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DIRECTION OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The idea of women empowerment has been at the centre since the last decade of the 20th century. Women as well as their environment is changing and there is also a change in the parameters set for them. The important is that there is no stagnation in this change rather there is a continuity in it. Consequently, the direction of social revolution is not built. There is more destruction and less construction in transition period and even there is lesser peace and tranquility in it. To some extent, it is a period of terror which a woman feels from both inside and outside herself. In no time, it has created a vast world in which women have multidimensional images of herself and in those images there are sagas of great exploitation, pity and sympathy. From that multidimensional facets of women, the revolutionary society is in great anger.

The power which decides and set the parameters for the direction of women empowerment are quite panic. Women have encroached the direction which was set for them. Now, they are out from that model of personality development in which they were supposed to be a teacher and self-reliant after becoming educated. It was the template of their progress. The intelligent and educated class is still trying to prove that becoming teacher and professor is the best profession for their daughters and wives. But women absolutely understand this conspiracy. They know it well what they have to do as a teacher. In the guise of dignity and social-family responsibility, they will be made patron of patriarchy in the long run. After dividing her personality into two parts they would be made weak. As a result, they will become as usual dignified, disciplined, laborious and meek on the cultural parameters. The female teachers of our country shrinks in the mere personality of a mother and starts living their lives on the level of society as an ordinary mother lives on the level of the family. The broad scope of this patriarchy cannot be accepted by the women. They want to create an independent world of her own where they could achieve the liberty like Taslima Nasrin; and occupy the personality of Kalpana Chawla, Shahba, Sudha Goyal, Shivani Bhatnagar, Madhumita, Mathura and Naina Sahni.

The conspiracy and game of patriarchy is very deep. It creates and establishes a new power in accordance with the changing environment. Its strongest arms are feudalism,

casteism, communalism, marketism and capitalism. These arms of patriarchy have been influencing the direction of women empowerment in its own favour in variation. Women have only gained as much liberty as it has allowed them the space of living inside its clutch. In the present scenario, all the arms in the leadership of capitalism have gained unlimited power. All the achievements of women are being encashed by capitalism. Women are trying to make themselves better for the welfare of the society and the country, but the irony is that their every effort is benefitting merely the powers of capitalism. Women are illusioned as well as surprised at result of what has happened in the journey of their struggle of development for over two hundred years. Where did their entire achievements go? Why did their achievements not satiate her soul? From where and how did scarcity come in her relations? On what basis did they become weak even after becoming financially strong? In the twenty-first century, what, after all, should they do to have the life of respect and love? All these questions are the challenges of women empowerment. Without passing through it, the direction of women empowerment cannot be set. The research scholars should do research and ponder in the light of these questions who wish that women should have a dignified and secured life in the society. These research papers will be given preference in the coming issues of 'Satraachee'. It is hoped that papers related to capitalism and patriarchy will be available in the next issue.



Islamist Challenge in Bangladesh: Rise and Growth of Jamaat e-Islami in Bangladesh

○ Dr. Aliva Mishra¹

Abstract

Islamism is not about the study of Islam; it is about a complex global phenomenon involving the instrumentalisation of the religion in pursuit of establishing an Islamic polity based on shari'a. The Jamaat e-Islami, founded in 1941 by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, a leading Muslim scholar, is the largest Islamist political party in Bangladesh. Averse to cultural syncretism and linguistic nationalism as the basis of separation of East Pakistan to become independent Bangladesh in 1971, it colluded with the Pakistani military on the genocidal atrocities during the war of liberation. As the Bengali nationalist Awami League-led government following its landslide victory in the December 2008 Parliamentary elections initiated the process of persecuting the Jamaat leaders involved in war crimes, the Islamist party lost much of its glory and power it had regained in the 1990s. All the same, Bangladesh Jamaat will not easily succumb to the external blows given its extensive social infrastructure and strong material base built by its dedicated cadres over the past decades. Apart from discussing the historical backdrop of the political rivalry between the ruling Awami League and the Jamaat, the article also aims to explain how the party's socio-economic base together with its ideological appeal in a predominantly Muslim nation accounts for its staying power despite being branded as the anti-liberation force.

Keywords: Islamism, Jamaat e-Islami, Awami League, BNP, War of Liberation, War crimes trial

Introduction

A complex global phenomenon, Islamism is variously described by scholars as an ideology, a movement, a form of government and an organization. Broadly, it refers to political activism and mobilization around Islamic beliefs, symbols and concepts, seeking to promote Islamic

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values in society and establish an Islamic polity based, to varying degrees, on shari'a.¹ Islamists across the world widely differ in terms of their programmes, strategies and tactics depending on the historical context and societal conditions but they all share the ultimate goal of reinstitution of an Islamic state and society. The Jamaat e-Islami, founded in 1941 by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, a prominent Muslim thinker and author of the controversial book titled *Al-Jihad fi Sabeel Allah* (Jihad in Islam), is the largest Islamist political party in Bangladesh. Ideologically committed to establishing an Islamic state in India, the Jamaat was opposed to the 1947 partition and later, fiercely resisted the secession of the Eastern part of Pakistan to become an independent Bangladesh in 1971.

During the Bangladeshi War of Liberation, the Jamaat e-Islami colluded with the Pakistani army to crush the nationalist aspirations by unleashing a reign of terror, killing an inestimable number of progressive intellectuals, artists, students and academicians apart from committing a series of brutal attacks on the minority Hindu community with unspeakable cruelty.² Predictably, the Jamaat disappeared from the political scene in the immediate aftermath of Bangladesh's independence on 16 December 1971. It, however, re-appeared six years later as a part of the ruling dispensation, thanks to the military junta that had captured power following the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975. After a brief period of political uncertainty, Major General Ziaur Rahman became the President of Bangladesh in 1977 and created political space for the outlawed Jamaat e-Islami through the Fifth Amendment to Bangladesh's constitution. In the following three decades, the anti-liberation forces were accommodated in the Bangladeshi political establishment with the Jamaat regaining its lost power and glory, and exercising disproportionate influence as junior partner in the ruling coalition.

It was the 2008 general elections that significantly changed the country's political landscape. For Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the slain leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had promised to the electorates during her campaign that she would establish the International Crimes Tribunal to punish the war criminals, particularly those belonging to the Jamaat. With the return of Awami League to power in 2009, the Jamaat became the prime target for its alleged role during the War of Liberation as the murderous auxiliary force of the Pakistani army. As the Sheikh Hasina government carried out a series of execution of the Jamaat leaders, the war crimes trial became an intensely contentious issue within the country and outside as well. While political detractors attributed it to her vendetta politics and authoritarian proclivity, others continued to justify the state actions against the anti-liberation forces for their alleged involvement in the genocidal killing regardless of whether trial procedures comply with the international standards or not.

In the light of the ongoing debate in the wake of Sheikh Hasina's second term as Prime Minister and the host of issues that it has brought to the fore, this article aims to explain the underlying ideological contestation between the Islamist faction and the ruling secular nationalist Awami League apart from examining the resilience and staying power of the Jamaat e-Islami given its robust social infrastructure and material base.

Ideological Contestation

The ongoing duel between the ruling Awami League and the Jamaat e-Islami had its roots

in the 1971 national liberation movement when the former was engaged in a bloody struggle against the Pakistan military-led establishment and the Jamaat, its local Islamist proxy. Founded in 1949 by a group of political activists based in the then East Pakistan, the party originally bore the name Awami Muslim League. In the wake of the crackdown on the *Bhasha Andolon* or the language movement in February 1952, the party dropped the word Muslim and came to be known as Awami League. Subsequently, the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib broadened its political base by welcoming non-Muslim Bengalis into its fold and spearheaded the nationalist movement against Pakistan on a secular platform. At the core of the Bengali nationalism lies the emotional attachment to cultural traditions and distinct linguistic heritage that overshadowed the Islamic unity based on which the state of Pakistan comprising the two geographically separated wings was created.³

The Awami League was ideologically wedded to promoting nationalism rooted in Bangladesh's unique combination of land and language, whereas Jamaat-e-Islami sought to preserve the religious unity of the west and the east wing of Pakistan in its struggle to establish Islamic state under the sovereignty of God what Maududi calls *hakimiya*.⁴ "The Islamic state of the jamaat" according to an analyst, "was to be all powerful monolithic state upholding a definite religious ideology and using the full weight of police and judicial powers to ensure that all aspects of life will reflect the character of its Islamic ideology."⁵ This explains why the Jamaat was opposed to the western concepts of secularism and cultural nationalism. Those who contested the valorisation of religion, which was posited as the potent homogenising force between Pakistan and East Pakistan, were considered by the Jamaat as enemies of the state.⁶

The Jamaat cadres thus actively assisted the Pakistani army to prevent the division of Pakistan when popular unrest in East Pakistan against the imposition of Urdu as national language turned into the liberation war of Bangladesh in March 1971. Through its action groups, namely the *Al-Badr*, *Al Sham* and *Mujahid*, known as the *Rajakar Bahini* in Bengali, the Jamaat tried to sabotage the liberation movement by targeting not only the *Mukti-Bahini* guerillas but also intellectuals and minority Hindus. The most dreaded of Jamaat leaders was Abdul Kader Molla, infamously known as the "the Butcher of Mirpur" for his role in the genocidal killing in Mirpur, a Dhaka suburb.⁷ Likewise, Ghulam Azam, another prominent Jamaat leader and member of the *Shanti Bahini* constituted by the Pakistani establishment was involved in killing hundreds of Bangladeshi civilians, raping mostly non-Muslim women, and kidnapping a number of leading academicians, writers and doctors among others.⁸ During the nine-month long struggle until Bangladesh attained independence on 16 December 1971, between "200,000 and 400,000 women became victims of rape and sex slavery", and nearly "three million Bangladeshis or East-Pakistanis were killed by West-Pakistani forces and their supporters, specifically the Jamaat-e-Islami and its affiliates."⁹

Jamaat in Post-Independence Bangladesh

Reflecting the spirit of the war of liberation and the ideological underpinnings of the Awami League, the post-independence Bangladesh under Mujibur Rehman as Prime Minister adopted nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism as core principles of the state when the Constitution was framed in 1972.¹⁰ In explaining the secular plank of the nation, Prime Minister

Mujibur Rehman stated, “Secularism “does not mean the absence of religion; Hindus will observe their religion. Muslims will observe their religion; Christians and Buddhists will observe their religions. No one will be allowed to interfere in other’s religion. The people of Bengal do not want any interference in religious matters. Religion cannot be used for political ends.”¹¹ Accordingly, the religion-based political parties like the Jamaat, which collaborated with the occupational army were banned under Article 38 of the Constitution. Besides, the ruling Awami League also introduced the Political Parties Regulation Act of 1972, which enumerated a number of conditions for political parties, restraining them from indulging in polarisation politics and religious experimentation.

Although Jamaat remained in political oblivion in the immediate aftermath of independence, it managed to survive amid the ideological confusion created by an overdose of secularism along with over-exposure of religions other than Islam in a predominantly Muslim nation. Reflective of this, Mujibur Rehman’s secular reforms, notably equal treatment to all religions was pooh-poohed as multi-theocracy. After all, secular nationalism in the case of Bangladesh was the product of a specific historical context marked by “a seething hatred towards West Pakistan”¹²; it was thus contextual rather than culturally rooted. Nowhere was this dilemma more glaring than in the failure on the part of Mujib, architect of the secular polity, to sustain Bengali nationalism as the hegemonic state ideology. The crisis had its beginning with Mujib changing course midway by symbolically Islamising his public conduct, identifying the country with the majority Muslim community and joining the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Lahore in February 1974.¹³

While Prime Minister Mujib’s attempts to reverse the secularization process conducted to the revival of pro-Islamic forces including the Jamaat under the cover of various social welfare organizations, his ouster from the national political scene in a military coup in August 1975 paved the way for the reinstatement of the Islamist party in national politics. As an analyst has aptly put it, it was the “crisis of hegemonic ideology” created by the post-independence secular nationalist elite that led the subsequent military regime to look for an alternative ideology to gain political legitimacy. “The military-bureaucracy oligarchy”, he added, “created a new ideological terrain: religion, territoriality of national identity and national security constituted its core.”¹⁴ As a result, Bangladesh in the following three decades saw the Islamist upsurge with the religious forces expanding their agenda and capturing space within the country’s politics denied to them earlier.

