 years of experience too.

The Illness Categories Treated by the TMPs:

Illness category	Experience (in years)				Total
	Less than 10	11 to 20	21 - 30	Above 30	
Fits	2	2	0	2	6
Muscles & bones/Fracture	7	7	2	26	42

Fever	2	4	10	15	31
Gastric/ stomach disorder	11	7	15	20	53
Jaundice	24	12	16	19	71
Children	1	2	4	8	15
Snakebite	3	10	11	17	41
Heart/asthma/dental	8	2	1	1	12
Gynaecological	2	1	1	1	5
Kaniki (Bhoota vaidyam)	3	6	8	13	30
Many (all)	4	6	4	4	18
Total	67	59	72	126	324*

· *The total exceeds 231 as some TMPs treated more than one illness.*

The most commonly treated illnesses by the TMPs are jaundice, 'gastric' and stomach disorders, muscle and bone problems besides the illnesses due to witchcraft/ancestral spirits/supernatural beings. About 20% to 25% of the TMPs reported treating these illness categories as specialists of any one or all these three categories of illnesses. While muscle and skeletal disorders are specifically mentioned by about 18% of the TMPs, the specialization for snake and insect bites was claimed by another 16%. Treatment for fevers too was stated by about 18% of the TMPs, but these fevers were said to be other than the 'normal' fevers like malaria, typhoid or flu. Treatment for children's diseases and gynaecological diseases was not reported by many TMPs (less than 5%). However, some magico-religious healers who stated to be treating all illnesses included these categories too.

Form the interviews with members who suffered from some major morbidity (reference period of one year from January 2020) and minor morbidity (reference period of one month from January 2020) it is found that the TMPs are generally approached either as the first contact with a health provider or after exhausting all other sources of health care. In specific diseases like jaundice, piles, muscle problems, fractures and bites of insects, reptiles, and animals TMPs are the first choice. In other diseases like tuberculosis, respiratory infections, and other chronic illnesses, there is also a tendency to simultaneously consult the TMPs and the biomedical practitioners. In illnesses like the paralysis, some gynaecological problems, the TMPs are contacted as a last resort too.

Contextual Issues in the Utilization of Public and Private Healthcare by the Savaras

Access to modern health care for the Savara is still very unsatisfactory in this ITDA. Many Savara habitations *(guda)* do not have satisfactory road connectivity. It is not possible to lay roads to every habitation too given the size of the habitation (10-30 households) and also the frequent abandoning of their habitations for some reason or the other. Further, the Savara prefer to

live in temporary settlements on the hill slopes where they cultivate crops during the time of cultivation and harvesting. Such temporary settlements will not have any road facility. The health care measures through mobile health vans, 108, and 104 are also difficult for many such temporary Savara settlements.

Some Savara inhabiting this Mandal do try to access PHCs and also the CHC for medical care for some illnesses. The average distance to be covered to access a P.H.C for Savaras would be around 5 km, and of course many have to cover a distance of more than 15 km. Similarly, to access the CHC, many have to travel about 20-40 km. Apart from these institutions, they also approach the Area hospital on referrals from the medical officers of the PHCs and the CHCs travelling even farther distances. Since the effective working hours of PHCs usually being 11 am to 2 pm, the members of many habitations face the difficulty of availing the services as the public transport for them is available before or after the working hours of PHCs. Recently, the working hours of some of the PHCs in the ITDA area are made 24X7 to improve health services. Even in these PHCs, the availability of medical officers is not assured all the time.

The Government has recently introduced the services of telemedicine for the inhabitants of the Mandal to address the issue of access. These are however poorly utilized by the Savara for various reasons, including the connectivity issues and the delays in response to the calls of the patients. The waiting time at the telemedicine centres is one important concern for them. Further, the Savara perceive that injections and IV fluid drip help in speedy recovery. The preference for biomedicine in the case of many illnesses is due to the perceived quick relief for the symptoms suffered through the administration of the injections or intravenous infusion. Patients visiting the telemedicine centers are prescribed only tablets. This discourages the Savara to make use of the telemedicine centres.

One important element in the lower utilization of public health care is a complete disregard for culturally sensitive health care delivery. The cultural insensitivity can be observed in the 'impolite' way the staff communicates with the Savara members, the way the symptoms and the labels of the illnesses are understood, the diet that is provided, the way patients are physically handled, etc. One Savara woman exclaimed: *"the staff at the PHCs simply blame us for every and all the diseases. They tell us that the disease occurred to us because either we ate dirty food or because we are addicted to alcohol. They just make these remarks without even knowing whether someone touched alcohol or not. They just do not understand that diseases can occur to good people because of bad people around them".* Mr Krishna Rao, a middle-aged Savara, similarly commented, *"I suffer from 'gastric'. I know that it is because I took food irregularly during the last one year due to my travel and also, I ate food that is completely different from what I eat at home. The Doctors, however, tell*

me that it is due to 'excess mandu' (alcohol). The staff did not make any attempt first to know what is my problem. They take for granted that all Savara are dunkers and all diseases to us are due to this only. They do not even let us sit there".

The biggest insensitivity that the members of the Savara community experience are regarding the language, as they speak a distinct language of their own, Savara. Many times, the symptoms reported are felt to be 'ambiguous' by the staff of the hospitals. On the other hand, the symptoms investigated by the medical officers are misunderstood by the Savara. These miscommunications may be resulting in delays in appropriate diagnosis with a consequence of discontinuation of the biomedical treatment itself.

One of the problems faced by the biomedical practitioners in public health institutions is the resistance of the Savara members, particularly the women for treatment at higher level referral hospitals. When Savaras are referred to these hospitals, generally inpatient treatment is advised. The longer the stay in an alien environment, the more is the worry for the Savara. Any advice for surgery makes them more nervous, as their notions of ethnophysiology and ethnoanatomy may not be in tune with the biomedical notions. The problem of communication is felt to be more acute in these hospitals as often it is directed through the community health workers, and so the members find this unnerving as they are unaware of what is happening around them. Thus, the availing of inpatient care and acceptance of surgery requires greater support from the members of the household, kin groups and/ or members of his/her therapy management group. The need for counselling by the right persons at the right time will prove to be beneficial. It is in this context, what Elwin (1955) wrote about the *Kundonboi*, the Savara women healer is pertinent. He writes: "here is the body of women dedicated to the public service and fulfilling that dedication with grace and energy. Here are women, believed to be vitally in touch with supernatural affairs, on whom one can rely, women who respond to the needs of sick and anxious with professional thoroughness and affectionate concern …The Kundonboi is indeed an impressive and honourable figure. She lives a dedicated life on the boundary between two worlds …The Kundonboi is the nurse and friend, the guide and the analyst" (quoted from, Shaw 2006: 200)

The difficulty of access to public health institutions as well as the desire to avail 'quality' medical care push some of the Savara to the biomedical care provided by qualified private practitioners. However, the economic status and also the non-availability of such providers in short distances make it difficult to choose services of such providers sparingly and only when the illness is evaluated as 'serious'. Many of the members do compromise regarding quality and end up availing the services of semi-qualified Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) who visit their habitations in short intervals or on the former's request over the telephone. Savara members inhabiting 145 habitations have listed 49

such RMPs whom they regularly approach for some medical services. This dependency of them on these semi-qualified biomedical providers is considered as a necessary evil by some of them as they also realize the possibility of medical complications due to their treatment some times.

The Rationale Behind and Benefits of Collaboration with the TMPs

The discussion on the collaboration of traditional healers in primary health care is neither new nor is a concluded one. Hoff (1992) presented a review of projects in various countries on this subject and suggested that 'traditional healers, if properly trained, can contribute significantly to the work of primary care teams. He pointed out the constraints in this regard as the lack of government recognition of the value of traditional healers, government commitment, and dialogue between healers and government staff. The value of traditional health practitioners is more clearly reflected in the statement in one of the W.H.O publications, "a healthy public policy ought to promote community health through a whole range of public policies, of which traditional health service policies are just one element. It makes health a priority on the public policy agenda, emphasizing positive initiatives rather than restrictive regulations, achieving objectives through rewards rather than penalties, and encouraging self -control, self -management, participation and mutual aid (Bernhard Badura and Ilona Kickbusch, 1991)

The issue of a possible collaboration of TMPs and the public health care system was researched in many countries in different contexts. The UNAIDS document (2000) has nicely summarized the discourse on the advantages and limitations regarding this collaboration in the specific context of HIV/AIDS in African context especially and remarked that despite its limitations, it makes sense to at least attempt collaboration given vast health needs in developing countries. Since then, the issue attracted the attention of scholars, more specifically in the context of control of HIV. Mills. E, S.Singh et al. (2006) concluded regarding the Sub-Saharan African situation that collaboration is essential, given the changing epidemic of HIV and the dynamic relationship between the two health sectors. Mendu and Ross (2019) similarly reported a qualitative study regarding the cross-referrals between practitioners of the two systems more recently.

The discussion on a possible collaboration of TMPs with the public health care system was not, however limited to HIV. It was discussed for other diseases like TB (Banerjee. A, Sharma BV et al. 2004), Malaria (Makundi.E, Malebo.H et al., 2006; T Druetz et al., 2018) and also in the areas of reproductive health care, mental health (Burns and Tomita, 2015; Green and Colucci, 2020) and others too. Makundi.E, Malebo.H et al. (2006) while observing that traditional health care is not necessarily a significant impediment or a delaying factor in the treatment of severe malaria in Africa recommended that training on the management of severe cases, periodically involving both traditional

health practitioners and health workers to identify modalities of better collaboration. T Druetz et al. in 2018 reiterated this position in the context of Haiti and stated that malaria elimination efforts should include the collaboration of voodoo priests and other traditional healers.

In light of the research findings and recommendations regarding the fruitfulness of collaboration of the TMPs in primary health care in the tribal areas, there is a need to explore for such collaboration in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. The TMPs, as a resource, in the extension of primary health services, are not cherished. Currently, the public health care system and the subaltern therapeutics play their roles in mutual distrust. The public health care system similarly operates in total distrust with the RMPs too, which is perhaps justifiable. But this possibly allowed a covert collaboration between the TMPs and the RMPs at least on an individual-to-individual basis in terms of referrals to each other. These developments are not in the best interests of the tribals.

Given the strength of the TMPs and the significant role that they play in the health care services in tribal areas on the one hand and the inadequacies of the public health care side on the other, the collaboration between the TMPs and the public health machinery should be considered seriously. Such collaboration will have greater acceptance by the community as the TMPs are not just seen as community functionaries, but also the ones who had accepted to follow certain ethics of the profession as a precondition to their practice.

Some of the TMPs in the Savara community also hold other positions like office-bearer of the statutory panchayat, positions in *Sangams* of the local church or temple, positions in the religious bodies, etc. These positions give them opportunities for extending their social capital, and thus they turn out to be an important community resource. The formal collaboration with them by the public health care system may help the members to make fuller utilization of this community resource.

One of the important issues regarding the health care of the tribals is a delay in seeking the treatment and then shopping for diagnosis and treatment in case of many an illness. If these delays and time lags are reduced, not only the early recovery of the members from illness can be achieved, but also the expenditure on health care can be cut down drastically. Hence, any collaboration with TMPs should be first directed towards the achievement of early referral from the TMPs in as many cases as possible to the qualified biomedical practitioners in public health institutions. This, however, needs to be achieved with due respect to subaltern therapeutics. The culture-bound syndromes need to be understood, and the freedom required to the TMPs in tackling them should be protected. Similarly, the interference in disease categories that are being treated for generations and those which pose a lesser risk to the children and the members of the productive age groups can be avoided. Currently, the

TMPs are seen as a valued source of health care for treatment of mental health problems in tribal communities. The availability of professional help in the CHCs and Area hospitals too for mental health issues is not available. Hence, in the case of diseases with mental disorders as a coepidemic of some other disease being treated in these institutions, seeking the services of the TMPs for treatment of mental illness with the support of the community seems sensible. Measures such as this would boost the confidence of the TMPs for partnering with the public health systems.

Concluding Remarks and Proposed Strategies for working with the TMPs

The TMPs can be considered for specific roles in some of the disease control programme. The call for 'End TB' by the W.H.O in 2015, recommends, along with other measures, moving toward a) active case finding in high-burden countries and b) community-based rather than hospital-based service. The selection of TMPs as DOTs observers in the TB Control Programme may be useful since they enjoy the status of 'professional' and also the 'son of the soil'. They can also assist in active case finding. Leprosy continues to be a Neglected Tropical Disease in India, and unfortunately, the research shows that tribal areas are registering high prevalence rates in the past decade(Naik, Thakar, Phrande, & Ganapati, 1999; Rao, Bhuskade, & Desikan, 2000; Prabhakara Rao, Bhuskade, Raju, Ranganadha Rao, & Desikan, 2002; A. Singh, 2010; Katkar, Mote, Adhav, Muthuvel, & Kadam, 2017; V. Singh, Turankar, & Goel, 2019). The early case detection and the follow up of contacts are very much required to bring down the prevalence in these communities. The involvement of TMPs in the follow-up of contacts particularly can prove to be useful because the current definitions of 'household contacts', and 'social contacts' are ambiguous and serve little or no purpose as far as the tribals are concerned.

Apart from support in the early diagnosis and effective treatment of many diseases, TMPs can deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach on many diseases. The fruitfulness of their involvement in the case of Colorectal Cancer (CRC) screening in this regard is pointed out. Similarly, they can be of great advantage in outreach programmes on menstrual hygiene practices which are currently given high priority in tribal areas.

Notes

1 Dr. Ajay Tamboli who served as District Collector of a tribal dominated district in Chhattisgarh narrated his experiences and innovative health care strategies adopted by him for better health care in a '*National Conference* on Revisiting Tribal Policies, Research and Innovations" organized by the Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad in collaboration with CIPS and Government of Andhra Pradesh at University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. On August 29-30, 2017.

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Ananya Mukherjee and Oinam Hemlata Devi

INSIDE THE KITCHEN: GENDERED KNOWLEDGE & FOOD LITERACY

Abstract

Women's cultural production and reproduction roles within their social capacities have long been worthy of academic inquiry. Women have for long been responsible for the welfare of their families, and feminist scholars have, over the past few decades, elaborately studied their gendered experiences within the kitchen space, the spillover of women's participation in the community, and the cultural transmission of multi-tiered, gendered knowledge within their community. Gendered survival sciences have been further developed to understand one's body, suggesting environmental programs and sustainable development strategies incorporate family, health, and ecological aspects. The primary objectives of this paper were to study the kitchen as a safe space for women towards cultural production and reproduction and to understand the trends in the transmission of gendered IKS and its impact on food literacy. The study was conducted across an urban community in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, for six months in 2020-2021. Three households were selected for an in-depth case study method using convenient sampling. The kitchen space reflects several cultural identities that influence social relations as women stand out as the primary partakers of cultural production and reproduction. A study at the household level in food literacy, gendered knowledge encourages discussions that could contribute to the discourse on sustainable development and food security at a global level.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Gendered Knowledge and Identity, Kitchen Spaces, Food Literacy, Gendered Performance*

Introduction

The conceptualization of spaces by cultural geographers for decades declares them as the product of culture and social experiences. Crucial theoretical frameworks reported in the late 1900s, for instance, Foucault's 'Of Other Spaces' (1986 [1984]), retraced the history of geographical spaces, suggesting that spaces influence people's real lives. Acquiring from the concept

ANANYA MUKHERJEE, Research Fellow and **OINAM HEMLATA DEVI,** Associate Professor, School of Human Ecology, Ambedkar University Delhi, Delhi Email: oinamhemlata@gmail.com

of space, feminist scholars investigated the kitchen space within the private domain to highlight gendered contestations emphasizing women's contribution to the cultural reproduction of gendered knowledge in their families across generations. Christie (2003) identified the kitchen space- both indoors and outdoors as a gendered territory that plays a vital role in the transmission of cultural and embodied knowledge over generations at the hands of women who have been reported to be the primary occupants of the kitchen. Women have for long been responsible for the welfare of their families, and feminist scholars have, over the past few decades, elaborately studied their gendered experiences within the kitchen space, the spillover of women's participation in the community, and the cultural transmission of multi-tiered, gendered knowledge within their community.

Before delving into the gendered knowledge of spaces, the kitchen, in particular, it is necessary to understand the universally constructed gendered positions in the light of the nature-culture domain. The secondary position of a woman in decision making and other spheres of power control in a society is a pan-cultural fact. In an attempt to understand the devaluation of women in society, Sherry Ortner (1974) writes that scholars who look beyond biological determinism of gender interpret female subordination given the non-human realm within a culture that engages in the process of sustenance while transcending the non-human realm 'nature'. Ecofeminists argue that in patriarchal thought, owing to a woman's body, she remains confined to particular social contexts implying a closer association with nature, while men who create artificially to sustain culture are associated with culture. The distinctiveness of culture rests precisely because; it can under most circumstances transcend the non-human realm, 'nature'. It may be perceived as Sherry Ortner writes: *'That culture asserts itself to be not only distinct from but superior to nature, and that sense of distinctiveness and superiority rests precisely on the ability to transform – to 'socialize' and 'culturalize' – nature'* (1974:73). Consequently, men are seen as superior to nature, and a woman's procreative roles assigned at birth are interpreted in the light of production and reproduction.

Women's cultural production and reproduction roles have long been worthy of academic inquiry. Feminist research has shown that women have, at the intersection of nature and society, exhibited absolute authority over gendered spaces within the household- primarily the kitchen. There, they engage in extensive food gathering, preparation and housekeeping for adequate nutrition to the household members while exercising authority over gendered spaces of the domestic sphere. Despite dissolved public-private binaries of space, the exclusion of a woman's identity and lack of adequate representation of the kitchen space calls for exploring the 'performance of gender, as described by Butler (1990). The kitchen space remains a contested site for exploration.

Let us now try locating gender identity inside the kitchen. Understanding gender as a social institution would help discern the gendered division of labour

to ascribe membership in a category of people by constructing similarities and differences among them, and assigning roles and responsibilities based on gender, race, and ethnicity. To understand the narratives of cultural identity from within the kitchen space, it becomes essential to discard the problematic consideration of a 'woman' as a unitary category, failing to differentiate among women by class, race, ethnicity, etc. Achieving gender is possible following which social order constructs and holds individuals to strongly gendered norms and expectations, characteristics of their identity, both descriptive and normative. Certain categories in society can create ideological shifts that allow them to dominate others, and such shifts become ingrained over a while. A prerequisite of equality, through the capitalist patriarchal perspective, could be the uniformity. Inside a household across classes, races, ethnicities, etc., a woman may be dominated by the distinctiveness and superiority of the male members, but the kitchen space remains isolated. The gendered control over the kitchen space provides a certain degree of uniformity within a household in the form of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), considered unique to women. This ideological conception could then be further incorporated into the discourse on food literacy to conceptualize the fundamental narrative of sufficiency, access/ entitlement to food following the social, political and economic components of everyday life, driven by the propagation of gendered knowledge by womenfolk from within the above-defined 'safe space' - the kitchen. As we may write, the kitchen space within the constraints of this study may be defined as a place predominantly occupied by women to prepare food for the members of the household. Here, the kitchen space is essentially a closed, indoor place, contrary to community kitchen spaces- depicting a symbolic connection between nature and society. A woman produces and reproduces the knowledge of the environment in food preparation from within this private space. This study may significantly alter social order within a household that constructs and holds individuals to strongly gendered norms, here from within the kitchen demonstrating food literacy; and expectations that are characteristic of their identity as mentioned above, both descriptive and normative.

The primary objectives of this paper were thus to study the kitchen as a safe space for women towards cultural production and reproduction and to understand the trends in the transmission of gendered IKS and its impact on food literacy. It explores the varied perspectives of ordinary women about their cultural identity, gendered experiences within the kitchen space, and the cultural transmission of multi-tiered knowledge within their community. Therefore, the purpose is to understand the narratives of cultural identity from within the kitchen space.

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) Framework:

The framework of Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) builds on the narratives that interconnect ecological issues concerning the politics of gender.

The focus is to deal critically at the intersection of feminist theories and political ecology. The feminist theory interrogates the hierarchies and essentialist formulations of the 'female' while, the perspectives of political ecology interrogate nature-society relationship highlighting the nuances of manifesting power in environmental conflicts and governance. The analysis of ecological knowledge and gender ideology, in contrast, locates how certain ideas are produced and debated within social and political processes and about particular groups and institution**s.** Leach's (2007) gender-centered scholarship in environment and development inspired feminist scholars to approach the nature-culture characterization by persistently linking the personal and the political.

As explored through this study, the feminist narratives in political ecology led to an inquiry into the political objectives of daily engagements in intimate sites, such as the kitchen space. In light of the subjectivities, to understand and address the dynamics of gender with natural resource management, feminist scholars have extended their inquiry to the domestic sphere to examine livelihoods based on natural resources and the management of natural resources in gendered spaces of the household. Feminist political ecologists understand and address the dynamics of gender from within food spaces to natural resource management. Their body of work includes ecology to depict gendered resource contestations. It examines women participation in political and economic activities surrounding environmental issues in a broader context. Men and women differ in their efforts and interests, linked to ecological conservation, depicted by their distinctive roles, responsibilities, and knowledge between household or familial levels of the division of labour. The conceptualization of gendered labour in food spaces concerning the environment is yet associated with women's inclination towards providing nutritional requirements of family members, and as mentioned above, the cultural identity of women within kitchen spaces is at the crux of this study.

Literature Review

Pysiological conditioning of women's bodies keeps them confined universally to social spaces that reflect women's social roles within the domestic sphere. The confinement of a woman to the domestic sphere is motivated by the fact that, like all female mammals, she lactates (Ortner 1974). Through her lactation process, she builds a relationship with her children, and the nursing role drives her to engage in significant work that requires administration of continuous attention and dedicated care with empathy. The right person for such task of enculturation is the mother. The natural nursing bond generated at times of childbirth is then extended to the family, and she becomes responsible for performing chores at home. The analysis of the nature-culture dichotomy is suggestive of a domestic divide that is reflective of a natural connection between nature and women; cooking functions within the

domestic context '*show her to be a powerful agent of cultural process, constantly transforming raw natural resource into cultural products*' (Ortner 1974:80).

a. Performing Gender:

Within gender studies, it becomes essential to look at the relationship between women and nature closely, incorporating a gendered understanding of nature. While 'home' is constantly discussed as a site of oppression of women, the kitchen is a gendered territory where women assemble to influence and assert control over food preparation (Christie 2003). Christie addresses everyday life in the domestic space and cooking as a source of knowledge of the environment. She draws from the concept of gendered spaces the differential use of gendered knowledge to explore women's cultural perceptions. Deriving from the geographical concept of 'space', Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari's (1996) focus on knowledge within the gendered spaces, encourages a body of work exploring spaces and placing gendered struggles and access to space. Based on the kitchen analysis in rural Hausaland, Robson (2006) enumerates the socio-cultural constructions of space, suggesting that married women predominantly occupy the private space, the kitchen. The kitchen may be a workplace for a Hausa woman, where, she participates in production, circulation and reproduction. According to him, the knowledge for food gathering and preparation is nurtured and embedded through socialization. This gendered knowledge is transferred from one generation to the other.

Women perform tasks inside the kitchen like cleaning vegetables, washing utensils, processing condiments, feeding their family members, etc. These shape their identity as 'food literate', an identity that matters. Her performance within the kitchen space holds onto an essentialist expression in the family—this, Osella and Osella (2006) term as *'performative aspects of the self'*. A woman in a kitchen can identify and integrate gender into her identity, acknowledging a status-based aspect in the household that gives rise to intra-household hierarchies. It may be inferred that the categorization is socially constructed, normalized and to an extend essentialized. Gender is achieved through essentialized social practices, and the transmission of acquired skills and gendered knowledge occurs during child-rearing and family care. Butler writes that the identity of a female member at the household, in confirmation with her gender, is essentially performatively produced and *'compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence'* (1990:33).

b. Gendered Interests Dictate Survival Needs:

Associating gender labels with the natural environment in relation to particular groups and institutions has helped scholars understand gendered resource contestations that consequently generate ecological effects. In Rocheleau's, Thomas- Slayter's, and Wangari's view, the *'convergence of gender, science and environment in academic and political discourse as well as in*

everyday life and the social movements' (1996:9) introduces the theme of *'gendered sciences of survival'. It* recognizes the reason of interest by women in environmental issues in the light of the knowledge they possess, the skills they acquire through socialization. The reasons directly link to the need to secure health, hygiene and wellbeing. In this way, the gendered sciences of survival can be linked to gendered environmental responsibilities in the physical environment extended to a woman's family from within the kitchen space. Gendered survival sciences have been further developed to understand one's body, suggesting through environmental programs and sustainable development strategies.

c. Women's IKS and Food Literacy debates:

Development strategies have long focused on food security, and research shows that IKS are valuable to attain food security, and address issues concerning environmental health (Kamwendo & Kamwendo 2014). IKS are unique to specific communities. Quite often highly gendered as a result of cultural production and reproduction from within gendered spaces of the domestic sphere, IKS may be fruitful in ensuring food adequacy at the household level. Kamwendo and Kamwendo (2014) acknowledge that an individual household may not have access to food despite a nation being food secure. Thus, it is essential to address food literacy first, in the context of nutrient access, nutrient sufficiency and food entitlement migrating from the household towards the nation. At the household level, food entitlement is subject to the food literacy of the household member, who takes the responsibility of gathering and preparing the food. Best suited within the Feminist Political Ecology framework is the definition of food literacy provided by Cullen et al. (2015) which states:

> *'Food literacy is the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political components'* (Cullen et al. 2015: 143).

Drawing from personal experiences, Kamwendo and Kamwendo (2014) write that the understanding, interpretation and transmission of local IKS calls for gender-based analysis. Their results indicate that women of ethnic groups are more involved in subsistence agriculture than men. This brings women closer to their association with nature, providing bare subsistence needs to their families while also practising, and transmitting local knowledge food systems to younger generations who exhibit enhanced food literacy of local storage and preservation techniques. A research gap has been identified that requires an exploration of a woman's identity as a food literate, her status in the family holds onto an essentialist expression of what Osella and Osella

(2006) term as the 'performative aspects of the self', she performs tasks inside the kitchen regularly. A woman identifies herself as food literate during her lifetime; she belongs to a group that is continually set apart from men (in roles, labour and other forms within the domestic space). Japanese society strongly associates the kitchen, a gendered space, to women acknowledging that women cook every day and are responsible for child-rearing (Kimura 2011). In the book '*Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Florence*', Counihan (2004) explores the core of Tuscan cuisine that is known to be rooted in mezzadria peasant farming. On the mezzadria farms, women were responsible for the work inside the home as well as production in the courtyard, gardens and field, thereby suggesting cooking to be an essential part of a woman's reproductive labour, identity and power, especially for those who mainly stayed confined within the domestic space for their families (Counihan 2004). This is indicative of an exploration of the woman's identity as a food-literate member of the household who takes it upon herself to acquire, refine and propagate the knowledge of indigenous food systems to the members of her family across generations contributing to enhanced food literacy, and consequently food security at the household level.

The above reviews provided an backdrop to address explicitly with the following two research questions. First, does the modern kitchen provide a safe space for women to propagate knowledge of indigenous food systems? And second, what is the role of gendered indigenous knowledge in enhancing food literacy across generations?

Methods of Data Collection

For this study, we adopted an ethnographic approach that is closely aligned with the methods employed by classical ethnographers. Participant observation and interview methods are the two sources of data collection used in the study. In the interview process, the case study method helps probing specific events or spaces. It helps in understanding an in-depth insight into the trends of gendered IKS and food literacy. During the interview process, the use of an interview guide helped in the generation of new questions from the respondent's responses. Three households were selected for an in-depth case study method using convenient sampling. The three households comprise seven female members across two generations of female members of the household.

The respondents answered questions such as 'How long do you spend in the kitchen?', 'How is labor divided inside the kitchen?', 'How do you gather your food?', 'How do you organize your kitchen?', 'How do you decide what food to prepare on what occasion, keeping in mind the health of your family, including yourself?' 'How has your experience in the kitchen evolved over the course of your lifetime?' The questions are open-ended, which helped probe the kitchen space further in detail in the context of the first objective of the kitchen as a safe pace. The questions were framed to encourage women to narrate how they

ended up inside the kitchen and acquired knowledge of indigenous food systems. The second set of questions includes questions such as, 'What do you know about the nutritional requirements of yourself and your family?', 'Do you share traditional recipes with the members of your household?', 'In your absence, who cooks food for your family?', 'Who else works with you or helps you with the daily chores in the kitchen?', 'On festivities, what special arrangements are made for food preparation?'. These questions focus on the second objective, wherein; women are expected to talk in detail about the transmission of their knowledge and the trends in the family.

Participant observation was used to observe respondents during their time spent in the kitchen. All respondents actively participated in the interviews. It is important to note two significant limitations of the methodology adopted. First, the study of women as a unitary category would be highly inappropriate. However, menfolk were found to be either busy or reluctant to respond, instead directed towards the female members signaling them to be the practical keepers of kitchen knowledge. Second, the kitchen space was not accessible for observation for long hours in the context of division of labour among the household members, particularly during the peak hours when food is prepared- at night. Owing to the limitations, significant data related to the functioning of the kitchen space may have been missed. Due to the constraints of COVID-19, revisiting the households at regular intervals and eliminating the mentioned limitations could not be tackled.

The study was conducted across an urban community in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, for six months in 2020-2021. Respondents are women who belong to the regular middle class, upper-middle-class households. The garden space other than the kitchen area also qualifies as a gendered space for the study.

