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NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Udita Kalyan and B.V. Sharma

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN BODY AND SELF IN ILLNESS FOR IDENTITY

Abstract

Body and self have been issues of inseparable discussion. The body always comes into the picture whenever the self is discussed, as soul or mind. Body is the empirical reality whereas the self's location is much debated. Yet at the juncture of illness, especially a chronic one, the two negotiate to define identity. A study among Juvenile Diabetics was undertaken in Hyderabad, India, wherein data collection was done through narratives and supplemented by data from a social networking site. While undertaking the study of body and self concerning chronic illness the researcher sought to understand how identity and the image of body and self change when confronted with life-altering experiences which are located in the body. The study focuses on issues like the constructs of body and self in illness, the negotiations between the two for private spaces, public spaces and social spaces, and the assertion of one over the other for identity. For some, their identity revolved around the body's state of dysfunction, whereas it was 'normal' for others. The disorder, though in the body, does not remain limited to pathological or physiological levels. But influences on socio-cultural front as well. The social factor looms large concerning work, marriage, and, for women in childbearing. Similarly, society also relates depletion, disease, death and decay with old age. The socio-cultural expectations of youth in such situations of chronic illness become baffling.

Keywords: Juvenile diabetes, Body, Self, Identity in Illness, Constructs of body, Constructs of self, Negotiations.

Introduction

The analytic categories of 'body' and 'self' and their entwining nature has received due attention in the social science discourses in different contexts. A summary of writings in this regard can be presented as follows. Almost all cultures distinguish between the body -as the material, visible- and the self as being immaterial, invisible and intangible at the individual level. The body has imagery, anatomy, and physicality. Its constitution and responses are one of the most important aspects of its study. Bodies have been discussed, debated and analysed over various issues. Like, 'What is the body?' Does the body have

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boundaries which are physical or does the body transcends boundaries when confronted with pain, trauma, disability, illness and, for that matter, ecstasy and symbolism and rituals (initiation ceremonies and concept of purity / purified bodies, etc)? 'Self' is studied primarily as to 'what it is'. Consequently, significant inquiries have been made as to: What is the self and where it is located? Is the self bound to the body or is 'it' beyond the paradigms of bodily experiences? It has been considered as the soul (in religious discourse), mind (in biological and psychological discourse) and more recently located in the social context¹ (Mead, 1974; Stets & Burke, 2003).

Body and self are too deeply intertwined to demarcate their origin and endings. These boundaries become more blurred when seen in the light of illness. During illness not only does the body suffer and undergo much contemplation but also the self is brought under scrutiny. They together seek to define the identity in terms of both personal and social identity. Since it is the body that bears symptoms (of illness) and is subjected to examination and treatment, illness has a primary effect on the body.

The problem with 'self' is that it has to mediate between this personal understanding and social identity. The social identity is where there is a shared meaning and one learns to see oneself as others may see him/her. Eventually, each person has a series of personal identities that have social meanings.

Chronic illness challenges the individual's claims to these identities. Identity and illness have a complex relationship that relates the individual to the biological world and the social world concurrently. This relationship is defined by the day-to-day social interactions and induced by the chronic illness. These limits are relative to the pre-illness self. The previous 'regular' or 'normal' roles cease to play as important a role as the illness. There is a disruption in the way one defines oneself, and in the time of chronic illness, it becomes difficult for the idea of self to remain intact. (Kelly and Millward, 2004)

This paper attempts to understand the constructs and negotiations of body and self among juvenile diabetics in the Indian context. The paper follows the model given by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1998) to understand the constructs of the body. Self, as perceived by bio-medicine, psychology and philosophy, is juxtaposed with the understanding of self, being a construct of social context. The negotiation between body and self is seen in the light of lifestyle practices and is found to take place differently in private, public and social spaces.

METHODOLOGY

The study regarding body, self and identity are abstract issues and one may not be consciously aware of their own defined opinions of them. They need analysis based on what is said, how it is said (language and analogies), and what is not said. To gather such information is essential to a methodology that allows the subject to 'tell their stories'. The study wants to understand the experiences of

Juvenile Diabetics (Type 1 Diabetics) and their ideas and perceptions about body, self, and identity in the face of a chronic illness. To realise these, the methodology of the Interpretative Phenomenological approach has been used in the study.²

The objectives of the research necessitated the use of narratives as the appropriate method. Narratives were combined with data collected from social networking forums. Narratives from fifty respondents above the age of 15 years were collected over a period of eighteen months (from August 2008 to March 2010) in Hyderabad, India. The narratives were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed covering issues of language, analogies used, Explanatory models and negotiations between different models, use of narratives to construct new roles and identities.³

In the last two decades, social networking sites have become widespread, especially in India, their impact clearly evident. These networking sites enable people to establish contact with acquaintances as well as form new friendships. Wide and uninhibited participation is witnessed in these sites enabling access to information otherwise unavailable. These forums gave insight into discussions difficult to collect in urban settings. Most definitely it posed the problem of defining the region or area of the study but gave insight into the globalizing world.⁴ Care was taken to consider only those discussion forums in which Indians living in different metropolitans participated. The discussion forums provided interesting information that supplemented the information gathered through narratives.⁵

DISCUSSION

The Constructs of Body

Body has been studied from varied perspectives -the Cartesian dichotomy, consumerist constructs, representation and imagery (Shilling, 2004; Turner, 1997; Sassatelli, 2005), power and subjugation (Foucault, 1979), etc. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock (1998) formulated the 'three bodies' model by drawing from the Phenomenological approach, Structuralism and Symbolism, and Post-structuralism. The three bodies delineated are- the Individual body, the Social body and the Body Politic. This study adopted the three-bodies model.

Individual body

The individual body focuses on pains and processes of the body and phenomenological experiences and explanations of juvenile diabetics. The respondents learned the symptoms of diabetics at a later stage. The narration of the illness by the individuals was detailed and systematic regarding the onset of the disorder and other illness episodes. Narratives were centred around pain in most cases, except for those who experienced dizziness or weakness

and concentration lapses due to low sugar. Insulin injections and food intake were other reminders of the body's state of sickness to the individual body.

Aspects of body weight, slim body, muscled and toned body were also issues of individual body. Though it is acknowledged that being healthy is more important than being 'beautiful', weight loss/gain was considered essential for 'good looks'. Female respondents took to weight loss normally. However, male respondents desired weight gain despite medical advice to the contrary as they believed in having good muscles to look healthy or grown up.

All the respondents had the bio-medical model as their EM (Explanatory Model) in understanding the disorder. However, their understanding of the disease is limited to adherence to treatment. Illness episode narration is based on the experience of pain in daily life and how it altered their lifestyle and does not speak in terms of cells and genetics.

Social body

The disorder in the body does not remain limited to pathological or physiological levels. Notions of health and illness in a society influence an individual's notions about the same. Being healthy is idealised as being in harmony with society. The individual's habits like eating junk food or smoking are contrasted with spending time with family which is considered virtuous. What is not good for the individual body is also rejected in the relations with the social body.

Social relations with family, friends, colleagues, etc., influence the ideas of illness and health. Whereas some blamed family as the reason for the disorder others saw the same as the reason to take care of their health. Their responsibility towards their family is the primary reason to adhere strictly to the treatment regimen. Most of them had not disclosed their sickness to their friends and colleagues while those who shared were not inclined to speak about it. Non-disclosure of disorder underlines the individual's belief/perception that he/she is not normal.

Discussion on social networking sites highlighted how the forum provided a kind of virtual family/ social circle/ nexus. The virtual forums provided support to deal with a wide gamut of illness-related issues from weight loss to dating and stigma. Since the members of the group are all facing the same illness, it creates a common bond, unlike the family. It provided an avenue to speak of their diseased bodies, disease-tainted identities and other issues of common concern that they cannot discuss with others, including family.

Body-politic

Though we have individual bodies they are not individually owned. Beyond the socio-cultural, other institutions lay claim to the individual body.

An initiation ceremony is as much about the individual body as it is about the social body. This raises the question 'Whose body is it?'

In the study many minors were not allowed by their parents to be interviewed about their illness. Even contact by the researcher had to be through the parents. This may as well be the first step of denying personhood to a juvenile and not giving credit to their ability to understand their own body and self, leaving aside defining it. This may also indicate that body and identity are considered adult issues and teenagers are thought incompetent to handle them (Alderson, 2007). At times even respondents 20 years old required prior consent of parents to talk about their illness. Family played a prominent role in the choice of doctor and treatment regimen. Some of them belonging to the age group of 20-40 years were prevented by their families to live in another city for education or even work.

Most of them, especially on social networking sites, stated facing stigma about getting married. Society's denial to accept them as normal, especially in terms of marrying a non-diabetic/ 'normal' person, is to claim power over their bodies. There is a constant interplay of the individual's assertion about being normal yet struggling to confirm or attain the standards of normal (non-diabetic). Work and marriage are two important areas where this struggle is manifested prominently. There were discussions on the social networking site about starting organisations employing only diabetics and ventures and matrimonial that cater to diabetic needs asserting their being different from the society.

The three bodies aren't exclusive but often overlap. They influence and impact each other. For instance, the individual may attach value to the body based on religious beliefs but the religion may emphasise the social body. Similarly, the individual body's pains, processes, and looks are socially approved. The weakness of the individual body finds acceptance or rejection in the social body. The social body might reject the weakness in the individual body for the fear of slackening the pace of 'normal' others who are competing. Thus, competent bodies are aspired for and that image is passed on to the individual also. The stigma prevents the free mingling of individuals and the sharing of information. This in turn may magnify or deepen the stigma. It thus remains an issue of the individual body and social body. In the same manner the social body and the body-politic overlap wherein the ideas of the social body may be seen as wielding power and authority over the body and the self.

The Constructs of Self

Philosophy always has the body on one end and the soul or mind as constituting the other, the unseen and the non-material in the dichotomy. More recent philosophical works assert 'self' as the other part of the dichotomy. Bio-medical approach upholds the Cartesian body-mind duality and hence

branched out into two fields- physiology and psychology. There are two approaches to self - Psychological and Sociological. Psychology focuses on the relationship of self to the individual studying the ideas of self, and self-awareness. Sociology focusses on the relationship between the self and society- how an individual's notions of his place in society and societal norms impact and influence each other.

Considering body-mind duality, Wierzbicker (1989) states how 'mind' is essentially an English word, and a folk concept reflected in the English language. The body-mind dichotomy, which is believed to have arisen out of the Cartesian model (based, in turn, on traditional, western, and Christian philosophy), is also not body-mind, but body-soul duality. In English, 'Mind' is restricted to that which is not material and thereby different from the body. Furthermore, the body-mind dichotomy is not as much a Western idea but an Anglo-Saxon concept and quotes the example of the Russian culture wherein '*Telo*' (body) is not conceptually opposed to '*duša*' (which depending on the context could mean soul/mind/heart). Thus, to view the self as mind, is in itself abiding by that model and overlooking the self as soul or social identity like in the Indian society where the social identity is primary to an understanding of self.

Most respondents showed how important the social identity was, even if they were in rebellion to the society's view of them as not 'normal'. Social behaviourists and anthropologists like G.H Mead (1974) and Mary Douglas (1994) highlight how the self exists with others and in a social context. This suggests, when a person in a religious society sees his 'self' essentially as a soul and in relationship to other souls, the social context of religion and relation to others, influences the way the person comes to acquire that idea or the concept of self. Similarly, when in a rationalistic society, one sees one's self as essentially mind it has its social context.

According to Harris (1989), self is different from person. A person can be a non-living human, a deity or even a disease. But the self is not like that. The self is an object and a subject at the same time. As an object, it can be observed, and as a subject self observes self in a way no other can. Thus, for the self to exist it has to be a living human being (according to Harris it can be animals too) and be self-aware. As Douglas suggests self knows itself, and only self knows itself in the sense that no other can know it. The self seeks to understand itself in terms of its predictability of response. This predictability or self-awareness comes when juxtaposed with the other. (Mead 1974; Douglas 1994; Harris, 1989) Harris suggests that any social discourse or interaction is impossible if there is not a mutually understood idea of personhood, selves and identity (Harris, 1989), thus, meaning that selves, identity and concepts of personhood find a basis in social context and discourse.

In the study 'soul' was a very personal issue and hardly discussed by

informants. None of them talked about the self in terms of mind or thoughts but rather as their social identity, even though implicitly. The way society sees them has deeply influenced their social identity leading to non-disclosure of their ailment to friends or colleagues. Some have kept this also from their relatives. In social identity, women informants found themselves in another matrix- of gender space and related to reproduction that impacts their identity as women in society. The disorder has impacted their bodies in one more aspect than it would a man's. Some of them had suffered multiple miscarriages and many others feared that and stated that it is more difficult for a diabetic girl than a diabetic boy to get married.

It is not the objective of the study to prove which of the three- soul, mind or social identity is the real self (for the idea of self may vary from person to person and from society to society). Rather it establishes how either of them develops in the social context. When one sees 'self' as a soul, it is located in a religious paradigm and the individual acquires and asserts this idea is rooted in that nexus. Even in the case of mind, the concept gained acceptance and popularity in some societies mainly due to the developments in biological and psychological sciences. The mind does not construct the self. (An important example could be how different societies define and view mental diseases and disorders.) To view or think of the 'mind' as the 'self' is itself a construct of society. 'Self' is constructed in the social context.

Similarly, we can view the self along the lines of the Hughes and Lock model, i.e., the individual self, the social self and also a political economy of self. The individual self may be soul or mind- the thought processes as well as the talents and capabilities of one. The social self is the social identity. The social identity may be derived from work, family, peer group, marriage and even religious ideas of a social body and one's place in it. The third self faces the challenges of hegemony, confirmation and divisions of normalcy and abnormality and confronts or resists it in different ways. Juvenile diabetics especially on the social networking website stated how 'they are normal' and that non-acceptance or discrimination are anomalies of the society. These ideas of self also are constructed and exist in a social context and influence the way a person sees his/her self, the social identity and questions hegemony.

Body-Self Negotiations

For a juvenile diabetic (and even a type 2 diabetic to a certain extent) the issues of food, insulin, work, marriage, sexuality and reproductive abilities are of much significance. These were taken as avenues to study and understand if body and self overlap and negotiate, in which aspects the struggle and conflict are more pronounced, and how this struggle is manifested. In different aspects of health, body and self come to the forefront. For instance, the body is talked of while discussing what pertains to body mechanisms and the bodily condition, whereas health is talked of signifying the lifestyle issues and the way it affects

the self in everyday life.

In certain issues body and self separate and in many they come together. The different aspects where one identifies with either the body or with the self one separates them like when a respondent claims they are normal and denies the diseased body they seek to distinguish between the body and self and suggest that the 'self' is normal because definitely the body is not (They seek their identity not in the body or subjugate their bodily identity to the self), whereas when they try to achieve something and prove themselves 'despite being diabetic' the body is brought under the self to formulate an identity.

The distinction between the body and self is made clear when one uses words like 'My body'. The 'Body' belongs to or is owned by 'my/me'. The usage of 'My body' sees a separation of body from me or my suggesting that the 'my' is other than the 'body' and 'body' is owned by 'my'. The 'I' knows the 'body' and its functioning. The 'I' has the body and the related mechanisms under control. This 'I' is a reference to the self and the body is brought under subjugation to ensure the preservation of the 'I'. Like...

NA- 'Every day **I think** that **my body** is better. **I** should take care of **my body** and... Actually, I go every day for a walk...'

NA- *'I think diabetes people will know **body mechanisms** more than other normal people...I am telling from my ten years' experience... **I can** understand more about **my body** mechanism. If it is growing weak, very weak we can understand...'*

The self is seen as asserting dominance over the body. Even in times when a particular habit or practice can be dangerous for the body, they go ahead with it to assert that 'they' are in control.

SNF- *'Does anybody binge on sugary stuff to make blood sugar levels reach peak to destroy you like having a litre of ice cream, packs of cookies and stuff? **I** do...It is because **I** hate this diabetic condition and now that I have it, **I love to make it worse...**'*

The statement reflects the subtle distinction they makes between 'body' and 'self'. Even at the time of asserting the self to disregard the precautions to be taken, it is the body that is used.

Only when the body faces an extreme crisis or experiences pain or difficulties or comes to the level of fatal risk does 'the self' realise its incapability to control matters and the body is given its due significance. The body, which is the vehicle of the self or its agent of expression, is acknowledged only when the self finds itself confronted with the question of life and death.

NA- *'Probably I did not know the seriousness of it then...The only thing that changed in my life was I used to carry a glucose packet ... Like I*

said, I was very negligent...My whole body was bloated it was a kidney disorder...and that is when I started taking things a little seriously. I know the damage is already done but I am trying to see what best I can do ... I have a wife and two small sons. I have a lot of responsibilities. So, I need to take care...'

This 'T' in the '*...I will be suffering ...*' is not away from the body but rather refers to it and the pains and sufferings of it. This 'T' of the body is also not distinct from the 'T' of the self because the existence of the self and its expression is dependent on the 'T' of the body. So, even when the self works to preserve the body, the self is working to preserve itself.

The issue of marriage brings the two together. The body and self cannot be separated when seeking a spouse and perhaps, also the reason that juvenile diabetics face their biggest struggle with society in this sphere. One is the stigma from the society and the other is their anxiety whether a non-diabetic would be able to understand and empathise with them in the way a diabetic would. Women informants also face the gender issue in this regard. Below are excerpts from an interview and a social forum discussion (a- c).

NA- '*...Yes I am facing difficulty getting married because of diabetes. Now and then, someone will meet my parents with a marriage proposal. When they get to know that I am diabetic will either walk away directly or make some ugly face or say something really bad. My parents have lost hope that I am going to get married and they have stopped trying as well.*'

SNFD-

- a. '*I'm 19 yr. old diabetic boy looking for a diabetic girl for a relationship.... so, if any girl thinks the same then please contact me and I'm not joking I want a serious relationship*'
- b. '*Yeah!!!!!!!!!!!!!! You've written what the others are too thinking about..... and I think this kind of relationship will have oodles of happiness in it 'coz both can be 100 empathetic..... in sharing their feelings.....*'
- c. '*Hi.....actually I'm older to you :-) by the way I want to say that for a diabetic boy I think it is easy to find a partner but for a diabetic girl...it is difficult...and I think even a diabetic man will never want a diabetic partner.....but I'm surprised as you are an exception so my friend it is my experience that I have been rejected many times as a diabetic to be a partner.....it is my story but not fit for all*

Related to marriage are also issues of sexuality and reproduction which came to the forefront in different contexts.

NA- 'It affects the power of fertility. That makes me feel worse... because I want more children but because of this diabetes last 1 and half years we are trying to have our next child but we cannot. I think my sperm count also may be reduced. Now I am taking treatment for that also.'

NA- 'Actually when I was 5 months pregnant... This was the first that and now I don't have any children ... I was ... I mean ... very upset but I had almost 3 to 4 abortions and one time, they kept me in the hospital for a complete 9 months... At the time of my fourth pregnancy, when the child was stillborn in the hospital then I told my husband "What is the use of my taking so much precaution? I have taken full care. Still, this has happened."

At the level of work, the body is tempered to prove itself. The self also needs to prove to the body that the diseased body can be managed and compete with the healthy ones. The self seeks to prove itself and also tries to prove the capabilities and strengths of the body.

NA- '...I did well in my career working for one multinational company where I was among the most trusted employees. I worked for a whole month, more than 16 hrs a day including Saturdays and Sundays for my previous project, which landed me in the hospital. This year also I was awarded the best employee of the year where I was working as part time employee. But I feel now that I have some severe problem and something lacking than most other guys. When you have to get married and have a disease like this, you start to feel limited. Now I have to handle typical reasoning and thinking of Indian society.'

The illness is seen in the body and not in the self. Taken from the biomedical perspective or any other medical practice the body is not functioning properly or is not in harmony or is in imbalance, but there is asserted of being normal or 'like normal' by most. It is not in the self and yet not separate from it as the self or rather self-image is altered but the illness is not seen in the self. It is also not completely separate from the self as the self is affected because of the illness and is deeply involved in its management. Illness is not seen as a limitation for achieving the aims of life by many of them even though it restricts them from living as freely as they would like. On the other hand, those who see it as a limitation hold diabetes responsible for failure in jobs, relationships and other different aspects of life.

NA- '... No family life. Two years ago, I married but she left because of disease only... I never used to go with friends and all because of this problem. Sugar level, if it comes down, then trembling and hunger. I never used to enjoy with my friends.... Why? I don't mix up well.... because of diabetes only.... My life got entirely spoilt because of this diabetes only. Everything nowadays depends upon strength and, stamina ... Basically, strength is not there. Regular jobs I am not able

to do. Present job, somehow. I am managing ... When in the previous job they came to know suddenly I have got a memo.'

When and how the self is expressed in the context of illness is when one asks the question 'Why me?' The question is not about the body or else the answer to that question would be sought accordingly. Also, the question might be what is wrong with the body? The 'why me?' has more to do with the self and life which finds explanation at times in fate, destiny, *karma* and the will of God. This is the reference to the soul or religious discourse that we find while discussing the self.

The negotiation between body and self is not generic but rather it was seen that body and self negotiate differently in different contexts. The negotiation is analysed in three spaces.

Private space

Private space signifies space for dealing only with oneself. This dealing is also located in a social context yet this is the space where one deals with and forms ideas about his/her body and self. In this specific context of juvenile diabetics, it was seen that private space was one's realisation of his/her illness and insulin intake, diet, episodes of illness, etc., acting as markers. Here is much reference to the body whether in terms of bio-medical explanations or illness episode narrations. This is where one negotiates between body and self as it affects his/her personal choices. The body might desire certain indulgences which the self may deny to maintain a healthy body and thus preservation of the self. Certain aspirations of self may be avoided as the body cannot endure it. The negotiation occurs only with the person himself/herself.

NA- '...I was keen on flying and joining the Air Force or something but couldn't because of this ... I would like to camp in the wild sometime in the nature but that is something I can't because insulin needs to be stored under certain favourable conditions or it won't retain its functional properties. So, travelling in hot climate conditions can be a bit of an issue at times.'

At times the self is seen as asserting dominance over the body even when a particular habit or practice can be dangerous for the body. Respondents go ahead with it to assert that 'they' are in control thereby risking the body and thus also the self, as has already been discussed earlier.

Public space

Public space denotes the close social circle that one deals with on an everyday basis. The people in this group represent society to the respondents or are the face of society that a person interacts with, and through whom they understand the perspectives and stands of the larger society.

Most Juvenile diabetics avoided disclosure of their illness and thereby diseased identity, at least in their public space. Besides the family, other relations like friends and colleagues are withheld from important information about the body. In the family, the body remains significant as it needs help and cooperation from other members about diet, rest, exercise, etc. But not disclosing or rather deliberately keeping this information from friends and colleagues implies fear of rejection, discrimination and stigma from society. Many of them, thus, only have a closed group of family in their public space. Relations with relatives, friends, and colleagues were very distant. Many stated that they did not have any close friends and that their parents or siblings were their friends. Those, who've not told friends despite knowing it can be dangerous if it was to preserve their job or because of fear of stigma. The body was risked to save social identity. In the public space, the body was subjugated the 'normal' self was projected, and identity was sought in the self, whereas, the body found only nominal space in the context of friends, colleagues, etc.

Social space

In social space especially for marriage, career and social roles body comes into the picture, sometimes involuntarily and sometimes otherwise. For example, in marriage, the body and self cannot be separated. Similarly, at the workplace one tempers the body and seeks its cooperation to attain the set goals. Most times it was the society at large, 'the Indian mindset' that was blamed/ accused of discriminating against diabetics.

In social space, we also see that by coming together as a group, even though virtual, juvenile diabetics are speaking volumes about their diseased identity and themselves, as diabetics, versus society. Just like society, in general, is anonymous to a large extent, so is the virtual group. They are a part of the society and the social networking group (Anonymity for the larger society is due to its number, and for the virtual world because it is again people without faces. People interact while maintaining anonymity.). At times they subscribe to the standards of the society and other times question them through the sub-group. The forum discussions marked the difference and presented the society as the other. The ideas of the society towards diabetics were discussed and argued against in the discussions. Even in the narratives, informants stressed on being 'normal'. If disease is seen by society as a limitation, something to look down upon, competent and healthy bodies are to be aspired for, and that image is passed on to the individual. Thus, it was witnessed that many of them spoke of struggling to make a mark in their studies or careers despite having diabetes. To be normal and compete in society or to be even considered competent one ought to be healthy and that is what juvenile diabetics are trying to prove.

Towards the end of an interview the respondent was upset enough to say, NA- '*... I am not going to answer anything anymore. I know your thesis*

must be important to you, but can't help you anymore ... If you have seen any foreign movie or documentary on /about India you will see only poverty, poor life, and illiteracy. You will never see (anything) good about India. Check latest 'Slumdog Millionaire' for example. Your report seems to be that only with a very bad conclusion ... I don't want to be part of a failure story.' What is this 'failure' and what is the link between India's poverty and juvenile diabetes?

CONCLUSION

There is a duality in terms of body and self or else there would not be any conflict. The body may be the agent or vehicle through which the self asserts 'itself'. The self may choose to take care of the body or not, and the body, working on its mechanisms responds accordingly. In the situation of threat to the body, the degree of threat also varies and where the degree of threat is very high, the focus shifts completely to the protection of the body. Thus, it is interesting to find out the negotiations between body and self in the setting of juvenile diabetes, where a chronic disorder can lead to life-threatening diseases.

The respondent on the social forum, who was torturing his body, saying he was going to do what 'he' wanted, was also asserting his self over his body. But the body was still the instrument through which self was asserted. The will of the self was done by mainly eating that which was prohibited. Food was taken by the body. The self needed the body to assert itself, to make 'itself' heard or manifested. Self is asserted to gain a normal identity and deny the diseased identity to prove one normal. 'I am normal' does not refer to the abnormally functioning body. The 'normal' self is chosen over the diseased body as identity most of the time unless one wants to deviate from assigned social roles or fit into them with the leverage given to the sick.

The disorder in the body does not remain limited to pathological or physiological levels though the identity changes in varied aspects. The social factor looms large concerning marriage, especially for women, in childbearing. The process, particularly of childbearing, is not a physiological matter alone but a matter of social status and significance.

Body and self negotiate differently in the three realms of private, public and social space. At times, one subjugates the other (whether to preserve or just to assert dominance) and, at times, the two uphold one another to preserve themselves. The two also separate to assert themselves independently, especially self, when they seek identity away from the diseased body. Yet ultimately it is the preservation of the body, and thereby of the self, that is most important to a person and body and self negotiate to achieve that above all.

Notes

1. Physicality of the body and questions about self are issues of discussion at the individual level. There is also a social body and a social self that is differently perceived and represented. This is discussed subsequently under the social body.
2. IPA is a methodology that emphasises understanding the phenomenological experiences and the meanings and the values that the subject or the participant attaches to them, and their interpretation both by the subject as well as the researcher. The researcher studies the meanings of experiences, events, etc., that the subject holds and interprets them as well.
3. These are discussed at length in the paper Rathi U and Sharma B.V. 2012, "Narratives in Medical Anthropology", in the South Asian Anthropologist Vol.12, No. 1, Pg 19-31.
4. There was a sense of the social body that was reflected through the social forums. Juvenile diabetics consider themselves versus society. There is a sense of ease with which they discuss various issues that concern and affect them about the ailment. Participants sought medical and personal counsel on these forums discussing issues they were uncomfortable discussing in person, giving life advice, share their experiences, give counselling, organise awareness programmes etc.
5. Throughout the text narratives elicited through interviews and excerpts from the social networking forum have been numbered as Na. for Narratives, SNF for Social Networking Forums, when excerpts or comments from social networking forums are quoted independently, and SNFD for Social Networking Forum Discussion used where a discussion from the forum is quoted. Emphasis is added.

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Ashween Ramhotar

ISLAND DIASPORIC ISSUES: EXPRESSION OF INDIAN CULTURE IN OLD HINDU HOUSES OF MAURITIUS

Abstract

This article investigates how reminiscences of the Indian heritage gathered by Hindu settlers (indentured labourers) through their initial huts / houses have affected culture in the small island nation of Mauritius during the Colonial context. The Interconnectedness of Culture and Architecture, characterised as Anthro-po-Architecture by (Sfintes 2019: 2), constitutes a starting point, while colonial hegemonic conditions act as the backdrop of this article. It is not only the physical spaces of the initial houses that are of concern, but also the underlying principles that guided their implementation, preservation, and close relationship with the lifestyle of people. Some of the major architectural elements, the possible links to Indian vernacular architecture, and their usage will be discussed and their contributions to keeping the distinct Indian culture alive, over the early generations of Indian settlement in Mauritius. Brief proposals for future applications and eventual avenues for other research will also be presented.

Keywords: Architectural Anthropology, Traditional Mauritian houses, Syncretic cultures, Indo-Mauritian culture, Culture.

Introduction

Indentured labourers were brought to Mauritius from various parts of India in great numbers by the British as from 1834, adding to the already existing population of Indian origin that were previously brought as slaves and artisans, as iterated by Teelock (1998: 5) in her book, Bitter Sugar. They provided the British as an alternative and cheap labour to fill the gap created by the abolition of slavery. By 1924, when this practice stopped, the population of Indian origin who decided to settle in Mauritius was 238,344. This represented a staggering percentage of about 74.5% of the total population of that epoch (Holmberg 1962: 18).

They initially faced much difficulty as they not only were far from their home country but also their working conditions were just as bad as that of slaves¹. However, Indentured labourers also had a culture of working hard, saving money, and a general inclination towards land ownership. "The decision to acquire a plot of land is perhaps the most influential event in the life of the

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Indian immigrants as well as in the history of the island” says Sada Reddi (2017) in an article published in the Mauritius Times.

From their first living quarters and execrable living conditions, those that decided to stay in Mauritius² toiled to change their socio-economic status. Many among them slowly bought land for cultivation from the white owners. The first-generation Indians, after completing their contractual obligation, set up small villages where they stayed. Despite their hard living conditions and the several natural catastrophes such as cyclones and epidemics they regularly faced, they reproduced the social structure they knew based on religious, caste system or relationship they formed with other travellers on the ships they came, says L'Estrac J C (2020: 72) in his book *Terres-Possession et Dépossession*. The name Indo-Mauritians was attributed to them as they got more involved in the economics of the country and their participation in the real estate sector grew at a sustainable rate, as the Sugar sector saw a boom after the World War II.

The population of Indo-Mauritians also strikingly increased because of high fecundity and because of notable improvement in the health services, reducing child mortality and increasing life expectancy (Holmberg 1962: 19). As a result, the typical Indo-Mauritian family was large and shared one house in the extended family structure, imitating what they could remember from their lifestyles in their village of origin in India. As their financial conditions improved, so did their living conditions. They built better houses in straw, mud mixed with cow dung³, timber, corrugated sheets, glass and sometimes stone. Though many houses adopted elements of the colonial Architectural language⁴ such as pitched roofs and timber openings with shutters, heavily present on the Island at the time, they lived according to their native Indian cultures.

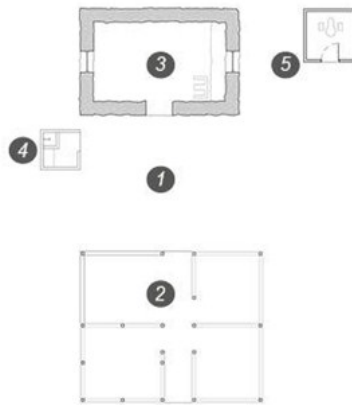
This article examines the ways of life that took place in and around the original houses built by the first Hindu Indo-Mauritian settlers and their descendants up to the 1960s when cyclone Carol hit the Island and devastated a large number of houses. After this period, house building systems changed drastically as concrete and cement block were introduced in Mauritius and the generations thereafter lived in more solid houses and in nuclear family structure. The drastic change in construction technique and lifestyle can constitute a basis for further research not presently covered in this article.

Mauritian vernacular house concept – remembering the Indian lifestyle.

Initially, a common type⁵ of Indo-Mauritian houses comprised of small, fragmented units, each dedicated a different household activity and all organised around a central gathering area. The main sitting area, '*la varangue*', and sleeping areas in one small building. Opposite to it, across a common outdoor gathering area was placed the kitchen and dining unit, while an outdoor space

close to the kitchen unit was dedicated to dish washing. The latrine, generally considered as dirty space, was placed further away from the other areas in yet another small building unit and finally the animal shed was located further at the back of the Kitchen area.

Figure 1: Typical plan of early Hindu Indo-Mauritian house and its various components. 1. Common gathering space; 2. Sleeping unit; 3. Kitchen unit; 4. Washing area; 5. Latrine.



There are several unique aspects of the traditional Indian culture and lifestyle that were kept alive through the vernacular houses built by the Indo-Mauritian settlers though it is doubtful that they could have brought anything with except the memory of their village life of origin given the appalling conditions in which they were brought to Mauritius. Furthermore, since most Indentured labourers were already living in dire situations in India and saw moving to Mauritius a means to improve their conditions, it is safe to assume that elaborate Architectural and cultural ideas may not have been present in their daily lives.

At the same time, adaptation to local conditions, local climatic challenges and economic difficulties must have compelled them to abandon many lifestyle patterns while forgetfulness over successive generations may also have led to loss of yet more culture. On the other hand, local building materials and techniques, different from those used in India were adopted. Houses acted mostly as means of providing basic shelter while cultural conservation could not have been a major preoccupation since their most pressing concern was survival. Therefore, culture must have been preserved and eventually transmitted mostly through memory, habits, and experience.

Many Architectural elements and cultural trait managed to survive despite the numerous setbacks. This idea is corroborated by Karani, (2014: 29) when she says that “psychology and subconscious of people are affected by the space they live in”.

This article lists lifestyles and Architectural elements that have contributed to keeping distinct Indian culture alive over the early generations of settlement and tries to relate their relevance in the contemporary Mauritius.

Figure 2a: Picture of common gathering area and early Hindu Indo-Mauritian house. Source: <https://vintagemauritius.org>



Figure 2b: Picture of Extended family and early Hindu Indo-Mauritian house. Source: <https://vintagemauritius.org>



The extended family

Prior to looking at the Architectural elements, it is important to understand cultural context of Hindu families of the time. They followed the extended family structure since it was not only a perpetuation of an ancient culture but also an effective way for families, despite being large, to survive by living together under one roof, sharing scarce resources, facing the numerous difficulties of the time, and resolving problems as one entity. Since the literacy rate of the Indentured labourers was low, the extended family system had relevance as it valued wisdom based on experience of life, repetition of traditions and continuation of established habits that were passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Elders, considered head of the family based on their wisdom and life experience, took decisions that were diligently followed by other family members. While the male members were earners of the family, they remitted all their earnings to the eldest female in the house, generally the Grandmother.

Grandmothers were decision makers and controlled the household. They managed all the expenses, did all the chores, prepared food and were responsible for the upbringing of children.

Though houses were tiny, made of basalt stone and hay, families and neighbourhoods were close-knit and followed well-defined familial hierarchies. People enjoyed great social proximity and togetherness despite or perhaps because of their low socio-economic status, Bathala, (2005: 145).

Religious beliefs

Indentured labourers arrived in Mauritius from the Indian states of Bihar, Andra Pradesh and Maharastra, adding to an already existing small population of people of Indian origin who previously came as slaves and Artisans from Tamil Nadu during the French occupation, depicted Chazan-Gillig & Ramhota P (2023: 11) in their book *Hinduism and Popular Cults in Mauritius*. The Indian population in Mauritius followed different religious beliefs, namely Hindus, Muslims, Tamils, Telegus, and Marathis, as well as further *caste*⁶ subdivisions among each of those beliefs. Religious beliefs and traditions were undoubtedly crucial to all the Indo-Mauritians as these embodied links to their motherland and shared loyalties to the nation-state, Bathala, (2005: 143). However, the scope of this article examines only the links between *Vernacular Architecture* of Mauritius and the early Hindus that came as Indentured labourers and demonstrates, in parallel, the need for further in-depth research for every other religion present on the Island as well as the syncretism that evolved over several generations.

The Hindu belief system is very complex and varies with different caste categories, let alone the various adaptations, adjustments, and amalgamations that occurred in a migration situation. Even the authenticity of the modern understanding of the caste system among the Hindus of Mauritius is questionable since it underwent major disruptions of continuity due to migration Chazan-Gillig & Ramhota P (2023: 12). Hindus somehow managed to keep their religious beliefs alive through their religious practices, traditions, festivals, and value systems even though the way religion and traditions were practised in the early years of migration and the modern way has many differences.

The Hindu principle of design is directed by the ancient system of *Vaastu shastra*, which prescribes ways to transcribe simultaneously universal, spiritual, global, and personal ideals in living space following the holistic aspect of the Hindu philosophy, which considers everything from the universe to the tiniest of particles as interrelated.

The resilient essence of the deep Hindu philosophy endured in the early villages and Hindu houses of Mauritius and was later reinforced by modern and scholastic concepts as the country developed and while Hindus tried to

establish more formal ideas and practices in the country, Chazan-Gillig & Ramhota P (2023: 38). However, the concept of interconnection was greatly emphasised through veneration and the various types of temples set up for different uses. The *Kalimai* was the neighbourhood prayer place, the *Hanuman* temple was a small prayer area in the front yard of a house, and the *pooja ghar* acted as the personal praying area of the family usually located in niches of the thick stone walls of the house. The *Sandhya*, performed in the house every evening at was obligatory for every member of the family. Furthermore, the Indo-Mauritians set up a system, through *baihtkas*⁷ where transmission of religious and moral values, socio-cultural connections and other community activities were carried out. Sarita Boodhoo iterates the role of the Baithka in Mauritius in an article published in the Mauritius times on August 27, 2010.

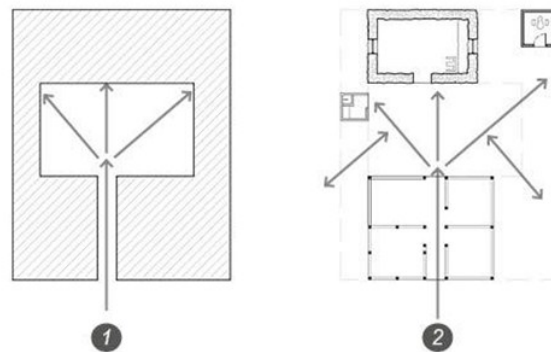
The first Indo-Mauritian Hindus placed many elements of their house by habit, based on what they could remember from their native villages and by adoption of ways of other local cultures already present in the country. The house was considered as a small temple and a mirror of the macrocosm following the Hindu philosophy. Outdoor footwear was not allowed inside the house and if barefoot, people used to wash their feet before entering the house as if entering a Hindu temple. The Position of every item in a house was undoubtedly out of memory and habit at first and was believed to hold great importance in maintaining peacefulness of the household. Scholastic parallels can clearly be drawn between the early habits observed in houses and principles of Vaastu Shastra. The *Griha pravesh* prayer enacts the same principle and so does the celebration of the threshold or *chaukhat*, as symbol of transition between two realms namely the outside, seen as public, and the inside, seen as private. Thus, the position of the washrooms and dish washing, considered dirty, were outside and away from the other clean spaces and clothes washing was done at the bank of nearby rivers. The *Chulha*, Cooking place, was also oriented according to Vaastu principles.

The Courtyard

What is categorised as a courtyard house encapsulates a multitude of typologies with several variations in various cultures around the world Rapoport, (2007: 57) and is not unique to India Gupta & Joshi, (2021: 2262) though certain types are embedded in the Indian vernacular house architecture and culture for centuries. A specific type of self-sufficient courtyard house, that occurred in warm and humid regions of India such as Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, defined by Bera, (2019: 16388), is of concern in this article since it matches the regions where Indentured labourers came and since it has startling similarities with the early Indo-Mauritian houses. It presents three distinct layers Gupta & Joshi, (2021: 2262). The innermost space, usually open to sky is the courtyard. It is surrounded by a second layer that is semi-open and act as transition into the third layer, the enclosed space.

In Mauritius the courtyard was commonly called *aangan* by Hindu Indo-Mauritians. It occurred as loose and unbuilt space in the centre of the different scattered individual units that comprised their house. It acquired strong cultural significance as polyvalent residual space between two building blocks that permitted intricate interconnections for the family. First, it acted as a common meeting point for the whole family, for example it was the place where daily activities like cutting of vegetables for food preparation was done, where children could play and interact with other members of the family as well as with free range animals, or where elders of the family spent their free time, among many other activities. Secondly, the courtyard was also a place where relatives, acquaintances and neighbours could meet the family for events or simply for the very frequent informal visits. Thirdly, it was the central space and focal point of the house where the *tulsi* tree was normally planted and where daily prayers were carried out.

Figure 3: 1. Conceptual drawing of typical Vernacular courtyard house from Mumbai, Chennai & Kolkata. 2. Typical loose version of courtyard houses built by Hindu Indo-Mauritian settlers.



The first villages were comprised of several such courtyard houses. Boundary lines between neighbours, constituted of simple plants, low stone walls or loose corrugated sheets, were blurred and not well defined. Connections, communication, and interaction between neighbours were core to the community and traits like sharing, tolerance, empathy, and sense of togetherness prevailed though they had very little material possessions and were mostly illiterate. This idea is corroborated by Kühnen & Kitayama, (2024: 1) when they points out that people of low social classes have the tendency to be more interdependent.

History witnesses that due to the numerous constraints of the coolies of Mauritius and their families, the local courtyard house models could not have been as well articulated and well established as their Indian counterparts though many cultural traits managed to survive. An in-depth comparison between the Indian vernacular courtyard house and that which occurred in

Mauritius can constitute as ground for future studies in the field.

The Veranda

Conceptually, Indian vernacular courtyard houses also had a layer of semi-open or transitional space surrounding a courtyard Gupta & Joshi, (2021: 2262). This in-between covered space was open on the courtyard side and was bounded by walls of the enclosed areas behind. It acted as buffer area between inside and outside, protected the enclosed spaces from direct exposure sun and rain, allowed cross ventilation throughout the house, and provided a space for various activities.

The evolution of verandas in the early Indo-Mauritian house may have had some footing in the Indian vernacular houses of the regions of origin but can also have some derivative from existing colonial houses of the Island, though the colonial veranda typology does not surround an internal courtyard but surrounds the house externally. The large veranda, around the central gathering space (courtyard), as found in courtyard houses of India Gupta & Joshi, (2021: 2262) was not replicated in Mauritius, perhaps because of economic reasons. Instead, a much smaller replicate took prominence.

It was mostly located facing the internal gathering area, in the sleeping area unit.

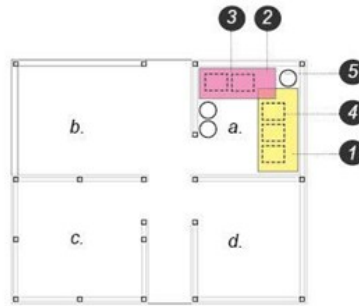
In some instances, road facing verandas could be found, maybe inspired by the colonial house of the time. Such external verandas were eventually enclosed with thin long glass panels and timber framing to maximise usage regardless of weather conditions and to provide a sense of privacy, an important trait of the Indo-Mauritians.

Regardless of its origin, the veranda has always been an integral part of the typical Indo-Mauritian culture as a dynamic semi-open space that offered a buffer between inside and outside. They were ideal for resting and for other activities during hot summer days as they provided shade while allowing cool breeze to flow.

The Godon

A term that may have been originated from the English word Godown, meaning warehouse, was about 2m x 2.5m that housed many activities of the Indo-Mauritian households. Its small size didn't make it a full room but a semi-room that usually contained a bed used for resting during the day or to accommodate the many children of the family. It also had a table for ironing clothes and shelves above for various other storage. The small size and multitude of activities that could be done in the Godon made it a relevant solution for many families to maximise usage with limited available means.

Figure 4: Typical plan of early Godon and its position in the sleeping unit. a. Godon; b. Veranda; c. Bedroom; d. Bedroom 1. Bed; 2. Table for ironing and other activities; 3. Storage below and above table; 4. Storage below bed; 5. Storage in boxes in every spare corner of the Godon.



The Godon being a polyvalent space that does not have a conventional definition as it sits somewhere between a corridor and a room in size. However, it represents resilience, adaptability, sacrifice, hard work, and struggle of the Indo-Mauritian families during the early years of settlement. It was on major element that allowed large families of 8-10 children to have a shelter and survive harsh times with meagre means and in small built spaces.

The need for the Godon gradually disappeared as the country developed and the socio-economic status of the population improved. However, with constant increase in cost of living, construction cost and price of land in Mauritius, could the Godon regain viability for the future houses of Mauritius?

Secondary kitchen

Food preparation is a sacred act among Hindus. "In Hindu culture, eating is a ritual: a sacrifice to the Supreme, unified by the recognition that process (cooking), object (food), and individual are all inextricably connected" according to an article entitled *The sacred Act of Eating: A Hindu Foodie's Daily Ritual*, published on Huffpost website in 2011. The kitchen, being the place where food is prepared, is traditionally guided by several organisational principles dictated by the age-old Vaastu shastra. These principles were only loosely followed, not in any formal manner, in the early Indo-Mauritian kitchens through centuries of trial and error, habit, and repetition. The scholastic and philosophical parallel was only made several generations later when the literacy rate increased in Mauritius.

The early kitchens, despite being small, had every kitchen activity ascribed a specific place either inside or outside in the close vicinity of the built unit. Cooking was done inside the small kitchen unit by squatting in front of the *chulha* placed in one extremity of the building while the smoke generated helped in protecting the timber elements of the kitchen unit from termites and other insects. Eating was mostly done sitting on the floor on

rattan *chattai* near the *chulha* while the roof space, wall tops and cavities were used for storage. Other kitchen activities such as vegetable cutting, and grain crushing in the *chakki* were carried out in the common gathering space while the occasional chicken, meat, and fish cutting, considered unclean when raw, was kept outside and so was dish washing which was done in a dedicated outdoor space next to the kitchen unit. Indo-Mauritian kitchens were in stark contrast, socially and culturally, with the large kitchens of the traditional colonial houses where mostly the house help worked, away from the main spaces and where positioning of kitchen activities was not guided by any philosophical principles other than organisational logic.

The Indian and western kitchen unit types underwent major amalgamations as the country developed. The western Internal kitchen found its way into residential Architecture as cooking and eating processes got modernised. The *chulha* gave way to kerosene and eventually gas cookers while eating using hands in copper plates on the floor gave way to forks and spoons on well-designed dining tables.

Nonetheless, a derivative of the initial Indo-Mauritian kitchen has been retained in the form of a Secondary kitchen, also called back kitchen or outdoor kitchen. They mostly occurred in the form of outdoor but covered areas in the vicinity of the main indoor kitchen and were mainly used for heavy cooking required for large family gatherings or for preparation of very elaborate mixed cultural dishes like the *Briani*, fried noodles, the *dholpuri* or cakes for festivals⁸.