For example, Major General Ziaur Rahman, who took over the reins of government as President of Bangladesh in 1977 after months of unrest and political uncertainty,¹⁵ replaced secularism as a state principle with “*Bismillah ar Rahman ar Rahim*”, which translates into “absolute trust and faith in the almighty Allah.” Equally significant was his rehabilitation of the Jamaat e-Islami in national politics by ratifying the Political Parties Regulation Act and later on, by forging political alliance between the Jamaat and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) founded by him. The BNP-Jamaat alliance led by his wife, Khaleda Zia remained a formidable political force until its 2008 electoral debacle. Likewise, Zia’s successor, General Ershad befriended the Jamaat in the face of resistance to his pursuit of Islamising Bangladesh contrary to the spirit of liberation movement.¹⁶ On the whole, restoration of the Jamaat e-

Islami as a legitimate national player and that too aligned with the military-led establishment helped facilitate the party's access to the country's vital economic sectors, which, in turn, contributed to the steady expansion of its social base.

Resurrected Jamaat in Bangladesh Politics

Ironically, the country was ruled during this period by the people who were once opposed to the creation of Bangladesh. Rather than the state trying and punishing anti-liberation forces and collaborators, they were promoted to leadership positions, which triggered periodic protests by civil society organizations. For example, return of the *Amir* of Jamaat e-Islami, Golam Azam, who gained notoriety for collaborating with the Pakistani army in the massacre of Bengali intellectuals during the war of liberation, prompted the *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* (National Coordination for the Implementation of the spirit of the Liberation War and elimination of the killers and collaborators of 1971), a civil society organization to hold the people's court in 1992.¹⁷ Many prominent citizens of civil society heard the case for days and on March 26, 1992 the People's Court held Golam Azam guilty. The BNP government of Begum Zia, however, ignored the people's verdict, and charged him on the flimsy ground of non-possession of a passport. A three member bench of the Bangladesh High Court later rejected the executive order of 1973 and passed a judgment declaring him a citizen of Bangladesh.

The controversy over Golam Azam's legal rehabilitation was triggered by public protest of Jahanara Imam, popularly known as the *shahid janani*. In her book *Ekattorer Dinguli*, she recounts the liberation war and the bloodbath unleashed by the anti-liberation forces and laments the systematic erosion of spirit of the liberation movement. Despite constant harassment, Imam continued to challenge the BNP-Jamaat alliance, demanding justice for her slain husband and eldest son until her death in 1994. At the same time, the Nirmul Committee members remained active, raising their voice against the anti-liberation forces even though the books published by the organisation on liberation war and politics of the Jamaat were burned by the latter. As the anti-liberation forces patronized by the ruling BNP increasingly asserted their presence in public sphere and manipulated ordinary citizens through duplicitous narratives, the minority Hindus became vulnerable. The BNP-Jamaat rule was, in fact, marked by major atrocities against Hindus including attacks on their places of worship, killing and rapes, leading to a steady exodus of the Hindus to various parts of the world.¹⁸

Apart from restoring political status of the likes of Golam Azam,¹⁹ the BNP-led government also repealed the Collaborators Acts to save the anti-liberation agents and appointed many of them to high ranking government posts. All this, doubtless, contributed to the mainstreaming of the fringe Islamist movement represented by the Jamaat e-Islam. What subsequently helped enhance Jamaat's political status was its participation during the Movement for Democracy (MRD) in the 1990s. In joining hands with a wide spectrum of political parties including the Awami League, and mobilizing its cadres in the countryside while organising protests and large gatherings in the urban centres against General Ershad's authoritarian rule, the Jamaat acquired the status of a legitimate player in Bangladesh politics. Its wider acceptability was reflected in its vote share of 12.13 percent with 18 constituencies it won in the 1991 Parliamentary elections. Recognising its growing popularity, the BNP chose to form a

government with the support of the Jamaat as its junior partner.

Out of power after the 1996 elections, the Jamaat joined the BNP-led four-party alliance to oppose the “anti-Islamic” Awami League government until 2001. While it emerged the fourth largest party securing 17 of 300 seats in the 2001 general elections and joined the BNP-led coalition government, its vote share declined to little over 4 percent with only 2 seats in the ninth Parliamentary elections held in December 2008.²⁰ In contrast, the Awami League-led “grand coalition” of 14 parties registered a convincing landside victory,²¹ paving the way for its leader Sheikh Hasina to form the government that continued for two successive terms in 2014 and 2019.

Sheikh Hasina’s Return to Power and Fall of Jamaat

With the return of Sheikh Hasina to power in 2009, the Jamaat e-Islami Bangladesh became the prime target of the government for its treacherous role during the liberation war of 1971. During her election campaign, Prime Minister Hasina had, in fact, promised to initiate the process of prosecuting those found guilty of war crimes in 1971, which she fulfilled by setting up the International Crimes Tribunal in 2009 and amending the original act of 1973. The Tribunal had the authority to investigate and bring to justice all those accused of crimes against humanity during the war of liberation, whereas the amended 1973 act was made applicable to both “organizations” as well as “individuals” accused of colluding with the Pakistani army in genocidal atrocities. Consequently, a series of arrests were made in 2010 and the top Jamaat leaders including its president and secretary-general were executed between 2011 and 2016.²² Even though the Jamaat-e-Islami orchestrated protests against the execution of its leaders,²³ it failed to evoke popular support because public opinion in Bangladesh over war crimes trial remained fractured. While the ruling Awami League described war crimes trial as part of its political agenda promised to the electorates and meant to give justice to family members of the martyrs, the Islamist factions termed the government initiative as politically-motivated, seeking to weaken ideological opponents.²⁴

The trials sparked protests in Muslim countries, namely Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, while the human rights groups criticised the process for not complying with the international standards. Internally, the liberal-minded intellectuals called for a new beginning based on political consensus pertaining to the legacies of the 1971 liberation war. The pro-government secular protesters, however, continued to mobilize support in favour of capital punishment for the war criminals, and demanded that the Jamaat e-Islami be banned on the ground that its existence challenged the foundational ideology of Bangladesh. Following the public interest litigation filed by a leading Sufi group in 2009, the Bangladesh High court in 2013 finally ruled that registration of Jamaat-e-Islami was illegal and banned it from contesting 2014 Parliamentary elections.²⁵ Despite the ban and relentless crackdown on multiple fronts including its assets, business ventures and its mass media outlets, the Jamaat e-Islami tried to remain politically relevant by fielding candidates as independents and fighting general elections on BNP platform. It downplayed its political activities by concentrating its efforts on the implementation of the Islamic way of life so as to transform Bangladesh into an Islamic welfare state.

The Jamaat’s failure to apologise for its role during the war of liberation in 1971 and bring in necessary changes to make it more inclusive,²⁶ however, led a group of activists to break

away to form Amar Bangladesh Party (ABP) in 2020. Interestingly, the new party has though chosen to abandon ideological confrontation with the ruling Awami League, analysts doubt its sincerity given the fact that many ABP members were originally the office bearers of the Jamaat and its students wing, The Islamic Chatra Shibir.²⁷ In any case, the Jamaat e-Islami appears to have survived the persistent hammering as its massive protest rallies and political gatherings demonstrate. Its resilience amid persecution owes as much to the ideological base of the party as its organizational capacity, social infrastructure and economic base.

Organizational Structure

As an ideology-based political party, the Bangladesh Jamaat e-Islami primarily focuses on cadre-building through ideological training and inculcating strict discipline to counteract the secular Bengali nationalism. The Jamaat's rise is attributed to "its band of dedicated workers, most of whom are former and current madrasa students."²⁸ The organization is hierarchically structured, comprising central, district level, Thana or upazilla levels. At each level, there is an elected president, *majlish e shura* and working committee. In addition, the party has its officials in wards and units that are further divided into subdivision of a panchayat and local booth. Besides, the Jamaat also has a parallel women front with the similar level of office-bearers.

The highest leadership structure is headed by the president known as the *Amir e jamaat*, whereas the *Majlish I Shura* represents the highest consultative body followed by the central executive council called the *Nirbahi parishad* and the central secretariat called the *Karmo parishad*. The membership structure of the party includes a *Rukun*, who is dedicated full-timer for the party followed by a *Kormi* who runs errands for the party and is involved in the mobilization, and a *Shoyogi*, an associate member available for party works. A full-time *Rukun* with sufficient experience in the party discipline and ideology claims the higher position.²⁹ The routine assignments of its party workers involves daily mandatory activities like reading Quran and related Islamic literature, studying *Hadith*, doing regular prayers, attending meetings for recruitment interaction, and commitment to book distribution.

Founded in 1977, the Islamic Chatra Shibir (ICS) is the student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat e-Islami. It represents the youth of Bangladesh and has been at the fore front in student union elections in universities across Bangladesh. It has a consistent support base in the University of Dhaka, university of Chittagong, Rajshahi Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, Chittagong Polytechnic Institute and many other educational institutes. The *Shibir* claims to have millions of supporters and 130 thousand workers with 103 branches and 14,000 units all over the country.³⁰ The organisation was earlier accused of sheltering a number of extremist organisations and helping them with logistics to spread terror.³¹ Critical of rival Mujibur Rehman's vision for Bangladesh, *Chatra Shibir* highlights the need for awakening Muslims, and its official narratives portray the enemy it is engaged in fighting as irreligious and grotesque to garner legitimacy.³²

Certain objectives are prioritised by *Shibir* to establish *Deen* (Islam) through teaching, preaching and coaching aside from its obsession to build a moral and ethical student community. *Chatra shibir* is the most vehement interlocutor for the Islamic domain with its goal to establish an Islamic state and society. Core to its assumptions is that Bangladesh has suffered on

account of its obfuscated identity, which needs to be redeemed. The organisation has, therefore, campaigned for purging secular contents from the curriculum and supported compulsory religion-based education in schools and colleges. The stress on moral education, good conduct, abstinence from entertainment, ideological nearness to Islamic texts is amplified due to the perception of its lack in private and public life. Chatra Shibir has all through maintained a strong antipathy to secular ideals and therefore patronised compatriots to corral compliance towards their project.

Jamaat's Economic Heft

The resilience of the Bangladesh Jamaat accrues from its pragmatic resource management, which has contributed to its economic heft. The party during its early years received funds from Islamic charities and religious institutions from the West Asia. The organisation's reliance on aid n assistance from oil rich lenders, however, lessened when it mastered the art of making smart investments in profit making ventures. Successful asset building and surplus capital management made it reasonably self sufficient to fund party cadres and welfare activities, which endeared the Jamaat e-Islami to the people. Its members were engaged in all sectors of the economy. Prof Abul Barkat who taught Economics in University of Dhaka designates this enterprise as "the economics of fundamentalism." According to Barkat, "The estimated annual 2004 net profit economic fundamentalism in Bangladesh would be about US\$200 million (Bd Take 12000 million). The highest share of such profits 27% comes from financial institutions (banks, insurance institutions, leasing companies etc). The second highest 20,8 %of the total net profits comes from NGOs. 10.8% comes from trading concerns, 10.4%profit comes from pharmaceutical industries and health institutions including diagnostic centres, 9.2% comes from educational institutions, 8.3%comes from real estate business, 7.5% comes from transport business and 5.8% comes from media and IT sector."³³

The increasing fortunes is utilised towards the upkeep of thousands of full time workers at all district and sub-district levels, which, in turn, contributed to the proliferation of ideologically trained cadres in key positions in almost all sectors of country's economy. "The greatest danger about the rise of the politics and economics of fundamentalism in Bangladesh", Barkat noted, "lies in the institutionalisation of fundamentalism implying organised penetration of islamist fundamentalist forces (with ideology assimilating mythos of religion with logos of reality)"³⁴ What distinguishes the Jamaat e-Islami's economic strategies from the mainstream business conglomerates is the economic investments of the former is driven by the ideological goal to capture state power as each functional economic module is meant to reach optimum threshold in terms of reach, and executed with messianic zeal and follow up.³⁵

Capping them all, Bangladesh Jamaat has targeted the economically marginalised sections of the society with its welfare programmes at a time when the phenomenal rise in the disposable income of the middle class and rich, spawning the disturbing trend of inequality. Its programmatic support for community services has, for instance, earned the party an image of benefactor for the cause of poor Muslim.³⁶ Matching actions with its vision of an Islamic state, the party's social welfare activities resonate with a large section of Bangladeshis, converting them into the party's persuasive sympathizers.