Ethical concerns to the area of analysis and interpretation:

A critical engagement and detailed reflective account are prepared upon the social class and category when attempting to objectively understand and analyze the responses. The knowledge of ethnography and feminist political ecology perspectives helped us connect with the case studies' embedded essential meanings. However, claiming the outcome as absolute objectivity will be inadequate considering the nature of the framework including types of data (qualitative), interpretation and its dependency on the positionality and judgments of the researcher's training and experiences in the study area (Mahajan, Rajangam & Babu, 2020). For ethical purposes and truthfulness to the data, verbatims are used to avoid overrepresentation of the rigor of our analytical ideas.

Case Studies

The in-depth case study interviews are reported briefly, considering the following three loose themes generated for analysis and interpretation.

Women's role in production and reproduction from within the gendered spaces was inquired in the study. By production, it means transforming raw materials into products of consumption that ensure survival, in this context, food; and reproduction refers to the labour that women put into producing offspring, child-rearing and the propagation of knowledge across generations. Pseudo-names of the respondents have been used to adhere to the concerned ethics and to maintain confidentiality.

Food Preparation: A Survival Skill

Mita Ghosh's family comprises three members, a 21-year-old son, a 23-year-old daughter and herself. Her husband expired ten years ago. Since then, she is responsible for ensuring the survival of her family members, demonstrating authority over the gendered spaces and the domestic space of the home. Mita Ghosh works for a private company in Jamshedpur and earns enough to provide for the food sufficiency of the family. Labour inside the domestic sphere is divided chiefly; quite often, she herself takes up the responsibility to gather vegetables, fruits and other components required to prepare food. Mita Ghosh is currently 53-years old, and she informs me that she grew up in a relatively low-income family and had very few resources for survival.

> *'My mother and father worked hard but we did not receive as much from our parents as we give to our children today. We did not know much about luxurious food, restaurants and eating outside. My mother cooked for us, we used to have the same food every day and very little food was distributed among eight of our family members. Despite poverty, we were never malnutritioned, we were never vitamin deficient and I think I would attribute my health to my mother, who despite being illiterate knew what was good for us.'* – Mita Ghosh [Interview conducted on 18th July, 2020].

Mita's kitchen was relatively modern; the latest technologies seemed to assist her in producing within the kitchen space amid her busy schedule of attending work and food preparation for her family. I observed that the kitchen was an extremely cosy space, and one could easily spend a lot of time cooking comfortably inside the kitchen. She does not acquire the help of any external service in food gathering and preparation but reports that her daughter and son occasionally assist her in preparing food when she is not around or is unable to cook due to reasons beyond her control. Most every day, before she leaves for work, she prepares breakfast and lunch for her children. When she cannot, she quickly processes all the materials required to prepare a meal and hands over a note to her daughter telling her what to cook and how. This rarely happened earlier, but due to the pandemic and increased work pressure these days, most often, the daughter was responsible for meal preparation for the family. She reports that the kitchen space is the most vibrant on Sundays. She can cater to the nutrient requirements of her family members and produce a delicious meal. She also informs that most of her cooking recipes have been

taught to her by her mother-in-law. Mita Ghosh, as a young girl, never cooked at her house before she got married.

She believes that her daughter and son have been brought up to ensure their survival even if she does not cook food for them.

> *'My daughter lives in Delhi, and son in Kolkata. Both of them are aware of what they must eat, what's healthy for them and what could get them sick. I think in terms of kitchen smartness, my daughter is smarter than my son because she spends time with me inside the kitchen. If I were to ask her the difference between dhaniya and pudina, she would be able to tell. Not my son. My son calls me when he wants to cook something; I always have to help him to even prepare rice, for instance. But yes, I think both of them know what nutrients they need to keep themselves healthy.'* [Interview conducted on 29th July 2020].

She also recalls memories of instances when her children fell ill, and she, over a phone call, taught them to make *'maad bhaat'* that assists in healing an upset stomach and mild digestive infections.

Cooking is not something Mita Ghosh enjoys, but she thinks that every woman must at some point in her life learn to cook and continue to cook for the rest of her life to sustain the health and well-being of her family. She looks upon cooking as a survival instinct, a skill every individual must learn to live a life not dependent on others. It doesn't matter if you're not a brilliant cook or a world-class chef. As long as one can feed himself when hungry, he has acquired a vital part of living healthy and peacefully. She loves to learn though, one of the primary reasons she never learnt how to cook as a young girl and still doesn't cook very often is due to how monotonous the daily rituals inside the kitchen space can get.

> She says, *'If I am asked to prepare something unique, for instance a dish that I have never heard of, I will be extremely curious to learn how to make it and I will make it as soon as I can. I made lasagna a few days back, I hadn't heard of it ever before, but YouTube assisted me in preparing lasagna and I cannot be happier.'* [Interview conducted on 3rd August 2020].

She also acknowledged that she knows what foods to consume regularly and understands why they can get monotonous. It was observed that the family was quite aware of health security, and being a medical professional, Mita Ghosh was very vigilant about what her children consumed even outside the home. *'We rarely eat outside, but when we do, we make sure to keep a check on our calorie intake.'* [Interview conducted on 14th August, 2020].

She informed that she considers it her responsibility to teach her children, especially her daughter, to cook well before she gets married to keep up with the culture in which she was born and brought up. As a proud Bengali, she is very fond of Bengali food, and she wishes to pass on her gendered knowledge of Bengali food systems, the ones she has learned from her mother-

in-law. The mother and daughter were set to prepare the fish curry. On the other day of the interview, the mother taught the daughter the recipe to make fish curry using a particular ingredient- curry leaves.

Kitchen in Nature?

Mrs. Chhanda Ghosh is a homemaker. She is 42-years-old and has been married for 18 years. She comes from a family of seven sisters, and her mother passed away when she was 16-years old. Her father and her relatives were primarily responsible for the social development of Mrs. Chhanda and her sisters as they grew up. Due to several financial struggles, she was married off to a businessman at a very young age, and due to this reason, she could not pursue her higher education. However, she did want to pursue a career in Economics. As a young girl and the oldest of the seven sisters, it fell upon her to take care of her family when her father went out for work or when she was expected to culturally produce and reproduce during special events, festivities, etc. And as she grew up, she adapted to the work expected from a home keeper, an individual responsible for her family's well-being.

Presently, there are six members in Mrs. Chhanda's household. Her husband, a 12-year-old son, a 14-year-old daughter, a sick mother-in-law, and house help, Tara *didi*, has been a family member for over ten years. Mrs. Chhanda's daughter's name is Deblina Ghosh. Due to the pandemic, she is currently in school and has been at home for over a month. It wasn't surprising that the daughter was spending a lot of time with her mother throughout the observation period. In the morning, the son is usually busy with his classes, and when not attending classes, he mainly was seen reading books or playing games with his friends. Mrs. Chhanda is a plant enthusiast. She informed that since she was a kid, confinement within the domestic space led her to pursue gardening. She hasn't stopped cultivating plants, especially those with high medicinal value and those that bear culinary purposes. Drawing it from her mother, Deblina is equally invested in gardening, and the two have been spending a lot of time with each other during the pandemic. They have been able to wonderfully redo their kitchen gardens so that now most of the vegetables that are cooked for the family come from their kitchen garden. This includes tomatoes, chilies, papayas, bottle guards, bitter guards, curry, lemons, *poi saag*, lemongrass, brinjals, etc. These plants are cultivated and often hybrid, but the mother-daughter duo ensures that the plants are grown organically. In doing so, the two female members indulge in the preparation of homemade organic plant fertilizers and soil enrichers known to improve the health of the plants and increase the nutrient value of the vegetables produced.

The *poi saag*, commonly known as the Malabar Spinach, is a plant that is quite frequently attacked by fungal spores that leave the leaves rotted, unfit for consumption. Mrs. Chhanda prepares *panchagavya* at home that helps maintain the plant's health and boosts its immunity to prevent fungal infections.

To the *panchagavya*, she adds curd, eggshells and goat milk to prepare a traditional recipe that she learnt while growing up from her relatives, and she believes that the formula is quite beneficial for the health of her plants. Deblina has retained most of the gardening techniques from her mother and says that she feels very close to her. Gardening is one such activity that she feels brings her closer to her mother every day that they indulge in it together.

> *'While Deblina is interested in learning how to grow plants, Piyush is least interested. He would rather just play with his friends. He considers this boring and so I refrain from forcing him to do something that doesn't enjoy. Deblina is like my student, I teach her new techniques in gardening practices and she learns. Look at that poi leaf, ask Deblina what is that and how to fix it. She will be able to answer, but ask Piyush; he will not have a clue. Just yesterday, we propagated a chilly sapling. I am expecting the hybrid chilies to be thicker, and richer in Vitamin C. What pleasure it is to cook vegetables from one's own garden!'* [Interview conducted on 22nd August, 2020].

Mrs. Chhanda and Deblina's interest in gardening is extended to the kitchen, wherein they spend a lot of time processing the condiments and vegetables they pick from their garden. Most of the cooking is done by Tara *didi*; she is proud of herself and boasts that nobody in the entire building can cook as well as she does.

> *'Name a dish, Bengali, Marathi, Bihari anything. I can cook everything. From Hyderabadi Biryani to Chinese Hakka noodles, you name it and you can have it. Chhanda didi has always been impressed by the skills that I have and for the knowledge that I possess when it comes to cooking. I learnt it from my thakuma (grandmother). My brother owns a catering business and once upon a time I even cooked for his orders. Now he hired professionals for his work but he does appreciate my work. Since Deblina and Piyush were kids I have assisted Chhanda didi in preparing healthy food for them. They are my kids too, and I love them dearly. I never bother Chhanda didi or Deblina with the kitchen work. The kitchen is my department and I am an expert. I don't even require help; I can easily manage everything single-handedly. But yes, I do love the company of Chhanda didi and Deblina when I am in the kitchen. Chhanda didi has been very kind to me. Dada Babu doesn't enter the kitchen, he only appreciates what I make for him. He often tells me that he trusts me with what I feed his family. When Chhanda didi is unwell (menstruating), I don't let her enter the kitchen. I belong to the lower caste. I am anyway impure; I can cook during menstruation, that's okay. All I want is to take care of the family, they are very nice people.'* says Tara *Didi*. [Interview conducted on 30th August, 2020].

Tara *didi* did not hesitate to cook. Indeed, she is an expert.

Gender Rituals as seen Inside the Kitchen

Mrs. Kattimani's kitchen space was vibrant and colourful. She is fond of collecting antique showpieces, her house is adorned with vintage showpieces, and so is the design of her kitchen, an indoor, closed space. She is fond of the

woodwork, and thus, her kitchen has a plethora of wooden chambers, cabinets, etc. On Christmas day, Mrs. Kattimani invited guests who would come over to spend the day. Mr. Kattimani took a day off and assisted Mrs. Kattimani and his mother in welcoming the guests. As per rituals, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law went to the kitchen to bring breakfast for the guests while Mr. Kattimani sat with them, chatting over a cup of tea. Guests appreciated the tea prepared by Mrs. Kattimani. As the day progressed, all females gathered together in the kitchen, and conversations began. While men conversed over a cup of tea/coffee on the dining table, women socialized from within the kitchen space- their conversations included lengthy discussions on the latest fashion, cooking trends, places to visit, TV shows, and talks about the neighborhood that gives several directions to their discussions. Mrs. Kattimani's daughter was young. She was an 11-year-old girl and was primarily seen playing around the house. Entry into the kitchen was prohibited due to the presence of sharp objects and fire. The little girl enjoys making cookies with her grandmother, which is one of the regular activities they indulge in. Her grandmother's raisin cookies are her favorite, and each time they take up the preparation, they compete to make better cookies.

> *'My family loves to eat rasam rice. Today we will make rasam rice, and the best part about today's preparation will be that our husbands will assist us in gathering all the materials and the condiments that are required to make the dish.'* [Interview conducted on 8th September, 2020].

The husbands were not excited about the whole idea of assisting with meal preparation; upon being asked, they answered that they would rather play chess. The females eventually let the men go away from the kitchen as they weren't enthusiastic about it and could create a mess.

> *'My husband always tells me that he is fine with all the work that may be assigned to him but he simply doesn't belong in the kitchen. After all, he is a man. He also makes a valid point in stating that there is no need for him to be here because I am efficient and I have always been a good cook, he loves to eat; not cook! When I was married, my mother-in-law told me that my husband loves rasam rice but to my surprise he couldn't even boil himself a cup of rice. I don't blame men, it's just not their job. But yes, the reason all of us here hoped they'd help us today is because we thought doing so, it'll be a good opportunity for all of us to spend quality time with each other. I had read earlier, couples who cook together, stay together. He will help me with cleaning, sweeping, moping, etc. from outside the kitchen.'* [Interview conducted on 17th September, 2020].

Five women gathered in the kitchen to cook food, with seventeen members present as guests. Of these five women, three were guests who actively took charge of Mrs. Kattimani's kitchen and divided the work among themselves to finish meal preparation in time. Once the family sat down to eat, the men ate first and discussed the rasam rice recipe and how its taste had changed over the years. Mr. Kattimani commented that his mother's food is different from his wife's, and that day it was altogether something different. He also

admitted that he knew nothing about what goes into preparing the dish, his lack of interest in kitchen affairs was evident. Mrs. Kattimani actively participates in meal preparation partly because it's her job and partly; because she also likes to cook. Mr. Kattimani dismissed all possibilities of cooking for the household.

New Year's Eve was similar. The household women were so tired at the end of the night that they did not seem to enjoy the food they cooked themselves. And even more so, women tend to sit to eat amid the leftovers of the male members of the house.

> *'I think this is the fate of women. My mother used to tell me when I was a kid, I will eventually grow up to be a homemaker and no, I do not consider it to be belittling. Being a homemaker is a big task. I am equally responsible for grueling tasks every day, most of which are performed inside the kitchen. I am responsible for deciding what to cook, it makes me happy. I like to pick out my own vegetables and yes, I think it's in our culture that women are trained to be such good wives. I wouldn't say I am not satisfied with what I do, you know how much fun it is to cook traditional food on special occasions! Our lives are anyway so busy, traditional food brings us close to our culture and I am proud of my culture. I will teach my daughter the skills to be a good wife; she needs to learn for a happy life ahead. And of course, one who eats healthy stays healthy.'* [Interview conducted on 26th September, 2020].

Mrs. Kattimani's mother-in-law is a quiet woman. She talked about her life but was hesitant to speak in detail about her family. She believes that Mrs. Kattimani has now successfully taken over her roles in the family, and now she can retire from the kitchen. This makes Mrs. Kattimani proud. For over 40 years, she has worked for the well-being of her family, and it was now time for Mrs. Kattimani to take over the kitchen, showcase her skills and knowledge of cooking, and take care of the health and happiness of her son and grandchildren. As a mother, she thinks that her job is now done; she has raised his son, and now Mrs. Kattimani's responsibility is to test her suitability in the family and never let her son stray. The women do not believe this to be patriarchal; her mother did it, she did it, Mrs. Kattimani is doing it, and when her grandchild will grow, she will do it too. Patriarchy doesn't exist. These are one's responsibilities that one needs to fulfil no matter what situation, what upbringing.

Discussions & Interpretations:

a. Identity of a 'food literate':

As mentioned in the beginning, the politics of gendered space within the household and the extended authority over nutritional provisions of the family will be the point of exit for my inquiry. A woman's performance inside the kitchen space shapes her identity; she acknowledges her essentialist

categorization as a food literate, 'who decides what to cook?' and in doing so, she transcends into becoming a food educator over the generations, holding on to the same essentialist expression in the family. These are the performative aspects of the self, as suggested by Osella and Osella (2006). The terminology 'literate' is used owing to the definition of food literacy as adopted for this study that is suggestive of an individual's ability to understand food in a way that encourages the development of a positive relationship with food systems acquiring skills that assist in navigating and participating in complex food systems throughout their lives. The informants have been able to build this relationship with food systems. In doing so, they have also been able to hold onto sustainable development of the health of their family members, taking into consideration the social, economic and political components of food preparation. The cases reported provide invaluable insights into developing an understanding of the gendered sciences of survival in the context of food and gender identity.

Secondly, upon identifying herself as a female, she would be expected to give normative significance to her membership in this group by adhering to gender roles. She is expected to perform all household rituals from within the gendered space of the kitchen (Appiah 2018). All respondents reckon they are also expected to dress in a particular way during festivities, wear specific ornaments, exhibit gender-appropriate behaviour, etc. Cultural events such as reported Christmas and New Year eve's celebrations influence the gender roles assigned to the females of the household. The dominant categories observed within the household, namely, 'male' and 'female', are hegemonic ideals. The dichotomization of gender can be seen in the definition of a man gender labelled as not a 'woman', -a two-gender system. As a part of the stratification system, gender is known to rank men above women; consequently, what a man does is perceived to be more important than what a female does, and as Judith Lorber (1994:32) writes: *'The process of creating difference depends to a great extent on differential evaluation'*. In doing so, automatically the tasks of a woman are considered to be linked to her identity as a nurturer-hinting towards a symbolic connection between nature and a woman.

The connection between the dominance of women from within a gendered territory and that of nature is ideological. For instance, in the ecofeminist argument, the ecofeminist scholars establish a connection between the domination of women and that of nature. As an ideology, it remains rooted in a system of ideas and representations, values, and beliefs responsible for placing women and the nonhuman realm hierarchically below men (Agarwal 2019). As a philosophical shift, it also calls upon women and men to conceptualize themselves and their relationships to one another and the nonhuman world and maintains cooperation, mutual love and care in non-hierarchical ways. However, the eco-feminist argument favouring the 'natural connection' between women and nature fails to consider women's lived material relationship with

nature instead of others, or they might conceive that relationship to be based on ideologies. This is evident in our findings. Women across households experience varied relationships with nature, depending on intra-household dynamics, gendered knowledge, access to natural resources, property, and power dynamics within the domestic space.

While undermining the conception of 'women' as a unitary category, critics of the idea of 'natural connection' emphasized how these differences in gender-environment relations would help understand concerns of tenure and property, gendered control over labour, economic and natural resources, products and decisions. These differences also greatly influence an individual's environmental interests and opportunities. Consequently, their environmental rights and responsibilities may be affected by a change in kin and household arrangements and the negotiations these entails. A woman's interest in food preparation is driven by the need to provide good health for the family, as reported by Mita Ghosh. A woman's procreative roles, assigned at birth, must by no means necessarily be interpreted to establish a close relationship between her and a universally conceived nature. Nature is a generalized category, and it fails to address complex beliefs about the physical and non-physical attributes of different micro-environments- experiences within gendered spaces such as the kitchen space, varying historically and socially, and variant ecological processes. The female 'essence' attributed to nature may differ within cultures and periods. This is because the concepts of gender, nature, and culture are historically and socially constructed.

In considering nature and culture in the context of gender, it may also be observed that while women are expected to cook within a gendered territory, men may own professional enterprises endeavouring to monetize food preparation skills. Here, gender identity is often structured based on normative roles, and second, occupational income and financial independence. Compliance with the norms of society has been seen above the domestic space. Consequently, it becomes evident that cooking from within the kitchen space may be considered a household chore, but cooking at the higher institutional level is a paid profession, as Tara didi reported. Contrary to what is suggested, women transform raw material to produce food for the family members culturally. In doing so, they may be able to disrupt her essentialist association with nature. Yet, in the cultural space, while 'cooking' primarily is continued to be understood as a trivial task, outside the domestic space, men takeover the nature-culture divide in colonizing the paid professions of chefs and businessmen in restaurants and other higher-level areas of socialization that to date remain restricted to men (Ortner 1974).

b. Kitchen as a 'safe-space':

Deriving from the concept of territoriality, it may be stated that the kitchen space is a gendered territory. Women are primarily responsible for

the arrangement of this space, the execution of 'cooking' activity on a day-to-day basis, and on special occasions. The entire cooking process relies extensively on the gendered knowledge that women possess; the quality of food to be prepared is also determined by a woman's efficiency in executing the traditional recipes that they learn from their elders during food preparation. In this context, it becomes crucial to look beyond the similar dichotomies of production/reproduction within the restricted space to emphasize the spillover of production and reproduction that women indulge in within varied social structures. Food is an integral part of any culture. The possession of gendered indigenous knowledge systems could be symbolic of reproductive and productive labour, which determines the health and well-being of the household members.

A woman's primary interest is to ensure the well-being of her family. Despite an established authority over the kitchen space, as evident from the findings, entry into the kitchen remains prohibited during menstruation, especially for upper-class women. Intersectional feminist critique of the phenomenon would analyze the dichotomies of dominance and subordination in the context of task and gender. Empirical studies have shown how women spend time outside the kitchen, in leisure only during menstruation, not by choice, but under pressure and exclusion from the mainstream eye suggestive of a purity/pollution narrative. While it could be humiliating for some, women such as Tara *didi* take it upon their caste to state that it doesn't matter whether or not I am menstruating, an outcast would always remain impure. In her household, the narratives of caste do not hinder the functioning of the kitchen. Despite prohibited entry, the household woman exercises her authority from outside the gendered territory through the other household members, influencing men to practice the science of survival. In doing so, she ensures that her family is secure. It is also evident that she remains bound in the shackles of the patriarchal society despite establishing an authority. Boys are aware of their nutrient requirements, casually learning from the trends in food gathering and daily ritual preparation. Consistent with the literature, the findings suggest that women are brought closer to nature in providing bare subsistence needs to their families. From a young age, she acquires, refines and propagates gendered knowledge contributing to enhanced food literacy, and consequently, food security at the household level.

Conclusion

In the broader context, preliminary studies at the household level in food literacy, gendered knowledge encourage discussions that could contribute to the discourse on sustainable development and food security at a global level. It is evident that despite efficient development strategies and policies to ensure food security at the worldwide level, poverty prevails at the household level. Poverty, as described by Amartya Sen, calls for the fulfilment of one's idea of well-being to qualify out of poverty. At the institutional level, courses concerning

the home sciences curricula till senior secondary grades encapsulate the gendered sciences of survival in their application to our everyday lives.

At the household level, food entitlement is subject to the food literacy of the household member who is responsible for gathering and preparing food. Gendered IKS plays a significant role in enhancing food literacy across generations and is the key to nutrient sufficiency of the family. As food educators, women ensure the health of their families and ensure food security. The kitchen space reflects several cultural identities that influence social relations as women stand out as the primary partakers of cultural production and reproduction. Religion plays a vital role in influencing the culturally diverse conceptualization of women identifying with food literacy in their capacities and the community they belong to in its entirety. At the hands of women who, as Counihan (1999:47) writes, '*… feed, who satisfy hunger, who are viscerally needed, and who influence others through manipulation of the symbolic language of food'*, food spaces tend to exhibit means to establish authority and gain community recognition for their food preparation skills. In this context, the kitchen space emerges as a safe space for women to exhibit their knowledge of indigenous food systems on several occasions.

The productive and reproductive labour that women put in from within food spaces accounts for their representation in their households as food literate at the domestic level. To deal with the larger discourse of food security and nutrient poverty alleviation, gendered knowledge of food systems must be preserved and propagated. Gendered knowledge is invaluable to determine the food literacy of the members of the household, thereby contributing to the overall food security of the family, at the household level.

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**Om Jee Ranjan, Subhash Anand, B. W. Pandey,
Poonam Kumria and Yuvraj Singh Rathore**

ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF ARCANUM IN EASTERN HIMALAYA: THE CASE OF MONPA TRIBE, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Abstract

Monpa Tribe lives in physically isolated and remotely situated Tawang-Chu (Tongsheng Grangma) valley which is a high-altitude river basin in Eastern Himalaya. Normal life is very hard in this valley due to the stiff high mountainous physio-climatic features and acute marginal habitat. Apart from the above facts, Monpas are rejoicing their lifestyle with proper sustainability using local autochthonous knowledge. Adaptive strategies of Monpas to survive in physically and socially 'semi' isolated valley are deeply associated with their traditional knowledge and believes. This research paper presents Socio-cultural lifestyles and traditional believes of Monpa tribe which are arcanum for the outside world. To know their socio-cultural traditions and impact of their religious believes on their lifestyle; a Living-in- Fieldwork was done at household level. For this, their daily routine has been closely observed including food habits, living styles, believes rituals and cultures. The objective of this study is to exhibit their socio-cultural living in the high-altitude basin and to explain the impact of their religious believes on their lifestyle.

Keywords: *Monpa Tribe, Socio-cultural Traditions, Lifestyle, Tawang-Chu River Basin, Eastern Himalaya.*

Introduction

Realignment of nature always gives a chance to become superior and accordingly human's synergy with nature provides him a chance to survive with a better conscience. This cooperative interaction between human and nature called "Human Adaptation" and it may not be measured perfectly without assessing the Geo-Anthropogenic attributes (Ranjan et al., 2016) and (Pandey,

OM JEE RANJAN, Department of Geography, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi, India, E-mail: omjeeranjan@gmail.com; **SUBHASH ANAND**, Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi; **B. W. PANDEY**, Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi; **POONAM KUMRIA**, Department of Geography, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi, India; Yuvraj Singh Rathore,

2015). The paper is an anthropogenic explanation of the mysterious living of Monpas in the high altitude of Eastern Himalayan valley. They are living and ruling this valley since a long time. There is oldest Tibetan epic of legendary *Ling Gesar* record wherein it is mentioned that in about 800 A.D. there was the king of the Southern Mon people (Monpa Tribe) whose name was *King Shingtri* (Stein, 1972). Chronological records say Monpas mysterious lifestyle is full of surprises for the modern world, and it is the blend of Buddhism, ancient believe *Bone Tsoi* cult and the lap of almighty Himalayan nature. Their ancient religious believes have a very deep root in their lifestyle, and it makes them self-reliant. Hence, the purpose of the research manuscript is to analyse religious-cultural impacts on Monpa's lifestyle which are casting a significant role to survive in the hard-mountainous climate (Ranjan et al., 2022).

Tawang-Chu *(Tongsheng Grangma)* valley is remotely situated and inaccessible in the high mountain river valley (Ranjan and Anand, 2017). It lies between Se-la-pass from southern entrance part and Bum-la pass as a last limit towards north by international political demarcation in North Eastern region of Indian Himalayan range. In 1914, a political boundary; Mc Mohan Line drawn between India and Independent Tibet state following Shimla agreement. Since then, this line is the Indo-China international border. It is a sophisticated covariance of a diverse and deterministic river valley system. Skyscrapers peaks, narrow valleys, extremely cold-moist weather, and dense vegetation make it otherworldly. When the sunlight spreads in this valley, it gives the impression of heaven in the lap of the Himalayas (Whiteman, 2000). Tawang-Chu River Valley is an amalgam of tranquil and incisive nature, in which human life is vibrating with mixed orthodox culture. (Ranjan et al., 2016).

The political boundary of the Tawang-Chu river valley was set as a district in Arunachal Pradesh on 6 October 1984. So, the Tawang-Chu river and its tributaries lies in this political periphery. The Study area is situated in far western part of the Arunachal Pradesh state and covering about 2172 Sq Km area and located between 27°27'48.0"N to 27°53'17.3"N Latitude and 92°14'40.3"E to 91°58'43.7"E longitudes (Figure 1) (Ranjan et. al., 2022. The landscape of the Study area is mostly mountainous, lying between 949 m to 6338 m and inhabitants generally lives in lower altitude, where they enjoy a cool temperate climate (Ranjan et. al., 2022).

Historical Background

Entire region has a very unique historical background which's investigations always ends on the word "TAWANG". It is believed that the name – "Tawang' has been taken from grand and magnificent Buddhist Monastery, located on the western edge of the river valley. Although, it seems like there is general custom of naming cities on the name of the belonged

river. Hence, Tawang district has its name on the river.

Tawang means (*"TA"* means *Horse* and*"WANG"* means *Chosen*) choose land by the Horse. As legend has it, it is believed that the study area is the land of Monpa chosen by the horse of *Merag Lama Lodre Gyatso* for establish a Monastery (Statistical Abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, 2006 and 2011). It is the birthplace of sixth Holy Dalai Lama as well as the second biggest Buddhist Monastery in the world. *Merag Lama Lodre-Gyatso* was a disciple of an Indian Buddhist *saint Guru Padmasambhava* who made this uncanny holy Monastery (Statistical Abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, 2006; Statistical Abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, 2011).

Administration boundaries follow the Tawang-Chu River Valley catchment area along the ridges and valleys. The administrative boundary has been derived from the Tawang-Chu River. It is surrounded by two international boundaries from western and northern side (GOI, 2011). There is only one town in this district – 'Tawang'; which is the administrative headquarter of the District. The sharing boundaries with the Tibetan region and Bhutan in North-western frontiers provide an epochally situation. Entire District is predominantly a rural area except one town where majority of peoples' livelihood depend on primary activities (GOI, 2011). Administratively, the district has 235 villages and one town under 10 administrative circles. There are three administrative sub-divisions of district which include Tawang sub-division, Lumla sub-division and Jang sub-division (District Statistical Handbook, 2015-16).