The secondary kitchen has remained as another strong ‘in-between space’⁹ of the Mauritian household and held several other uses over time. In addition to cooking, the protected space became helpful for clothes washing and drying during rainy seasons, storage for gardening tools or gas cylinders, for DIY activities, herb cultivation, bicycle shed, traditional food preparations such as pickle making and countless other activities. The traditional *roche laver*, used for washing of clothes, and the *roche cari*, used for making pulps by mixing herbs and spices, are still part of many local households. They are typically located near outdoor kitchens, easily accessible from the main kitchen through a back door.

Wall thickenings and adaptable storage

People that had kitchen units with walls built in basalt stones and a roof made of straw on timber structures, used the top of the walls for storage, while at some places, the walls had built-in cavities for storage purposes. The timber structures of the roof were used to hang onion and garlic for drying and storage.

Making use of every available space to its maximum was a trait of the Indo-Mauritian family. They were self-sufficient as they cultivated most of their vegetables and spices and had to store the excess in various ways. Garlic,

onion, *Karipoule*, and chilli, common ingredients in the Indian food culture, were dried while some fruits were made into pickle for preservation. Garlic was hung in the kitchen timber structure for storage and was believed to repel mosquitoes and other insects.

Generations of scarcity must have compelled people to develop an interdependent attitude Kühnen & Kitayama (2024: 1), resulting in saving for anticipated potential future shortages for their families and that of their immediate surroundings. The traditional house thus also acted as a storage space with every spare space optimised to keep necessary provisions.

Protection and security – The Jaali, roof overhangs and shutter windows

The Indian vernacular house is reminiscent of many cultural inclinations that were tried, tested, amended, and adopted over many centuries of informal evolution. Among those were notions of privacy, security, and protection against adversities of nature that dictated the development and continued use of semi-opaque screens also known as *Jaalis*, solid timber shutters to openings and roof overhangs. Since India is a mixture of many cultures over a large territory, the expressions of these elements and material used for their construction are diverse in the Indian Vernacular models.

The cultural traits of a need for privacy and security together with a more universal need for protection against adversities of nature remained engrained in the psyche of the Indentured labourers when they left their native villages and settled in Mauritius. The sub-tropical fauna of Mauritius, filled with a myriad of insects, reinforced the need for these expressions in early local houses.

When the Hindu Indo-Mauritians started building their own houses, the use of jaalis, hand made in thin cloth, locally available rattan, bamboo or sometimes timber, was perpetuated in Mauritius with some adjustments that were perhaps due to the availability of materials and local craftsmanship. They were used either as light separation between spaces or on opening and were built in a way that they allowed air circulation through the house, offered protection from the sun, and gave privacy to the user at the same time. Some were also used to prevent insects from getting into the house. The Jaalis were perfect examples of a simple, passively sustainable, and effective solution practiced in local traditional houses.

Roof overhangs, mostly for protection against climatic conditions, were found both in the vernacular huts and early colonial houses though their origins, detailing and construction materials were different in both models. Straw roofs of the Hindu Indo-Mauritian huts were allowed to extend beyond the walls such that they would form a layer of overhang around the house, protecting the stone walls from sun and wind.

Indo-Mauritians also used wooden or metal windows and doors that were secured from inside with cast iron bars. They not only provided added security to the openings but also acted as cyclone bar, protecting the openings from cyclonic winds¹⁰. When closed, they brought opacity to the openings and gave privacy to the household. They also represent a duality in cultural expression whereby on one hand there was a need for transparency, light and ventilation through openings and on the other hand there was also a need for privacy for certain times of the day.

All these elements constituted overlapping layers of expression found in vernacular houses and are very much representative of the deep and diverse culture that the Hindu Indo-Mauritians inherited.

Contemporary applications

The house still holds a sacred position among Mauritian Hindus. Practices, especially related to Vaastu Shastra and veneration, have been continually practiced since the early settlements, first in very informal ways, but later reinforced by philosophical grounding inspired from Hindu scriptures and scholastic philosophies.

However, over time, many elements of the early Hindu Indo-Mauritian house were gradually abandoned. A sustained stable economic progress brought an acceleration in the pace of life and an increase in the cost of living over the years. Though Mauritians now have improved Socio-economic status, are more educated, have smaller families and have far greater exposure to the world than previous generations, the value of the traditional family and neighbourhood bonds can be said to be decreasing. This can be deduced by comparing the way buildings and neighbourhoods were organised in the past and now. Houses were small on large plots of land, while boundary walls between neighbours were loose in the past, whereas the contemporary houses are bigger on much smaller plots of land in rigid neighbourhoods and demarcated by strong rigid boundary walls. Families, if any, are now smaller, more isolated, and increasingly detached from each other. Furthermore, movement of families from Rural to Urban areas, and shift from extended to nuclear family system have also brought a shift of culture and values.

Many elements of the early Hindu Indo-Mauritian house typology have the potential to enhance disappearing but essential qualities of the Mauritian culture. It is essential to sustain what managed to survive while, at the same time, identify and revive those that had become obsolete over time but may provide solutions for future foreseeable problems of local society.

Contemporary houses of Mauritius do not have the *Godon* anymore. However, the recent hike in land price together with soaring construction costs are becoming hard realities for Mauritians. It is getting harder and harder for people to afford a house while ownership of large pieces of land like the

Indo-Mauritians is very rare. Therefore, the ideas of flexible and multi-usage spaces represented by the *Godon* should not be discarded as they may yet find relevance in a not-so-distant future. Furthermore, it is perhaps more relevant to integrate the notion of loose spaces with varied uses in local houses today more than ever as the need to reduce wastage and heighten the crucial social, cultural, and environmental benefits is being felt.

The tradition of inviting relatives and acquaintances over for religious festivals and other celebrations, though much less frequent now than before, has remained in the Hindu families of today. This aspect transcends all ethnic belongings and has always acted as a vehicle promoting multicultural values and creating strong bonds amongst people. The vernacular Hindu Indo-Mauritian house always encompassed solutions for the family visits and fondness for gatherings. The need to promote social visits and gatherings as part of our unique cultural identity is perhaps even greater today. A reaffirmation can easily be achieved in the local contemporary Architecture by recognising the necessity of extension spaces such as the veranda or the outdoor kitchen that are used for daily storage and other activities but can also turn into vibrant gathering/bonding space where relatives can meet while preparing for a festival or celebration.

Having elders staying close to the nuclear family cell is an important aspect of the contemporary Mauritian family. They provide much needed support to the family as well as help in the upbringing of grandchildren and impart values while taking care of them after their school hours while their parents are still working. An extended family system and its related house typology may not be applicable anymore, but a contemporary derivative of such houses that retain the important relevant principles and essence of the traditional culture may be of great help to the modern Mauritian society.

Over the years, as people had to build with very little available means while facing drastic changes in construction techniques and with very limited Architectural support, practical solutions such as the use of Jaalis have almost disappeared from our local Architectural scenery. Wooden shutters have had a similar fate. Nowadays, the design of openings has transcended the typical vernacular forms and has acquired a character of its own. There has been the introduction of many types of atypical openings in the Contemporary local houses such as corner windows, full glazed facades and slit windows. The security is now tackled by introducing burglar bars, alarm systems, and cameras while privacy aspects are dealt mostly with the use of curtains or blinds to the interior face of the openings. Though shutters and jaalis have mostly been suppressed in the Mauritian Architecture of today, its essence of multi-skin and unique cultural expression that it represented may still be relevant and need to be explored further through in-depth research and creative applications.

Furthermore, the Jaalis and wooden shutters were perfect examples

of simple, passively sustainable, and effective solutions practiced in local houses of Mauritius that may well become applicable as the sustainability consciousness grows.

Overhangs, on the other hand, were successfully adapted and were retained even when construction techniques shifted drastically from timber pitched roofs to concrete flat roofs. Overhangs are now built in several materials, namely metal, timber, and concrete, with a variety of alterations, mix and match, and adaptations, even though the adaptability of Concrete roofs to the Mauritian climate needs to be explored further.

Overhangs also act as façade embellishments and add-on elements that families install to their existing houses when the need was felt or when they saved enough money to implement them. Two major contemporary uses can be deducted from the understanding of overhangs in the Mauritian context. Firstly, as plug-in and flexible elements to houses that are designed in such a way that users can add as complementing architectural elements months or years after they have started living in their houses. Secondly, the essence of overhangs can become an integral part of the Architecture as a fixed response, such as volumetric protrusions and intrusions that have the same protective characteristics as the overhangs but are not read as separate elements from the main volumetric expressions.

Conclusion

There are several opportunities to explore the relevance of the cultural expressions found in the early houses of the Hindu Indo-Mauritians. They were integrally sustainable in many ways and did not rely on academic classifications to prove their sustainability status. They were not expensive to build, maximised usage of space, had inherent climate control systems and presented multi-layered solutions, successfully balancing spiritual, religious, cultural, environmental, as well as the requirements of the individual, the family, and the neighbourhood. However, there have not been many academic studies and analyses of such houses in the past in Mauritius, when it is clear that many ideas and elements hold great importance to History, Culture, Architecture, Environment, Economy, and Society. Mauritius is a diverse society that has been resilient in many adversities and has emerged as a strong tolerant country that celebrates all cultures. Aspects of society that promote unity in diversity must be researched not only for academic purposes but also for application in our contemporary setting. There is much scope for further in-depth studies in not only old Hindu houses but also those of Muslim, Tamil, and Chinese that can provide a base for studies on expressions of syncretism in the Architecture of Mauritius and for identifications of more formal contributions that Architecture has in the Mauritian culture.

Glossary of terms

La Varangue	<i>Main sitting area of the traditional Indo-Mauritian house, usually open on sides but covered with roof.</i>
Caste	<i>Indian social class system</i>
Vernacular Architecture	<i>Local building that was not designed but followed traditions, based on trial and error, and used local available materials.</i>
Vaastu shastra	<i>Vāstu śāstra – literally "science of architecture" is a traditional Hindu system of Architecture based on ancient texts that describe principles of design, layout, measurements, ground preparation, space arrangement, and spatial geometry.</i>
Kalimai	<i>Early praying places of neighbourhood that were used by many for veneration and other religious and social activities.</i>
Hanuman Temple	<i>Introduced much later in Mauritius and commonly called 'Mahavir swami' though the name and function are for Hanuman praying and protection of the house.</i>
Pooja Ghar	<i>Personal prayer space found in individual houses depending on people's beliefs</i>
Sandhya	<i>Daily prayers done at home.</i>
Baihtka	<i>Baithka in Mauritius are referred to as a place in a locality where culture, religion and traditions are taught to children.</i>
Griha Pravesh	<i>Hindu religious ritual performed before occupation of a new built house.</i>
Chaukhat	<i>Threshold of main entrance door of a house traditionally made in timber.</i>
Chattai	<i>Rectangular rattan mats commonly used for sitting on the floor by Indo-Mauritians.</i>
Chulha	<i>Traditional Cooking stove made of cow dung, mud, and stone.</i>
Aangan	<i>Courtyard or yard of a typical Hindu Indo-Mauritian house.</i>
Tulsi	<i>Holy basil plant considered as sacred in the Hindu philosophy.</i>
Godon	<i>Semi-room commonly found in Indo-Mauritian houses used for storage of goods and for sleeping.</i>
Chakki	<i>Two circular stones placed on top of each other with the top one fitted with a metal rod handle and a hole in the centre where grains were put and crushed by circular movements of the top stone done by manually rotating it by holding the metal rod.</i>
Roche laver	<i>Basalt stone used for washing clothes when water became readily available and the practice of clothes washing at riverbanks stopped.</i>
Roche cari	<i>Basalt stone for used for making pulps by mixing herbs and spices used in Indian food preparation.</i>
Karipoule	<i>Curry tree or sweet neem leaves used in traditional Indian food preparation. The Mauritian name was probably derived from its Tamil name karivēppilai.</i>
Jaali	<i>Term for a perforated wall or latticed screen, usually with an ornamental pattern constructed using calligraphy, geometry, or natural patterns.</i>

Notes

- 1 In 1870, the mortality rate for the Europeans was 18.4 per thousand; among the creole population 66.6 per thousand; among the Indians no less than 158.6 per thousand. Holmberg, L. (1962)
- 2 Many Indians left Mauritius and returned home as soon as their contracts allowed. Up to 1924, when immigration had practically ceased, the total number of Indians brought to Mauritius was 453,036, but 169,692 of these had left the island again. Holmberg, L. (1962)

- 3 Cow dung mixed with mud was commonly used as floor and wall finishes. It is believed that the properties of cow dung are good for insulation, have health benefits, are an insect repellent, and are believed to emit positive energies for spirituality.
- 4 The influence of the British and French Architecture (termed as Colonial in this article) was already present on the Island and served as a heavy influence, reference, and greatly guided the available craftsmanship on the island at that time.
- 5 House types and sizes were determined by the economic status of the families. Families with a high economic status constructed houses made of stone and corrugated sheets, while those with a low economic status built houses from bamboo and hay, covered with a mixture of cow dung and red soil.
- 5 The social organisation system has been perpetuated for thousands of years.
- 6 It is true that the *baithka* was the nerve centre of the community in the old days. It was in the *baithka* that they would teach their children the vernacular and inculcate religious and moral values. (Boodhoo S, 2010).
- 7 Traditional food from various cultures appropriated in Mauritius by all and representative of the diverse culture of the country.
- 8 An in-between space is referred to here as a space that is neither inside nor outside. It occurred accidentally under overhangs or roof protrusions specially kept for such activities.
- 9 Mauritius is frequently visited by cyclones during summer.

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Nandini Sarangi

MICHAEL CERNEA'S IRR MODEL AND NEW REHABILITATION POLICY: A CASE OF KALINGANAGAR PROJECT, ODISHA

Abstract

The paper examines the validity of Michael Cernea's Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction (IRR) Model in the context of contemporary changes to rehabilitation and resettlement policy by looking at the case of involuntary displacement in Kalinganagar Project, a steel plant operated by Tata Steel in Odisha. Through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with displaced individuals, the study reveals a complex narrative where issues of inter-generational equity and a growing sense of deprivation overshadow improvements in infrastructure, earnings, and living standards. The shift from a subsistence economy to a market-driven industrial environment has led to discontent. The analysis highlights critical gaps in the policy, chiefly in its one-time, top-down approach to rehabilitation, which fails to account for long-term socio-economic challenges confronting the displaced communities. Rigid and uniform application of rehabilitation strategies needs to be replaced by policies tailored to the specific socio-economic realities of the displaced groups like the Scheduled Tribes. Finally, the study underscores the inadequacy of one-time mitigation measures in addressing the long-term impoverishment risks. A more sustainable, multi-generational support framework is suggested since backwardness has not gone away by transferring benefits to the displaced generation.

Keywords: *IRR Model, Impoverishment risk, Development-induced displacement, Involuntary displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement*

Introduction

Over the last fifty years, research on development-induced involuntary displacement has demonstrated impoverishment risks displaced families face (e.g., Cernea 1999, Cernea 2000, Cernea 2006, Downing 2002, Fernandes 2004, Fernandes 2007). While industries and dams came up heralding economic development, the host population suffered impoverishment, i.e., their lives became worse than their pre-displacement status. To address the hazard of

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impoverishment, Cernea (1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) developed the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) Model, which has been a dominant analytical framework in the study of development-induced involuntary displacement. The model postulates that state authorities and project proponents can predict and mitigate these risks through policy measures. Cernea (1997) lists eight areas of risks: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, increased morbidity & mortality, food insecurity, loss of access to common property & services, and social disarticulation. Cernea (2000: 3660) argues that the IRR Model “adds substantively to the tools of explaining, diagnosing, predicting and planning for development and thus helps create the knowledge compass needed for complex resettlement situations.” Impoverishment in development-induced development has been widely used and validated in empirical studies, such as those by Patnaik (1989), Baboo (1991), Ramaiah (1995), Mathur & Marsden (1998), Mahapatra (1999), Rajagopal (2000), Downing (2002), Lobo & Kumar (2009), Somayaji and Talwar (2011), Scudder (2011), Kumar (2014), Pattnaik (2013), Ambaye & Abeliene (2015), Mukherjee & Pattnaik (2025) and continues to guide research and policy in this field.

Since the development of the IRR Model, there has been a paradigm shift in the policy on land acquisition in response to resilient anti-displacement movements that led to project failures, e.g., Baliapal Integrated Test Range Project in Odisha (1984-1990), Singur (2006-2008), POSCO (2005); Niyamgiri (2004-2009). In other places, projects were delayed, or land to be acquired had to be curtailed because of strong anti-displacement movements, e.g., Narmada Bachao Andolan (1985-1993). The acquisition of land for industries and infrastructure projects continues to be a vexed issue engaging policymakers and academics alike. There is now a clear understanding that though land acquisition cannot be altogether avoided in a developing economy with needs for rapid industrial and infrastructural growth, the use of the coercive apparatus of the state to acquire land or sloppy rehabilitation and resettlement carries significant political as well as project risks. As a result, the colonial era Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (Government of India 1894) has been replaced by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act 2013 (Government of India 2013). The rights of forest dwellers have been recognised under the Forest Rights Act of 2006 (Government of India 2006). Besides, the policies at a normative level relating to rehabilitation and resettlement have undergone many changes to ensure proper rehabilitation and resettlement to mitigate impoverishment risks. The legal and policy frameworks that influenced the IRR Model have, therefore, been substantially altered. There is a need to carry out empirical studies using contemporary cases of displacement in the current ecosystem to evaluate the extent to which impoverishment risks are getting mitigated under the new rehabilitation and resettlement regime and whether the IRR Model is still valid in understanding displacement.

Tata Steel Kalinganagar Project

The Tata Steel Kalinganagar Project was selected as a case study for several reasons. First, it stands as one of the most significant single cases of involuntary displacement in recent Indian history, with 3,478.608 acres of land acquired and 1,234 families displaced from four revenue villages consisting of 13 hamlets, as shown in Table 1. Second, the project experienced significant opposition during the land acquisition process, which included violent clashes in 2006 that led to the loss of 14 lives when police attempted to evict families forcibly. Third, the Kalinganagar Steel Plant, with an annual production capacity of six million tons, was commissioned in 2015. By now, the rehabilitation and resettlement processes have been completed, providing an opportunity for an objective evaluation of the success or failure of the new rehabilitation and resettlement regime.

The rehabilitation and resettlement followed Guidelines issued in 2005 specifically for the Kalinganagar Integrated Steel Plant Project (Government of Odisha, 2005). These guidelines were later subsumed under the Odisha Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy, 2006 (Government of Odisha, 2006). Heads of families, sons above 18 years, unmarried daughters above 30 years, widows, orphans, and physically and mentally challenged were enumerated as separate families for entitlement benefits, as shown in Table 2. The adoption of a new definition of family led to the number of families initially enumerated as 562 in 1996 increasing to 1234.

The eight risk mitigation measures can be reconstructed from a study of the policy documents relating to rehabilitation and resettlement, as the project promoters followed them in Kalinganagar.

Landlessness: The loss of land was to be fairly compensated by cash so that displaced families could buy land elsewhere.

Joblessness: One person was to be nominated by each family unit and provided a job, or if the person was unwilling to take up employment, then cash in lieu. The person so nominated was to receive a maintenance allowance till employed, preventing any disruption to livelihood during the transition.

Homelessness: All the displaced families were to be provided one-tenth of an acre of homestead land in a resettlement colony and house-building assistance in cash for building a new house.

Marginalisation: The livelihood of the families was to be restored by providing jobs or cash-in-lieu, and they were to be relocated to rehabilitation colonies to re-establish community life.

Food Insecurity: Families were to receive a maintenance allowance for two years after the vacation of land. They were also entitled to the benefits of the Public Distribution System. The Company was to provide monthly

groceries till one person in the family was employed.

Increased Morbidity and Mortality: The rehabilitation colony was to be provided adequate medical care by establishing a hospital. Besides, the colonies were to be provided with necessary health care.

Loss of Access to Common Property and Services: Community assets such as Roads, Community Centres, School Buildings, Health Centres, Anganwadis, Playgrounds, Places of Worship, Burial Grounds, Water Supply, Electricity, and other infrastructure were to be provided, whether they existed in the original village or not.

Social Disarticulation: The families were to be resettled in rehabilitation colonies, allowing them to retain family and kinship networks.

The reconstruction of the risk mitigation measures, at least on paper, looks adequate in policy and their rationale can be explained using the IRR Model. The question, therefore, is whether these policies have led to mitigation of impoverishment risks. If so, then the IRR Model is still valid in understanding the area of 'development-induced involuntary displacement' and is an adequate policy tool to predict risks and plan mitigation measures leading to the complete elimination of the hazard of impoverishment.

Method

Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with displaced families in September 2023, moderated by the researcher. FGDs have been used in social science research for a long time. Fontana & Frey (2000: 385) define FGD as "an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups of typically six to eight people participate in the interview for one-half to two hours." In a narrative personal interview, the interviewee can drift into personal recollections at the cost of accuracy and may not get the opportunity to rectify, modify, or edit information shared with the interviewer.

On the other hand, a group interview provides a setting for validating the data in two different ways. First, others may intervene with helpful prompts that can enhance recollection or modify views to make them more accurate and less vulnerable to misinterpretation. Second, others may provide different information or opinions that help in discussion that can lead to a collective construction of the generally held views of the community. In the process of debate and discussions, data becomes more objective and nuanced. Ultimately, group construction offers a more accurate picture of the problem's context and various nuances of the problem. However, there is a risk of the group trying to suppress less popular or minority viewpoints and exaggerating what is perceived to be in the group's collective interest. Blumer (1969: 41) argues that an interview of a small number of persons or a group "is more valuable many times over than any representative sample. Such a group, discussing

collectively their sphere of life and probing into it as they meet one another's disagreements, will do more to lift the veils covering the sphere of life than any other device that I know of."

All three groups for the FGDs were formed in a natural setting, with members of the resettled families. The first group consisted of senior citizens: four men and four women. Their age ranged from 61 to 70 years. They are relocated to the same resettlement village. The second group consisted of women, all members of a Self-Help Group. Their age varied from 29 to 56. The third was a heterogeneous group in terms of age (31 to 63), gender, and occupation. In the case of all three groups, members are part of the same community and have existing relationships. The researcher tried to prevent their intra-group dynamics from influencing the conversation by any member or coalition of members dominating the conversation or the narrative.

Findings

The three FGDs reveal a somewhat coherent narrative; therefore, the findings are summarised together. Even though the compositions of the three groups were different, the outcome turned out to be similar. At a broad level, there was palpable resentment and dissatisfaction with the outcome of the rehabilitation and resettlement despite clear recognition that their lives have become better in many respects.

From Village Society to Industrial Organisation

The picture that emerged is that the rehabilitation colony has better infrastructure than the original village. Displaced families live in better houses. They earn more, have more food, more comfort, and have better living standards. They have electricity, cooking gas, and piped water. They no longer have the compulsion of toiling hard for two square meals a day. Children now go to much better schools, and all families have access to good and free health care. However, some areas of critical concern emerge in their new lives in the rehabilitation colonies. The displaced generation has not been able to adjust to the new life of working in an industry. The tribal way of carefree and unfettered existence close to nature differed significantly from life as workers in an industrial organisation. So, there is a sense of nostalgia and loss. They must reach the factory at a particular time and perform assigned work. With some elementary training, they could not have acquired skills to a level necessary to succeed in the new environment. Many of those who got jobs, have indulged in conspicuous consumption, mainly drinking. Some have even married a second time, abandoning their families, adversely affecting family life. Women were, in particular, very critical of the gains. Even those given jobs realise that they were not educated and skilled and, therefore, were provided low-paid jobs at the bottom of the organisation and not respected at all. The factory is built on their land, but they have no dignity. There is no

recognition of the sacrifices they have made, and this fuels their resentment. The idea that one job per family and house in a resettlement colony will be enough to mitigate risks, looks good on the surface. As the groups deliberated, the inability to cope with the new situation was evident.

The realities of market societies

The members realise that everything in their new life is about money, and they do not have enough money. A market is a harsh and coercive organisation for a person without purchasing ability. In their original village, they grew vegetables in the kitchen gardens, reared livestock, and collected wood and forest produce from the nearby forest. They have shifted entirely to buying their daily needs from the local market by paying money. The new life has increased their appetite or requirement for goods sold in the market. They realise that they need much more money to satisfy these needs. They feel a sense of relative deprivation. A second aspect is that relationships have become undervalued in a society where cash becomes the essential determinant of value. People with money have more respect than those who are struggling. The emergence of inequality is contrary to the ethos of a much less differentiated tribal community to which they belong. From living in a village economy, they now have to face the full force of a market economy, causing frustration and anguish.

The concern for the next generation

Families have become landless as the compensation was inadequate to buy alternate land. They spent the compensation amounts to construct their houses as the assistance for house construction was insufficient. Some have spent the money on other forms of consumption like buying a bike or organising children's marriage, etc. They realise that the next generation will be landless and suffer serious consequences. There is a lot of resentment over inter-generational equity. Firstly, those who had not reached the age of 18 in 2005 (the cut-off date used for identifying families) have now reached the employable age and realise that they are not entitled to any jobs. Secondly, when a person retires, the job does not pass on to the next generation, unlike land, which can be bequeathed. So, employment provides livelihood but cannot be inherited. The next generation is experiencing a loss of livelihood. This reality is beginning to dawn on the community, and they are angry about it. The youth now go to distant places as migrant workers for livelihood. The idea that development in the area will create new job opportunities for everyone seems not to have worked. There has been no trickle-down effect. Now, they have to compete in the open job market once the protection of secured jobs as displaced families is gone with retirement at the age of 60 years. The next generation is unable to compete to get skilled jobs in the industrial economy or become entrepreneurs to make a living from business and trade. The capacity

developed in the course of one/two generations is inadequate to be successful in the new economy. Backwardness could not have and has not gone away with one generation provided a job. The members felt that the authorities were only interested in their land, and now that the Company had taken away their land, no one had any concern for them. They are left to fend for themselves. The rehabilitation and resettlement activities, viewed as a one-time activity, have ended. The money that the promoters were required to spend has been spent. Now, there are no entitlements, rights, or obligations on the part of the project promoters to fulfill.

The continuance of the trust deficit

To begin with, the host community did not trust government officials, local politicians, and company managers. This lack of trust is an existential reality of tribal communities borne out of day-to-day lived experience in negotiating with the outside world. They are aware of their lack of capacity to deal with these outsiders, who they find are too cunning and powerful. This cultural attitude of distrust was exacerbated when an attempt was made to evict them from their land forcibly by use of coercive state power, like threats, criminal cases, and the use of police force. Thereafter, the communities moved out of their villages and vacated the land for the industry by negotiating what they considered at that stage as a good benefit package. There was a scope for the government officials and the Company to rebuild trust after people agreed to be displaced. The delay in relocating the families to the resettlement colonies and the long wait of 10 to 15 years to get a job has been very disappointing. After the families were displaced, the project promoters kept them in transit camps for years. They survived on free rations and some stipend. Jobs began to be provided only in 2013, though many had to wait beyond the commissioning of the factory in 2015 to get employed. The original notification for acquiring land was issued in 1992; resettlement took a long time. There is no sustained communication, and the families believe that once the land is gone, their utility to the State authorities and the project promoters no longer exist. The optimism that everything will be ok by the time resettlement is completed has proved to be a mirage. Families are, consequently, feeling cheated. They do not think that they were given a fair deal.

Gender Issues

The FGD with women raised many gender-specific issues. In these tribal societies, women are almost equal partners in the production process. They go to the field, work as farm labour, go to the forest to collect forest produce, and even work as non-farm labour. Their role is vital to providing for the family. The male folk do not share family responsibilities in equal measure and often indulge in excessive drinking and way-ward lives. This traditional role of women as providers and caregivers seems not to have been very well understood either

in policy or by the promoters and government officials. Sons above 18 years were considered as separate families for the purpose of employment, whereas unmarried women above 30 years were considered a separate family. Very few women in these communities remain unmarried till 30 years, and therefore, they were not considered as separate family units. This definition of family is against the fundamental Constitutional rights of equality before the law and equal protection of the law. The policy discriminated against women. After getting jobs, many men indulge in conspicuous consumption, including alcoholism. Some have accepted a second wife. Some women have been abandoned. Women now have to provide and care for the family while their role in production has decreased as they no longer have land, kitchen gardens, livestock, or collect forest produce, firewood, etc. It would have been different if the policy had treated men and women equally for employment or retained women's productive role beyond their role as caregivers. Women were at the forefront of the anti-displacement movement and were anxious that their responsibility in providing for the family would increase and that men would not share the burden in case things turned out to be worse. Now, women feel that their apprehension was correct. The policymakers seem not to have understood the role of women in these communities and have not entered into any discussion with them to ensure that women do not lose out. The gender disparity has increased, making the status of women worse.

Limitations

The major demerit of FGD is that it tends to be dominated by a few or a coalition of members. The moderator has to show a high level of skill to create a democratic space for the exchange of views without any domination by any member or coalition of members. The moderator must also give particular attention to more reserved members who usually avoid speaking out unless requested. The quality of an FGD is highly dependent on the researcher's skills and the members' capacity and willingness; in that sense, the output is dependent on a host of variables that cannot be tightly controlled. So, the findings can alter with a different moderator, a different group composition, or a different style of conducting FGDs. There is also a possibility of 'group think' and the group joining hands to project their demands before an outsider with the hope that they will be redressed. The majority view may get the better of truth and nuances as minority views get silenced or under-reported. Any individual disagreeing may fear being misunderstood as betraying the cause of community solidarity. So, there is a scope for the negatives getting exaggerated and the positives getting understated. The best a moderator can do is to recognise possible noise in the data and factor them in the data analysis while drawing conclusions.

Discussion

The IRR Model provides a framework for predicting impoverishment

risks. Cernea identifies eight areas and suggests that these risks are higher or lower depending on the specific case of involuntary displacement. Further, all families are not exposed to the same level of risks; some are more vulnerable, e.g., the landless, destitute, physically disabled, etc. The FGDS show that the mitigation measures, as implemented, did not get rid of the risk of landlessness. A land-for-land policy would have been a much better mitigation measure. The real problem is viewing risk mitigation as a one-time measure and calculating the cost of rehabilitation and resettlement as a fixed project cost. Such a policy could work if a one-time benefit transfer could eradicate backwardness within one generation. The hope that in ten years, mitigation measures will transform the lives of displaced families forever so that they will not experience impoverishment risks in the long run is highly misplaced. When the Indian Constitution was adopted, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities were provided reservation in public employment for ten years with the expectation that in a decade, they would catch up with the rest of society despite suffering atrocities and socio-economic backwardness for hundreds of years. That expectation was misplaced, and affirmative action in the form of reservation in public employment has been extended far beyond the stipulation of a decade and to new groups. Backwardness has multiple dimensions. The new policy regime is still relatively rigid and bureaucratic. They propose a 'one-size fits all' strategy and fail to consider the socio-economic factors relevant to long-term impoverishment risk mitigation of the specific host community. The dominant thinking process that Rehabilitation and Resettlement is a one-time cost to the project promoter (Tata Steel), and once provided land, money to construct a house, and employment to one member of each family, the host community consisting of Scheduled Tribes can compete in the new economy and become beneficiaries of inclusive growth has turned out to be Panglossian optimism.

The displaced families now want another socio-economic survey to identify impoverished persons and new measures to deal with impoverishment risks. The FGDS show, rather robustly, that the lives of these families were upended. They feel highly dissatisfied because they find no further benefit transfer coming their way through policy. Those with jobs are not able to cope with employment or think that they are not respected because of their low-status jobs and lack of skills. On the other hand, those left out of the family enumeration can claim no right to get jobs. When people are retiring at 60 or dying, and the FGDS report increased morbidity attributed to excessive alcohol consumption (difficult to form a definite view in the absence of health data), they realise that the Company has no responsibility towards the livelihood of the next generation. They are suddenly required to participate in a market economy without the skills or capital, and they find the experience harsh and exploitative. These families need extended support beyond the first ten years or the first generation. The next generation is much better educated but not entitled to jobs in the new Steel Plant. Given the level of youth unemployment

in India, they stare at uncertain futures while becoming landless.

The new rehabilitation and resettlement policies, normatively, make no difference between Scheduled Tribes or any other community in rehabilitation and resettlement. The extent of land ownership defines each family. Policymakers should index benefit transfer to the level of socio-economic backwardness of the host community. There should be a clear understanding that socio-economic backwardness is too entrenched and is a multi-headed hydra that cannot be remedied through a one-time measure. This lack of customisation of policies to meet the needs of the host community has created risks of impoverishment, causing high levels of anger and resentment. The promoters view rehabilitation and resettlement, as a one-time cost and time-limited activity, that has ended. Neither are they required to share future benefits nor are they needed to create an institutional framework to look after the displaced families. One-time rehabilitation and resettlement is, thus, an inadequate risk mitigation. The IRR Model does not limit itself to predicting only eight risks or suggest that mitigation measures should be a one-time benefit transfer. The model's strength lies in helping policymakers predict risks and recommend mitigation measures in the demographic and cultural context of the host community. The onus is on state authorities and project promoters to ensure that risk mitigations do not fail in the long run. The policy regime in the case of Kalinganagar is undoubtedly an improvement on the past. It has led to substantial improvement in the living standard of the host population but still falls short of preventing impoverishment in the long run.

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Basanta Kumar Bindhani and Jayanta Kumar Nayak

TRADITIONAL HEALING PRACTICES: PLANT-BASED, ANIMAL-BASED, AND SPIRITUAL THERAPIES AMONG THE TRIBALS OF KORAPUT DISTRICT, ODISHA

Abstract

*This study explores traditional remedies used by tribals in remote areas of Koraput district of Odisha, conducted among 243 individuals, including 8 traditional healers from 14 villages. It documented the use of 45 plants and 15 animals to treat around 30 ailments. *Nyctanthes arborists-tristis* L. (UV=0.354), *Curcuma longa* L. (0.305), *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (0.3) were the most cited plants with higher use value (UV). Of the 30 plant families, Fabaceae (rate of use=11.11), Euphorbiaceae (6.67), and Caesalpiniaceae (6.67) were the most represented. The UV of *Gallus gallus domesticus* (0.272), *Homo sapiens* (0.202), and Chiroptera (0.169) was higher among the most cited animals. Of the 13 animal families, the rate of use of Bovidae was higher (20). Commonly treated disorders were skin diseases, colds, fever, sickle cell anemia, toothache, jaundice, tuberculosis, dysentery, and sexual disorders. Additionally, the study identified the use of magico-religious or spiritual methods to address various health issues.*

Keywords: *Ethnomedicine, Traditional medical practice, Tribals, Koraput*

Introduction

Traditional medicine is more accessible, affordable, and acceptable among marginalized communities in developing countries (Sato 2012: 625; Mallik et al. 2012: S988). Anthropological studies play a crucial role in preserving this rich traditional knowledge by offering a holistic approach to understanding the cultural context in which these healing practices thrive. Moreover, such research can bridge the gap between indigenous knowledge systems and modern science, facilitating the discovery of novel therapeutic solutions. In India, about 65% of the rural regions depend on traditional medical practices, particularly those residing in remote forests (Mishra et al. 2016: 14). Odisha accommodates approximately 22.85% of the scheduled tribes of the state population and 9.19% of the total tribal population of India. In Odisha, the total number of tribes is

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62, living in harmony with nature in hilly forests of different districts. Koraput, where the present survey is carried out, is one of the underdeveloped districts of Odisha as well as a predominantly tribal populated one, constituting 50.56% of scheduled tribes of the total population of the district (Chandramouli 2011: 409). Most of the regions in this district are situated very remote, inaccessible to modern medical systems, and have a significant shortfall of doctors at primary healthcare centers (PHCs) (Bindhani et al. 2021: 303). In tandem, the tribal people in Koraput mainly rely on traditional medical systems (Bindhani et al. 2021: 303; Bindhani et al. 2021: 1). More importantly, our recent study revealed that the sickle cell carriers in this region mostly depend on ethnomedical practice. The tribals of this district have a high knowledge of biodiversity that governs their livelihood sustainability. Though a few works of literature are available on ethnomedicinal plants, no study is found on the therapeutic uses of animals and their products in the studied district along with the supernatural and religious activities. Specifically, documenting their knowledge of traditional healthcare practices would be advantageous in finding new medicines in the near future.

Therefore, the present anthropological study aims to explore and document the various medicinal uses of plants, animals, and their products among the tribals in Koraput district. Furthermore, the study aims to reveal supernatural and religious activities for treating various ailments.

Methods

The present cross-sectional study was carried out in the tribal villages in the Semiliguda block of the Koraput district, Odisha, where the Gadaba and Paroja tribes are inhabiting (Figure 1). For the present study, villages (n=14) situated in mountain valleys with underdeveloped road communication and infrastructure were selected. All the data concerning medicinal plants and animals were collected with the help of traditional healers (n=8) and the villagers (the male and female traditional healers are locally termed as *Dishari* and *Gurumai*, respectively).

A total of 243 individuals from 243 households were selected randomly to assess their perceptions of traditional medical practice. A survey was conducted among all these households with schedules and personal interviews. The reported medicinal specimens were scientifically identified and authenticated taxonomically using 'medicinal plant names services', 'plants of the world online', and previously available works of literature. The local name for the medicinal materials is also documented. The mode of preparation, process of treatment, proper doses, and the method used to harvest, preserve, and collect medicinal materials from the forest were also recorded. The sources from where the traditional healers get knowledge regarding ethnomedicinal use were collected. The results were presented in terms of the local name, scientific name, family name, and a short description of the plants, animals,

and their products in the alphabetical order of scientific name along with the ethnomedicinal use(s). Furthermore, magico–religious or spiritual aspects of traditional medical practices were obtained through in-depth interviews and case study methods.

The collected data was analyzed using Use Reports (UR). UR is the citation of one plant or animal or their parts used by one informant. The frequency of citation (FC) of all used medicinal plants, animals, and their products was calculated by adding up the total citations or UR for a species.

Use value or UV, is used to express the correlative importance of each particular plant species locally known and was calculated by the following equation (Gazzaneo et al. 2005: 1).

$$UV = \sum \frac{U_i}{n}$$

Further, the rate of use was calculated for various plants belonging to different families by using the formula:

$$\text{Rate of use} = \frac{\text{Number of times a plant family used}}{\text{Total number of plant families}} \times 100$$

All the statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (version 22). Statistical significance was considered at a p-value d— 0.05. MS Excel was used for the sorting of data. Informed written consent, transcribed in local languages, was obtained from each participant before recruitment.

Results

The present study was carried out among 243 individuals, including 8 traditional healers in Koraput district of Odisha. The study found that the tribals of Koraput district mainly rely on two-dimensional traditional medical practice, i.e. firstly, plant and animal-based ethnomedicines, and secondly, magico–religious and spiritual approaches. However, the ethnomedicinal uses of plants and animals, which is the primary objective of the present study, are significantly higher than the supernatural activities in the studied area.

This study explored 45 medicinal plants from 30 families (Table 1) and 15 animals from 13 families with therapeutic uses (Table 2). Most of the plants and animals reported have different medicinal properties based on their parts or products. These were identified as being used for the treatment of about 30 ailments or therapeutic indications. Some common disorders that were treated were skin diseases, cold and fever, headache, toothache, jaundice, tuberculosis, dysentery, sexual disorders, nutritional disorders, and sickle cell anemia (the details are presented in Table 1 and Table 2). *Nyctanthes arborists* L. (UV= 0.354), *Curcuma*

longa L. (0.305), and *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (0.3) were the most cited plants with higher use value (UV) (Table 1). Of the 30 plant families, the Fabaceae (rate of use = 11.11), Euphorbiaceae (6.67), and Caesalpiniaceae (6.67) were the most represented plant families in this study (Table 3). The UV of *Gallus gallus domesticus* (0.272), *Homo sapiens* (0.202) and Chiroptera (0.169) was found to be higher among the most cited animals (Table 2). Of the 13 animal families, the rate of use of Bovidae was higher (20) (Table 4). The comparative analysis of the mean use value (UV) of plant-based and animal-based ethnomedicines revealed that the use of plant-based ethnomedicines (0.109) was considerably higher as compared with animal-based ethnomedicines among the studied population (Figure 2).