Social Infrastructure

If the Islamist groups across the Muslim world have grown in strength and popularity over

the past decades, it is largely due to their impressive social infrastructure, which, among others, includes schools, hospitals, charitable institutions and emergency relief. In the case of Bangladesh Jamaat, however, it goes beyond the traditional welfare activities and programmes; it is involved in building educational institutions, developing its own mass media platforms and managing micro finance organizations. Unlike other such Islamist groups, it does not run its own welfare organizations, and its members “hold senior positions in many organisations engaged in provision of social services, which apparently have no formal links with the Jama’at.”³⁷

Bangladesh Jamaat, for example, has significant influence in the country’s education sector, from school to the university as well as technical education. Its control over the educational institutions is guided by the twin objectives of disseminating its world view so as to create fertile ground for a revolution from below, and expanding its support base among the new generation of Muslims who are born and raised after the 1971 liberation war. Some of the prominent institutions under the covert or overt Jamaat control include International Islamic University Chittagong, International Islamic University, Asian University, South East University, Islamic Bank Technical College, Green University, Manerat School and Lyceum Kindergarten apart from an array of coaching centres.³⁸ In the print and electronic media, likewise, the Jamaat has been reasonably successful in projecting its image and ideological alternative, especially through Bengali daily *Naya Diganta* and Diganta TV purportedly owned by members of the Islamist organisation.

Finally, the Jamaat e-Islami has a significant presence in the domain of micro finance. Even though the Islamic micro finance is sparse as compared to other micro finance organisations in Bangladesh, the former is increasingly visible due to its strict adherence to Shari’a laws, which prohibits collection of interests. While other secular NGO’s distribute loans and assistance with a medium to high rate of interest, the religious oriented NGO’s cater to interest-free loans. In doing so, it has not only fulfilled the expectations of an overwhelming Muslim populace but also expanded the field of NGO activism by including variety of actors and wide range of products.³⁹ In this context, it is worth mentioning the significant contributions of a senior Jamaat leader, Mir Quasem Ali towards building the organisation’s enduring social base through his multiple philanthropic initiatives, namely the Islamic Bank, Islamic medical college, Islamic nursing institute, Islamic bank Mahila *madrassa* and the Bangladesh cultural centre.⁴⁰ ‘The *Ibn Sina Trust* founded by him has also done pioneering work in the health care sector, and successfully manages several medical colleges, hospitals, diagnostic centres and Pharmaceuticals.

Conclusion

Bangladesh Jamaat e-islami has shown its staying power in politics despite being branded as the anti-liberation force not because of its unwavering mission to bring about “awakening among Muslims” as a prelude to establish the Islamic polity but because of the large, organised socio-economic base it has built over the decades. This explains how the Islamist party has survived the persistent persecution since its 2008 electoral setback, and continues to challenge the cultural syncretism and Bengali nationalism represented by the ruling Awami League. Given its robust social infrastructure, it will not easily succumb to external blows, political or military. The economic base it has established propelled by some wealthy and hardcore

members' business ventures are the crowning accomplishments of the organisation. The tag of being anti-liberation or collaborator, if over-emphasised and over-played, is likely to boomerang. Its resurgence as a consequential mainstream political player in the deeply polarised Bangladesh depends as much on its organisational resilience and mobilisational potential as the performance and popularity of the incumbent Awami League-led government.

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The Idea of Quality Education for School Students: Challenges and Opportunities as per the NEP 2020 & the NCF-SE-2023

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Abstract

The idea of quality education for school students is central to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. The NEP 2020 highlights the importance of inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive education, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and skill development. It advocates for multilingualism, promotes the use of local languages, and encourages learning in students' mother tongues to enhance their understanding. Additionally, it fosters an appreciation for local culture and values. Despite its transformative vision, the implementation faces several challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained teachers, and disparities in access to quality education across different regions. Moreover, the shift from rote learning to experiential learning and technology integration in classrooms presents challenges but offers opportunities for holistic development of students, innovative teaching, digital literacy, and a more inclusive education ecosystem. To fulfil the vision of the NEP 2020, the NCF-SE 2023 aims to provide a flexible curriculum that allows students to explore subjects of interest while promoting critical life skills. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities, the vision of quality education as per the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 can be realized, fostering well-rounded, empowered students who are prepared to face future challenges. Therefore, this research paper will examine the key aspects of the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE-2023 aimed at improving

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the quality of education in Indian schools. It will also discuss the challenges in implementing the NEP 2020 and the opportunities offered by both the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023.

Keywords: Quality Education, Sustainable Development Goal 4, The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023, School education, students, Pedagogy, and Holistic development etc.

Introduction

The word “Education” originates from Latin terms like “Educare” (to nourish), “Educere” (to draw out), “Educo” (to lead out), and “Educatum” (the act of teaching). “Educere” highlights developing a child’s latent potential, guided by teachers who nurture these possibilities. In Hindi, “Siksha” stems from the Sanskrit word “Shash,” reflecting discipline, control, and direction.¹ Education plays a pivotal role in human life, shaping individuals, communities, and societies in transformative ways. It is a fundamental right and a powerful catalyst for progress, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.² Education empowers individuals with knowledge, skills, and opportunities, fostering growth, innovation, social cohesion, health, and informed choices.³ It cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, essential for addressing complex challenges. Education is central to achieving gender equality, empowering women, and fostering inclusive societies.⁴ Education breaks barriers, addresses disparities, and promotes fairness. It fosters sustainable development, environmental awareness, civic engagement, and responsible citizenship, transforming lives, empowering communities, and creating an equitable, prosperous world.⁵ Therefore, Education is a lifelong journey, beginning at birth and continuing throughout life. The infancy phase is crucial, laying the foundation for development, though early guidance largely depends on family. Formal schooling introduces additional influences, including peers, shaping educational paths. Spanning from preschool to advanced studies, the educational framework shifts focus from societal benefits to individual growth, highlighting the essential role of education in fostering holistic development.⁶

Regarding the importance of education in human life, great teacher, political scientist, and statesmen of ancient Bharat, Chanakya said, “*Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere. Education beats the beauty and the youth*”⁷ Swami Vivekananda, a renowned teacher of his era, also described the purpose of education as the unveiling of the inherent perfection within every individual. He said, “*Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind. Suggestion is the friction; which brings it out*”.⁸ In this line of thought, Rabindranath Tagore also said, “*The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence*”.⁹ It means education is the transfer of knowledge and skills. However, education truly embodies a transformative process that cultivates positive changes and enhances the mind’s capacity to think and act in a refined manner. Education instigates enduring transformations in individuals’ cognitive capacities, empowering them to discern between right and wrong actions. The fundamental essence of education resides in instilling values and knowledge within individuals. Those who grasp this notion recognize that genuine education entails repeated exposure rather than mere

lectures on materialistic subjects. Hence, this aligns with Albert Einstein's assertion that *"Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."*¹⁰ Thus, education empowers individuals by providing them with knowledge, skills, and an understanding of their rights and duties toward their family, society, and nation. It expands horizons, encourages critical thinking, and enables people to address societal issues such as injustice and corruption. By fostering a greater awareness of the world, education becomes a cornerstone of national development, sparking innovation and creativity that drive social and economic progress. Without education, growth and innovation falter, highlighting its essential role in building a thriving and prosperous future.¹¹

Quality Education

Quality education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in an ever-evolving world, driven by technological advancements, while also fostering personal empowerment and societal growth. Centered on inclusivity and equity, it fosters academic excellence, critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. By enabling lifelong learning and adaptability, it prepares individuals for global challenges. Quality Education liberates the mind, sparks imagination, and builds self-respect. As a pathway to prosperity, it opens opportunities and enables contributions to a healthy, progressive society. Learning benefits everyone and must be accessible to all, ensuring that every individual has the chance to thrive and participate in creating a better future.¹²

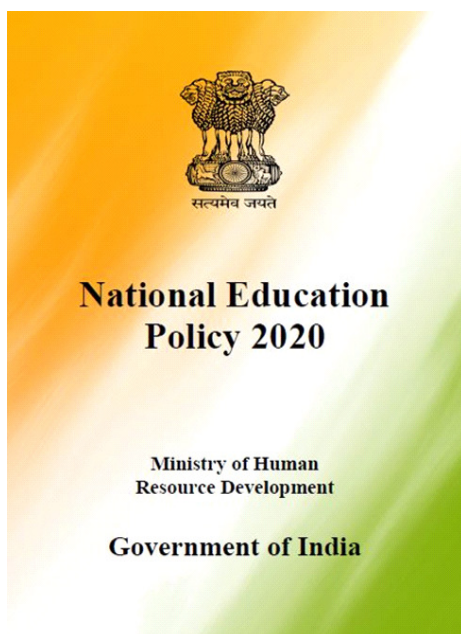
The parameters of quality education include accessible and inclusive learning opportunities that provide to diverse needs, ensuring no one is left behind. Competent and motivated teachers play a vital role, supported by ongoing professional development and adequate resources. A robust curriculum, relevant to real-world contexts and aligned with national and global standards, is essential. Effective pedagogies that promote active participation and collaboration are equally significant. Infrastructure, including safe and well-equipped classrooms, technological resources, and supportive learning environments, also underpins quality education.¹³ Regular assessment and feedback mechanisms help track progress and improve outcomes. Finally, partnerships among schools, families, and communities ensure a holistic approach to education. By fostering a culture of excellence and equity, quality education serves as a catalyst for individual success, social cohesion, and sustainable development. It remains a universal priority for achieving a better future for all.¹⁴

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 focuses on *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."*¹⁵ Education is a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty, fostering equality, and empowering individuals to lead better lives. This goal emphasizes the importance of access to free, quality education from primary to secondary, as well as affordable higher education and vocational training. By 2030, SDG 4 aims to achieve universal literacy and numeracy, improve school infrastructure, and increase the number of qualified teachers. It also stresses the need to eliminate gender disparities and provide equal opportunities for children from marginalized and vulnerable communities. For school students, this means not only access to education but also access to learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and stimulating.¹⁶

Achieving SDG 4 requires the collective effort of governments, international organizations,

civil society, schools, communities, and individuals. It is vital for schools to focus on developing well-rounded curriculums that nurture critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in students. Equal emphasis should be placed on life skills, such as communication and collaboration, which prepare students for real-world challenges. Teachers play a crucial role in delivering quality education, and they must be adequately trained, supported, and motivated. Additionally, governments and institutions should invest in technology and digital resources to bridge the digital divide and provide access to learning materials for all students, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status. Quality education empowers students with knowledge and skills, enabling them to build a sustainable future, contribute to their communities, and achieve their full potential.¹⁷

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020



The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a massive transformation in education through– *“an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy envisages that the curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one’s country, and a conscious awareness of one’s roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The vision of the Policy is to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop*

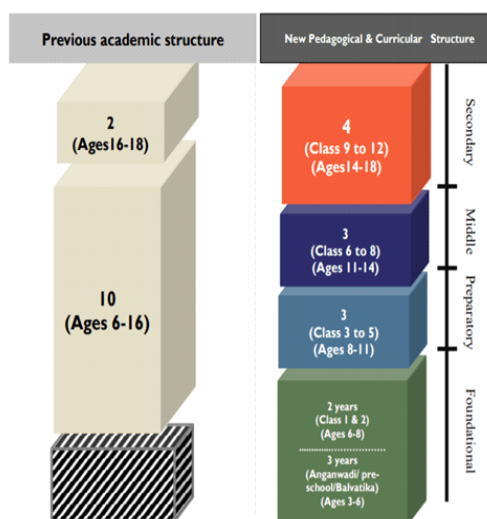
*knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.”*¹⁸

The NEP 2020 is built upon five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability.¹⁹ It seeks to equip the youth to tackle the varied challenges, both national and international, of today and tomorrow. On 11 September 2020, the Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed the Conclave on “School Education in the 21st Century,” highlighting the transformative reforms introduced under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and he said *“National Education Policy is going to give a new direction to 21st century India and we are becoming part of a moment that is laying the foundation for building the future of our country.”*²⁰ PM Modi further said, *“The new National Education*

Policy is a means to fulfilling new aspirations, new opportunities of a new India.....Energetic youth are the engines of development of a country; Their development should begin from their childhood. The NEP-2020 lays a lot of emphasis on this.”²¹.