Social Environment

Population

The district has 29,151 male population and 20,826 female population out of 49,977 of the total population (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). 50, 000 (49, 977) people live in the River Valley in which 34, 811 people are Monpa and Takpa Tribes. Monpa tribe is a dominant tribe in terms of population and Takpa has very less population in the river valley who lives in all 235 villages in the valley (GOI, 2003). Remaining 15, 166 peoples are outsider in which many are Tibetan refugees (Census of India, 2011). Census data shows, 84 per cent people are rural habitant while remaining 11202 persons (16 per cent) lives in urban area (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). There are 8377 household's inhabitants in 235 villages while, 1685 households live in the town (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). Tawang circle has largest population as 7897 persons live in villages and 11202 persons live in Tawang Town while *Bonghar* circle has lowest population. In Jang Circle, *Dungse* Village is considered as highest populated village among all the villages 1770 persons live in 375 households, while *Khromten Gonpa* is a least populated village in Tawang District where only two persons live. This village is the part of Kipti

circle (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). *Sherkimang* village in *Dudungghar* circle is the second least village, where only three persons live (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). Average Population density in the Tawang District is 23 people km^2 therefore, Tawang-Chu river valley is considered seventh least densely populated district in India. By taking an advantage of 73 Primary schools, 49 Middle schools, ten Secondary schools and four Higher Secondary school; about 61 per cent Population are literate in this valley (District statistical Handbook, 2016). In addition, about 19 other central/private/ NGO's educational institutions are running in the District. Sex ratio of Tawang district is 701 females per 1000 males and male literacy rate (67.54 per cent) is greater than female literacy rate (46.53 per cent) (District statistical Handbook, 2016).

Ethnic Groups

Natives of the river valley are the scion of Mongoloid race and they are 69.65 per cent of the total population in Tawang District, remaining 30.35 per cent people are from other states of India or Tibetan refugees although Tibetan refugees are also from Mongoloid race (Laskar, 2011). But few Tibetan refugees (101 refugees) have gained the right to live in this mountainous district, as does a citizen of India (Field work, 2018).

These native people are called Monpa Tribe although very few native people belong to Takpa tribe (Sarkar, 2006) and (District Statistical Handbook, 2015). The Monpa has strong-well built, fair- yellowish skin and average height body structure (Bareh, 2001). They are very gentle, friendly, mild, courteous, smart and their meek nature make them amazing human being (Chowdhury, 1997). They have very deep sense of believes in the nature. This land has been ploughed by them for centuries hence, Tawang-Chu River Basin is a habitant of Monpa and therefore it is called *Monyul* in their native language (Sarkar, 2006). In Tibetan/Bhoti literature, *'Mon'* means low altitudinal land/country/ area than Tibet plateau and *'pa'* means people. Hence, *Monpa* means the people who live in southern direction of Tibet on the Himalayan slope (Chowdhury, 1997). This tribe has three subtypes according to their habitation situation (Chowdhury, 1997).

a) Northern Monpa lives in extremely western part of Arunachal Pradesh (in Tawang-Chu River Valley)

b) Central Monpa, who live in Dirang Range and

c) Southern Monpa, lives in Kalaktang

Although, Monpa tribes of Central and Southern part of the region call themselves *Tsangla* and Monpas of Northern directions (in Tawang- Chu Valley) called themselves simply *Yarpa Monpa* (People of the high-altitude region) while they called Dirang Monpa as '*Dangnangpa' (People who lives in east part)* and used *Rongnangpa* (people who lives in Gorge) word for Kalaktang's Monpa.

All Monpas have almost similar tradition, custom and culture but different dialects. According to their avocations, society of Monpa tribes can be divided into four divisions –

a) *Ungpa* – Cultivators

b) *Brokpa – (Brok means Pasture and Pa mean people*, Rears Yak and Sheep) Shepherd

c) *Tsongpa – (Tsong means trade and pa means people*, engaged in trades) Traders

d) *Zoba /Lhebrie* – Artists (practicing handicraft or construction works)

Socio-cultural life: Marriage Ceremony in Monpa Tribe

Monpa tribes have patriarchal society, generally, nuclear and patrilineal family is found in this tribal society but mutual support and co-operation among entire clan is very strong in this tribe (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). Assuring existence in future in socio-cultural way with traditional values called marriage and related ritual is called *Nyen Bakshar Pamey)* among Monpas in Tawang District. Generally, they are Monogamy though polygamy (*Chungma*) is also in their culture (Hoffmann, 2005). After divorce or death of husband women can re-marry. Women have equal rights as men in this tribe; any woman can become female monk (*Ani*). In fact, there is a beautiful Gompa at the top of the mountain peak, where all the rituals are performed by women, called *Gyangong Ani* Gompa.

This Gompa is situated in the highest peak in altitudinal terms among all of Gompas (Monasteries) in Tawang district. This sacred place, which is completely operated by women monks, is located in a very inaccessible and high place (Ranjan, 2021).

Therefore, it is little bit hard to reach and it is almost difficult to see this *Gompa* without reaching there. Matrilocal marriage (after marriage male stay in wife's home with in- laws) also can be seen in Monpa's communities but it is not as frequent as wife lives in husband's place (Bareh, 2001). They follow Hindu's ethical tradition in marriages. This Gompa is located five-kilometre north side far away of main town on top of the hill. This was found by Mera Lam Lodre Gyamtso and about fifty Female monk (Ani) lives there.

Socio-cultural life: Last Rite/Ritual in Monpa Tribe

In every religion, every person passes through last rite (ritual) which is the last socio-cultural ceremony of every person - Properly dismantling process of the dead body. In this, religiously, human give back all the things / materials obtained from the earth. The Monpa tribe has four types of tradition of deco positioning of dead bodies according to their religion.

a) Cut the body of the deceased into 108 parts and immerse it in the river one by one as a cremation.

b) They have also custom to take the dead body to the top of the mountain and leave and expose it for the birds like Eagle and Vultures to eat as a funeral.

c) Burn the dead body as a cremation.

d) Bury the dead body as a cremation.

After death of family member, bereaved family call priest (*Lama*) to perform rituals of death rites. A statue of Lord Buddha is kept near the head of the dead body and a lamp of ghee is lit until the dead body is taken for the last rites. According to Monpa's believe, Lama who also has astrology knowledge decides funeral methods along with date and time and they called it *Jambeyang* in local dialect. Among Monpas the particular day is an important for rituals and rites. If the day is not considered auspicious, they do not take the corpse for the last rites, rather they wait for the auspicious day to come, like Saturday is not considered as an auspicious day for cremation therefore, they wait for next coming day (Sunday) to perform last rite and cremation. The first type of cremation process, which is "Cut the whole body into 108 parts and immerse it in the river (Generally Tawang-Chu River) one by one as a funeral" is the best last rite/ cremation among all above-mentioned processes. In this process, a person who chops dead body into 108 parts called '*Thampa*' and during this process, their religion does not allow anyone to witness this ritual. Burying the body as a cremation is an impaired funeral process, so only very poor bereaved families perform it or it is cremated for those who die due to infectious disease. After the death of a family member, they celebrate this rite as a sad ceremony/rite called "Segu" for 49 days. It is a believe that, after 49 days, that soul left the place. During these days' lama chant mantra and lights a lamp for rest of peace of the departed soul and bereaved family offer food and drink to relatives and friends, who come to join this last rite. Generally, the rich families of the Monpa tribe send food articles to the monastery/ nunneries for the Lamas and raise prayer flags with the chorten (stupa) (Dhar and Coomar, 2004).

Housing Pattern and Design

As Monpa's mainly involved in agricultural activities, their houses are made accordingly (Bareh, 2001). A door from one side of a porch leads to a hall called *Neng*. A furnace in the middle is made here and family member use this for cooking and as a dining hall, where whole family can sit and enjoy their meal and enjoy free time. There is another porch leads to a narrow dark room called Gombu ((Plate 1). It is place for brewing liquor and uses as a store room. Basically, Monpa's houses are double storey made by stones, mud and woods to protect them from the extreme cold and snowfalls of chilly winter (Banerjee

et al., 2022). They make one room for worship of Lord Buddha called *Tchoi-som*. *Meylo* is a guest room a little away from the main House, but it is connected to the main house through passage (Solanki & Chutia, 2004).

Generally, a typical Monpa house is a two-story building using stone, wood and clay. According to the building materials, there are three types of houses, as most houses made of wood are called *Pang-Khem*; When it is made of stone and clay, it is called *Chess-Khem* and a house made by bamboo is called *Cherkhem. Cherkhem* type house usually found in lower altitudinal region where rainfall intensity is comparably high than higher region (Solanki and Chutia, 2004).

Village of Monpa Tribe

Generally, Monpa villages are a bunch of few houses but some villages- *Seru, Dungse, Jangda, Khet, Thongleng Khirmu, Kharsa, Namazing, Yuthunmbu, Gongkher, Mukto, Rho, New Lumla, Soleng, Kharteng, Mangnam, Gispu, Shoktsen* and *Shakti* are large mountain villages. Every village has boundary demarcation called '*Dhotak*'. In this way, they classify the area of village to utilize the community based natural resources as forest products, pasture land, cultivational land etc. In their local language, land for house making is called *Khyemsa*, all time Cultivated land is called *Lengsa*, Forest called Nag, grazing land called *Broksa* and land for jhum cultivation called *keei- lengsa*. They can sue *Mangsa* land (community land) for personal use after permission and paid nominal tax as token of respect of community but they cannot use *Mangsa* land for personal commercial purpose. Monpa has also their own (individual) land called *Gosa*. A Glass of local brew (*Baang-Chang* / *Sin-Chang* / *Arak*), along with a silver coin and scarf, is the minimum tax for individual use of community land (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). Every tribal village has main entry path with a welcome gate called Kakaling (a hut like structure with religious painting and every route in rural area has a sacred stone structure called Manee. Manee is kind of building structure or stone shrine, situated on road side with fitted wheels. These religious holy wheels are for prayer purpose of passers-by. Every wayfarer rolls these wheels in right direction with hand murmurs mystic spell "Om Mane Padme Hung!".

In addition, prayer flags, called 'phan', can be seen everywhere with *Chorten (Stupa)*; It is hung as far as they can reach to hang it, because it is believed that this holy flag protects them from evil sprite.

Dress and ornaments

Monpa tribe lives in a high altitude cold and hard physio-climatic region, therefore, their dress and cloth must have according to local environmental conditions. They wear a variety of warm and culturally rich, beautiful, well-designed colourful dresses (Norbu, 2008). Their ethnic clothes are made of

leather and silk threads (Aris, 2008). Usually, the Monpa tribes weave all the clothes themselves, although now they also buy some daily use clothes from markets imported from other states (Norbu, 2008).

Male person wears two types of trouser which are made by silk thread – full length trouser called *Dorna* and three-forth size trouser called *Kangnom* (Norbu, 2008). Male person also wear *Khanjar* named full shirt made by *Endi Silk* and a woollen/ leather upright overcoat called *Aliphung*. *Khanjar* is red colour full shirt and *Aliphung* is black colour coat. In the winter season, the Monpa-men wear a red coloured woollen top / shirt / coat called *Chhuupa*. *Paksar* is another top wear dress for male made by leather and a sleeveless coat called *Pak-k-Tza*a. Traditionally, they wear unisex full-length boot called *Tsem-Lham* which is made by Yak and Cow leathers (Aris, 2008) (Plate 2). Female Monpa wear *Singka* which is sleeveless red colour with white stripes long Gown type dress Singka made by Endi Silk (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). A long towel type of cloth they wrap around their waist; called *Chudang* and *Teng Kyima*.

Men and women both wear a traditional cap called *Nga-Sha* and *Goichen Jamuk* is a kind of traditional headscarf wear by females (Aris, 2008) (Plate 2). During traditional rituals or traditional dance program or religious ceremony they wear several specific types of ethnic dresses (Solanki and Chutia, 2004). (Plate 2 and Plate 3). Monpa tribe usually wear silver ornaments with several types of stones. Bangles, neckless, finger rings armlets are some good examples of Monpa's ornaments. *Poshe Phre-Nge* is a kind of neckless ornaments made by silver and stone is a common ornament (Norbu, 2008).

Religion

Monpa believes in Mahayana Buddhism therefore, it's a land of Buddhism. Hence the history of Buddhism starts with two legends when they came here via Tibet in 8th Century A.D and brought the message of Buddhism among Monpa tribes (Sarkar, 2006; Stein, 2008). The names of those Indian Buddhist monks were Shanla Rakshila and Maharipoch Pema Junne or Padmasambhava. Before that, they believe in *Bone Tsoi* cult which is the ancient cult of Tibetan but later it was absorbed in Mahayana Buddhists (Stein, 2008). Legendary *Mera Lama* from *Gelugpa School* (one of the Mahayana Buddhists cults out of four - *Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kargyupa and Gelugpa*) came here and founded famous Monastery in Tawang (Aris, 2008; Mayilvaganan et al., 2020). He was a contemporary of the fifth Dalai Lama (A.D. 1617–1682) (Solanki and Chutia, 2004).

Hence, all priest (Boddh monks) called Lama here and they belong to the Gelugpa school/sect and they are members of Tawang monastery. Though, Bone Tsoi cult still can be seen in their rituals as they believe in many types of spirits/deities and cast many sacrificial rites and doing exorcism which is not

the part of Buddhism (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). Apart from Baudh, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Shikh are also live in the valley but they are basically outsider from Tawang valley (District statistical Handbook, 2016).

Amazing art and sculpture can be seen among the inhabitants of this valley where almost every visible wall to be found with Mahayana Buddhist pantheon and cabalistic circles and diagrams as well as local deities related stories (Hoffmann, 2005). One of the most amazing and magnificent idols can be seen in Tawang town which is a statue of Lord Buddha 6 meters high. Tawang Monastery itself describes the culture of local traditions and Monpas.

Festivals of Monpa Tribe

Monpas celebrates several Buddhist mystics festivals (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). All festivals are culturally associated with religious rituals and agricultural activities as Monpa tribe are basically cultivators (Nayar, 2008). Losar, Dungjur, Torgya, Choeikor, GandenNgamchoe, Chhakkur, DurkppaTse-Shi and Shioaa-Shaaka Dawa are important festivals (Dhar and Coomar, 2004) (Table 1). Monpas wear special dress according to believe and rituals during the festival ceremony (Stein, 2008). Every festival has special and unique celebration methods and rituals. Monpa rejoice every festival celebration in traditional way (Adak, 2001).

Dance is an essential in every festival. Among all type of traditional dances, Wooden Mask Dance and War Dance are very unique and special (Dhar and Coomar, 2004). They do not mix traditional ethnic formalities with modern habits and trends. The Monpa tribe has great faith in their traditions and respects and protects these values from modern culture traditions and trends of the world.

Traditional Foods and Beverages of Monpa Tribe

Tawang- Chu River valley is highly fertile land. Climatic variability along the slopes and fertile fluvial soil in the valley provide unique conditions to grow large varieties of crops hence, local people are self-sufficient in food security (Haridasan et al. 1990) and (Singh, 2013), (Plate 4). Monpa Tribe in Tawang Valley consume several types of ethnic beverages (Adak, 2001). Monpa's traditional alcoholic beverages are *Yu, Themsing*, *Rakshi, Lohpani* and *Bhangchang*. These are named according to the methods and ingredients for making the drink. These beverages are considered to be good for health in their tradition. *Themsing* is the best quality alcoholic beverage with good aroma and reddish coffee colour among them which is prepared by finger millet or barley. Rakhsi has second important among all local traditional alcoholic beverages according to quality and test, made by barley, rice and maize. Touching by hand during preparation and processing is avoided and a wooden spatula (Cchok/ Khajir) is used during preparation (Solanki and Chutia, 2004).

Local yak paneer (Chhurpi), dry meat of Yak (Shya), dried green chilli (Solu Krepu), Rimom (blue green algae) are some famous traditional food items in Monpa Tribe. Among all food items *Chhurpi* is a kind of high social status symbol in this tribal community. *Fresh chhurpi* called *Chhur Singba* and *old Chhurpi* (about 5 years old) called *Chhurpupu* (Plate 4). *Putang* is a kind of sweet dried Noodles. *Phutang Thukpa* is another kind of food made by paneer, dry meat of Yak, dry fish and vegetables. Generally, Phutang Thukpa is eaten with *Putang Khazi* (kind of spicy sauces). Khrangpa and Kakun, are other ethnic foods made from Maize. *Solu Krepu* (green fruits and chilly mix food), Khapse (fried flour), Salt tea with fresh Yak Ghee, *Bong* (Barley flour), *Gasinpipi* (fried pea seeds), *Muela sia shjjape khamtang* (kind of Vegetable curry), *Momo*, etc are some other traditional food items in Tawang Valley (Plate 4).

Socio-economical Life

Monpa Tribe of Tawang Valley are cultivator and ninety percent people involved in agricultural activities (Saha, and Bisht, 2007). Maximum people are cultivators and few are involved in rearing of yaks, cow, goats, sheep, pigs, horses, *Adzos* (cross bread of yak and cow), donkeys and Buffalos for dairy products, leather and meat. Basically, they have semi -nomadic Transhumance lifestyle. People who live in northern higher regions like Mago, Luguthang and Thingbu, are engaged in animal rearing activities and Low land dwellers engaged in mix agricultural activities (Saha, and Bisht, 2007), (Plate 5). Most of the cultivators of Tawang Valley practice subsistence farming and they grow potato, maize, ragi, peanut, wheat, pulses, barley, millet, mustard, paddy, buckwheat, several vegetables, garlic, onion, turmeric, soya bean and about all types of crops suitable in local climate (Singh and Sureja, 2006).

Even today they use traditional equipment (machete, mattock, hoe, reaping hook, rake, axe, pommel, plough) and doing organic farming. Hence, they are well aware of the importance of fertilizer and they know perfectly uses of manure (Saha, and Bisht, 2007) (Plate 5). They collect *Soiba* (a kind of degraded Oaks leaves, full with humus) from forest to use as fertilizer. Monpa Tribe still depends on barter- labour-system, means they helps each other during peak sowing and harvesting seasons and it is called *Lakpar* (in their language). After work land owner served food and local drinks (Plate 5).

They also practice Jhum Cultivation to grow several vegetables and crops. Jhum cultivation is called *Kei-lengsa* in the Tawang-Chu river valley in local language.

Monpa involved in horticulture and sericulture and they grow citrus fruits like lemon and orange, banana, guavas, pears in lower altitude and walnut, pomegranates, peaches, apricot, apple, and kiwi in higher altitude. They do fishing in river Tawang-Chu and tributaries and also cultivate fishes in ponds (Saha, and Bisht, 2007).

Monpas have very magnificent knowledge of weaving. They weave several traditional cloths and make traditional crafts- arts. They are expert in wood works as they made wooden masks, tailoring works and paper making. These expertise knowledges provide them high social status in their community. Papermaking and Art knowledge make them special and unique among all mountainous tribes of the Eastern Himalaya. Monpa tribe is expert in making many types of basket (locally called *Shang-gor / Dala)* made by bamboo.

The Monpa tribe has an age-old tradition of trading with Tibet and other long-distance routes like city of Kolkata cities in Assam but they have also barter system among Dirang, Namshu, Thembang, Kalaktang regions also from Bhutan. Barter system is mainly found in the upper valley of Namyang-Chu river valley (Adak, 2001).

There is only one city "Tawang" in this district, where all kinds of secondary / tertiary activities and administrative activities take place. The valley of Tawang has very rich and beautiful landscapes. This skyscraper in the lap of Himalaya has also very rich and ancient-unique cultural lifestyle. Hence, it has a very rich potential feature for tourisms. Several local people are involved in tourism activities and services. There are some prominent tourism spots in Tawang which has considerable contribution in the local economy. Tawang Valley has attractive potential for eco-tourism, cultural tourism, wildlife tourism, religious tourism, geographical tourism, mountain trekking and anthropic tourism. Domestic and foreign tourists enjoy every year following places which are the major area of interest in tourism in the valley (District statistical Handbook, 2016).

- Tawang Town is very beautiful culturally rich administrative place with religious spot. Tawang monastery is the focal point in this town which is founded by legend lama Mera Lama Lodre Gyatso in 17th century.
- Urgyelling (about 4 km from Tawang): Birth place of Thangyang Gyatso,
- Bramadug Chaung/Sengsarbu Ani Monastery, Gyanggong Ani Monastery, Nunneries. These monasteries controlled by women Lamas. (about 2 km far away from Tawang town)
- Jaswantgarh statue (63 km from Tawang): War memorial founded in memory of Martyrs war heroes of the India-China War.
- Brokenthang waterfalls situated in Zimithang Circle (94 km far away from Tawang town)
- Gorchan Chorten situated in Zimithang Circle (94 km far away from Tawang town)
- Sandrukpen Monastery situated in Zimithang Circle (94 km far away from Tawang town) built in stone. It is very old and second largest

Stupa in Asia built in the 17th to 18th centuries.

- Nam-Tsering waterfalls in Lumla Circle. About 50 km from Tawang town.
- Sangatsar lake (home of musk deer and snow pigeon) this lake is 36 km far from the town. It is also a place of Buddhist pilgrim because it is believed that Buddhist Guru Padma Sambhwa has reported offering prayers. This lake was formed by earthquake. This lake is also called Madhuri lake (on the name of Madhuri Dixit, an Indian Bollywood actress because "Koyla" Movie shoot was done here)
- Pangkang Teng Tso lake: this lake is located 17 km far from the town along the rout of Bum-la pass. It is a very beautiful lake and attractive place for wonderer.
- Nagula lake: it is a lake located near mountain pass (28 km far from Tawang)
- Sela pass: Situated in about 4200-meter altitude (80 km far away from Tawang town). Sela lake is situated here.
- Jang water fall (34 km from Tawang town) Nuranang waterfalls,
- Gorichan Peak (Sa-Nga Phu), the highest peak of Arunachal Pradesh. Red panda and musk deer have found here. (60 km far away from Tawang town).
- Chagzam Bridge: Built in 15th century by Tangton Gyalpo, a great philosopher and famous chain bridge maker and disciple of first Dalai Lama. (144 km far from Tawang town)
- Bum-la Pass: this is situated on the Indo-China border at 4600-meter altitude. This pass is famous because it was used by Dalai lama to enter in Indian territory. (20.6 km far away from Tawang town)
- Taktsang Gompa: Situated 50 km from Tawang, a religious and historical site surrounded by coniferous forest on the lofty mountains. Here Guru Padmasambhava used to meditate in the 8th century.

Conclusion

In the lap of a lofty mountain, Tawang-Chu river provides heavenly ecosystem services where in north-west border is far away corner place having a cool and calm nature flourishing with mysterious and splendiferous civilization. About ninety percent population belong to Monpa tribe, hence, the river valley is known as the land of Monpas. Their culture, religious beliefs, live-styles and harmony with the environment provide a unique identity to the river valley. Agriculture and its allied activities are the prime source of livelihood. They grow all types of organic crops. They believe in Gelugpa cult

which is one branch of Mahayana Buddhist religion, hence their lifestyle and social activities has influenced by it.

The geographical environment and Mahayana Buddhism have a profound influence on their clothes and festivals. Almost all festivals and religious-cultural rituals are practised practically according to the physical-climatic traits since long time. Their housing patterns, situation of villages have very deep impact of physiography as well as religious believes. Celebrating the festival of Monpa tribe is either related to their agricultural productions or to their religious faith or both. The anthropogenic features of this valley seem to have been created by the soul of Lord Buddha as the spirit of etiquette of Buddhism flows with the wind in the valley in every person and every moment of life. They protect themselves by making resources available in the harsh mountain climate and difficult terrain and they have been doing this for centuries without manipulating nature laws.

There are several splendid and mysterious religious monuments and monasteries which are the main attraction of cultural tourism along with local festivals and rituals. In addition, beautiful landscapes of the valley are also attraction points of tourism. With the competition to adopt tourism in commercial form, now the possibility of distorting this beautiful heavenly nature is increasing. Global politics and human greed are affecting its intact and pure geo-anthropologic attributes. Valley of mountains, amazing wonder mountain lakes, sky scraped white snowy peaks, beautiful culture and straightforward people are specific features of this valley. If someone once came in the Tawang-Chu Valley; he/she could hardly forget this amazing and divine beauty of nature.

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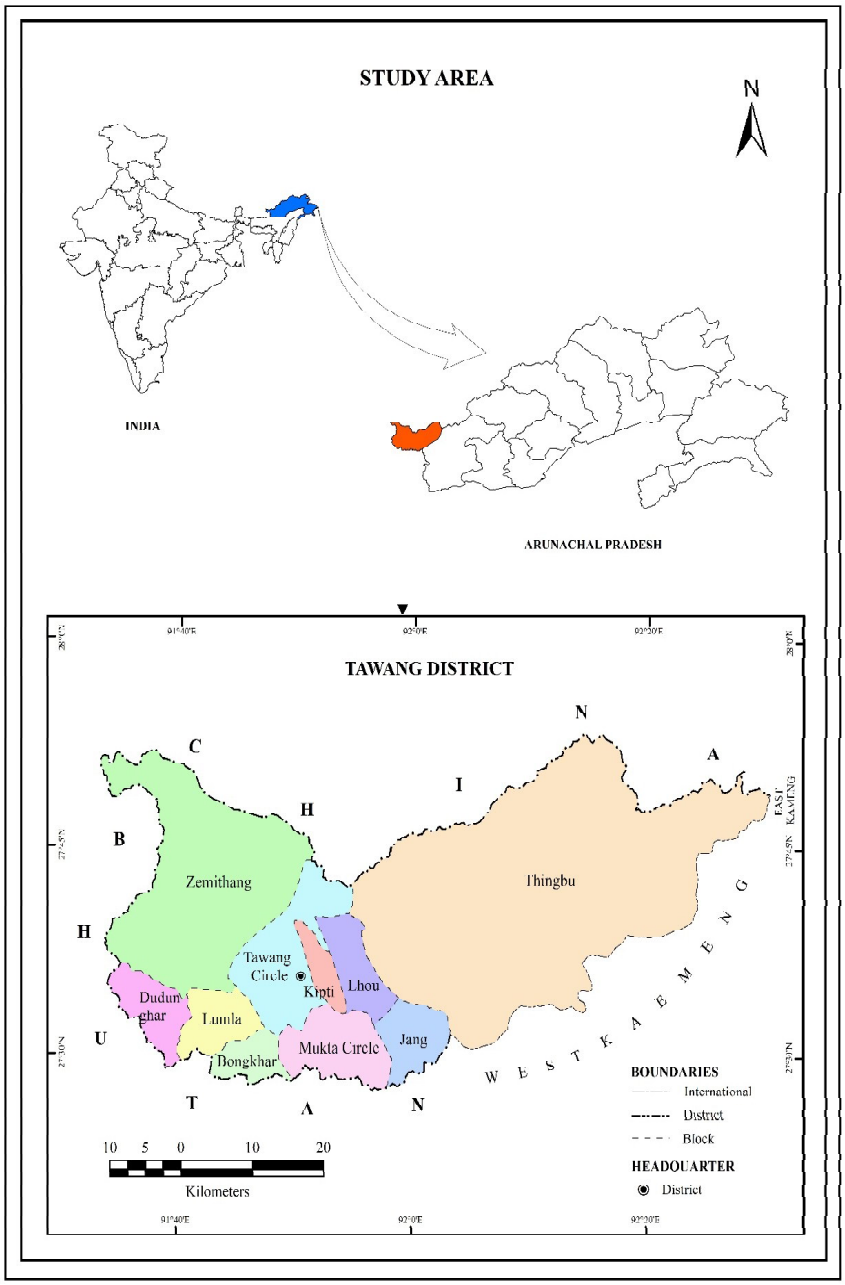
Figure 1: Study Area



Compiled by authors on ArcGIS, 2019

Plate 1: Monpa's House

Primary Survey, 2017

Plate 3: Ethic special dresses for festival ceremony celebrations.

Primary Source, 2018

Plate 4: Traditional Foods and Beverages of Monpa Tribe

Primary Source, 2018

Plate 5: Agricultural activities of Monpa Tribe

Primary Source, 2018

Table 1: Festivals and Celebrations of Tawang Valley

S.N.	Festival	Time	Cultural Believes	Rituals Activities
1.	**Loser**	Last week of February to mid-March (Five to Fifteen days)	Celebrate as a New Year Every household cleans their houses and prepare special foods and it to be offered to God. They called lamas and offer foods to get blessings Wear new traditional cloths	It is believed that ill health and evil spirits are dispelled from the house with dirt during cleaning process. Frist day called Lama Loser, second day Called Cyano or King Loser (this day Monpas wish Happy Loser each Other like Hindu's Diwali Festival) and third day called Yuilha Loser (It is prayer day with religious flags). Yuiha Loser is a fun day for children and Young Persons.
2.	**Torgya**	January to February (This is three days festival).	It is a Dance Festival	Lama dances in front of the public in the monastery courtyard. The monks prepare a stupa-type structure one meter high from millet flour called Toriga and recite a religious text called Toriga Chakra during ritual. At last, they burn that Torgya which is the symbolise of evil spirit.
3.	**Dungjur**	Every third year Torgya festival called Dungjur	It is believed that this festival brings more divine blessings. It is bigger function than Torgya.	A message is sent to the Dalai Lama about this festival at least one year before. In reply of this message, Dalai Lama sends an Fobjon (an article). It is then mixed with a plaid of barely and small pills of dung and about ten crores plaid are made out of this. It is then painted in red colour. These pills are called Maneribu. A special ritual is held for the divinity called Chenrezi Chugchiji (it is eleven monks' performance who chant mystic formula 'Oh Mani Peme Huin'
4.	**Choeikhor/ Choekhor**	Usually celebrate this festival in seventh month of Buddhist calendar year	It's a harvesting related festival and it is believe that this ceremony for better productions of crops.	In this rituals Monpa perform types of traditional wooden Mask dances and performers called Kiengpa. After the ritual priest go to their field and chant sacred formula of words for protection and bumper yield.
5.	**Ganden Ngamchoe**	In December	It is a festival to eternize the death anniversary of Lama Je Lama Tsongkhapa (Founder of Gelukpa Sect of Buddhism)	Lamps are lighted in every house and Monastery/ Gompa including every Buildings.
6.	**Durkpa Tse-shi**	July to August (in the 4th day of 6th month of the Buddhism calendar.	Celebrate in remembrance of Lord Buddha's first sermon in Sarnath, Varanasi.	Lamps are lighted in Monastery/ Gompas and chant prayers.
7.	**Zepa/ Shioaa-Shaaka Dawa**	In June month 15th day of the fourth month of Buddhism calendar.	This is the day when Lord Buddha is born, incarnated and died.	It is celebrated the whole month and Good deeds are performed, solemnities are followed and many pilgrimages are conducted by Monpa tribe during this month.