Table 1: List of plants and their parts used for medicinal purposes with their use value (UV)

Botanical name	Family name	Local name	Method of preparation and ethnomedicinal use	FC	UV
<i>Abrus precatorius</i> L.	Fabaceae	Runja	5-7 seeds are soaked in water overnight and prepared into a paste from it. The paste is taken orally by the female for birth control.	6	0.025
<i>Adhatoda vasica</i> Nees	Acanthaceae	Basango	Dried leaf powder is applied externally to heal wounds. A decoction of leaves is taken internally to cure fever and taken twice daily to cure asthma. The leaves were immersed in castor oil and then kept warm over a flame and placed for about 5 minutes on the eyelids to cure eye infection.	53	0.218
<i>Allium sativum</i> L.	Amaryllidaceae	Rasuna	To address respiratory infections and other comorbidities associated with sickle cell anemia, a daily regimen involves consuming a paste made from 3-4 fresh garlic cloves mixed with lukewarm water both in the morning and before bedtime.	6	0.025
<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Anacardiaceae	Aamba	Bark infusion is taken to cure diarrhea. Latex is applied on the foot crack to heal up.	1	0.004
<i>Centella Asiatica</i> L.	Apiaceae	Thalakudi	About 5- 7 fresh leaves are taken orally on an empty stomach in the morning to cure jaundice and to the improvement of memory and immunity.	40	0.165
<i>Holarrhena antidysenterica</i> Wall. Ex. G. Don	Apocynaceae	Kurei	The juice of the bark is taken orally to cure dysentery. Bark paste is applied to treat skin diseases.	32	0.132
<i>Holarrhena antidysenterica</i> Wall Cat	Apocynaceae	Kurei	The dried root powder is taken orally to kill parasitic worms. 1 spoonful of decoction of seeds along with honey is taken orally to cure fever.	5	0.021
<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (Linn.) R.Br.	Asclepiadaceae	Arakha	Root paste is applied to treat bleeding piles. Root bark paste along with opium is applied externally on the nostrils to treat the nasal sore. A mixture of dried leaves and stems with latex is applied to get relief from insect bites. The juice of the leaves is dropped into the nostril to cure epilepsy.	17	0.070
<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> R.	Asclepiadaceae	Sugandhi	The dried root powder is taken with milk to improve vital strength and against sexual debility. Crushed roots are taken twice a day orally for 7 days to cure piles.	3	0.012
<i>Aloe vera</i> (L.) Burm.f.	Asphodelaceae	Gheekumari	Two tablespoons of aloe vera juice taken orally to alleviate pain associated with sickle cell crises	1	0.004

<i>Eclipta alba</i> L.	Asteraceae	Bhrungaraj	Half a teaspoon of leaf juice is taken orally to cure urinary infection and constipation. Leaf juice is taken with milk to treat blood pressure.	38	0.156
<i>Bombax ceiba</i> L.	Bombacaceae	Simuli	Root paste is taken orally to regulate periods—the powder of the bark is taken orally to cure diarrhea.	2	0.008
<i>Bauhinia vahlii</i> Wight & Arn.	Caesalpiniaceae	Sialipatra	To cure intestine disorders, a decoction of a few pods is taken orally.	8	0.033
<i>Cassia fistula</i> L.	Caesalpiniaceae	Sunari	The fruit's pulp is applied to the naval area of kids for the treatment of flatulence. The barks are taken with <i>Terminalia chebula</i> fruit and honey to get relief from cough. Leaves are mixed with seeds of <i>Raphanus sativus</i> , leaf of <i>Syzygium cumin</i> , and garlic and made into a paste to apply externally to treat scabies.	21	0.086
<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> L.	Caesalpiniaceae	Chakunda	Paste of the seeds used to cure skin diseases.	7	0.029
<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.	Cannabinaceae	Ganjei	A pinch of leaf powder is mixed with water and then taken orally to treat infantile diarrhea.	16	0.066
<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> Roxb.	Combretaceae	Arjuna	Leaf paste is applied externally to treat acne and dark spots on the skin.	9	0.037
<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i> (Lam.) Kurz.	Crassulaceae	Hemakakiri	Leaf paste is taken orally to cure headaches.	24	0.099
<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn. F.	Dipterocarpaceae	Saala (Sal)	The bark is boiled with water, and then the extracted water is used for bathing to treat measles.	6	0.025
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> Linn.	Euphorbiaceae	Chitakuti	The latex is applied externally to treat toothache. Roots are taken orally by chewing to cure body aches.	26	0.107
<i>Phyllanthus Emblica</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Amla	The seeds are crushed and taken with water orally to cure leucorrhoea. Taken as raw to cure cough and indigestion	46	0.189
<i>Ricinus communis</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Jada	Oil extracted from seeds is applied for the cooling effect to cure headaches. Seed oil is cooked with food and taken orally to cure constipation.	29	0.119
<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Kuntz.	Fabaceae	Palaasa	About 5 flowers are soaked overnight in water, and then filtered out water is taken orally to cure genital problems.	9	0.037
<i>Millettia pinnata</i> L.	Fabaceae	Karanja	Oil extracted from the seeds is applied to the skin for treating common skin diseases. The twigs are used as a toothbrush for dental care. The root pulp is applied externally for the remedy of heat boil. A lump of seeds with black pepper paste is taken to cure intermittent fever. Bark decoction is taken orally to cure the fistula.	57	0.235
<i>Tephrosia purpurea</i> (L.) Pers.	Fabaceae	Banakolathia	Crushed leaves are taken orally to treat hyperacidity. The root is chewed to treat toothache.	1	0.004
<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> L. f.	Fabaceae	Rakta chandan	Wood is crushed with water and applied externally to heal burns and wounds.	48	0.198
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> L.	Lamiaceae	Durlava	The juice of the root is taken orally to treat stomach aches.	12	0.049
<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i> L.	Lamiaceae	Tulsi (Tulasi)	A handful of leaves is boiled with water and the infusion is taken orally to cure stomach pain. Fresh leaves are taken orally in the morning to fix a common cold.	73	0.300

<i>Lawsonia inermis</i> L.	Lythraceae	Henna/Menjuati	A few Leaves are taken with water to treat nail cracks. Leaf paste is applied externally on the affected area to treat headaches and skin infections.	42	0.173
<i>Hibiscus rosasinesis</i> L.	Malvaceae	Mandar	A paste of flowers is applied to treat hair fall. Bark paste is taken orally to cure menstrual pain.	20	0.082
<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Meliaceae	Bhuin nim	Juice of a few leaves is taken to treat constipation and with honey to treat fever. The paste of fresh leaf and turmeric is taken to cure intestinal worms.	18	0.074
<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	Meliaceae	Neem (Nimba)	Leaves paste prepared with Curcuma longa (turmeric; the local name- Haldi) is taken orally as well as applied externally to cure measles and chickenpox. Water is boiled with bark and used for bathing to cure skin infections.	65	0.267
<i>Cipadessa baccifera</i> (Roth.)	Mig. Meliaceae	Pitmari	Leaves are boiled in water, and the hot water is used as a warm washcloth and placed on the head to cure headaches.	29	0.119
<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> Lam.	Moraceae	Panasa	A decoction of stem bark is used to cure headaches. The smoke of dried leaves is inhaled to treat hiccoughs. Leaf juice is taken to reduce hangovers due to alcohol. The fruit pulp is applied locally to treat insect bites.	11	0.045
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L.	Moraceae	Bara	Latex is taken orally to cure gonorrhea and applied externally to treat piles.	6	0.025
<i>Musa sapientum</i> L.	Musaceae	Kadali	Latex is applied to the affected area to treat skin diseases.	14	0.058
<i>Nyctanthes arboris</i> L.	Oleaceae	Gangaseuli	Fresh leaves are crushed and taken orally once daily for 7-10 days to cure malaria.	86	0.354
<i>Biophytum sensitivum</i> (L.) DC.	Oxalidaceae	Lajakuli	The plant is uprooted, dried, made into powder form, and applied externally to heal wounds.	23	0.095
<i>Piper nigrum</i> L.	Piperaceae	Gol maricha	5- 7 grams of powder is taken orally with water to treat night blindness, acidity, stomach pain during the menstrual cycle, cough and cold.	66	0.272
<i>Aegle marmelis</i> (L.) Correa	Rutaceae	Bela	Fresh leaves are taken orally to cure diabetes and stomach disorders. 15-20ml of crushed fruit is taken twice daily to treat dysentery.	60	0.247
<i>Madhuca indica</i> J.F.Gmel.	Sapotaceae	Mahula	Seed oil is used externally to cure skin infections that happen due to the urination of a spider and is also used as a massage oil to treat muscular strains. The flowers are used mainly to make countryside liquor, and a minimal dose is taken orally for children's good health. Root paste is used externally to heal snakebite.	38	0.156
<i>Gmelina Arborea</i> Roxb.	Verbenaceae	Gambher	The fruit juice is taken orally to treat urine infection and reduce body temperature due to fever.	3	0.012
<i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Verbenaceae	Begunia	10-15 ml of infusion of leaves taken orally to cure jaundice.	15	0.062
<i>Curcuma longa</i> L.	Zingiberaceae	Haldi	The powder is mixed with water and taken orally to cure stomach disorders and coughs. The paste is applied to treat wounds and skin diseases.	74	0.305
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe	Zingiberaceae	Ada	They are used as an anti-inflammatory agent. About 5ml of juice is taken orally to treat throat infections. Dry powder is taken orally with lukewarm water to cure mild stomach aches.	23	0.095

Table 2: List of animals and their products used for medicinal purposes with their use value

Scientific name	Family Name	English name	Local name	Part used	Method of preparation and ethno-medicinal use	FC	UV
<i>Anguilla bengalensis bengalensis</i>	Anguillidae	Eel fish	Kochia	Blood	Fresh blood is taken orally to cure anemia and asthma.	6	0.025
<i>Apis indica</i>	Apidae	Honey bee	Mahu machhi	Honey	It is taken orally to cure cough and cold.	15	0.062
<i>Blatta orientalis</i>	Blattidae	Cockroach	Asarapaa	Whole-body	The raw cockroach is taken orally to treat tuberculosis and asthma.	2	0.008
<i>Bos indicus</i>	Bovidae	Cow	Gai	Urine, Milk, Ghee, Dung	Urine is used for treating fever and associated weakness. Lukewarm milk is used to cure headaches, muscle aches, and weakness. Lukewarm ghee is applied to cure mouth infections. Dried dung ash is used as toothpaste.	34	0.140
<i>Capra indicus</i>	Bovidae	Goat	Chheli	Urine, Milk, Flesh	Fresh urine is taken orally to cure tuberculosis. Milk and flesh soups are taken orally to improve nutritional health. Fresh milk is sprayed to treat mouth ulcers.	6	0.025
<i>Capra sp./ Ovis aries</i>	Bovidae	Sheep	Mendha	Milk	Milk fat is applied externally and massaged to cure muscle aches.	13	0.053
<i>Chiroptera</i>	Chiropteridae	Bat	Badudi	Meat	Cooked meat is taken orally to cure a cold, fever, asthma, and rheumatism.	41	0.169
<i>Columba livia</i>	Columbidae	Pigeon	Paara	blood	Fresh blood is massaged externally to cure paralysis.	1	0.004
<i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>	Phasianidae	Chicken	Kukuda	Egg, Meat	Raw egg is taken orally to treat asthma and bronchitis. Meat soup is taken orally to cure a cold.	66	0.272
<i>Homo sapiens</i>	Hominidae	Human	Manisha	Saliva	Fresh human urine is used as an antiseptic to cure wounds.	49	0.202
<i>Hoplobatrachus tigerinus</i>	Dicroglossidae	Frog	Benga	Fat	The extracted fat is massaged externally to get relief from joint pain.	1	0.004
<i>Macra species</i>	Macridae	Bivalves	Shamuka	Shell	A crushed shell is mixed with coconut oil and applied externally to heal acne. Also, the shell is used to cut the umbilical cord or birth cord.	16	0.066
<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Phasianidae	Peacock	Mayura	Flesh	Cooked flesh and soup are taken orally as an aphrodisiac (to boost sexual desire).	1	0.004
<i>Scylla Serrata</i>	Portunidae	Crab	Kankada	Whole-body	The whole-body soup is taken orally to cure jaundice.	8	0.033
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Suidae	Pig	Ghusuri	Fat	Fat is applied externally to cure piles (hemorrhoids).	3	0.012

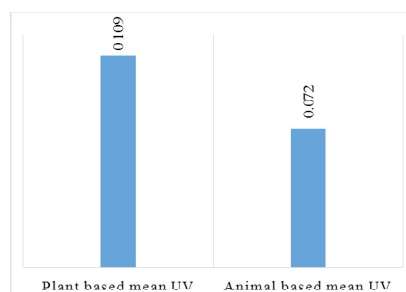
**Figure 3: Comparison between the mean UV of plant-based and animal-based ethnomedicines**

Table 3: Various medicinal plants belong to different families and their rates of use

Family name	Frequency	Rate of use (in %)
Acanthaceae	1	2.22
Amaryllidaceae	1	2.22
Anacardiaceae	1	2.22
Apiaceae	1	2.22
Apocynaceae	2	4.44
Asclepiadaceae	2	4.44
Asphodelaceae	1	2.22
Asteraceae	1	2.22
Bombacaceae	1	2.22
Caesalpinaceae	3	6.67
Cannabaceae	1	2.22
Combretaceae	1	2.22
Crassulaceae	1	2.22
Dipterocarpaceae	1	2.22
Euphorbiaceae	3	6.67
Fabaceae	5	11.11
Lamiaceae	2	4.44
Lythraceae	1	2.22
Malvaceae	1	2.22
Meliaceae	2	4.44
Mig. Meliaceae	1	2.22
Moraceae	2	4.44
Musaceae	1	2.22
Oleaceae	1	2.22
Oxalidaceae	1	2.22
Piperaceae	1	2.22
Rutaceae	1	2.22
Sapotaceae	1	2.22
Verbenaceae	2	4.44
Zingiberaceae	2	4.44

Table 4: Rate of use of various animal products of different families

Family Name	No. of time used	Rate of use
Anguillidae	1	6.67
Apidae	1	6.67
Blattidae	1	6.67
Bovidae	3	20.00
Chiropteridae	1	6.67
Columbidae	1	6.67

Phasianidae	1	6.67
Hominidae	1	6.67
Dicroglossidae	1	6.67
Mactridae	1	6.67
Phasianidae	1	6.67
Portunidae	1	6.67
Suidae	1	6.67

Now, coming to the second dimension (i.e., supernatural and religious approach), which is the secondary objective of the study, the religious agents or village priests (locally known as *Shamans* and *Dishari*) administered some disorders like stomach pains, strains in the neck region, insects and snake bites, as well as witch attack, etc. For instance, the concerned healer holds some edible salt, chants a specific holy mantra, and provides it to the patients to take orally to treat stomach aches (Figure 3). Similarly, to treat neck strain, mustard oil is massaged on the affected area with some specific types of holy mantra. A variety of red stones (locally termed as *dhauka pathar*) is rubbed with water and kept until the sedimentation, and then the surface water is taken orally to cure stomach disorders. Further, among the individuals in the studied area, the perception of healing different disorders through supernatural or religious activities is found in a positive and effective spectrum. They additionally incorporated religious rituals to address ailments such as body pain, stomachaches, snake bites, and fever, attributing these afflictions to fear or witchcraft.

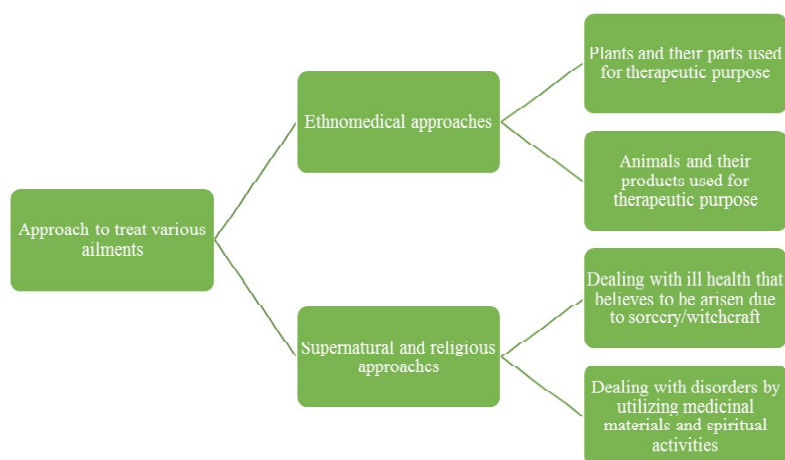


Figure 3: The model of ethnomedical approaches to treat a disorder among the tribals of Koraput district, Odisha.

Discussion

The present study aims to reveal the traditional remedies for various ailments among the tribals in the Koraput district of Odisha. Therefore, to

obtain the aim, information regarding ethnomedicinal practices using various plants and their parts, animal and their products, and religious activities were collected. The study found that the tribals of the Koraput district mainly rely on two-dimensional traditional medical practice, i.e., firstly, plant and animal-based ethnomedicines, and secondly, magico-religious or spiritual approaches (Figure 2). However, the ethnomedicinal uses of plants and animals, which is the primary objective of the present study, are significantly higher than the supernatural activities in the studied area.

This study explored 45 medicinal plants from 30 families (Table 1) and 15 animals from 13 families with therapeutic uses (Table 2). Most of the plants and animals reported have different medicinal properties based on their parts or products. These were identified as being used for the treatment of about 30 ailments or therapeutic indications. Some common disorders that were treated are skin diseases, cold and fever, headache, toothache, jaundice, tuberculosis, dysentery, sexual disorders, nutritional disorders, and sickle cell anemia (the details are presented in Table 1 and Table 2). *Nyctanthes arborists* L. (UV= 0.354), *Curcuma longa* L. (0.305), and *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (0.3) were the most cited plants with higher use value (UV) (Table 1). Of the 30 plant families, the Fabaceae (rate of use = 11.11), Euphorbiaceae (6.67), and Caesalpiniaceae (6.67) were the most represented plant families in this study (Table 3). The UV of *Gallus gallus domesticus* (0.272), *Homo sapiens* (0.202) and Chiroptera (0.169) was found to be higher among the most cited animals (Table 2). Of the 13 animal families, the rate of use of Bovidae was higher (20) (Table 4). The present data on ethnomedicinal practices with several plants and their parts have been matched with previously existing literature (Mohapatra et al. 2018: 1959; Panigrahy et al. 2016: 36; Kar et al. 2013: 36; Mallik et al. 2012: S988; Kumar et al. 2012: 127; Dhal et al. 2011: 4142; Gulco 2001: 25), and revealed that some of the traditional therapeutic plants are dually described in the literature. However, there are differences in how the remedies are administered, the specific plant parts utilized, and the additional ingredients incorporated. Similarly, therapeutic usages of animals and their products are compared with previously published literature¹⁴⁻²¹ (Kioko et al. 2015: 1; Kakati et al. 2006: 163; Mahawar & Jaroli 2006: 1; Jamir & Lal 2005: 100; Solavan et al. 2004: 198; Aja & Padmalatha 2004: 442; Gupta et al. 2003: 342; Girach 1991: 15), and some of them were reported earlier. However, those differ from the present data in terms of treating diseases and methods of administration. Notably, no previous study has been reported on animals and their parts used for ethnomedical practices in Koraput district. Furthermore, the consumption of certain animals mentioned by the tribals contradicts findings from recent literature. For instance, recent studies have highlighted the potential link between the consumption of bat meat and coronavirus infection (Ruiz-Aravena et al. 2022: 299; King 2020: 237). Therefore, further investigation is warranted to ascertain the efficacy and safety of animal-based treatments.

The comparative analysis of the mean use value (UV) of plant-based

and animal-based ethnomedicines revealed that the use of plant-based ethnomedicines (0.109) was considerably higher as compared with animal-based ethnomedicines among the studied populations (Figure 3). Most importantly, no previous study was found that reported both plant and animal-based traditional medicine.

Now, turning to the secondary dimension of the study, which involves supernatural and religious approaches, religious agents or village priests (known locally as *Shamans*) administered treatments for disorders such as stomach pains, strains in the neck region, insect and snake bites, as well as witch attacks. Additionally, a blend of plant-based, animal-based, and magico-religious models was observed in the studied area. For instance, the healer involved in treating stomach aches may hold edible salt while chanting a specific holy mantra, which is then orally administered to the patients. Similarly, to alleviate neck strain, mustard oil is applied to the affected area along with specific holy mantras. In the local practice, a variety of red stones, known as *dhauka pathar*, are rubbed with water and left overnight until sedimentation occurs. The surface water is then ingested orally to alleviate stomach disorders. Moreover, individuals in the studied area perceive healing through supernatural or religious activities positively and effectively for various ailments. Further research is necessary to delve deeper into this approach and understand its scientific basis.

Individuals knowledgeable about traditional medicines reported that they primarily acquired their knowledge from their parents, which aligns with the findings of another study by Mahawar and Jaroli (2006: 1). They also engage in religious rituals to address issues such as body pain, stomach-aches, snake bites, and fever, believing that these ailments result from fear or witchcraft.

Conclusion

The present study documented 43 plants and 16 animals used for the treatment of about 30 ailments or therapeutic indications. From an anthropological perspective, understanding these traditional healing practices is crucial as it highlights the intricate relationship between cultural beliefs, social structures, and ecological knowledge among the tribal communities. Such insights can inform contemporary healthcare practices and enhance biodiversity conservation.

In the present study, some commonly traditionally treated disorders were skin diseases, cold and fever, sickle cell anemia, headache, toothache, jaundice, tuberculosis, dysentery, sexual disorders, and nutritional disorders. *Nyctanthes arborists* L. (UV= 0.354), *Curcuma longa* L. (0.305), and *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (0.3) were the most cited plants with higher use value (UV). Of the 30 plant families, Fabaceae (rate of use=11.11), Euphorbiaceae (6.67), and Caesalpiniaceae (6.67) were the most represented plant families in this study. The UV of *Gallus gallus domesticus* (0.272), *Homo sapiens* (0.202) and Chiroptera

(0.169) was found to be higher among the most cited animals. Of the 13 animal families, the rate of use of Bovidae was higher (20). Most importantly, the study revealed instances of practicing magico-religious or spiritual approaches to treat different diseases apart from ethnomedicines based on plant and animal products in the studied area. However, the use of plant-based ethnomedicines was found to be significantly higher than animal-based ethnomedicines and magico-religious practices. The perception of healing different disorders through supernatural or religious activities was found to be positive and effective among individuals in the studied area. Additionally, religious rituals were incorporated to address ailments such as body pain, stomach aches, snake bites, and fever, with afflictions often attributed to fear or witchcraft.

Traditional cultures, natural resources, and knowledge of ethnomedical practices in India are rapidly disappearing due to modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. Currently, older individuals serve as the primary guardians of this vital information. Therefore, it is imperative to systematically document traditional knowledge of medicinal practices in all autonomous regions or groups, which remain mostly unexplored. Such efforts will preserve cultural heritage and provide valuable insights for future research and healthcare practices.

Declaration

The authors declare that they have no competing interests. Raw and treated data generated during the study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article. The study was approved by the institutional ethical committee.

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Muzamil Rashid, Abhik Ghosh and Irfan Ali Banka

CONSTRAINTS OF PASTORAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF GUJJAR AND BAKARWAL OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Abstract

This paper explores the complex annual migration patterns of the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoral community in Jammu and Kashmir, examining how physical geography, cultural traditions, and climatic variability shape their mobility. Through ethnographic fieldwork, the study reveals the multifaceted challenges these pastoralists face—including inter-community tensions, shrinking grazing lands, infrastructural development along migratory routes, and the disruptive impact of state policies on traditional on-foot movements. Despite these constraints, the community demonstrates remarkable resilience and commitment to preserving their pastoral heritage. The findings highlight that many perceived challenges are less about natural hardship and more about external interventions that overlook the community's lived realities. Road construction, deforestation, and unconsulted development projects threaten not only their livelihoods but also the ecological sustainability of the rangelands they steward. The study emphasizes the need for participatory policy-making that centers the voices and knowledge of the pastoralists. By doing so, governance can better support both the sustainability of mobile pastoralism and the cultural identity it sustains. Ultimately, this paper underscores the critical role that pastoralism plays in the socio-economic and ecological fabric of the region. It calls for a reimagining of development models—ones that integrate indigenous perspectives and promote a balanced coexistence between tradition and modernity.

Keywords: *Pastoralism, Gujjar and Bakarwal, Constraints, Adaptation, Ethnography, Mobility*

Introduction

The Gujjar and Bakarwal of Jammu and Kashmir form a historically significant tribal group whose livelihood primarily depends on rearing livestock, mainly sheep, goats, and cattle (Khatana 1992; Rashid et al. 2024: 2746). While pastoralism remains central to their economy, many also engage in small-

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scale farming, horticulture, and other supplementary occupations to sustain their livelihood. According to the 2011 Census, Gujjar and Bakarwal constitute the third-largest ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir, making up over 11.9% of the region's population. They share a common ethnicity, language, religion, and cultural traditions, which unify them as a single community (Suri 2019: 57). Within this community, a distinction is made based on livestock preferences, with those primarily rearing cattle referred to as Gujjars and those tending sheep and goats as Bakarwals (Rao and Casimir 1982: 42).

The Gujjar and Bakarwal follow a cyclical migration between two fixed points—the winter pastures of Jammu and the summer pastures of Kashmir. This journey, spanning hundreds of kilometers across varied terrain, begins each year in April after the *Baisakhi*¹ festival. The migration takes over two months, culminating in their arrival at the summer *Dhoks*², where they graze their livestock on the region's rich, productive pastures. Access to forage at different elevations remains a primary concern for the community, as their livelihood depends on seasonal grazing.

The grazing pastures used by the Gujjar and Bakarwal can be categorized into three types. The first includes the alpine and sub-alpine meadows of Kashmir, known as *Margs*, such as Lien Marg, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Yousmarg (Figure 1). These high-altitude pastures provide nutrient-rich grass that helps livestock regain strength and weight quickly. The combination of abundant moisture, impermeable rocks, and high-altitude conditions sustains lush, revitalizing grass ideal for grazing (Shashi 2006: 22). The second category consists of intermediate pastures located in areas such as Dudu-Basantgarh and Ladha Dhar in Udhampur, as well as Rattan Shah along the Mughal Road. These pastures serve as transitional grazing grounds during the community's migration in spring (forward migration) and autumn (backward migration). The third type comprises the winter pastures of Jammu, situated in the subalpine zone (Directorate of Environment and Remote Sensing 2011). While less productive than the summer pastures, these areas provide essential grazing land when Kashmir remains covered in snow.

Pastoralists encounter environmental, economic, and political challenges that hinder their mobility, yet their resilience reflects a deep-rooted connection with their environment and livestock (Nunow 2024; Reid et al: 2014). Previous studies have examined the socio-economic lifestyle and socio-ecological linkages of Gujjar and Bakarwal migration (Khatana 1992; Casimir and Rao 1985). These studies primarily describe their movement between fixed points—from the lowland winter pastures of Jammu to the highland summer pastures of Kashmir—outlining broad mobility patterns. However, they do not fully address the spatial and temporal constraints shaped by contemporary socio-political and environmental challenges.

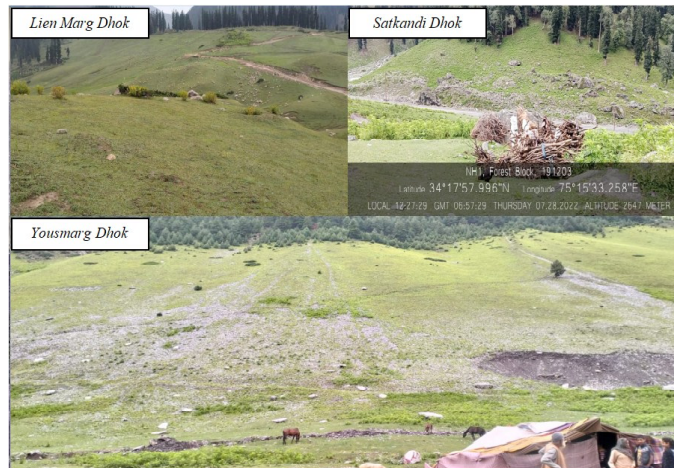
This paper goes beyond describing spatio-temporal migration by

conducting an in-depth analysis of the constraints pastoralists face at different elevations. It bridges the gap in existing research by exploring the adaptive strategies they employ across seasonal migrations. Understanding these strategies is essential for assessing mobility patterns and informing policies that support sustainable pastoral livelihoods. As the Gujjar and Bakarwal navigate the intersection of tradition and modernization, the paper underscores the need for culturally sensitive, participatory policy-making to safeguard their heritage and sustain their way of life.

To analyze migration patterns and identify the constraints pastoralists face at different elevations, the following research questions guide this paper:

- I. How do the Gujjar and Bakarwal migrate in time and space?
- II. What challenges do they encounter throughout their migration cycle?
- III. What key factors influence their annual migration patterns?
- IV. How does the community sustain its centuries-old practice despite various constraints?

Figure 1. Pasture Landscapes of Dhoks in Jammu and Kashmir



Source: Authors (2022)

Study area

Jammu and Kashmir, located in northern India (Figure 2), is characterized by a mountainous landscape with an average elevation of 1,850 meters (6,070 feet) above sea level³. It spans between 75° 57' E to 77° 57' E longitude and 32° 38' N to 34° 15' N latitude (Singh et al. 2020). This study was conducted across Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on the Gujjar and Bakarwal community along their *Rasto*⁴, *Dhoks*, and *Paros*⁵. Authors observed pastoral *Kafilas*⁶ throughout their mobility between Rajouri and Bandipora districts.

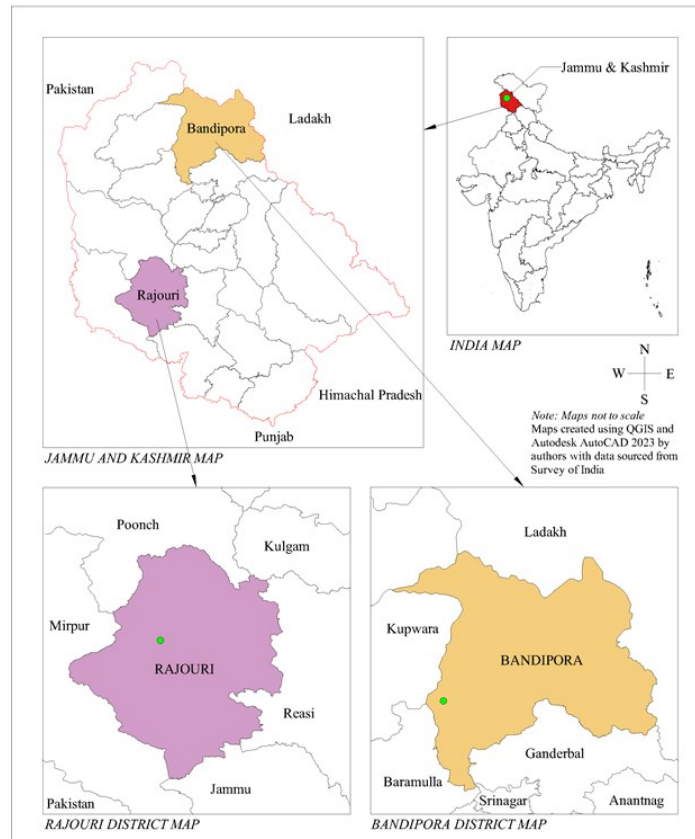
District Rajouri

Established in 1968 after separating from Poonch, Rajouri covers 2,630 square kilometers (Figure 2). Its geographical coordinates are 33° 22' 16.6368" N, 74° 18' 55.8216" E. The district has a population of 642,415, including 232,815 Scheduled Tribe members⁷. Livestock rearing is the primary occupation, and Rajouri has the second-largest Gujjar-Bakarwal population after Poonch.

District Bandipora

Carved out from the Baramulla district, Bandipora (34° 25' 12" N 74° 39' 00" E) is nestled between the Harmukh peaks and Wular Lake (Figure 2). The district's favorable agro-climatic conditions, abundant grazing lands, and topography make it well-suited for pastoralism. Key pasture areas include Kandi/Gurez, Booth Panaar, Athwutoo, Watpora, and Lawarpora, which support year-round sheep and goat rearing.

Figure 2: Study Area in Jammu and Kashmir, India



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

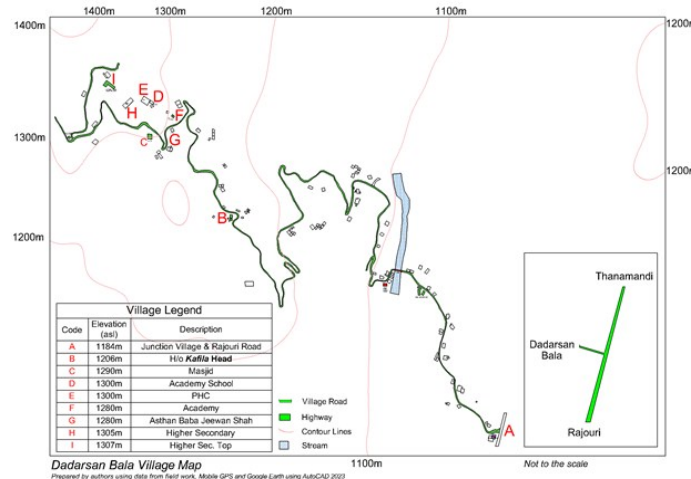
Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative ethnographic research on the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoral community. Ethnography, as a methodological tool, enables an in-depth exploration of their lived experiences, cultural dynamics, and seasonal movements.

Fieldwork was conducted between 2022 and 2025 across Jammu and Kashmir to document seasonal variations in pastoral activities. The data collection methods included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Research settings encompassed *Dhoks*, *Paros*, and the mobile *Kafilas* transitioning from winter pastures in Rajouri (in the Jammu region) to summer pastures in Bandipora (in the Kashmir region).

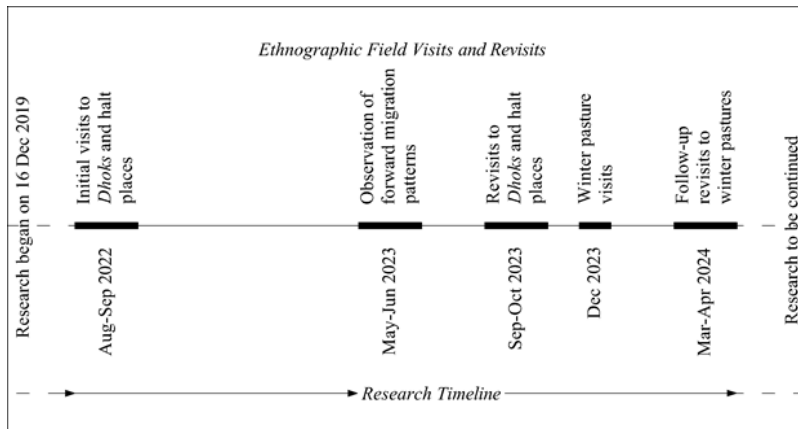
The researchers traversed with the *Kafila* during its forward migration, staying at different halt places to observe and document firsthand experiences. Before commencing fieldwork, necessary written permissions were obtained from the respective district administrations. The migration began from Dadarsan Bala village in Thanamandi, Rajouri (Figure 3), with additional *Deras*⁸ joining or leaving the *Kafila* at different points, making the group composition dynamic. The research route was deliberately chosen along the Mughal Road, due to the high concentration of *Kafilas* migrating through this route. The forward migration of the *Kafila* under observation commenced on May 18, 2023, and concluded on June 24, 2023, lasting 37 days in total.

Figure 3. Village Map of Dadarsan Bala



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The complete migration cycle was documented to capture constraints, rituals, and seasonal variations. Additionally, ethnographic revisits to both summer and winter pastures offered longitudinal insights. These revisits were systematically conducted across different seasonal phases (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Timeline of Ethnographic Field Visits and Revisits among Pastoralists

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

A total of 22 *Deras* were selected for the study, ensuring both logistical feasibility and an in-depth exploration of migratory patterns. Among them, ten *Deras* from the *Kafila* were closely followed until their arrival at *Dhoks* in Bandipora district. While the *Kafila* primarily consisted of Bakarwals, an additional twelve *Deras* (six Gujar and six Bakarwal *Deras*) were studied at various halt locations.

Interviews were conducted in Urdu and Kashmiri to accommodate linguistic preferences. The GPS Map Camera application was used to document coordinates and track the migration route, though network constraints in high-altitude areas occasionally affected data accuracy.

Fieldwork posed significant challenges, including: sleeping in tents near rivers and forests; extreme cold and harsh weather conditions; lack of washroom facilities, particularly for the female researcher; network unavailability in Pir Panjal Range and sometimes in Kashmir Valley; political instability and conflict-related constraints in the Kashmir Valley.

Thematic coding was employed to analyze the qualitative data using ATLAS.ti software. The data collection strategy did not aim for broad generalization but rather focused on capturing migration patterns and constraints representative of a significant portion of the Gujar and Bakarwal community. No claims of statistical representativeness for the entire pastoral population were made based on interviews and observations.

Result

The migration patterns of the Gujar Bakarwal pastoralist community illustrate their year-round journey, transitioning from winter to summer pastures and completing an entire migratory cycle annually. Their journey follows established routes across varying elevations to reach the *Dhoks*.

Traveling in groups known as *Kafila*, they face numerous challenges along the way. Despite these hardships, they remain resilient, adapting to obstacles while preserving their traditional lifestyle and cultural heritage.

Spatial-Temporal Migration

The Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists migrate annually between the southern and northern regions of Jammu and Kashmir for economic sustenance. This oscillation covers different elevations, ranging from the Outer hills or Shiwaliks (600-1,200 meters above sea level) in the south (Jammu) to the Greater Himalayas at 4,570 meters (Khatana 1992). These varying elevations contribute to climate diversity, ranging from the tropical heat of Jammu to the temperate climate of Kashmir.

Areas below 1,220 meters, including Rajouri, Udhampur, Jammu, Kathua, and parts of Poonch, experience little to no snowfall, whereas higher reaches of the Pir Panjal and the Greater Himalayan range, exceeding 4,880 meters, remain snow-covered for over three months each year. During winter, pastoralists move to the outer hills in the south for grazing, and in summer, they migrate to the cooler, higher altitudes. Table 1 illustrates the spatial-temporal movement of the Gujjar and Bakarwal community over time.

Table 1. Seasonal Migration Patterns and Elevational Use of Pastures

Month (FM/BM)	Seasonal Location of Pastoralists	Location Type (Pasture/Route)	Elevation Range (meters above sea level)
Dec-Apr	Outer Hills	Winter Pasture	600-1200
Apr (FM) & Nov (BM)	Narrow Valleys	Migratory Route	1220
May-Jun (FM) & Oct-Nov (BM)	Middle Mountain Range	Intervening Pasture	1820-2440
	Pir Panjal Range	Migratory Route	3335
	Valley of Kashmir	Migratory Route/Long Halt Place	1525-1830
	Side Valleys	Migratory Route	2135-2440
Jul - Sep	Greater Himalayas	Summer Pasture	4570

Source: Compiled by the authors based on ethnographic fieldwork and data (2022–2024).

Note: FM = Forward Migration; BM = Backward Migration.

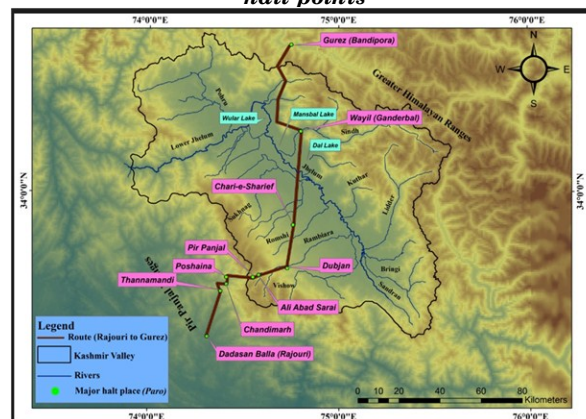
The Migration Panorama

Migration begins from villages such as Dadarsan Bala, Tatta Pani, and Jamula in Rajouri district and leads to Gurez in Bandipora district in Jammu and Kashmir. The route traversed by researchers is shown in Figure 5. The *Kafila* initially consists of 2-3 households, merging with other groups at junctions along the *Rasto*, sometimes bifurcating and reuniting as necessary.

A migration Schedule in a particular area through which the *Kafila* moves is devised to have an objective insight into the behavioral routine depending upon the constraints faced in that particular area. This includes

aspects such as the timing of waking up, packing household goods, initiating the march, the daily march distance, journey duration, *Paros*, and the number of *Dhiyaras*⁹. Early arrivals, swift packing, and extended marches, coupled with late arrivals at successive halt places, signify unfavorable conditions likely to impede the journey. Conversely, the *Kafila* expresses satisfaction when adopting a more relaxed approach, including later wake-up times, leisurely packing, a steady march, and unhurried departures.

Figure 5. Map showing Route which researchers followed during study with major halt points



Source: Prepared by the authors using ArcGIS (2024)

Journey from Winter Pastures to Intervening Pastures

Route: Winter Pastures → Thanamandi → Bafliaz → Intervening Pastures

The *Kafila* traverses major market towns and settled villages before reaching intervening pastures. Key locations along this route include Rajouri, Thanamandi, Bafliaz, and Chandimarh, requiring five days of travel. In these areas, the *Kafila* expedite movements with early rising, swift packing, early departure, and late arrival at succeeding halts, indicating unfavorable circumstances for longer stays. The traffic in the busy markets hampers the free movement of the livestock and the livestock are distressed by vehicle noises. The *Ajri*¹⁰ needs to remain very attentive to manage the livestock.

Fear of clashes with sedentary villagers also compels the *Kafila* to maintain a rapid pace, avoiding unnecessary halts. They only pause briefly for meals without setting up tents. This stretch demands long daily marches with minimal breaks to prevent conflicts, minimize livestock disturbances, and reduce the risk of theft.

In Intervening Pasture

Route: Bafliaz → Chandimarh (Noor Chamb) → Mada → Poshana

Traditionally, pastoralists spent 15-20 days in intervening pastures, grazing livestock and awaiting other groups before proceeding. The sight of melting snow in the Pir Panjal would signal the next phase of migration. Traditional knowledge and experiences help pastoralists in deciding the time for continuing their journey ahead. However, behavioral patterns in these pastures shifted notably in 2022-2023, with less time spent than in previous years. In 2023, the Jammu and Kashmir Tribal Affairs Department took an initiative to provide truck transportation for the pastoralists to their summer pastures. However, logistical shortcomings resulted in significant delays, with many pastoralists stranded while waiting for promised transportation. As a result, migration began later than usual, reducing the time spent in intervening pastures.

Figure 6. Picture of pastoralists loading the trucks provided by government with livestock



Source: Authors (2023)

Interview Excerpt

Interviewer: Can you describe how the time period in the intervening pastures has changed?

Participant: Earlier, we spent 15 to 20 days in these pastures, gathering with other groups before continuing. From here, we had a clear view of the Pir Panjal. Once we saw the snow melting, we would resume migration.

Interviewer: Has this pattern changed in recent years? Why?

Participant: Yes, in 2022-2023, we spent significantly less time here. The government promised transport, but in the end, most of us did not receive it, forcing us to stay longer in winter pastures.

Interviewer: How did this impact your migration?

Participant: Earlier, we could stay longer in intervening pastures, ensuring a smoother transition. But now, with only a few of us getting transport, our entire schedule has been affected. We used to leave on time, reach the intervening pastures on time, and eventually arrive at

our Dhok as planned. However, due to delays, our animals suffered, they were not fed properly, and they grew weak from the scorching heat and lack of grass in the winter pastures.

At Chandimarh near Noor Chamb, a key halting point, pastoralists face unpredictable weather, including sudden rainfall, gusty winds, and hailstorms. During one storm at 8 p.m., strong winds blew away the tent in which the authors lived with a pastoral family, but rather than despair, the women laughed and exclaimed, "*Tumbo udh gayoo!*" ("*The tent has blown away!*"), highlighting their resilient spirit. In the next day afternoon, under sunny skies, the *Kafila* leader predicted rain using traditional wisdom. Observing the clouds, they accurately estimated the timing and secured the tents an hour before the downpour.

Chandimarh, the last town before the mountainous region, marks a long stretch with no villages or towns until the Kashmir Valley. Here, the group halts longer to shop, with the market offering goods, including popular *Kulcha*¹¹ from local shops. The 99 km journey from Chandimarh to Dubjan passes through rugged terrain and pastures, winding through valleys, following streams, and navigating boulders and slippery stones.

In the region between Chandimarh and Poshana, the *Kafila* traditionally traversed the Chatta Pani stream multiple times, negotiating icy waters and floating icebergs as they moved from one bank to another. However, the recent construction of bridges brought about a change in this practice, requiring a more careful and deliberate crossing for the *Kafila*. Here the *Kafila* is divided into two groups: *Dera Kafila* (comprising women, children, and horses) and *Maal* (consisting of livestock and the *Ajri*). The *Deras* use the bridges (Figure 7 & 8), walking along the main Mughal road, while the *Maal*, along with the *Ajri*, take an alternate route, navigating the mountainous terrain and crossing the Chatta Pani streams multiple times. Both groups communicate to coordinate upcoming halts and join each other accordingly.

Figure 7. Picture of Chatta Pani Stream through which *Maal* migrates



Source: Authors (2023)

Figure 8. Picture of Chatta Pani Bridge through which Dera migrates

Source: Authors (2023)

Pir Panjal Range

Route: Poshana → Gaddermaidan → Sathrian → Dubjan → Charar-e-Sharief → Kashmir Valley

The Pir Panjal range, a large chain of Lesser Himalayas, features the iconic *Pir ki Gali* peak, standing at 3,485 meters (11,433 feet) above sea level. Named after Pir Baba Sheikh Ahmed Karim, the mountain hosts a revered shrine at its peak. This region presents formidable challenges for pastoralists, who traverse treacherous terrains, cross streams formed by melting glaciers, and endure extreme weather conditions. Heavy snowfall often renders grazing grounds inaccessible, compounding the difficulties of migration (Figure 9 & 10). The constraints include navigating through melting snow, slippery icebergs, strong cold winds, and treacherous terrain. The journey during snowfall turns to be a dicey affair for the livestock as a mere slip could cost a life. The moving air is extremely cold and piercing because of the presence of icebergs all around (Figure 11). Despite the adversities, the Pir Panjal region remains a captivating fusion of nature and culture, with the pastoralists displaying an enduring connection to their surroundings. The *Kafila* here experiences persistent anxiety, evident in their early rise, swift departure, and late arrival at each successive halt. They take long *Dhiyaras* and spend minimal time at each halt. The ascent from Chandimarh to the Pir Panjal peak is an uphill route, culminating at a shrine. From this point onward, the descent into the downhill route on the other side of Pir Panjal begins.

Figure 9. *Picture of Pir Panjal Peak covered with snow during forward migration*



Source: Authors (2023)

Figure 10. *Movement of Livestock on Pir Panjal Peak covered with snow*



Source: Authors (2023)

Figure 11. *Picture of Pir Panjal Peak covered with Ice Bergs*



Source: Authors (2023)

Figure 12. Picture showing livestock of pastoralists crushed by the vehicle on Mughal road



Source: Authors (2023)

As the *Kafila* progressed, the pastoralists face the arduous task of repeatedly crossing these hillsides adorned with flowing streams of water. Here, the pastoralists again had to choose between traversing via the main road or navigating through the mountains (crossing streams of water). Both options posed significant risks to the pastoralists. Crossing waterways jeopardized their lives, while using the road carried the threat of livestock being crushed by passing vehicles (Figure 12). The route is perilous, marked by deep ravines and steep rocky heights. The unstable, crumbly soil poses a constant challenge, making secure footing difficult to maintain. Moreover, the frequent land movements from above often cause mass falls, obstructing the route.

After crossing the Pir Panjal pass, they rest in the forest due to exhaustion and wait for laggards. Following tradition, the Gujjar Bakarwal offer sweetmeats in the name of tarns or the *Pir* of each pass, expressing gratitude for a safe journey. Late rising, slowly packing, leisurely departures were behavioral patterns seen in these forests. The *Kafila* observed a meticulously planned path through forests taking short *Dhiyaras*, allowing livestock ample grazing until they reach inhabited areas of Kashmir Valley. In one of the interviews, a Sub Divisional Magistrate said that, nearing the southern boundaries of the Kashmir valley, the *Kafila* often encountered organized bands of robbers. These groups would ambush the *Kafila*, hurling stones to make animals tumble down the precipice, and then seize them. The group remained vigilant for the safety of the animals in this area.

Valley of Kashmir

Route: Dubjan → Shopian → Charar-e-Sharief → Wayil Ganderbal

After traversing the dense forests, the pastoralists enter the picturesque Valley of Kashmir, where they encounter settled Kashmiri agricultural communities. At this point, the *Kafilas* often split into smaller groups and follow multiple alternate routes. This phase of migration is marked by long *Dhiyaras*, underscoring the pastoralists' vulnerability to local resistance. Passing through cultivated fields and

lush fruit orchards, especially the vibrant apple groves nestled among willow, poplar, and almond trees, sparks resistance from the settled population.

Resistance intensifies during the forward migration (May–June) when agricultural fields are cultivated and orchards are in full bloom. The movement of large flocks and herds sometimes obstructs roads and traffic, especially when the *Kafila*'s path merges with metalled roads or passes through villages. To avoid conflict, pastoralists often begin their day early, pack swiftly, and depart promptly. In this stretch, livestock—often weakened by the long journey—are marched without adequate halts to reduce damage to crops and property, minimizing potential confrontations with farmers.

Before ascending to the summer pastures in the Greater Himalayas, the *Kafila* takes a prolonged halt to allow stragglers and the rear group to catch up. These halts can last between 15 to 20 days. The *Kafila* followed by the authors rested for 15 days at Wayil¹² under a bridge. Even during this pause, using the main roads for local movement poses risks such as livestock being struck by vehicles.

After the valley ascent, the *Kafilas* face mountains at elevations between 2,940 to 4,291 meters. Crossing passes is challenging, with snow bridges and melting snow obstructing the route, especially during early summer when they reach their *Dhoks* and snow is yet to melt. The *Kafila* navigates these hurdles, demonstrating resilience and expertise in conquering demanding terrains.

Summer Pastures (Dhoks)

Route: Wayil Ganderbal → Gurez Bandipora → Bodogam → Naie (*Dhok* in Bandipora)

The summer pastures, nestled on the northern slopes of the Greater Himalayas, remain snow-covered through winter and are only partially clear even in the summer months. Upon reaching these pastures, the *Kafila* disperses their *Deras* on the majestic Himalayas, having successfully navigated the challenging passes. The Himalayas features several significant pastures where the researched *Kafila* establishes their pastures in Bandipora, opting for different *Dhoks* including Gossie, Dodukhutoo, Badra, Naie, Viji, Mantri, Trisangam, Mawa, Salnie, Patalwan, Kisser, and Minimarg.

From July to September, the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists graze their livestock across these highland meadows, forming a profound seasonal bond with the landscape. These verdant pastures not only provide nourishment for the livestock but also serve as spaces for cultural continuity and community resilience. In autumn (late September to early October), the pastoralists begin their return migration, regrouping into larger caravans and retracing their steps through the same arduous terrain—demonstrating endurance, adaptability, and a sustained connection with both their animals and the land.

Discussion

The migratory journey of the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists reflects a complex interplay of challenges and adaptation. Their seasonal movement in search of suitable pastures underscores a deep-rooted relationship with the natural environment. Despite encountering various constraints at different stages (Table 2), they demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination to sustain their traditional way of life for future generations.

Their annual migration is shaped by an intricate combination of environmental, cultural, and social factors. The community navigates a range of disruptions—from inter- and intra-community conflicts to animal theft, crop damage, road accidents, and disputes with local villagers. Unpredictable weather events such as snowfall, rain, hailstorms, and sudden temperature shifts further complicate their movement. Nonetheless, the pastoralists' adaptive strategies reveal a strong capacity to cope with these challenges (Tufail 2014), often relying on indigenous knowledge systems.

Physically, the terrain itself presents numerous hazards: narrow gorges, steep inclines, slippery paths, landslides, and barren stretches. Expanding settlements and development projects are shrinking grazing land, restricting pastoralists' movement. Shrinking of pastures has forced many pastoralists to adopt alternate livelihoods (Dar 2023). Road construction along migratory routes, pasture fencing, extortion at forest check-posts (Shauq 2018), and land occupation further exacerbate challenges.