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the fundamental values and principles in school education, highlighting the importance of developing not only cognitive abilities but also social and emotional skills. This includes foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, as well as higher-order skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving, alongside soft skills like cultural awareness, empathy, perseverance, grit, teamwork, leadership, and communication. The Policy goals to make pre-primary education universally accessible and places special emphasis on achieving foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond for all students by 2025.²²

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revolutionize India’s education system by ensuring equitable access, inclusivity, and holistic development. It emphasizes a 5+3+3+4 pedagogical structure, catering to developmental stages from ages 3-18. The policy prioritizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic growth through structured, play-based learning. Foundational literacy and numeracy are key, ensuring proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The NEP advocates for curriculum reforms integrating critical thinking, vocational training, life skills, and experiential learning. It proposes reforms across all school education levels, including enhancing school quality, redesi-



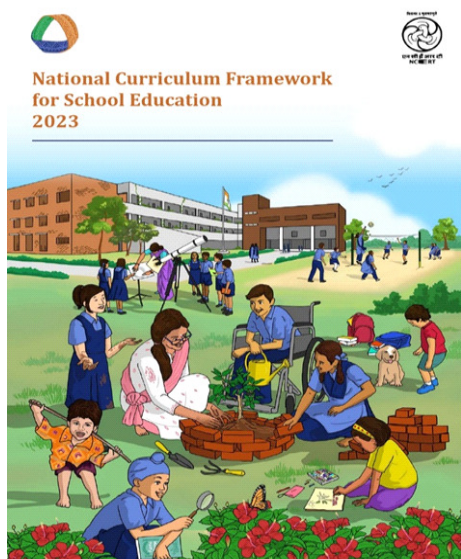
gning curriculum, revamping assessments, improving teacher training, and restructuring education regulations. Furthermore, the Policy advocates for increased public investment in education, leveraging technology, and expanding vocational and adult education. It suggests reducing the curriculum load in each subject to focus on essential content, thus allowing space for holistic, discussion-based, and analytical learning approaches.²³ In this context, PM Modi emphases, “*It is necessary to develop a greater learning spirit, scientific and logical thinking, mathematical thinking and scientific temperament among youngsters*”²⁴.

Consequently, the NEP- 2020 proposes a comprehensive revision and overhaul of all aspects of the education system, including school regulations and governance, to align it with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education while honouring India’s tradition, culture, and values. Technology will be seamlessly integrated into education through various existing and proposed initiatives, such as interactive textbooks, high-quality e-content for teacher and student capacity building, and activities aligned with learning outcomes. Acknowledging the increased access to education due to the establishment of primary schools in every habitation, the policy recognizes the operational challenges posed by very small schools with low student

numbers.²⁵ The Policy places significant emphasis on Quality Education across all stages of School Education. It views quality education not only as transformative but also as instrumental in shaping the minds and characters of learners, ultimately fostering active citizenship. Empowered learners, it believes, not only contribute to the country's developmental imperatives but also play a crucial role in building a just and equitable society.²⁶

NEP 2020 also highlights the need for empowered teachers through comprehensive training, professional development, and mechanisms for quality assurance. Technology integration is a key focus, promoting digital tools and platforms for personalized and interactive learning. Assessment reforms emphasize competency-based evaluations over rote memorization, fostering holistic development. The policy underscores equitable and inclusive education, addressing disparities for marginalized groups and promoting Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) to preserve cultural heritage. Overall, NEP 2020 envisions a transformative, inclusive, and innovative education ecosystem that equips students for lifelong learning and global adaptability.²⁷

National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NSF-SE) 2023



The NEP 2020 called for a complete transformation of India's schooling system to make it of the highest quality for all students equitably, and to serve the needs and aspirations of the country and its people, today and for the future. Therefore, the purpose of National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE, in short NCF) is to help to bring about changes by effecting corresponding positive transformations in India's school curricula. The NEP 2020 called for the development of a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the State's New Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs) as the bases for transforming school education in the country. This aligns with the empowerment of states within our federal framework, where education is a concurrent subject under Article 246 of the Constitution of India.²⁸ Hence, the National

Curriculum Framework for School Education (NSF-SE) 2023 aim to help bring consonance and harmony across the curricula in the country.²⁹

The NCF-SE 2023 stated, *"The Curricula across our country must be informed by and be fully responsive to the glorious unity and diversity of India. The imagination of NEP 2020, where institutions and educators are highly empowered - including to develop Curricula - is energized by this diversity and the nurturing of it. States have the Constitutional mandate to provide high-quality education to all children, and their own unique State contexts inform their own approaches to Curricula."*³⁰ The NCF-SE 2023 stands as the most recent version of this crucial document, serving as a thorough blueprint for the school educational transformation in India. Quality education, as envisioned in the NCFSE

2023, is holistic, inclusive, and future-focused, aimed at equipping students with knowledge, skills, and values for lifelong learning. It aims to reshape the Indian education system by prioritizing a learner-centric approach that values individual strengths, interests, and learning styles. Rooted in the Indian vision of education, it emphasizes holistic development, encompassing physical, socio-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. The framework highlights play-based learning, fostering curiosity and engagement among young learners, while competency-based education develops critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills.³¹ (*See the Pictures*) Integrating technology into teaching enhances digital literacy and access to diverse resources. The NCF-SE 2023 underscores the value of multidisciplinary learning by connecting knowledge from different subjects to address real-world challenges and enhance comprehensive understanding.³² The framework highlights the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy, ensuring every child attains proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic. It also prioritizes experiential learning and competency-based curricula that cater to diverse learners, making education engaging and meaningful. By integrating local and global perspectives, the NCF-SE 2023 aims to balance traditional knowledge systems with modern advancements, promoting cultural pride and global citizenship.³³



(Source: National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, NCERT, [chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjpcglclefindmkaj/https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCFSE-2023-August_2023.pdf](https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCFSE-2023-August_2023.pdf))

Challenges in Achieving Quality Education

As we discussed the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 aim to transform the Indian education system into a learner-centric, inclusive, and globally relevant model. However, achieving the vision of quality education outlined in these frameworks faces numerous challenges. The first significant hurdle is the lack of infrastructure and resources, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas such as slums. Many schools lack basic facilities such as functional classrooms, sanitation, and access to digital tools necessary for integrating technology in education. Bridging the digital divide remains a daunting task as many students, especially in remote areas, have limited access to devices and reliable internet connectivity, which hinders the implementation of tech-based learning methods advocated by these policies.³⁴

Another critical challenge lies in addressing the shortage of well-trained and motivated teachers. While the NEP 2020 emphasizes teacher empowerment and professional development, the reality is that many teachers lack access to regular training and upskilling opportunities. The recruitment and retention of qualified educators, especially in underserved regions, are further complicated by low salaries, lack of career advancement opportunities, and inadequate professional support. This results in a teaching workforce that may not be adequately equipped to implement competency-based, multidisciplinary, and inclusive curricula as envisioned by NCF-SE 2023.³⁵

The emphasis on holistic development and competency-based education also requires a paradigm shift in pedagogical practices, which poses a challenge for many schools. Traditional rote-learning methods and exam-centric education systems are deeply ingrained, and transitioning to experiential, inquiry-based, and skill-oriented learning approaches requires significant effort. Additionally, the proposed assessment reforms, which focus on formative assessments and holistic evaluation, demand a shift in mindset from both educators and students. Resistance to change, coupled with a lack of resources and training to implement these reforms effectively, could impede progress toward quality education.³⁶

Equity and inclusion form another cornerstone of the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023, but addressing disparities in access to quality education remains a persistent challenge. Socioeconomic barriers, gender inequality, and regional disparities disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and students from tribal and economically weaker backgrounds. Ensuring that these groups receive equitable opportunities requires targeted interventions, financial support, and community engagement. However, the implementation of such measures often faces logistical and financial constraints, further widening the gap in educational access and outcomes.³⁷

Lastly, fostering collaboration among various stakeholders is essential for achieving the goals of the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023. However, the coordination between policymakers, educators, parents, and communities is often fragmented. Schools, especially in rural areas, may lack the administrative capacity to engage effectively with communities and implement reforms. Moreover, public awareness about the objectives of the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 remains limited, leading to resistance or apathy toward new initiatives. Strengthening partnerships, ensuring adequate funding, and promoting awareness campaigns are critical to overcoming these challenges. Achieving quality education as envisioned in

these frameworks requires sustained efforts, systemic reforms, and a collective commitment from all stakeholders.³⁸

Opportunities as offered by the NEP 2020 & the NCF-SE 2023

The NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 offer a unique opportunity to transform the Indian education system into one that is more inclusive, innovative, and accessible. One of the primary opportunities for achieving quality education is the shift toward a learner-centric approach. NEP 2020 states *“In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. To close the gap in achievement of learning outcomes, classroom transactions will shift, towards competency-based learning and education. The assessment tools (including assessment “as”, “of”, and “for” learning) will also be aligned with the learning outcomes, capabilities, and dispositions as specified for each subject of a given class.”*³⁹ NEP 2020 stresses the need for recognizing the diverse learning styles, strengths, and interests of individual students, allowing for personalized learning pathways.⁴⁰ The NCF-SE 2023 further reinforces this by advocating for a flexible curriculum that can adapt to the needs of every learner.⁴¹ This personalized approach not only ensures that students are engaged but also promotes a deeper understanding and retention of knowledge, creating an environment where students feel empowered to learn at their own pace. By accommodating diverse learning or pedagogy needs, both frameworks provide a pathway to bridge the educational disparities that exist across regions, communities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Another significant opportunity lies in the promotion of holistic development through education. Both the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 emphasize the importance of fostering a balanced growth of the mind, body, and spirit. This includes the development of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical skills, with a strong focus on values and life skills. The shift from rote memorization to understanding competency-based education allows for the nurturing of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. The emphasis on life skills education ensures that students are not only prepared for academic challenges but also for the demands of the real world, equipping them with the tools necessary to thrive in a complex and rapidly changing global environment. The integration of physical education, art, emotional intelligence, and ethical learning into the curriculum helps develop well-rounded individuals prepared to make positive contributions to society.⁴²

The NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 also open doors to the integration of technology into the learning process, which has immense potential for enhancing the quality of education. The NEP 2020 advocates for the use of digital learning tools, e-resources, and online platforms to make education more accessible, interactive, and engaging.⁴³ This creates opportunities for students in remote and underserved areas to access high-quality learning resources that were previously unavailable. Technology can also facilitate personalized learning by allowing students to learn at their own pace, track their progress, and access a variety of learning materials. The NCF-SE 2023 further emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills necessary to navigate the digital world effectively.