Primary Survey, 2018 and Statistical Handbook of Tawang District, 2015

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Lijo P. George and M. S. Jayakumar

HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICTS AND FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES: THE SITUATION OF KATTUNAIKKA IN THIRUNELLI, KERALA.

Abstract

Human-animal conflicts have become one of the foremost controversial issues in the landscape of the Wayanad district. The ever-growing Human-animal conflicts seriously affect the life and livelihood of forest-dependent communities. Collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) is the prime source of income of such communities of Thirunelli panchayath in Wayanad district. Kattunaikka are forest dwellers and their social life and economy are centred on the forest. This paper attempt to portray how human-animal conflicts impact the lives of forest dwellers in the Kattunaikka community based on an ethnographic study. Human-animal conflicts have wreaked havoc on the life of Kattunaikka and pushed them to the plantation and other sectors within and outside the state. A constructive forest management policy shall be drafted to improve the livelihood of forest-dependent communities.

Keywords: *Human-animal Conflicts, NTFP, Forest dwellers, Kattunaikka, Thirunelli.*

Introduction

Human-animal conflicts occur in numerous forms and differ greatly in intensity, which is one of the most dangerous challenges to humans and wildlife worldwide (FAO, 2008). Large herbivores (elephants, buffalo, and hippopotamus), large mammalian carnivores (lions, leopards, cheetahs, spotted hyenas, and wild dogs), as well as crocodiles and wild boars, are typically, the animals posing the highest threat to humans, causing the majority of human-animal conflicts (SARPO, 2005). The human-animal conflict has existed as long as humans and wild animals have shared the same habitats and resources (FAO, 2009). These conflicts have a massive effect on farmers and forest-dependent communities, as well as on their livelihoods.

LIJO P. GEORGE, Research Scholar, Department of Sociology: University of Kerala and **M. S. JAYAKUMAR,** Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Kerala.

Conflicts between humans and animals are increasing and have become a growing problem in India. Human-animal conflicts are frequent in Kerala state and have claimed the lives of 173 humans between 2010 and 2020 in Kerala (Bose,2020).In the Wayanad district, human-animal conflicts have emerged as one of the most contentious issues in the landscape. When wild animals leave forests, raid farmer's fields, and occasionally kill people, it becomes the most serious episode of human-animal conflicts (Munster & Munster, 2012). Thirunelli Panchayath in Wayanad has emerged as the hot spot of human-animal conflicts in Kerala.

Forests constitute an integral part of the life of tribal communities as they entirely or partially depend on forests for their livelihood. More than half of the nearly 170 million people living in and around the forest fringes in India belong to tribal communities, who depend on forests for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) for their livelihood (Narayanan *et al*., 2011). NTFP refers to any product generated in a forest other than timber (CIFOR, 2004). NTFP species comprise medicinal plants, edible plants, starches, gums and mucilage, oils and fats, resins and oleoresins, essential oils, spices, drugs, insecticides, natural dyes, bamboos and canes, ûbers and ûosses, grasses and edible products (FAO, 2005). The marketable NTFPs account for an estimated three billion rupees annually in India (Alex & Kattany, 2016). Moreover, forests play an essential role in the livelihood of the rural population and thus form the central pillar of rural poverty eradication (Shylajan & Mythili, 2007). Though the range of NTFP species varies (around 3000), only 150 or lesser have marketability (CIFOR, 2004).

Wayanad is a hilly district in Kerala with a distinct political, agrarian and ecological history, and is prosperous, fertile and has a pleasant climate (Munster, 2016). Wayanad is one of the agriculturally productive districts in India (Jose & Padmanabhan, 2015). The most distinguishing feature of the district is its large Tribal population, consisting mainly of Paniyar, Adiyar, Kattunaikkar and Kurichiyas (Munster & Munster, 2012), who account for 1,48,215 of the total population of Census, 2011. Forest covers 40 percent of the total land area of the district (about 1580 sq. km), constituting a significant portion of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in the lap of the Western Ghats (Kerala Forest Statistics, 2018).

The current research attempt to describe how human-animal conflicts impacted the lives of Kattunaikka, a forest dwelling community who are mostly settled inside the forests of high mountains and also in forest fringes. Collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) is the prime income source for the Kattunaikka, who depend on NTFP for food and earning. The NTFP played a significant role in eradicating poverty among them. Honey and medicinal plants are the major NTFP collected by the Kattunaikka, and honey collection ensures a high price for the produce, leading to a better income. Older people, women and children used to engage in NTFP collection, mostly medicinal plants, and it is their only source of income. The severe wild animal attacks, especially by

wild elephants, have jeopardized the livelihood of Kattunaikka community and consequently, many of them have stopped collecting NTFP and have plunged into poverty.

Kattunaikka Community

Kattunaikkan is derived from the word 'Kadu', which means forest, and 'Naikkan' means leader (Thurston, 1909). Kattunaikka community is considered as descendants of a nomadic primitive hunter-gatherer group who wandered on the hilltops and caves. Kattunaikkar is also termed in Malayalam as 'Thenn kuruman' (Thenn means honey), which denotes their honey harvesting expertise (Kakkoth, 2005). They are distinct with a more profound knowledge of forest nature, plants and animals (Munster & Munster, 2012). The population of Kattunaikka in Kerala is 18,199 (Census, 2011), the majority of them reside in Wayanad, and they are distributed in Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad Districts. They served as labour force in the interiors of the forest. The British employed them for large-scale capture of wild elephants using snares (Nair, 1987). Kattunaikka are primarily forest dwellers, and their social and economic lives are centred around the forest. Kattunaikkars are the best honey collectors among the tribal communities (GOK, 2008); hence, they are considered the honey heroes of the Western Ghats.

Human-Animal Conflicts (HAC)

Human-animal conflicts can be defined as direct and intense competition for resources resulting in actual or perceived individualized harm to wildlife, humans or property (Knight, 2000). HAC happen when the requirements and behaviour of wildlife negatively affect the goals of humans or when the human goals harm the needs of the wildlife. HAC, in most situations, may result in crop damage, property damage and injury or death of domestic animals and even humans (IUCN, 2005).

Thirunelli panchayath in Wayanad is traumatized by the frequent incidents of human-animal conflicts which threaten human lives and livelihoods. Out of 29,000 people living in the Thirunelli, an average of 18 people are subjected annually to wild animal attacks. Statistical data reveals that Thirunelli in Kerala reports the highest number of cases of human deaths, injuries, and destruction of crops caused by wild animals. Out of the 145 loss of lives in wild animal attacks in Wayanad district, 86 were in Thirunelli. Between 2001 and 2018, 234 houses in Thirunelli were destroyed by wild animals, of which elephants wrecked 98 percent. The people of Thirunelli are in heavy distress due to HAC, which is a matter of serious concern.

NTFP and Livelihood

Forest dwellers depend on NTFP as a source of income and as a staple

food (Narayanan et al., 2011). The tribal communities in Kerala have the right to collect NTFP from the forests (Alex & Kattany, 2016). Kattunaikkkar, Paniyar, Adiyar, and Kurichyar are the major NTFP collectors of Thirunelli. Kattunaikka is a traditional honey collector, food gatherer and hunter. Besides them, Paniya and Kuruma also depend upon forests for their livelihood (Shylajan & Mythili, 2007).

NTFP also plays a remarkable role in protecting bio-diversity along with facilitating rural economic growth. Several opportunities for rural development are connected to the Non-Timber Forest Products. However, the bordering areas of forests have become more dangerous than it was before. Due to increased human-animal conflicts, NTFP collection from the forests is challenging for the forest dwellers as wild animals distress them directly (mortality, harm) and indirectly (fear of death and injury). Thus, Human-animal conflicts have developed into one of the furthermost contentious problems in Thirunelli.

Methodology

The current research adopted the qualitative method. The objective of the study is to analyse the impact of human-animal conflicts on the livelihood of forest dwellers in Thirunelli, with an emphasis on the Kattunaikan community. The research is an ethnographic case study, and fieldwork was performed using the long-term participant observation method. The methodology is grounded on full participation in the lives of forest dwellers while simultaneously observing their activities from a distance. The research setting is selected from the forest-dependent communities of Thirunelli. Research opinions emerged were, followed by the thematic qualitative analysis. The Fringe villages and tribal hamlets of the study areas were graphed during the post-monsoon season to prepare the specifics and problems encountered in NTFP collection.

Research Design

The current research adopted qualitative methods to understand the impact of human-animal conflicts on the livelihood of forest dwellers in Thirunelli. Ethnography was employed to collect in-depth qualitative data in the natural environment. The current research is descriptive analysing the effect of human-animal conflicts on the livelihood of forest dwellers, focusing on the Kattunaika community.

Methods of Data Collection

The current research comprises both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through unstructured interview schedules and participant observations. The narrative responses from the forest dwellers

were captured using a digital voice recorder. Prior consent was sought from the respondents to use the device, secrecy and ethical usage of data were assured. Participant observations were most substantial in the research for capturing primary data. Participant observation, an ethnographic method very often used in longer-duration studies, requires the researcher to be based in the field, engaging with respondents' everyday actions and reflecting on these and their meanings (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). The most basic research tool used in this approach is comprehensive regular field notes, supplemented with visual or audio aids. The researcher resided and engaged with the forest dwellers to have an in-depth understanding of the problem of human-animal conflict. Data collected from secondary sources such as Government documents, forest records, Action committee reports, and Panchayath documents regarding the human-animal conflict were also cross-verified by the researcher through informal discussions with the villagers.

Theoretical Framework

It is possible to connect Vella's theory of forced migration to the present study. Vella suggested an alternative approach to the existing theories on migration that confined only to push-pull factors. Forced migrants refers to various legal or political categories that all refer to the people who have been forced to leave their native places and seek safety elsewhere because of several significant concerns, including environmental and disaster issues (Vella, 2019). Vella categorised the forced migrants into environmentally displaced and internally displaced. In Thirunelli, these two categories are visible. The natives of Thirunelli were internally displaced due to occurrence of human-animal conflicts which affected their life and livelihood. As a result, they are forced to leave their place of origin to distant destinations to for a living.

In Thirunelli, due to the increasing human-animal conflicts, many of the Kattunaikka community, the forest dwellers, are forced to move to Coorg district in Karnataka state to engage as agricultural labourers in the plantation sectors to make a living. Thirunelli demonstrates a range of features that are closely related to Vella's theory of forced migration.

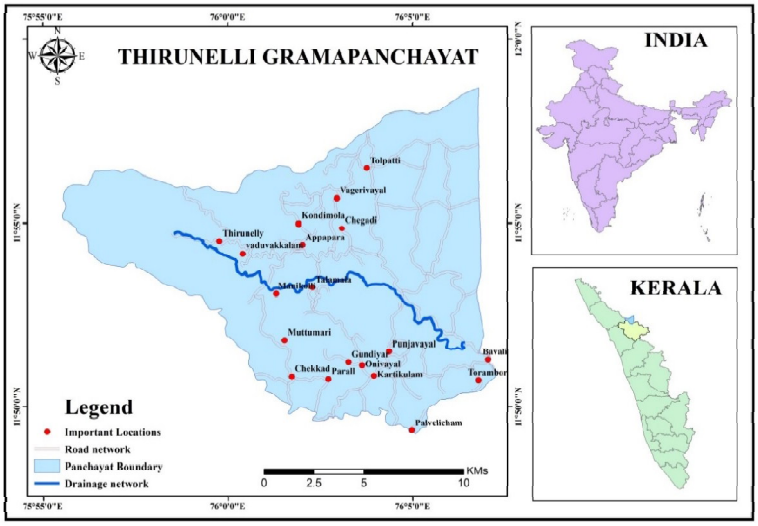
Data Analysis

The data collected were mainly composed in the form of narratives. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data obtained. The collected data was in audio form, and the initial task was to transcribe the interviews and narratives. As the interviews and discussions were all in Malayalam, they are translated verbatim into English. Exemplary themes and descriptive data were dragged from the field notes to supplement thematic analyses of the narratives. The names of the primary informants were converted to pseudonyms, and all identifiable information were removed.

Study area

Wayanad district is a hilly terrain on the Western Ghats located in the northern portion of Kerala. Thirunelli Grama Panchayath, part of Mananthavady Block Panchayath, is located on the northeast side of Wayanad and shares borders with Karnataka state. Thirunelli Grama Panchayath expands over an area of 201 sq. km of which three -fourth (72 percent) is under forest cover, with amazing landscapes all around. It consists of two revenue villages - Thirunelli and Thrissilery. The total population of the panchayath is 28,644, of which 14,142 were men and 14,502 women. Scheduled Tribes form almost 45 percent of the population, which comes around 13,103, (6373 men and 6730 women). The population of Scheduled Caste is very small, comprising only 2 percent of the total population (577), of which 290 are men and 287 women (Census, 2011). More than 85 percent of the population of Thirunelly depend on agriculture for livelihood (Guillerme et al., 2011). The Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) also contribute much to their livelihood. The current research, carried out in Thirunelli Grama Panchayath examines the effects of human-animal conflicts on the livelihoods of forest dwellers in Thirunelli.

Figure 1: Location of Thirunelli - (Inset) Kerala and India.



Source: Own creation

NTFPs of Thirunelli Forest

Thirunelli forest is one of the focal points of NTFP and has a rich natural diversity. Most of the NTFPs are of medicinal value. The substantial items collected for self-consumption and income are diverse types of honey, gooseberry, and numerous kinds of roots and mushrooms. Honey is the major NTFP collected from Thirunelli forests. The honey collection offers a better

income due to the high price of the product. Mainly three variants of honey are collected from the Thirunelli forests, Cheruthen (Small bee Honey), Vanthen (Big bee Honey), and Puttuthen (Termite Mounds Honey). The vital source of income for the tribal communities in and around Thirunelli is collecting seventeen varieties of Non-Timber Forest Products. In Thirunelli, mostly the Kattunaikka community engages in the NTFP collection irrespective of age. Young children and adults' dwell in forests for the same. People who are unable to do other works opt for NTFP collection as a means of income to meet their living expenses. Key NTFPs collected from Thirunelli with their market price are specified in Figure 2. The older generation (Male and Female) of Thirunelli engage NTFP collection and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Programme (MGNREGP) as their only source of income.

Table: 1. Commercial NTFPs Collected from Thirunelli Forest

Sl No:	Botanical Name	Local Name	Parts used	Market Value (INR/Kg)
1	*Apis florea*	Cheru Then	Resin	2000
2	Termite Mounds Honey	Puttu Then	Resin	400
3	*Apis dorsata*	Van Then	Resin	400
4	*Curcuma longa*	Manjal	Rhizome	100
5	*Cyclea Peltata*	Padakizhangu	Tuber	500
6	*Emblica Officinalis*	Nelli	Fruit	50
7	*Hemide Shius Indicus*	Nannari	Root	800
8	*Piper Nigrum*	Kurumulaku	Fruit	400
9	*Coffea*	Kappikkuru	Fruit	65
10	*Sida rhombifolia*	Kurumthotti	Root	18
11	*Solanum torvum*	Chunda veeru	Root	15
12	*Wax*	Mezhuku	Resin	350
13	*Boswellia sacra*	Kunthirikkam	Resin	200
14	*Desmodium gangeticum*	Orila	Leaves	12
15	*Pseudarthria viscida*	Moovila	Whole plant	18
16	*Sapindus emarginatus*	Soppum kaya	Leaves	30
17	*Senegalia rugata*	Cheenika	Leaves and Bark	40

Source: Primary Data

The people of Thirunelli depend on the forests to meet their firewood requirements as well. On comparing the employment opportunities available to tribal people in various sectors, NTFP collection generates the maximum contribution.NTFP collection is a major source of employment for tribal communities in Thirunelli.

Image 1: A Kattunaikka man collecting Medicinal Plants

Image 2: Forest dwellers collecting and processing Eenja (*Acacia caesia)*

Source: Primary data

Forest Dwellers and Wildlife Encounters

The Kattunaikka people are specialists in the honey collection. They have dexterity in honey collection that is traditionally bestowed upon them (Demmer,1996). The wild animal attacks have seriously affected the collection of NTFPs as well as the livelihood of forest dwellers. In Thirunelli, many people have lost their lives due to wild animal attacks, especially during the NTFP collection. The magnitude of attacks inflicted upon the NTFP collectors has consistently increased over time. Kattunaikkkars, who are familiar with forest and used to collect honey even at night, are now scared to do the same in daylight due to wild life attacks.

In Wayanad, the incidences of people getting killed by wild animals

while collecting NTFP, have become very common. In a recent incident, a young resident of the Basavan Colony in Pulpalli Panchayath got killed by a tiger, that fed on the entire body except his head. Such incidences have forced people living in Thirunelli to refrain from collecting NTFP and led to the cessation of their sources of income which has pushed many tribal communities to poverty.

Increasing Wildlife Encounters

Wildlife attacks on forest dwellers are increasing day by day. The collection of NTFP requires walking several miles into the forests; hence, NTFP collectors have greater chances of encountering wild animals. This is because they get closer to wildlife habitats while roaming in the forests in search of NTFP. Human-animal conflicts also happen in the vicinity of human settlements along the agrarian fields and the forest edges. According to the dwellers, the animals have recently become more violent. Many believe that increasing wildlife populations is the primary cause of human-animal conflicts and that the current boom in wild animal populations is unusual. They state that the number of wild animals expanded beyond the carrying capacity of the forest.

Balan, an NTFP collector from the Kattunaikka community, commented on the hazards while collecting NTFP and also about the dangerous situation occurring in Thirunelli

> "My wife was an expert in collecting medicinal plants. One day, when we were returning after collecting the medicinal plant 'Chunda veeru' (Solanum torvum), in a curve near the river, a giant tusker with one tusk suddenly attacked the group and scared us. Panicked and terrified, we jumped into the river along with the collected NTFP worth ₹ 2,000. Many of us were seriously injured, some in the attack and some while running for life. Somehow, we managed to reach home alive. Both of us caught a fever after this incident. Afterwards, we stopped NTFP collection due to fear, and later, I engaged in other works in the village for livelihood. Nothing worked right, and eventually, I moved to Ernakulam with the support of an agent to work in a hotel for a wage of Rs. 350 per day. Since my wife also stopped the NTFP collection, she lost her only source of income. There is a rise in the number of elephants, and they are everywhere. Earlier, elephants used to get scared by the random noises we made. However, the situation has changed as elephants attack people who produce scary howls. The collection of NTFP was a worthy and exultant source of income. But with the increased wild animal attacks, it has been affected, and life has become very difficult."

Forest dwellers used to go in groups of 20-30 people to collect the NTFPs. The majority of collectors move along with their families to gather and may consist of husbands, wives, and even children, and they shared similar difficulties as they faced severe consequences of wild animal attacks. Elephant is an occupational hazard for honey collectors. The income gained from

collecting NTFP was indeed the major source of income of the forest dwellers in Thirunelli who spend it to meet their everyday expenses, health and educational expenses. The wild animal attacks have wrecked their life, and most of them have stopped going to the forests because they are scared of elephants and tigers. The older people who used to engage in NTFP collection stopped moving to the forest as they were the most vulnerable to wild animal attacks. The Kattunaikkars, who are experts in collecting honey, succumbed to the attacks of elephants, bears, tigers, and wild buffalos that have become very common in Thirunelli. They haven't witnessed such kind of wild animal attacks before. Sloth Bears attack NTFP collectors frequently to acquire honey from them. In one such attack, an NTFP collector was killed, and several forest dwellers were injured. The severity of wild animal attacks has jeopardized the income of the tribal communities in Thirunelli, which include the collection, processing, and marketing of forest produces. Since many of them have stopped the collection of NTFP, they have plunged into poverty.

Religious Practices and Collection Methods

Religious practices, ceremonies or rituals to cope with stressful life conditions is referred to as religious coping (Pargament et al., 2005). Forest dwellers, especially the Kattunaikka perform certain rituals and ceremonies to mitigate human-animal conflicts. They have been collecting NTFPs through traditional methods for generations and thus have a complex relationship with their environment. Honey is usually collected in groups of five or more males. The group usually consists of members of the same hamlet and community. The collectors stay in the forest for two or more days for honey harvesting, and the task is accomplished by carrying utensils, rice, and other essentials with them.

Rituals are performed before honey harvesting and mostly at the bottom of the harvesting tree. They perform rituals and ceremonies to their traditional God, 'Mala Devatha', and seek blessings for protection from wild animals. They treat bees as holy beings, they hold prayers and seek forgiveness before harvesting honey. Kattunaikka forest dwellers do not wear footwear while honey collecting as they consider trees and forests as divine. They sturdily believe that the honey hunt will be unsuccessful if the Gods are enraged. Female members also make offers before the NTFP collection. They move to the forests only after a few minutes of deep prayer and offer coconut to their native God to protect them from wild animal attacks. Kattunaikka people do not adulterate in the NTFPs.They strongly believe their ancestors will curse them if they adulterate NTFP and consider it as a gift of nature. Religious practices and beliefs play a vital role in the NTFP collection of the Kattunaikka community.

Due to insufficient awareness and scientific alternatives, NTFPs are still being gathered unscientifically. Forest dwellers usually collect gooseberries

and other fruits by cutting the branches of trees. In the case of medicinal plants, likewise, the entire roots and tubers are collected by digging soil without leaving any part of it for future regeneration. NTFPs are collected using the simple traditional method, and in most cases, harvesting choices and practices affect the extracted species, eventually leading to their exhaustion.

Vijayan, 48years old, a male of the community, said.

> *"We move in groups to collect honey from forests, usually during the night. A smoker device is used to drive the bees away, and the honey portion of the hive is chopped off. Before climbing the honey tree, we observe some rituals. We pray to the goddess of mountains, who is believed to protect us from evils and attacks of wild animals. While some of us engage in gathering honey from the treetop, others remain on the ground to guard, howling and making loud noises to scare wild animals away. NTFP collection is currently troubled with dangers. During such a honey harvest in one of the Vishu season (April month). One of us, a smart honey collector who climbed a tree to collect honey just before me, was clawed to death by the attack of a tiger. It was such a terrible situation and tragedy that will never be forgotten. I was haunted by the sight of the man soaked in blood for several months. Nowadays, the honey collection is a game between life and death. Moreover, the environment changes daily, causing a decrease in honey harvesting. Still, we continue to engage in treacherous NTFP collection, as we have no other options."*

Gathering NTFP from forests poses severe survival challenges to the forest dwellers of Thirunelli. Climate change has harmed the frutescent phase, resulting in a decrease in honey production. The future of forest dwellers appears bleak, not just because of the impact of climate change and the reduction in forest resources but also due to the rising human-animal conflicts. Wildlife attacks disrupt all types of farming and cultivation activities. Such attacks previously occurred primarily during harvest season and are widespread throughout the year without seasonal variations.

Inaccessible Compensations

The victims of the human-animal conflicts mostly belong to tribal communities or from socially or economically backward classes; their sources of livelihood and their settlements are adjacent to wildlife territories. Men are more major victims of wildlife attacks than females because men venture into forests more often alone than in groups for NTFP collection. Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department provides compensation to forest dwellers in case of injury or death during NTFP collection. Entire tribal communities living in the forest areas of Kerala state are covered under the compensation scheme called Participatory forest management (PFM) insurance of the Forest and Wildlife Department. It is found that victims from the Kattunaikka community were less aware of the compensation procedures, and the majority of them never approached the forest department for the claim.

Getting compensation from the government often involves lengthy procedures and is time-consuming. Being unaware of these procedures, the Kattunaikka consider it as a long and problematic administrative process to get compensation.

Bellu, aged 50 years, a forest dweller from the Kattunaikka community, commented

> "After the tiger attack during NTFP collection, I was the first person from our hamlet to file for compensation from the forest department. We don't understand government files and procedures because the majority of the older people in our hamlet are illiterate. I gave my thumb impressions wherever the authorities asked for. I opened a bank account at the age of 48 in order to receive compensation. I applied for compensation before two years, and there has been no progress since then".

The majority of the victims among the forest dwellers did not apply for compensation as they were unfamiliar with the schemes. Creating awareness about the compensation schemes will support victims. The majority of forest dwellers depend on NTFP collection for their livelihood, and due to HAC, they shifted to agricultural manual works, especially in Paddy cultivation. They cannot entirely turn to non-agricultural occupations as they rely entirely on forests.

Consequences

Due to the increased HACs, several forest dwellers, particularly from the Kattunaikka community, migrated to the Plantation sector in the 'Kutta' region in the Coorg district of Karnataka State for their livelihood. It is found that a frequent wildlife attack towards forest dwellers is the primary factor for their migration. The Kattunaikka men, the expert honey hunters, of Wayanad, now make their living by working as plantation labours in Kutta. Families of Kattunaikka moved to Kutta to work in the plantation sector, just as they moved to the forest to collect honey. The majority of forest dwellers are daily migrants (they leave in the morning for work and return by the evening), and the landowners in Coorg provide transportation facilities.

Some are seasonal migrants who remain in the host region for a short period. In addition to daily wages, the plantation sector in Kutta offers food and housing for seasonal migrants. Thus, human-animal conflicts have harmed the lives of forest dwellers, forcing them to leave their native land and forest and move to distant locations for livelihood.

Conclusion

Many tribal groups in Thirunelli depend on NTFP as a source of income. The depletion of forest resources combined with increasing wildlife attacks have seriously affected the income of forest dwellers, especially the

Kattunaikka community and wreaked havoc on their lives. Though the government provides alternative livelihood opportunities to forest-dependent communities, they appear to be less effective. The forest-dependent communities are giving up NTFP collection because of the escalating human-animal conflicts. They have moved to the agricultural plantations of the Coorg district in Karnataka as labourers with low wages for their livelihood. Due to the augmented conflict situations, they face serious livelihood issues. Comprehensive forest management policies and programmes need to be formulated to enhance the livelihood as well as to overcome the prevailing issues of forest-dependent communities.

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P. Vijaya Prakash

MARITIME COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCES AND CULTURAL ASSETS IN APPROPRIATION: ARTISANAL FISHERS OF NORTH COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH

Abstract

Indian studies on maritime anthropology or marine fishers are scarce and mostly limited to reports. Marine fishing of artisanal nature had been the main occupation of Jalari and Vadabalija communities of northern Andhra Pradesh, who inhabit and make use of the maritime landscape for varied socio-cultural and economic activities (fishing-vending). The beach and its varied topographical features of coastal landscape, which come under common property resources (CPRs) are meticulously used for habitation, and managed for varied fishing tasks like fabrication of boats, repair of nets/lines, drying of fish etc, fish landings, shore sheds, shrines and memorials through traditional technologies and leadership of village functionaries. The local make of boats, nets and lines coupled with traditional knowledge on sailing-harvesting and tenancy agreements of catch-sharing had been integral of artisanal fishing, which is labour intensive and low capital outlay. Since the artisanal marine fishing coupled with informal vending networks are critical in supply of protein rich marine food at affordable price among inland peasant and tribal populations, special attention may be paid to safeguard the artisanal fishing in terms of governance and advocacy.

Keywords: *maritime anthropology, common property resource, maritime resource, culturescape, village functionaries, open access*

Introduction

The less productive sandy and rocky beaches of seacoasts of the oceanfront have been brought under human intervention for marine food resources was evidenced through kitchen middens of the Mesolithic period (about 10,000 BCE). Since then, such landscape had been transformed into a culturescape represented by fishing cultures, an adaptation of maritime resources of land and water, a common property resource (CPR). Dependency on natural CPR led to the development of cultural asset, a paradigm of technological innovation, fabrication of boats on land to sail at sea

P. VIJAYA PRAKASH, Senior Fellow-ICSSR, Department of Anthropology, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-530003

(Nietschmann, 1973). The cultural systems, knowledge advancements and related socio-political institutions regulating culture and nature had been the core of fishing culture (Steward, 1955). The common property resources (CPRs) are such for which no individual has a right over but are critical for poorer sections of the societies. Best examples of CPRs are parts of pastures, forests, wastelands, watersheds, rivers and seas (Jodha, 1986). Among these, maritime resources are unique, contributed to socio-cultural and economic development of humankind. Complexity of global distribution of seas and oceans, continental mobility of biotic resources and open access to common pool resources (fishing grounds) had been fortune as well as threat to indigenous populations, who depended exclusively on maritime resources of land for habitation and fabrication/repair, while water for harvesting fish. Despite the significant contribution of marine resources to the economy, the maritime CPRs and fishing communities have seldom received enough attention of planners. Moreover, the role of artisanal fishers is disregarded in development initiatives in spite of harvest of nutrient energy from turbulent waters, and supply protein-enriched marine food among inland peasants on informal marketing networks.

Culturescape

In social science research the environmental awareness brought the tremendous relationship between culture and nature. Wherever human beings live, take possession of nature, shape landscapes while they develop their own culture (Alvarez 2010). There are no landscapes without peoples' intervention, and as such any natural landscapes exist the culturescape persist. Landscapes are always to be understood as cultural structures exposed to economic dynamics and socio-cultural activity, shaping prime matter that serves as the foundation for any landscape, each with its particular design presents unique value (Seeland, 2008). Culturescape is described as the transformation of a part of nature carried out by man to shape, use, manage and enjoy it, according to the patterns emanated by his own culture. It is a configuration of human and natural resources. Therefore, the landscape is a society's cultural projection upon a given space.