Table 2. Constraints Faced by Gujjar and Bakarwal Pastoralists during Seasonal Migration

Region	Constraints	Adaptation Strategies
Winter Pastures	1. Resource scarcity 2. Traffic congestion 3. Inter-Community conflicts 4. Animals die because of the grass grown in late April- May	1. Purchase fodder from local villagers 2. Bifurcate the <i>Kafila</i> into two groups "<i>Maal</i>" and "<i>Dera Kafila</i>" 3. Compensate crop damage; disputes resolved jointly by <i>Kafila</i> and village heads 4. Leave pastures before such grass grows
Intervening Pastures	1. Sudden weather changes 2. River crossings at multiple times	1. Use of indigenous knowledge to protect from unpredictable weather changes 2. Bifurcate the <i>Kafila</i> into two groups "<i>Maal</i>" and "<i>Dera Kafila</i>"
Pir Panjal Ranges	1. Landslides 2. Grass scarcity due to snow cover 3. Unpredictable snowfall 4. Cold temperatures 5. Livestock casualties on Mughal Road	1. Opt for main road for migration 2. Move hastily with long <i>Dhiyaras</i> 3. Use of indigenous knowledge 4. Avoid shearing sheep until reaching summer pastures 5. Choose alternate, less risky routes for animals
Valley of Kashmir	1. Resistance from settled communities 2. Road traffic risks	1. Divide <i>Kafila</i> to avoid concentrated impact; minimize crop interaction 2. Prefer forested and off-road routes
Greater Himalayas	1. Snow-covered Passes	1. Taking alternate routes
Summer Pastures	1. Dotted-Snow-Covered Landscape	1. Let weak and hungry animals recover in nutrient-rich meadows

Source: Ethnographic fieldwork (2022–2024).

Efforts by the government to modernize pastoral migration—such as providing transport services—have often lacked community involvement. These initiatives, while beneficial for a few, disrupt traditional migratory patterns. The state's decision to establish fixed pick-up and drop-off points without consulting the community has led to the abandonment of key intervening pastures, causing overgrazing and degradation in designated areas. Interviews reveal that the Dubjan pasture, for instance, has suffered severe ecological strain due to these top-down approaches.

Beyond the ecological impact, the shift toward mechanized transport threatens the cultural fabric of migration. Ancestral shrines, burial sites, and other culturally significant locations along traditional routes are increasingly bypassed. Similarly, the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Jammu and Kashmir, though intended to empower forest-dwelling communities, has paradoxically coincided with increased evictions of pastoralists. This contradiction—granting rights on one hand and displacing communities on the other—highlights the disconnect between policy intentions and outcomes.

Despite these adversities, Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists remain vital to the region's cultural and economic life. Their role in supplying meat, producing dairy products, and preserving indigenous methods such as the production of *Kalari* (or *Kaladi*)—recognized with Geographical Indication (GI) status—highlights their significance in regional economies and cultural heritage. Preserving these contributions requires a collaborative approach, integrating indigenous knowledge and pastoral expertise into policy decisions. State policies aimed at modernizing tribal communities have often overlooked traditional knowledge systems (Hasnain 2023). The lack of community input in policy formulation has led to challenges that restrict pastoral mobility and threaten cultural continuity. Community members consistently stress the importance of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) before introducing any new development interventions.

Targeted support measures are essential to improve the sustainability of pastoral livelihoods. Introducing livestock insurance schemes—similar to Kenya's Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI)¹³—could help offset losses caused by climate shocks. Financial assistance programs, like the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), can promote sustainability and competitiveness among pastoralists (Nori and Gemini 2011). Additionally, setting up transit shelters at key halting *Paros* would provide essential rest stops and enable small-scale trading, boosting local economies.

In recent years, the absence of market access has led to the discarding of wool in forests (Figure 13). Wool prices have drastically dropped from by around 80 percent, with darker wool fetching even less due to limited dyeing options. Similar challenges are being addressed elsewhere—for example, the

World Bank's DRIVE program in the Horn of Africa supports improved market access and trade for pastoral communities (Stralen and Roberts 2024).

A participatory, inclusive policy approach that recognizes the socio-cultural and economic value of pastoralism is essential. Sustaining these communities requires a collaborative framework that includes them in decision-making processes, ensuring both their resilience and the preservation of a centuries-old way of life.

Figure13. Photograph of discarded wool in forests



Source: Authors (2024)

Conclusions

This paper presents ethnographic insights into the migratory patterns of the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralist community in Jammu and Kashmir. While their journey may appear constraint-ridden from an outsider's (etic) perspective, fieldwork reveals a different reality when viewed through the lens of the community itself (emic). Many challenges often highlighted by outsiders—such as river crossings, harsh weather, or rugged terrains—are not seen as insurmountable by the pastoralists. Instead, the real threats stem from external forces: development interventions, mainstream policy decisions, and state actions carried out without the community's consultation.

The seasonal migration from winter to summer pastures demonstrates a dynamic relationship between the pastoralists and the diverse ecological zones they traverse. Instances such as crossing rivers multiple times with livestock or cheerfully responding to events like tents blowing away are not obstacles in their eyes but part of a life deeply embedded in nature and resilience. These realities call for a more grounded understanding by policymakers, especially when planning infrastructure projects, deforestation, or land fencing that directly interfere with traditional migratory routes and grazing areas.

For centuries, Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists have sustained their mobility using indigenous knowledge to adapt to environmental challenges.

However, modern interventions imposed without participatory processes now pose significant risks to their way of life. Cultural, climatic, and geographic factors all converge to shape their migration patterns, underscoring their remarkable adaptability and emotional commitment to their animals and territories. Their identity is inseparable from the landscapes they traverse, and their livelihoods are intricately linked to these seasonal movements.

Beyond cultural importance, their practice of converting plant biomass into protein-rich food contributes significantly to food security in the region. Yet, existing policies often fail to reflect these realities. The models employed by governing bodies frequently misrepresent pastoral life, leading to disruptions that jeopardize traditional knowledge systems and threaten ecological balance. This study highlights the need for policies that are not only sustainable but also culturally informed and responsive to the lived experiences of the community.

Safeguarding the migratory heritage of Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoralists is essential to preserving the cultural and ecological integrity of Jammu and Kashmir. Future research should prioritize the community's own perspectives, enabling a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the impacts of policy and development on their way of life. A collaborative, inclusive approach is crucial to ensuring the harmonious coexistence of tradition and progress.

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Notes

1. *Baisakhi* or *Vaisakhi* is a spring harvest festival that's celebrated on the 14th or 15th of April (Gregorian calendar) every year. Several Indian festivals coincide with the harvest time and *Baisakhi* is one of them. *Baisakhi*, the name derived from the Bikrami month of Baisakh, falls on April 13 every year and on April 14 once every 36 years. See also Bhalla (2005: 8).
2. In the Gojri language, *Dhok* refers to the high-altitude summer pastures traditionally utilized by the Gujjar and Bakarwal pastoral communities.
3. See Jammu and Kashmir topographic map at <https://en-in.topographic-map.com/map-m6tdn/Jammu-and-Kashmir/>
4. *Rasto*, in the Gojri language, denotes the migratory routes followed by the Gujjar and Bakarwal during their biannual movement between summer and winter pastures.
5. *Paros*, in the Gojri language, refers to the temporary stopovers or halt places along the migratory routes.
6. *Kafila*, in the Gojri language, refers to a migratory caravan.
7. As per District Rajouri website <https://rajouri.nic.in/>

8. *Dera*, in the Gojri language, refers to a family or household unit.
9. *Dhiyara*, in the Gojri language, refers to continuous journeys
10. *Ajri* means hired shepherd in Gojri language
11. Kashmiri *Kulcha* is a kind of biscuit made in Tandoor usually sold by Bakery shops.
12. Wayil is a tourist village in the Ganderbal District of Jammu and Kashmir, India.
13. See Promoting Index Based Livestock Insurance in Kenya at <https://boreshahoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Boresha-IBLI-Technical-Brief-Final-web.pdf>

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Sankha Priya Guha and Upasana Pandey

PROXEMICS IN INSCRIBED SPACE: A STUDY OF MIGRATED BIHARI COMMUNITY IN DUM DUM MUNICIPALITY, WEST BENGAL

Abstract

The subject of “Proxemics” has become relevant in today’s world, particularly for societies that have undergone spatial shifts leading to cultural reproduction in an altered inscribed space. Proxemics refers to people’s use of space as an aspect of culture and Inscribed space represents the relationship between human and their surrounding environment be it physical or social-cultural. Migration is an essential phenomenon of demographic change that leads to proxemics within new Inscribed space where a migratory community accommodates itself through new cultural production. The study reveals the dialogue between proxemics and inscribed space borne out of migration or spatial shift which has gradually led to cultural reproduction amongst the studied community.

Keywords: *Inscribed space, Proxemics, Migration, Cultural reproduction, Bihari Community.*

Introduction

The concept of Space in Anthropology is ever-expanding as it acts as the site of the production of culture. The concept of Space is multifarious and it cannot be brought into any single analytical conceptualization (Guha 2014:10). Culture is enlivened in space such that without space there is no clear conception of culture membership (Gupta 2000:25). In recent Anthropological studies, Space has been used by different scholars bringing forward new theoretical approaches in Cultural Anthropology. Low and Zuniga (2003:187-203) have classified spatial studies into various thematic categories, out of which Inscribed Space is one of the significant concepts which is taken up in this study.

Anthropologist’s considerations of Inscribed Space focus on the fundamental ways in which humans “write” or impute in an enduring way their presence on their surroundings (Low and Zuniga 2003: 185). “Inscribed

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Space” focuses on the way different scholars define the fundamental relationship between humans and the environment they occupy. It implies the way humans write their presence in their surrounding environment. At the same time, this is also true that Inscribed Space is solely a metaphor describing the relationship between humans and their environment. (Low and Zuniga 2003: 13). Many eminent Anthropologists have put forth their views about Inscribed Space in their own way. James Fernandez reveals that a mutual relationship exists between humans and their natural and built environments (Fernandez 1984: 187).

Edward Hall (2003: 51) studied the influence of culture on perception and behaviour of space, thus, putting forth the field of Proxemics, the study of people’s use of space as an aspect of culture (Hall 2003:51). Hall conceptualizes that each individual is surrounded by a bubble. The bubble is symbolic of personal space whose size variation depends on the situation and types of social relationship (Low and Zuniga 2003). Proxemics owes much to the work of Sapir and Whorf, however Hall in his article “Proxemics” puts forth the linguistic portion of his work and argues that “the principles laid down by Whorf and his followers about language apply to all culturally patterned behaviours but particularly to those aspects of culture which are most often taken for granted and operate as Sapir so aptly put it.....” (Hall 1968:84; Low and Zuniga 2003:52).

Migration is an important phenomenon of demographic change which results in the shift in Inscribed space. The Migratory community while resettling them in a new Inscribed space manifests Proxemics in that particular altered space. Within that new Inscribed space, the migratory community is accommodating themselves in the new altered physical and social environment. Hence, we can understand the manifestation of interrelationship existing between Migration, Inscribed space, and Proxemics.

OBJECTIVES

To highlight the objectives in this present empirical research, we do seek to observe and interpret the economic and social change amongst a migratory community post migration in an altered inscribed space. The study further seeks to understand the way a society produces space as an aspect of culture. Most importantly the study tries to understand the modality of Proxemics in an altered Inscribed space following the migration of community

METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted amongst the Migratory Bihari Population settled in the Dum Dum Cantonment area of North 24 Paraganas district of West Bengal. The study has been conducted using the most revered method in Anthropology, the first hand fieldwork. The methodological premise of the

conducted study is predominantly based on a qualitative-interpretive approach. Different anthropological techniques such as participant observation, interviews, and case studies, have been used to meet the aforementioned objectives. The data collected is analysed using qualitative analysis strategies in the form of autoethnography, thick description, and narrative analysis. However, despite qualitative analysis of the data, quantitative analysis is also undertaken to analyse the demographic content of the study.

EMPERICAL DISCOURSE:

The present study has been conducted in Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality in the district of North 24 Paraganas of West Bengal amongst 50 migrated resident Bihari families of U. K Dutta Road and its adjacent areas under the postal jurisdiction of 700028. The 50 families consist of 238 individuals in total out of whom 117 are Males (49.1%) and 121 are females (50.9%).

In Figure 1 and 2, we have shown the cartographic layout of the studied area, both through physical and google earth images.

FIGURE 1: Physical Location of the Studied Area (Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality)

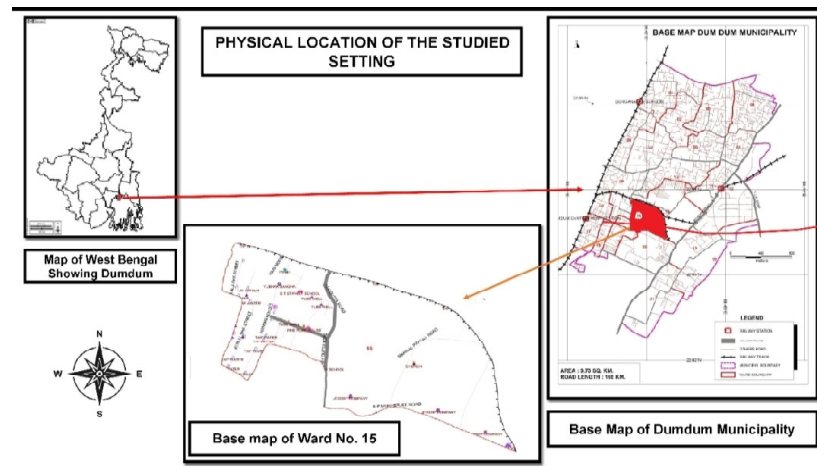


FIGURE 2: Satellite Image (GPS) of Studied Area (Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality)



Migration History

Some of the migrated Bihari families are residing in this area for over a century. The families settled here trace their origin from different districts of Bihar and still frequently visit their ancestral places. Most of the families studied in the present context immigrated to the studied locality in around 1960's. The oldest immigrated family of this area has traced its migration history in 1857 during the first war of independence. Most of the people have migrated due to vocational issues borne out of financial challenges from the very beginning.

As stated earlier, the studied 50 migrated families have their ancestral place in different districts of Bihar viz. Gaya, Siwan, Chhapra, Aara and Muzaffarpur. The overall studied population has their ancestral place located in different villages of the aforesaid five districts, the numerical count of which is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NUMERICAL COUNT OF THE MIGRATED FAMILIES FROM DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF BIHAR.

Sl. No.	Name of the District	Family Count	
		Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Siwan	23	46.0
2.	Gaya	08	16.0
3.	Chhapra	04	8.0
4.	Aara	12	24.0
5.	Muzaffarpur	03	6.0
	TOTAL	50	100.0

Economic character

The studied population profess different types of occupation which include service in the private sector, casual labour, washerman, tea seller, maid-servant, cook, cab driving, different types of businesses like scrap, wood, hardware, and other forms of specialised engagements such as electrician, plumber, and home tutors. From the aforesaid occupational categories, the milk business and role of a washerman are still being continued from their traditional past and is still continuing following migration from their ancestral place. The milk business is continued by the milkman community who hails from the Ahir caste and the washerman community hails from the Dhobi caste. Caste still has a bearing on the economic life of today's urban world. The distribution of the studies population based on their practising occupation is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION ON THE BASIS OF OCCUPATION

Sl. No.	Occupational category	Male		Female		TOTAL	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.	Daily Labour	12	17.6	02	20	14	17.9
2.	Business	31	45.5	02	20	33	42.3
3.	Service	24	35.2	05	50	29	37.1
4.	Others	01	1.4	01	10	02	2.5
	TOTAL	68	100.0	10	100	78	100.0

From Table 2, we can say that out of 238 individuals, 78 (32.7%) individuals are economically engaged, whereas 160 (66.3%) individuals are still unemployed. The unemployed section includes both students and housewives. Maximum numbers of working individuals are engaged in Business of different types as already mentioned. Two female business ladies manage their own business including that of boutique shop and a small factory. Following the business, comes the service categories in which individuals are working in both Government jobs and private firms like private schools, hospitals and banks. The five female service employees work in private sectors including that of bank and other multinational companies. The labour category of the area is predominantly engaged as electrician, plumber, shop or mill worker, painter, mason, cowshed worker, and van puller, whereas 2 female individuals work as a cook at different households. The "Other" is represented profession such as Insurance agent and private tuition. tutors.

Social Identity:

The studied Bihari population hails from different castes shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: NUMERICAL COUNT OF FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS ON THE BASIS OF CASTE

Sl. No.	Name of the Caste	Number of families		Number of individuals	
	Number	%	Number	%	
1.	Brahmin	01	2.0	04	1.2
2.	Lohar	02	4.0	05	1.9
3.	Halwai	02	4.0	10	3.9
4.	Nonia	02	4.0	12	4.7
5.	Gwala	04	8.0	21	7.7
6.	Sonar	01	2.0	05	1.9
7.	Dhobhi	02	4.0	23	8.7
8.	Baniya	04	8.0	23	8.7
9.	Kumhar	04	8.0	17	6.9
10.	Chaurasia	05	10.0	21	7.7
11.	Godh	03	6.0	15	6.0
12.	Rajput	12	24.0	58	24.0
13.	Ahir	08	16.0	40	16.7
	TOTAL	50	100.00	238	100.00

From Table No. 3, it is evident that the number of families hailing from different castes ranges from one to twelve the Rajputs being the maximum and Brahmin and Sonar the minimum respectively

In Table No. 4, we have classified the caste hierarchy on the basis of Varna-Jati concept where the different Caste or Jatis mentioned above are categories under their respective Varnas. The Vaisyas consist of the majority of the Jatis amongst whom Ahirs and Dhobis still perform their caste-based occupation in the studied setting.

TABLE 4: HEIRARICAL DIVISION OF VARNA AND JATI

SL.NO.	VARNA	JATI
1.	BRAHMIN	BRAHMIN
2.	KSHATRIYAS	RAJPUT
3.	VAISHYAS	LOHAR, AHIR, KUMHAR, CHAURASIA, SONAR, GWALA, HALWAI
4.	SHUDRAS	NONIA, GODH

The Family size and type of the 50 studied families in the studied area are shown in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively.

TABLE 5: FAMILY SIZE

TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES	SMALL FAMILY	MEDIUM FAMILY	LARGE FAMILY	VERY LARGE FAMILY
NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER

%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
50	100	08	16	38
76	04	8	00	-

*Family Size Classification (Shah,A.M 1973)

(i) Small: 1-3 members (ii) Medium: 3 – 6 members (iii) Large:7-9 members (iv) Very Large: 10 & above members.

From table 5, it can be said, that majority of families, are medium in size (n=38; 76%) which is usually composed of married couples along with their unmarried children. This is followed by small families (n=8; 16%). Count of small families is followed by number of Large Families (n=4; 8%).

There are two reasons for the medium sized family being maximum in numbers. One is that the head of the family immigrated few years back and started a new family through marriage and procreation. Two is that the people who immigrated to the locality in the 1960's or 1970's have either returned to their ancestral place to spend their retired life, leaving behind their children with their nuclear families to continue living or have expired.

TABLE 6: FAMILY TYPE

TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES		NUCLEAR FAMILY		EXTENDED FAMILY		INCOMPLETE FAMILY	
NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
50	100	37	74	10	20	3	50

From the Table on Family type, majority of the families (n=37; 74%), are of nuclear type family consisting of married couples and their unmarried children. This is followed by extended family type (n=10; 20%) consisting of married couples along with their married children and grandchildren. Only 3 (6%) families are of incomplete type in which one is composed of two single brothers, the second one is composed of a single widow mother and her unmarried children and the third one is composed of an aunt living with her nephew.

THE SPATIAL IDENTITY OF THE RELOCATED BIHARI COMMUNITY

The Bihari migrants after their immigration had tried to restore their culture at the relocated urban space. They are continuously reproducing their traditional space within the neighbouring Bengali culture in multiple domains like material and social traits. The following eight cases have been hereby cited on multiple culture traits to represent the spatial attributes.

The following eight cases do speak about food behaviour, cooking style and recipe, dressing styles, Marriage and dowry rules, Community Sentiment, usage of vernacular language for communication, vocation, ritual practices in context of pujas and other cultural traits. These cases do reveal the conflict and conformity amongst the studied Bihari community in regard to the

continuity and discontinuity of social space. The cases also reflect the way Bihari culture is produced, ruptured and reproduced by the immigrants amongst the local Bengali people in the Bengali culture area. This becomes particularly relevant for the immigrated Bihari people in the way cultural space is produced for them in regard to the dialectics of self and others.

CASE 1: Case of traditional Food and traditional dress pattern Sustenance by the Biharis.

A 45-year-old female who has lived in the studied area for about 20 years said that she has learned to cook different types of Bihari food at her native place in the Chhapra district. She continues to cook food in the traditional Bihari method even in Bengali culture areas as they don't prefer the Bengali recipe and style on a daily basis. *Litti-Chokha* remains her favourite and commonly practiced recipe. She adheres to the cultural rules of cooking traditional recipes prepared during their festivals.

This middle-aged woman along with other female immigrants of similar age is continuing their traditional style of draping Indian *Saree*.

CASE 2: Case of Language usage by the Biharis.

A man aged 40 years is born and brought up in this locality. His grandfather was the first person in his family to immigrate to this locality. Being a representative member of the 3rd Generation living in Bengal post-migration, he says that his family still talks in Bhojpuri amongst themselves. His wife and other females, haven't learned Bengali and have no intention of learning it shortly. For him, it is a *Pardesi* language which is not mandatory to learn. The men of the family work to earn a living and thus understand and speak Bengali as much as required. The 4th generation of the family speaks both Bhojpuri and Hindi amongst themselves and in Bengali with the Bengalis.

CASE 3: Case of traditional Marriage behaviour amongst the Biharis.

A Brahmin woman, aged 46 years, says that her family is completely against the concept of Inter-caste marriage or Inter-community marriage. If any girl or boy does this, then they completely disown them from their family. The foremost reason for disowning them is that they won't be able to show their face at their traditional native place in Bihar. They would have to go through a lot of insult and embarrassment if their son or daughter did so. They believe that marriage should be arranged by their kinsmen so that they can get a sense of confidence about the other family. Also, if the marriage takes place with all the traditional marital rituals, then the bride and groom can get the blessings of god and other family members. Hence, their marriage would be successful. Bihari tradition of choosing the bride or groom within the same caste has not been altered. Dowry is a hallmark concept within the

Bihari community and it has not been just confined to rural space.

With marriage, comes the marital symbols, such as *piyar senur* (Yellow vermillion), *sinhora* (Box for keeping the yellow vermillion), and *Bichua* (Toe ring), which are worn by the Bihari women after marriage. These symbols are considered sacred and if anything happens with the symbols, then it is considered as a mishap with the husband.

CASE 4: Case of Spatial Orientation for the Biharis.

A female aged 55 years, said that when their 2 storied building was under construction, she designed the floors with the kitchen and temple adjacent to each other, and the washroom was planned at a defined distance from the kitchen and temple signifying its polluted identity. She even considered the direction of the temple and kitchen so that it doesn't affect the *vaastu* of the house. She was very particular in the direction of keeping sacred items at her house. For her the directions also play a vital role in the sleeping and dining position. She has also imposed various restrictions on her family members while entering the temple and kitchen so that the sacred place doesn't get polluted.

CASE 5: Case of Spatial Identity Formation of the Biharis during Supernatural Practise.

A man aged 35 years, says that they have celebrated "Chhath Puja" for about 20 years now in West Bengal, right from the time his father migrated here. He says that, during Chhath Puja, it becomes very difficult to identify the place they are residing, as it seems that they are in Bihar itself. The hustle in the market, the *chhath* songs playing all over on loudspeaker, doesn't make him feel that he is not at his native place. The whole Bihari community comes together and celebrates the festival together.

CASE 6: Case of Cultural Transformation for the Biharis.

A Bihari woman aged 40 years was born and brought up here in West Bengal. She said that her family doesn't follow any caste-based or community-based restrictions in acceptance of food. Though, it's prohibited till now at her traditional native place, but here, living in an urban society, she doesn't believe in such kind of restriction. She also said that she loves to consume Bengali cuisine, especially *Sukto*. She makes various kinds of Bengali food items at her house by watching YouTube videos and with the help of her Bengali neighbours. She said that she actively takes part in traditional Bengali festivals such as Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Laxmi Puja, etc. She practices these festivals by adopting the same ritualistic manner as Bengalis. She takes part in Durga puja and Kali puja on a community level whereas she celebrates Laxmi puja at her house with her family. She celebrates these festivals by wearing the

traditional Bengali “Laal paar” Saree (saree with red borderline). She said that she likes to wear *Sankhapola* in her hands, which is a Bengali marital symbol along with her traditional native marital symbols.

CASE 7: Case of Change in Marital Behaviour for the Biharis.

A 55-year-old Bihari man has been residing in the studied area for about 50 years. He had a love marriage which was an inter-community marriage with his wife, 30 years back. His wife is a Bengali. After their marriage, he said that he got fully incorporated into a Bengali culture due to his wife. His wife cooks Bengali dishes and follows the traditional Bengali supernatural belief system. They even talk in Bengali amongst themselves. Hence, his children have been encultured in Bengali tradition since birth. Recently, his daughter’s marriage took place with a Bengali boy by following all the Bengali marital rituals and customs. At present, he said that he has given up the Bihari tradition and he along with his family follows the Bengali tradition and culture.

CASE 8: Case of Culture Change through Dowry practise for the Biharis.

A Bihari woman aged 40 years, born and brought up in West Bengal, said that her marriage was regulated based on Dowry. But she on the other hand, is quite firm with the decision of not regulating her daughter’s marriage based on dowry. She believes that the money she would be giving as dowry, that money would contribute to her daughter’s education.

THE PROXEMIC REALITY

Biharis carve out cultural space for them amongst Bengalis in the studied area. They produce space as an aspect of culture. In simple words, Proxemics becomes operative. This trait of cultural space production becomes evident through number of characters revealed from different ends. The opinion of the neighbouring Bengali people becomes important here and it is represented in the following cases.

CASE 9: Case of Conflict between the Biharis and the local Bengalis.

A Bengali woman aged 60 years, said that she lives in a 2 BHK flat and her immediate neighbour is a Bihari family who share the same floor. She doesn’t have a nice bond with the family as according to her, that bihari family doesn’t like Bengali people. The Bihari woman, very frequently tries to get in an argument with her, even at small incidents happening in the flat. According to her, that bihari woman is not educated as she was married at a very tender age in Bihar and hence, she doesn’t tries to understand things in a matured way. She also doesn’t like her voice tone as its quiet high with her at times of argument

CASE 10: Feeling of Insecurity for Bengalis through Cultural Dominance of the Biharis.

A Bengali woman aged 50 years said that if she wants to buy a traditional Bengali *taant* saree, then she won't be getting one in the market present in the studied area. She says that the shops only sell the Bihari pattern sarees. There is not even a single shop selling traditional *taant* saree. She said that at times of Bihari festivals, the whole market gets busy selling the festival things and it becomes really difficult often for her to get the daily necessary items. Recently, her daughter got married. She was not able to get even the smallest things for the marriage from the local market due to less number of traditional Bengali shops. She told that there are more than 10 shops selling items required for sacred rituals in the local market and not even a single shop is owned by a Bengali. Hence, majority of items present in the shop are for Bihari sacred rituals. This is too disheartening for her, that gradually the whole Bengali traditional culture is getting hampered by the settlement of Biharis.

CASE 11: Case of Bihari Community sentiment.

A Bengali woman aged 45 years lives in a slum present in the studied area. She and her family are the only Bengali family living there. Rest all the houses consists of Bihari families. She says that the Biharis being majority in the area, often dominates in various cases. She said that she doesn't like their traditional language as it sounds very rough. The Bihari families often try to indulge in fights on silly topics such as on usage of common tap, usage of common bathroom present in the slum area, space for cleaning utensils, etc. If any heated argument takes place between her and any of the Bihari family, the whole Bihari community comes in solidarity and start supporting one other. Hence, she tries not to communicate with them as much as possible.

CASE 12: Case of Cultural admixture between Bengali and Bihari.

A Bengali man, aged 50 years, said that there are majority of Bihari families living in his colony. The Biharis celebrate various festivals. He said that he has a nice bond with few Bihari families and they invite him to their houses during their festivals. They often send Bihari cuisine food to his house and he loves to have the Bihari food. He said that especially on *Chhath puja*, the Biharis invite him on the second day of the festival to their houses to have the *Prasad*. They even deliver the "*Thekuas*" (Cookies made out of jaggery and flour) as the 'Prasad' of *chhath puja* to his house after the festival ends. He said that the only problem he faces during the Bihari festival is the access to the market. During their festivals, the market becomes crowded and it becomes really difficult to get the necessary items also. All the shops, irrespective of their niches, start selling festival related items. Even transport gets hampered due to blockage of roads, especially, in *Chhath Puja*.

The Biharis are strictly trying to produce their own cultural space and restoring their identity. Manifestation of Proxemics is taking place through a number of cultural traits as represented in the aforesaid cases. The Biharis are not ready to accept the Bengali method of food preparation, and, hence are continuing their traditional method to cook food. (Refer case 1). Though they have migrated, still they are considerate regarding their reputation at their native place, hence they are against the concept of inter-caste or inter-community marriage. The Biharis believe in the marriage arrangement through kinsmen and Dowry as the driving force of marriage. (Refer case 3). The Bihari women are very sensitive towards their marital symbols and the symbols play a very important role in their married life as they consider it sacred. The marital symbols include orange vermillion, box for keeping that vermillion and toe rings. (Refer case 2). The Bihari women are continuing to drape their sarees in traditional Bihari way, thus representing their traditional culture at an urban space. (Refer case 2). The immigrants continue to communicate in their native language, i.e, Bhojpuri amongst themselves and seek their pride in it. Some of them, specially housewives, are not ready to learn the local Bengali language, as they consider it as “*Pardesi language*”(Outsiders language) (Refer case 2). The Biharis are very particular regarding the concept of “Purity and Pollution” which is blindly followed at their native place and they are focussing on the same concept post migration at an urban space. It can be seen in the case of death, birth, distance between kitchen (pure) and washroom (polluted) and also regarding the directions of sleeping, consuming cooked food and placement of material things (Refer case 3 and 4). Identity restoration of the Biharis can be prominently seen through their practice of Supernatural beliefs. This prominency can be seen during the greatest festival of Biharis, i.e, “*Chhath Puja*” when it becomes difficult to identify Bengal as it turns into a Mini Bihar. (Refer case 5).

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, observation is being made on the spatial reproduction of the Bihari culture as an outcome of migration and the relationship between Migration, Proxemics and Inscribed space. The study reveals the way a Bihari community after migrating to a Bengali culture area produce their traditional native space in an altered location and maintain their cultural identity. In the process of maintaining their identity, some form of their traditional cultural attributes ruptures to some extent.

The economic hardships faced by the Biharis at their rural ancestral place forced them to migrate to the present urban locality. Most of them underwent economic shift in the new location as they have adapted to a new socio-economic way of life amongst the local Bengali people. They got engaged in different types of occupation already mentioned. Amongst the different engagements only the milk businessman and washer man are still continuing

in their new inscribed space in line with their traditional caste-based vocation. Their economic condition has a tremendous effect on the type and size character of the resettled families. Majority of families present in the studied area are of small nuclear type as affording ability to maintain a large extended type becomes the constraint. However, resettled families with family business are able to sustain large extended families in the present setting.

The Biharis try to restore their culture amongst the neighbouring Bengali culture. This can be seen from their practice of cooking food in their traditional Bihari way. (Refer case 1). The immigrants condemn the concept of inter caste or inter community marriage as it brings embarrassment and insult to them at their native place. Still if any member of the community does so, they get disowned from their family. (Refer case 3). Inter community marriage which took place in the studied area shows shift from the Bihari tradition by the local Bengali culture. (Refer case 7). Bihari women are very particular regarding the marital symbols as they consider it very sacred and if any unfortunate thing happens to those symbols, they anticipate the forthcoming of some unwanted mishaps to their marital partner. The immigrants in majority still continue to believe in Dowry as the regulating mechanism of any marriage. (Refer case 2). They are holding their culture through their native language like Bhojpuri and some of them have no intention to learn the local Bengali language as they consider it as *pardesi* language (foreign language). (Refer case 2). This practice of communicating in native language gets discontinued in case of inter- community marriage. (Refer case 7). The concept of “purity and pollution” is evident amongst the Biharis along with the importance of geographical directions while sleeping, consuming cooked food, and placement of material things. This concept is continuing amongst them from their native place. (Refer case 3). If supernatural beliefs are taken into consideration, the biharis are still following their traditional supernatural belief post spatial shift. During the *Chhath Puja*, they restructure their present location in traditional mould like that of their native place. (Refer Case 5).

A character of flux becomes very much observable in the present study as the Bihari immigrants are trying to sustain their traditional culture and simultaneously certain characters are getting altered by the local Bengali culture. This multiple identity can be seen right from their pattern of food exchange where the immigrants are not adhering to their traditional caste based restrictions. (Refer Case 6). The Biharis are getting engaged in the Bengali festivals which are being performed at the community level and the married Bihari women are incorporating the Bengali marital symbols in their daily routine as a result of the spatial shift (Refer Case 6). The inter community marriage between the Bengali and Bihari individuals has also taken place after migration which has led to production of cultural pluralism in the studied setting. The Bengali culture is getting dominant post inter community marriage. (Refer Case 7). Spatial shift is also leading to the increment in the educational

quality of the immigrants. As a result of this, a section of the educated bihari families are condemning the concept of Dowry and instead promoting women education (Refer Case 8).

As the Biharis are producing space amongst the local Bengali culture, the opinion of the local Bengali people about the bihari immigrants is also getting important. The local Bengali people feel insecure about their culture being dominated over by the Bihari people in different aspects. At the outset we have observed the disappearance of the traditional Bengali shops from the local market. The whole market is dominated by the shops selling items preferred by local Bihari community. Even the shops owned by Bengali proprietors are too keeping majority of commodities preferred by the Bihari people. The Bengalis have to travel distance, in order to buy their traditional clothes or other material items. (Refer Case 10). The crowded market during the Bihari festivals makes it difficult for the Bengalis to get their daily requirements as all the general stores start selling the bihari festival items (Refer Case 12). The Bengalis feel that the community feeling amongst the Biharis is very strong. If a single person or family engages in a fight or argument with Bengali family, the whole community comes together and support that single family. A character of cultural dominance develops (Refer case 11). Few Bengalis have the opinion that the Biharis don't like the Bengalis in person and hence, indulges in arguments and fights with them even on silly topics. (Refer Case 9 and 11). The Bengalis also opined that they like to participate in Bihari festivals, enjoy the delicious bihari food offered by the Bihari neighbours and even they invite them to show up their presence in their festivals. (Refer case 12).

CONCLUSION

The present study incorporates Proxemics where the migrated community is settling in a new inscribed space and is using the space as an aspect of culture. From the study, it is evident that the migratory condition of a society leads to a dual manifestation of cultural practices. Proxemics is becoming operative in Inscribed space due to migration as the migratory community culturally accommodates in the new inscribed space whereas the originally settled community is accommodating themselves through cultural reproduction.

Whenever a community migrates and settles in a new space, cultural conflict and conformity develops between the migrated community and the original settled community. In a cultural migration situation, an admixture of two communities takes place and this admixture leads to the production of grey areas which do express its character in time and space. The migratory community carves out its cultural identity amongst the other communities settled in the location whereas, on the other hand, the originally settled community has to undergo a cultural admixture thus resulting in the

community's spatial overlapping. In a nutshell, the culture of insecurity develops in the new inscribed space through the manifestation of conflict and conformity by the communities.

The different cases though limited in number still emphasize on multiplicity of spatial identity between the natives and the aliens.

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Ruhini Starlson

TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES IN HINDU AND BUDDHIST RITUALS: CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL COHESION IN A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

Abstract

This study explored how ritual practices form part of everyday teaching and learning and how Hindu and Buddhist rituals can further contribute to social cohesion in a multicultural classroom. The investigation of the Waldorf education system is a link to how one could incorporate ritual practices from other cultures into mainstream education. Theoretical frameworks of Hinduism, Buddhism, ritual, Waldorf education as well as multiculturalism and social cohesion were used to inform this research.

This study reflects that ritual practices from all cultures could be beneficial in enhancing social cohesion between learners. The divisiveness among people in the world today does not serve humanity. One way of overcoming this division is by introducing positive ritual practices from all cultures to educate and inform people about the similarities that exist among humans. Understanding ritual and ritual practices from different cultures, including Hindu and Buddhist rituals could have a positive impact on education in South Africa.

Keywords: Social cohesion, multiculturalism, Hinduism, Buddhism, ritual practices.

Introduction

This study explored how teaching and learning practices and Hindu and Buddhist rituals could contribute to social cohesion in a multicultural classroom, specifically in a South African context. This was investigated by introducing a group of 35 Grade 8 students from a mainstream high school in Kwazulu-Natal to a ritual practice known as a 'labyrinth', common to Buddhism and Hinduism. Ritual in this context relates to the repetition of human actions and the reasons therefore. According to Axel Michaels (2016:4), performing rituals means "to enact the claim of unchangeability, that is, the claim that the same is acted out again and again or that it is mimetically repeated". Our daily actions can, in effect, be viewed as rituals repeated regularly as a form of discipline – from brushing our teeth in the morning to drinking tea before bed.

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While rituals may narrowly be perceived as having a religious framework, when viewed contextually, they are not always so.

The methodology for this research was a qualitative case study employing focus group discussions, interviews, participation, observation, analysis and interpretation. Information was gathered from texts, educators and learners. Narratives, rituals and symbolisms were compared to address ritual practices as contributing to and enhancing social cohesion in the South African education system. Social cohesion has several definitions, but for the purpose of this study, social cohesion means to have “a sense of belonging that translates [...] a common identity [...] inclusiveness, tolerance, respect for individuals [and] mutual trust” (Mekoa & Busari, 2018:108).

Acts of othering, moral and cultural imperialism, inequality, ignorance, fear, lack of confidence and a refusal to adapt to or change are still prevalent in today’s post-apartheid South Africa and are also, therefore, prevalent in the school system. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve deeply into the issues inherent in the South African school system, it is important to touch upon them. As Jonathan Jansen (2019: 355) illustrates,

In any of South Africa’s nine provinces you could within 30 min or less drive from one of the most affluent schools in the world to one of the poorest and most dysfunctional schools anywhere. The one set of schools would boast rolling green sports fields and state-of-the-art computer laboratories and the other would be fitted with pit latrines...

Other than infrastructure and facilities, inequalities also include overcrowding, quality or lack of educators, resources, learning/teaching outcomes, etc. Edward Fisk and Helen Ladd (2004:x) observe that “Few if any, new democratic governments have had to work with an education system as egregiously- and intentionally inequitable as the one that the apartheid regime bequeathed to the new black-run government in 1994.” Apartheid laid the foundations for major injustices and disparities within the country’s school system with negative effects on social cohesion – both inside and outside the classroom.

Theoretical Perspectives

The three main theoretical perspectives used in this study were ritual, Hinduism and Buddhism, and multiculturalism. All aspects of the research process were guided by the theories and this section provides an overview of each along with their relevance to the study.

Ritual

Theorising the term ‘ritual’ can be problematic, as it has many definitions and multiple meanings. Elizabeth Collins (1998:1) draws on Wittgenstein’s remarks that “there is no set characteristics that can be found”

to define rituals. It is a concept with innumerable applications. The term 'ritual' is interpreted differently by different people; it may be viewed as traditional, formulaic, symbolic, metaphoric, culturally meaningful, religious, repetitive, habitual or a pattern of behaviour. It could even be applied as meaningless, says Collins (1998:1), "as in the expression, 'It's just a ritual'".

Emile Durkheim's drive to understand religion and society is what led him to ritual theory. Tim Olaveson (2001:91) explains, "he began to look at religion sociologically, and began working out a hypothesis of its inherently social genesis and function". In addition, Anne Heider and Stephen Warner (2010:77) state, "For Durkheim, ritual was a more potent source of social energy than belief because of its basis in the emotions aroused by collective action"; suggesting that ritual contributes to social cohesion. Through his investigations of religion and society, Durkheim realised that ritual is indispensable in the study of culture and society. Various theorists interpret Durkheim's definition of ritual as a culturally standard, repetitive activity, essentially symbolic in character, aimed at guiding and influencing human circumstances or at least allowing individuals to understand their place in society better. Durkheim expressed that religion was derived from ritual and not the other way around. He believed that ritual is essential to "create and motivate citizens to moral behaviour" (Olaveson, 2001:94), which, in turn, fosters togetherness, sharing and right conduct. Olaveson (2001:94) further quotes Durkheim referring to his theory of collective action, which suggests that the true function of ritual is to "make us act and to help us live [...] it is action that dominates religious life, for the very reason that society is its source".

Erika Summers-Effler (2006:135) discusses ritual theory as a ...

... focussed interaction at the heart of all social dynamics [where] group emotions are linked to symbols, forming the basis for beliefs, thinking, morality, and culture. People use the capacity for thought, beliefs, and strategy to create emotion-generating interactions in the future. This cycle, interaction '!' emotions '!' symbols '!' interaction, forms patterns of interaction over time. These patterns are the most basic structural force that organises society.

This again links ritual as a salient aspect that organises society, which is further linked to Durkheim's theory of collective action. The above quote also suggests that society is not grounded on the inclination and ability of an individual, but rather the characteristics established in social interaction and then used by people (Summers-Effler, 2006:136). In this way, people learn and construct themselves as they interact with others.

According to François Berthomé and Michael Houseman (2010:69), emotions are integral attributes to "ritual interactions themselves, reflecting and inflecting emotions in a variety of sensory, expressive, moral and strategic ways". Pascal Boyer and Pierre Liénard (2006:1) suggest that as human beings

we create rituals in numerous ways. This can happen intuitively through constant repetition and can be established in “cultural rituals, religious rituals, nonreligious rituals, in the routines of many children, in the pathology of obsessive compulsive disorders and in normal adults around certain stages of the life-cycle” (Boyer & Liénard, 2006:1). Consequently, rituals are expressive or symbolic in the way they are conducted from person to person and ground us with a sense of steadiness and continuity in life.

Catherine Bell (1997:9) reveals that ritual is not yet viewed as an essential, universal category or characteristic of human behaviour, but rather a cultural and historical structure that has been cripplingly used to distinguish several “styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality, and cultural determination”. While certain rituals may exhibit a religious framework, they are however not religious in every sense. Michaels (2016:7) believes that “nearly all actions can be combined with the term ritual: greeting, eating, sitting, speaking, laughing, crying – all this and so much more can be ritualised and then become a ritual type”. However, Meredith Rossenr and Mythily Meher (2014:4) state that, “in sociology, ritual theory is premised on the idea that meaning is generated in and by repeated social interactions” and is not necessarily small tasks or habits we repeat daily. Rituals may also be observed as a means of increasing social relationships and the connection to one’s self. This could in turn strengthen education systems where the building blocks for an individual are activated.

With numerous writings on ritual, it appears that there is an increasing curiosity about the term and how it relates to society and its individuals. This has impacted how rituals are also used in an educational setting. According to Basil Bernstein, Lionel Elvin and Richard Peters (1966:429), “[r]itual in humans refers to a relatively rigid pattern of acts specific to a situation which construct a framework of meaning beyond the specific situational meanings”. This is done through ritualistic acts of social order, specifically those that enhance the acceptance of processes used to uphold “continuity, order and boundary and which control ambivalence towards the social order” (Bernstein et al., 1966:429). Bernstein et al. (1966:429) believe that these notions are related to education as a social form and analysed the effect of “changes in the function of the school on ritualising processes”.

Rituals in education are grouped as “consensual and differentiating”, which are intended to combine all individuals of a school “as a moral community, as a distinct collectivity [which gives schools] continuity [while relating to the] values and norms held by certain dominant groups in the non-school society” (Bernstein et al., 1966:429). Differentiating rituals are concerned with groupings within schools. These groupings can be by sex, age or social interactions of individuals. Differentiating rituals include standing in the classroom when the educator enters, school uniforms, and raising one’s hand before speaking (Bernstein et al., 1966:430). Some differentiating rituals could also exclude

some groups from the school community, while other differentiating rituals enhance respect for the authority of the school (Arslan & Saridede, 2012:1177).

Hinduism and Buddhism

Klaus Klostermaier (1989:12) expresses that Hinduism is a branch of philosophy that examines the fundamental nature of reality and confirms that it “already forms a large and important part of human heritage and, as such, is of intrinsic interest to all who care to learn about humanity”. Epics such as the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita or the Mahabharata have created and represented the rituals, morals and values in Hinduism. Through ritual practices such as storytelling, yoga, affirmations, meditations, and daily gratitude to the sun and elements of the earth, values and morals become instilled in individuals. Some of these morals are truth, righteousness, honouring the earth and all living beings, love, compassion and gratitude. In Hinduism, it is often through and within rituals that such inclusivity of other beliefs is practised and experienced. This dispenses itself as a reason as to why the rituals taught in the Hindu culture is worth considering as a contribution to teaching and learning in a South African context and why it could be beneficial in enhancing social cohesion in a multicultural classroom. Unlike other great faiths of the world, Hinduism is not confined to a single body of religious commandments; it is an all-embracing way of life.

The concept of *dharma*, which means righteousness, relates to wide notions such as duty, work, righteousness, morality, justice, cosmic law, harmony and eternal truth (Menon, 2001:11). Hinduism is distinguished by a means through which an individual’s identity is encompassed and is reflected in how one communicates. It is often regulated through rituals throughout one’s life. Many Hindus follow cultural patterns by going the ritual way in resolving individual or social problems. The term *dharma* is seen as a moral law in Hinduism and is connected to rituals such as the practice of good speech and right conduct. *Dharma* is a principle in Hinduism that governs personal conduct. George Williams (2003:25) states, “Dharma is one of the most pregnant notions in Hindu philosophy, mythology and religion [...] it can be translated into English as virtue, truth, or duty”.

Like Hinduism, Buddhism also follows the act of *dharma*. Buddhists obey the teaching of impermanence; that nothing lasts. This is essential in understanding *dharma* or Buddha-*dharma*, which teaches Buddhists how to live a good life of compassion and integrity (Lewis & DeAngelis, 2017:13). Peter Herschok (2006:122) suggests that “all sentient beings are capable of developing and conducting themselves in accord with Dharma and that Buddha paid specific attention to the central importance of establishing societal conditions conducive to the practice of Dharma”. Some of these ritual practices, as mentioned above, include right speech, right conduct, right actions, right concentration and right mindfulness.

A common ritual found within both Hinduism and Buddhism is walking the labyrinth. This activity is also present in many other cultures and religions worldwide and throughout history. According to Melissa Gayle West (2000:n.p.), “[t]he labyrinth is one of the oldest and transformative tools known to humankind, used for centuries for prayer, ritual, personal and spiritual growth”. Making use of a labyrinth as a ritual practice allows an individual to seek meaning that is “greater than accumulating material possessions [because] the labyrinth helps you to fully experience yourself” (Christie, 2018:n.p.). There are several myths tied to the labyrinth, from a link to dance in Greek mythology to game playing in Troy adopted by the Romans from Etruscans, all during a time of “goddess-centred religions” (Christie, 2018:n.p.). Tony Christie (2018:n.p.) suggests that “any attempt to define the labyrinth is lacking in something because the labyrinth is knowledge, experience, reflection, wisdom, enlightenment and more”. West (2000) states that the labyrinth is like therapy that allows one to turn inwards, letting go of the stresses in our day.