Integrating technology into classrooms also offers the potential for innovative teaching practices, such as flipped classrooms, gamified learning, and collaborative online projects, all of which enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.⁴⁴

Another opportunity presented by the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 is the promotion of inclusive education. The policies highlight the need for an education system that is equitable and accessible to all students, regardless of their background, gender, disability, or geographic location. The NEP 2020 specifically stresses the importance of bridging the educational divide between urban and rural areas and ensuring that marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, have access to quality education.⁴⁵ Chapter 4: *Inclusion in Schools* of the NCF-SE 2023 emphasizes the significance of inclusive education and its practical implementation in schools. It advocates integrating inclusive practices into the curriculum and teaching methods to provide every child with an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach not only supports students who are often marginalized but also plays a vital role in fostering a fairer and more equitable society.⁴⁶

Moreover, the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 provide an opportunity for comprehensive assessment reforms. Both the policy documents advocate for moving away from traditional, high-stakes exams that often prioritize memorization over understanding. Instead, the focus shifts to continuous, competency-based assessments that measure students' progress over time and provide meaningful feedback. The adoption of project-based, formative assessments allows for a more holistic evaluation of a student's abilities, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. This approach to assessment helps students develop a growth mindset, encouraging them to view learning as a continuous process rather than something measured only through exams. Moreover, it reduces the pressure of rote learning and fosters a deeper understanding of the subjects, aligning assessments with real-world competencies.⁴⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, the world is constantly evolving with advancements in technology, changes in the job market, and shifts in global dynamics. Quality education equips children with the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities they need to navigate and succeed in the future. Education empowers children by providing them with the tools to make informed decisions, pursue their passions, and seize opportunities for personal and professional growth. Quality education opens doors to higher education, better career prospects, and improved quality of life. In today's complex and interconnected world, critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills are invaluable. Quality education fosters these skills by encouraging inquiry-based learning, experimentation, and creativity, enabling children to tackle challenges effectively. Quality education promotes global citizenship and intercultural understanding.

The NEP 2020 outlines a transformative roadmap for quality education, emphasizing curriculum reform, innovative pedagogy, teacher training, updated assessments, and technology integration. It aims to revamp the entire education structure to align with 21st-century aspirations, including UN SDG 4, while upholding India's cultural values. The NEP 2020 emphasizes nurturing creativity, foundational literacy, critical thinking, and emotional, ethical, and social development, envisioning an education system rooted in Indian ethos to transform India into a sustainable knowledge society and global superpower. Therefore, the NCF-SE

2023 aims to prepare students for a globalized world. It emphasizes the development of global competencies, including intercultural awareness, language proficiency, and an understanding of global issues. This prepares students to engage with the global community and contribute meaningfully to it.

Furthermore, the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 emphasize inclusivity, equity, and innovation to address contemporary educational demands. However, obstacles such as resource imbalances, infrastructure deficiencies, and systemic inequities pose challenges to their effective implementation. To overcome these barriers, it is essential to tackle issues like gender and socio-economic disparities, language obstacles, and the need for comprehensive teacher training to facilitate the shift toward a holistic, competency-based education system. Despite challenges, the policies emphasize a learner-centric approach, personalized pathways, and the integration of technology to democratize education. Inclusive education aims to bridge inequities, empowering marginalized students. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, combined with experiential learning and teacher empowerment, foster critical thinking, creativity, and practical problem-solving skills, equipping students to tackle global challenges. Finally, the NEP 2020 and the NCF-SE 2023 provide a framework to nurture students' intellectual, emotional, and social potential, contributing to national progress and global competitiveness. Addressing resource gaps and systemic challenges through collaborative efforts can establish a resilient, inclusive education system that ensures quality learning for all.

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Navigating the Complex Dynamics: China-India Border Dispute and Geostrategic Implications

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Abstract

The China-India border dispute, spanning the 3,440 km Line of Actual Control (LAC), is one of Asia's most enduring and complex conflicts. Rooted in historical ambiguities, colonial-era boundary demarcations like the McMahon Line, and competing territorial claims over regions such as Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, this conflict reflects deeper geopolitical and strategic tensions. The region's importance lies in its role as a buffer, resource-rich area, and a critical point for connectivity and infrastructure, aligning with broader ambitions like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's counter-development strategies.

Recent incidents, including the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, have highlighted the volatility and mistrust defining bilateral relations. China's infrastructure advancements and military posturing are perceived as efforts to assert dominance, counter India's rise, and secure geostrategic leverage. Conversely, India has bolstered its border preparedness and sought partnerships, such as the Quad, to balance Chinese assertiveness.

The dispute has significant implications for regional and global geopolitics, influencing alliances, economic ties, and power dynamics in Asia. While challenges persist, peace prospects hinge on confidence-building measures, pragmatic diplomacy, and multilateral engagement through platforms like BRICS and the SCO. Prioritizing coexistence and shared prosperity are vital to mitigating tensions and fostering stability.

Keywords: China-India Border Dispute, Regional Stability, Strategic Rivalry, Infrastructure Development, Economic Interdependence, Nationalism, Regional Power Dynamics, BRICS and SCO, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Galwan Valley Clash,

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Introduction

China and India, the two most populous nations globally, have a history marred by prolonged border disputes spanning the 3,440 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC).¹ The China-India border dispute, rooted in historical ambiguities and competing territorial claims, is one of the most enduring and complex conflicts in Asia. The dispute primarily involves Aksai Chin, controlled by China but claimed by India, and Arunachal Pradesh, administered by India but claimed by China.² The conflict's origins lie in colonial era boundary demarcations, including the McMahon Line, which China does not recognize. This poorly demarcated border, intersecting sensitive regions like Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tibet, has been a hotbed for stand-offs and clashes, culminating in the tragic Galwan Valley confrontation in June 2020, resulting in casualties on both sides 20 Indian and 38 Chinese soldiers.³

This dispute holds immense significance due to the geopolitical importance of the Himalayan region, acting as a strategic buffer and a resource-rich area. It impacts regional stability, India-China relations, and the balance of power in Asia. Additionally, the conflict influences global geopolitics, involving powers like the U.S. and Russia, while also shaping alliances like the Quad and BRICS. The dispute underscores broader challenges of sovereignty, nationalism, and emerging security paradigms in the 21st century.

Historical Context

The China-India border dispute traces back to the colonial era, with British India's ambiguous boundary demarcations fueling disagreements. The McMahon Line, drawn during the 1914 Simla Convention, placed Arunachal Pradesh under India, but China rejected its legitimacy.⁴ Competing territorial claims escalated into the 1962 Sino-Indian War, where China seized Aksai Chin, citing its strategic importance for Tibet-Xinjiang connectivity. Post-war, skirmishes continued, including the Doklam standoff and the Galwan Valley clash. Despite agreements like the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement, mistrust persists. Periodic negotiations have sought conflict management, but progress remains limited due to nationalism, strategic rivalry, and differing geopolitical priorities.⁵

Geopolitical and Strategic Importance of the Region

The disputed territories of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh hold significant geopolitical and strategic importance in the China-India border dispute. Aksai Chin, a high-altitude desert controlled by China but claimed by India, is crucial for China's connectivity between Tibet and Xinjiang, forming a key link in its internal security and infrastructure.⁶ Arunachal Pradesh, administered by India but claimed by China as "South Tibet," serves as a buffer region with strategic implications for both nations. The territory is resource-rich and holds cultural and historical significance, intensifying the conflict.⁷

The Himalayan frontier, which spans the disputed boundary, is vital for regional security. Its rugged terrain provides natural defenses but also complicates border management, making it a flashpoint for military confrontations. Control over the Himalayas ensures strategic depth and access to crucial waterways and trade routes, heightening its importance in regional geopolitics.⁸ Economically, the region intersects with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to enhance its connectivity and influence. India's counter development efforts, including

road and infrastructure projects, aim to secure its position and counterbalance China's influence. These strategic and economic stakes underscore the complexity of the territorial dispute, affecting regional stability and shaping the broader geopolitical landscape of Asia.⁹

Current Dynamics

Recent confrontations, such as the 2017 Doklam standoff and the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, highlight the volatility of the China-India border dispute. The Galwan Valley incident marked the deadliest skirmish in decades, with casualties on both sides, underscoring the fragile state of peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).¹⁰ Both nations have intensified military posturing, deploying troops, heavy weaponry, and surveillance technology to the border. China has built extensive infrastructure, including roads and airstrips in Tibet, while India has ramped up road and bridge construction in sensitive areas to strengthen connectivity and rapid troop deployment. Diplomatic efforts, including agreements like the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement and periodic bilateral dialogues, have sought to de-escalate tensions. However, these measures face limitations due to deep mistrust, differing interpretations of the LAC, and unresolved territorial claims. The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms perpetuates the cycle of confrontation and stalemates.¹¹

The Strategic and Geopolitical Dimensions of the India-China Rivalry

Beyond matters of sovereignty and nationalism, the border dispute intricately intertwines with geostrategic and geopolitical interests, reflecting the broader strategic competition between these rising powers. China's interest in strategic border locations stems from a desire to gain advantages in infrastructure, access, and control. Extensive investments in roads, railways, airports, dams, and communication networks along the border, particularly in Tibet, are integral to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).¹² These initiatives enhance not only China's economic and diplomatic influence but also its military and strategic capabilities. For instance, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key component of the BRI, passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), a territory that India claims as its own. China's infrastructure projects enable it to deploy and mobilize its troops and equipment faster and easier along the border and to project its power and presence in the region. China's infrastructure projects also enable it to access and exploit the natural resources and water sources in the border areas, which are vital for its development and security.¹³

A significant factor driving China's interest in these locations is its quest to counter and contain India's rise and influence. Recent resolutions of border disputes with Bhutan and support for Nepal underscore China's efforts in this direction. China perceives India as a potential threat, especially considering its strengthened ties with the US and other Indo-Pacific nations.¹⁴ Incursions into Indian Territory serve as a means to exert pressure on India, pressuring concessions on various fronts. For example, China has been demanding that India should not build infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh, which China considers as part of southern Tibet, and has unilaterally renamed some of its locations, such as mountain peaks, rivers and residential areas.¹⁵ China has also been opposing India's involvement in Afghanistan, where India has been providing development assistance and security cooperation. China's incursions and intrusions are also aimed at creating a perception of India as a weak and passive actor, and to

deter other countries from aligning with or supporting India.¹⁶

China's actions also function as a method to test and probe India's resolve and response. The Doklam standoff in 2017 and the Galwan clash in 2020 are testament to India's determination to resist Chinese pressure and defend its interests.¹⁷ Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar has articulated India's commitment to peace while firmly opposing China's unilateral attempts to alter the status quo in eastern Ladakh. He has also said that India and China have to find a new equilibrium in their relationship, as the old one based on the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi-Deng Xiaoping agreement has been disturbed by China's actions in Ladakh. India has also invested in improving its infrastructure and military preparedness along the border, and has deployed more troops and equipment to counter China's moves.¹⁸ India has also shown its willingness and readiness to stand up to China and to fight back against China, as evidenced by the Galwan clash, when India inflicted casualties on the Chinese side and prevented them from advancing further into the Indian territory. China's incursions and intrusions into the Indian territory are not isolated incidents but part of a coordinated effort to gain permanent control of disputed border areas, posing a severe challenge to India's security and sovereignty.¹⁹ Responding with a firm and effective strategy, India must strengthen infrastructure and military capabilities along the border, enhance strategic partnerships, and engage in dialogue with China to restore regional peace and stability.

Geostrategic Implications

The border dispute strains India-China relations, fostering mistrust and impeding cooperation. Frequent confrontations have overshadowed trade ties and diplomatic initiatives, creating a persistent security dilemma. The conflict undermines attempts at regional stability and mutual economic growth.²⁰ The dispute has driven India closer to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), aligning with the U.S., Japan, and Australia to counter China's assertiveness. Simultaneously, it complicates dynamics within BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where India and China are key members with diverging interests.

The U.S. views the conflict as an opportunity to strengthen ties with India, using it as a counterweight to China's rise. Russia, balancing partnerships with both nations, seeks to mediate while maintaining strategic neutrality, reflecting its delicate position in the evolving global order.²¹ The dispute disrupts trade, with India imposing restrictions on Chinese goods and investments. The conflict threatens supply chains, infrastructure projects, and cross-border economic initiatives, creating long-term economic challenges and increasing the cost of regional instability.²²

Despite the tensions, China exhibits no inclination towards war with India, there are reasons.