Marine fishing has been one of the most extreme adaptations achieved by man. The studies related to their socio-cultural and economic profile led to the emergence of maritime anthropology (Acheson, 1981). Anthropological studies agree that fishing communities adapted to maritime landscape and climate thereby can be differentiated in several ways from non-fishing communities. Dependency and managing common property resources (CPR) like beach, shores and seas of the oceanfront have been the factors differentiate from neighbourhood agro peasants. The fishers developed a set of norms and values guided by various socio-cultural networks and institutions, and adapted to hazardous tasks of sail at open sea and fish in marine waters (Poggie, 1980). Clear division of labour had been the characteristic of maritime feature, where

men are involved in fishing at sea while women vend the catch on land (Davis and Nadel, 1992). At present, artisanal marine fishers, both men and women are in a state of crisis due to the transformation of common property resources (CPRs) into common pool resources through open-access mechanisms. The paper investigates into the appropriation of maritime CPRs, which sustained artisanal fishers over millennia until the threat arisen out of open access of CPRs, due to technology-driven open sea and deep sea fishing.

Study Area

About 974 km coastline (12° 45' to 19° 50' Northern Latitude and 76° 45' to 84°45' Eastern Longitude) of the Bay of Bengal on east coast of India is the eastern seaboard maritime landscape of Andhra Pradesh. A couple of meters to about 2.5 km swath of the coastline have been the habitat of fishermen eking their livelihood at sea. The fishers' habitat consists of beaches, ridges and dunes, intermittently intercepted by intruding hills and river channels forming bays, mudflats and backwater pools. Fringes of these marine landforms have been used for habitation as well as economic and religious activities (Prakash, 2010). Several shore spots and bays adjacent to habitations and adjoining aquatic resources of the sea have been common property resource (CPR) being appropriated by fishers on traditional modes of harvest and sharing the catch. Six endogamous units (castes) such as *Jalari* and *Vadabalija* in northern, *Besta* and *Pattapu* in southern and in between *Agnikulakshatriya* and *Palli*are are distributed along the seacoast of Andhra Pradesh. About 1.63 lakh families accounting for 6.05 lakh persons distributed over 546 villages, of which 1.51 lakh families are active fishers at present (Marine Fisheries Census, 2010), while the remaining adopted different non-fishing modes of livelihoods.

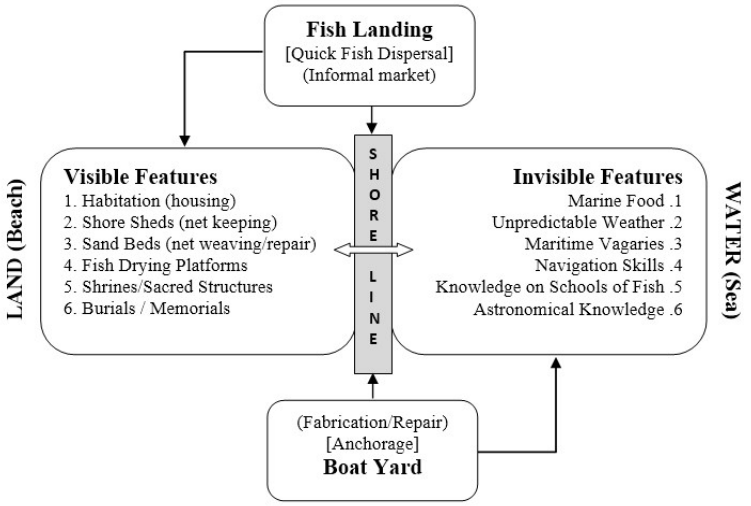
Scientific studies related to these communities of maritime culturescape are scanty and less in number, and are of fisheries reports than cultural adaptations (Salagrama, 2003). However, a few anthropological studies pertaining to Jalari and Vadabalija communities of north coastal Andhra Pradesh provide glimpses into maritime cultural profile. The present study reviews and presents the maritime context of Jalari and Vadabalija communities and analyses the CPR appropriation in sustaining artisanal fishing and in supply of marine food among the inland populations. The kinship analysis of Jalari fishing community of east coast provided not only the critical nature of kinship ties in sustaining fishing culture and economy but also provided database for understanding South Indian kinship usage (Kodanda Rao, 1981). Anthropological study of Jalari community and institutionalised role of '*marakatte'* (bulk buyer) and *'berakatte'* (retail buyer) indicating gender participation has been categorically brought out by Sridevi (1986 and 1989). Descriptive account of basic sociocultural features and material culture of fisherfolk of north east coastal Andhra Pradesh (Suryanarayana, 1977), village based note on Vadabalija fishers by Rajendra Prasad (2003) and traditional knowledge of Jalari delineated

by Ravi and Ramana (2016) add to maritime cultural practices of north coastal Andhra Pradesh. Fisheries of coastal Andhra in terms of capital investment, earning and expenditure of marine fishers brought out by Subba Rao (1988) provides basic tenets of collective efforts of fishing economy. An impact assessment study on 'mechanization of a traditional economic activity delineated two important factors (i) breakdown of social solidarity and economic cooperation due to mechanization and (ii) hub of socio-cultural networks have become economic clustered isolates (Prasada Rao and Yathiraj Kumar, 1984). Imposition of food taboos of fishermen of Visakhapatnam coast have been attributed to resources depletion and ecological crisis (Rajesh Patnaik, 2007). In contextualising social disruptions Charles Nuckolls (1997) and Dalibandhu and Sharma (2020a) interpreted the divination of *chupurayi* (seeing stone) performed by the traditional priestess, while *kaniki* (the practitioner) from outside activity, as 'primary' and secondary spirit attacks among Jalari community, points out the root causes for disruptions of social relations among Jalari. Similar study conducted by Dalibandhu and Sharma (2018) indicating increased risk, morbidity and mortality due to increased occupational hazards and uncertainty in economic activity overtime. These studies indicate disruption in maritime socio-cultural milieu due to various extraneous factors of technology and access of CPR. The Vadabalija community had not been drawn much attention for investigations in spite of their inseparable nature with the sea and Jalari community.

Traditional habitations/village of fishers composed of thatched huts of conical shape and cellular shrines are located on beach contiguous to shoreline. Other notable structures are government sponsored personalised concrete houses and public utilitarian schools, offices and cyclone relief centres. These habitations denote homogenous as they are exclusively inhabited by fishing communities with an exception of a few households of petty traders, toddy tapers and shepherds. Fishermen habitations are sandwiched between encroaching sea on one side and private properties on the other leading to sever congestion. Adjoining beach and its shore inherently been used as common property resources (CPRs) for various socio-cultural and economic ends. The beachscape consists of shoreline and rolling sands. The former is used for fish-landing and boatyard, while the latter used for varying common utilitarian purposes such as rest sheds, net yards, fish drying yards, shrines, memorials, burial ground etc. The habitation together with beachscape forms the culturescape of the fishers (Prakash, 2017). The data collected during 2019 and 2020 (ICSSR fellowship period) is coupled with the survey conducted during 2010-12 (UGC Report, 2010-12) to analyse common property resources management of fishers found along the 362 kms coastline of northern Andhra Pradesh, consisting of Srikakulam (182 kms.), Vizianagaram (25 kms.) and Visakhapatnam (155 kms.) districts. Data related to maritime resources and their management had been collected through schedules separately designed for village and households, focusing on village centric CPRs and peoples roles

on managing the resources. Anthropological field techniques such as personal interviews, focus group discussions, and case study methods are used to collect both qualitative and empirical data. Purposive sample method is followed to consult the fishermen and women vendors while at their respective works. A few selective case studies are made on various managerial aspects of fishing economy and culture. The observational and analysed factors of maritime landscape are schematically presented to represent the fishers' culturescape.

Fishers Culturescape



Social Assets of the Culturescape

The maritime culturescape consists of twofold geophysical resources, land for habitation and fabrication of boats and nets, while the biotic resources of the sea to harvest for fishing economy. These twin factors were put in operation by making use of common property resources, evidenced through visible manifestations of material assets on land while invisible knowledge systems at sea to harvest marine nutrient food resources. Each of these was the outcome of resources management as means of adaptation to land and water of CPR envisaged from the data, presented in Table- I and II. The fishers' habitations are invariably located at beaches proximate to tidal margin, a few close to stream mouths or hillocks. The skill of boat fabrication and navigation, the knowledge of locating the schools of fish and harvesting are learned by experience and success stories of the elders (Srinivasu, 2017; Vasanthi, 2017; Dalibandhu and Rama Mohan Rao, 2021). In spite of inherent factors like uncertainty of success, hazardous nature of the sea, vulnerability of life, the Jalari and Vadabalija fisher communities of north coastal Andhra Pradesh were practicing marine fishing successfully by organize themselves into castes, which are interdependent and cooperative in several socio-cultural and economic

pursuits. The fishermen habitats are unique, secluded from rest of 'composite communities of village India' (Beteille, 2002). The socio-political leaderships are traditionally organized by the community and village functionaries such as the *kulapedda* (community head), *pillagadu* (lineage head) and *dasudu* (priest) and *bhaktudu* (lineage priest). The fishermen households can be divided into two categories, the group having boats and fishing paraphernalia while the other do not own any of these but had the knowledge of sailing and fishing, thereby the 'owner-tenant' interdependent system is integral of artisanal fishing economy. The tenancy agreements are oral, bounded by customary law and principles at community level, being managed and regulated by the cooperative attitude of community and village functionaries, which have been sustaining fishing economy of the region under study. Both Jalari and Vadabalija communities are at subsistence level. Out of 59,149 fishermen families, 58,547 accounting 98.98 percent are below poverty line (BPL), while the remaining 602 (1.02%) families are marginally above BPL. Elite among fishers inhabiting the urban fringes are having ownership or partnership of mechanized boats, which operate from three fishing harbours/jetties of the study area (Visakhapatnam, Bhimunipatnam and Bhavanapadu).

1. Boat for Navigation

Traditional boats (tied and stitched boats) are fabricated by few fishermen specialized in boat fabrication. They use simple carpenter tools like adze, chisel, saw and driller, and the knowledge of design and size is based on arm lengths, no measuring instruments are used as most of the fabricators are either illiterates or elementary school dropouts. Supply of boat fabrication is based on order with oral specifications of type and size with or without the provision for sail and motorization, no brand specification, but only model. Agreement of raw materials to be used (wood), price, time and delivery are on conventional mode, any breach or dispute comes under village caste panchayat, both by the elected and traditional leadership, resolves at local levels. Entire process of fabrication takes place at beach under the shade of groves, a CPR. The role of caste panchayat system has been integral of artisanal fabrication for offshore and nearshore peasant fishing. However, motorization of sailboats has been increasing for far sea harvest through nylon net fishing. About 31,318 fishing vessels are in operation in Andhra Pradesh, out of which 47.25% are traditional boats, 46.77% are motorized (fibre boats) while the remaining 5.98% (trawlers) are mechanized (Marine Fisheries Census 2010).

Sailing at open sea on country boats (unbranded local make) is risky and challenging, but the knowledge gained by peasant fishers over maritime vagaries and variations of atmosphere is remarkable. The gained knowledge of weather conditions, water colour, sea currents, seabed, schools of fish, and such marine related aquatic character, and the dynamic characters of celestial bodies at sky are being orally transacted over generations to sustain artisanal

fishing. The gained invisible knowledge had generic relationship with the visible sailing to harvest invisible fish. However, the inherent knowledge is now subjected to erosion due to contemporary invasive forces of technology and marketing (Dalibandhu and Sharma, 2020).

2. Nets, Hooks and Lines for Harvest

Open sea fishing is a group activity and a variety of nets such as trawl, drift, gill, disco, and varied sizes of hooks and lines are used. Fishing expedition group varies from a minimum of two to eight persons of varied skills of sailing, laying nets and lines in accordance with type of boat, nets and expected schools of fish (squids, prawn, crabs, fish etc). Combination of expertise is critical in success of catch. On social front, the group consists of owners of the boats, nets and tenants. The tenants could be kin members and also other fishing caste persons. Principle of sharing catch on equal ratios of participating assets (boat and net shares) and men has been sustaining the competitive success over vast waters of the ocean. Tenancy agreement among owners of vessels, nets and persons, their participation in voyages, continuity, absence, abstain and such related intricate issues are honoured at reciprocal understandings. The agreements on word of mouth come under the traditional jurisdiction and the domain of traditional village councils of fishermen communities (Jalari and Vadabalija).

3. Fish Landings and Market

When catch arrives at fish landings the activity of fisher women commences. Woman financier-cum-wholesale dealer (*marakatte*) and women retail buyer-cum-vendor (*berakatte*) nexus (Sridevi, 1989; Venkatalakshmi, 2018) immediately activates for quick disposal of catch as the white meat is perishable. No units of measurements but graded lots of fish are subjected to auction/sale. *Marakatte* directly buys bulk from catchers, while *berakatte* buy portions of lots of fish from *marakatte*. Entire transaction process lasts in less than an hour duration. Marketing processes like pricing, bargaining and buying of catch solely depends on customary understandings of harvesters and marketers. The financier obligations, kindred preferences and trade principle of supply-demand nexus play a critical role in quick dispersal at fish landing on very informal way. Entire process is undisputedly regulated by invisible customary principles of trade under traditional vigilance of community functionaries. Bulk of motorized and mechanized catch lands at jetties and fishing harbours is subjected to urban marketing and export, while artisanal peasant fishing has been critical in supply of protein requirements for local populations.

These three main sets of socio-economic and cultural manifestations are further complimented by another three sets of secondary material manifestations, which include shore sheds, sand beds and shrines. The first two are directly related to sailing-harvest, while shrines are associated with

veneration towards rescue and success of fishing expeditions. Each one of these material assets of common property shows complexity of organization and evolution. Absence of documentary evidences of these cultural forms has resulted in resorting to collection of information from community elders through case study method, indicating the tangible assets are encompassed by intangible sets of socio-political regulations and knowledge, which were inherited over the generations through oral transactions.

i. Shore Sheds

Shore sheds are temporary thatched shelters overlooking the sea erected with the help of palm tree logs or casuarina posts to provide shade to nets. A unit of shed generally measures 15x20 feet, and such are added to a maximum of five in number, which depends on availability of sandy terrain and size of habitation. Though the sheds are basically built for keeping nets they are being used as transit halts before and after fishing expeditions and also as rest-shelters. Fishers spend leisure time under the shade, share experiences at sea, such as knowledge on water currents, schools of fish, tricks of trade, and such fishing related besides family chores. In the absence of sheds, grooves are used as transit shelters. Playing cards is common at several of these sheds. The invisible asset of knowledge gained over several fishing expeditions has been an immense knowledge shared among fellowmen signifies importance of shore shed. Realizing its socialization context fisheries department had been geared up to build permanent shore sheds at a few select beaches.

ii. Sand Beds for Fishing Tasks

The beachscape consists of sands in the form of ridges which supports maritime flora and fauna. The sand dunes often change surfacial features due to wind currents and tidal waves. Sand beds spread along shores have been used for pre and post-harvest fishing activities, such as net weaving, drying, repair, and also drying the fish. Since the sand beds are common property resource the spatial management is the task of village functionaries, mostly managed on clan and kin obligations, either in succession or on rotation with mutual consent among users. The extent of sand beaches at several places is shrinking due to encroaching sea causing hardships for pre and post fishing activities.

iii. Shrines and Memorials

A part of the common property resource adjacent to beach sands, river mouths and headlands is devoted for sacred and profane activities, which are in the form of cellular shrines of deities (Mother Goddesses) and memorials (*Veerudubabu* and *perantallu*) are community assets, and the propriety vested by village heads and priests. Plurality of shrines of different deities and

memorials are significant at clan and lineage levels and they are the assets of the community. These sacred assets are common property resources of the community, management through different functionaries such as lineage heads, priests, *kulapedda*, *pillagadu and dasudu,* and their veneration is renewed by organizing seasonal, annual and periodic festivals and cults (Prakash, in press).

Discussion

The Jalari and Vadabalija are two important maritime fishing communities mutually making use of common property resources (CPRs) in north coastal Andhra Pradesh. Their habitations are exclusively inhabited by either of the two or shared by both. In several socio-cultural and economic aspects they show similarity but practice endogamy, which is strictly adhered. Anthropological literature though meagre, broadly indicates that Jalari are traditional fishers while Vadabalija are seafarers. It is imperative that shallow and backwaters of the sea had been the CPR of Jalari, who had the knowledge of weaving cast nets, lines to tie hooks and traps to catch fish. As per the Jalari narrations, they used tied boats (tied logs/catamaran) to harvest offshore fish, while Vadabalija informants claim domain knowledge of sailboat fabrication and navigation across seas and oceans, who assisted as mariners for commercial maritime trade. It is plausible that the mechanized sailing, of late, displaced the sailboat, thereby the Vadabalija are rather forced to expatriate either as individual inhabitants or neighbourhood of Jalari on beachscape. The articulation of offshore artisanal fishing knowledge of Jalari and Vadabalija knowledge of seafaring at open sea might have contextualised the skill gap between offshore and open sea access. The sharing of technology knowhow of sailing at open sea and fishing knowledge of marine resource between two communities had been mutually benefitting, while the common property of resources (CPR) of maritime environment are being managed by mutual consent for coexistence.

Unlike other CPRs like pastures, forests, rivers, the beachscape resources of maritime landscape demand different modes of adaptations, which are manifested through material assets and socio-political institutional arrangements, specifically of village councils composed of *kulapedda, pillagadu* and *dasudu* besides elected representatives of panchayat system of governance with ascribed functions. The main economic resource (fish/biotic) is invisible, mobile, seasonal, and under open access, the institutionalization of extraction is inherently unique, which signifies maritime culture. The three sets of techno-cultural assets of boat fabrication yards at seafront, space for net weaving, and shore space for fish landing had dual functions, testified by visible material assets at beachscape and an aura of invisible happenings at sea. Each of these assets is institutionalised in the fold of community councils to thrive on hazardous economy and to sustain cultural cohesiveness. The fishermen habitations are congested as they are sandwiched by the adjoining private

properties and the encroaching sea are left with the maritime CPR, which are meticulously managed by apportioning for various pre and post fishing activities managed through traditional village functionaries. As such, very negligible cases were referred to local police in managing CPRs. The traditional artisanal fishing is critical in supply of protein at informal price by fisherwomen through local vending booths (street hawking, street side vending and fish markets) among nearby populations. The unsold and bulk catch is dried and marketed through daily and weekly markets of the region, which assures supply of fish among inland peasants and tribal populations. The study indicates that the artisanal fishing demands low investment as the fishing paraphernalia are self and local make, the price of the fish is regulated by informal means, which depends on the catch. Since the artisanal fishing coupled with informal marketing networks are integral of supplying protein rich marine food among inland peasants and tribals special attention may be paid to safeguard the artisanal fishing in terms of governance and advocacy.

Table-I: Database on Maritime Common Property Resources and Assets

District	Coast length (in kms.)	No of Villages	No of villages per km	Fish drying platforms	Net Yards	Country boat fabrication Yards	Fibre boat moulding Yards	Cyclone Relief Centres
Srikakulam	182	106 (7)*	1.84	52	48	36	10	54
Vizianagaram	25	20	1.25	13	20	0	0	6
Visakhapatnam	155	65	2.38	17	16	10	5	40
Total	**362**	**191 (7)**	**1.96**	**82**	**84**	**46**	**15**	**100**

*Villages given up fishing

Table-II: Database on Fish Landings and Villages

District	No of villages sharing fish landings								Total Fish Landings/Villages
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	>8	
Srikakulam	34	20	2	2	1	1	0	0	60/99
Vizianagaram	4	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	8/20
Visakhapatnam	12	8	4	0	1	0	1	1	27/65
Total	**50**	**29**	**7**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**95***

*A total of 184 fishing villages have only 95 fish landings, which include Jetties at Bhavanapadu and Bhimunipatnam and Visakhapatnam fishing harbour

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Ruchika Sharma

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: ANALYSIS OF KANGRA

Abstract

Stigma due to infertility affects different aspects of women's lives across the globe, particularly in a patriarchal Indian society, where it further relegates them to a lower social status. The rationale of the paper is to unfold the situation of infertility caused by Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) in a traditional rural population of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, India. The paper focuses on the identification of the PCOS case percentage, consequences of infertility, and suggestive measures to mitigate the socio-psychological impact of PCOS.Due to under- reportage of PCOS at the local public and private hospitals, the study adopted snowball method toidentifywomen experiencing infertility. Rotterdam Criteria with available clinical evidence was employed for screening of PCOS women. Out of 167 PCOS affected women, 54.4% were found to be experiencing infertility wherein 9.58% women happened to have primary infertility while secondary infertility was found to be higher i.e. 44.91%. The qualitative data informed that the affected women, despite being the victim of the disease were not engaged in the decision making process which severely affected their situation.

Keywords: *Reproductive Health, Gender, Well- Being, Stigma, Family.*

Introduction

In a traditional Indian society, marriage is irrefutably the predominant institution for raising children (Perelli-Harris et al., 2012), and motherhood is considered to be a natural and primary course for married women. Therefore, the desire to have children is regarded significant for a successful marital life. However, the inability to bear children is deemed to be a misfortune, affecting and altering the life course of married individuals. At large the concordance between body processes and social processes is maintained in the social structure by acceptance of the given codes of conduct specific to a culture. Ortner (1972:5) pointed out that due to women's reproductive capacities, they are rendered an integral and dominant part of nature, as compared to men.

RUCHIKA SHARMA, Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi

This is also the reason that women's reproduction is central in shaping their womanhood. The individual accepting the codes of behaviour get idea of cultural expectations about gender roles from their environment i.e. their society's value and belief about the categories (Blackstone 2003: 335). The fulfilment or non- fulfilment of these gendered expectations impacts the well-being of the individuals respectively. Thus, in case of women with infertility, the non-fulfilment of the expected roles of womanhood, puts their identity in predicament.

Across the world, infertility[1] has been relatively neglected, especially due to global politics revolving around high fertility and measures to control it. The consequences of infertility would impact women of those cultureswhere womanhood is deeply linked or seen synonymous to motherhood while childless women are often discriminated against and stigmatized (Inhorn2003:1842). This paper is an attempt to situate the intersection between gender roles, fertility, patriarchy and decision making with a backdrop of infertility due to PCOS and its impact on the life of women's mental well-being. The concept of bodies becomes important as subjectivities in its social meaning become important to unfold gender constructs and images, and idealized nature and roles.

In India, the prevalence of infertility, in general, is calculated to be around 3.9 to 16.8%, and approximately 3.7% in Himachal Pradesh (World Health Organization [WHO] as mentioned in National Health Portal, NHP 2016). Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), being the most prevalent endocrine condition across the world, and is also one of the common causes of infertility. A study by Gill, Tiwari, & Dabadghao(2012) estimated 3.7% prevalence of PCOS in North India. On the other hand, studies that have been conducted on PCOS (between 2011 to 2017) anticipated its prevalence in India to be ranging from 3.7 to 22.5 per cent (Ganie et al. 2019:333). The discrepancies in data can be grounded on the criteria used to record prevalence. In the Indian context, PCOS is associated with the changes in socio-cultural, political and economic scenarios post the liberation of the Indian economy in year 1991 (Pathak 2020:49).

PCOS and Infertility

The evidence of infertility cannot be singularly corroborated to urbanisation in developed countries as cases are reported from underdeveloped or developing countries and traditional societies as well (Harpending 1994 : 385). Among many, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) has become a most common cause of primary infertility[2]and secondary infertility[3] (Basirut et al. 2019:203), stemming from the endocrine imbalance (Eggers, Sabine,& Hashimoto 2007:169). Many scholars have described it through various manifestations or symptoms such as irregular or no menstrual cycle, excess hair growth on the face and body (hirsutism), weight gain, acne, ovarian cysts,

and thinning of the hair on scalp, insulin resistance etc. (Ehrmann 2005: 1223; Speroff, Glass & Kase 2005: 465; National Institutes of Health Evidence, NIHE 2012).

Infertility is reported to be ten times more common among women with PCOS in comparison to the healthy controls (Hart & Doherty 2015:919). Since the PCOS affected womenhave impacted ovarian quality and function, it poses a greater risk of infertility or secondary infertility (Hart & Norman 2006:751; Hart & Doherty 2015:918) and higher risk of miscarriage (Homburg 2006 : 281).

PCOS, Infertility and Mental Well being

In patriarchal societies, infertility among traditional women contributes to the psychological burden, and is often associated with lower social status; lowered self-perception; lowered autonomy in making decisions; divorce; and physical and emotional violence (Syamala 2012 :18). Motherhood is taken to be natural for women, and any deviations are discouraged (Goffman 1963:6). Many scholars believe that the ill body is a focal point to explore the socio-cultural and politico-economic issues where the body of women affected with PCOS can be perceived as a 'social body'from a socio- political perspective (Pathak 2020 :49).

Infertility, besides the physical consequences of PCOS and subsequent lowered body image satisfaction (Himelein &Thatcher 2006: 613), leads to adverse effects that women might experience in different spheres of their daily life such as low social contact and self-esteem that converge into mental trauma, stress, depression (Kerchner, Lester, Stuart & Dokras 2009 :207), and risk of other psychiatric disorders (Cesta et al. 2016 :196).

The major impact on the mental well-being of the affected women can be correlated to their social environment where the role of family pressure has already been explored by many scholars (Ramesh & Dinesh 2020: 308). Unfortunately, the male infertility is culturally 'invisible' (Barnes 2014:2), and theblame for childlessness often falls upon women, who have to face the associated stigma unevenly.

Generally, reproductive decision making may either be unilateral or collective in nature, taken up openly, or may be secretly or imposed in a coercive way. In the Indian context, the reproductive decision making rests not just with the couple but with other members of the family as well. The stress culminates as culturally women are expected to bear children immediatelyafterformalisation of marriage. As a consequence, women with PCOS facing issues in conceiving, start experiencing pressure from their affinal families. This is because in many cultures across the world, fertility and upbringing children endows a better status and power to women in the social structure while childless women experience discrimination, derogation, and

ostracization (Riessman 2000 :111). The impact of PCOS associated stigma and individual's production of self-image is realized on the well- being of these women who may get engaged in different practices of seeking social support. In practice impactedwell-being of the PCOS affected women are hardly discussed with the sick throughout the treatment which makes them more vulnerable(de Niet et al. 2010 :1501).

Methods of Data Collection

This cross-sectional study was conducted between year 2018 and 2019. The sample size of the study included 167 PCOS affected women from the rural villages of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh (a state in North India). The participants were in the age group between 18 years to 45 years. The study utilised a mixed method approach combining qualitative methods such as medical biographies, in- depth interviews, life histories, case studies, narratives etc., whereas an interview schedule was employed to collect quantitative data. Face-to-face interviews were employed to explore the possibility of finding illiterate participants as well. The quantitative and qualitative data were arranged in three data sets (i) macro data such as demographic details, percentage of PCOS, cases of infertility and sub- infertility, miscarriages, etc. from interview schedule; and (ii) in-depth data from life histories and case studies. Since the local medical institutions reported only a few cases, the participants were recruited through snowball method utilising the social network of midwives, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)[4] and *anganwadi* workers. The anthropometric measurements were collected using standard techniques of Weiner and Lourie (1981). Stature and body weight measurements were recorded to the nearest 0.1 cm and 0.5 kg. The descriptive statistical analysis was done by using SPSS Statistical Software version 20.0.

Inclusion Criteria

The individuals fulfilling all three Rotterdam criteria (2004) along with clinical diagnostic evidences were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

The individuals with medical history of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, etc. and of thyroid were also excluded from the study.

Findings

Table no. 1 depicts that out of 167 PCOS affected women, 16 (9.6 %) women were having primary infertility and 75 (44.9%) were suffering from secondary infertility. The comparative historical research delineated that high fertility is desired by all known great religions of the world and since the

indicator of fertility or infertility of a couple revolve around women's conception, fecundity rituals are most often correlated to the female sex (Eggers, Sabine,& Hashimoto 2007). In the patriarchal traditional societies, a women's identity is generally established with and revolves around motherhood (Riessman 2000; Eggars &Kirchengast 2001).

In case of infertility, the cultural values and norms pile up stress on the affected women. Despite being a sufferer, women do not have much of a say and generally become peripheral in the reproductive decision-making process. For the present study, some cases of primary infertility were interviewed in which the reproductive decisions rested not with the women but with her family leading to various kinds of stresses, as can be witnessed from the following case study.

Case Study 1: A 40 years old married woman had a clinical history of irregular menstrual cycle, who got diagnosed with PCOS in year 2001. She was a housewife. Her height was 160 cm and her weight was 65kg (BMI 25.39). Her waist circumference was 99 cm. In her case, the diagnosis of PCOS was confirmed with the presence of irregular menstrual cycles and polycystic ovaries via conducted ultrasound. She was not aware of PCOS in the beginning and got to know about it only after the doctor's diagnosis. Just after her marriage, at the age of 20 years, she tried to conceive for two years but was unable to get pregnant. She also reported that they were not using any birth control so the inability to conceive remained a puzzle for them. Due to the persistence of the same issue, both the husband and wife went to see a local doctor. She reported that after examination of both it was found that she was suffering from PCOS.