Multiculturalism

Anne Phillips (2007) presents an understanding of culture and the duality or divide between people that remains prominent today. She explores ways to overcome this divide and looks into ‘multiculturalism’ as a means to gloss over or conceal inequalities. Her work is a key source in understanding the issues with post-colonialism and the denial of change. Phillips (2007:9) proclaims: “a more careful understanding of culture provides a better basis for multicultural policy than the overly homogenised version that currently figures in the arguments of supporters and critics alike”. She (2007:9) argues, “one of the biggest problems with culture is the tendency to represent individuals from minority or non-western groups as driven by their culture and compelled by cultural dictates to behave in particular ways”. The world is established by cultural diversity; therefore, multicultural experiences have become a consistent aspect of many individuals’ lives.

According to Verynica Benet-Martínez and Ying-yi Hong (2014), “multiculturalism is typically seen as identity supporting for minority groups and consequently leads to some resistance on the part of the majority”. One can assume that the majority can be expected to only make use of multiculturalism wholeheartedly if it becomes more beneficial to their group. In the opinion of Phillips (2007:3), “multiculturalism became the scapegoat for an extraordinary array of political and social evils; a supposedly misguided approach to cultural diversity”. When understood correctly, multiculturalism presents us with a means that can benefit society, where all cultural groups are equally appraised and paramount in society, including a form of communication that is positive and that may prepare a foundation to enhance social cohesion. It can be said that multiculturalism refers to a set of expectations or methods for dealing with diversity.

Carl Grant and Agostino Portera (2011:4) maintain that “multicultural education interconnects with equal themes that involve pedagogy, theory, practice, methodology, culture, identity, power relations, recognition, globalisation, cosmopolitanism and justice”. Multicultural education could benefit learners, as they would become more knowledgeable about different cultures, people and practices. Educators could also become more aware of the needs of each learner and create practices around this to assist their learners. Incorporating rituals from all cultures could bring about a different and more acceptable type of coexistence where multiculturalism is not just a term, but the essence of society and the world.

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was utilised with data collected from an art intervention, observation, interviews and questionnaires among learners and educators from one mainstream high school (Harborview Secondary School) located in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Thirty-five Grade 8 learners from the school participated in five one-hour sessions over three months in 2021, where they were involved in a ritual practice of walking the labyrinth common to both Hinduism and Buddhism. After observation, 10 learners were interviewed. Two educators completed questionnaires regarding ritual practices. All participants and parents of learners signed consent forms with anonymity maintained through the coding of participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research of Stellenbosch University.

Presentation and discussion of findings

The findings and conclusions based on the data reflect the contribution of incorporating ritual practices in schools. Although this study was limited to Hinduism and Buddhism, it reflects that ritual practices from all cultures could be beneficial in enhancing social cohesion between learners and could positively contribute to teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms. The introduction of positive ritual practices from all cultures could serve to educate and inform people about the similarities that exist among humans. Understanding ritual and ritual practices from different cultures, including Hindu and Buddhist rituals, could have a positive impact on education in South Africa.

This section presents the evaluation and interpretation of the qualitative data collected from the research conducted. Data were grouped under two sections: art intervention and interviews with learners and questionnaire responses from educators. Only the most relevant data and quotes from participants were presented. A discussion follows after the presentation of the data.

Art intervention and interviews with learners

The intervention chosen consisted of drawing and painting a labyrinth. The plan was to build a labyrinth with the Grade 8 learners for them to have the full experience of walking it. However, this was not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the drawing was a compromise. Thirty-five participants engaged in the art intervention.

The participants were separated into two groups due to Covid-19 regulations. The lessons began by drawing the labyrinth on the board and asking the learners what they thought it was. Responses included: a maze, brain, headphones, place to walk, curved lines, tree, mandala or road. When asked what they thought a labyrinth was used for, responses included: drilling, mosquitoes, directions to go somewhere or something used for hypnosis. Only two learners appeared to have some idea of what a labyrinth is and what it is used for.

It was explained to the learners that ritual practices could enhance personal growth and development. The term 'ritual practice' for this study was then clarified and the picture of the labyrinth was explained to the learners along with a brief history of labyrinths. Drawings of a labyrinth were handed out to the learners and they were asked to quietly and slowly – using their index finger – follow the circular lines to gain a concrete understanding and feel of the paths that form a labyrinth. After an explanation, the learners then placed the same page on the floor, with the blank side facing up. With a pencil, they were requested to draw circles using their feet. This was merely a practice exercise for the next step, which entailed metaphorically walking the labyrinth with a paintbrush in between their toes while imagining walking a labyrinth. Some learners used their hands to dip their brush into the paint before placing the brush in-between their toes and very silently and slowly followed the lines into the drawn labyrinth and back out. Other learners used only their feet. The activity was followed by a discussion with the learners about how they felt during and after the three stages of the exercise.

The first question posed was: 'How did you feel about the activity?' P1S answered:

I actually was at peace doing it because I'm always very energetic, so it actually tamed me and I was in peace and I really enjoyed it, [...] it was very exciting for me to do because I don't do such unique things like [this] every day.

Although not expressed, P2S did not appear to enjoy using her feet. "It was very unusual" and a new experience, she said. P3S engaged well with the activity. Despite using her feet controlled movements were reflected. She said:

I enjoyed it very much. ... Actually, I'm happy that I had to meet you,

because I've never seen this before, I've never even heard of it before [points to the drawing on the board], so it's like new information to me.

Although P4S was shy and soft-spoken, she reported, "Mam, I really enjoyed doing the painting". P5S said she would like to experience physically walking a labyrinth, "because I would like to be able to focus more in a way and even be calm while walking". Although P7S lost control of the paintbrush, spilt the paint over her page and tore her page in the process, she said, "I enjoyed [...] experiencing something new, like I've never done this before and it was something new for me so I kind of got interested in it". There was a more childlike enthusiasm when watching P8S work. He too spilt the paint over his page but was not perturbed by it. These comments indicate that the participants felt something positive. West (2000:n.p.) explains that "[d]uring a labyrinth walk the left and right hemispheres of the brain are balanced, leading to the perfect state for accessing intuition and creativity".

The learners were asked whether they would walk a labyrinth if it were built at their school. Nine participants reported that they would undertake this activity. While initially unsure, P6S eventually thought the labyrinth would be beneficial: "Most probably the daily stresses, it will help that". P3S stated that he would walk the labyrinth "because it really makes you focus and if you focus, then you'd be able to concentrate in class". Christie (2018:n.p.) believes that the labyrinth is a means of bringing a person into a space to "feel more at one with yourself, and you begin doing things that you enjoy [that] make you feel alive".

The learners were then asked about their understanding of a ritual. P1S stated, "[...] when I hear the word 'ritual' I feel like peace or something, but I don't actually know what it means". P3S and P5S felt that a ritual was a gathering with other people doing a small prayer or offering to God. P5S added that it could be when people fast or when a wife fasts for her husband for luck. P6S felt that a ritual could be art. P8S felt that ritual is part of religion and is something that "came from the past". Regarding the question: 'Do you practise any rituals?' P2S shared that she prays, watches Netflix and does homework. P3S was happy to share and said, "Well I play cricket, volley ball, sometimes [I] play soccer with my brother ... that's pretty much what I do on a daily basis and reading". However, none of the participants were able to identify any positive ritual practices at school. School rituals were related to mathematics, homework or lessons taught and socialising during lunch and after school. The negative rituals were reported as smoking, swearing, drinking, taking drugs and vandalism. P1S explained that the use of rituals among the learners could be beneficial and stated, "I actually would change the vandalism and bullying because I see like every wall I go past [...] there's something written on the wall and some of them are very rude things, and also the bullying it's like really bad". P2S reported that learners do not communicate and "everyone minds their own business".

The art intervention intended to present to the learners of the mainstream high school a ritual practice (walking a labyrinth) common to Hinduism and Buddhism. Each piece of work allowed the learners to investigate something new while invoking new thoughts, understandings and ideas. Each piece of work also finally became a representation of the learners in their mark-making, reflecting those whose thoughts were focused on 'walking' the labyrinth and those who felt distracted or uncomfortable. Though the learners were at a disadvantage in that they were not physically able to walk the labyrinth as intended, most learners were receptive and showed a positive reaction to the art intervention. They enjoyed painting with their feet more than drawing with their feet. Most learners were focused and calm during this process. Although many expressed feeling calm upon reflection during the group discussions, some struggled, as they felt awkward using their feet, which distracted them. One learner said that it felt like a "mother guiding you out of things". The associations with certain actions were clearly different for each learner and coming from diverse cultures also must have played a role. The class educator was pleased that the learners enjoyed the activity and were exposed to something innovative that could allow for further thinking. Gauging from the educator's and the learners' feedback, there is a likelihood that this type of ritual practice, when done on a more regular basis, could positively contribute to teaching and learning.

Questionnaire responses from educators

Due to time constraints and the Covid-19 pandemic, only two educators of Harberview Secondary School agreed to participate in this study and preferred completing a questionnaire rather than face-to-face or online interviews. Responding to the question of their understanding of ritual practice was, T1S answered that rituals include cult-like activities or a religion that exhibits "sacrificial offering". She clarified that "there are religious groups like Hindus who believe in sacrificing an animal [...] it involves long prayers [...] my understanding was pointing to the negative thinking of Satanists, drinking of blood, Islamist and the sacrifice of animals over Eid-ul-Adhaa". T2S, on the other hand, linked the term 'ritual' to religion and religious practices all over the world. After explaining the study, T1S's understanding was possibly broadened and she commented that ritual "could refer to habitual practice that could determine the outcome of a certain aspect of the day". She understood that a ritual does not necessarily have to be religious or sacrificial in nature. T2S stated, "I did not realise that ritual was consisting of such a vast aspect as to one's daily living and so on".

When the educators were asked what ritual they practice at school, T1S said that she incorporated prayer in her classroom, which is a "personal habit" to make the learners aware of a "higher being". She also considered marking the register and discussing Covid-19 protocols as rituals. She commented, "All the children know what to expect every morning [and] feel

serene and peace, as they know what to expect. [This] keeps them central and they can focus their energies on preparing for the day". T2S reported that she did not talk about religion to avoid conflict between learners. She regarded everything that is done in a day as ritualistic, "from doing school work to having lunch and socialising". She found value in the ritual of socialising and felt strongly that religious practices are not beneficial in that they may "create conflict amongst learners of different belief systems". For some individuals, ritual practice "is all they have to keep them sane and motivated" (T2S).

When asked if ritual practices could educate people about the similarities that exist among multicultural communities, T1S explained that the ritual of the morning prayer is universal, incorporating all cultures. T2S, who still linked ritual practice to religion, felt that if people wanted to learn more, they should attend places such as "churches, temples and mosques". She also said that holy books are also available to learn more. When asked if ritual can contribute to social cohesion, T2S commented: "Yes, I feel that ritual practices can enhance social cohesion within schools if everyone can accept that we are all the same despite colour and home languages". The last question posed to the educators was, 'how do you feel about Hindu and Buddhist ritual practices (values and morals) being incorporated in schools?' T1S answered that "All practices aim for peace, love, tolerance, acceptance [and] understanding". She also said she believed that this may assist those who are lost and unaware of the benefits of prayer. T2S said, "I feel it is a good idea because the ways of the Buddhist do not rely solely on religion" and said their teachings assist people in finding inner peace. However, contrary to the first part of her answer, T2S felt that Hindu practices could cause conflict among learners, probably because she linked Hinduism to religion. She, therefore, recommended that only Buddhist teachings be incorporated in schools.

Discussion of findings

Based on the intervention and all responses, the learners appeared more accepting and tolerant than the educators. Most learners were empowered with new knowledge and interested in knowing about other cultures. Despite the learners having different religious backgrounds, there was no evidence that religion was a barrier to the learners. Learners looked past religion and expressed an interest in the rituals of other cultures. They believed it could benefit them, especially those who experienced problems at home and consumed alcohol, drugs and other substances. However, the educators and most learners did link rituals to religion. As discussed, Durkheim (in Olaveson, 2001:94) stated that religion comes from ritual – not the other way around – and that the function of a ritual is to help one live freely in the world, rather than being attached to religious dogma. It was noteworthy that the art intervention, despite limitations, had an impact on the learners in a subtle way, allowing them to connect to their innate selves. Berthomé and Houseman

(2010) also indicate a link between rituals and emotions. If walking a labyrinth was a regular ritual for the learners, it is possible that they could experience “a sense of steadiness and continuity in life” (Boyer and Liénard, 2006:1).

It was striking that T1S expressed that Hindu and Islamic ritual practices were tied to Satanic connotations. It reflects that as an educator, she was not well informed about other cultures, which could negatively impact teaching and learning. T2S felt that only Buddhist ritual practices should be incorporated into schools. This is linked to the view of Lewis and DeAngelis (2017:366), who believe that Buddhism in the classroom can create “devotion” and “reverence”. P2S was of the view that Buddhist practices are much easier for learners to grasp and that they are universal, unlike Hindu ritual practices. It may be construed from her comments that T2S, too, had limited knowledge about religions. The data collected and time spent at the mainstream school was insufficient to definitively find that ritual practices in Hinduism and Buddhism would enhance teaching and learning and contribute to social cohesion in a multicultural classroom. However, it did appear that the learners were able and willing to learn more about ritual practices of all cultures. Given the opportunity, as Summers-Effler (2006) and Bell (1992) state, ritual practices could contribute to social cohesion among learners, and a labyrinth could also enhance teaching and learning if used daily.

Conclusions

This research aimed to understand how ritual practice forms part of everyday teaching and learning as well as how ritual within Hinduism and Buddhism could contribute to social cohesion in a multicultural classroom. The boundaries and limitations of the research included the availability of the participants, time constraints, Covid-19 regulations, the number of rising cases within the school and language barriers between the interviewer and learners. Many valuable lessons were learned during the process that could be useful when delving deeper into ritual practices from all cultures and how to introduce these to learners of all ages in a South African context.

Ritual practice, for this study, entailed the repetition of activities. This type of ritual practice brings about discipline, which in turn creates meaningful and shared experiences. Incorporating these kinds of ritual practices into schools requires time and planning. Establishing positive and valuable rituals is a long process and cannot be done in one art intervention or a few discussions. It needs to be incorporated into the curriculum or, as many would argue, it should become a way of life in and outside the school. The repetition thereof could foster “inclusiveness, tolerance, respect for individuals and mutual trust” (Mekoa & Busari, 2018:108): social cohesion. While the timeframe of this research was limited and resulted in a small-scale collection of data, it could serve as a pilot study for further research as the data reflect that the inclusion of certain ritual practices has the potential to enhance learning in a multicultural classroom and could contribute to positive behaviours and social cohesion in learners if applied in the

right context. Including ritual practices of other cultures could assist in finding new solutions to the many challenges in the South African educational system.

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Manish K. Verma and Ishdeep Kaur Bhandari

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE THIRD GENDER IN LUCKNOW CITY OF UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

Abstract

The third Gender was tagged as the marginalized section of the society. Third gender existence can be traced in Hindu mythologies and even in the Mughal period they have enjoyed a high position but during the British Empire third gender life becomes terrible. This paper will help to analyse the religious practices of the third-gender community. The study was carried out in Lucknow city of Uttar Pradesh, India with the help of primary data and secondary data. A semi-structured or an open-ended interview schedule was used to collect data. As told by third-gender people that there is no religion in their community is controversial because Hindu and Muslim third genders live jointly and organise various religious practices of both religions. The way they are adopting both religious practices marked heterodox religiosity. This is the kind of acculturation which is possible due to their self-consciousness and their position in society.

Keywords: *Third gender, religion, religious practices and rituals.*

Introduction

In human life, religion is an important aspect which is a part of life. Religions have sacred histories, scriptures, symbols and holy places that aim mostly to give meaning to life. Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor has defined religion as “the sense of a belief in spirits or higher powers of some kind is a universal phenomenon”. Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviours and practices, morals, texts, ethics, or organizations that relates humanity to supernatural or spiritual elements. The word “Religion” comes from the Latin term ‘religio’ which means that religion is a principle of unification and harmonisation. According to the Oxford Dictionary religion means “human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or Gods entitled to obedience and worship”. The term ‘Religion’ is defined in different ways by different thinkers according to their understanding. According to Geertz Clifford “religion is a system of symbols

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which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations.... by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". Even Emile Durkheim has also explored religion in a comprehensive study and defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things". Therefore, Durkheim pointed out that all human societies are separated into the contrasting territories of 'sacred' and 'profane'.

However, religion is an important fragment of the establishment of a society which allows all the members to live together in a systematic communal way. In India, there are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism et cetera. Social scientists recognize that religion exists as an organised and integrated set of beliefs, behaviours, and norms centred on basic social needs and values. A common explanation for religion is that it helps humans deal with stress, anxiety and uncertainty. In Indian tradition, the meaning of the word 'religion' is very significant. For Indian tradition, religion is not only the set of beliefs or faith but also includes the way of life, action and so on. According to the Hindu religion, man's Dharma is to become the infinite which he already is in potency. The term 'Dharma' is derived from the root 'Dhri' which means to sustain, uphold, and hold together. From this aspect, religion is one kind of bond which hold together the social life of men. Dharma aims at the realization of the self or the infinite in man.

Different societies not only have varying types of gods, spirits, and supernatural forces, they have different types and numbers of religious practitioners, rituals and different ways of interacting with supernatural forces. Religious beliefs and practices of different religions vary widely from society to society. Practices performed in religion may include rituals, festivals, sermons, sacrifices, funerary, music, dance, art and other aspects of culture. Religious practices in India consist of multiple rituals and performances that intersect but do not overlap. For instance, in every culture, marriage and funeral rituals are performed in some way, although these customs vary between cultures and within religious affiliations.

Whatever might be the meaning of religion from different spectrums it may be described as a system of beliefs and practices adhered to and followed by different types of societies. However different societies have different marginalized sections in their society. In Indian society, one of the most marginalized sections is the third gender community. The third gender is considered as "neither male nor female" because they appear like men but feel like women also have a different form of religious practices in their community.

Moreover, the present study has made an effort in understanding the religious practices of the third gender community of Lucknow city, Uttar

Pradesh. The study may be simplified to recognize how the variety of rituals and practices were adopted by them. Third genders or Hijras can employ a variety of religious symbols and practices from a position of liminality, free from the restraints of ordinary behaviour, which allows for heterodox religious practices. Religion provides a framework for hijras to assert self-consciousness and affirm self-identity (Zene, 2000). Furthermore, these heterodox practices highlight the importance of the hijra's interpretations in performing religious practices (Zene, 2000), to deliberately assert and legitimate their identity through both Hindu and Muslim identifications. These types of syncretic practices may be seen as creating new interpretations of religious identity, as practices of both the religions were done as a form of admixture which can be termed an 'acculturation'.

Third Gender History

Even societies have divided human beings also into two particular sexes that is male and female and two genders masculine and feminine. This division of sex takes place at the time of the birth only and it is considered the permanent tag also. For most of the people, it is difficult to think beyond this sex and gender but some cultures have included more than two genders which are considered as neither men nor women like in Omanis of the Saudia Arabian Peninsula, Native American tribes, Tahiti, in New Guinea and Hijras of India. Hijras are the hermaphrodites' people which results in multifarious biological factors and they are also called intersexed that is they contain both masculine and feminine traits. But some of the Hijras define themselves as neither male nor female who is incapable of sexual sensation because they believe that they have neither male nor female genitalia. Hijras were born in our society but still, they are considered the outsider community of our society because they are neither male nor female and do not fit in this category.

Basically, they are not men due to the lack of interest to get engaged in sexual acts as a man and they adopt feminine roles but still, they cannot reproduce babies due to their intersexuality. The third gender is a gender identity and a state of mind. People born with the male body and feel like a female and vice versa are called by different names in India like eunuchs, aravanis, kothis, jogappas et cetera. Hijras or the third gender trace a thousand years back historical origin. The word "hijra" is derived from a Hindustani/Urdu word and translated into English as "eunuch" or "hermaphrodite" (Reddy 2006). They have different names according to the regions like 'chakka' in Uttar Pradesh, 'kabjra' in Karnataka, 'khushre' in Punjab, 'maya' in Orissa, 'banjara' in Rajasthan et cetera. Apart from these words 'hijra' is a common word used all over India (2006). The third gender or hijras speaks about them through their clothes and make-up. They roam in public to extract money from the person, to whom they seem to be susceptible. They earn money by collecting alms and by performing at weddings, births and festivals. They are

not beggars but castrated males who are typically known for their women like dressing, make-up, voices and their prototypal clap.

Third gender existence can be traced in Hindu mythologies in ancient texts the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In the Ramayana when Lord Rama leaves Ayodhya for his fourteen years of exile, the people of Ayodhya follow him and then he tells them that all men and women should return to their places. After completion of exile when Lord Rama returns to Ayodhya he sees that hijras were still waiting there. Lord Rama was impressed with their devotion and grant them a boon of blessings to people. This boon is actually the 'badhai' that they give to the newly wedded couple and at childbirth (Narain 2006). Even the Hindu God Shiva is represented as 'Ardhanarishwar' form in which Lord Shiva is half merged with Parvati that is half male and half female (Venkat 2008). In ancient spiritual traditions like in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism there is a reference of the third gender also. The Vedas have discussed the three categories or sexes and in the fourth century the Ancient Kama Sutra have also mentioned about people of 'third sex' or 'Tritiya Prakriti'. They have mentioned about three separate categories like Pums-Prakriti (male nature), Stree-Prakriti (female nature) and Tritiya-Prakriti (third nature). The third sex is also mentioned in ancient Hindu law, astrology and medicines. A description of three kinds of devas of music and dance in Puranas was also given like Apsaras (female), Gandharvas (male) and Kinnars (neuter) (Singh 2020). Buddhist Vinaya has mentioned about four sexes like males, females, ubhatobyanjanakas (people of double sexual nature) and pandaka (people of various non-normative sexual natures). It has been seen that third-gender people exist in almost every culture around the world.

In the story of 'Mahabharata', a hijra named "Shikhandi" was used on the advice of Lord Krishna to defeat guru Dronacharya in the Kurukshetra war. One more story was found in the Mahabharata of "Ahiravan" who had offered his blood to goddess Kali for the victory of Pandavas and he gets power from goddess Kali. Ahiravan was also known by other names like 'Aravan', 'Travan', 'Travat' or 'Travant' was the son of Arjuna the Pandava prince and Ulupi the Naga princess. In honour of his self-sacrifice, Lord Krishna grants him three boons and before going to the battle he desires that he wants to get married but no woman was ready to marry such a man who is doomed to die in a few hours. Lord Krishna takes the female form name Mohini and marries him (Narain 2003). In South India, the hijras assume themselves as 'Aravanis' the Aravan's progenitor. Even the Pandava Arjuna during his exile period has taken a vow to live as a eunuch or third sex named "Vrihannala" for a year. As Lord Krishna knows that Shikhandi in her previous life was a woman named Amba who was abducted by Bhishma to marry his brother. She cried and insists Bhishma let her go and marry her love. He left her but his lover refused to marry her. At that moment she prayed to Lord Shiva to make her a reason for Bhishma's death and she got the blessings from Lord Shiva. On the day of the

war, Lord Krishna asked Shikhandi to ride a chariot of Arjuna. Seeing this Bhishma said that it is Adharma to use a woman in the war, and then Lord Krishna replied that abducting a woman without her will is also an Adharma. Bhishma refused to fight with a woman and then Lord Krishna asked Shikhandi to take the arrow and kill Bhishma. Lord Krishna explained that all this happening was due to Karma and it was done to protect and establish Dharma. All these incidences show that third genders have given a great contribution to the establishment of Dharma and their contribution to the betterment of society cannot be ignored.

In India, during the Mughal period, the third gender had enjoyed a high position because of their trustworthy nature and strength. They got the job in the palace as an advisor or protector of harems to protect ladies because of their ability so that ladies can live life with fewer worries. During the Mughal period, the story of Malik Kafur is known to all. He was a slave third gender who was bought by Allauddin Khilji. Malik Kafur was originally a Hindu eunuch of Gujarat. He was very handsome and intelligent. In 1297, he was purchased for 1,000 Dinars by Nusrat Khan for Allauddin Khilji (Preserve Articles). He has become trustworthy very soon and holds a higher rank. Even he was a brave warrior also and won many places for Allauddin Khilji. After the Mughal Empire and during the British Empire third-gender life becomes terrible. This has changed their life and position from the respected stage to the criminal stage. They were given a tag of criminal and their daily activities were criminalized. They were denied civil rights and criminalized under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. They were given the punishment of imprisonment for two years and a fine or both for castrating children, dressing like women and dancing in public. The Britishers have seen their power and plan to chop their power through exploitation and making them marginalized by giving them the tag of criminal tribes. Homosexuality was criminalized in India under Section 377 (Hinchy 2019). In 1952 after independence they were denotified but the stigma continued and they became the object of mocking and violence. In 2001, Naz Foundation has filed a case in Delhi High Court to abolish Section 377. But the decision was not in their favour and homosexuality was still considered a crime. Then again in 2005, they filed a petition in the Supreme Court for reconsidering the Delhi High Court judgement. In 2013 homosexuality was criminalized again but on 6th September 2018, the Supreme Court of India has finally given the decision of legalizing homosexuality in India and abolish Section 377.

Review of Literature

This section involves the review of literature related to the religious perspective of the third gender. Religion is particular a system of worship and faith. There is various religion found that people follow in India and the third gender is also in this category. Different research works have tried to explain the religious values and practices related to the third gender.

Gayatri Reddy (2006) in her book 'With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity' has explained about the religion of the third gender residing in Hyderabad city. In the particular chapter "We are all Musalmans now" she has explained that the third gender of Hyderabad worships Hindu God and Goddess but follows the Muslim religious practices despite they trace their existence from Hindu mythology.

Kidd & Witten (2008) in their paper 'Understanding Spirituality and Religiosity in the Transgender Community: Implications for Aging' have focused on the religious faiths and beliefs followed by female to male individuals and transgender people. The study highlighted the religiosity instruments for investigating of lives and experiences of these people by checking the evolution of religious beliefs and expression in them.

As Jennifer Loh (2011) in the paper 'Borrowing Religious Identifications: A Study of Religious Practices among the Hijras of India' has mentioned the different religious practices done among the third gender of India and tried to explain about their identity and practices. Another focus of this paper was on their sex and gender status as mentioned about the marginal position of the third gender in Indian society.

Piyush Saxena (2011) in his book 'Life of a Eunuch' has mentioned the rituals and festivals of the third gender, in particular, chapter "Eunuch Deities, Rituals and Festivals". He has explained how all the third gender communities participate in or celebrate all festivals of Hindu, Muslim or Christian like Holi, Christmas, Eid et cetera. He has further mentioned how the third gender worships Bahuchara Mata and visits shrines of Muslim saints.

The above section has explained the work related to the third gender and after reviewing different works of literature, the author has identified that awareness related to the third gender has been gradually increasing but there is still a long way to go for providing facilities and acceptance to this community.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to understand and analyse the religious practices followed in the third gender community of Lucknow city.

Hypothesis

Religious practices followed by the third gender community in Lucknow city are different from other communities existing in society.

Area of Study

The study is conducted in the Lucknow city of Uttar Pradesh, India. According to the census 2011, the third gender population in India is approx

4.9 lakh of which 28% is residing in Uttar Pradesh and Lucknow is chosen as the area of study considering it as the capital of Uttar Pradesh. The exact population of the third gender is not yet counted because they did not have a fixed location and they were scattered to so many places. To complete the study respondents were selected from different locations in Lucknow city like Krishna Nagar, Hazratganj, Indira Nagar et cetera.

Research Methodology

The study was carried out with the help of primary data and secondary data. The sample size for this study was 60 from 5 different areas of Lucknow city (10 from Krishna Nagar, 6 from Rajajipuram, 9 from Daliganj, 22 from Hazratganj and 13 from Indira Nagar). A semi-structured or an open-ended interview schedule was used to collect data in which in-depth interviews from 60 respondents were taken and 5 case studies were done. Along with this non-participant observation was done during the fieldwork. For this study, purposive and snowball sampling are used. In this work, the first third-gender respondent was contacted from the author's near colony and the contact of another respondent was taken. This has formed a chain-like pattern which is termed chain sampling or snowball sampling. For better understanding, many secondary sources were also used like books, newspapers, autobiographies, NGO reports, research journals and other publications. In last SPSS was used for the interpretation and analysis of data.

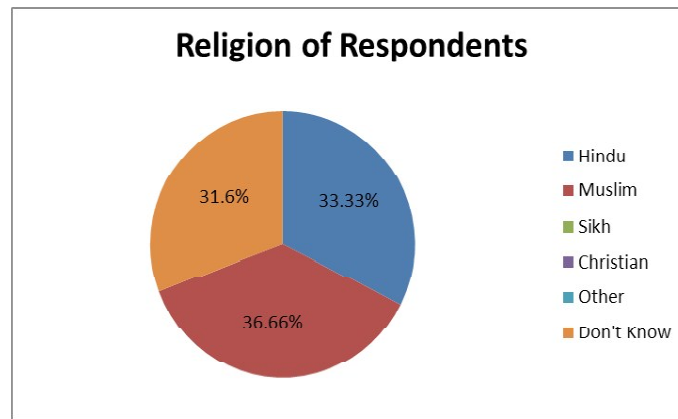
Analysis

Religion is an essential part of any community. It is like a cultural system in which designated behaviors and sets of practices are there. Religion is a universal concept of human societies. Religious beliefs give meaning to life and answer all the questions of a man about himself and the world. Emile Durkheim in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things". Different scholars have recognized that religion is part of every culture and they try to understand how religious practices and beliefs guide humans.

Serena Nanda (1999), in her book, while talking about the religion of hijras argues that at a deeper level the hijra's claim to power is through the ritual sacrifice of the phallus, as the identification with Shiva suggests, at the more conscious and culturally elaborated level, it is the devotion to the Mother Goddess (specifically Bahuchara, who is one variant of the Mother Goddess) that is the focus of the hijra community and the most explicitly acknowledged source of their powers. Gayatri Reddy (2006), in her work, highlights an extraordinary observation regarding the religion of hijras in Hyderabad. She argues that hijras in Hyderabad see themselves, generically, as Musalmans, or Muslim, despite their recourse to Hindu mythology in constructing their histories.

The third gender as an ambiguous category can be understood in the term of Hinduism religion. Bahuchara Mata is the shrine to the goddess that is found in almost every third gender household for daily prayer. The third gender also identifies with the Lord Shiva form of Ardhanareshwar that is half man and half woman. They used to worship goddess Bahuchara Mata, Lord Shiva or both. In India, it is not surprising that they adopted both Hindu and Muslim rituals. They used to follow Muslim commensal, burial customs and worshipped Hindu Gods and Goddess. Even they identified themselves as Muslims and when asked about religion, they said that “*hum hijro ka koi dharma nhi hota*” or “We do not have any religion”.

Figure number 1: Religion of Respondents



Source: Fieldwork

The above figure number 1 shows that in Lucknow region out of 60 respondents, 20 (33.33%) were Hindus, 22 (36.66%) were Muslim and 19 (31.6%) did not know about their religion. As the response of some third gender was that they are here from childhood and some from by birth so they don't know about their religion and some have answered that they use to worship every religion so they do not count themselves in any one religion. There was no third gender recorded in the Sikh or Christian religion.

The religion of the third gender is pluralistic. As told by the third gender, the conversion of religion takes place in their community. When a Hindu chela has to occupy the gaddi or position of her Guru Maa who is a Muslim, then she has to convert her religion and become Muslim to attain that place but this restriction was not for the other chelas. In third gender words, “*jab hum kisi Hindu chele ko gaddi dete hain toh use musalman banna padega*”. This conversion of religion in their community was non-questionable because the third gender were seen as the marginalized section of the society. But this conversion of religion does not affect their religious practices and celebrations because they celebrate both Diwali and Eid with the same

enthusiasm and use to visit both temples and mosques equally.

The Supreme Court of India 2014 has added the third gender to the other backward class (OBC) category. With this, the OBC identity was given to all third-gender communities which were assumed to a religion-free communities. It was assumed because of their separate performative rituals. Most of the third gender drop their surnames and hide their religion or caste to avoid discrimination. As seen in their community the Hindu and Muslim third genders live peacefully with each other in the same place. In some places, they jointly organise various religious practices of both Hindu and Muslim religions. As the third gender is not born in a third-gender family. They join their community with different religious backgrounds and perform certain religious practices which they used to perform in their childhood. And those who join third gender community as a child and did not know about their religion, they use to practice those religious rites that their guru or caretaker use to follow. The third genders have a strict hierarchy pattern in which chela has to follow his guru-maa instructions seriously. Despite this rigidity, one chela gets a chance to perform his religious practices. This freedom of religious practices helps them to know each other's religious practices and beliefs.

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (head of Kinnar Akhada) has said that there is no caste and religion in their community that is third gender community. Even one of my respondents of Lucknow Payal Singh (head of Uttar Pradesh Kinnar Akhada) has also stated that in their community there is no caste or religion restriction. All religions are equally welcomed and no discrimination is done within their community. But on the other hand, inequality was reported by Mansi (name changed), a 50-year-old third gender from Lucknow. As told by her that despite having the talent at a young age she has faced lots of discrimination because of her different religion as compared to her Guru maa (head of toli). As told by the third gender people that there is no religion in their community is controversial and contradictory. There are many different festivals of both religions which were celebrated together in their community. They are witnessed by celebrating Hindu rituals like keeping the fast of Navratra and celebrating Diwali, Holi or any other festival with equal enthusiasm. While working with the third gender community of Lucknow city it was found that the Muslim third gender would go to Masjid every Friday for offering the namaz in male attire (kurta-pyjama) to hide their identity and they use to sit in the last row so that no one notices them. Some of the third genders have visited Hajj, Mecca with the passport of 'male' identity because Saudi Arabia did not allow third gender people to enter their country.

Religious Rituals or Practices in the Third Gender: The third gender considers themselves as a lineage of both Hindus and Muslims from a historical and religious perspective. They peacefully stay together in the same place and respect each other's religious practices. In some of their group they jointly perform and celebrate each other religious festivals. The way the third

gender is adopting both the aspects of Hindu and Muslim practices they are marked by heterodox religiosity. These are two types of religious rituals or practices among the third gender which are as follows:

- i. ***Hindu Rituals:*** This section deals with the Hindu religious aspects of the third gender. This Hindu religiosity is related to the worship of 'Bahuchara Mata' the goddess of the third gender community. The third gender believes in Bahuchara Mata as their spiritual guide and gives blessings of fertility and prosperity to people in the name of Bahuchara Mata. Many myths or stories are related to the Bahuchara Mata and many of the third genders even don't know the stories related to her but they still worshipped her. According to the third gender, goddess Bahuchara is also called 'Murgevali Mata' and her temple is situated in Gujarat. The image of goddess Bahuchara Mata is very unique as she sits on a big cock. She has four hands in which one hand holds a sword and another holds a trident. In another hand, she holds a book while the other hand is in the posture of giving blessings to people. Bahuchara goddess is considered the goddess of sex change this is the reason the third gender worships her so that they won't become the third gender in their next life. Third genders have properly set up their worship place in their home where they keep the idol of God and Goddess. Not only Bahuchara Mata but they worship other God and Goddess of Hindus like Lord Shiva, Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, Lord Sai, Goddess Laxmi, Goddess Durga et cetera. It has been seen in many third-gender houses that in their worship place they have kept the picture or idol of Bahuchara Mata along with the other God and Goddess. The other religious activity was found during the time of a guru's death as told by third-gender respondents. They behave as a Hindu widow behaves during her husband's death. They break their bangles, remove the jewellery and wear light colour or white colour clothes till they got another guru. This activity was done to give respect to their passed guru. Sometimes they used to perform a Puja and Shobha Yatra or Parade in which they pay homage to all their senior deceased guru-maas. As told by them in this, they have a one-week programme of puja in which the whole community gathers here. Last day they have a grand Shobha Yatra in which they have a horse chariot, elephant, and camel, they play music and dance to reach the temple where they donate fruits and sweets which were later distributed to nearby poor people. After the judgement of the striking down of Section 377 by the Supreme Court in 2018, another important step was taken by the government for them in 2019 was of arranging a place at the Kumbh Mela festival in Prayagraj. This is an important Hindu festival where the third gender group has set a camp via the name 'Kinnar Akhara' and many of the Hindu third genders have gone to this place for taking a holy bath.

- ii. *Muslim Rituals:*** The next section deals with the Muslim rituals which were followed by the third gender. Beyond Hindu rituals almost in the third gender different Muslim rituals have also been observed. According to third gender respondents, along with Muslim third genders Hindu third genders also participate in or observe the Sababarat festival to pay homage to their deceased senior guru-maa. Muslim third gender maintains Roja that is abstaining from food during the month of Ramjan. In this period Hindu third gender either goes for the same fasting ritual or if not then they join them (Muslim third gender) in the evening time when they disclose their fast or Roja. All the third genders (Muslim and Hindu both) equally celebrate the Id festival. Along with these festivals and rituals, one more major ritual was observed is Muharram (ten-day mourning ritual) in which all the Muslim third gender mourn for their two Muslim saints Hussain and Hassan. As mentioned prior that the important custom which all the Muslim third gender follow was doing Namaz either in Masjid or in their home. As many of the Muslim third genders have kept their Quran book in their worship place. They use to visit some dargahs (mausoleums) or tombs of Sufi saints situated in Ajmer and Mumbai to pay homage and to get blessings. Besides all these rituals one more custom is followed by them is the burial custom. As mentioned by them that all the third genders will be buried after their death as per Muslim rituals either the third gender is Muslim or Hindu. No cremation was done for the Hindu third gender. The reason behind the burial custom was kept hidden because of their secrecy. As mentioned above the chelas act as Hindu widows after the guru's death but the burial practices are totally according to Muslim rituals. Dressing pattern is also observed in them that is the adoption of the burqa (black attire worn by Muslim females in public). One of the third genders told that they used to wear a burqa when going out alone and even the Hindu third gender has also mentioned that she also wears a burqa when going outside alone to protect her by hiding her identity. In the third gender community, they follow each other customs as the Muslim third gender was witnessed by wearing a bindi on her forehead.

Discussion

The religious identity of the third gender in Lucknow does not conform to conventional religious classifications. Instead, it embodies a complex, fluid, and pluralistic model of religiosity that is shaped by lived experiences, community hierarchies, social marginalization, and historical-cultural memory. This blending of religious symbols and practices between Hinduism and Islam can be understood as both a coping mechanism and an assertion of agency by a community historically excluded from normative religious institutions. One of the key elements emerging from this study is the idea of heterodox religiosity.

Which is a form of religious expression that deviates from standardized orthodoxy and embraces flexibility. This heterodoxy is both a necessity and a choice for the third gender community. Since many third-gender individuals are rejected by their birth families and religious communities, they reconstruct spiritual identities within hijra households, where religious practices are not rigidly bound by orthodoxy but shaped by community needs and inherited cultural fragments.

The pluralistic practices like offering namaz and celebrating Navratra, observing Muharram while worshipping Bahuchara Mata reveals a significant cultural innovation. These practices serve not just as religious observances but as symbolic acts that legitimize the existence and identity of the third gender. As Clifford Geertz (1993) argues, religion acts as a cultural system that creates meaning through symbols. In this context, hijras' religious expressions construct and maintain their social identity, as well as provide them emotional anchoring in a world where they face systemic exclusion.

Another important insight relates to acculturation and intra-community conversion. The case of a Hindu chela converting to Islam to inherit a gaddi illustrates that religious identity within the community is governed by symbolic authority and hierarchy rather than by doctrine or belief. While this might be seen as forced religious conversion from a mainstream perspective, within the third gender community, such practices are accepted as part of their social order. Interestingly, despite this conversion, the individual may still continue participating in Hindu rituals, reinforcing the community's layered religiosity. The dual adherence to religious customs for example, celebrating both Eid and Diwali, or performing Muslim-style burials for Hindu-born members also reflects a deeper philosophical and social reconciliation. It shows that the third gender community views religion not in terms of exclusivity but as a toolkit for spiritual and cultural affirmation. Their practices break down the rigid dichotomy of sacred and profane as outlined by Durkheim (1915), instead operating within a liminal space where the sacred is continually redefined by experience.

It is also critical to acknowledge that while outwardly the community claims to be caste-free and religion-neutral which was asserted by leaders like Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Payal Singh individual narratives. This contradiction reflects a microcosm of Indian society, where progressive ideals often coexist uneasily with entrenched prejudices. The tension between proclaimed inclusivity and lived discrimination reveals that the third gender community, despite its marginalization, is not immune to the broader social dynamics of caste, religion, and hierarchy. The ritualization of grief, such as chelas mourning like Hindu widows and yet organizing Muslim-style burials for their deceased gurus, demonstrates an intentional ritual hybridity. It suggests a conscious act of community formation and memory-making that does not rely on dominant religious institutions. These practices function not only to

honor the dead but to reinforce community bonds, transmit traditions, and assert a distinct third-gender identity.

From a socio-political perspective, the third gender's religious life can be viewed as a form of resistance. In appropriating and reinterpreting religious rituals, the community asserts its place within traditions that have historically marginalized them. Their participation in public religious events such as the Kumbh Mela via the Kinnar Akhara signifies an act of reclaiming spiritual space and legitimacy. This challenges the mainstream notion that sacred spaces are exclusive to cisgender and heteronormative bodies. Finally, this pluralistic religiosity reflects broader themes in the sociology of religion—particularly the idea that marginalized communities often forge new paths of spiritual meaning that subvert and reframe existing religious hegemonies. The third gender's religious practices are not mere acts of survival but are expressions of cultural creativity and resilience.

In conclusion, the religious identity of the third gender in Lucknow should not be seen as fragmented or confused. Rather, it is holistic, dynamic, and highly contextual. It resists categorization within binary religious frameworks and instead manifests a model of adaptive religiosity it is a form of spirituality that is performative, strategic, and inclusive. This not only challenges dominant religious narratives but also enriches the broader understanding of religion in pluralistic societies like India.

Conclusion

Moreover seeing the religious elements of the third gender as the adoption of both Hindu and Muslim rituals and practices should not be considered a problem because there is no communal disharmony amongst them but it gives a frame of the complexity of religion. As a result, it consists that hypothesis is accepted because of their different kinds of religious faiths without any discrimination. It is seen as an amalgamation or mixture of both the religions in which they may adopt or adapt those practices which were according to their need. This is the kind of acculturation. Acculturation is a process of social and cultural change by balancing two cultures. In this, a person adopts cultural values or practices from others but still holds its original cultural values and traditions. As the third gender individual joins the community belongs to different religion and it may create a problem but they have fluidity in adopting each other culture. This helps both Muslim and Hindu third gender to join the group by maintaining their own religious identity. In some households, all the third gender are either Hindu or Muslim and in some, it includes both Hindu and Muslim third gender. They are the utmost example of acculturation in which they have adopted some of the values and practices of each other cultures but still have maintained their particular religion. It is found in the third-gender community that they employ Muslim practices in their daily customs but they also worship Hindu gods and goddesses. There

does not seem any dispute or clash between them. All this is possible due to their self-consciousness and their position in society which has created this kind of amalgamation. And this religious pattern of the third gender cannot be defined into two categories of Hindu and Muslim. This has given a new pattern of adopting new religious practices particular on individual and on the community level and it has created a new religious identity also.

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Suparna Sarkar and Anindya Bhattacharyya

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON RAMKELI FAIR AND THE RITUAL OF *MATRIPINDADAN* AT GOUR MALDA

Abstract

The glorious past of Malda, district of West Bengal is associated with ancient ruined city of Gour. Ramkeli is a small village located here. A fair is annually conducted at Ramkeli, is considered as an important pilgrimage for Vaishnavism, a predominate cult of Bengal promoted by Chaitanya. The fair has been held from more than five hundred years to celebrate the advent of Chaitanya at Ramkeli. The fair is also popular for another reason, generally in Hinduism the right to offer pinda is held by sons for paternal lineages but during this fair matripindadan ritual is performed by women for maternal lineages in Gayeswari or Goureswari temple located at Ramkeli. An explorative study is conducted at Ramkeli by using participatory observation method to understand the association or dilemma between these two cults of Chaitanya and Shakta.

Keywords: *Chaitanya, Vaishnavism, Matripindadan, Bhakti Movement, Shakti cult, Ramkeli.*

Introduction

Ramkeli is both a place of religious devotion and entertainment, situated at Malda. The significance of Ramkeli fair is almost five hundred years old. The fair is organized to celebrate the coming of Chaitanya at Malda. It holds significance for Hindu community because it is a seat of worship for two sects: the *Vaishnava* and the *Shakta* sects. The fair at Ramkeli starts on the last day of *Jayistha* (second month of Bengali calendar). In *Chaitanya-Bhagvata* Virndavana Das (written in 1535 AD) claims that once Chaitanya visited the village Ramkeli at Gour and stayed for three days on his way to Mathura and Vrindavan and the day was *Jayistha-Sankranti* (last day of *Jayistha*, which falls in the middle of June). The day is celebrated as an auspicious day for *Vaishnava* community (a religious community, worshiper of Krishna) and the fair signifies the advent of Chaitanya at Gour Malda (15 June of 1515 AD).¹ In India it is a common practice for sons to perform funeral rituals of parents and

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offer *pitripinda* but at Ramkeli on that day of *Jayistha-Sankranti* a large number of female devotees visit from different parts of India to give *matripinda* and this *pindadana* is only held during the fair at Gayeswari or Goureswari temple near Firoz-Minar which is considered as an unique feature of this fair. This paper shall base its narrative on review of literature on Ramkeli, Vaishnavism in Bengal, Chaitanya, *Shakti* worship and on an ethnographic account of the two significant festivals held on the same dates. Both the events give women two-fold identities: a chooser where she can exercise her agency and at the same time the other event subsumes her identity in the wider patriarchal domain of authority and domination.

The distance between both temples at Ramkeli (Madonmohan and Goureswari) is about two kilometres but both groups of devotees do not accept the persistency of the other. The *Vaishnava* devotees of Ramkeli recognize the existence of *Shakti* cult and Gayeswari at Gour but deny its historical root. For them different Hindu kings developed their kingdom here so the stone carved idol of the temple remain as a relic and the temple has no significance for the conduction of this fair. They do not accept the philosophy of *Shakti* worship because they view Krishna as the supreme soul and Radha for them is only woman deity whose entity persists in her love for Krishna. Thus every devotee of Krishna (including male devotees) is an embodiment of Radha. Most of them did not have any idea about the location of the temple. The devotees of *Vaishnava* community who are directly involved with the worship of Madanmohan and Chaitanya mostly belong to upper-caste position. According to them the ritual practices of *Shakti* cult like meat, alcohol and blood considered as impure for *Vaishnava* and those practices are associated with lower born people. To them, Chaitanya as the saviour of humankind had tried to liberate people from those practices. So for them, *Shakta* community is situated in lower position than *Vaishnava* as their lifestyle is associated with lower caste groups who are non-vegetarian. So, the basis of the dialectic is both *Vaishnava* and the *Shakta* exist at the same place but deny their existence becomes significant context in which the opposite position of women in both cults are discussed in the paper.