Firstly, both nations are nuclear powers, and a conflict could have catastrophic consequences, prompting the imperative for peaceful resolutions. **Secondly**, their formidable economies, valued trade relations, and shared challenges make war an undesirable prospect. China is one of India's biggest trading partners (\$135.98 billion in the year 2022), and a war could affect their supply chains, markets, and consumers.²³ **Thirdly**, both countries are also

facing domestic and regional challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hong Kong protests, the Taiwan issue, the Uyghur crisis, the US rivalry, the farmers' protests, the Kashmir issue, the Pakistan threat, and the economic slowdown. A war could divert their attention and resources from addressing these problems and create more instability and insecurity. Their active participation in multilateral platforms and initiatives, such as the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, underscores the commitment to dialogue and collaboration, crucial for stability and understanding between the two nations.²⁴

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that the China-India border dispute is deeply rooted in historical, geopolitical, and strategic complexities. Key findings highlight the persistent mistrust, the asymmetry in military and economic capabilities, and the influence of nationalism and domestic politics in perpetuating the conflict. Recent confrontations, such as the Galwan Valley clash, underscore the urgent need for conflict management. Pragmatic diplomacy and structured conflict resolution mechanisms are essential for mitigating tensions. Confidence-building measures, enhanced border management, and leveraging multilateral platforms like BRICS and the SCO can provide avenues for constructive dialogue. Promoting economic interdependence further aligns the interests of both nations toward mutual stability.

While challenges remain, prospects for future peace and cooperation exist if both nations prioritize a long-term strategic vision emphasizing coexistence, cultural understanding, and shared prosperity. Diplomatic avenues remain essential for resolving the complex dynamics surrounding the China-India border dispute and fostering stability in the region. China and India have a history of cooperation and coexistence, and they should not let their differences become disputes. They should also respect each other's sensitivities and concerns, and build mutual trust and confidence. As the two largest and fastest-growing economies in Asia, China and India have a responsibility to ensure peace and prosperity for themselves and the world.

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Reforms and Misinterpretations of *Talaq* and *Khula* in Islamic Jurisprudence: A Historical and Contemporary Analysis

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Abstract

In pre-Islamic Arabia, divorce laws were heavily skewed in favor of husbands, who could dissolve marriages at will, leaving wives in a precarious position. Islam brought transformative reforms, aiming to protect women's rights in divorce. However, the introduction of *Talaq-ul-Biddat* reintroduced challenges for modern Muslim women. Similarly, the law of *Khula*, which empowers women to initiate divorce, has been misunderstood and distorted over time.

This paper examines the evolution of Islamic divorce laws, tracing their historical roots and adaptations from pre-Islamic practices. It focuses on the procedural requirements, conditions, and consequences of *Talaq* (husband-initiated divorce) and *Khula* (wife-initiated divorce) within the Islamic legal framework, while highlighting their application in India. Emphasis is placed on aligning these practices with constitutional principles to ensure equity and justice. The study seeks to rationalize personal laws, fostering an understanding that harmonizes tradition with contemporary societal norms.

Keywords: *Talaq*, *Khula*, Ila, Zihar, Lian, Mubarat, Faskh, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019

Introduction

The practice of Instant Triple *Talaq* has been a contentious issue in India, sparking intense debate and scrutiny in recent years. One pivotal event in this discourse was the landmark case of *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*¹. This case highlighted the urgent need to address the implications of Instant Triple *Talaq* on the rights of Muslim women. The eventual ruling

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had far-reaching consequences, igniting significant discussions on gender justice and religious practices.

The core issue revolves around the widespread misunderstanding and misuse of Muslim law on *Talaq* by men. Although *Talaq* is sanctioned in Islam under specific conditions, its practice often diverges from the teachings of the Quran. This misunderstanding not only affects legal proceedings but also profoundly impacts the lives of those involved. Additionally, the law of *Khula*, which allows women to seek divorce in Islam, has been gravely misunderstood and distorted over the years. These distortions have led to a lack of clarity and equitable application of the law, particularly concerning women's rights in marital matters.

Understanding and addressing these misconceptions and distortions are crucial for promoting gender equality, justice, and fair legal practices within Muslim communities. By examining these issues, this paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic law and its application in contemporary contexts. The paper explores how these two practices (*Talaq* and *Khula*) have been rationalized in the recent past, shedding light on the legal perspectives that have influenced their treatment and interpretation.

Islamic Methods of Dissolution of Marriage

Several authors on Muslim law have classified the modes of dissolution of Muslim marriage differently. It can be dissolved either by the death of the husband or wife or by the act of the parties or by Judicial Process.² The author believes that Islam, in its approach to divorce, has not devised new methods but rather recognized and adopted existing methods that were prevalent in pre-Islamic societies. Islam acknowledges the diverse cultural and social practices that existed prior to its advent, and it has incorporated and refined these methods to ensure that they align with the principles of justice and compassion.

These methods are diverse, as they can be initiated by either the husband, the wife, or through mutual consent. When instigated by the husband, the practice of *Talaq* (repudiation) comes into play, further divided into *Talaq-ul-Sunnat*, including *Ahsan* (most approved) and *Hasan* (approved), and *Talaq-ul-Biddat*. Other avenues include *Ila* (vow of continence) and *Zihar* (injurious assimilation). On the wife's part, *Talaq-e-Tafwid* (delegated divorce) serves as a means of dissolution. Additionally, mutual consent provides two distinct methods: *Khula* (redemption) and *Mubarat* (mutual freeing).

Talaq (Divorce by the Husband)

In pre-Islamic Arabia, men had unlimited power to divorce their wives at will, often without any specific reason or regard for the consequences.³ There was a practice to divorce wife and then take her back several times so as to ill-treat her.⁴ This absolute authority led to severe injustices and instability in marital relationships. Islam introduced significant reforms to this practice by placing restrictions on the exercise of this right by men. *Talaq* could now only be exercised under specified conditions, ensuring a more just and measured approach. Furthermore, a man could pronounce *Talaq* only twice,⁵ with the opportunity for reconciliation after each pronouncement. After third pronouncement the man could not remarry the same woman, unless she had married and subsequently been divorced by another husband. This regulation aimed to prevent the frivolous and repeated use of *Talaq*, thereby promoting stability

and fairness in marriage.

Under Hanafi law, Islamic school of Jurisprudence majorly followed in India, there is no requirement for a specific form or phrase for the pronouncement of *Talaq*. It can be declared orally or in writing, using any words that clearly and unambiguously indicate the intention to dissolve the marriage. If the words are ambiguous, the intention must be proven.⁶ The presence of the wife is not mandatory, nor is it required to notify her. The *Talaq* takes effect from the time of its pronouncement, and it is valid under Sunni law even if pronounced in the absence of witnesses.⁷ However, Sunni and Shia laws differ on the requirement of witnesses. *Talaq* pronounced in absence of witnesses is valid under Sunni law but not under Shia law. Under Shia law valid *Talaq* can be pronounced only in the presence of proper witnesses. Certain conditions, such as the husband's sound mind and attainment of majority, are essential for a valid *Talaq*.⁸

Hanafi jurisprudence recognizes two forms of *Talaq*: *Talaq-e-Sunnat* and *Talaq-e-Bid'ah*. *Talaq-e-Sunnat* follows the manner provided by the Quran, which is revocable during the iddat period.⁹ In contrast, *Talaq-e-Bid'ah*, also known as Instant Triple *Talaq*, is an irrevocable form of divorce. A complete understanding of the Quranic law on *Talaq* requires studying chapters 2, 4, and 65 of the Holy Quran.

The Quran prescribes a specific procedure for divorce that must be followed.¹⁰ In the Ahsan form of *Talaq*, the husband makes a single pronouncement of divorce during a period of purity (tuhr) when the wife is not menstruating and has not had intercourse with her. The pronouncement remains revocable during the iddat period, which is three menstrual cycles, three months, or until delivery, depending on the circumstances. Revocation can be express or implied, such as through cohabitation. If the *Talaq* is revoked, the spouses can resume their marital relationship without remarrying. If not revoked, the *Talaq* becomes irrevocable after the iddat period.

The Hasan form of *Talaq*, also recognized by most Islamic schools except the Maliki school, involves pronouncing *Talaq* in three successive periods of tuhr. The first two pronouncements are revocable, but the third makes the divorce irrevocable. Under Maliki law, this form is considered *Talaq-e-Bid'ah*.

These procedures demonstrate that the right to divorce is not an absolute and unilateral right of the husband. It cannot be exercised arbitrarily or capriciously. The process allows for ample opportunities for reconciliation and provides time to reflect on the decision, with remedies suggested to avoid divorce as much as possible.

As for *Talaq-ul-Biddat*, *Biddat* means "innovation in religion". This form of *Talaq* was introduced by *Omeyyads* to escape the rigors of law.¹¹ As it is irrevocable, it is considered as disapproved mode of *Talaq*. This *Talaq* becomes effective as soon as it is pronounced, with no possibility of reconciliation. This is also called *Talaq-ul-bain* (irrevocable *Talaq*)¹². This mode of *Talaq* was never approved by the Prophet. It was for this reason this mode of *Talaq* was not in vogue in his lifetime.

Ever since its introduction by the *Omeyyads* in the second century of the Islamic-era, this mode of *Talaq* is in practice among the Sunni Muslims.¹³ It is to be noted that though

Sunni law recognizes this *biddat*, it is considered to be sinful. To be *Talaq-ul-biddat*, the three pronouncements must be made during a single *tuhr*; either in one sentence or in separate sentences. The pronouncement must indicate clearly the intention to dissolve the marriage irrevocably. He may use any formula to dissolve the marriage. *Talaq* may be given in writing also. Once *Talaq* takes place in this manner the parties cannot remarry without there being an intermediary marriage.¹⁴

Consent of the husband pronouncing *Talaq* must be free. However, under *Hanafi* law, *Talaq* given under compulsion, coercion, undue influence, fraud and voluntary intoxication is valid and dissolves the marriage. Other schools of Sunni law and Shia jurists consider the *Talaq* given under such circumstances as invalid. However, even under *Hanafi* law *Talaq* pronounced under forced or involuntary intoxication is void.¹⁵ *Talaq* pronounced in joke or jest is valid.

The basis for this *hanafi* rule is perhaps the following tradition of Prophet—

“There are three things which whether done in joke or earnest, shall be considered as serious and effectual; one, marriage, the second, divorce, and the third, taking back.”¹⁶

Several authors including Ameer Ali and Fyzee have criticized this rule. Fyzee strongly suggests for abolition of this rule. Except for in one situation, he finds this rule to be absurd and unjust.¹⁷ Quoting Fitzgerald he says that in Turkey under Sultans there was a well understood convention, where a wife who wished to get rid of his dissolute husband would go to a *Kazi* with two irreproachable witnesses and depose that he had divorced her when drunk, an allegation which he would not be in a position to deny. Abdur Rahim and Ameer Ali suggest that the courts in India should not apply *Hanafi* law; instead on grounds of equity they should apply *Shafii* law.¹⁸ While Fyzee says that the proper remedy would be to do away with this rule by way of statute.

Recent developments with regard to *Talaq*

The validity of this mode of *Talaq* has been questioned several times in the courts in India. In *Fazlur Rahman v. Mt. Aisha*¹⁹ it was argued that thus mode of divorce is against the Quranic law, opposed the traditions of Prophet and the court is not bound to give effect to this rule. The court relying upon *Hedaya* upheld *Talaq-ul-biddat*. It was held that the verses of Quran have been differently interpreted by the different schools. The Hon’ble Court found that *Talaq-ul-biddat* was in vogue for several centuries among Hanafi Muslim. The Court did not consider it appropriate to interfere with the interpretation for which there was consensus of opinion (*Ijma*) among large and influential sections of theologians. Reiterating the position of *Hedaya*, court also held that irrevocable *Talaq* pronounced even during menses period would be effective.