After diagnosis, in 2001, she underwent regular hormonal treatment, recommended by the doctors but even after a long span of 19 years, the couple have not been able to bear a child. It confirmed that her infertility was both, a symptom and a consequence of PCOS. Her diagnosis with PCOS brought her multiple stressors but reported to have never experienced stress because of other secondary elements such as weight gain and hirsutism as much as she experienced it because of infertility. The one which affected her well-being, the most, was her family's and society's behaviour and attitude towards her. She reported that, after diagnosis, her husband became indifferent to her and continued to blame her for their childlessness. It made her unhappy and slipped into depression because of it. It affected her relationship with her husband so deeply that they barely communicated. Their sexual relationship also got affected because of it.

Her failure to accomplish the 'expected' brought her dishonour in the family and society.While her family pushed her to the periphery, her co- sister and her children became centre of their attention which also progressed her depression. The cultural norms where barren women are not allowed to perform or participate in various rituals, produced the feeling of alienation, which

negatively affected her quality of life and lowered her self-esteem. She did not feel like a 'complete woman'. She reported that her family and husband have turned down any of her suggestions to have a child via modern day reproductive technology such as In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF).

On the other hand, in cases of secondary infertility (for example, Case study 2) women did not experience stigma related to childlessness. This is primarily because, prior to infertility, they had birthed a child. However, women with secondary infertility shared other components (such as stress and depression) with infertile women.

Case Study 2: In another case, in which the woman (height 152.4cm, weight 50 and BMI 21.5, waist circumference 75) had PCOS symptoms, secondary infertility was reported. The woman pretended that she was content and happy with her life. After bringing to note that every female in their family had at least two children, when she was asked about her reason to stick to only one child, she started crying. It was realised that her pretension was a strategic management of her depression and fact about herself to maintain her role as a dedicated wife and daughter-in-law, and to conceal something which could generate stigma or empathy. She had a son and pretended to be satisfied with the number of children they wanted in their family. Later she told that she did conceive a second time after her first son was born. But since her husband did not want her to continue the pregnancy, he imposed his decision on her coercively and compelled her to abort the child.

After one year of abortion, when family counselled him and suggested them to have another child, the couple affirmed with the family's suggestion and tried to conceive but the woman was unable to conceive. Later when they consulted a local doctor, she got diagnosed with PCOS associated secondary infertility. With diagnosis, the doctor prescribed her some medicines but despite it she could not conceive. She reported that after some time, they went to a local shaman as they believed that their infecundity could be a consequence of killing an unborn child and the curse of it might have been affecting them but their state remained the same.

In the study population, unmarried women (n=31) with PCOS shared their concerns related to fertility, reproductive health, motherhood, and prospective marital issues that may arise due to PCOS (for example, case study 3).

Case Study 3: A girl of 26 years (height 165, weight 50, BMI 18.4 waist circumference 65) with a clinical history of irregular menstrual cycle i.e. oligomenorrhea, was about to get married after a year. She was lean with 1.61m height and 46kg weight. The girl showed her concern regarding irregular periods, when other female members of her family socialized her about the ways of conduct post marriage and of marital life. Later when she was taken to the doctor, she was diagnosed with PCOS. She immediately started her

medication for the same but showed her concern regarding her fertility. She also showed her concern about the effects of PCOS on the quality of ovum which could affect the health of the future children.

Discussion

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), being an endocrinopathy, is an ailment that affects women's fertility in their reproductive period. Through the case studies above, it is revealed that women in Indian context do not have reproductive decision making power where dominance of other's decisions impacts their well-being in totality. In this cross-sectional study, out of the total 167 women with PCOS with an age range between 18-45 years and a mean age of 30.78 ± 6.7 years, 9.58% women happened to have primary infertility and 44.91% women had secondary infertility. For the given sample size, there were 30 (18%) women out of the total PCOS patients who happened to have at least one or a maximum of three miscarriages.

Given the frequency of infertility in PCOS patients, the author has tried to address the social and psychological consequences of infertility; andassociated concerns and decision making processes via presented case studies. During research study, it was found that most of the participants were lean but had the issue of central obesity. Most of the participants were not seeking treatment, and the one seeking it was not fully aware of the consequences of the disease.

Conclusion

Through the present study it was found that out of 167 participants, 54.4% were experiencing infertility (either primary or secondary) due to PCOS, wherein a proportionately larger number of women experienced secondary infertility which remains relatively inconspicuous in the national statistics but have similar psychological consequences.PCOS negatively affected all aspects of their life. Reflecting on these negative impacts of PCOS in these cases, it can be said that PCOS is not only a medical condition rather a bio-social problem. It is important to point out that along with medication to treat the disease, there is a dire need to facilitate medical counselling for both, i.e. the affected women and their families, especially in rural areas, to work on physical as well as socio- cultural consequences of PCOS and their mitigation. In this view, interventions including counselling and capacity building of the family members will help in establishing a strong family support system for women; and encourage the affected women to develop a positive attitude, fight against the stigmatization and other social atrocities. Therefore, in rural areas as in urban, emotional social support groups should be created to provide regular emotional support and counsel women to improve their mental well-being.

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Ethical Approval and Participant Consent

This study was approved by the Ethical Clearance Committee, University of Delhi. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study and anonymity was maintained.

Limitation of research

The study could be conducted with a larger sample size, to have a better view of population wide prevalence. The cases of deviations in Luteinising Hormone (LH) and Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) level were excluded in study.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of infertility among women participants with PCOS.

Infertility	Count (N)	Percentage (%)
Primary Infertility	16	9.58
Secondary Infertility	75	44.91
Total	91	54.49
Miscarriages (1 or more)	30	17.96

Notes

1. Infertility is a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse (see National Health Portal, NHP 2016; Zegers- Hochschildet al. 2009: 9).

2. Primary Infertility synonymous to infertility which means that the couple has never conceived (see National Health Portal, NHP 2016).

3. The Secondary infertility means that the couple has experienced a pregnancy before and failed to conceive later (see National Health Portal, NHP 2016).

4. Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers act as an interface between the community and the public health system who facilitate health care needs of local people (National Health Mission, 2021). Accessed at https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=150&lid=226.

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Kanika Sharan

WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AMONG THE GADDIS OF THE HIMALAYAS

Abstract

This paper explores the components that comprise women's Autonomy in the Agro-pastoral community of the Himalayas. The present article focuses on the Gaddi community, settled in the Dholadhar range of the Western Himalayas. Many people of the community practice seasonal migration, moving to the low valleys in the district of Kangra in winter and returning to their villages in Bharmour in the neighbourhood of Chamba in summer. Each region has distinctive features when we talk about women's Autonomy. Bharmour has lower economic, socio-cultural and political Autonomy than women in Kangra valley. Kangra valley women have greater mobility and decision-making authority. Their political achievements and financial independence are a few examples of their Autonomy. Gender systems practised in their community are also significant predictors of their Autonomy. Caste, class and gender roles play a pivotal role and have an equivocal influence on women's Autonomy in the Himalayas.

Keywords: *Autonomy, Gaddi, women, Anthropology, Pastoral, Himalayas, decision-making*

Introduction

Autonomy is the power to obtain information and make decisions about concerns related to self. It provides access to social resources such as power, knowledge, and prestige within and outside the family and community. It also provides access to material resources such as food, land, income and other forms of wealth. The most accepted definition of 'autonomy' is true to me, standing up for 'what I believe,' thinking for 'myself', and being one's person (Friedman 2003: 3). Autonomy is about the choices and actions that give us the liberty to be our true selves and make decisions for our betterment. Women's autonomy offers women the freedom to make choices and take steps toward independence and empowerment. Women's senses of self in many societies always seem to be organised around social relationships; moreover, in many marginalised communities, autonomy has no meaning; somehow, it

KANIKA SHARAN, Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi.

is beyond their reach or unnatural or unknown. Furthermore, this is because of the patriarchal attitudes and traditional sex-role socialisation, which creates obstacles to their independence and sense of self. On the brighter side, women have ways of living in this world or surviving. Women are open to emotions; they are sensitive and comfortable in attending to the well-being of others. However, when they support others' well-being, the concept of sense takes secondary status automatically.

Theoretical Framework

Anthony Giddens's structuration theory analyses the interrelations of agency and structure. According to him, agency reflects intentional activities whereby individuals seek to satisfy their needs and goals, while structure refers to the already-existing rules and resources employed in such actions. Giddens calls agency a human action. For him, to be human is to be an agent, although not all agents are human beings. Agents' knowledge of their society informs their actions, reproducing social structures that enforce and maintain the dynamics of actions. Gidden defines 'ontological security as the trust people have in social structure; everyday actions have some degree of predictability, thus ensuring social stability. However, this is not always true. The possessions of the agency allow one to break away from normative actions, and depending on the sum of social factors at work; they may instigate shifts in the social structure. The dynamics between agency and structure make such generative action possible. Agency does not refer to people's intentions but rather to the flow or pattern of people's actions. The structure gives form and shape to social life, but it is not the form and shape. Structure exists only in and through the activities of human agents (Giddens 1989: 256).

A revised understanding of agency has long been the explicit or implicit concern of feminist research devoted to uncovering women's marginalised experiences. These experiences attest to the capacity for autonomous action in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities (McNay 2000:10). General reflections have initiated the concern with the concept of agency on the changing nature of economic and social structures in late capitalist societies. Concerning issues of gender, a more rounded conception of agency is crucial in explaining how women have acted autonomously in the past despite constricting social sanctions and how they may act now in the context of processes of gender restructuring. An important aspect of a woman's agency is her very existence as an autonomous being and her capability to influence the parameters of her life and the environment within which she functions. In other words, the agency represents a certain degree of power, and women's autonomy becomes intertwined with their empowerment (Dasgupta & Lal 2007: 12).

In this paper, I seek to understand the components that comprise women's autonomy among Gaddi women of Bharmour and Kangra. Secondly,

the representation of women and their agency and relationship with men and each other. Furthermore, how they use their agency in their everyday life in Bharmour in the district of Chamba and Kangra city.

About the community

In the Dhauladhar mountain ranges of the Himalayas, there is a valley in Bharmour, the homeland of Gaddi, an agro-pastoralist community. During the early days, Gaddi were sheep and goat herders and used to take care of their land and migrated seasonally with their herds towards the lower range valley, Kangra, in the district of Kangra. Gaddis are anthropologically and administratively classified as a scheduled tribe community, and they follow Hinduism. However, they are distinct in how they perceive the universe and their position in the cosmic order of things (Kaushal 2001:158- 176). Their dialect reflects the influence of Pahari, Gujarati and Rajasthani languages. The term "Gaddi" originated from the Hindi word meaning the seat. According to traditional beliefs and oral narratives, Gaddis came from the royal seat of Lord Shiva, which is why he holds an extraordinary place in their lives. Oral folklores also talk about the Gaddis created by Lord Shiva. Gaddi is a generic term used for many subcastes within it. Under the generic term 'Gaddi', there are two upper sub-castes, i.e. Brahman and Kshatriya or Rajput Gaddi. There is another sub-caste within the community, such as Sippi and Halis. Gaddi Brahman considers themselves pure and the head of the community. They feel superior and detest being associated with the tribal terms. They believe they are like Hindu Bharahman, top of the ritual hierarchy. They are biased against other sub-caste of the community. Then comes the Kshatriyas or Rajput Gaddis. They are related to Rajputs in Rajasthan, but during the war between Aurangzeb and the Hindus, they ran away and started living in the Himalayas. According to them, their traditional clothing is the only difference that sets them apart from the Hindu Rajput. Rajasthan Rajputs wear clothes made of cotton due to the extremely hot weather conditions, and Gaddi Rajput traditional clothes are made of wool or other thick material due to the cold weather in the Himalayas. The Sippi sub-caste are traditional weavers and local oracles, and the Halis are involved in agriculture and also occupy the roles of traditional carcass removers and healer chanters (Kaushal, 2010: 158- 176). The young generation from the Kshatriya, Sippi and Hali sub-caste loathe the Brahminical supremacy of the Brahman Gaddi. They are against the traditional rituals that Brahmans practice to enjoy a higher status in the community and look down on other sub-castes. Besides being a caste-based society, the Gaddis are patriarchal and patrilineal. They have village exogamy, and descent is in the male line. if we observe closely, we can find Gaddi women creating their own space and negotiating with patriarchal norms to move forward toward empowerment.

Women play a central role in the Gaddi lifestyle, providing labour for various livestock, land and household tasks. Within the gigantic livestock

economy of India, women comprise a majority of the available workforce, especially at the rural and household level enterprises (Ramdas & Ghotge, 2006). Women in pastoralism acquire different roles considering the pastoral activities prevalent within their households and communities (Verma & Khadka, 2016). We will see their attitudes and behaviour differences if we observe Gaddi women from Bharmour and Kangra. Women from Bharmour are somewhat more traditional in nature and lack awareness about self. In contrast, due to urbanisation and tourism, women in Kangra are exposed to the idea of financial stability and, hence, are more independent and aware of the concept of self. In recent years, the community has witnessed many changes and diversity in their modes of living, level of education, family structure and mobility. Many youths migrate to different places or cities for better education and job opportunities. There are barely any people in the valley who are not taking up different jobs and are limited to traditional sheep-herding. Moreover, due to the large-scale migration of men, women took on many responsibilities of running the village, including productive and exchange activities. Apart from the requirements of hard work brought about by environmental conditions, the migration of men has put an excessive burden of work on the hill women (Channa 2013: 215). This paved the way for women and young girls to negotiate their space in the patriarchal family structure. Despite the progress, many families still practice the older structure of land or property inheritance, caste endogamy practice in the marriage system, sacrificing sheep on every good occasion, etc. Manjari Mehta (1996:181), in her work concerning the women of the Himalayan region, commented that 'while certain activities in the domestic and agricultural realms were designated as strictly "male" or "female", in the days when there were few local or non-local employment opportunities available, men assisted their womenfolk in a variety of tasks. Thus, it is not 'tradition'. Still, the transformation brought about by a variety of factors, such as overexploitation of the forest resources, degradation of the hill environment by industrial and state activities, and the pull factors of job opportunities on the plains, have resulted in a disproportionate burden of work on the women (Channa 2013: 216). If we view Gaddi women from the lens of legal and political rights, employment opportunities etc., they lack high status (Bhasin 2007:3). The conceptual framework to analyse women's status or agency comprises the seven roles women play in life and work: parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community and as an individual (Bhasin 2007: 4)

Methodology and Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted in two Gaddi villages in Himachal Pradesh, namely Ther in Khaniyara valley in the district of Kangra and Gosan in Bharmour in the district of Chamba. Fieldwork was conducted in three stages in 2019 and 2021 at different time intervals. The study includes women informants from different categories of age, marital status and occupation. A purposeful sampling method was used, and research participants were identified

based on their availability and consent. They were informed about the research objectives, and those willing to contribute and consent were considered for the interview. A total of 48 interviews were conducted; the age range was 18 to 90.

All women were interviewed twice with a gap of two months. The first interview was done to establish rapport with them, to get to know them better and to understand their daily life routine, and the second was after spending two months learning about them. The second interview focused on an in-depth discussion about their natal house, relationship with their husband, in-laws, children and other affinal kins. It also focused on their status in the family by asking questions related to decision-making agency, their socialisation process, involvement in politics and agency in family planning. Each interview was conducted for 45 to 90 minutes, and the discussion medium was Hindi and written in English. Participant observation was undertaken with the community's women throughout the three intervals of the fieldwork. Focus group discussion was done with the women gathered for the monthly 'Mahila' meeting. During Focus group discussions, they discuss all kinds of decisions they make during the absence of their husband and other male kin. They also discuss how social norms influence their choices. During the discussion, they also reflect on their ideas on how they want their daughter to grow up in future and what makes a woman a 'good woman.'

Findings and Discussion

Women's role in the Gaddi family and society

According to the community men, Gaddi women are the backbone of their family structure and community. Women are valued for their hard physical labour and affection for the family. In Himalayan society, a woman plays an important role not only in farming activities but in the well-being and survival of her family, along with the management of natural resources depends on her. Girls are socialised to take care of their family first and put themselves last from an early age. They learn various household works such as cleaning, washing, cooking, bringing water, herding and taking care of sheep, goats or cattle etc., at a very early age. Moreover, if they have agricultural land, then take care of seasonal manure and seeds to the field, harvesting etc.

Traditionally, marriage was seen as a meaningful ceremony that used to provide her with the real meaning of existence. Maintenance of the family and societal values is her responsibility as a woman. Mothers-in-law usually take charge of households works such as taking care of the hearth, looking after children and domesticating animals. Older women tend to practice their power and authority on younger women. Hearth or Chulha plays a vital role in almost every Gaddi household. In private spaces, women practice their hierarchy through the hearth. The ranking around the hearth was and still is arranged according to gender and age. If it is a joint family with a standard

hearth, the mother-in-law will be on the top of the hierarchy and the then-wife of the elder son and then younger sons. Sometimes the ranking arrangement depends on who gives birth to the male child. Daughters-in-law who give birth to boys have mostly held the higher position in hearth-related order or to women whose husbands earn more and contribute more to household purchases.

As per the Hindu Succession Act 1956, daughters now have equal rights on parental properties. However, Gaddis believes that the land should go to their sons. They think sons take the family forward as they are the *family's Vansh (lineage)*. The old traditional laws dictate that sons inherit the property of their parents, while daughters inherit only moveable items. One Gaddi men remark,

"*During daughter's weddings, we give gifts to her and her in-laws, which is more than sufficient. We do not have a problem giving the land if she claims her right, but what kind of woman wants her brother's shares of land? If she does that, she is not a good daughter or sister and can never be a good daughter-in-law. We failed to raise her good and give her good values.*"

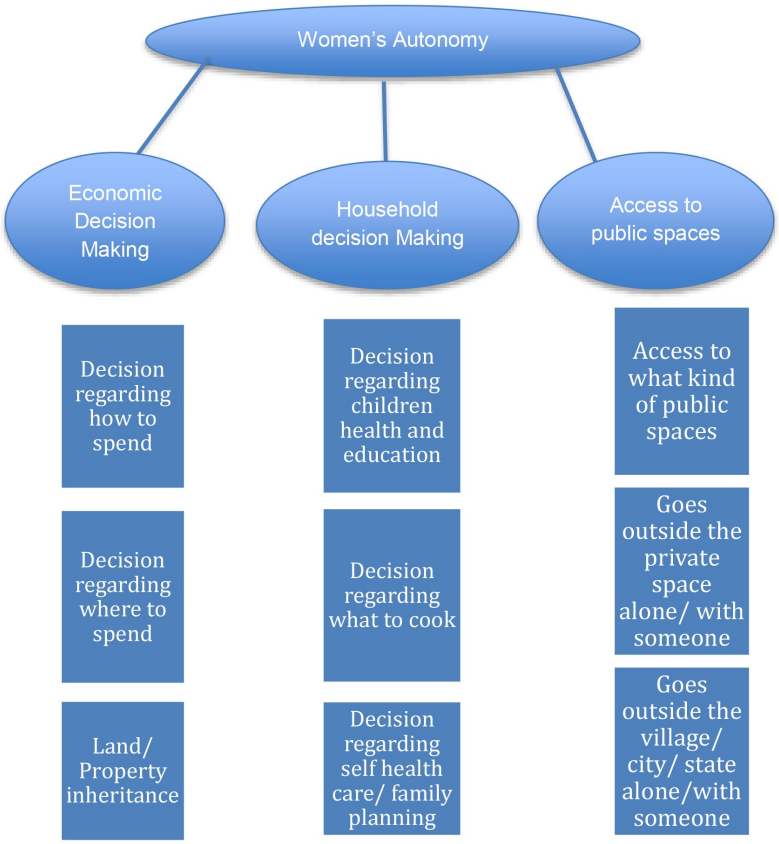
Dowry and gift exchange systems were absent among Gaddi until they encountered other communities; the exchange of gift systems entered the community and was practised in a mild-mannered way. The bride's family gives clothes, sometimes jewellery, to the in-laws, and a few household necessities such as cupboard, bed, utensils and clothes to their daughter/ bride. Groom's parents provide jewellery and clothes to the bride and her relatives. *Mangtika* (head accessory) and *naakbali* (Nath) are given to the bride by the groom's side. This two-silver-made jewellery plays a vital role in the wedding.

Women's Autonomy and its dimensions

Autonomy is the capacity to manipulate one's environment through control over resources and information to make decisions about one's concerns or close family members Responsibilities related to activities in private space, looking after family, and kinship defines Gaddi women's identity. Her self, roles, rights and obligations are strongly connected to household structure and their relationships with affinal and natal kin. The kinship system among Gaddis is patrilineal, and women are transferred between patrilines at the time of marriage and live with their husband's families. Women are not considered part of their natal home because they become part of their husband's families after marriage. The rank of authority in the household is governed by age and sex, and it applies to both men and women. Older people practice their power and authority over younger men and women, and older women practice their control over more youthful women. More aged and young women have the lowest position in the family and societal hierarchy.

Gaddi women have close ties to their parents and siblings even after marriage, indicating the extent of women's autonomy. In the Gaddi community,

women still share a strong bond with the natal family. She depends on her natal kin for both material and emotional support, and the natal family understand their needs and desire and take care of her. Gaddi women's close relation to her natal kin after marriage reflects the Autonomy she enjoys in society. Also, if women are treated well by the natal family, they tend to be treated right by their in-laws. They know her natal family will intervene if she is not treated right. A good relationship with her natal kin also impacts her health and children. They provide the constant required support needed. The nature of a woman's relationship with both her affinal and natal kin is seen as an essential consideration in an investigation of women's autonomy. There are different dimensions of women's autonomy, such as



1) **Movement in public spaces:** This aspect talks about how much autonomy women enjoy regarding their freedom regarding their activity. Whether they have the freedom to take up jobs outside the house, if she is working outside, whether they are allowed to work till late, is she always escorted by any male member whenever she goes

out? Whether they are allowed to go alone to the market, to the field, to their natal kin, to the health centre, to the next village, or outside the city.

2) **Economic Autonomy:** Gaddi women carry out all types of work in both private and public spaces. Their hard work is the demand of their agro-pastoral mix lifestyle. Many women from Kangra valley and household workers, such as looking after the house, children and domesticated animals, work outside for financial stability. They take up jobs as Aganwadi workers, Asha behenji, Nurses, school teachers, handicrafts, traditional accessories making and other government jobs. Some are involved in politics and play a vital role in uplifting their village and wards. If they have agricultural land, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, threshing, and collecting wood for fuel are also part of their routine. Their role is needed and appreciated in economic and non-economic, and no-wage work activities are equally important.

3) **land inheritance:** Many women and young girls spend some time on their agricultural land. However, financially stable Gaddi families hire women and girls from lower strata to work on their land. These women are primarily low-wage workers, and they always bring young girls to assist them with the work, making them no-wage workers and creating intrusion in their studies. The Gaddi community follows patriarchal rules according to which the land passes from father to son. Ownership of material property is also passed on from father to son. Land legal papers are continuously registered in the name of the male head of the household. Hence, men in society are considered the owner of the production, while women own nothing. Moreover, this makes them dependent on men.

4) **Decision-making power**: (i)Economic Decision: Autonomy of economic decision-making in women's control over the decision process related to domestic financial matters with a husband or other male kin members of the family. If she has control over resources and has to say in daily household purchases, how to spend money, and how much to spend on everyday household items. It reflects her economic stability and agency over the financial affair. Some women are employed and financially stable. They use their agency and economic power to make all financial decisions without male assistance.

   (ii) Household Decision making: Autonomy of women regarding household decision-making refers to women's ability to participate in decision-making on domestic affairs such as the welfare of children, education of children, their everyday needs, own health care and family planning. Her liberty to make decisions in such affairs improve her self-esteem and give her confidence, a feeling of respect and good status

in the family. Due to their financial stability and autonomy over financial matters, Gaddi women help her decide household affairs without being dependent on their husbands or male kin.

Women's Position and Autonomy

Age is a factor in the life cycle that affects a woman's position in the family. According to Gaddi tradition, the daughter-in-law is responsible for the household work, but the mother-in-law has the authority to decide the family matters. The research revealed that the Autonomy of older women and their husbands are high, but older women have distributed agency. The spousal age difference is common in India. My research indicates that a woman younger than her husband has less say in the decision-making as her socialisation is done in a way that tells her to respect her husband and obey him. However, women can be seen taking decisions in the absence of their husbands.

Education attainment is the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society. The husband's education is also essential to understand the wife's needs, involve the wife in decision-making, and give freedom of choice along with the movement. Furthermore, education is a powerful instrument for acquiring new values and, consequently, for modifying one's relationship with other human beings and the environment. This study reflects that women with a higher level of education have more involvement in economic and household decision-making compared to less educated women. Interestingly, women from Kangra have more Autonomy than women from Bharmour.

Exposure to media is a medium through which a woman could obtain knowledge/awareness/ information outside the school and colleges. Women in both Kangra and Bharmour have access to various forms of media. They use various kinds of social media platforms to express themselves. Some self-help group women also use these platforms to sell traditional accessories through social media platforms. Exposure to media also keeps them connected with their family and friends all the time. Due to this exposure, women are more aware of their power and agency usage and practice autonomy in educational, household and movement-related decision-making.

Access to resources is, to a large extent, predetermined by availability to the family. To understand this part of the research, I asked questions such as whether a woman can purchase her clothes and whether she gives her opinion on household finances. Decision-making within the household is another critical aspect of participation and power-sharing between household members. At one extreme are women who do not have any say even in the most trivial of decisions, such as the choice of what to cook, and at the other end are women who make most decisions in the household. Decision-making ability is influenced by household living arrangements, the presence of the

husband in the family, a mother-in-law or other affinal kin, and by life cycle situations, such as whether a woman is a new bride or a senior woman with grown-up children. Gaddi women are more likely to make decisions related to children and within the home rather than decisions in the public space, especially those involving money matters in Bharmour. The situation is quite the opposite in Kangra, and women tend to decide in public and private spaces, primarily due to the absence of men.

Economic independence is an essential aspect of Autonomy. Gaddi women are involved in various kinds of paid and low-wage work. Working outside not only helps them earn some money but also helps them to feel good about themselves. They believe that they do not need the assistance of a male member to support them since she has control over their income. Very few women in Kangra are entirely dependent on their husbands. They have taken up jobs such as Aganbadi workers, Nurses, teaching, and other government jobs. Some women work on agricultural land, and some are into business with their husbands.

Loss of land after their shift to the lower-altitude villages in Kangra has led the women to intensify their traditional knitting, weaving and accessories making. These women form a group in their town which work similarly to a self-help group. In these self-help groups, women sometimes gather at someplace or in somebody's house, making traditional accessories and selling them within the community. They are connected to various Gaddi women who migrated out with their husbands to different cities through networking. These women are involved in traditional weaving or accessory making, selling them to earn money through electronic payment platforms. They are in contact with many Gaddi women through social media platforms, and they all make and sell things through this platform. Due to this activity, they not only get a chance to interact with each other but also get an opportunity to keep themselves aware and updated on current issues.

In Bharmour, most women think it is the men's job to earn money and look after the family. According to them, men should earn enough to care for their wives and children. Women are barely seen doing work outside the house. However, some women have worked as a teacher etc. When I interviewed female teachers in Bharmous to ask them why they took the job, most replied that they had too much time and did not like wasting time, so they took the jobs. They feel that this also kills their time and gets some money. Some girls in Bharmour revealed that they want to study more and take up jobs in different cities, but their family thinks that they should get married and settle first and then do whatever their husband decides. I interviewed a few males in Bharmour and wanted to understand their opinion on women's independence, and they said if women want to work, they can but who will look after the household and children? If she can manage both, she can go out and work. While others said, "*they can earn but not before marriage because too difficult to find a suitable groom for*

financially independent girls." They believe their daughters should study as much as possible and then get married. After that, they can do anything if their husbands allow it. During the interview in Kangra, many women with daughters told me during the interview that their daughter wants to study more and have a job first before marriage. Many women said their daughters oppose the wedding offers because they believe education and employment are essential to them before marrying someone. I interviewed some men in Kangra and got mixed reactions from them. Some of them agreed that women should financially establish themselves before marriage just in case something occurs, like the sudden death of a spouse. Some said they should get married on time, discuss these matters with their husbands, and do whatever they decide together.

The following important area of women's position is the relationship of fear of husbands or other male affinal kin and domestic violence. I put questions in front of them, such as whether they were ever beaten ever or beaten regularly or whether they disagreed with their husband. In this most sensitive of areas may lie a sensitive indicator of the inequality or the degree of repression of women and deference to men they are living with and dependent on. Most women revealed during the interview that they are not afraid to disagree with their husbands or other affinal older men. Still, they do not conflict with them out of respect. During the interview, women said they are socialised to learn to agree with their husbands and respect them to become excellent supporting wives. They added that their husbands never raised their hands or shouted at them because they were good wives and kept them happy by supporting their decisions.

Lastly comes the dimension of communication between spouses. Elsewhere it has been argued that this is a critical aspect of the relationship between the genders. During the interview, I asked women questions such as whether they can talk about anything to their spouse, feel emotionally attached to them, or discuss family planning with their spouse without hesitation. They said they feel closer to their natal family, but in their in-law's house, they can only depend on their spouse. Most young couples hesitate to discuss or talk about anything with each other during the initial period of their marriage. Still, over the period, facing the ups and downs of life together, they grow fond of each other, depend on each other and discuss every matter together to make their life better. Among Gaddis, it is a saying that a happy married life is significant to dealing with any life problems. A happily married mam takes care of his wife and children and does good in life. Moreover, keeping the man of the house happy is his wife's responsibility. In the Gaddi community, communication is quite good between the married spouse. They seem to participate in various activities, spend quality time together and dance at cultural events.