Theoretical Understanding

The feminist understanding of gendered polarisation provides a critical approach to study the traditionally assigned male-female role division in various social institutions and explain it as a socio-cultural construction. This construction helps to maintain the sustainability of patriarchal social order that enhance gender inequality and women subordination. From the feminist view gender assigned roles are not determined by the biological classification of human body rather those are scripted by society, culture, values, norms, customs and institutions (Oakley 1996: 35-39). The empirical research on Ramkeli fair was conducted by using the ethnographic account as espoused by

Malinowski for understanding the traditional values, beliefs, customs and cultural practices of this fair. The theoretical paradigm of Malinowski was based on interpretative analysis of empirical data. As a functionalist he emphasised on the study of culture. He denoted culture as a whole where patterns, values, beliefs, ideas and practices of people are studied. He analysed culture from a functionalist perspective. Through his study he tried to grasp people's own vision about his own world, thus interpret the culture as a whole. His theory was based on 'function' and explained how function of one institution can influence the other and claimed every customs, values are not isolated from each other rather connected with the rest of the culture. He also emphasised on the understanding of those who practice culture and how it becomes meaningful to them by mitigating their own needs. Lastly he interpreted how those cultural practices promote social cohesion (Kaberry 2002: 71-91).

In this empirical work on Ramkeli fair the authors want to critically analyse this functionalist tradition by explaining the conventional customs and values of this fair as a cultural system and try to understand the how this age old practice use the traditional gender defined role as a mechanism for maintaining the patriarchal social order for fostering social cohesion and uniformity of collective value system.

E. Leach as a structuralist had tried to bridge the gap between functionalism and structuralism. He advocated every society maintain a balance with constant stability of flux and potential changes of culture, thus there not always exist an absolute form of conformity in cultural practices rather that can be sustained with conflicting interests, which is identified as a source of dynamism. Thus the mechanism of cultural change is based on the reaction of the people of a particular community on the basis of their differential economic and political interests. Thus he focused on the binary opposition of society and claimed every society have different form of culture with various representation of binary oppositions. For him the understanding of a cultural system should be based on the interpretation of the structure of mind of the people and analysis of their understanding about the binary (Kuper 1983: 142-166).

In this paper the binary opposition between the *Vaishnava* and *Shakta* community is interpreted on the basis of the traditional values and beliefs system of both cults, and also the authors try to re-define the caste and gender based hierarchy within the religious practices of Vaishnavism. Through this empirical study the authors criticise the rigid binary structure of male and female role that serves to restrict women agency and emancipation by using a feminist lens. Feminist epistemological position argues the structure of gender based on the binary of two different sexual identity is functionally used to provide privilege position to men and suppress women position through the practice of culture.

Although the religious ideology of Chaitanya emerged on the ideology of equality but with the considerable changes and negotiations in the practice of Vaishnavism at Ramkeli the devotees of Chaitanya interpret the presence of caste and gender based hierarchy within Vaishnavism as functional for the preservation of the tradition of the cult on the other the members of both two religious communities assign functional meaning to the dilemma between this binary opposition of Vaishnavism and Shaktism. The study also explains the assimilation process of Vaishnavism and Shaktism which serve to maintain the whole cultural order and the rear the stereotypical order of gender hierarchy and socially constructed belief of gender based appropriate behavioural practice within these both two religious cults.

Evolution of Ramkeli Fair and the Role of Chaitanya

During Pala dynasty Gour was the capital of Bengal and considered as the capital even after the Muslim rulers owned Gour in 1198 AD. After shifting the capital in 1350 AD to Pandua in 1353 AD Gour again became the capital of Bengal. Roup and Sanatan are believed to build Madanmohan temple at Ramkeli in 1509 AD. The idols of Madanmohan (other name of Krishna), Radha, Balarama and Revathi and a statue of Gopal, Gauranga, Nityananda and Advaitacharya and two oil portraits of Roup and Sanatan are situated in the temple. A huge stage is constructed in front of the temple for *naam-samkirtana*. There are eight cistern ponds (*asthasakhi-kunda* of Krishna) at Ramkeli as a model of Vrindaban named—*Roup-Sagar, Shyam-Kunda, Radha-Kunda, Lalita-Kunda, Bisakha-Kunda, Surabhi-Kunda, Ranja-Kunda* and *Indulekha-Kunda*, designing the place as *Gupta-Vrindaban*. It is supposed that here Chaitanya met his two devotees under the *Kelikadamba* (*Mitragyna-Parvifolia*) and *Tamal* (*Diospyros-Montana*: sacred grove) tree in front of Madanmohan temple and after staying there for three days Chaitanya returned to Puri, Odisha (*Nilachal*) on 17 June, 1515 AD. From then, the place was flooded with devotion for Chaitanya and the mass gathering of devotees at that auspicious time transformed into a widely known Ramkeli fair. Every year a large number of *Vaishnava* as well as other devotees come from different districts of West Bengal and India to visit this fair (Chakraborty 1992: 10-19).

Chaitanya influenced large number of people through his devotional spirit, popularly known as *Bhaktiyoga* (cult of devotion). Vaishnavism has been discussed in Hindu *Puranic* mythology but it was transforms into a complete new dimension during fifteenth century by Chaitanya (1486 AD to 1533 AD) and his followers in Eastern part of India especially in Bengal and Odisha. His philosophy of Krishna *bhakti* and *prem* (devotion and love) took universalised form. Bengal Vaishnavism is based on the philosophy of *bhakti* rather than quest for knowledge, devotion towards Krishna is considered as only path of salvation (*bhakti* leads to *mukti*, freedom from the mundane) (Ghosh 2020: 204).

Chaitanya was ascribed godhood by devotees and looked upon as lord Krishna incarnate which became the unique feature of Bengal Vaishnavism. Chaitanya possessed the qualities of charismatic leadership that attracted his devotees. According to Max Weber a charismatic leader is one who is quite ordinary but possesses such qualities that attract people towards the leader and the qualities set him apart from the ordinary people. The common and the ordinary people accept the leader as if endowed with supernatural, superhuman or exceptional qualities those are not accessible by them. For him, charisma can become a revolutionary force in the social world which may lead to dramatic changes in the traditional system (Ritzer 2011: 128-129). Thus, Chaitanya cult was constructed due to the charm of his personality and the appearance of his evident devotion.

The *Bhaktiyoga* of Chaitanya was unique as sometimes expressed by his dancing and singing with joy, sometimes he lost his sense and immersed in Krishna *bhakti* (Goswami 1925: 169). For Krishnadas Kaviraj whenever Krishna wanted to feel the love of Radha he appeared in Navadvip in the form of Chaitanya who had the duality of both two divine souls Radha-Krishna. Radha was described as warm, soft and her eternal love for Krishna is compared with his devotion (*Radha-bhava*, the love of Radha for Krishna) (Goswami 1925: 4-9). So Bengal Vaishnavism is infested with purity of love and Chaitanya received the central space in the heart of the *Vaishnava* in Bengal (Goswami 1925: 17-21).

The unique feature of Chaitanya Vaishnavism is *harinaam-samkirtana* (taking the name of Krishna collectively) which becomes the main attraction of Ramkeli fair. Initially *kirtana* was conducted privately in the house of a devotee named Shrivasa but Chaitanya instructed to organise it in a larger form (Ghosh 2020: 53). People from different segments of society like untouchables; lower caste groups including women was flooded with devotion evoked by *kirtana* (Ghosh 2020: 55). He advised his devotees to lead a simple life and live as a beggar, should be strict vegetarian and be humble with others and these practices of poverty can connect Vaishnavism with the people of lower strata. He defined *kirtana* as characterised by fervour of devotion where emotion has played a dominant role so people forget caste distinctions as they participate (Chakrabarty 1985: 74-78). In the era of Chaitanya this form of collective devotion had developed a movement against all conservativeness of caste rigidity, popularly known as Bhakti Movement of Bengal where Chaitanya took a significant role (Ghosh 2020: 52-55). By performing *naam-samkirtana* he developed a communication among the devotees and generated a mass consciousness of pure devotion. As an intellectual he developed new ideas, new thoughts in opposition of the existing evils of society and revolt against social prejudices regarding caste hierarchy (Ghosh 2020: 208-209).

Chaitanya was associated with Radha like emotion (*Radha-bhava-dyuti*) which is the product of the ancient Indian theory of *rasa* (an emotional form of

devotion) of *Bhakti* cult which leads to salvation (*moksha*). According to Hindu religious ideology devotion (*bhakti-rasa*) is divided into five sub-categories such as— *shanta-rasa* (quiet meditation), *dashya-rasa* (devotee performs as a servant of the deity), *sakhya-rasa* (based on friendship), *vatsalya-rasa* (parent like emotion) and *madhu-rasa* (emotion of passionate love) (Goswami 1925: 57). The devotion of Chaitanya was based on *madhu-rasa* form here he is regarded as embodiment of the union of both Radha-Krishna. He claimed all the devotees of this material world can be viewed as Radha (woman love) and the supreme lord Krishna is one and only man of the Spiritual world (Ghosh 2020: 203).

The practice of mass marriage of *Vaishnava* became the most unique feature of this fair. For the exploitation of lower caste people by the upper caste especially those lower caste women who were widow, husband deserted and abandoned were in more vulnerable situations. Sometimes for the pressure of society they gradually engaged in various kind of anti-social activities either willingly or unwillingly (Das 2017: 1). For losing the dignity of ideal womanhood (chaste wife) they gradually were isolated from the mass.

By following the *Bhakti* cult of Chaitanya his disciple Nityananda Abadhut started to organize the ceremony of mass marriage at Ramkeli to rescue those exploited people which also helped them to start a new journey with a new mate. The marriage was conducted by exchange of *kanthi* (necklace made by strings of beads of *Tulshi* stem) and *tilak* known as an identity of *Vaishnavite* conversion. For this marriage both groom-bride were needed to enlist their name to the authority of the temple. The marriage was conducted in front of Madanmohan temple on the auspicious day of *Jayistha-Sankranti*. Before marriage the *Vaishnava* and *Vaishnavi* took a bath in a pond (*kunda*) near the temple and wear fresh cloth for maintaining purity (Das 2017: 1). Then *Vaishnavi* had to stand in a row by covering themselves and only their little finger of left hand remain uncovered. The *Vaishnava* has to choose their mate by selecting the fingers, exposed in public. The marriage started with the promise of life-long devotion to Krishna by exchange of one-rupee (*pachsika-posia*) and *Vaishnavi* was committed to help her male partner to devote properly throughout his life (Chakraborty 1992: 28-31). But today at Ramkeli this *kanthi-badal* ritual has become a myth. The purpose of the practice was to help the distress people to return to the mainstream society with dignity and also provide the socially accepted right of togetherness and equality. A Bengali song was popular among the *Vaishnava* of Bengal—

‘Ramkeli mela giya bostomi anibi, pachsika poisa diya konthi bodlenibi, khonjoni bajaye tare tulibe kaghore, hare Krishna naam kori smariaprabhure’ (Chakraborty 1992: 30). {Translated as- In Ramkeli fair *Vaishnava* can marry *Vaishnavi* by exchange of *kanthi* and one-rupee. Celebrate the entry of the Bride in the house of the groom by playing *khonjoni* (a musical instrument of *kirtana*) and together take the name of Krishna}.

In Indian society a social stigma is inflicted on unmarried men and women, because the importance of marriage is undeniable for maintaining status-quo. The cost of mass marriage was very low that became helpful for those brides and grooms who could not bear the heavy cost of social marriage which can also remove the stigma of spinsterhood (Chakraborty 1992: 28-31). Thus the purpose of the marriage was to liberate those people who could not marry and also it introduced the new life of togetherness towards the path of devotion. Although the philosophy behind this practice involves equality of both mates but the *Vaishnava* devotees of the fair have an antagonistic idea about this marriage. As they believe at the time of that mass marriage the grooms had to select their mate only by watching the finger of the bride, they were not attracted by her beauty thus the men by accepting a woman as his wife emancipate her from social stigma so as a husband he became her saviour. Hence the primary duty of the woman is to serve her husband for whole life. Here the patriarchal construction of woman identity becomes an important factor as by following the concept of ideal womanhood in this form of marriage the wife had to follow the instructions of her husband as her existence is based on her status of wifehood.

Our journey at Ramkeli

The journey started from Rathbari, Malda which was 15-16 Kilometres from Ramkeli. The two unique characteristics of this fair is mass marriage of *Vaishnava* and *matripinda* offered by women. The journey had started long back when we saw people flooded trains, jammed buses to visit Ramkeli fair. It aroused in us a strong urge to know what it was and what it stood for which attracted so many people from all over India and from foreign countries.

Devotees from different parts of West Bengal (Siliguri, Birbhum, Bolpur, Purulia and others) and also from India (Varanasi, Guwahati, Uttarakhand and others) came to the fair. They sat in a row in separate tents and asked all visitors for alms and help in form of uncooked food and money. But the visitors had no information regarding the origin of Madanmohan temple, Roup, Sanatan and Gayeswari or Goureswari temple, although they acknowledged the spiritual power of Chaitanya and philosophy of *Bhakti* cult.

The religious observance by *Vaishnava* community (*harinaam-samkirtana*) is the main attraction of this fair. Several tents are made by different group of *bairagi* (both men and women), known as *bairagi-akhra* in the premises of Ramkeli. Chaitanya did not create *kirtana* but transformed it as a weapon of resistance against the domination of Brahmanism. Before his appearance *Vaishnava* community established a group headed by Adwaitacharya at Navadwip, Nadia but that was caste based where the right to worship Krishna and to perform *kirtana* was only enjoyed by upper caste (*Brahmin*, *Kulin-Kayestha*, *Baidya*) Hindus. Pre-Chaitanya era was expressively dominated by Brahmin community and women predominantly governed by the male

members of society. Chaitanya as a religious reformist had tried to change the character of the ritual practice of *Vaishnava* community and transform it into a mass movement (Ghosh 2020: 52-53).

Bengal Vaishnavism was transfused by the local disciples of Chaitanya like— Vrindavan Das, Jayananda, Lochana Das, Murari Gupta and others, those who were married devotees and some of the devotees took ascetic vow (known as *goswami*) like- Sanatan, Roup, Jiva, Raghunath Bhatta, Gopal Bhatta and Raghunath Das and others, all of them belong to different caste position in society (include both upper and lower caste) (Ghosh 2020: 199). He declared that even if a person is *Sudra* (lower caste) can be considered as true *Vaishnava* if s/he recites the name of Krishna (Ghosh 2020: 206-215). He argued as— '*Chandal jodi Krishna naam kore tobe se chandal noy, Brahmin Jodi oshot pothe chole tobe se Brahmin noy*' (Translated as- if an untouchable will take the name of Krishna s/he cannot be considered as untouchable and if an upper caste Brahmin will become dishonest s/he cannot be denoted as Brahmin) (Bramha 2015: 69). Thus by rejecting all caste based distinctions he promoted a sense of equality as a state of devotion which is known as spiritual democracy (Ghosh 2020: 52-55).

Every year a huge number of *Vaishnava* and *Vaishnavi* participate in the worship of Madanmohan on those auspicious days of Ramkeli fair. An unstructured interview was conducted with them about the importance and origin of the fair. The caste status of those *Vaishnava* were blended (both upper and lower) in most of the *Vaishnava-akhra* (group of *Vaishnava*, who perform *kirtana*) but it was seen that the main hosts of different *Kirtana* groups were upper caste male Brahmins and those were directly involved in the occasion. Other participants were mixture of various caste position. Here the role of female devotees were limited especially as passive helper who helped the male performer by playing different music instruments or participate in chorus music during *kirtana*. Thus the male upper caste *Vaishnava* became the main organizer of the rituals associated with Madanmohan temple. Some of them were the member of various *kirtana-akhra* and the other were involved as priest of the temple.

In philosophical level the devotees believed caste system is based on hierarchy and is defined by birth according to *karma* (action of previous life) so every caste group have different caste status and only the philosophy of Vaishnavism can reduce this differentiation by liberating the lower caste people from the sins of their previous life. But in real sense at Ramkeli caste distinctions play a vital role where the caste position of Chaitanya including Roup and Sanatan was glorified by the upper caste *Vaishnava* who defined them as Brahmin *santan* (son of Brahmin), that denotes their privileged position within the *Vaishnava* community. For them becoming *Vaishnava* leads to redemption from lower caste position but simultaneously they claimed that the higher caste position is more privileged for becoming more virtuous from

the deeds of previous life.

The idea of those *Vaishnavite* about marriage is based on patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy use marriage as a weapon to control women, it provides right to husbands to keep women under their control and women also internalized the moral code of conducts for being an ideal wife, which is known as *pativrata* *dharma*. *Pativrata* denotes some specific code of conducts of Hindu wife leads to chastity and wifely fidelity as pure form of selfhood. Her responsibilities should be restricted to her husband and which becomes the means of salvation of her life (Chakravarti 2006: 74). Similarly in mass marriage a *Vaishnavi* had to consider her husband as her lord (*pati-parameswar*), obey his order, should become the passive helper of his way to devotion and after death of her husband she could devote herself towards the supreme god Krishna. One participant (*Vaishnava*) stated as '*Naarir ehojonmer potiseba projomne Krishna prapti ghotai*' (Translated as- wife should serve her husband, it leads to salvation in her next life after death).

For understanding the dilemma at Ramkeli between the philosophies of *Bhakti* cult, based on equality and the actual idea of *Vaishnava* about gender specific equality and role of women (especially married, *Vaishnavi*) it is important to know about the objectives of this philosophical school of Chaitanya and about his married life mentioned in different *Vaishnava* texts.

The Bhakti Movement of Chaitanya was governed by two major purposes— resistance against the religious conversion conducted by Hussain Shah (Muslim ruler, reigned 1493-1519 AD) in Bengal and provide rights to lower caste Hindus who were exploited and marginalized by dominant Brahminic ideology.

Among various male devotees some of female devotees had played an important role for spreading Chaitanya philosophy but in most of the cases they were associated with some of his male devotees. The most deserving names are— Ganga Devi, daughter of Nityananda and wife of Madhavacharya who spread Vaishnavism in parts of Bengal; Sita Devi, wife of Adwaitacharya and after his death she provide leadership to his disciple at Shantipur in Nadia; Janhnavi Devi, daughter of Suryadas Sarkhel and second wife of Nityananda; Hemlata Thakurani, daughter of Srinivasa; and Madhavi Devi, sister of the Sikhi Mahiti (Ghosh 2020: 198-199).

In *Vaishnava* community there exist a long standing controversy of *Sevikiya* (care and affection) versus *Parakiya* (extra-marital relationship) love for Krishna (Ghosh 2020: 203-204). *Vaishnava* philosophy has variety of ideologies, from all of those Narahari Sarkar and his follower Lochana Das spread the ideology of devotion for Chaitanya in the spirit of love of *gopi* (married female friends of Krishna) for Krishna. This group of followers denoted intense physical desires among the women of Nadia for Chaitanya. They claimed all married women of Nadia including ugly and beautiful considered handsome

Chaitanya as their *Nagar* or paramour and felt the desire to touch him and their eyes were thirsty to gaze at him. Thus for those women the glory and grace of Chaitanya was defined as ultimate sweetness of life. This philosophy was popular as *Srikhanda* School of devotion and the ideology was extended among the rural belt of Burdwan region during eighteenth and nineteenth century.² Thus *Srikhanda* School of thought denoted *Parakiya* (extra marital love) love for Chaitanya who was considered as the embodiment of Krishna (Chakrabarty 1985: 190-192). However different mythology of *Vaishnava* claimed that Chaitanya usually avoided direct interaction with women as an ascetic (Sen 2019: 141-142).

Among the two wives of Chaitanya, Vishnupriya as his second wife is given more importance in *Vaishnava* literature, as she viewed the transition of his life to monkhood. She is regarded as Satyabhama (second consort of Krishna) in her past life and denoted as a young bride, whose whole life remained devoted to her lost husband (Bandyopadhyay 2015: 248).

From colonial period educated middle-class Bengali assumed a need for this cult to purify the tradition from sexual immorality (*Parakiya* cult) as a negative stereotype was generated against the *Vaishnavi* (female ascetics) (Banerjee 1987: 1197-1206). For Melville Kennedy most women took Vaishnavism in order to hide their lower caste status. He stated in the *bairagi* (ascetic) life the widow *Vaishnavi* can remarry without recognition of society (Kennedy 1925: 172). Chaitanya–Vishnupriya image portrayed the connection of Vishnupriya to Lakshmi with the notions of abundance, wealth, beauty, and prosperity. That was developed for the increasing importance of domesticity, conjugality in the colonial period (Chakrabarty 1993: 1-34). When in a society the concept of ideal womanhood is most desirable, then the idea of conjugal worship became more popular than the couple those are associated with one another on the basis of passionate love (the divine couple Radha-Krishna loved each other but Radha was married to Ayan Ghosh).

Haridas Goswami who promoted the Chaitanya–Vishnupriya tradition, was born in a Brahmin family. Here Vishnupriya is personified as *dasya-bhava* (devotion through service) towards her husband. This represented a radical alteration of theological perspectives of Bengal Vaishnavism. As Tony Stewart stated this image portray the relation on the basis of socially acceptable moralities (Stewart 2010: 160). Thus Haridas Goswami tried to synthesize the both opposite cults of Vaishnavism.

The expression of ideal womanhood represented in *Sevikiya* philosophy of Vaishnavism. On the other *Parakiya* cult expressed a passionate devotion, love and aesthetic pleasure between Radha and other *gopi* (female friends) for Krishna which was beyond the marital relationship and the philosophy was in opposition of chastity and fidelity of ideal womanhood. Thus both of these two philosophies tried to define the role of women from the idea of patriarchy

(male dominated construction of women identity). According to Hindu mythology (guided by patriarchal ideology) the innate nature of women is called as *strisavabhava* denoted women as sexual being as in opposition with the moral code of conduct of women known as *stridharma* defined as fidelity to husband. *Strisavabhava* represented women sexuality as their essential nature which is defined as maternal heritage. Here *Parakiya* cult is the representation of this innate nature of women (married women of Nadia feel sexual attraction to Chaitanya). On the other *Sevikiya* cult of Vaishnavism introduced the dharma (religious ideology) prescribed code of conduct for women which is based on the devotional spirit of women to her husband signified as *stridharma* conceived by paternal heritage which led to ideal womanhood (chastity of Vishnupriya) (Chakravarti 2006: 72-74).

It was observed at Ramkeli the perspective about mass marriage and role of women, the *Vaishnava* devotees was guided by this philosophy of Chaitanya-Vishnupriya cult, where wife should play the role of passive helper of her husband in his way to devotion. In this form of marriage patriarchal ideology took the dominant form, the life of a wife should be devoted to her husband and denoted husband as the lord to whom the wife must offer unquestioning devotion. Although the cult of Vaishnavism is based on the equality of all human being in the path of devotion but here also the ideology of patriarchy, as a weapon of domination is cultivated and nurtured by this religious sect till today at Ramkeli.

Agency of women at Gayeswari or Goureswari Temple

Ancient Gour was the capital of Bengal, where *Shakti* cult was predominant. The great mother goddess of Gour was denoted as Goureswari, was worshiped by various Hindu king in different time periods. The temple was situated at the left side of Gour near the river bank of Bhagirathi later destroyed in the river. Including in Pala dynasty the presence of the temple could be found at Gour. At the time of Sena Dynasty the king Lakhan Sen established four Chandi temples at four different gateways of his kingdom to protect Gour named— eastern corner- Jahurachandi temple, western part- Dwarbasinichandi temple, northern side- Patalchandi temple and southern corner- Goureswari temple. Later the original temple of Goureswari sank into the river Ganga, and was rebuilt by Lakhan Sen at his newly constructed town named as Lakhanabati (present name Phulbari Village near Adina, Malda). The village was also known as Deogram where various Hindu temples were constructed (Ghosh 2020: 389-392). Again the temple was destroyed by Muslim ruler Bakhtiyar Khilji (reigned 1197-1206 AD) and the actual idol was replaced in different place of Gour by Brahmin priest to confuse the ruler.

Alexander Cunningham and Francis Buchanan Hamilton described Dwarbasinichandi as the mother goddess of Gour. Francis Buchanan Hamilton stated (1809-1810 AD) although the Dwarbasini temple was destroyed but still

at that place near about 5000 people gathered in the month of *Jayistha* to celebrate the worship of Goureswari, the owner of Gour, later he found the deity was worshiped near Firozpur. Alexander Cunningham (1879-1880 AD) also accepted the village Kamalabari (at the northern side of Gour where the Dwarbasinichandi temple was established) possessed the temple of Goureswari (Ghosh 2020: 389-392). Later the idol was established on the border of Gour. As the Muslim rulers ruined the temple several times, the idol was worshiped in different places of Gour (Basak 2011: 87-88). Hindu King Ganesh again established the temple in Bamanpara and started to worship Goureswari but his son Jalaluddin destroyed the temple (the son of Hindu king Ganesh converted to Islam). Later at the time of Hussain Shah the idol was found and the temple was again established by Alauddin near the north-west part of Baishgaji-Prachir (ancient name Banglacot) in front of Firoz-Minar. Till today in that temple a stone carved four handed goddess idol is worshiped as Goureswari (Ghosh 2020: 389-392).

Our journey at Goureswari Temple

Besides the festival of *Vaishnava* the Ramkeli fair is also popular for *Shakti* worship. In the western side of Firoz-Minar beside the thin stream of river Bhagirathi Goureswari temple is situated. The temple is considered both as *Shakti-peeth* (one *peeth* among the 51 *Shakti-peeth*) and also as Mother Goddess of Gour. When Gour was the capital of Bengal the temple was constructed for the ritual of maternal funeral, especially conducted by daughters so the deity is also known as Gayeswari. Till today the ritual is performed by women at Gour in the first day of Ramkeli fair (Basak 2011: 87-88). After having a bath in the river they worship goddess Tulshi, light a lamp in Firoz-Minar with the help of *bihari-pandits* (Hindi speaking Bihari male priest) and give their tribute to their mother in the Gayeswari temple, the ritual is popularly known as *matripindadan*. They float the *pinda* (a small ball made of rice flour, ghee, sesame seeds, milk, honey and like other traditional elements; which are sold near Firoz-Minar) in the pond near the temple and light a lamp for peace of the holy souls of their ancestors on the roof of the temple. In this temple there exist a model boat (signifies *baitarani*), after completing all the rituals the devotees have to cross the boat as a significance of the path towards heaven (*bhabanadipar*). On the first day of the fair women devotees from different places like— Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh including Nepal visit the temple to offer *matripinda*, so the place is also known as *Matri-Gaya*³.

Krishna-Kali Association

Historically the cults of *Vaishnava* and *Shakta* are radically different and antagonistic but at the philosophical level there developed a proximate association between these two ideologies. According to *Shakti* cult Kali is the fierce form of Durga (wife of Shiva) and *Vaishnava* denotes Krishna as the god

of love. The similarities between Kali and Krishna are based on their origin and embodiment. Both deities have dark complexion either blue or black which represents the darkness that consumes all the sinister of both material and spiritual world and embedded truth and peace. Both of their names signify the black one, the male version is denoted as Shyam (other name of Krishna) and female version is Shyama (other name of Kali) (Datta 2016). Mahabharata defined Durga as the sister of Krishna known as Yogmaya (other name of Kali) regarded as Subhadra at Puri in Odisha who was born from the womb of Yashodha.⁴ At the philosophical level *Kala* is a Sanskrit word means time. Time controls the universe which is unrestrained and immortal reality. The name Kali is the feminine word for time and masculine is *Kala*. Kali denotes the never ending cycle of time. Shiva as a male counterpart of time, Mahakaal is Consort of Kali. Hinduism also signify the three male gods—Brahma-Vishnu (other name of Krishna)-Mahesh (other name of Shiva) together as the origin of creation, procreation and destruction. On the other the *Bhagavad-Gita* symbolize Krishna as *Kala* who defines time. Thus the three philosophies are associated with each other. According to Bengali folk tradition once Krishna takes the form of Kali for Radha. Every night he used to play flute in forest with Radha even after her marriage which was unrevealed to Ayan, her husband. Once her sister-in-laws Jatila and Kutila informed him so he went to the forest to catch his wife red-handed but Krishna knew everything. So he asked Radha to collect red flowers and fruits as if she was worshiping and he took the form of Kali. Hence when Ayan visited Radha he saw her as worshiping goddess Kali. He was pleased to see this. Thus in folk tradition there develops a co-existence of faith between Krishna and Kali (Vora 2018). But in Vaishnavism there exist a huge debate between these two cults for the differences in ritual practices of *Vaishnava* and *Shakta*, the details of this dilemma is discussed in the next section.

The Dialectic between the Philosophy of Chaitanya and *Shakti* Cult

At practical level the conflict between the philosophies of *Vaishnava* and *Shakta* is very evident. According to the *Vaishnava* especially Chaitanya who transformed *kirtana* as a path of devotion believed Krishna as a supreme power creates this material world. So every elements of this world are considered as a part of Krishna. Thus Chaitanya could found the *duyti* (existence) of Krishna everywhere and felt love for every living element equally. On the other *Shakti* worship is based on animal sacrifice. This defines the opposition between the both cults. Chaitanya was soft-hearted but an incident related to this dilemma represented a different version of him. Kaviraj (1925) stated once a Kali devotee put red flower and blood of goat (ingredients for sacrifice essential in Kali worship) in front of the house where *Vaishnava* devotees gathered together for *kirtana* (house of Shrivasa). Soon the person who was the perpetrator suffered from leprosy and came to Chaitanya for apology. But he refused to help him and sent him to Shrivasa for apology. Thus although

Chaitanya had a non-violent character, he could appear in an aggressive form to protect his ideology (Goswami 1925: 319-321). Thus in reality the life style and ritual practices of both cults are totally different.

Puri is one of the most important pilgrimages for *Vaishnava* where Chaitanya spent the last part of his life. Here goddess Vimala (regarded as a *Shakti-peeth*) is worshiped at the Jagannath temple. Although the goddess is oriented with *Shakti* cult but in everyday worship after offering food to Jagannath temple (vegetarian) the offerings is given to Vimala temple thus it become *mahaprasadi* (oblation to the deity). The goddess is identified as a form of Durga, consort of Shiva and also the mother goddess of Puri. According to the *Shakti* cult every *Shakti-peeth* (51 temples are made in honour of various body parts of Sati, first wife of Shiva) is associated with a temple of Bhairava (another form of Shiva) as a guardian for the protection of the temple. But only in Puri, Jagannath as a form of Krishna considered as the Bhairava of Vimala Devi. Here the philosophy of oneness of Hindu trinity (Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva) is established. But according to the *Shakti* cult Jagannath is identified as Shiva-Bhairava rather than as a form of Krishna (Mahapatra 2005: 9-14). Only in the occasion of *Durga-puja* (Bengali festival celebrated during autumn) non-vegetarian food is offered to Vimala temple and also animal sacrifice is practiced on the third day of this occasion (*Astami*, eight day of *Navratri*). After completing all rituals by following the philosophy of *Shakti* cult the Vimala temple is purified, from then again the offering of Jagannath is started to deliver to Vimala (Tripathy 2009: 66-69). Thus the offering of remnants of Jagannath to the deity signifies her subordinated position to Jagannath, but the devotees of the temple including *Vaishnava* cannot ignore the existence of the deity.

But at Ramkeli the dichotomy between *Vaishnava* and *Shakta* was very crystalline. The visitors of the fair were divided into groups. One group (especially *Vaishnava*) came to perform *kirtana* or worship of Madanmohan and Chaitanya near the temple. The other appeared in the fair to offer *matripinda* in Gayeswari or Goureswari temple, conducted specially by women and most of them were from lower caste group came from different rural belts of Malda as well as some other places of West Bengal. They believe if one performs the ritual she has to perform this at least three times in the next three years. Thus the ritual provides an opportunity for women to liberate their ancestors which ideally are conducted by male progeny in Hinduism.

Conclusion

A significant opposition to caste system was manifested from various tradition of Bhakti Movement during early and late medieval period in India (Four major regions of India witnessed the impact of *Bhakti* tradition: Tamil region- 700 AD to 1200 AD; Maharashtra-1200 AD to 1700 AD; North India-1400 AD to 1700 AD and Eastern India- 1500 AD to 1800 AD). The ideologies of

different cults varied according to the philosophy of each but in every cult devotees came from different caste groups including upper and lower positions. All of the cults provided democratic access to the devotees from different segments of society and religion became an important space to liberate lower caste men and women. By following the *Bhakti* tradition marginalized lower caste men and women felt the urge to liberate themselves from the domination of Brahmanism and also from the role of domesticity that was allotted to women in caste based social order (Chakravarti 2006: 95-96). But by conducting a field study through the use of participatory observation method at Ramkeli, it was observed that although the *Bhakti* tradition of Chaitanya has criticized caste hierarchy the devotees at Ramkeli were unable to ignore this caste based domination within the domain of religious purity. They accept the privileged position of the upper caste Brahmin in *Vaishnava* community and try to restore the superiority of upper caste as a group of *Vaishnava* even within the *Bhakti* cult of Chaitanya. Moreover *bhakti* (devotion) towards Krishna that culminated in the submission to the Lord also personified subordination and submission of women who were unable to escape the patriarchal ideology. The cult did not offer any catharsis either to them to ignore this dominant ideology.

The development of Bhakti Movement of Chaitanya became a strong anti-Brahmanical tradition which provides an image of alternative religious community. But when it is practiced by devotees it idealizes authoritative the social relations, domination and hierarchy within the social structure as developed by the dominant ideology of caste and gender politics. They develop as a religious sect where the members follow their own beliefs and rituals and produce an endogamous community thus ultimately become a caste like sect where the practice of patriarchy and the sentiment of *pativrata* is very prominent and considered essential for the socio-cultural construction of women's identity (Chakravarti 2006: 103).

Though the history of Gayeswari or Goureswari temple was more ancient than Ramkeli fair, the fair is more popular for the *Bhakti* cult of Chaitanya and Madanmohan temple than the ritual *matripinda* of Gayeswari or Goureswari temple. Here too, the agency of women to exercise freedom and attain liberty from patriarchal practices is denied. The devotees of Chaitanya accepted the socially expected role of an ideal woman which represents woman as emotional, adorable, and loving like Radha, beloved of Krishna or like Vishnupriya. The *Shakti* cult defines women as dangerous and destructive, so Vaishnavism could not accept the philosophy of *Shakta*. On the other the women devotees who came to visit Gayeswari or Goureswari to perform the ritual of *matripinda* also did not accept the glory of Chaitanya at Ramkeli and also distanced themselves from participating in *Vaishnava* rituals. Their conviction is based on the philosophy of *Shakti* cult and the great mother of all humankind, they had a deep faith on the ritual of *matripindadan* which can only glorify their status as a daughter to their natal descent. The paper based on exploratory

study conducted through the participation of the authors in Ramkeli fair during the auspicious time opened an opportunity to understand how the caste hierarchy redefines itself within a rupture in the Hindu idea of pure and polluting castes and at the same time exposes us to the idea of reconciliation of space and agency within the same Hindu pantheon. At Ramkeli the process of women emancipation is nurtured by women of lower-caste position, through the active involvement in the ritual of *matripindadan*, the group of individuals those who are marginalised in both categories of gender and caste can practice their agency which is the most unique characteristics of Ramkeli fair. At the Ramkeli fair there exist an indefatigable struggle between women's subordination as a functional practice in the name of preserving tradition of *Vashinava* community and the exercise of women's agency and emancipation practiced by the women of lower-caste position in the temple of mother goddess Gayeswari or Goureswari. This struggle is juxtaposed but not integrated, is in continual denial of the existence of each other, but at the same time their unified expression of their own beliefs form a cultural practice unique to Ramkeli. The functional existence of the binary yet a denial of the singular significant presence of each other thus reinforce the cultural unity of the society as a whole. The cults and their practices are only piecemeal in contrast to the holistic nature of social existence.

Declaration

We do hereby declare that this paper has not been published earlier or not currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Notes

- 1 According to Chaitanya-Bhagvata Hussain Shah was the king (Sultan) of Gour (the capital of Bengal from eight to twelfth century) and his two royal servants—Roup and Sanatan (belonging to upper caste Brahmin) became disciples of Chaitanya.
- 2 Srikhanda is a village near the sub-division of Katwa, Burdwan. The region was popular for Bhakti Movement of Chaitanya
- 3 Gaya is a city, has historical significance which is identified as a holy pilgrimage of Hinduism. Traditionally the place is important for the performance of pindadaan ritual. Once Rama with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana offered pinda for his dead father in Gaya. Here the ritual is performed by son for their ancestors (male forefathers) or dead parents to pay homage after their death, which leads to salvation of the soul and by performing this ritual son can get the blessings of their ancestors. It was believed that Sita (wife of Rama) also offered her matripinda in Gayeswari or Goureswari temple at Ramkeli. So the temple is known as Matri-Gaya.
- 4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogmaya_Temple (Last accessed on 21 March 2023).

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Dalibandhu Pukkalla and M. R. Gangadhar

MARINE ECOLOGICAL ADAPTATION AND FISHING LIVELIHOODS IN A SOUTH INDIAN FISHING COMMUNITY

Abstract

Marine fishing communities have been hassled with various occupational difficulties to sustain their livelihoods. The engagement in fishing practices as a mode of occupation has been gradually declining and shifting towards alternative livelihoods, creating an imminent threat to food security for these communities. The fishing sector's sustainability depends on the availability of marine resources, supportive ecosystems, and engagement in fishing by fishermen as a means of support. However, there are different whys and wherefores for the unsustainability of the fisheries sector, including climatic variations, failure in resource management, overexploitation of fishing stocks, modern fishing practices etc. This work has been conducted among the Jalari, a Telugu fishing caste in Peda Jalaripeta of Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Keywords: *Climate Change, Ecological Crisis, Food Security, Pandemic Narratives, Sustainable Development.*

Introduction

Globally, small-scale fishing communities have been struggling with livelihood vulnerabilities due to unsustainable industrial fishing practices on the one hand and their attempts to look for alternative livelihood options to sustain their economic well-being on the other. The relationship between ecology and economy has thus changed, leading the local fishing sector to deploy different strategies, including involvement in the market economy, changes in fishing methods, engagement and modes of production in fishing, and technological interventions. Ecology and its community adaptation have significantly influenced social and cultural development. The development is also connected with local conservation systems by providing valuable resources for sustaining livelihoods. The sustaining livelihoods and ecological dimensions are associated with the proper management and utilization of resources. When

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this management and utilization works step by step, it supports environmental sustainability and its impact on revving community livelihoods. Over the years, the communities have observed several changes in the local environments, and the day-to-day activities in every local system have been experienced. Further, human beings, including other living organisms, have acclimated to ecological settings according to the local ecosystems. These ecosystems are further subsidized to sustain livelihoods by integrating local conservative strategies to protect local environs (McCay 1978, Kodanda Rao 1991, Ndarathi et al 2020).

The knowledge of the fisheries over the marine ecosystems has been predominantly considered in terms of experience and interaction between marine and local environments. Fisheries have gained knowledge from their forefathers, transmitted it from generation to generation, and constructed it cognitively among them (Dalibandhu & Sharma 2020). Also, it has been embodied into constructive knowledge systems that enable them to defend and sustain their livelihoods. The fishermen keep their sustainable livelihoods by integrating cognitive knowledge into everyday marine fishing practices. The fisheries have been developing their understanding based on observation and experimentation by integrating various interactions with the marine environment. Adapting to marine ecological conditions and their observation made them think profoundly and helped construct fishing-related knowledge practices for successful expeditions. In this process, the fisherman also progressively manages knowledge acquired based on observing and experimenting with fishing practices and transmitting it over the generations. The fishermen are also experts in understanding the local habitat and its environs to analyze the conditions based on their experiences. These experiences are also derived through observational knowledge documented in the form of memory about their local marine ecology (Dalibandhu & Sharma 2020; Dalibandhu & Rama Mohan 2021, 2023).

The coastal length of India stretches approximately 8,118 km. It constitutes the habitat where most fishing communities have sought their livelihoods for millennia (Handbook on Fisheries Statistics 2020). It is, therefore, paramount to acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between the marine ecology and local fishing communities to comprehend the fishing sector's dynamics. In fact, despite several anthropogenic constraints, fishing communities have established a deep, interdependent relationship with their environment. It is essential to analyze how modern livelihood patterns and local fishing communities influence each other and how this interrelationship determines the fish communities' economic well-being. The fishing communities' growth can be gauged based on how resources are used and preserved by transmitting marine and fishing knowledge across generations. While conveying knowledge to sustain their livelihoods, the fishermen must devise unique coping strategies and professional techniques to maintain fishing

as an occupation. The community livelihood approaches and strategies have helped them mitigate their occupational risks in the face of the increasingly extractive fishing methods deployed by large-scale industrial fishing expeditions. The recent changes in the fishing sector have reshaped marine livelihoods and led to the occupational vulnerability of fishing communities (Bene 2009; Dalibandhu & Sharma 2020; Umamaheswari et al 2021; Kang and Peng 2023).

Historically, humans have mainly depended on agriculture and fishing for survival. While practicing fishing as an occupation, humans relied upon various methods and innovations based on previous generations' know-how to sustain this occupational pursuit, thereby promoting food security. Globalization in the fishing sector and climatic variations has caused the slow erosion of fisheries' local knowledge and practices, profoundly impacting marine livelihoods (Dalibandhu & Sharma 2020; Dalibandhu & Rama Mohan 2021). The global COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted the fishing sector and small-scale fishers' already vulnerable marine livelihoods (Jeeva et al 2023; Johnson and Osella 2024). The Covid-19 pandemic has changed fundamental socio-economic dynamics, influencing the development of fishing communities across the globe. In order to understand the challenges posed by the pandemic, it is essential to capture small-scale fishing communities' narratives around their social prosperity and well-being pre- and post-pandemic. However, only limited research has been conducted among Indian small-scale fishing communities, particularly ethnographic studies focusing on Indigenous development narratives that examine the connection between historical events and fishing communities' existential challenges and issues. The distribution of coastal length, fish landing centres, and fishing villages across India's states is diversified. India's coastal length allows for establishing various fish landing centers that help the nation develop through the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and food export and import mechanisms. Unlike other economic occupations, fishing and its correlated activities are shared by both genders. Division of labour is essential to fishing activities and the fishing economy. While men catch fish, women engage in marketing activities. Hence, it is considered a gender-based activity in marine fishing communities, which reflects occupational diversity and promotes both gendering livelihoods and sustenance (Handbook on Fisheries Statistics 2020).

Jalari and their Folktale

The Jalari, one of the fishing communities in India, primarily inhabit the north coastal region of Andhra Pradesh, India. However, their population is mainly concentrated in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, and East Godavari of Andhra Pradesh. They are marine fishermen, like the Vadabalija community in the same region, and in many places, these two communities are part of multi-caste villages. In the caste hierarchy, the Vadabalija community is inferior to that of the Jalari. Although

the caste occupation is marine fishing for both these communities, they differ regarding the mode of fishing and many social and cultural characteristics. However, the occupational risks for both of them are similar given similarities in the environmental conditions in which they operate and the equipment used.

The Jalaris claim to be the original fishermen and that the other two communities, namely the Vadabaliya and Palli, who also claim fishing as their traditional occupation, have taken to this occupation only after them. According to the folk tale of the Jalari, their ancestor was Karnudu, one of the heroic characters in the epic Mahabharata. Only he knew how to weave fishing net. After finishing fishing, every day, he would burn the net till it was turned to ashes. However, one day, the net was not burnt, and a small piece remained unburnt. According to the folk tale, Vadabaliya and the Palli learned the making of nets from this unburnt part of the net and gradually made fishing as their occupation (Kodanda Rao 1975, Ravi and Ramana 2016). During fieldwork, the Jalari informants also explained the etymological meaning of Jalari. Jalari is derived from 'Jala' which means water and ari which means Hari/ Vishnu. Jalari thus references Maha Vishnu, who is considered the Supreme god by the Jalaris. Hence, the name of their community has become Jalari.

The Jalari are an economically disadvantaged community with very low literacy. The household is the basic unit of production and consumption. Preferential cross-cousin marriage is a distinct feature of the Jalari. The Jalari follow the principles of patrilineality for tracing descent and are patrilocal in their residence pattern. The woman, however, returns to the parents' house if she is divorced or widowed, if not remarried. The nuclear family is numerically dominant in the present times. Both men and women contribute to the household economy among the Jalari. The men do the fishing, and the women take care of the fish's processing and marketing in many instances. Despite economic contribution to the family, in addition to the burden of care of children, the aged and sick members of the family, the women are subject to male authority in the family. Their involvement in decision-making is limited to a few spheres. Not only gender discrimination in education and healthcare is apparent in society, but also the complaints of domestic violence are on the increase. The authority of men, coupled with their alcohol addiction leads to domestic violence.

Assessing Marine Ecological Conditions and Weather Forecast

The fishermen know their local marine environment and can locate natural resources. They can able to locate the various marine living species and fish behavior. This knowledge has not only been constructed over the years and also it has been the product of several engagements in fishing practices that provide practical skills related to fishing and allied activities. Ecological surroundings are decisive for every living organism's survival and

determine the adaptation of its biological characteristics. Therefore, ecological dynamics particularly concerning the sea and its boundaries have played a significant role in changing the survival mechanisms and influencing the living strategies of fishing communities, including Jalaris in the Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally, they have undertaken fishing activities within specific boundaries, reflecting their equipment and knowledge about the sea, safeguarding the resources, and leading to sustainability. However, due to the rising population, sea boundaries are gradually contested by an increasing number of stakeholders, leading to the erosion of sand dunes and impacting the local ecological sustainability. It is becoming a pressing challenge for everyone inhabiting the coastal areas to protect the marine ecological environment since it impacts fishermen's livelihoods and food security.

A comprehensive knowledge of the local marine ecosystems plays a vital role in the operation of fishing expeditions, as it informs the fishing communities' understanding of patterns around marine ecologies, resulting in a variety of fishing strategies that allow them to manage resources sustainably. Over time, however, these resources have declined due to unsustainable industrialised fishing activities driven by market economies and the establishment of artificial constructions that have reshaped local marine ecologies.

There is always a close relationship between the sustainability of marine ecosystems and practices based on collective local knowledge. After the introduction of mechanization in the fishing sector, local knowledge practices are gradually neglected and leading to the erosion of these practices. For example, while fishermen earlier used to identify fishing grounds based on their local knowledge recently, they have adopted Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, making their sustenance dependent on global trends. This example reflects how community members depend on modern devices to identify fishing grounds rather than integrating their embodied local knowledge (Dalibandhu & Sharma 2020; Dalibandhu & Rama Mohan 2021).