It has been policy of the courts in India to not supplant its interpretation of Muslim law for which there is clear consensus of theologians. But recently in the case of *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*²⁰ the Hon’ble Supreme Court testing this practice on the anvil of Constitution of India held it to be unconstitutional, arbitrary, and not an essential part of Islam. The court held that instant triple *Talaq* violated the fundamental rights of Muslim women, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. The judgment emphasized the need for gender justice

and equality in personal laws.

Based on the Court's findings, it can be argued that Triple *Talaq* was neither encouraged by the Prophet nor mentioned in the holy book, the Quran. Most Islamic countries had already abolished this practice, indicating that if it were an essential religious practice, it would have been stated in the Quran and not eradicated elsewhere. The Court not only declared triple *Talaq* as unconstitutional and illegal but also directed the government to take measures to reduce and prevent divorces based on this practice in the future. As a result, the government enacted the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which made the practice of *instant triple Talaq* void and a punishable offence.

Analysis of Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019

The Act²¹ addresses the issue of instantaneous and irrevocable divorce (*Talaq-e-biddat*) by Muslim husbands. It deems such declarations, in any form, void and illegal.²² It imposes imprisonment for up to three years and fines may also be imposed on husbands pronouncing *Talaq* by the Magistrate²³ and ensures that married Muslim women receive a subsistence allowance and custody of minor children in such situations.²⁴ The offense is cognizable, allowing legal action upon reporting by the affected woman or her relatives.²⁵ The act is compoundable, permitting settlement with the Magistrate's approval, and restricts bail unless reasonable grounds are found after consulting the affected woman.²⁶ Overall, the act aims to make *Talaq* illegal, punishable, and void while safeguarding the rights of married Muslim women.

While the Act may seek to remedy treacherous practice, it is not free from evil. Merely declaring triple *Talaq* void through legislation may not lead to immediate change, as it holds religious significance for some. A woman who has received a pronouncement of triple *Talaq* may consider it religiously prohibited (haram) to continue living with her husband, even if it is not recognized as a legal divorce. The complexity of the issue requires reforms within the conduct of the religious community. There are concerns that the Act might prompt husbands to abandon wives rather than pronounce triple *Talaq*, creating challenges for the women's reintegration into their families due to social stigmas. Also, when abandoned she cannot marry elsewhere.

Section 5 of the Act grants women subsistence allowance post-triple *Talaq*, but questions arise about its feasibility, particularly when the husband is imprisoned. While the Act allows women to seek separate maintenance proceedings, Section 4 imposes criminal penalties on husbands for what is primarily a civil matter. In Islam, marriage is a contract, and breaches should not attract criminal sanctions unless all civil remedies are exhausted.

In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India*²⁷ it was established that criminalization should not occur when the offense is groundless. Since instant triple *Talaq* is void by law, imprisonment may not be warranted. Additionally, the prescribed three-year punishment, comparable to severe offenses like sedition, appears disproportionate.

Lastly, post-2019 rise in *Khula* cases may indicate coercion on women.²⁸ Addressing triple *Talaq* demands a holistic approach, combining legal reforms with societal initiatives. Educating women, fostering financial independence, and enhancing outreach through government initiatives are essential for their empowerment and well-being.

Khula (Divorce Initiated by the Wife)

Muslim law allows for dissolution of marriage by mutual consent. Any prior agreement or delegation of authority is not needed for dissolution by mutual consent. It is one peculiar feature of Muslim law. Prior to Islamic law the wife had no right to ask for divorce. Quran provided for this form of relief. The dissolution by mutual consent can take place in either of the two forms: *Khula* and *Mubarat*.

The holy Quran by way of injunction provided for *Khula*-

“If you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. There is no blame on them for what she gives to become free thereby.”²⁹

The *Fatawa Alamgiri* lays down that ‘when married parties disagree and are apprehensive that they cannot observe the bounds prescribed by the divine laws, that is, cannot perform the duties imposed on them by the conjugal relationship, the woman can release herself from the tie by giving up some property in return in consideration of which husband is to give her a *Khula*, and when they have done this a *talak-ul-bain* would take place.’³⁰ In the case of *Moonshee Buzul-Raheem v. Luteefoon-Nissa*,³¹ *Khula* is described as divorce initiated by the wife, who offers compensation to the husband for her release from the marriage. *Khula* is in fact a right of divorce purchased by the wife from her husband.³²

Islamic principles value the happiness of spouses and do not compel them to endure an unhappy marriage merely for the sake of preserving the sanctity of marriage. The Quran encourages the settlement of disputes through mediation of a reconciliation committee comprising representatives from both families, in order to achieve peace and reconciliation.³³

The case of Jamilah and Burairah illustrates how women could seek *Khula* if dissatisfied with their marriage, and even the Prophet’s intervention could not change their decision.³⁴ The judgments made by the Prophet and the Caliphs suggest that the husband’s will does not solely determine the outcome of a *Khula* case.³⁵ *Traditions*, show that the Prophet dissolved their marriages at the request of the wives, even though the husbands were willing to fulfill their obligations under the law. These cases also demonstrate that *Khula* was granted without causing undue hardship to the wife.

Over time, women’s rights in *Khula* have been curtailed. According to Abdur Rahman’s *Institute of Mussulman Law*, *Khula* is a legal act of emancipation that takes place by mutual consent on a consideration paid, but it is not mandatory, and the court cannot award separation against the husband’s consent. The definitions and opinions of *Khula* by jurists are often misleading as they wrongly suggest that it is an act of the husband. They classify *Khula* into two categories: one effective by mutual agreement between the parties and the other by the order of the Qazi or courts. The Quran uses specific words in verse 2:229 for dissolution of marriage under Qazi. *Khula* by mutual agreement is held to be valid, although it does not strictly fall within the verse’s jurisdiction and terms. The jurists have deduced the principle justifying *Khula* by mutual agreement through reasoning and deduction from the Quran’s words. However, this concept should not be confused with *Khula* under the order of the Qazi, which is explicitly covered by the Quranic verse.³⁶

According to Holy Qur’an 2:229,

“Then if ye (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by Allah; so do not transgress them, if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such person wrong (themselves as well as others).”³⁷

It is important to emphasize that the wife has an unconditional (absolute) right to *Khula* and no one can prohibit her from utilizing this right.

So, if the husband does not consent to wife’s request, she can file a case in court without having to establish specific grounds for divorce. The court or Qazi may grant *Khula* based on the precedent of cases like *Burairah*, where a wife sought *Khula*, returned her mahr (dower), and obtained the divorce. However, as *Khula* is initiated by the wife and not by the husband, she may not be entitled to maintenance during the Iddat period unless she is pregnant.³⁸ During this period, she may not be entitled to clothing, but she has a right to accommodation. However, she may choose to waive any of these entitlements if she wishes to seek *Khula*.³⁹ It should be noted that the rules regarding *Khula* and the entitlements during Iddat may vary in different schools of Islamic law and in different jurisdictions.

Typically, as part of the *Khula* process, the wife relinquishes her claim to the dower as compensation. This compensation may be immediate or postponed to a future date. The mahr or dowry need not be returned immediately and can be paid in installments or through alternative arrangements,⁴⁰ recognizing the financial circumstances of both parties and ensuring fairness in the dissolution of the marriage.

In the *Khula* process, the marriage is dissolved as soon as the proposal is accepted, even if the payment of compensation has been postponed. Therefore, if the wife fails to pay the compensation to the husband, the divorce is still valid. In such situations, the husband may take legal action against the wife to recover the amount owed.⁴¹

Unfortunately, the law of the *Khula* has been gravely misunderstood and distorted over the years. In *K.C. Moyin v. Nafeesa* it was held that Muslim women have lost their right to invoke extra-judicial divorce after the coming into force of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 as they could seek divorce only under the Act. But recently, the Kerala High Court⁴² has remedied this wrong. It was contended before court that while a Muslim woman had the right to seek divorce on her own will, her pronouncement of *Khula* was not an absolute right, as it depended on the husband’s acceptance or will. Rejecting the argument court held that *Khula* is a form of unilateral divorce available to a woman under Islamic law, and she has a right to seek it without the husband’s consent. The court further rejected the argument that they should approach the court if the husband refuses consent.

The court clarified that when a woman approaches the court in such a situation, the court is not required to adjudicate or determine the status, but simply has to pronounce the termination of the marriage on behalf of the wife. The court emphasized that *Khula* has been recognized as a form of divorce based on a no-fault basis. Therefore, the court concluded that the residuary ground referred to in Section 2(ix) of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 cannot be equated with *Khula*. The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act only allows for the dissolution of marriage at the request of Muslim women based on fault grounds, the

court stated.

Conclusion

The Islam, in its approach to divorce, has not devised new methods but rather recognized and adopted existing methods that were prevalent in pre-Islamic societies. It has incorporated and refined these methods to ensure that they align with the principles of justice and compassion. By recognizing and adopting these pre-existing methods, Islam demonstrates its ability to adapt and bring about a more just and equitable approach to divorce.

Under the reforms, the husband was allowed to pronounce *Talaq* upon his wife for maximum three times, but in distinct periods during which attempts at reconciliation could take place. Only if all efforts at reconciliation failed, the final separation would become effective. This mechanism sought to provide opportunities for reconciliation and avoid impulsive divorces.

Importantly, the Prophet Mohammad aimed to curtail the unlimited power of divorce held by husbands and granted women the right to seek separation on reasonable grounds. But unfortunately, *Talaq-ul-Biddat* was introduced into law. It with its instantaneous nature and unilateral pronouncement, became a matter of concern as it deviated from the intended spirit of Islamic law. The Supreme Court of India's ruling in *Shayara Bano v. Union of India* (2017), declaring triple *Talaq* unconstitutional, was not only a significant legal development but also an acknowledgment of the need to align divorce practices with the core tenets of Islam. The subsequent enactment of the Triple *Talaq* Act further reinforced this alignment by encouraging alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution, as advocated by Islamic principles.

As regards *Khula* it is established that it is an alternative to the unilateral power of divorce traditionally held by husbands, allowing women to seek dissolution of the marriage through a legal process and judicial intervention. It gives women the opportunity to assert their rights and make independent decisions regarding their marital status. Recent Kerala High court ruling that a Muslim woman has the right to obtain *Khula* even if her husband does not consent to it, reaffirms it as a form of unilateral divorce available to women under Islamic law. *Khula* is acknowledged as a form of divorce that operates on a no-fault basis.

These judgements have brought significant advancements in aligning the law of *Talaq* and *Khula* with Quranic injunctions and principles within the Indian context. These judgments have recognized and affirmed the independent right of women in Islam to dissolve their marriages, emphasizing their agency, autonomy, and the principles of justice and gender equality enshrined in Islamic teachings. By empowering women with the ability to seek divorce on no-fault grounds and ensuring proper legal procedures, these judgments have fostered a more equitable and just approach to marital dissolution. They have sought to establish equal footing for both Muslim men and women in terms of their rights and options in the context of divorce. The reforms and adaptations within Islamic jurisprudence aim to ensure fairness, justice, and gender equality within the framework of marriage dissolution.

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Canada's Leadership in Global Health Security: Exploring its Role as a Middle Power

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Abstract

Being a traditional middle power country Canada has some niche areas where it has focused to address the most concerning problem of the world. Global health had been a key priority area in Canadian foreign policy, which could be theoretically linked to its global position as a middle power based on liberal internationalism and looking at the security from the perspective of non-traditional lens. This role that Canada has played in addressing global health concerns also reflects its standing as a good global citizenship. This has been established how Canada treats health as a matter of high politics which is majorly concerned with national security. Its contributions in programmes related to health in Latin America as well as Africa through official development assistance highlights its standing as a serious player in the immediate neighbourhood as well as globally which could also be understood through Bary Buzan's regional security complex theory.