Differences in Bharmour and Kangra

While comparing the collected data from both areas, variation was

visible in various aspects of Autonomy in both communities. To understand autonomy, I used factors such as access to resources, freedom of mobility, decision-making, economic Autonomy, fear of husband and communication with a spouse. Kangra is most of these aspects reflected that woman there has more agency than women of Bharmour. The area and people of Kangra are more developed due to Urbanization and the influence of tourism. Mobility is highest in Kangra, where women can go out more. Mobility is comparatively low in Bharmour. The division of labour is apparent in Bharmour. Women take care of the private space, and men work in the public space.

Though women can be seen in temples or mountains for collecting wood or herding sheep, to travel outside the city or state, they are sometimes companies by men. The system of covering the head can be observed too. Women's mobility is associated with their participation in life outside the home. It strongly indicates their freedom to access essential places and spheres otherwise restricted and outside their reach or control. Thus, women in Kangra are at an advantage in this critical sphere. Access to resources follows quite a similar pattern to decision-making, but women in Kangra have the most significant key to resources. Men from kangra are usually busy with work or employed outside the village, giving women more authority to make transactions. Access to resources is mediocre Bharmour area, much along the lines of mobility and decision-making.

To some extent, the pattern is identical to decision-making. Women in Kangra, her position is probably higher because of the absence of men, leaving women to make decisions or at least make more decisions in their absence purely for practical reasons. Decision-making in financial decisions, such as purchasing household goods and livestock, is highest in Kangra. Still, it is slightly low in decisions within the household, such as spending money on children's education and marriage. In Bharmour, women make decisions regarding purchasing kitchen goods, but children's education and marriage depend on men.

Perception of economic Autonomy is most certainly the highest among women in Kangra, especially those who are financially independent. In the Kangra region, the participation of women in formal and informal jobs is the highest. Tourism in Kangra has provided lots of employment opportunities. The agricultural land, where women are substituting men, can be seen though they sometimes receive minimum or no wage. In Bharmour, women with stable financial conditions look after the family, and poor women work in the lands of Brahmin Gaddi on a low wage or no wage.

Fear from a partner is absent in the Gaddi community. Women are respected for their household duties and contribution to the community. Women and men are often seen working together and participating in cultural events. Communication between spouses is another dimension of women's Autonomy

in their ability to express themselves freely with their spouses. Communication seems much more accessible and more intimate in Bharmour than in Kangra. This is probably because of the frequent absence of spouses in Kangra.

Conclusion

The current paper explores the area to see what constitutes women's Autonomy in Kangra and Bharmour's rural settings. Gendering at the village level is a significant predictor of women's Autonomy. Factors such as exposure to urban influence and communication channels, which also operate at the community level, are as important as women's Autonomy. Since they can also bring modern influence to bear on the gender system. We discuss different activities done by women or given to women in the absence of men. There is a difference between women doing men's work and women being recognised as responsible for specific tasks. Women in both Kangra and Bharmour are involved in lots of work, both in public and private spaces, which requires hard labour. The power delegated to women is seen as proxy power. It is not seen as legitimate but seen as temporary. All this hard work in different spheres of society does not give them any absolute control or agency in full. All these works are seen as the responsibility of women in the absence of men who hold the real power.

The men's activity defines the community (Channa 2013: 217). Despite controlling the village domain, women are seen as subordinate, as pastoralism is a male domain. Pastoralism is identified with men but sustained by women. Gaddi women not only engaged in subsistence activities essential for survival but also reproduced the social relationships that substantiated the community. What gives women agency is the total separation of their sphere of activities from that of men, enjoying power and position. (Not given or transferred by men in their absence). Gaddi men respect their women and appreciate the hard work done by them.

Sometimes, they accept women's legitimate control over the village's affairs. Therefore, women make decisions over various matters only in the absence of men who have gone outside the state for various other opportunities; hence the agency given to them is temporary and not inherent. Anthropological literature that has generated the concept of the public and private space (separate space for men and women) does not always fit into the western model of public and private. Thus, women are visible in local markets, agriculture fields, pilgrim centers, tourism etc. These all fall within the women's domain for the gaddi women as they are within their concept of habitation and not the wild. Women's work and skills are as old as humankind, but they are underpaid and subordinate to men's. This dualist human development approach needs to be addressed to gain gender equality. Their contribution to the family and society needs to be valued, their voice needs to be heard, and changes need to be made in their livelihood, health and education to solve the gender disparity.

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Mehboobun Nahar Milky

LONELINESS AND CAREGIVING: EXPERIENCE OF LONELINESS AMONG FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF CANCER PATIENTS

Abstract

Cancer diagnosis and its treatments have a profound impact on cancer patients' families in multiple ways. Caring for a family member diagnosed with cancer is a complex, extensive and arduous task that makes a caregiver vulnerable to psychological distress. This study aims to gain insights into the aspects of loneliness incurred while caring for a cancer patient within the family. Though several studies have been conducted to understand psychosocial distress among caregivers but in the context of Indian populace, it has not been well explored. In-depth and semi-structured interviews with eight caregivers of cancer patients were conducted in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Three major themes were identified: perception and tasks of caregiving, feelings of loneliness, and enduring illness. Findings from this study offer an account of the participants' perceptions of loneliness and its consequences among the caregivers of cancer patients, and their strategy to gain resilience towards it. Caregivers' experiences of loneliness often contributed to adverse effects on their emotional, social, and physical wellbeing. The unique individual experiences of cancer caregivers require an in-depth understanding of how caregiving is subjective and how loneliness affects the wellbeing of both caregivers and patients diagnosed with cancer.

Keywords: *Cancer, Caregivers, Caregiving, Coping, Loneliness*

Introduction

Today's estimates of cancer are alarming: as per the estimate, every year more than 12 million people throughout the world are diagnosed with cancer (Hesketh, 2013; Jemal, Torre, Soerjomataram, & Bray, 2019). Recent statistics of cancer incidences and mortality indicates that around 9.6 million cancer deaths and new cases of cancer amounting to more than 18.1 million worldwide were reported in 2018 (Jemal, Torre, Soerjomataram, & Bray, 2019). In the Indian context, studies show that the cancer estimates for the country are disconcerting and it is viewed as one of the primary reasons behind

MEHBOOBUN NAHAR MILKY, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Science Education and Research, HBNI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, Email id: mehboobun.milky@niser.ac.in

premature deaths (Murthy, Chaudhry, & Rath, 2008; National Cancer Registry Programme, 2013; Jemal, Torre, Soerjomataram, & Bray, 2019). According to Jain (2018), there are approximately 2.25 million people with cancer in India, and every year there is an addition of about 700000 new registered cases. Takiar, Nadayil, & Nandakumar (2010) points out that more than 80% of cancer cases in the country are in advanced stages, and palliative care is essential towards improving their quality of life and family members of the patients play a vital role in providing care. Ferlay et al., (2013) has estimated that the total number of individuals in requirement of palliative care in India is about 5.4 million per year.

A diagnosis of cancer, and the associated threats of mortality often affect one's life (Willams, 1984). For not just the patients, but their caregivers[1] as well, cancer is an experience that can be seen as life-changing, which alters their life course forever. Though cancer happens to individuals, it affects many others since an individual is not an island onto himself/ herself; the individual is a part of a family and a society. Thus, cancer alters the lives of a set of people and not just the patient, forever.

It is pertinent to note that the moment of diagnosis is the beginning of an endless ordeal and a struggle for survival for both the cancer patient and the caregiver. At first, the focus is to survive the difficult disease and the gruelling treatment regime. And after the treatment period is over, the attempt is to accept the 'new normal' and adapt accordingly (Alfano & Rowland, 2009, p. 425). It is not just adverse physical effects, the cancer patients as well their families often go through financial stress and psychological issues such as depression, loneliness and post-traumatic symptoms (Tesauro, Rowland, & Lustig, 2002). Cancer and its treatment impact both the quality of life and relationships, both familial and societal (Northouse, Mood, Templin, Mellon, & George, 2000; Mellon, Northouse, & Weiss, 2006; Morris, Grant, & Lynch, 2007; Wagner, Das, Bigatti, & Storniolo, 2011).

An instance of how cancer's impact is found not just on the patient, but the caregiver as well can be found in a study by Edwards and Clarke (2004) which stated that the patients and their family caregivers undergo similar levels of anxiety and depression. In fact, a qualitative study by Mellon (2002) found that it is the caregivers who fear the recurrence of cancer more than the patients themselves, underlying how caregivers may be even more traumatized than the patients, at times. Physical sequelae of cancer does not remain confined to the patient, as the caregivers face physical and psychological impacts, as they too experience fatigue, physical and emotional burden, change in their normative roles, etc. (Jensen & Given, 1993; Wagner, Das, Bigatti, & Storniolo, 2011). A study by Jensen & Given (1993) conducted on 248 caregivers found that varied levels of fatigue were experienced by all of them, with a significant number showing signs of severe fatigue.

Moreover, cancer caregivers are often found grappling with depression, health issues, and future uncertainties (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2008). To compound the matters, it is found that such physical and socio-psychological issues continue long after the treatment. A qualitative study by Hodgkinson and colleagues on cancer survivors found that there were several unmet needs even after the cancer treatment had ended (Hodgkinson, Butow, Hobbs, & Wain, 2007). Sometimes, the caregiving process can be so difficult as to elicit serious considerations of morbidity and may even contribute to mortality (Schulz & Beach, 1999).

Cancer diagnosis is a major turning point in a person's life where the normalcy of the life that he/she led till then is severely disrupted. Hardly does one find oneself prepared to face this sudden and irreversible disruption. And it is not just the cancer patient, the life of the caregiver too is adversely impacted with regards to their social and personal relationships as well as work schedule, due to the stressful and time-consuming nature of caring for a critically ill person (Rokach & Sha'ked, 2013). This usually leads to manifestation of psychosocial issues for the caregivers, such as loneliness (Rainer & McMurry, 2002).

Loneliness is a universal experience irrespective of one's gender, race, age, social or economic status, and it is something that may either be for a specific period or be felt persistently (Rokach & Sha'ked, 2013). Loneliness is defined as "the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively" (Perlman & Peplau, 1981, p. 31). Weiss (1973) proposes two kinds of loneliness based on the type of social deficit, i.e., emotional loneliness and social loneliness. An absence of intimate relationships results in emotional loneliness, and social loneliness occurs when one is unable to integrate adequately with the social network such as in the work place, neighbourhood, friends, community, etc. There are studies which indicate that lonely people are more prone to facing financial stress, lack of friends and even domestic violence (Rokach & Sha'ked, 2013). In comparison to other people, lonely individuals tend to be more self-absorbed and find it difficult to connect with others effectively in a social set up, often destroying one's relationships (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). One's cognitive features such as attention span, logical thinking, memory, etc. may get negatively affected by loneliness (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009) and this may result in serious psychological issues such as depression and unhealthy self-deprecation. (Rubenstein & Shaver, 1982). According to Theeke (2009), acute and continued loneliness may result in poor health, sleep disorders, hypertension, lack of intimacy in conjugal relationships, psychological distress and may even lead to dementia.

Though there exists some research on the kind of effects that caregiving has on the physical and mental health of the caregivers, much of the research on caregiving, however, is focused on two issues, i.e., stress and coping

strategies (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Pearlin, Mullan, Semple, & Skaff, 1990). As per the existing research, family caregivers, especially elderly spouses, are the most affected by caregiving in terms of their physical and mental health issues (Ostwald, 2009). The study by Schulz and Beach (1999) identified the severity of the risk of a hastened death for the older spouse caregivers when compared to the others of the same age. This in no way should be construed as the lack of risk for non-elderly family caregivers; it's just that the severity is much greater for the elderly, and it is instructive to note that the overall context in which caregiving is done, contributes majorly to such a situation. The study of Schulz, et al., (1997) identified a few major factors in the increased level of stress among family caregivers. According to them, if the caregiver and the patient shared a close and intimate relationship before the diagnosis, then that would put greater stress on the caregiver in the process of caregiving. Moreover, if the patient's level of dependency on the caregiver is greater, greater would be the stress on the caregiver as well. A lack of social support is another contributing factor in increased levels of stress on the caregiver. All of this contribute towards a sense of acute helplessness and results in profound loneliness in the caregiver. The fact that almost all of the family caregivers are non-professional carers, who learn on the job the different aspects of caregiving, such as assisting the patient in his/ her daily chores, ensuring proper prescribed medication is done on time, dealing with possible side-effects, etc., makes their job a stressful and lonely affair. Lack of confidence in how well they are able to carry out their duty makes them feel a sense of guilt as well, and the fact that they rarely get to share these uncertainties and intimate problems with others, makes them more self-absorbed and that too has an adverse impact on their mental wellbeing, generating in them feelings of sadness, frustration and helplessness (Ojeda, et al., 2014). The study by Ekwall et al. (2005) highlighted the aspect of social exclusion experienced by family caregivers. They stressed on the fact that this kind of social isolation, often an involuntary one, contributes greatly to their loneliness.

It can be surmised from the existing research on caregiving and its impact on the caregivers that most of the family caregivers experience feelings of burden, sadness, helplessness, a sense of guilt, lack of social engagement, and all this results in them becoming more self-absorbed, which makes their sense of loneliness a more acutely felt experience. Lack of social support or the perceived lack of it has been identified by many researchers as a major contributing factor to the caregivers' sense of distress (Goldstein, Atkins, Landau, Brown, & Leigh, 2006), their lack of happiness in conjugal relationship (O'connor, McCabe, & Firth, 2008) and the much-compromised quality of life (Chiò, et al., 2004). This lack of social support often tends to be an almost irreversible phenomenon as the caregivers, even if they do their best, fail to reconnect with their old acquaintances and relatives, because it is they who stop visiting the family of the cancer patient for fear of being burdened as well (Rokach & Sha'ked, 2013), and hence recuperating from such an ordeal becomes

an extremely arduous task for the caregivers.

Recently, some studies have been undertaken on cancer patients and their caregivers in India. However, only a few of these studies discuss the profound psychosocial impact of cancer on the patients and their family members (Arunachalam, Thirumoorthy, Devi, & Thennarasu, 2011; Chaturvedi, Shenoy, Prasad, Senthilnathan, & Premalath, 1996; Jagannathan & Juvva, 2009; Chawak, Chittem, Butow, & Huilgol, 2020). Goswami & Gupta (2018) observed that, sometimes while providing care to the terminally ill patients in India, the caregivers neglect their own needs leading to their own psychological and financial stress. Their study found that, family caregivers are generally females who are actively involved in the process of care giving, and are the worst sufferers. However, there is a dearth of research on the kind of negative effects that caregiving has on the physical and mental health of the caregivers in India. It is against this backdrop this study is undertaken where I intend to understand how the process of caregiving leads to the feelings of loneliness, its consequences among the participants and the strategies used to cope with loneliness.

Theoretical Framework: Biographical disruption and Loneliness

The theory of biographical disruption, introduced by Michael Bury in 1982, is a seminal concept that tries to encapsulate the catastrophic effect of a diagnosis of chronic illness among individuals. Biographical disruption has been used as both a descriptor and as an explanatory tool to understand how people respond to and adapt to chronic illness. In his work regarding chronic illness, Bury discussed chronic illness as "the kind of experience where the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpins them are disrupted" (Bury, 1982, p. 169). He described three aspects of biographical disruption. First, illness interrupts the body, social roles and the social world through "the disruption of taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours" (Bury, 1982). Second, chronic illness upsets self-identity, affecting one's individual biography (Charmaz, 1983; Charmaz, 1994; Charmaz, 1995). And third, the way in which people react to disruption involves "the mobilisation of resources in facing an altered situation" (Bury, 1982, p. 169). However, biographical disruption has not been explicit in research on caregivers of individuals with chronic illness and on loneliness, the concept resonates with several research findings. By using the aspects of Bury's biographical disruption, research can be reinterpreted to suggest that this might be a helpful concept. Numerous events and alterations in one's life due to the tasks of caregiving can lead to major changes in the structure and functions of everyday life, that may trigger loneliness, which may have the potential to hamper the life course, leaving people searching for personal meaning in order to make sense of the altered situation. Similarly, loneliness can affect one's idea about self, their assumptions of the social world and the social relations they maintain (Cardono, 2010).

Additionally, events such as chronic illness that induces loneliness may compel an individual to make sense of their changed circumstances and reconstruct a biography that reflects present, past and future. Interpretations of research findings above suggests the efficiency of utilising biographical disruption as a lens through which to view loneliness. However, past research has not meticulously used this stance. This article attempts to use the concept of biographical disruption in understanding loneliness among the caregivers while caring for a chronically ill family member and see whether there are incidences of biographical flow or not. This study, with the knowledge about the state of loneliness during a caregiving process for a family member with cancer may elucidate information regarding types of specific interventions that might be beneficial in overcoming loneliness.

Method

Study design

This qualitative enquiry employed an ethnographic approach to explore the varied experiences of loneliness among the family caregivers of patients with cancer. Through ethnography, one can have an understanding about the daily processes, routines and perspectives of the participants resulting in a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) from the participants about the phenomenon under study. Along with observation, interviews were used for collecting data. Face-to-face interviews provided in-depth description where the participants shared their experiences of being a caregiver to a cancer patient in their family. The interviews were semi-structured, where an interview with open ended questions guided the interviewing process. The participants chose the time and location for the interview and the average duration for each interview was about 70 minutes. The study was carried out in Kolkata, West Bengal. During the interview, empathic probing was used to elicit the participants to provide a clear version of their experiences. The entire interview was transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

Participants

The participants were selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: a) family member who is considered by the patient as most involved with her/his care, b) patient has to be 18 years or older and currently undergoing treatment, c) ability to interact in Bangla, Hindi or English, d) consent and willingness to participate in the study. A total of eight participants were recruited in the study of which seven were male and one female. The participants were Bengali, yet culturally diverse, geographically scattered from both urban and rural settings with varying socio-economic status. The average age of the participants was 41.6 years. Two participants were caring for patients with breast cancer, two with oral cancer, one each

with prostate, abdominal, liver and stomach. The time since the diagnosis of the cancer for the patients ranged from two years to ten years.

Data Analysis

After repeated reading, an extensive understanding of the interview statements was obtained. The interview contents were transcribed verbatim to acquire insider's perspectives about the experiences of family caregivers of cancer patients. The transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis. Line-by-line review of codes within the transcripts were done. The meaning of each statement was analysed and the analysis of similarities and differences within the transcript codes were done. The similarities were organised and summarised from the meanings to develop category themes. The rigor of the qualitative data analysis was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data and the use of memo developed during the iterative analytic process. The codes were also discussed with peers, who had experience in qualitative analysis, to ensure validity. The results shown are based on this iterative process.

Results

The results of this study are discussed through three themes: perception and tasks of caregiving, feelings of loneliness, and enduring loneliness. Several subthemes were identified amongst these themes, which are as follows:

1. Perception and Tasks of caregiving: caregiving as responsibility/ duty, various tasks of caregiving
2. Feelings of Loneliness: overwhelmed with care work, disconnected, lack of guidance, poor understanding by close people, reduced private space, declining social relations, helplessness and powerlessness
3. Enduring loneliness: acceptance of reality, futility in fighting, optimistic thinking, understanding relationship, spirituality

Theme 1: Perception and tasks of caregiving

Caring as responsibility / duty: Caring for a cancer patient within the family is difficult. For most of the participants, whether spouse, child or sibling, caregiving for a cancer patient was about doing everything possible to prolong the patient's life and ease their condition. A few participants who were overwhelmed by the tasks of caring considered it as a 'responsibility' or a 'duty' towards the patient that comes with the relationship that they share. Spouses viewed marriage as encompassing of one's carer role, an expected part of their relationship, whether a mutual understanding or a religious obligation. Likewise, many children with a cancer parent considered it as an expected responsibility towards their parent. K3 said-

> I am the only son of my parents… my father's treatment, his care is mine… my father's responsibility is upon me.

Various Tasks of Caregiving: From the transcripts, it was clearly understood that the participants were often struggling with life while performing care work. Care work involved various tasks of caring such as activities of daily life, household chores, symptom management, finances and needs of other members of the family. Cancer work influenced other day-to-day activities, asking for more efforts in accomplishment of those works.

> I have to manage everything - my life as well as taking care of everyone, my father, mother and sister… I have to balance both the household and other works. (K5)

> I manage everything, from cooking, cleaning, shopping and my business as well. Initially it was difficult, but now, over the time, I have learnt how to manage. I can manage now. (K6)

Theme 2: Feelings of loneliness

This theme describes the perceived circumstances leading to the feeling of loneliness among the family caregivers of the cancer patients. In the following section, this theme is divided into several sub themes.

Overwhelmed with care work: This subtheme focuses on the aspects that a caregiver has to face on a daily basis while caring for a cancer patient and how it contributes to their loneliness. Generally, the major task of caring involves attending to the symptoms and treatment related issues, which is often considered as unending, difficult and stressful by most of the participants. The extreme difficulties involved in carefully attending to the various physical ailments faced by the patient become an arduous task, especially in the initial days of care when one is not used to the process. With time, even though the carers get used to the process, it still takes a heavy toll on their own physical and mental conditions, as it takes up a huge chunk of time disrupting their daily routine.

> When you have someone like this at home, you have to care for them round the clock… there is no rest; forget about rest, I don't remember when was the last time that I had proper peaceful sleep. I have to clean the overnight-accumulated pus from his mouth. It's so smelly, like something is rotting inside, or perhaps worse than that, and it takes time… lots of time; I do it very slowly. I have to wipe it clean and then, there is blood. Blood oozes out from there [orifice]. Taking care of him is very difficult, I have to be careful. (K3)

Apart from managing the symptoms, the participants have undertaken various other tasks on a daily basis. These tasks were regarded as hard,

strenuous and demanding. Many participants took care of household work and the needs of other family members.

> I have to look after everything... I have to balance both the household and other works majorly. (K6)

> I manage everything; cooking, cleaning, shopping and my business as well. Initially, it is difficult; I have learnt how to handle it. But frankly saying, I get too tired after all this. It's tough. (K4)

Disconnected: The task of caregiving has affected other facets of the participants' life. Participants pursuing formal education have to face greater difficulties while tending their ailing parent. A few of them have to drop their education in order to efficiently provide care, especially in those cases where the concerned parent was the sole earning member in the family and used to manage the household.

> Before this, my life was good, it was as perfect as one can dream of… I was studying, focusing on getting a job, my father was managing the house hold and the farm, but now everything is gone. I have to leave my education so that I can sustain our family and take care of my father. (K3)

Lack of guidance: All the caregivers participating in this study described how caring for a cancer patient is difficult and tasking and how it could have been easier it someone was available to help them out. A few participants mentioned about the need of guidance while caring for a family member diagnosed with cancer at some point of time. K1 said:

> I was hoping if someone could show me physically how to do it, then it would have been easier or perhaps someone could do it … Once I have hurt her unknowingly while dressing her wound… it is when I feel most lonely and desperately wish someone was there to guide me and help me out.

> I have to change his shirts and towels, he is always leaking from his mouth… clean them… dry them properly in sun, give him a bath, clean his discharges. I have to look after so many other things along with his [father] care and there is no one to help me, no one to guide me and tell me which technique is easier. I have to do it all by myself. (K3)

Poor understanding by close people: A few participants mentioned that they feel lonely when people around them are having difficulties in understanding what the participants are trying to convey and what they are going through.

> I felt lonely and sad when I told my friend that it is difficult for me to go out as I have to be with my father. (K3)

> The feeling of being understood is important when you are going through a crisis like this. (K1)

Reduced private space: Experiences of loneliness among the family caregivers was often seen to be linked with the constraints due to the tasks of caregiving. A few participants discussed about how their daily life was characterised by reduced freedom to have and manage their time and choice of space, by a lack of spontaneity, and with limited scope of being away from concerns. The needs of the patient were the top priority and a constant pre-occupation.

> I don't have time for myself… it's all about her care, either am taking care of her or managing the work. I do feel burdened with all this, but I can't do anything. (K6)

> Sometimes when I am hanging out with friends, I smoke. And now I don't get the time to be with them. (K3)

> A break would be good… sometimes I desperately want a break from all this…where I don't have to wake up early, do the household chores, won't have to worry about anything- her [patient] health, medication or her food… just a bit of time for myself where I can just sleep and relax or perhaps read a book or watch a football match. (K5)

Declining social relations: This subtheme focuses on the experiences of alienation from the relations, whether friendship or kinship ties, that the caregivers maintained earlier. A few participants talked about the losses and deprivations they faced with respect to their close relationships. The rearrangement of these relationships on both practical and emotional state due to their circumstances were sometimes perceived to heighten their loneliness.

> Friends! When you have a situation like this, everyone leaves you, even your relatives. I felt really bad; I was like a son to them and look how they are behaving, just because I need money and some help - that too for my father's treatment! (K3).

> Soon after the diagnosis, our relatives drifted away. They severed all connections with us. We are on our own. (K2)

Helplessness and powerlessness: A few participants discussed loneliness in the context of an overwhelming sense of helplessness when they could get no help from people at the time of need, especially when they faced a difficult situation which was not easy to manage on their own. On these occasions, loneliness was marked by a feeling of powerlessness where the caregivers felt they neither had control over their situation nor did they know how to deal with it efficiently. This absence of help and support from others during a time of need / crisis made them perceive their caregiving role as a solitary activity

where one had to fend for oneself, and this perception coming out of their lived experience led them to a feeling of profound loneliness.

> There are so many things where I can use a bit of help, but unfortunately, we don't have any scope of that. (K4)

> I was hoping if someone could show me physically how to do it; it would be easier or perhaps someone could do it, anyone! Things are getting worse day by day. I have to manage everything on my own. I feel so helpless! (K1)

This kind of lack of help from anyone made the caregivers feel solely responsible in carrying out their duty, and the enormity of this responsibility accompanied by the feeling of loneliness weighed heavily on their shoulders. For many of them, it was not even a matter of someone else sharing their responsibility, but even a semblance of help, however symbolic in nature, may not have physically eased their burden, but at least made them feel that they were not alone, and this would have gone a long way in assuaging their sense of helplessness and loneliness. Additionally, the thought about losing their loved ones due to untimely death has heightened the feelings of loneliness and helplessness among the a few participants

> I am at the brink of losing everything. She [patient] is here, but just in flesh and blood. Then after a few months, I will be completely alone, with no one beside me. I will be stuck in my house, waiting for each day to pass and yes, I have to wait; there is no other option. I would be left behind to suffer. (K5)

Theme 3: Enduring loneliness

This theme focuses on the ways through which the participants are coping with their loneliness. Although they are having a lot of difficulties, they have managed and are managing their situation. In this regard, changing attitudes, optimistic thinking, spirituality and positive relationships have played an important role in them being resilient with their situation.

Acceptance of Reality: Narratives from the participants showed a great deal of acceptance with the situation that they were facing. A few of them mentioned that accepting the reality was difficult initially, but later acceptance of it helped them to deal with it with a bit of ease.

> Let's accept this, sooner the better. We can't do anything else other than that. (K5)

Futility in Fighting: A few even considered it futile to fight with the situation as they felt they lack any sort of control over it. Contrastingly, some of the participants showed courage and were determined to fight their agony as long as they could.

> Whatever I am going through, I will fight it till my last breath, and I will never give up. I will do every possible thing to save us. (K3)

Optimistic Thinking: Some of the participants displayed optimistic thinking related to the diagnosis of the patients. Maintaining optimism with hope for finding a cure helped the caregivers to survive through the difficult phase.

> I wanted to stay positive about all this, and I think one thing is still positive- the diagnosis. I know that her detection is at an early stage; there might be some hope, and if we treat it properly, then we can get rid of it as well. (K1)

Understanding Relationship: Strong and close family bonding also enabled coping with the situation. A few mentioned how an understanding relationship among the family members has helped in managing their otherwise depressing situation.

> It gave me more courage, and seeing her understanding about this and the support she gave me [teary]… till now she has supported me in everything… I have a strong wife, you know (K1)

Spirituality: Apart from these, spirituality played a significant role in helping the participants to cope with the loneliness they were going through. A few participants relied heavily on destiny and fate in order to get along with their situation.

> Whatever is happening is my destiny. Whatever is destined to happen will happen eventually. (K5)

Some of the participants considered their loneliness as punishment from the supreme being.

> I surely did something wrong. What! that I am not aware of; otherwise, why I am being punished! Amidst all this I am alone, and there can't be no greater punishment than losing a loved one and being lonely. This is my punishment for my deeds only, nothing else. (K3)

Most participants believed in the notions of an afterlife, greater good and complete reliance on God, which helped them to look beyond their present suffering and gave meaning to their situation.

> Everything is God's desire. I am just entrusting my life to my 'lord'. He is the caretaker of the world; He has created this situation; hence he will rescue me. (K3)

> By God's mercy everything will turn out okay; I won't agonise about this. and through this my relationship with God has grown. I feel I am closer to Him. (K2)

Discussion

Bury (1982) explored the notions of biographical disruption as a way of understanding the experience of living with chronic illness. This study emphasises that the concept of "biographical disruption" has salience for those caring for family members with cancer and how the tasks of caregiving and induced loneliness can affect the way they see themselves and their sense of self-worth. Loneliness among the family caregivers of cancer patients has received scant attention, and it remains relatively unexplored in existing research on caregiving. Previous studies indicated that there is a decrease in the social network size for most of the patients a (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003). However, the ability to maintain social contact is further constrained among caregivers of individuals with cancer. In addition to this, in order to normalise their disrupted situation, individuals seek to accommodate disruption into their lives by revising their past and future self, where meaning- making is continuous and crucial.

This qualitative study explored how family caregivers experience and perceive loneliness while caring for patients with cancer. Participants' tasks of caregiving and its demanding nature have induced the feelings of loneliness. The findings of this study are discussed through three themes with a few sub themes and these are- perception and tasks of caregiving, feelings of loneliness, and enduring loneliness.