The rise of sea levels, unpredictable waves, increased temperatures, heavy rainfalls, and a general imbalance across local marine ecosystems make fisher communities particularly vulnerable and negatively impact their social and economic well-being. In order to cope with climatic variations, it is necessary to look for approaches that preserve the available resources. To create awareness around changing weather conditions and contrast the challenges these small-scale fishing communities face, we suggest that marine research and policy analysis engage meaningfully with traditional local narratives and consider how climate change impacts marine livelihoods.

Pressure on the ocean has been gradually increasing for various reasons, including rising coastal development, tourism and changing human needs linked

to food security, marine pollution, biodiversity loss, and climatic variations. To resolve the ocean pressure problem, it is necessary to integrate appropriate good governance by implementing ecosystem-based approaches, as suggested by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Winther et al. 2020). Furthermore, it is necessary to record the local perspectives and practices around sustainable resource management by the concerned agencies. Local practices, in fact, traditionally integrate specific procedures to protect the ecosystem, such as limiting how far fishers can venture into the sea during different times of the year to allow the undisturbed breeding of the fish. It is evident that it is paramount that local voices are brought to the fore to mitigate marine pollution and guarantee sustainability.

The wind directions and sea currents play a significant role in reaching the shore early. In case of unsupportive winds or sea currents on a particular day, they try to avoid fishing or will not go for longer distances for fishing. The fishermen discuss their next-day fishing expeditions, assess the weather conditions, and plan for fishing, which enables them to evade occupational accidents during fishing expeditions. It is also noted that if more winds occur, there will be a good availability of fish to catch. However, in recent years, fishermen have noticed that there will be fewer catches when there are more winds. There will be a good fish catch in case of fewer winds. The fishermen have been observing the weather fluctuations for the last few years.

If the boat is in the east direction in the sea, then the winds should come from the same direction and there should be *turneeru odisi*. Similarly, if the boat is in the west direction in the sea, the winds should also come from the same direction, and there should be *tendi odisi*. If the boat is in the opposite direction of the winds and is opposite to other sea currents, reaching the seashore will take much time and require a more physical workforce. When the boat and wind are in the exact directions, the fishermen can reach the seashore early and save time and physical energy. And, another indication that, if fishermen notice the frequency of large size of tides and no wind blowing from the east direction (the winds should not come from the Bhimili to Jalaripeta direction) indicates there will be the possibility of a cyclone.

The fishermen can identify and predict the weather based on these daily changes. By understanding these changes, they plan for next-day fishing expeditions, and as per these changes, they also carry suitable fishing nets, hooks, and lines for fishing. The weather changes impact not only human beings but also the fish varieties, particularly their behaviors. Earlier, fish varieties were mostly available near the shore, but they might have gone too deep and been available far from the shore. It is one of the significant changes in the fish behavior, which reflects that fish might have migrated to the deep sea. These are initial changes observed by the fishermen and predict what will happen in the coming years, mainly changes in fish behavior. These changes may significantly impact the fish varieties and threaten the fishing communities

and their marine livelihoods.

Fishing Communities' Livelihoods and Concerns of Sustainability

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced vulnerable fishing communities even further. This latest socio-economic distress cannot be analyzed separately since the pandemic is just an additional burden and recent climatic variations affecting fishing activities. The devastating pandemic impacted the market economy of small-scale fisheries, especially women's role. The role of women in the fishing markets reflects women's essential contribution to the household economy. While women's household decision-making roles are traditionally significant, their empowerment has been challenged during the pandemic: the temporary closure of the fishing markets has disempowered their role in the household and limited their decision-making, particularly in economic activities.

The fisherwomen have a significant role in processing and managing dry fish and selling it locally. They buy fish from local fishermen at a reasonable price and sell it at local markets or villages by roaming with baskets full of fish on their heads, maintaining relationships with the locals. The women who sell fish in the markets suggested that the relationship between consumer and seller has declined due to pandemic conditions: before the pandemic, consumers frequently visited the markets, bought fish, and were familiar with the seller, the quality of fish and price, conditions of local markets, and the availability of fish varieties. With the pandemic, this scenario has changed, impacting each seller's market economy and the relationship between buyer and seller. The fisherwomen say that, following the pandemic, consumers are not willing to go near unfamiliar people and are reluctant to purchase their fish due to proximity and concerns about their health, thus excluding fisherwomen from critical social interactions. One of the senior fisherwomen reported that dry fish was in demand before the pandemic; however, the pandemic has changed food habits, as people have developed safety concerns around fermented foods, including dry fish. This resulted in a gradual drop in the number of women selling fish in villages and markets.

Pandemic restrictions and customers' habits at the fishing markets have also affected the associated members, such as wage labourers, rickshaw pullers, mobile transporters, and local merchants, who depend on the markets. The fishing markets contribute to food security, generate employment opportunities, and stimulate economic growth. Therefore, the pandemic disturbed the value chains influencing the fishing economy, particularly small-scale fishing.

For fishing expeditions, financial investment is needed to buy fishing equipment, such as a boat and engine, nets, hook and lines, and diesel. After the pandemic, the price of fishing equipment increased, making it difficult for the fishermen to invest in it. At the same time, however, the production value

has not increased, further affecting fishing expeditions negatively. Fishers have been concerned about crew recruitment, managing the household economy, their children's future, the rising livelihood insecurity, and social vulnerability. Thus, it is vital to apprehend how these communities are developing livelihood mechanisms that reduce their issues in a post-pandemic period.

Conclusion

The fishing communities have identified external forces that trigger social transformations, particularly climatic change and the COVID-19 pandemic. The livelihood insecurity and vulnerability experienced by the fishers are necessary to understand and provide suitable solutions for improving their socio-economic conditions. Fishers maintain their marine livelihoods despite these difficulties through their vast local experiences by integrating local knowledge practices. Further studies should highlight the specific resilience agencies practiced by fishers throughout their everyday lives so that state governments and welfare agencies can consider these in addressing the livelihood problems of fishing communities. An integrated approach that considers the synergies between the environment, human inhabitants, local knowledge practices, and management will mitigate fishing communities' socio-economic issues at a broader level.

Local knowledge is always an asset acquired and transmitted from forefathers to sustain the occupation. The knowledge of the communities has given a significant dimension to comprehend from the perspective of their fishing engagement in promoting livelihood practices. However, livelihood dynamics and locally acquired knowledge practices help them promote economic well-being. The fishing communities and their daily engaging local knowledge practices are helping them to make successful fishing expeditions to raise the economy and sustain their occupational livelihood. The communities are also experts in imparting and assessing local knowledge practices to perform daily fishing activities by adapting local ecological conditions. Further, it is necessary to examine the marine ecological changes and its adaptive strategies by small scale fishing communities after the introduction of mechanization of fishing which impacted the marine livelihoods and the wellbeing of these communities.

Due to low negotiation skills and lack of proper political representation, fishing communities have been relegated to the lowest social rung in many parts of the country. Notwithstanding their contribution to the national economy, the concerned welfare authorities have poorly addressed the plight and socio-economic vulnerability of the fishing communities. The hurried efforts by state governments toward marginal fishing communities to save lives and compensate for the loss of their livelihoods during the pandemic were insufficient.

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K. Radha Krishna Murty & B.A. Sarma

DYNAMICS IN IDEOLOGY, IDENTITY AND MOBILITY OF DALITS: SOME ANALYTICAL ISSUES

Abstract

The present paper poses a multiplex Question : Are the dalits in Indian Society at cross roads and tries to answer it positively. In doing so the ideas used in its analysis are the concepts: dalits identify (consciousness) towards brahminism, their sponsored mobility, ethnicisation (ideology), and politicisation in Indian society. The paper is an outcome of the authors' reflections upon the recent developments that emerged in the caste-based socio-economic and political systems of our country matching with evidences drawn by scanning the available but related knowledge, skimming and scouting the same only to support the contentions wherever needed. The paper ultimately reveals that dalits are on the one hand firmly appears in rejecting the caste system criticizing the same explicitly and overtly and in various situations. At the same time they covertly and silently accept and enjoy the benefits offered by the system from time to time which tantamounts to accepting the system. The dalits thus exhibit a dual behavior that comes out of their split personalities by standing at the cross roads with a confusion in not knowing which way they need to go ultimately.

Keywords: *Dalit consciousness, Sponsored mobility, Ethnicisation, Compensatory discrimination.*

Introduction

In this paper the term “dalits” refer to ex- untouchables and other scheduled castes. Brahminism as a term is not the ideology of brahmins per se, rather it cannots and subsumes the ideology of the caste system centered around Manu’s meta-physical beliefs of karma, guna, rebirth, and purity and pollution (see for details: Dumont;1970; Sharma;1984:1). Brahminism is the epitome of the culture and ideology of inequality undergirding the caste system. Brahminism itself is a multi – stranded ideology, not always free of contradictions. For instance, both egalitarian and non- egalitarian philosophies and interpretations denouncing and espousing the caste system have found expressions in the preachings of religious leaders basing more or less on the

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same sources of sacred literature. In brahmanical ideology there is a passive obsession with various kinds, degrees, and durations of pollution and its binary opposite, purity.

Theoretical Perspective

Recent research on dalits in India focuses on several theoretical perspectives, exploring how dalit social consciousness and resistance are emerging through various means, including constitutional provisions, and socio-religious movements. These perspectives on dalits in India are multifaceted, acknowledging the historical and ongoing impact of caste system, while also highlighting the agency, resilience, and evolving identities of dalit communities. Research continues to explore the diverse experiences of dalits, their political and social movements, and the on going struggle for equality and justice.

The present paper is backed by situational approach in sociology and social anthropology, also known as the situational action theory that emphasizes how individuals' actions are influenced by specific circumstances and opportunities they encounter. It suggests that individuals will only recognise and pursue opportunities for certain behaviour if they already have a propensity or predisposition for that behaviour. In essence the situational context can trigger or enable a predisposition, but it does not create it. In other words this approach emphasizes how external factors and specific contexts influence individual behaviour and social interaction, rather than solely internal traits or personality. It suggests that behaviour is not only determined by personal characteristics but is also shaped by the social environment and specific situation. This perspective recognises the development of dalit identity and consciousness as a result of their experiences of oppressions and struggles and their efforts to reclaim dignity and assert their rights. It explores the various forms of dalit resistance and activism, including social movements, political mobilisation and cultural expression as they strive for equality and justice.

The dalit consciousness as well as brahminism are complex and dynamic in themselves. Depending upon the history and situation, the dalit consciousness forges responses and relationships that may be variously characterised as rejectant, ambivalent, compliant, acceptant or unproblematic. Freeman (1986:153) has identified three authors – Moore, Moffatt and Berreman with three different postures or perceptions: (a) a kind of ethico-personal compliant attitude towards degradation and discrimination conceding to caste Hindus a kind of 'karmic' and 'dharmic' authority for the practice of untouchability (Moore); (b) a kind of consensual evaluation of dalits vis – a – vis their occupational pursuits, cultural habits and conditions of living (Moffatt); and (c) a consistent dissent, protest and rejection of the system as iniquitous and illegitimate (Berreman). Freeman, however, sums up characterising these postures as partial views of reality. A dalit response, like rejection of

brahminism, emerges from a negative evaluation and identification which may be directed to any or all of its four elements: purity-pollution beliefs, birth based ascription, specific caste characteristics, and caste hierarchy and status ascription. The rejection of all the four elements implies a total erasure of caste ideology from the dalit consciousness. It is also possible that only purity-pollution beliefs may be rejected and in their place rational, humanistic, secular beliefs of universal equality may be embraced. This substitution process may be independent of the retention of other elements -ascription, caste characterisation and ranking in non- ritual socio – economic terms. One can muster enough basis to reason that rejection of brahminism is contingent, partial and selective. However, a valid indicator of compliant or non – compliant dalit consciousness is the attitude of the dalit towards reservation and compensatory discrimination (Galanter). Anyway the dalits probably never perceive themselves entirely in caste- free terms.

Now let us try to identify a few epiphenomenal trends of sponsored mobility of dalits. Sponsored mobility means statutory reservations, their effective implementation as well as supplementary and supportive measures of material and non-material assistance such as age, grade, and fee concessions, special recruitment drives, scholarships and various other kinds of favoured treatment as a protective cover against unequal competition and discriminational disadvantage. Some of the recent trends and consequence of sponsored mobility programmes are:

1. Creaming effect, emergence of inequalities among different sections of dalits, differential rates of mobility and cornering of the benefits of sponsored mobility by certain individuals, families, groups with no trickle down to the middle and bottom strata of dalits;
2. The creamy, advanced, mobile individuals enjoying the double advantage of both open contest and sponsored mobility leading to reserve discrimination and conflict aggravation with open competition caste groups. After all protective discrimination not only protects but also discriminates;
3. Increasing demand articulation and exertion of pressures of vote bank politics for continuation/expansion of the reserved arenas, positions and opportunities;
4. Public demands and lobby pressures for the reserved caste status from castes excluded from protective reservations;
5. 'Vested interest' resistance to non-caste economic and open merit criteria and opposition to de-reservation by creamy layers; and
6. Recent demands for enhanced quota of reservation proportional to population increase of individual castes and so on.

Thus, as a result of the protective discrimination policy, there is substantial visible and invisible upward mobility at least among some sections of dalits. Among those upwardly mobile families 'reserved status' became a vested interest and an inheritable family asset preventing there by the proper horizontal spread and trickle down of benefits of sponsored mobility to non-beneficiary sections.

Another concomitant result of sponsored mobility on our impressionistic evidence is the mismatch between upward mobility and human resource development leading to a quick up-spiralling of aspiration levels among the reserved categories. Where aspirations explode, human resource development retards. Quick expansion of opportunities accentuates this further. Taking the umbrage of the protective law and its rigorous implementative machinery, several candidates belonging to dalit and backward castes overpush themselves for a faster upward climb. Protectionism, compensatory discrimination, explosion of aspirations and opportunities, pampered treatment by ruling powers in the interest of vote mobilisation and the mismatch between meteoric rise and manpower development are not only causing a mediocrity crisis but also an eye-sore of the unreserved castes. Thus, if the dominant castes are alleged to be enjoying the affluence of exploitation, the reserved castes are perceived to be experiencing a new found affluence and security, sharpening prejudice, polarisation and radical posturing. As rightly felt by Srinivas, "the caste system thus eroded at the ritual level but emerged at the political and economic levels. The agitations (predominantly urban based) against caste-based quotas in education and employment display a very high level of caste consciousness and use overt caste-related slogans and acts of protest, thus putting question mark on the supposed disappearance of caste from Indian soil" (2003:455).

Thus with the conferment of reservations and other material benefits of compensatory discrimination, the caste identity of the dalits has been reinforced and legitimised. It is serving the purpose of interest articulation since social mobility and sanskritisation as levelling process deprive the dalits of the privilege of reservations and other benefits and force them to compete with other castes on an equal basis, deprived status labels and symbols are voluntarily retained and used by the dalits. In fact, claims to deprived social status are now increasingly being made from several other groups not listed as scheduled castes in official records. Claims and demands are also being made by the reserved categories to extend the principle of reservations to higher unreserved positions and sectors. The current trend is to retain, enlarge and effectively implement reservations. This constitutes a major source of dilemma and ambivalence in the dalit consciousness. Thus history, ideology and interest articulation fragment their consciousness. Paradoxically, however, as felt by Gopal Guru, "if the dalits get sanskritised and integrated into the larger community they cannot at the same time claim reservations and

protective discrimination. Theoretically, reservations and sanskritisation are mutually exclusive, precluding each other" (1984:29). All this suggests that there is neither a rejection of brahminism nor a neutralisation of caste consciousness by dalits. That is the reason why Parvathamma long back notes in anguish that "the caste system has a notoriety about it, incorporating and absorbing everything within itself including contradictions and conflicts" (1981:62). Individuals and castes among dalits who continue to depend on traditional occupations and patron-client relations with caste-hindus are less antagonistic to and meekly compliant with brahminism than others differently situated. It is the more militant dalits who attack brahminism. One example may be scheduled caste priests in some temples of South India. It is an indication of selective and fractional character of rejection of brahminism. The paradoxical or ambivalent nature of dalit consciousness is plainly evident here in this example. On the one hand, it amounts to acceptance and reassertion of one element of Brahmanism (the purity-pollution notion) and on the other, it signifies the rejection of another element of the caste ideology (birth-based ascription of purity).

The nomenclature shift from scheduled castes to dalits indicates a significant stand in dalit consciousness as far as ritual purity is concerned. Ritual purity and hierarchy concerns are now less relevant for most dalits in the prevailing conditions of dilution of the practice of untouchability and segregation. This implies that the modern route to social mobility and equality is other than sanskritisation or religious conversion. Mobility, equality and integration are defined more in politico-economic and socio-economic terms than in religious and ritual terms. This explains the emphasis in dalit consciousness on reservations, their retention, extensions and effective implementation. The desanskritisation and debrahminisation of the brahmin varna itself is an explanation (Rao and Murty, 1972:241). In a situation when the caste system has shed off much of its ritual complexion, rigour, and function and is operating in modern competitive contexts as a system of interest groups, vote banks and federations of lobbyists, the ritual part of the Brahmanical ideology does not constitute a frame of reference for evaluation and emulation (Morkhandikar:1990). With its traditional roots and ideological nourishments drying up, caste is now an institution functionally adapting itself and drawing on other kinds of sustenance. State policies and measures, democratic politics, and interest-based mobilisations and counter mobilisations are reinforcing the ethnic primordialism of caste while weakening its ritual underpinnings. This in our view is the explanation for dalit ethnicisation.

Ethnicisation and politicisation are the two trends generated by sponsored mobility of dalits in recent times. Ethnicisation of the dalit stratum is evidenced by such developments as abandoning the old models of mobility like proselytism and Sanskritisation and the embracing of the socio-economic and empowerment model and emergence of a national dalit identity deriving

out of their numerical strength, horizontal mobilisation, as well as the protective laws of the land, To dalits, political empowerment alone seems to be the shortest and best route to mobility - to - equality to integration - to - dominance. With the result there is a certain strengthening of caste identities, loyalties and solidarities cutting across regions even among those who were historically the worst victims of the caste system. As the upwardly mobile dalits acquire a critical mass, the political empowerment route will be increasingly preached and used.

Similarly, the unmistakable indicators of the politicising trend among the dalits are: emergence of dalit literature, a specific dalit ideology emphasising dalit Culture, organisation of dalit Mahasabhas glorifying Ambedkarism and pressures for treating Ambedkar more a national hero than a dalit symbol, horizontal mobilisation and formation of coalitions and Political alliances, strong bargaining power through operation of solid vote banks, articulation of demands for the high political offices of the nation, decline of the influence of traditional leadership and emergence of new youthful, radical and intolerant dalit leadership with the intention of reassertion of a distinct and dignified dalit identity and its public recognition as such. All these strategies will be focused more and more upon the empowerment route which in the new awakening has the potential to lead them away from dominance - dependence structures for reservations, material advance, plums of political office and political patronage. It is not enablement (i.e, mobility through Sanskritisation and manpower development) but only empowerment which is the root of the desired metamorphosis from 'dalitness' to 'dominance' from "client" status to "patron" status, from the 'ruled' to the 'ruler' status and from the 'vote giver' status to the "vote - getter" status. In this strategy, therefore, reservations are demeaning and dysfunctional. The real mobility, equality and integration are not in material and social status terms but flow from the ascent to power. It is power alone, in the new reckoning of dalits, that gets them what they want and what they were deprived off so long. Deprivation and dalitness are relative to access to power and not anything else. Once the dalits are in power and Power is in their hands there will be no stopping or looking back. That is the logic of empowerment.

Thus, in the beginning caste was a system for the division of labour, and social relations between different caste groups were regulated by the JaJmani System. With the decline of this system and increasing livelihood diversification, caste identity became an instrument to mobilise people for economic and political gains. A basic shift took place in caste from ritual hierarchy to identity politics, from ascribed and designated status to negotiated positions of power, from ritual definitions of roles and positions to civic and political definitions of the same (Kothari: 1994:1589). Also as a result of consciousness and ethnicisation of dalits, identity politics based on subjective beliefs, memory and overt politicisations are sprouting. A defining factor of

identity politics is the production of a shared sense of togetherness meant for seeking social justice using strategic essentialism.

As rightly felt by Oommen (2001:24) “given the numerical importance of dalit bahujans, universal adult franchise did make them politically salient. But this is not adequately matched by their upward economic mobility inspite of numerous development programmes initiated by the government from time to time to improve their economic condition. The change in the ritual context is the least which continue to bestow on them low social prestige. Consequently, the existential condition of dalits is characterised by status incongruence. Their efforts to interrogate the entrenched castes often result in atrocities against them”. Thus looking at the view of Indian society from above (Indological perspective), one can notice the oppression and perpetuation of hegemony experienced by dalits. But the view from below (sub-altern perspective) can and should provide the much needed antidote to this, facilitating the institutionalisation of equality and social justice leading to a robust civil society.

Looking at these multifarious intermeshing trends one cannot but wonder whether the ancient Manu ideology is being unwittingly revived and reincarnated in modern terms and contexts with the Manu spirit shifting progressively or completely from the sacred to the secular realm in reinforcing and perpetuating caste identities and loyalties, and dividing and disintegrating the society on caste lines and caste - based militancy and counter militancy. The Indian democratic political ethos is increasingly seized by a caste fever, a caste frenzy, a caste temper and a caste obsession. Caste in India did not die as Ambedkar wished, but is undergoing functional adaptation by mutation, induced and aided by the modern political processes. The caste basis of these modern formations is strengthening giving the caste system a fresh lease and hold on the society. If Manu’s reservation principle has engendered a highly segmented social system legitimated and traditionalised in a religious – ritual matrix, the reservation policy based on the constitution is seeking to perpetuate the same in non-ritual, secular, social justice, mobility, emancipation, and empowerment terms. The upshot of all and any reservation principle is thus the same, although its logic, rationale, and legitimation are different. If Manu was to be despised for the creation of a segmented social order, all the modern hindu groups are to be treated in the same way for their organised efforts of caste preservation, caste mutation and caste based mobilisation. If Manu’s doctrine of reservations was based on the principle of ritual purity and exclusion, the modern means of perpetuation of the caste system is based on the principles of vested interests, dominance, deprivation, numerical strength, hatred, revenge and historical recompense-all again in caste terms, not in terms of economic and individual criteria or any other national or universal identity. If caste segmentation was historically imposed on the society by Manu and his caste members, in the modern bases of perpetuation of caste segmentation and solidification, the whole society is now an active participant. Given the current

trends, our futuristic projection is that we are all going to live in a caste-ridden society for a long time to come. The Manus ghost is continuing to haunt us down the centuries into the modern era. The modern idioms and expressions of caste appear to be a vindication and durability of the Manus spirit, caste will not cease as long as we think, talk, choose, compete, vote, organise, decide and act in caste terms. In such a politically and psychologically stilted caste order as now prevails, inter-caste marriages, interaction, interdining and commensal relations do not dilute or dissolve caste. The decline of the ritual, normative, and cultural dimensions of caste is being compensated by a strengthening of political and psychological caste dimensions/expressions. In these new-tangled, new-found strengths of the caste system, the whole society is a culprit. It looks as though every modern Indian is becoming a 21st century Manus. While Ambedkar who desired the annihilation of caste is dead, Manus is alive in our midst!. Caste as a ritual phenomenon is gone more or less. However it stays as an ethnic phenomenon striking new psychological and political roots.

In the long history of the caste system protest movements which negated and attempted to dissolve the system have by and large failed. Historically dissent - rejection was never total and a pan-Indian phenomena; it was sporadic, partial and short lived. The emergence of 'dalit panthers' is a historical extension of the Ambedkarite strategy of ethnicisation and politicisation. Equality, economic and educational development and sharing of power as the obvious concerns of ethnicisation claimed priority in his praxis. The ironical result of such a strategy was the unintended reinforcement of original caste identities which Ambedkar might not have anticipated. The present renewal and reinforcement of caste and the current reformulation of caste identities would turn the ghost of Ambedkar in his grave. The iron grip of caste on Indian society is not easily broken since it has produced a breed of dalit leaders who are instrumental in perpetuating compliant and accommodative attitudes for the simple reason that they owe their elite and leadership positions to their being dalits. Hence Bougle eloquently affirms that "the caste system is an amorphous collection of anomalies and anachronisms, calculated to embarrass the most expert enquirer and discourage the most enthusiastic researcher. It allows all regimes to pass over its head; it alone remains. And like the tenacious Jungle, its vegetation rapidly swallows up once more the few cleared patches; it is as though Hindu soil belongs to it from all eternity and forever" (1971:).

Conclusion

To conclude, Dalits' situational perspective emerges out of thoughts and experiences of millions of dalits who have unique structural location in the society and their consciousness is shaped by long history of cumulative exclusion. By providing different needed points to understand the social reality

the paper has questioned the established concepts and deconstructed a number of available notions about Indian society in general and dalit community in particular. More than just an academic view point, the paper offers a comprehensive framework that challenges traditional sociological approaches by centering the experiences, voices and realities of dalit communities.

In its ultimate analysis the paper focused on the diabolical behaviour being exhibited by dalits. On the one hand they agitate for the removal of caste system from Indian soil and on the other hand they accept and enjoy the dolls/benefits offered by the system generation after generation. All this reveals the blackmailing nature of dalits for demanding more and more benefits using their trumpcard 'dominant caste' in terms of their numerical strength as a political weapon in caste ridden politics of Indian democracy.

This reminds us a proverb in Telugu folklore which is "*koduku bagundali – kodalu munda avvali*". That is "the son should be alive, hale and healthy but the daughter-in-law should become a widow". How is it possible? In other words, to dalits caste system should go but the benefits it offers are needed for them to enjoy and experience upward social mobility.

However today, the dalit perspective continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary challenges. It addresses new forms of discrimination in digital spaces, examines the impact of globalisation on dalit communities and analyses how modern education and urbanisation are reshaping dalit identities and aspirations.

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Saumyata Pandey

SURROGACY PERCEPTIONS AND ETHOS: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON INTENDED PARENTS

Abstract

Surrogacy is a method often pursued by infertile couples, offering the hope of having their own genetic children. However, it is fraught with specific legal, ethical, and emotional challenges. The article delves into these issues using case studies of intended parents selected through snowball sampling. It investigates the motives and experiences related to surrogacy, along with other connected aspects. The findings affirm that surrogacy is a boon to intended parents and dispels misconceptions perpetuated by its critics. Intended parents generally view the surrogacy process as a positive experience. Nevertheless, they believe that well-crafted regulations can significantly reduce many of the potential risks associated with surrogacy.

Keywords: *Surrogacy; Intended Parents; Ethical; Child; Mother*

Motherhood is cherished for many women, but due to physiological disorders, some cannot conceive. Infertility affects individuals physically through tests and interventions, socially through stigma, and financially through costly treatments and exploitation (Kothari, 2012). While not life-threatening, its emotional impact is profound, causing distress from the inability to fulfill the biological role of parenthood (Sharma, 2014). Societal pressure increases mental, physical, and social suffering, especially for women, making losing maternal identity traumatic (Golboni et al., 2019). To find joy in parenthood, many turn to alternatives like Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART), In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), and Intra-Uterine Injections (IUI). Advances in medical science, particularly in assisted reproductive techniques, such as donor insemination and embryo transfer, are increasingly popular among infertile couples. Surrogacy involves a woman carrying a child for another person or couple, who then take custody at birth (Liamzon et al., 2021). While surrogacy is seen as a life-giving process that allows infertile couples to have a child, it is also associated with legal, ethical, and emotional challenges. Infertility is often perceived as a social stigma, and surrogacy can be viewed as stigmatized

and sexualized care work (Pande, 2009; Golboni et al., 2019).

Tieu (2009) described surrogacy as a mutual agreement between the surrogate and the commissioning parents, made before the child's birth, with the primary objective being the utility and fulfillment of an infertile couple, rather than the child's welfare. Complications can arise from financial incentives, as well as disputes over the rights of the surrogate mother, the child, and the intended parents. According to Liamzon et al. (2021) and Arvidsson (2015), surrogacy creates a triangular relationship between the surrogate, the intending parents, and the baby. It is often considered a last resort for those facing primary infertility, meaning they have not previously had children.

Shah (2021) noted infertile couples turn to surrogacy after other methods fail and worsen health, leaving no options. The perceived benefits are shaped by capitalist society, which views surrogacy as paid services. In reality, surrogates provide much more, involving gender differences (CSR, 2010). Despite this, surrogacy is widely accepted among childless couples. Intended parents, often from higher social classes, seek surrogacy when they can't have children naturally or medically. India became a global fertility tourism hub due to affordable, accessible services, but ethical and feminist concerns arose about commodifying motherhood and reducing women and children to transactions (CSR, 2010). Feminist views vary: liberal feminists defend surrogacy as reproductive autonomy, while radical and Marxist feminists see it as patriarchal and capitalist exploitation, especially affecting marginalized women in India.

Postcolonial and intersectional feminist critiques highlight how transnational surrogacy is shaped by global power asymmetries, positioning Indian women as reproductive service providers in an economy that centers Global North clients (Bandelli, 2019). Reproductive justice frameworks advocate for an expanded lens—beyond autonomy and commodification—emphasizing dignity, access, and socio-economic realities (Petchesky, 1995).

Despite nuanced theoretical discourse, surrogacy debates in India remain polarized, often sidelining intended parents. Liamzon et al. (2021) note that infertility carries deep stigma in India's child-centric culture, yet perceptions of surrogacy vary. Singh (2019) emphasizes that intended parents encounter significant legal, emotional, and ethical complexities, which are further amplified by limited information, warranting a closer examination of their experiences within specific socio-cultural contexts.

Moreover Scholars like Donati (1999) and Franke (2001) caution against frameworks that depict women merely as victims, urging recognition of relational and agentic dimensions. Beck (1992) sees surrogacy as a "metamorphosis" in maternal identity, disrupting biological continuity and reframing legal and ethical norms. In this light, surrogacy cannot be viewed merely as a continuation of reproductive technologies but as a transformative

practice that redefines kinship, agency, and responsibility.

This paper, therefore, seeks to contribute to a more grounded and inclusive understanding of surrogacy in India by centering the voices of intended parents—individuals who, despite failed infertility treatments, continue to seek biological parenthood. By situating their experiences within feminist theoretical frameworks, the research aims to illuminate the ethical tensions, cultural negotiations, and emotional landscapes that shape surrogacy in contemporary India.

Materials and Methods Participants:

The study employed a conventional, exploratory approach to understand the experiences of intended parents with surrogacy, addressing the paucity of research in this area. It involved five couples (ages 36–47) who had children via surrogacy, including one NRI couple based in Singapore and four Indian couples residing in metro and high-density urban centers.

A total of nine participants (from upper-middle and middle-class backgrounds) were interviewed, excluding one unavailable husband. In all cases, the intended father was also the genetic father. Participants were selected through snowball sampling, and data were collected via in-depth telephonic interviews using a semi-structured guide. Confidentiality was strictly maintained.

Data Collection:

This qualitative, retrospective study applies a social constructionist lens to examine how intended parents perceive and experience surrogacy, acknowledging that such meanings are shaped by context. Drawing on literature and case studies, the research used telephonic interviews to retrospectively explore five couples' motivations and encounters with surrogacy agencies, IVF clinics, legal authorities, and surrogate mothers. Interviews were conducted shortly before the enactment of the Surrogacy Regulation Act (December 2021), with each lasting approximately one hour over two sessions.

Thematic focus included pre- and post-surrogacy experiences and societal attitudes. Initial interviews featured only the intended mother; subsequent cases included both parents. Discourse analysis revealed patterns in how participants navigate surrogacy within shifting cultural and institutional landscapes.

The Ongoing Debate on Surrogacy

Surrogacy is a contentious issue with significant ethical and moral implications, leading to intense debate in legal and bioethical contexts. The discussion is particularly polarized among feminists: liberal feminists support

women's autonomy over reproductive choices, while socialist and radical feminists criticize surrogacy for commodifying women's bodies (Scott, 2009). Critics argue that surrogacy perpetuates the objectification and subordination of women, framing it as degrading rather than liberating (Petchesky, 1995; Scott, 2009; CSR, 2010). Rozée et al. (2020) highlight that the empirical reality of surrogacy in India encompasses both liberating and oppressive elements.

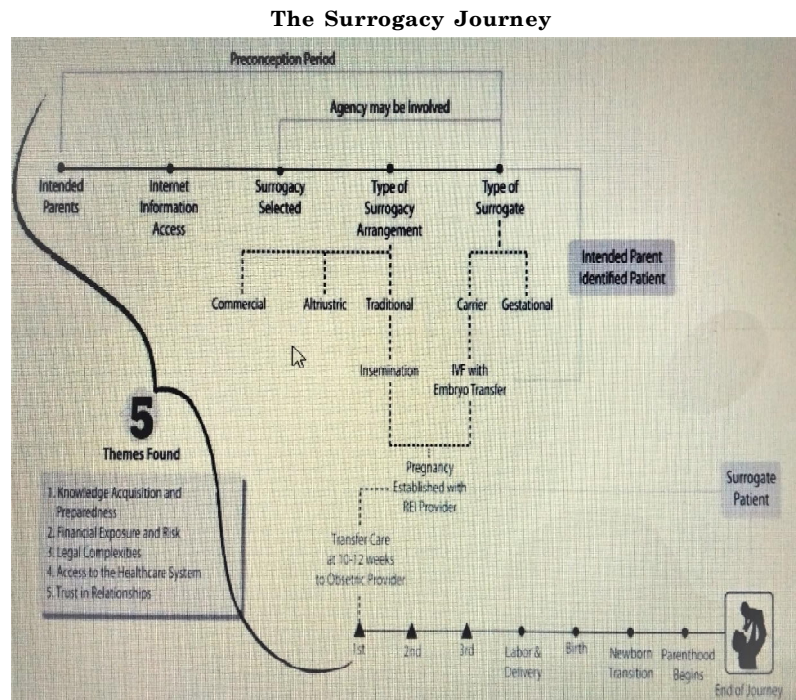
The paper emphasizes the necessity for public dialogue and policy engagement, advocating for thoughtful governance over prohibition. It suggests that blaming surrogacy, surrogate mothers, or intended couples is unproductive given the complex motivations and systemic pressures involved. A regulatory framework is needed to protect rights, ensure informed consent, and uphold dignity. Systematic dialogue across various demographics is crucial for developing culturally aware and socially just policies.

From the perspective of childless couples, surrogacy is often seen as a profound blessing, with narratives reflecting joy, completeness, and gratitude towards surrogates. This emotional fulfillment tends to overshadow the negative discourses surrounding surrogacy. The study calls for a nuanced understanding of surrogacy that recognizes its transformative potential, rooted in empathy and cultural sensitivity.

The limitations of the study include a small sample size of five couples with heterogeneous reasons for choosing surrogacy, and it did not capture participants' views on the recent surrogacy Act, as interviews occurred prior to its passage. Overall, the findings challenge the dominant narratives of exploitation, framing the surrogate's role as "honourable labour" and highlighting the importance of agency and constraint in surrogacy arrangements. The study also points out practical tensions, particularly regarding the disclosure of birth history to children, suggesting that counseling services could play a vital role in navigating these complexities.

Objective of the Study

Although numerous studies have explored the impact of surrogacy on surrogate mothers, there is a notable gap in research focusing on the perceptions, pain, and emotional turmoil that intended parents experience. The present study aims to bridge this gap by highlighting how surrogacy serves as a blessing for infertile intended parents. Additionally, the study seeks to provide a nuanced analysis of the motivations, experiences, and reasons behind the adoption of surrogacy by intended parents, particularly in the context of the exploitation discourse surrounding surrogacy.



Source: Armour 2012

Findings of the study CASE 1

One NRI couple living in Singapore, well-educated and belonging to a prosperous and reputed family, opted for surrogacy. The intended father is a financial expert, and the mother works in a multinational company. Both of them are in their forties and were blessed with a surrogate child five years ago. The NRI mother shared her perspective on the motivation behind choosing surrogacy.

Since metropolitan areas are easily accessible to NRIs and foreign nationals due to the availability of modern healthcare facilities, advanced technology, and the assurance of privacy regarding the couple's identity, these areas are becoming new hubs for surrogacy. This is in contrast to the challenges associated with smaller towns, which involve issues of pain, endurance, and adaptability (CSR, 2010). The intended mother's views, having been blessed with a surrogate child, are discussed here. When asked about their background and whether the decision to pursue surrogacy was made jointly by the couple, the intended mother replied:

Wife: I got married at the age of 28 years. Since my career was important at that time, I did not want kids. My husband and I decided to have kids only after achieving stability in our respective careers. Time was passing

happily.....some abortions (unwanted pregnancies) also happened in the meantime. I did not pay attention to these things and took it as usual. We were busy but happy. However, this ambitiousness to get settled in our life took away six years. After this period, we planned to have our kid. However, unfortunately, many miscarriages happened, so the consulting doctor recommended we go for IVF treatment. The irony of the situation is that when I could conceive in a usual manner, I aborted, but when I planned to have one, it did not happen naturally. So, it was a challenging phase of my life. The IVF treatments were also unsuccessful and resulted in tremendous weakness in my body. I can still feel the pain of the injections. That still lingers in my mind. I took IVF treatment in another country, and there, too, it was not successful. I consulted astrologers, did remedies told by them, went on fast, and visited temples and everything I told to have a kid. Gradually, I developed depression. During this period, one of my close friends suggested that I opt for adoption.... Losing all hope of having a child naturally, we planned to adopt a kid. So I came back to my maternal home for this procedure. I took help from my friends, but the waiting list was too extensive for us to wait. My husband gave up hope of having a child, but since I was desperate to have a kid, I asked him to co-operate and wait for some more time.

Nevertheless, the technicalities involved in adoption for an NRI couple and the long waiting list took my patience away, and I again returned. After one year, when I came to India to attend one function in the family, I met a friend who gave me an insight into surrogacy. Without wasting much time, I consulted my mother regarding surrogacy and the procedure involved. After her approval, I asked my husband, but he was not ready for it, but for my sake, he gave his assent.

The next question was on infertility, the reason for considering surrogacy rather than other fertility treatments and the problems she faced during the process.

Wife: Though some rays of hope gave me positivity, the procedure was not easy. Initially, to get a surrogate mother according to my choice like I wanted a fair and educated woman. After that, the regular technical issues and visits to doctors were routine during the process. I want to tell you that many abortions also happened, only after the surrogate mother got pregnant the third time. So much money got wasted in the process. I don't know whether it was deliberate or normal. I just want to mention that I didn't confide about adopting surrogacy to anyone except some close ones. The reason was that the mindset of most of my relatives is traditional. They would have never accepted the child born out of surrogacy. You will not believe that even well-educated families are sceptical about surrogacy. No doubt, the procedure involved is cumbersome. I travelled from abroad to India multiple times, but the joy after getting a kid nullified all the complexities. I could have availed surrogacy treatment abroad, but since it was too costly.

When questioned about the present situation, like the response of family, relatives and friends, and when the intended parents told them about the surrogate child after the birth of a surrogate child. She answered:

Wife: Although her daughter is now five, only a few relatives are aware she was born through surrogacy. During a family visit to India for her birthday, a friend familiar with their journey asked about the procedure. After learning about gestational surrogacy—where the child is biologically related to the intended parents—the friend became more understanding and bonded deeply with the child.

This experience highlights widespread misinformation about surrogacy, even among educated circles. Many mistakenly assume the surrogate mother is the child's biological parent, revealing a persistent lack of awareness about medical and ethical distinctions in gestational surrogacy.

Would you like to include this in a narrative section or personal reflection in your study?

When enquired regarding the acceptance of the child by the family, she replied: Now, my daughter is the apple of my husband's eye, and she bids him goodbye when he leaves for office. She waits anxiously for her dad to come back from the office. Our daughter is everyone's beloved. Even her grandparents do not let go her out of their sight. Her stammering words echo in the whole house.

CASE 2

The couple lives in a metro city of India, is well-educated and belongs to an upper-middle-class family. The intended father is a businessman, and the mother is a creative artist. Both of them are in their late thirties. They were blessed with a surrogate child four years back. The couple in conversation gave their perception as to why they chose surrogacy. They said that the failure on the part of infertility treatment led them to choose surrogacy. It was the last resort for them in seeking to have a child. They had a great longing for a child. Seeing their relatives' children made them more desperate.

Wife: I was upset by what others were saying..... they said that you are going to be 40 soon, but you do not have a child.

The couple had a history of unsuccessful attempts to conceive prior to the surrogacy arrangement and a series of failed IVF trials. The couples struggled with the prospect that they might not get a chance to build their own 'biological' family. Here, it needs to be mentioned that just like the couple in Case one, they were not in favour of adoption and wanted to have their own flesh and blood. They highlighted having exhausted all other options before deciding to try surrogacy.

Wife: "My husband always wanted a kid of his own. But, I wasn't able to conceive I tried every possible treatment and multiple cycles of IVF, but they all failed..... One IVF cycle costs around 2 lakhs.

Husband: 'Yes, we did everything, we can'.

Wife: One day, I told my husband that my body would not be able to tolerate more pain....I will not go to the doctor to be injected again... no more, please....I am done now.... Knowing I've done all possible, I chose surrogacy'.

When enquired how she came to know about surrogacy, she said that one day she was discussing her longing for the child and the medical reasons with one of her close friends. It was her friend who suggested going for surrogacy.

Wife: From that day, I started researching on the web about the procedure involved and the technicalities involved. After consulting several doctors, I decided to go for it.

She mentioned some ethical issues that came on their way. They had, just like another infertile couple, ambiguous feelings towards surrogacy before going for surrogacy. Also, the husband was susceptible initially but gave his nod after some time. Thus, it was a mutual decision of the couple.

Husband: See, in our society, disbelief exists against having children with a surrogate mother, and you can't ignore or disrespect the people living with you. And it took some time before we decided to go for it.

The wife also reaffirmed that they didn't plunge into the decision and went for it when they thought it appropriate to do after doing plenty of self-research.

Wife: Before opting for surrogacy, we did extensive research on surrogacy, ranging from general discussions with friends and information about clinics. It was her friend who prompted her to go for it.

The couple revealed a negative opinion in media that shows surrogacy as exploitation, especially in the Indian context.

Husband: See, our society is sceptical against having children through surrogacy, and you cannot avoid those inhibitions.

The couple also said that while gathering information on surrogacy, they found that India is the prime choice of many couples for financial reasons.

Wife: Surrogacy is quite expensive in other countries. We are lucky to be living here.

Regarding the ethical debate on it, she said, 'If some women want to lend their body and can carry a child for nine months and give a whole new life, why don't people accept it? That is what makes me upset.

When enquired on sex-determination, the intended parents said they never went for sex- determination and that the child is more important, whether it is a girl or boy. Moreover, being unbothered about social condemnation on account of surrogacy, they haven't kept surrogacy a secret, but post-birth, some relatives are sceptical about the child's birth. Regarding disclosure of surrogacy to the surrogate child, the intended parents said that they would be telling the child his birth at the appropriate time. The couple also stated that adequate compensation was given to the surrogate mother, and for them, it is honourable labour and not exploitative. However, they are not in touch with the surrogate mother after the child's birth but are full of gratitude towards that woman who blessed them with happiness for a lifetime.

In her words, "No one will ever understand how much a woman goes through when she is incapable to give birth to a child in a natural way. I wanted my baby to feel complete so I went for it and my husband though not interested initially but supported me till the end. It was hope and need for having a child that helped me to tolerate mental, familial and social hurdles. Now, I am enjoying my motherhood."

CASE 3

The couple lives in the metro city of India and belongs to an upper-middle class family. The intended father is a doctor, and the mother is a housewife. Both of them are in their late thirties. The intended mother spoke about the incident that was instrumental in choosing surrogacy. The couple preferred surrogacy as an option also because they wanted their genetic children. At present, they are happily living with their four-and-a-half-year-old surrogate child.

Wife: I didn't have a medical problem related to childbirth, but one fatal accident during seven months of pregnancy stopped me from conceiving again.....I was happily waiting for my child to arrive, but....that accident damaged my uterus, and I was told by the doctor that I would never be able to bear a child again.

The wife said that she slipped and got hurt while stepping up the stairs. Due to excessive bleeding, abortion was done, and further tests showed that the uterus had been damaged and that she would never be able to bear a child again. The accident, the medical reports, and the hopelessness regarding motherhood made her suffer severe depression. Since her husband is himself a doctor, he knew about surrogacy. So he prepared her mind to go for surrogacy. However, they only told their close friends and family about the surrogacy arrangement. Being a doctor himself, the husband meticulously monitored every stage of the surrogacy process. The couple didn't confide in the details of the surrogate but it appeared that the surrogate lived in the same city and that the couple paid regular visits to her. The visits increased during the last

month. Also, they were present during every medical check-up in the hospital. They also fixed the job of the surrogate's husband as he was unemployed.

Wife: During the initial months, she (the surrogate) called us in times of need. However, during the eight-month, I used to call her many times a day....desperateness ...you know.

Husband: Her (wife) life has changed after getting the child....After the accident, she went into depression....became very negative ...Alas, things are right now....She is positive and happy.

Wife: During the process, the thought of a surrogate running away with the child also came I

also argued with myself ...what if she(the surrogate) refused to hand over the child....these multifarious thoughts gave me sleepless nights ...but now everything is fine, and I have my child with me.

She and her husband said they wished to disclose to their child that he is a surrogate baby at the appropriate time.

Husband: Let the child grow up and when we are sure that he is able to understand it, we will confide him the truth.

CASE 4

The couple lives in a crowded city in India and belongs to a middle-class family. The intended father is a businessman, and the mother is a government teacher. The intended mother and father are in their late forties. The intended mother spoke about the reasons for choosing surrogacy. The couple preferred surrogacy as an option also because they wanted to have their genetic children. They also took financial help from their sibling for the expenses incurred.

Wife: I married early at 23, but after three years of marriage, we separated. After the divorce, to make myself busy and to shut negativity and anxiety, I became a workaholic....taught in school en tuition at home....in order to prevent overthinking regarding the past life....time passed. After seven years, he(husband) came in my life.

Husband: Earlier, she was very reserved, but now she is more open....we met through a common friend of ours...and got engaged after seven months.... So life was good...we were happy.

Wife: Just like every couple, we also wanted a kidBut, after around two yearss, I started thinking about why I could not conceive....I had a discussion with my hubby, and he asked me to consult a gynaecologist....one day, during a visit to the private clinic, I was diagnosed with Asherman's syndrome.

The couple went to multiple clinics for treatment, but there was that same reply, 'NO' everywhere. Finally, the couple accepted their fate and was living with it. But one day, the husband read about surrogacy while scrolling the sites on infertility.

Wife: After weeks of enquiry, one day, my husband discussed surrogacy....I was like...are you serious....I don't want any kid now. But, my husband persuaded me that.... please for the sake of my love...please give me this happiness...I could not deny it...and the rest is history now.

Husband: Initially, it was difficult to get acceptance from my family for this method but 'where there is a will, there is a way' My mother was more worried about society's reaction. She even said what would happen if our neighbours came to know and that she was not ready to answer those questions.....but ultimately accepted it.....See...the problem is with our society. The social stigma makes the conditions difficult.... that's why the couple had to think and rethink again... before getting into the process.

Currently, the couple is living with a two-year-old daughter and doesn't want to ponder the past.

CASE 5

The couple lives in the state Capital of India and belongs to a middle-class family. The intended father works in a private bank, and the mother is a housewife. Both of them are in their late forties. The intended couple spoke as to why they chose surrogacy. The couple preferred surrogacy as an option also because they wanted their genetic children.

Wife: We married lateI was facing problems in conceiving the child naturally. Some uterine abnormality was detected. Also, I am diabetic and have thyroid problems.... the doctor suggested surrogacy..... Though I was susceptible to going for it as my husband wanted to have his genetic children, he persuaded me.

Husband: I said that if we can get our own genetic children through it, then why not we try it...also I did not like to adopt someone else's child.

Wife: Initially, I was nervous and was not accepting it, but the need to have a child and his persuasion made it possible.

Notably, the intended mother was in favour of adoption, but it was an unwillingness on the part of his husband that prompted her to accept surrogacy. The couple also said they took a loan for the expenses that occurred in the process.

When asked as to whom they have told that they have opted for surrogacy, the intended father replied:

Husband: Our immediate family (parents and siblings) knows it.....She (wife) said there is no need to talk about it except with our parents and siblings. She does not want that others should know about it. Surrogacy is a kind of treatment ... is normal ... but people behave as if this is something abnormal.

Wife: I don't know why but I do not want to disclose it to everybody.... living in a stigmatized society does cast an impact upon you...you can't avoid it...may be that made me apprehensive initially.

Presently, the couple lives happily with their five-year-old son and considers surrogacy a boon to childless couples. However, when enquired as to whether they will disclose to the child that he is a surrogate child, the intended mother said:

Wife: I don't know when we will disclose it.....but yes, we will. If we do not disclose the truth to him, then there will be a constant fear in our mindsmaybe someone else may tell the child....then it will be difficult to handle.

With the exception of one case, all couples reported having no ongoing contact with their surrogate mothers. While some participants initially felt conflicted about surrogacy, their personal experiences led them to reject narratives of exploitation. They emphasized that surrogacy, particularly commercial arrangements, provided meaningful financial support to surrogate mothers and improved their life circumstances.

When asked about a potential shift to altruistic-only surrogacy, one participant questioned its feasibility, noting the difficulty in finding someone willing to undergo such a demanding process without compensation—calling it “difficult for a childless couple” to find such a “saviour.” Participants also described the intense physical, emotional, and psychological toll of fertility treatments, suggesting that surrogate mothers appear as “angels sent by God” during moments of despair. One husband stressed the mutual benefits of commercial surrogacy, calling its prohibition “not logical.”

Despite the emotional weight and complexity, all participants expressed a willingness to share their experiences, hoping that future intended parents could draw insight and support from their stories.

Discussion

Families are an integral part of Indian culture, and to extend family lineage, it becomes necessary to achieve parenthood. However, in the case of infertility, ART and surrogacy is the preferred options. But, surrogacy is often engulfed with ethical, legal, moral, emotional, and psychological dilemmas (Maftai and Holman 2020; Committee Opinion No.660). Moreover, it is not only an act of love but also a financial transaction that brings people together for a cause.

Surrogacy in India is estimated to be a 2.3-billion-dollar industry that has grown phenomenally in the past two decades (Nair 2015). The total cost of the procedure in India can range from

\$20,000 to \$45,000 in comparison to \$60,000 to \$100,000 in the US (Gezinski et al. 2017; Gupta & Chaturvedi 2020). The family income of surrogates involved in the process is low and varies widely, between 2000 and 30,000 INR per month, with a median income of 10,000 INR (Rozée et al. 2020). According to Patel et al. (2020), the Indian surrogate's intentions of going in for surrogacy are primarily financial as they are often from poor economic backgrounds, facing a financial crisis, barely educated, and facing family pressure to go in for such contracts against their comfort and willingness. Thus, in India, surrogates do it to provide better education to their children, buy a home, start a small business or a shop, repay their debts and have a better lifestyle. Thus, it is two people who are mutually helping each other.

Contrary to common assumptions that intended parents belong to elite social strata, this study reveals socioeconomic diversity among couples opting for surrogacy. Echoing Shah (2021), financial strain and stigma surrounding infertility often compel individuals across classes to pursue costly treatments—even taking loans that exceed annual incomes. Shah also notes a higher likelihood of informal commercial surrogacy in India due to the absence of standardized pricing, intense stigma, and high costs.

Societal stigma in India's child-centric culture affects the degree to which surrogacy is considered. While media narratives suggest increasing acceptance—especially due to celebrity involvement—at the individual level, many intended parents conceal surrogacy owing to misconceptions and limited public discourse (Shah, 2021; Liamzon et al., 2021).

Aker (2001) suggests postmodern family structures only gain traction when traditional biological routes fail. Ragone (1996) observes that intended parents prioritize values of nurturance and family over concerns about surrogacy's deviation from tradition. According to the CSR Report (2013), surrogacy decisions are made jointly by couples in nuclear families, with friends often exerting more influence than extended family, although final decisions rest solely with the couple.

Most commissioning parents are deeply motivated to have a child, often irrespective of the child's sex. Clinic records indicate uterine absence as a common medical reason, but other factors—such as chronic illnesses, dysfunctional reproductive systems, pregnancy complications, and repeated fertility failures—also drive surrogacy decisions.

Surrogacy cannot be disentangled from broader cultural narratives around motherhood, kinship, justice, and agency. Payne et al. (2020) advocate for a socially just, context-sensitive approach that addresses structural

inequalities while acknowledging the complex interplay of agency and vulnerability among both surrogates and intended parents.

The case studies discussed in the paper depict that the intended parents choose surrogacy only after a long period of infertility and when it's the only option available to them, and after facing difficulties in selecting other possible options to have kids. It deciphers the societal pressure on childbearing, the social perceptions on surrogacy, the psycho-ethical views involved, the reasons for choosing surrogacy, the experience of intended parents during the process, the retrospective view, i.e., their experience after the birth of the child; and how others reacted to the decision on choosing surrogacy.

Reflecting back, the intended parents in the study recalled their experiences, reflecting the societal pressure of having a child. From the perspective of intended parents, surrogacy involves moral doubts and is perceived as a last resort due to failed infertility treatment as they want to have a child of their own flesh & blood (Maya and Adital 2019). Arvidsson et al. 2019, who explored how Swedish parents who had commissioned surrogacy abroad experienced parenthood recognition through a social constructionist approach, found that the formal recognition of parenthood involved a complex and frustrating process that makes people feel questioned as parents, negatively affecting parental welfare. Hence, from a reproductive justice perspective, it is necessary to ensure that the process resulting in the intended parents' recognition of parenthood does not end up with their feelings questioned.

In all the case studies, the result was 'happiness'. The intended parents showed full gratitude towards that woman who blessed them with happiness for a lifetime. The quotient of happiness overshadowed their anxiety and stress during the process. The finding validates some preconceptions and deconstructs others, revealing social paradoxes in surrogacy practice. The couples that were interviewed chose surrogacy after a long period of infertility and because of repeated failed IVF treatments and reflected a great extent on the negative discourses in media that often depicted surrogacy as exploitation. They rejected the exploitation discourse by referring to the surrogate mother's situation by calling it honourable labour, not exploitative and calling it a positive experience.

Also, data from earlier studies highlight that the altruistic element, i.e., helping couples with fertility issues achieve parenthood, is also one of the driving motivations for most surrogates besides monetary benefit. Therefore governing, rather than banning, is probably the best way to deal with issues related to surrogacy. The eventual goal should be to ensure that women's dignity, integrity and self-determination are upheld at every stage of the surrogacy process, and the rights and well-being of children are guaranteed afterwards. Moreover, as far as intended parents are concerned, prohibiting international commercial surrogacy would likely prevent at least some of them from having their own children (Piersanti et al., 2021).

Clear communication between intended parents and surrogates is crucial, as mismatched expectations regarding contact and relationships can cause emotional strain (Patel, 2020). Accurate medical information empowers intended parents to make informed decisions, reducing potential distress. From the perspective of childless couples, surrogacy is often seen as a transformative path to parenthood, offering immense joy and hope (Taebi et al., 2020).

All participants in the present study generally viewed surrogacy positively, aligning with findings from MacCallum et al. (2003). A strong desire for a genetic link to the child emerged as central to their motivations, echoing prior research (MacCallum et al., 2003; van den Akker, 2005). Additionally, participants believed surrogacy improves the surrogate's life through financial benefits, a view supported by Arvidsson et al. (2015), Vora (2013), and Gupta (2012).

While all intended parents expressed intent to disclose the child's birth history, they remained uncertain about timing—preferring delayed disclosure to protect the child from societal stigma and to focus on familial joy. This aligns with arguments that children have a right to know about their origins (Deomampo, 2013; Zandi et al., 2014; Papaligoura et al., 2015). Disclosure was typically limited to close family and friends, and often occurred shortly before or after birth. As Papaligoura et al. (2015) suggest, delayed revelation may reflect the parents' desire to shield loved ones from distress or their own difficulty in confronting social misconceptions surrounding surrogacy.

However, Jadvā, 2020, contend that the children aware of their surrogacy birth are well adjusted. However, previous studies held that the relationship with the surrogate was maintained over time but is less frequent than before. The findings of the present study are similar to those by Papaligoura et al. 2015 and Jadvā et al. 2019 and showed that it was discontinued after the child's birth. It occurs due to deeper fear in intended mothers that the surrogate's presence might weaken their relationship with their child. Shah (2021) argued that none of the intended parents wants to introduce the surrogate mother to their children, calling into question the rights of children to know about their origin. Even hospitals did not inspire more interactions between the surrogate mother and the intended parents or the child keeping in mind the existing social class prejudices against surrogate mothers and ensuring easy relinquishing of the child. However, all the participants felt deep gratitude for the surrogates for making it possible for them to parent a child.

Papaligoura et al. (2015), who analyzed the experiences of Greek commissioning women, found that surrogacy is perceived as an overall positive experience by Greek intended mothers, in spite of the pain and agony they experience during pregnancy. Their findings are reassuring for women who want to parent a child through a surrogate arrangement. Further, the intended

parents who have been interviewed in this practice negate the widespread exploitation discourse when referring to their encounters with surrogate mothers though they simultaneously argued for its regulation.

Conclusion

Surrogacy in India reflects a multifaceted landscape shaped by cultural values, emotional urgency, economic asymmetry, and ethical complexity. This paper has argued that reductive binaries—such as exploitation versus empowerment or commodification versus autonomy—fail to adequately represent the lived experiences of intended parents and surrogates alike. Drawing from feminist theoretical frameworks and grounded case narratives, it becomes evident that surrogacy arrangements are shaped by both agency and constraint, solidarity and stigma.

The findings reaffirm this duality. Across all case studies, *the prevailing outcome was joy and gratitude*—a deep emotional fulfilment expressed by intended parents, often eclipsing the stress, secrecy, and hesitation that preceded it. For these individuals, surrogacy was a last resort after prolonged infertility and repeated IVF failures, pursued not out of convenience but as a hopeful necessity. While dominant media and legal narratives often portray surrogacy as exploitative, the participants in this study actively challenged that view—describing the surrogate’s role as “honourable labour” rather than objectified service. This challenges prevailing assumptions and compels us to reassess the social meanings ascribed to reproductive labor.

Moreover, the study highlights practical tensions—particularly surrounding disclosure. While participants were broadly in favor of informing their children about their birth history, most preferred delayed disclosure, citing cultural stigma and emotional sensitivity. This aligns with previous research suggesting that uncertainty around timing and method of disclosure is a common concern among intended parents. Hence, *counselling services emerge as a critical support mechanism*—helping parents navigate emotional ambivalence, prepare for future conversations with their children, and manage relational dynamics with surrogate mothers.

Additionally, the paper affirms the importance of public dialogue and policy engagement. Blaming surrogacy, surrogate mothers, or intended couples serves little purpose in the face of such deeply human motivations and systemic pressures. Instead, *what is needed is thoughtful governance rather than prohibition*—a regulatory framework that protects rights, ensures informed consent, and upholds the dignity of all involved. Systematic dialogue on surrogacy—across age, gender, and class contexts—is essential for developing responsive policies rooted in cultural awareness and social justice.

Ultimately, though engulfed in legal, ethical, and emotional complexities, surrogacy remains—*from the perspective of childless couples—a*

profound blessing. As the narratives show, the joy of parenthood, the sense of completeness it brings, and the gratitude felt toward surrogates far outweigh the negative discourses that dominate public debate. Recognizing surrogacy's transformative potential demands *a thoughtful and multidimensional approach*—one rooted in empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to safeguarding both agency and accountability within its evolving practice

Limitations of the study

The limitation of the present study is the small size of the sample, which comprised only five couples who took part in the interview, but the sample is heterogeneous concerning reasons that led the intended couple to opt for surrogacy. Hence, it is suggested that future studies explore the perceptions and narratives of intended couples to have a child through surrogacy. Also, the viewpoint of the participants on the impact of the recently passed surrogacy Act was not done as the interviews were taken before the act was passed.

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Shutter Notes

S. N. Ratha

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: ROLE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Abstract

*Universal good health and Well-being, figures as Goal No. 3 in the list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 of the UNO. Long before the organised and institutionalised measures were adopted, people in different parts of the world had found out ways and means to remain healthy. Some of these 'ways and means' passed on from person to person, from one community to another, from one locality to another and so on. However, certain measures, techniques and ingredients remain confined to communities, localities and even to individuals.**

Anthropologists, in their role of conducting 'fieldwork', observing and documenting human activities and achievements 'firsthand', are the right persons to document local health care methods and ingredients to universalise the knowledge for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

My intention here is to share information on local health-care measures from my locality and field-work, with my co-professionals, to sensitise them to document such information while engaged in field-work, and be agents in universalising useful local knowledge and practices

Keywords: *Good health, wellbeing, Anthropology, Field-work, Local knowledge and practices*

I

In our culture, children are initiated to cooked food (*anna prasana*) at the age of six months and six days. Most breast-fed babies, when hungry, are seen sucking their fingers. As they begin to toddle, the tendency to pick up some edible from the floor, leading to worm infection, requiring anti/deworming treatment.

The treatment, to which I was exposed, was to gulp a paste prepared from grinding a fistful of *neem* (*Margosa/Indian lilac/Agadirachta indica*) leaves with about 50 grams of *ajwan* (*carom*) and a little quantity of water and warmed every Sunday, till the age of about ten. This has been the ongoing practice in my village: no ante-worm or deworming tablets.

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As children, injured/bleeding while playing, we used to pluck a few leaves of a wild herb, locally known as *bana Sebati* (wild Chrysanthemum) and rub them over the wound. The bleeding would immediately stop, and the wound would dry up in two to three days.

A recent personal exposure to a local remedy:

Travelling from Hyderabad, I reached Dibrugarh (Assam) on 17 May 2018, to conduct a Doctoral viva-voce examination in the university. The supervising teacher, Professor Indira Barua was my former student in Gauhati University, where I was a faculty member from 1963-76. Some of my students, who by now are occupying senior Academic positions in different Institutions in the North-East, and close family friends, somehow came to know my programme and wanted me to spend some time with them. From Dibrugarh, I travelled to Gauhati and from Gauhati to Shillong. It was a hectic travel spread over ten days. Taking an evening flight from Gauhati to Hyderabad, I reached home and went to bed early. When I got up in the morning, I was not able to lift my left leg. Pain from the waist to ankles was unbearable. I was not able to walk or even stand. For about two weeks, I was treated with injections and tablets. Nothing worked. In that condition, I went to my native village (Salakama) in Odisha. Monoj Tripathy, a resident of the adjacent village (Kalama), suggested a remedy for the ailment: chewing five to six parijat** leaves along with the same number of pepper, about half an hour after lunch and dinner, and gulping it with a mouthful of water. I did it for six days. I was completely cured. I continued the process for another week. I shared this with a number of persons suffering from similar ailments to their benefit.

II

Some health management practices in my locality are:

1. For proper digestion: Eating a white radish.
2. To get rid of lice and dandruff: Applying ash prepared by burning dry banana leaves.
3. Treating a persistent/ obstinate wound: Applying the paste made from pippal bark
4. To get rid of mucous: Taking *dalchini* (cinnamon) powder with honey
5. One side Headache; Applying the paste made by grinding raw guava
6. Headache: Taking *tulsi* (holy basil) leaves with warm water/ Applying the paste made by grinding betel leaves with edible camphor
7. For good sleep: Rubbing mustard oil, mixed with lemon juice to the paw.
8. For easy delivery (child): Chewing and eating three brinjal flowers

9. For ear pain: By dropping/ gently pouring slightl warm aloe vera juice into the ear
10. Frequent urination: Eating a sesum *laddu* (about 100gms), before going to bed
11. Bloodlessness (low Hb); Taking aloe vera juice with cane sugar.
12. Fever: Ginger juice with honey.
13. Migrane: Chewing 2-3 leaves of marigold in empty stomach and drinking a little water, for about a week
14. Blood sugar: 10-15 Nitya Kalyani (*catharanthus roseus*) leaves soaked overnight in water and consumed on empty stomach in the morning for about two weeks
15. Joint pain: Prepare decoction by boiling 10 15 grams *guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*/ Giloy) vine and leaves by boiling them in about 200 ml of water, reducing it to half and taking it for a few days, twice a day.

Millennia before the modern medical systems stepped in; people all over the world have been using these remedies with reasonable benefit.

III

But there are also challenges. For example,

- Ensuring the safety and efficacy of local practices.
- Sensitizing all practitioners to test and respect local beliefs and practices including magico-religious healing practices/ *mantra* therapy and yogic practices.
- Institutionalizing tested Community based health care education

Incorporating local knowledge with other health care and management systems through Participatory research shall ensure community participation in over-all health management efforts. While projecting a holistic perspective of health care; it may also be cost effective; as most raw materials are locally available. The onus is on the field-oriented Anthropology and its practitioners to integrate the classical and modern knowledge with the local

IV

There are some culture-related 'Dos and Don'ts' guiding health-care behavior without medication. For example, fasting on certain specific days, not to consume curd at the night, avoiding certain vegetables and other edibles, meat and fish in certain seasons, and days.

An aphorism in Chanakya Neeti cautions: '*Aushadagre bisham bari* /

Bisham bari supayeshe’ meaning ‘taking water immediately before medicine, and after *payasam* is poison. The secrecy of good health and wellbeing, says Charaka, the Father of Medicine, is *Rita bhuk, Mita Bhuk and Hita bhuk*, meaning ‘eat in regular timing, do not over eat, and eat such items which the body sustains. Drinking and eating in standing posture is considered as *Pisacha Bhojana* (Demonic eating). Of late, it is found that eating and drinking in standing posture are supposed to lead to joint pain.

V

Asana and *Pranayama*, popularly known as yoga, have almost gained universal recognition as a gate-way to good health. *Yoga*, the Sanskrit word here means ‘merging’, merging of the *atma*/ soul/ self with *paramatma*/ the supreme self/God. But yoga is not only *Asana* and *pranayama*. It consists of six other practices which ensure universal wellbeing. They are:

- *Yama* (*abstinence, Non-violence, truth, non-stealing*),
- *Niyam* (*Soucha: Purity of body and mind, santosha: , Contentment, tapas: austerity/ ascetics/perseverance*),
- *Swadhyaya* (Introspection),
- *Iswarpranidhan* (Contemplation of Supreme God)
- *Pratyahar* (withdrawal),
- *Dharana* (concentration),
- *Dhyan*, (Meditation)
- *Samadhi*. (Absorption)

VI

Proper food is an important ingredient to ensure good health.

The Bhagavata Geeta XVII:7,8,9,10 classifies food in terms of their effect/ impact on human personality and wellbeing. It says that

‘Food dear to all is of three kinds.’

The food that promotes life, vitality, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, are sweet, soft nourishing and agreeable.....

The food that are bitter, sour, saltiest, very hot, pungent, harsh and burning, producing pain grief and disease

The food, which is spoiled, tasteless, putrid, stale, refuse, and unclean.....

On this backdrop one can imagine the health hazards, consequent upon the wide-spread consumption of 'junk food' in street-corner food joints!

VII

Input from Anthropology, should, not only help in universalizing the local health care and well-being practices but also sensitize people to related 'dos and don'ts'.

**Sanjivani, the herb to bring the dead back to life is lost. It was known only one person, Soshena of Ramayan fame.*

***Parijat: The local name is Gangasiuli/Gauda Khadika/ Sefali. Elsewhere it is known as Shiuli, Harasingar. The English name is Night jasmine and Coral jasmine. The Botanical name is *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*.*

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Saurabh Ji

SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS ON SPIRITUAL NATIONALISM

Abstract

Sri Aurobindo's exploration of Bharatvarsha's spiritual nationalism transcends conventional boundaries, emphasising a unity beyond politics or culture. Rooted in Vedic scriptures, the nation's identity is intricately tied to the ancient concept of 'Bharata'—symbolising a carrier of spiritual significance. Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical perspective rejects the negation of matter, presenting a dynamic, evolving reality containing diversity within unity.

His conception of civilization and culture revolves around the synthesis of reason and spiritual delight, advocating for a harmonious balance. Sri Aurobindo sees great individuals as instruments of the divine in the perpetual evolution of human culture. He urges a transcendence of culture, embracing suprarational beauty and good based on ancient Vedantic metaphysics.

At the heart of Sri Aurobindo's vision lies the psychological foundation of nationhood, prioritising a unity of hearts over superficial affiliations. Dharma, a uniquely Indian concept, serves as the guiding principle, encompassing aspects of life beyond easy translation. Sri Aurobindo critiques the Western confusion between Dharma and religion, asserting Dharma's universal foundation and its profound influence on individual and collective progress towards the divine ideal. Recognizing the nation's layers—gross, subtle, and hidden—he emphasises the imperative of understanding the enduring essence within, akin to the unchanging Source discovered within the individual, to truly grasp the depth of Indian nationality.

Keywords: *Sri Aurobindo, Bharatvarsha, Spiritual Nationalism, Metaphysics, Vedic scriptures, Civilization, Culture, Supermind, Evolution, Bhagavad Gita, Dharma, Self-Realisation.*

Introduction

The exploration of nations and nationalism delves into the profound concept of spiritual nationalism within the context of Bharatvarsha, or India. Rooted in ancient scriptures and values imparted by revered sages, this spiritual nationalism has shaped the nation's identity for centuries. Visionaries like Sri Aurobindo, amidst a challenging period of foreign rule, illuminated the spiritual essence embedded in Indian scriptures.

Sri Aurobindo's (1996) articulation of spiritual nationalism transcends conventional notions of religion, advocating for a higher spirituality that unites the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. His view, deals with ultimate union of the jivatman (jīvâtman) and Paramatman (Paramâtman) via evoking our inner being or Psychic being (Chaitya Purusha) The concept challenges the limitations of political or cultural unity in fostering true psychological unity within a nation. Rather than relying on superficial affiliations, Sri Aurobindo calls for a deeper, human unity—a unity of hearts that goes beyond divisive ideologies. This philosophical perspective sets the stage for an exploration of the true essence of Bharat, urging individuals not only to be Indian by birth but to embody the timeless values that define the nation's core.

Bharatvarsha and Its Vedic Roots

Bharatvarsha is a spiritual nation. deeply rooted in Vedic scriptures, shaped by the insights of India's rishis and forward-thinking individuals. Delving into the Rig Veda's 18th hymn of the seventh book reveals the fascinating narrative of Dasarajna, famously known as the Battle of Ten Kings. This historic clash unfolded on the banks of the Ravi River in Punjab, where ten powerful tribes conspired to overthrow King Sudasa of the Bharata tribe, part of the illustrious Trtsu Dynasty. Despite the odds, Sudasa secured a resounding victory, catapulting the Bharata tribe to prominence. The consequential embrace of the name 'Bharata' by the people led to the moniker 'Bharat Varsha,' symbolising the land of Bharata Sri Aurobindo's (1990).

The significance of 'Bharata' as the official Sanskrit name of the country, Bharata Ganarajya, extends beyond its surface meaning. In the Rig Veda, 'Bharata' is intricately linked with Agni, with its Sanskrit root 'bhr' connoting "to bear" or "to carry." This association highlights 'Bharata' as a symbolic bearer or carrier, adding depth to its cultural and historical resonance.

Within the context of Sanatan Dharma, commonly perceived as a polytheistic faith, lies an underlying monotheistic essence. At its core is Brahma, the Self, a singular deity of incomprehensible greatness. The diverse gods in the Hindu pantheon serve as manifestations of Brahma, collectively embodying different facets of the divine. Brahma, as the supreme being, orchestrates the eternal order that sustains the universe. This belief system, rooted in cosmic order, mirrors the societal stability during the Vedic Period,

marked by centralised governance and seamless integration of social customs into daily life. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, at a philosophical level, acknowledged the profound divergence between Indian ascetic transcendental idealism.

Sri Aurobindo's Conception of Metaphysics, Civilisation and Culture

Sri Aurobindo (1995) laid the groundwork for a metaphysical exploration of the nation's purpose and identity. The foundation of the nation's identity and purpose is embedded in the ancient scriptures of India, as elucidated by the wise sages and visionary individuals. Taking an evolutionary approach to the mind, lens of Sri Aurobindo, sheds light on the presuppositions of Vedantic metaphysics. While Advaita Vedanta may not offer a direct metaphysical evolution, Sri Aurobindo introduces a fresh Vedantic perspective wherein the mind possesses the potential for evolution into a higher state—the goal being the transcendence of its inherent limitations, culminating in the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo perceives the supreme reality not as a static, immutable entity but as a dynamic, mutable force containing the seeds of diversity within unity.

Sri Aurobindo contends that the external universe is not a subjective illusion but the genuine creation of a real being. He rejects the negation of matter and life, asserting that matter is a veiled form of spirit. In the cosmic evolution process, spirit assumes the form of inconscience through a deliberate limitation of consciousness, leading to the successive emergence of matter, life, and mind.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, delving into the philosophical realm, asserts the divergence between Indian ascetic transcendental idealism and Western secular materialism. Recognizing the exceptional achievements of the Indian mind in intellectual, vitalistic, and political spheres, and its supremacy is evident in the writings of Vedantic sages and teachings of Buddha. The notion of evolutionary progression through matter, life, and mind, initially traced in the Taittiriya Upanishad, finds systematic development in Western philosophy, showcasing the interconnectedness of Eastern and Western thought in the evolution of human understanding.

The Upanishads serve as the source for the concept of supreme spiritual reality, while the hymns of Rigveda contribute to the notion of inconscience. Additionally, the Vedantic idea of Tapas has played a role in shaping the understanding of consciousness as a creative force. Despite this rich heritage, Sri Aurobindo acknowledged Bharat's struggle to align terrestrial life with spiritual ideals, leading to an inclination towards renunciation and an overemphasis on the transient nature of cosmic phenomena, thereby weakening the vital force.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, grounded in Upanishadic philosophy, posits civilization as another manifestation of Prana, akin to the state of civil society with organised economics and politics. Culture, in his view, aims at

the creative attainments of the mind (Manas in Vedantic terms). Sri Aurobindo envisions a synthesis of culture through reason (Vignana) or the harmonious reconciliation of Tapas and spiritual delight (Ananda). The supreme reality, is not merely a static transcendental entity but a dynamic and free reality containing the potential for mutation and multiplicity, emphasising the coexistence of diversity and unity.

In the perpetual evolution of human culture and civilization, Sri Aurobindo puts forth the concept that a great individual, or hero, merely acts as an instrument of the divine, devoid of true agency but serving as a medium for divine action. The realisation of God's presence becomes the key to performing actions that are spiritualized and aligned with divine will, as expounded in Gita Sri Aurobindo's (2000). Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, rooted in ancient Vedanta and Puranas, delineates the cyclical progression of human cultures and civilizations.

In social science and philosophy, a typological distinction between culture and civilization becomes imperative. Culture encompasses the entirety of human activities, while civilization is confined to the highly sophisticated aspects of collective existence. Sri Aurobindo urges a transcendence of culture, advocating for the embrace of suprarational beauty and a suprarational good, delving into ancient Vedantic metaphysics that highlights the prominence of the supernal supreme existence, goods, and bliss.

Dharma: The Psychological Foundation of Nation

The focal point of Sri Aurobindo's perspective lies in prioritising the psychological over the physical as the basis for nationality. In his vision, nationhood is primarily rooted in the concept of psychological unity, which can be accentuated by shared collective memories of ancient traditions, past heroes, common geographical habitation, and shared interests and values. This understanding led him to characterise nationalism as the fervent desire for the realisation of a Divine Unity within the nation, a unity that encompasses all individuals, despite their diverse roles in political, social, or economic spheres, as fundamentally equal.

Central to this societal construct is the guiding principle of Dharma, a concept that encompasses various aspects of people's lives, including religion, ethics, society, politics, law, and custom. Originally governing the lives of many, these rules were intricately linked to the cyclical nature of human existence. According to Sri Aurobindo, the unalterable law of nature is represented by this cyclical law, symbolising an accurate depiction of the human life cycle. His writings reflect the zenith of India's thriving and ascendant soul, offering a spiritual message for all humanity.

Dharma, as Sri Aurobindo asserts, is a uniquely Indian idea that defies easy translation into terms like duty, religion, code of conduct, ethical rule, or

moral law. It transcends these labels while incorporating elements from each. Simultaneously individual and universal, fixed and evolving, eternal and progressively advancing, Dharma serves as an inner guide. It must be individually discovered yet is an integral part of the broader dharma shared by the group, the nation, and humanity to which one belongs.

Sri Aurobindo's critique extends to the commonly held beliefs in historical religions worldwide, characterised by a belief in God as the creator, a central revelation, a messenger, a sacred book, commandments, ecclesiastical laws, and a hierarchical priesthood. He distinguishes Dharma from religion, emphasising its universal foundation, immeasurably more profound than mere religious practices. The confusion between Dharma and religion, he argues, has fueled Western misconceptions of Indian culture, contributing to social and political issues in contemporary India.

Dharma is the foundational principle of life, second only to the pursuit of the Infinite in the Indian cultural ethos. It represents a fundamental law of human nature, shaping both inner and outer activities, as well as the relations with other beings, Nature, and God. Dharma, in its essence, encompasses the divine nature that needs to develop within individuals, guiding the inner workings of growth. Moreover, it governs outgoing thought and action, shaping relations to facilitate individual and collective progress towards the divine ideal.

Sri Aurobindo posits that the Indian concept of nationality should transcend the superficial and delve into the profound. Drawing inspiration from the philosophical outlook of the forefathers, he suggests that, akin to the individual, the nation possesses layers—gross, subtle, and deeply hidden, with an unchanging and imperishable Source of life and form at its core. The trueness and depth of Indian nationality, he argues, lie in recognizing and understanding these subtle layers, acknowledging the enduring and immutable essence within, akin to the unchanging Source discovered within the individual.

Conclusion

The exploration of Sri Aurobindo's framework for spiritual nationalism centred around the concept of One Consciousness, denoted as psychological unity. Examining the historical and philosophical backdrop of Vedic knowledge, the focus is on the impact of British colonisation on Bharat, leading to a reawakening and a profound exploration of Sri Aurobindo's works. Bharat, one of the world's oldest civilizations, embodies a unique way of life shaped by the insights of Yogis and Sages, making it inherently spiritual.

In a world grappling with identity conflicts and material pursuits, Bharat, aspiring to global leadership, faces internal challenges. Sri Aurobindo's insights on Spiritual Nationalism provide valuable guidance in navigating the journey toward self-realisation and global leadership, emphasising the necessity of spirituality in achieving the nation's aspirations amid contemporary

complexities. Sri Aurobindo's contributions to Spiritual Nationalism in the contemporary era serve as a link to self-understanding and offer perspectives on Bharat's trajectory in 2047.

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EXPLORING THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF TOBACCO USE: INSIGHTS FROM TRIBAL YOUTHS

Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the perceived benefits of tobacco use among tribal youths in the Ukhrul district, Manipur. Grounded in theories of functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and affect regulation, the study reveals that tobacco use among these youths transcends addiction, functioning instead as a social, symbolic, and emotional tool. Drawing on narratives from 98 in-depth interviews, the findings demonstrate how tobacco is used to foster peer cohesion, project maturity, and masculinity, and manage negative emotions such as stress, boredom, and loneliness. It argues that any effective public health intervention must address the emotional, symbolic, and structural dimensions of tobacco use, particularly in marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Tobacco use, perceived benefits, tribal youth, health behavior, qualitative study.*

Introduction

Tobacco use among youths is often approached from a biomedical or public health perspective, focusing on addiction and its harmful consequences. However, anthropological research increasingly reveals that tobacco use holds deeper social and symbolic meanings (Marshall 1979; Black 1984; Weiner 1988; Singer 2004). Among tribal youths in transitional settings, such as the Tangkhul Nagas of Ukhrul district, Manipur, tobacco use cannot be understood merely as a physiological habit; it functions as a multifaceted tool for identity formation, emotional regulation, and social inclusion. Prior studies have demonstrated that tobacco use can serve as a rite of passage into adulthood (Van Gennep 1960), a symbol of masculinity and modernity (Ng et al. 2007), and a means of coping with stress, emotional turmoil, and boredom (Kendler et al. 1993; Breslau et al. 1998). Additionally, tobacco smoking has been linked to body image practices, such as weight control and appearance enhancement, particularly among adolescent girls (Dwivedi et al. 2012; Nichter et al. 2004). Drawing on theoretical perspectives such as symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969), functionalism (Malinowski 1944), rites of passage theory (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), affect regulation theory (Tomkins 1966), and stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman 1984), this study explores the perceived benefits of tobacco use among tribal youths by examining how it fulfills social, emotional,

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and symbolic functions within their cultural context. It asks: What roles does tobacco use play in the lives of Tangkhul Naga youths, and how do these reflect the specific cultural realities they navigate?

Methodology

The study is part of doctoral research carried out between 2011 and 2016 among the Tangkhul Naga tribe of the Ukhrul district in Manipur. The Tangkhuls are one of the largest Naga tribes in Northeast India and inhabit a district where cultural continuity and modern change are in constant negotiation. Data were collected from four higher secondary schools within Ukhrul town. A total of 416 youths aged 15 and above participated in the survey. From this, 98 self-identified tobacco users (68 males and 30 females) volunteered for in-depth interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in the local dialect, later transcribed into English. Questions explored initiation, use patterns, emotional and social contexts, and perceptions of tobacco's role in their lives. A manual approach was used to code and categorize responses into three broad themes: social, symbolic, and affective needs. Ethical procedures included informed consent, confidentiality assurances, and voluntary participation. Verbatim quotes have been used to preserve authenticity and reflect the participants' voices directly.

Findings and Discussion

Tobacco as a social facilitator

Tobacco use, particularly smoking, fosters social connections within networks, serving as a 'timeless transaction' that facilitates communication and group engagement (Currarni et al. 2013; Dakers 2009). "It helps us start conversations," said a 16-year-old boy. "We light a cigarette and then begin talking it makes us comfortable." In contexts like funerals, where communal grieving is culturally significant, tobacco use becomes a gesture of solidarity. "You sit with the family, you smoke, and you share tea. It is part of showing you're with them," explained a 20-year-old. Among peer groups, the shared act of smoking or chewing created a sense of belonging. "Without a cigarette, it feels like something is missing," a 17-year-old said. Many saw smoking as a 'ritual of group entry' a social code that marked inclusion and trust. Non-smokers were sometimes viewed as distant or even untrustworthy: "They don't open up. They're always quiet. Smokers, on the other hand, are fun," shared one respondent. These narratives illustrate how tobacco serves not only a physical function but also a symbolic one, echoing symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969), where shared meanings are constructed through social interaction. Tobacco becomes a medium of communication, a relational bridge, and a sign of social inclusion (Tajfel and Turner 1979), where group practices like smoking reinforce in-group identity and cohesion.

Tobacco as a symbol of maturity and masculinity

Tobacco also emerged as a potent symbol of adulthood, especially for males. In the absence of formal rites of passage, smoking was interpreted as a modern-day ritual marking the transition from boyhood to manhood. "I started smoking at 13. I felt grown up. It gave me a sense of freedom from my parents," said one respondent. Others recalled mimicking fathers, uncles, or older boys they admired. "They looked cool, confident. I wanted to be like them," said a 16-year-old. Some described tobacco as a "costume" for a modern man. An 18-year-old remarked, "We live in a modern age. Cigarettes are everywhere. It's part of being up-to-date." For others, it was a gendered expectation: "Being a boy, I'm supposed to try everything. Smoking shows I'm brave." This performative use of tobacco closely aligns with Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity where certain behaviors, including risk-taking, are culturally coded as male. For this group of youth, their body becomes a stage on which maturity and toughness are enacted, and tobacco is the prop. These findings also resonate with rites of passage theory (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969), where smoking fills the void left by the erosion of formal initiation rituals and acts as a culturally legible transition to adulthood.

Tobacco as an emotional coping mechanism

Beyond social and symbolic functions, tobacco use was frequently described as a response to emotional stressors. Relationship problems, academic pressure, family conflict, and boredom were among the common triggers. "When I'm angry or stressed, I light a cigarette without thinking. It calms me," shared a 21-year-old. Others described it as a form of relief after emotional trauma. A young woman said she began chewing tobacco after her best friend betrayed her: "It gave me calm my nerve when my heart was heavy." This aligns with Tomkins' (1966) model of negative-affect smokers individuals who use tobacco to manage unpleasant feelings. Even though the initial use often resulted in dizziness or nausea, the perceived psychological reward was enough to continue. Some youth associated tobacco with enhanced focus and concentration. "I can't study without a cigarette," said one student. Others called it their "only friend" during lonely moments. "When I'm alone, cigarettes keep me company. I don't feel sad," said a 19-year-old. These insights are consistent with stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman 1984), which frames tobacco use as an emotion-focused coping strategy adopted in the face of psychological or situational distress. The use of tobacco in this way is not merely habitual but functional offering temporary relief and emotional regulation amid challenging life circumstances.

Gendered use of smokeless tobacco – a domestic utility

A distinctive pattern emerged among female participants who used smokeless tobacco not primarily for social bonding, emotional relief, or identity

expression, but as a functional substitute within daily bodily routines that aligns with the theory of functionalism (Malinowski 1944). Many girls reported using tobacco-laced products as mouth fresheners, digestive aids, or even for beauty enhancement, citing beliefs that it aids in weight control and improves complexion. In some rural settings, smokeless tobacco was perceived as a practical alternative to brushing teeth, particularly where access to oral hygiene products is limited. One participant shared, “I chew with my friends to improve my complexion and lose weight,” while another noted, “We haven’t seen any tobacco-related illness, so it’s not taken seriously.” These practices reflect a domestication of tobacco use, woven into everyday habits and bodily maintenance. This utilitarian mode of use does not fit neatly into symbolic interactionism, affect regulation, or identity theories, as it is neither performative nor socially negotiated in the same ways. Instead, it reveals an embodied, pragmatic logic shaped by local beliefs, gendered health practices, and limited infrastructure, pointing to a theoretical gap that calls for further exploration through frameworks such as everyday biopolitics, cultural health beliefs, or embodied habitus.

Conclusion

Tobacco use among tribal youths in Ukhrul is not just a health concern; it offers a glimpse into the lived experiences of young people trying to find their place in the world. For many, tobacco isn’t simply a habit; it’s a way to express who they are, cope with stress, connect with friends, or live up to certain social expectations around masculinity or appearance. It has become a part of everyday life woven into routines, emotions, and relationships in ways that are deeply meaningful. To truly understand and address this issue, public health strategies need to go beyond warnings about disease and addiction. Messages rooted in fear or shame often miss the point. What’s needed are approaches that acknowledge why tobacco use feels helpful or necessary to these youths and then offer them real, meaningful alternatives. Programs should be designed with young people in mind, giving them healthier ways to deal with pressure, feel seen, and belong. Health policies also should integrate anthropological and psychosocial insights, recognizing that behaviors like smoking or chewing tobacco are shaped by more than just personal choice. They reflect culture, emotion, relationships, and local realities. When we take these factors into account when we listen with empathy and respond with respect, prevention efforts can make a difference. It’s only through this kind of thoughtful, human-centered approach that we can hope to support lasting change in the lives of these young people.

Limitations of the Study

This study’s findings are limited by a small, localized sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Its cross-sectional design restricts temporal analysis, while the exclusive focus on perceived benefits and lack of gender-specific insights offer only a partial understanding. The

population specificity further limits the generalizability of results.

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COMMUNITIES ON THE MARGIN: DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS IN INDIAN SOCIETY, by Nadeem Hasnain. 2024. Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp.IX+287.

As the title suggest the book analyses the status of marginalized communities in India through both historical and contemporary perspective.

Under the marginalised communities, the author has included the scheduled tribes, he scheduled castes, other backward classes, minority communities, including linguistic, religious, and sexual minorities.

The author has described the marginalised population in the preface that they face discrimination and social, political, and economic exclusion, because of unequal power relationships, they face the risk of dispossession of land and livelihood. They also face severe exploitation by the upper classes and caste. This is not only found in India but also found throughout the world. However, India has a large number of such communities, numbering to more than 70% of the population, and the Scheduled Tribe constitute 8.6% of the population in India. The President of India declares a community as a scheduled Tribe under Article 342 of Constitution of India. There are 705 Schedule tribes notified by the Government of India, but the same Tribe is found in different states. Therefore, the actual number of tribes is less that is about 468 according to the people of Indian project of Anthropological Survey of India.

The author has defined tribes on different Anthropologists perspectives. However, the government mostly followed the Lokur communities Five-Fold criteria: indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness. The tribals in India have faced different kinds of problems, including problems of land violation, indebtedness, bonded labour, problems of education, problems of forest dwellers, problems of development, and problems of shifting cultivation among others.

There are many constitutional provisions for safeguarding the interests of the tribe. There are social safeguards (Article 23, 24, 46, 254, and 275). There are educational and cultural safeguards, and there are political safeguards as well. The fifth and sixth schedules are concerned with the administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas.

For the development of tribal areas, the government made some planned development programs through the Five-Year Plan. In the third Five-year plan (1961-66), the government introduced tribal development blocks. In the fourth five-year plan (1969-1974) area development approach was implemented, which ultimately led to as the author says an innovative idea of tribal sub-plan. It included the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) in each of tribal concentrated districts. Secondly, in the less concentrated districts Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) was implemented, and 75 small tribes were given special attention under the Primitive Tribal Group category (PTG). Today tribal sub-plan is found in 20 states. There are 194 ITDPs and 259 MADAs.

Besides this, the book also deals with various tribal movements and the impact of

other religions on tribes in India. The second part is titled as The World of Caste System. It has seven chapters covering the Scheduled Caste, particularly the aspects of exclusion and operation, the Indian state and the constitution, Dalit consciousness, Dalit assertion, Dalit politics, and Dalit movement. Further, it includes the other backward classes, their issues and challenges, mobilisation for empowerment, and the backward class movement. Undoubtedly, untouchability has been the ugly face of Indian society. Hasnain describes in detail the caste system through both *varna* and *jati* model. In the Vedic era there were no untouchables, in the later Vedic era untouchability started. Later on in the *jati* system untouchability worsened. Hasnain listed ten such discriminations to the untouchables by the other castes. They included separate utensils in tea stalls and eating joints, denial to fetch water from common source of water, denial of service from washerman and barbers, denial of entry into temples and so on. However the government of India through article 341 and 342 declared Dalit population as Scheduled Caste and provided a three-pronged strategy to ameliorate the suffering and injustice of the Scheduled Caste : protective arrangement, affirmative action and development. Several welfare programs have been made for their educational and economic empowerment.

There are Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians as well but they have not been given the status of Scheduled Caste. Among the Sikhs there are also Scheduled Caste: the Mazhabis, Ramdasias, Kabirpanthis, and Sikligars. The author discusses about the Dalit movement which started in the early nineteenth century. It was inspired by Jyotiba Phule and later on led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Later on, different sects came up like the Ramdeo Panth, Satnami Panth, Kabir Panth and Matua Sect.

Other backward classes are an important segment of Indian society. They constitute many occupationally specialised groups such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, weavers, butchers, cotton carders, oilseed pressers, barbers, vegetable vendors, cattle herders, etc. They come under the weaker section of the society. Therefore, they are protected through the Constitution. The Mandal Commission said that 52% of India's population belongs to OBC category. On one hand the OBCs are given reservation in jobs and educational institutions on the other hand they have become dominant caste in different states like the Jatt in Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh, Yadav and Kurmi in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Patel, Patidar and Kunbi in Gujarat, Maratha in Maharashtra, Vokkaligga and Lingayat in Karnataka, Kamma and Reddy in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. There are Muslim OBCs as well. However, Muslim OBCs are not given any benefit by the Government of India.

The third section has four chapters: (i) status of Linguistic Minorities, (ii) Religion and status of Religious Minorities, (iii) Muslim: some other facets and (iv) Queer as Sexual Minorities. Article 29 deals with the protection of interests of minorities and Article 30 deals with Right of Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. There is a Ministry of Minority Affairs to take care of the interests of the notified minority communities, namely Muslim, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains. Linguistic Minorities are those communities which do not constitute the mother tongue of the state. Constitutional provisions were formulated to protect their educational and cultural interest and rights. Among the Religious Minorities Muslims are the largest community, having 14% of the total population. Hasnain quotes Rajendra Sachar, " Muslims of India constitute an integral part of the Nation. Their history is a part of Indian history and their blood has mingled with the rest of Indian blood in common causes". The author says the spread of Islam in India can be understood in terms of three sources: (i) Muslim invaders and rulers, (ii)

traders/ merchants, and (iii) Sufi- saints. On the empirical plane the author says that Indian Muslim society may be understood through three models: (i) Deoband, a town in westerns Uttar Pradesh, following the Wahabi school of thoughts; (ii) Aligarh, a city in western Uttar Pradesh, is famous for Aligarh Muslim University, this model stands for modernism, rationalism, science and technology, (iii) the Ajmer model, a city in Rajasthan stand for the Sufi Mystical Tradition, i.e., love for all human beings irrespective of caste religion race or any other boundary. The author has also included Christians, Sikhs among other religious minorities.

Overall it is a welcome addition to the field of marginal communities which is full of information data and detailed analysis of the problem and the challenges of different communities.

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