It is important to acknowledge and develop an in-depth understanding of the problem of loneliness among caregivers of individuals with chronic illnesses such as cancer, from their own perspectives. It is then that suitable interventions can be made to attenuate loneliness among the caregivers. However, there is scarce existing literature that addresses this issue in the Indian context, and the current study was undertaken to fill in that gap through in-depth interviews of caregivers, to explore the facets of loneliness among them. The findings of this study corroborate with those of the existing qualitative research on loneliness among caregivers (Dahlberg, 2007; Stanley, et al., 2010; Tiilikainen & Seppänen, 2016), which underline the complex and multi-faceted nature of the loneliness experience among them. The absence of, or strains in their relationships with others, including close relationships, led to a collapse of their sense of belonging and that caused and accentuated the feeling of loneliness among the caregivers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Because caregiving meant complete dedication to the patient's cause on a consistent and daily basis, it left hardly any time for the caregiver to socialize, and this lack of social inclusion and absence of any meaningful social interaction played a part in creating a sense of loneliness among the caregivers (Brambilla & Leach, 2014). These changes due to the task of caregiving disrupts the taken-for- granted beliefs and assumptions the caregivers hold about their relationships with other people. It is not just the lack of social network that was caused due to the tasking nature of caregiving, but the enormous time

demanded by caregiving work for the patient resulted in the caregivers getting very little time for maintaining their own wellbeing. Caring full time for the cancer patient ensured that the caregivers were left with almost no time for their self-care.

Loneliness is caused by the loss of or/and strain in relationships, especially with their significant "others" (Williams, 2007) and this loneliness can be both emotional and social (Weiss, 1973). Moreover, this loneliness is accentuated by a feeling of self-doubt among the participants since many of them happened to have little knowledge of professional caregiving and this often compelled the participants to rethink their biography and self-conception (Bury,1982). The absence of help from others and a feeling of being fully responsible for the patient's caregiving added to their feeling of loneliness. Additionally, one gets a more nuanced understanding of the caregiving process and the associated loneliness when we see it through biographical disruption. The findings show that the biographical disruption largely influenced the affected individuals' behaviour in the changed conditions. The extent of biographical disruption also had significant bearing on the capacity, or lack thereof, of the affected individual to reconstruct their biography in the new circumstances.

The findings from this study suggest that the feelings of loneliness among caregivers can be attenuated, if not fully prevented, if adequate support can be made available for them during the process of caregiving. For instance, risk of social isolation can be reduced if systemic help can be provided to the caregivers so that they could get some respite from the job at hand, or at the very least, awareness can be raised among them to not just focus on the needs of the patients, but to consciously make an effort at finding time for their self-care, which would then assist them to take care of the patients in a more productive and efficient manner (Ashworth & Baker, 2000).

In addition to raising awareness among caregivers, it is important to raise awareness among the general public regarding the important contributions of the caregivers as well as the extremely difficult nature of their job so that instead of the usual stigma attached to the caregiving work in most orthodox societies, there could be the deserved social recognition and appreciation for the caregivers, which will help reduce the risk of social exclusion and hence, the feeling of loneliness among them.

Conclusion

The contributions made by family caregivers have become extremely significant in the contemporary times since the healthcare related to chronic illnesses is showing a marked shift towards home from hospitals (Daar, et al., 2007). Along with cognitive and psychological interventions, one-on-one and group therapy and resilience training are critically needed to address loneliness as a determinant of health among caregivers. This study emphasises the need

for accessibility to meaningful resources such as social support and palliative care that may enhance well-being among cancer caregivers. It is pertinent to have an informed and in-depth understanding of the various issues and challenges faced by the caregivers to be able to provide them with suitable support system, but in the formal and informal settings of hospitals and homes, respectively. This study has highlighted one of the several issues grappling the caregivers, especially family caregivers, i.e., loneliness and pointed out the underlying need to understand its various facets so that appropriate interventions can be made to enhance the general quality of life of the caregivers, and ensure their physical and mental wellbeing.

Notes

1 Cancer patient's significant others are often referred as their caregivers. Caregivers play multiple roles in supporting the cancer patients, in terms of facilitating their treatment and overall wellbeing.

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Yash Goswami

ANALYSIS OF FLOOD MYTHS AMONG GREAT AND LITTLE TRADITIONS

Abstract

Across all cultures folklore has an expression of existence comprising the universal value of collectivity and brotherhood and togetherness. Religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Ancient Greeks and Aztecs and several other tribal groups around the globe have diverse cultural histories. But one mythical story has in common about the great deluge. Although these stories are different in detail of events or in specific plot, the premise remains remarkably the same. The recurring theme of flood and myths of a giant deluge constitute an underlying and important theme in all the classic literature as well as in oral tradition. Even Indian classical writings have evidence of flood myth narratives along with the primitive folkloric traditions, especially in the tribal minorities of central India. It can be seen by interpretation of certain characteristics of mythology that are almost universal and have a wide range of distribution and acceptance in all forms of societies. The purpose of this paper would be focusing specifically on the classical collection of flood myths. There would be an attempt on identifying and analyzing a plurality among classical flood myths by selecting the four flood myths from the perspective of great tradition and little tradition in which two are from great and two are from little traditions. Here I am focusing upon comparing and analyzing the deluge stories from Europe and India. By comparing the folklore stories of Bhil and Kamar deluge as little tradition and from great tradition Hindu and Judeo-Christian deluge. However, the original historical occurrence of events can be observed through the modification and enhancement in the myth from generation to generation.

Keywords: *Folklore, Flood, Myth, Deluge, Noah's Ark*

Introduction

The most live through and universal of the catastrophe myths like flood, fire, drought and plague is associated with flood myth. Its geographical location may differ according to each culture but prevalence indicates that destruction of the world by water is a revolving theme (Birrell, 1997, pp. 213-59). The recurring theme of flood and myths of a giant deluge constitute an

YASH GOSWAMI, Research Scholar, University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University New Delhi, Email – yashgos66@gmail.com

underlying and important topic in all the classic literature as well as in oral tradition. Even Indian classical writings have evidence of flood myth narratives along with the primitive folkloric traditions, especially in the tribal minorities of central India. It can be seen by interpretation of certain characteristics of mythology that are almost universal and have a wide range of distribution and acceptance in all forms of societies. Among all the traditions across the earth there is nothing so general, so correctly to show what can be developed from the same tale according to the different spiritual character of a person as the flood traditional tale (Rehwinkel 1951: 129). The purpose of this paper would be focusing specifically on the classical collection of flood myths. There would be an attempt on identifying and analyzing a plurality among classical flood myths by selecting the four flood myths in which two are from great traditions and two are from little traditions. By comparing the folklore stories of both India and Europe it is found that India is a leading country in folklore stories among Asian countries. In the context of pan Indian folklore it has the characteristic of multiplicity and can be questionable. Concluding remarks would be made by the finding of the comparative analysis at the last of the paper.

Theoretical Framework

Little tradition and great tradition are sort of a conceptual approach that helps in the study of social change in deluge myths across different cultures throughout the world. This conceptual framework was created by Robert Redfield while studying the villages in Mexico later on, this approach was utilized by McKim Marriott and Milton Singer in conducting their intensive study in Indian villages. "Civilization" and "Social Organization of Tradition" are two major propositions in this approach. According to evolutionary view, a civilization is built upon two stages; firstly, Orthogenetic evolution and secondly on heterogenetic contacts. Orthogenetic evolution suggests changes occurred in those aspects where internal or indigenous factors are in charge of such changes. The heterogenetic contacts suggest changes occurred due to external contact or any kind of interference of outside civilization (Nitisha, n.d.)

In all civilizations, social structures can be differentiated into two level

1. The Folk and Peasantry
2. The Elites

The Folk and Peasantry depicts the little tradition. The second segment the elites depicts the great tradition. The great tradition incorporates the traditions contained in epics like Vedic texts, Old Testament and other biblical texts. While the little tradition, moreover, is local tradition of great tradition customized according to the regional and village affairs.

Redfield (1962) stated that "tradition" has always been dominated by

structure of tradition approach. Generally, this approach requires studying interaction between dominant cultural traditions at the core of complex civilized societies and local folklore societies. According to (Marriott 1955) a great tradition beholds its dominance to two processes. The initial process is *universalization* by which Marriot implies the carrying forward of the elements which are existing in the little traditions in the rural villages into an institute which is "universalized" consciousness into great tradition. The second process is *parochialization* which means "downward spread" from great tradition to little tradition (villages). Both universalization and parochialization are distinguished by transformation and there were some sort of gaps in communication which the local communities identified and filled on their own. If we see comparatively, the concept of universalization and parochialization explains the process of cultural change which is understood by Sanskritization when universalization comes very nearer to the concept of parochialization. Here in this conceptual framework the Kamar and Bhil deluge has been placed as little tradition and The Hindu deluge and Old Testament deluge has been placed as great tradition for comparative analysis.

The Hindu Deluge (Manu)

One morning when Manu was washing his hands, a fish came into the hands of that sage. It spoke to him rear me; I shall save you if you save me. A flood will wash away the entire living creature across the earth. Firstly, Manu kept that fish in a jar. After some days it grew out of the jar so he dug a pit later into the sea. There fish told there will be a deluge in coming years and advised him to construct a ship for the future. When the deluge happened, the fish came to rescue, he tied the rope of the ship to its horn. They safely reached the northern mountains. The fish advised him to tie the rope of the ship to the tree so it doesn't drift away. As all the creatures were wiped out of the earth, he wanted to revive the human population in the desire of the offspring he started to make offerings to the god. Butter, whey, curd and butter with water were offered. Through this woman rose a year later. She said I'm the daughter of the person who begat me. All the blessings invoked through me make use of me all that shall be granted through me. Along with her he offered God through sacrifice and worshiping wishing for the offspring. Through her the new race was generated later they were known as the race of the Manu. (Gaster 1969).

The Old Testament Deluge (Noah's Ark)

In Hebrew it is mentioned that once men lived at ease that the harvest from a single season crop could last for forty years. Children used to be born only in a few days instead of taking nine years to be born and could easily learn how to walk and talk. Even people used to command extra celestial bodies like the sun and moon. During this period made numerous sins because of this god got very angry with humans so he decided to destroy the old order

with a deluge. God wanted to give one more chance to the human kind so he instructed Noah to warn them and to mend their ways. Noah warned them for the next 120 years but wicked men didn't listen and mocked him. During the last week Noah was building the Ark through Adam's book which he received from angel Raziel. Later that week male water came from the sky and female water came from the ground causing the flooding of the whole surface area. Noah took 365 species of reptiles and 32 species of the birds with him on the Ark along 8 peoples from his family. Falsehood as well as misfortune too took refuge on the Ark. Sinners also gathered around the Ark but they were turned down by the wild beasts that were guarding the door. On the ark Noah fed all the animals for one year which in turn took toll over all others as the food was scarce. On the tenth day of the month of Tammuz, Noah sent a bird (Raven) which didn't return after someday a dove, who came back with an olive leaf plucked from a mount of olives in Jerusalem. (Ginzberg 1909). Noah sacrificed some clean animals and birds to God, God got pleased with the devotion of Noah, in return God promised not to destroy living kinds with the flood in the future, giving the rainbow as a sign of this agreement. Animals inclined towards wilderness and became apt food, and Noah and his family later repopulated the human population on earth. (Wickedness in the World, n.d.).

The Kamar Deluge

Mahadeo was determined to wipe out the entire old world with the new. It is said that Mahadeo was sure that it would take around five days to wipe out the entire world with flood. The news first broke out among animals then it passed to humans by a deer. One old man made a huge boat out of sandalwood near the sea-shore. On that boat he constructed a number of the rooms. There were around six rooms there in the first one he kept the water, in the second one he kept fuel which could be in the form of woods. The third one was meant for cooking and the fourth one was meant for defecation. The two other rooms were meant for living; later he was his son and daughter and filled that boat with the entire necessary item which would last for at least twelve years. It seems like he doesn't want to save himself or his old lady. That's why he locked the houseboat from outside along with his son and daughter only. After the fourth day comes the fifth day of thunder and destruction which brought endless water lightning and rain from all the four directions which wiped out all the living beings on the earth, only a boat made up of sandalwood floating among the chaos. After the "OLD" is gone Mahadeo wanted to create the "NEW". Then he sends 12 lakhs of *kauru* birds in search of the seeds of earth and man for the creation of new life. They flew for twelve years over the endless ocean of water, some of them died, some survived by lounging over the sandalwood houseboat.

Mahadeo called a crab from the sea to find any seeds of the earth. After some time from the bottom of the sea, the crab brought an earthworm

(Kechwa) from his teeth, the last seed of the earth found. Through this little seed sufficient part of the earth emerged. For the creation of the sky, he created four pillars in opposite directions to each; later he tied the skin of the black cow on the post of these pillars which covered the whole world. The sky was made by the skin of the black cow and the shining nails were placed for the creation of the stars. As the earth is complete but there were no sun and moon for the indication of day and night. For that Mahadeo gave moon from his head then he asked the *Pandavas* for their suns. They gave their four Suns which were arising from each direction but it made earth too hot for survival later Mahadeo asked them to withdraw the three suns. For the creation of human beings Mahadeo reared the children from that house-boat because he wasn't able to find any other seed for the creation of human life. He reared them like their own son and daughter. Later Mahadeo taught the boy how to produce different crops out of nature. The first one was *Dahi* cultivation, later the *Paddy* in the month of *Asar*. For the protection of the cultivated field from the invasion of wild animals Mahadeo made the boy and girl sleep together in the field in order to create the human race in full-fledged manner which led to the pregnancy of the girl. Usually, it takes nine months for the development of the foetus but this time it took only nine steps. The girl gave birth to thousands of the children, ultimately, she died in the process. Mahadeo succeed in reviving the living life on the earth. (Dube 1951).

The Bhil Deluge

It is said that Bhagwan (God) created earth out of two washer men. They were both brother and sister. The girl whenever goes to draw water from the river, she had a habit of feeding the fishes with rice. Due to her good gesture one day a fish came near to her and asked what her desires were? What do you want from life? She replied that I don't know. The fish told her that there will be a deluge soon. Make a cage for yourself and your brother and don't forget to keep some pumpkin seeds, water and a cock. The rain along with the thunder destroyed the whole earth along with the living creatures. The god inquired if anyone had survived. Then he heard the crowing of the cock. God himself went on to near the cage and asked both of them who warned you regarding the deluge. The girl told him about the encounter with the fish. The god called the fish and asked her why you warned them about the deluge. The fish lied first but later confessed the truth because of the lie the god cut off the tongue of the fish. From the tongue of the fish leeches took their origin. It is said that because of that incident till now they don't have a tongue. The god turned both brother and sister opposite to each other and made them husband and wife. This was the way to make them realize that they are going to be progenitors of the human race.

It is pretty clear that Bhil borrowed the story from Hinduism. Though this version of myth of the deluge has almost the same characters, the first

Brahman (Manu) were left out and only human couples established in their own version. This depicts that Bhils created this character in order to counter Brahman ascetic, whose obligation was to remain pure by washing himself from holy water. One of the main reasons they portrayed this couple as washer men is because generally, they live near the water and this would establish a natural connection with the water creatures. This can be an example which establishes how while Sanskritizing into Hinduism, they often intact themselves towards the essential part of their own culture. (Koppers 1940/1941).

Similarity at Structural Level:

Man has become degenerate and wicked. There shall be a new beginning. The old order should be wiped off along with the previous race; the deluge purifies the world for all its sins and iniquity. These arguments are consistent throughout among these deluge stories. Could it be more reasonable if anything happens rather than the total destruction? What was its purpose? This indicates that for sin man must be punished. Instances of warning are mentioned; despite full blown pouring rain everywhere; sufficient delay permitted; who should be saved and how? All these saving mechanisms are mentioned sufficiently. The well ordered and systematic origin of the earth and sky, fabricated in certain days. The planned progress of the world's history from last surviving people as there were no sort of mental consciousness regarding incest. The construction of a boat or an ark and the exact statement of the context of roping the boat along with a mountain (Harper 1894). All the deluge stories inculcate the idea of minimizing evil from life and positive glorification of human relation with nature. Besides that promoting the moral compass of forgiveness, so does all these deluge myths.

Observation and Concluding Remarks

The dissimilarities in reference to the spirit and motive are distinguishable, the Hindu deluge story is obviously anthropomorphic including the representation of the gods like fish and a woman rose up from the offering made to the god. While the Anthropomorphic element in the Old Testament's deluge is very less and never twisted. When one reads the Hindu deluge story and discovers no teaching or greater lesson, while in the Hebrew story there has been account for the greatest teachings like punishment for sins, liberation for being righteous. This shows not all great traditions are relatable in terms of myth's structural level. S.C Dube viewed that a little and great tradition are relatable but there is no specific definition but there is no specific definition but there are many great or near great traditions, in which each one operates with its accepted texts and ethical codes. Despite that the great tradition – little tradition framework would not be able to make proper justice on the role and significance of regional, national or at western tradition, each one of them are powerful in its own way (Singh 1973: 15).

Not all the deluge stories are similar, however the common theme of mass destruction of the world by flood is there in many religions and cultures. But in the case of Noah's ark and Bhil's stories include how God became angry and furious over humans for their arrogance and decided to bring catastrophic water calamity in order to wipe out the whole order and only the chosen were left out to repopulate the earth again. In both Noah's ark and Manu's story the ark and boat came to rest on a mountain that depicts the immense depth of the water, so in order to survive, they had to lead to the higher altitudes. The survival of Noah's family and Manu's is very coincidental and presumably the origin of the new human race. In the flood myth from the Old Testament, God who put aside Noah by instructing him to construct an Ark the same as the Hindu version of the story, it is also through divine intervention in the form of the god Vishnu that mankind is safeguarded from total wipeout. In each folklore tale there is a sort of divine prophecy to the main character of the deluge that a calamity is coming to which everyone else is uninformed. (Barton 1916). If you see in contrast to the great tradition in both tribal instances (little tradition) it is a fish and deer (animals) are chosen as divine informers who announce the coming of the deluge. The relative idea of repopulating the race is quite controversial as well as similar in all accounts. As God, he instructed them to repopulate by incest. (Levi-Strauss 1955) created a hypothesis which solidifies our argument: the basic units of a myth are not outlying relations but *bundles of social relations* only by putting these bundles together, these social relations can be placed to use and combined so as to bring out a meaning. This mere recurrence of various patterns in various regions separated geographically and culturally tells us commonality in the human psyche.

The Indian great tradition was always continuous with the little tradition that can be found in its various regions, villages, tribes and caste. It is because the indigenous civilization has been tailored out of previous folk and regional cultures. Another reason of this cultural consciousness which has been formed across the Indian subcontinent was with the help of certain elements i.e., Sacred texts and sacred objects like totems and other representatives of cultural transmission like brahmins (Singh 1973: 14).

There are striking accounts of differences and similarity when compared with great tradition to little tradition. Leading sociologist G.S Ghurye has noticed that the tribes have shown a habitual tendency to look upon themselves as Hindus or as people intently related with Hinduism. For instance, it's a tendency in Hindu religion of mystifying animals like fish to be denoted as Vishnu in the form of fish while in Bhil's it's not like that they didn't mystify animals, it's just a fish with good intentions. In another instance the tribe makes the flood look local and the biblical and Hindu's myth makes it general. The little tradition has a conception of local deity or supreme god (Mahadeo) in strong contrast with the general idea of single monotheism by Hinduism and Judeo-Christians.

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BOOK REVIEW

ROUTRAY, SAILEN , *Everyday State and Politics in India: Government in the Backyard in Kalahandi*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019, 138pp., £36.99 (paperback). ISBN: 9780367887254

The state in relation to society in India has largely been studied from the lens of political science and political theory. Sailen Routray's *Everyday State and Politics in India: Government in the Backyard in Kalahandi* offers alternative understanding of state-society relations without taking the usual recourse to dominant politicist perspectives as implied in the works of scholars of the post-colonial Indian state. This book is the product of an ethnographic study of a micro-watershed development project in Kalahandi in southwest Odisha, a district disreputably branded as Somalia or Ethiopia of India for its persistent droughts and acute level of poverty and backwardness. Viewing the emergence of such participatory mission-mode based development projects since the 1980s as a critical stage in the evolution of Indian state, the book tries to analyse the subtle utterances of the new forms of developmental statecraft.

The Gramscian passive revolution framing of the making of the Indian state by Sudipta Kaviraj and the extension of passive revolution thesis into the political society framework by Partha Chatterjee are the grounds that the book tries to problematise anthropologically. Routray argues that these pioneering accounts in Indian political theory, although claimed to be addressing the third-world political realities, often emulate the grand abstraction and the high-scale explanation of the theories of western provenance. They do not explain the myriad articulations of the workings of the state in marginal spaces like Kalahandi. Besides, people's culturally rooted rationalities of perceiving and deliberating the state cannot be made legible with such normative theoretical prescriptions. Hence, to make his book's purpose obvious, he emphatically asks that-"If the dominant way of perceiving and experiencing the state in the non-west does not follow the templates set in the west, is there a generic non-western way of articulation of politics and the political?" (p.31).

The book is divided into six chapters with ample anecdotes of everydayness, as any good ethnographic writing must contain. Throughout the book, the use of metaphorical phrases to make uncomplicated analysis out of intricate observations is what gives the impression of a captivating prose. Chapter 1 introduces Kalahandi's grim socio-historical moorings and reviews its discursive framings found in different registers. The author takes an archival detour to the 1980s when the representation of Kalahandi as a geography of hunger emerged in the narratives of academics, poets, journalists, and datasheets of government and non-government organisations; and it is the time when "state started seeping through" (p.103) the capillaries of Kalahandi. This throwback would surely help the readers visualise a detailed sketch of the realities that necessitated the state intervention in Kalahandi.

Chapter 2 proceeds with a set of tales from field to illuminate the idiosyncrasies with regard to the functioning of the developmental state and the shifting perceptions about the state's disciplinary action, and its deterministic effect on people's shared morality. The tales also make visible the vernacular pathways through which the developmental

programmes are twisted and refashioned locally in agreement with the local cultural concepts and categories. Another interesting theme is how the various actors of the local state can subvert the imperatives of transparent conduct- a statist virtue. According to the author, although the kind of events described by scholars from the passive revolution school and the events from Kalahandi are more or less similar, they do not subscribe to and describe any singular social reality. The developmental state in Kalahandi is not founded on the politics of class coalitions and hegemony, as the passive revolution thesis assumes. In contrast, the author suggests the 1980s as a distinct temporal window for interpreting the state, i.e. to shift the focus from "state formation" to "state fabrication". Routray employs Judith Butler's idea of "gender fabrication" as a parallel analytical lens to look at Indian state as continuously "being fabricated" through its performativity and not as "being formed" at decolonisation as a fixed ontological entity. The mission-mode project in Kalahandi is one such archetype of fabrication wherein the state had morphed its character from a regime of "symbolic" mode of operation at a distance to a regime of direct engagement within the quotidian sphere of social life.

Chapter 3 discusses the practical modalities through which the state has morphed its character on ground and infused into uncharted spaces. It elaborates on the five interrelated "tactics" of state fabrication in Kalahandi, such as "multiplication" of the points of contact via new types of institutions like SHGs; "expansion" through NGOisation of welfare delivery; "pluralisation" of logic of legitimate intervention through technologies like participatory governance and categorical targeting of beneficiaries; "provisionalisation" of operation in the form of rented office buildings, contractual recruitment; and "textualisation" of governance through extensive documentation and auditing.

In chapter 4, the everyday function of the developmental state in Kalahandi is discussed with case narratives of project meetings between government and NGO functionaries. The meeting events reveal that the bureaucratic hierarchy as regularly seen in the organisational culture of the state is replaced by an "overall culture of informality" (p.68) at workplace- a contingent feature arising out of the tactic of converging the government apparatus with that of NGOs. The chapter offers a stimulating discussion on the mushrooming of institutions like watershed committees and user groups representing the "quotidian logistics of state-fabrication" (77) and facilitating further entrenchment of state power. However, regarding the effects of state fabrication the author does not agree with James Ferguson's post-development critique of development as a machine of depoliticisation of society. Instead, he contends, "one needs to reframe politics and how it is cognised in the local ethical world such as that of Kalahandi" (p.105). In other words, the counter-tactics used by the subaltern actors to make their claims, for example the vernacular concept of "*bhag*" (an ethical register against elite-capture of public welfare services), or the trick of "*lukiba*" (a deceptive practice among project staffs to hide from the burden of accountability) testify against the dominant narrative of developmental governmentality. These anecdotes of transactional dealings with the state in Kalahandi, the author opines, concur with the famous "weapons of the weak" argument of James Scott.

Chapter 5 dwells on the idea of "*toutary*"- a vernacular conceptual lens to make sense of the state in Kalahandi. *Toutary* reflects the political ramifications of developmental statecraft while there is increasing presence of political touts and brokers within the state's service delivery system. Author's diagnosis of the phenomenon of *toutary* is made beyond corruption, rather it is seen as a vernacular domain of politics that emerged out of social perception of state action. Also, the chapter offers an interesting account of the folk narratives

on the overpowering influence of touts on the magico-religious domains of society and this, the author argues, "provides a space for an ethical critique of emergent forms of state fabrication and governmental action as well" (p.79). The final chapter collates the theoretical takeaways of each chapter.

Methodologically, the book demonstrates the strength of multi-sited ethnography on puzzling entities like the state and bureaucracy, which has always been a challenging terrain in social science research. The book proves that understanding the complex interfaces between state and society lies in ethnographic possibilities across societies and cultures, not in the static models of political theory. It also argues against the overreliance on historical method, which has failed to grapple with the state's contingent transmutations vis-à-vis emerging milieus of decentralised statecraft like rural livelihood, natural resource management, micro-credit, health and sanitation. The author presents numerous case studies and life histories of villagers, local politicians, NGO workers, and government functionaries to make his arguments well illustrative. The use of participant observation for witnessing people's quotidian interactions with the state is compelling and encouraging. However, author's positional qualifications behind such participatory observations of governmental affairs and easy access to bureaucratic circles is not talked about.

Routray's book has tried to bring the state back again as a new subject of study in conjunction with the contingent processes of development. However, the book does not shed any light on social cleavages like caste or gender, which could have been done through a discussion on the village social structure. This would perhaps bring to light more layering to the counter-cases. Nevertheless, the book is an evocation to give serious attention to situated experiences of state-society relations from diverse third-world geographies and "not to reduce the narratives of these experiences to being mere variations of a global master narrative" (p.107). The book is a valuable addition to the existing literature on "everyday state" while instilling hope for open-ended theoretical engagement with ethnographic reality from Kalahandi or elsewhere. It is a relevant text for students and researchers of social anthropology, development studies and political science wanting to explore the state beyond formal politics.

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, **PRADYUMNA BEHERA**
Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

MORE, S. *Memoirs of a Dalit Communist: The Many Worlds of RB More*, edited by Anupama Rao, translated by Wandana Sonalkar. 2020. New Delhi, LeftWord Books, 293 pp., Rs. 450 (paperback), ISBN 978-81-940778-0-0.

Ramchandra Babaji More's incomplete project, Memoirs of a Dalit Communist, is a combination style of autobiography edited by Anupama Rao and translated from Marathi to English by Wandana Sonalkar. RBM died before completing his memoir. He could only write about his then-life till 1927. As a result, even after reading the compiled-autobiography, readers are unaware of many aspects of his life. Satyendra More, his son, has augmented the text even more by incorporating substantial-aids from his father's repository or collection, such as letters, photographs, and book covers. While R.B More's grandson Subodh More painstakingly compiled all of these into a cohesive manuscript featuring three generations of endeavor in introducing to its readers a guidebook of Dalit political movements and Labor Union framework in the lives of activists and urban assembly line workers alike; further

elucidating Maharashtra's politics at the time.

The book is organized around three major themes: the first section RBM's quest for school admission, in which he highlighted how school administration discriminates against Dalit children and how he was prevented from participating in learning. He was resolved to pursue his ambitions, and he submitted letters to the colonial authorities, which were widely publicized. As a result, the early phases of communal consciousness and assertiveness are apparent in his life-history. The second section explored the supposed and empirical situation of Dalits in the military, including his active participation in the Mahad Satyagraha. RBM claimed to have urged Ambedkar to attend the Mahad convention. While the third segment described RBM's decision to join the communist revolution, he contends that the greatest hindrance to class consciousness is caste consciousness, and he pushes the Party to prioritize the fight against caste.

This book failed to expound on RBM's admission into the Communist movement and ignored the issues that developed during the Bombay strikes of 1928 and 1929. There is also no mention of RBM's internal party conflict in the memoir. RBM's caste differences with the Communist leadership, as well as his endorsement for Ambedkar's anti-caste movement, inhibited his advancement inside the party. Many of the book's arguments are debatable; those familiar with Dalit politics and Ambedkar's works would be able to reflect more clearly. Further, the prefatory comments of Prabhakar Sanzgiri, a CPI-M committee member, has also been omitted from the English version. Sanzgiri notes that, until the 1980s, Communist Party study sessions did not contain caste or religion issues, both of which have gained significance in Indian politics lately.

Overall, this book concentrated on the subcontinent's convoluted past, which included marginal identities and battles that were continually concealed in order to minimize the potential of alternatives to society's authoritarian status quo. It is a significant autobiographical novel that interweaves three generations of family history, political debate, and social interaction among Bombay's urban industrial workers. The lucid wording and composition make it an excellent read in the Dalit-autobiography category for all readers.

KANCHAN BISWAS

Research Scholar,
Centre for the Study of Social Systems,
School of Social Sciences,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.