Keywords: Health Security, Canada, Foreign Policy, Middle Power, Liberal Internationalism, Leadership

Introduction

Global health issues remain a significant priority in international politics, despite the rise of populist politics and budgetary austerity in some regions, leading many global health specialists to fear that health may diminish in importance within this framework. Countries like Canada, the United States have renewed their commitment to addressing outbreaks of infectious illnesses through global cooperation networks.¹

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Canada which has mostly sought to be a socially progressive force, punching above its weight to be and exerting influence disproportionate to its financial and military resources. Leaders in Canada have been prominent and respected contributors to global health research, practice, and diplomacy for decades.² At times, however, the tendency to give primacy to consensus building, inclusion and equity has led to a lack of decisiveness and timely strategic action. Conversely, when Canada has stayed from progressive social values, and economic self-interest has been prioritised in foreign policy, the country's perceived leadership in the global health community has diminished.³ However, the leadership in Canada has always kept global health as one of the key priority areas in its foreign policy irrespective of Conservatives or Liberals in power. Despite these, Canada's efforts have been criticised due to it being irregular and at times uncoordinated and unserious. The Canadian federal government has a clear chance to turn its pledges to fairness and global citizenship into more powerful leadership on the international scene in the face of growing nationalism and scepticism about multilateral commitments made by some of the world's great powers.

Theoretical understanding of global health security and Canada's role

The notion of security has various meaning attached to it such as 'a state of being without threat' i.e., absolute or definitive security and 'the elimination of threats.' It could be analysed at different levels such as regular day-to-day at individual level (health, economic, environment, safety); safety for favourable circumstances (political, freedom, rule of law) and against hostile conditions and threats (crime, violence, war).⁴ The most appropriate definition for security for the paper is derived from the Copenhagen school which suggests broadening the range of relevant threats to include the military, the political, the economic and the societal and the environmental sector. The Regional Security Complex Theory given by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver emphasised that a regional security complex is a group of states whose primary national security concerns are so closely intertwined together that they cannot be addressed independently of each other.⁵ This provides us as a base in understanding that Canada's efforts in improving the global health security system emanates from its linkages with its own security. Whether it is the Americas or the countries in Africa and Asia, Canada through its Official Development Assistance has tried to address the health security concerns.

Securitisation has been extensively utilised in global health, particularly concerning the governance of infectious diseases⁶, facilitating the expansion of the security agenda to incorporate non-traditional security threats, such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), into foreign policy discussions. The securitisation of health challenges, characterised by the deliberate employment of security terminology, has enabled the acquisition of supplementary finances and resources to combat health dangers that might not have been attainable otherwise.⁷

Emergence of Canada as Middle Power

The history of diversity and nation building has, in turn, defined Canadian foreign policy. At the end of WW II, Canada emerged as a middle power i.e., countries that are defined by moderate military and economic resources as compared with major powers such as US, UK, Russia, etc. but with a potential to wield considerable political influence.⁸ Middle powers achieve such impact by forming alliances, promoting shared norms, working cooperatively through multilateral channels, and engaging in diplomatic solutions. Although conducting foreign

policy in this way can be more restrictive than unilateral action, but in return, middle powers can exert great influence on health and other global concerns than their material sources would allow. Despite occupying the world's largest national territory, Canada's economic and military resources are overshadowed by its southern neighbour, which gives multilateralism and liberal internationalism greater strategic importance for Canada.⁹

Liberal Internationalism and Canada's foreign policy: a juncture of health security policies

Liberal internationalism has been the prevailing framework for elucidating Canada's foreign policy behaviour and remains deeply entrenched, notwithstanding the Harper administration's shift towards a more overtly interest-driven and somewhat isolationist foreign policy¹⁰. Liberal internationalists contend that Canada's external state behaviour mirrors the democratic and egalitarian values, as well as the cultural norms, prevalent in Canadian society. They perceive global health interventions as a rational extension of humanitarian concerns in a world characterised by persistent wealth and social inequalities.¹¹ Are Canadians still liberal internationalists? Foreign policy and public opinion in the Liberal internationalism perceives non-state actors as possessing a substantial role in foreign policy processes. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are regarded as progressively significant influencers of Canadian foreign policy, with their involvement in policy formulation historically viewed as a mechanism of democratisation¹². The international literature on health diplomacy thus recognises the impact of policy advocacy networks and non-state actors in integrating health issues into foreign policy discussions¹³. Canadian NGOs played a pivotal role in garnering governmental support during the negotiation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by fostering a global epistemic community in which members facilitated each other's engagement with the foreign policy apparatus¹⁴.

Safeguarding Health: Analysing Canada's Contribution in Global Security

When Canada's role in Afghanistan changed from peacekeeping to active combat, many in the country were forced to re-examine this question. This transition of the mission was motivated by several factors including a commitment to improve the lives of the people of Afghanistan and to protect the security of Canadians by tackling terror threats at their source.¹⁵ The mission was however proved controversial. The human cost combined with a lack of sense of progress and concern about whether this is the appropriate role for Canada, contributed to this unease.¹⁶ Canada as a wealthy nation does have a responsibility to contribute to efforts to improve international security and by particularly when doing so will provide protection to Canadians at home. However, Canada could choose a different policy course, one less controversial and more consistent with Canada's traditional role as a middle power, that would achieve the same objectives.¹⁷

It is increasingly evident that serious threats to collective security comes not from individuals but also from communicable diseases. These new infectious threats are constantly arising and challenging human systems. Irrespective of their origin, these threats or diseases not only affect the health of those in the countries which they arise but are increasingly like to spread across border as evident by the spread of COVID-19. The outbreak of Covid19 made evident

to Canada, failures to control these emergencies as they arise abroad could have catastrophic consequences for Canadians and it also reminds us of our collective vulnerabilities to such threats.¹⁸

The WHO defines the global health security as “the activities required to minimise the dangers and impact of acute public health events that endanger the collective health of populations living across geographical regions and international boundaries.”¹⁹ In this context, Canada is doing its best through its public health system to deliver appropriate and evidence-based response measures to tackle global public health threats. Canadian approaches to health policy, at home and abroad, reflects its particular history based on the values of equity and universality. Canada’s publicly funded, but largely privately delivered, health-care system straddles social and private medicine.²⁰ Abroad, Canada’s approach has mainly been to promote global health through multilateral cooperation, alliance building and collective actions. In advancing global health and equity, Canada’s strategies have been fuelled by its long-standing commitments to multilateralism and global citizenship.²¹

Canada’s National Security Policy

When the Canadian government announced its first (and, as it turns out, last) national security policy in April 2004, the SARS outbreak of 2003 was still fresh in their minds. Then-Prime Minister, Paul Martin’s covering letter for “*Securing an Open Society*”²² observed that:

“The recent SARS outbreak and the 2003 electrical blackout showed how our interconnectedness to events originating elsewhere can have a major impact on the health and economic well-being of Canadians.”

The 2004 National Security Policy, long forgotten, suddenly looks prescient in its efforts to establish public health as a basic national security necessity, to treat global pandemics as a national security danger, and to build long-term response capabilities. The policy identified global pandemics as one of the eight principal threat vectors impacting Canada. Terrorism ranked first, while global pandemics occupied the eighth position. But at least it was on the list and the policy allocated an entire chapter to public health emergencies.²³

According to the chapter on “Public Health Emergencies,” the federal government was determined to address pandemic threats in a different way. This included overcoming jurisdictional gaps between various governmental levels, developing a new governance model, strengthening public health capabilities, taking lessons from the past, and incorporating the concept of public health protection into the national security canon. The policy included a bold promise: “*Going forward, the Government intends to take all necessary measures to fully integrate its approach to public health emergencies with its national security agenda ... the public health dimension will figure strongly in the Government’s integrated threat assessments ...*”²⁴

In the aftermath of 2004 declaration of national Health Policy there had been few outcomes that had been carried forward in the ensuing years. Two significant events occurred. The ‘Public Health Agency of Canada’ was established, appointing a chief public health officer and a designated minister. The former Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response

was incorporated into the new organization. In the Budget 2004, the government allocated \$665 million to enhance public health preparedness.²⁵

Certain pledged projects have yielded results that are challenging to quantify. The policy addressed the establishment of a 'Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN).' The GPHIN mission statement asserts that it serves as "an essential source of early warning for potential global public health threats, encompassing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear hazards."²⁶ The G7-established 'Global Health Security Initiative,' for which Canada provides the secretariat, also exists. The GHSI was established to enhance public health preparedness and response. Canada led an action group aimed at establishing a network of important authorities tasked with formulating and executing specific measures to enhance global health security.²⁷

The policy established the formation of an intelligence fusion centre initially designated as the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC), located at CSIS. Although the original intent was for ITAC to conduct comprehensive threat assessments, including those related to global pandemics, it lacked the necessary resources, expertise, and stature within the Canadian intelligence community to achieve this objective. Consequently, the initiative waned. The Canadian military seemingly lacks an equivalent to the U.S. National Center for Medical Intelligence, which operates under their Defense Intelligence Agency.²⁸ The Public Health Agency of Canada, the federal government's hub for scientific expertise on global pandemics, possesses a modest intelligence unit that grants access to classified information.

Canada's Pioneering Role in advancing Global Health through Development Assistance (Pre-COVID Era)

The start of the long-standing leadership by Canada in global health security and development assistance for health started in 1948 when Canadian doctor Brock Chisholm was elected the first Director-General of the newly established WHO. Many Canadian occupied prominent roles in health developments over ensuing decades. In a landmark report, 'Partners in Development,' prepared by Lester Pearson, urged high income countries to increase overall official development aid (all forms of aid development) to 0.7% of their gross national income by 1975.²⁹ Achieving recognition of this target epitomised the capacity of Canadians to use a middle-power voice to foster new norms. Despite Canadian championing of the benchmark, Canada's own ODA commitments have lagged behind those of other countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) including middle powers such as Sweden. However, Canadian Development Assistance for Health (DAH) have risen particularly in recent decades. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), Canada's overall DAH increased by more than seven times from \$168mn in 1997 to \$1.25bn in 2016. Canada's overall share of global DAH increased from approximately 1.35% to 2.58% during this period. By 2015, Canada was placed third among G7 countries in terms of DAH as a percentage of gross national income (0.058%) behind the UK, and the USA. Canada's allocation of DAH is consistent with its historical emphasis on multiculturalism: in 2016, more than 41.0% of Canada's DAH flowed through multilateral channels i.e., development banks, Gavi, Global Funds to Fight AIDS, and UN bodies whereas 34.7% of all global health financing overall was channelled

through multilateral mechanisms.³⁰

Health Equity in Action: How Research Drives Policy and Practice

A long-standing theme in Canadian approaches to global health has been promotion of health equity. This has been pursued through the middle-power behaviours of collective action, leadership on non-traditional security issues and promotion of human rights norms. Health equity is concerned with disparities in health that are systematic, avoidable, and unfair; that is where differences in health have social, economic or political causes as opposed to biological causes.³¹

Canada has used research as a strategy for the promotion of equity. This priority is exemplified by Canada's health research funding structures including the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). IDRC is respected worldwide for its approach to funding low-income and middle-income country (LMIC) researchers in 150 countries with sustained emphasis on capacity building.³²

The independent Commission on Health Research in Development was co-founded by IDRC and chaired by Canadian John R. Evans. In 1990, the Commission's report initiated a significant discussion on health equity by revealing that merely 5% of funds (US\$30 billion in 1986) were allocated to research focused on issues faced by poor countries, whose populations experienced 93% of the global burden of preventable disease.³³ The Commission identified inequitable funding and fragmented international efforts, leading the WHO to adopt a resolution at the 43rd World Health Assembly. This resolution advocates for increased funding and improved coordination to assist researchers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in conducting essential national health research. Although Canadians led the Commission, the Canadian Government exhibited a delayed response to the recommendations.³² Since 2000, funding for global health by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the primary federal funder of health research in Canada, has risen from under CAN\$3 million to over CAN\$30 million.³⁴

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) distinguishes itself from other national health research funders by considering global health research as integral to its mission of enhancing the health of Canadians, grounded in the principle that a healthy population cannot exist in an unhealthy world.

Navigating the Pandemic: Canada's Role as a Public Health Leader During COVID-19

The COVID19 pandemic is a global threat that doesn't recognise borders, and it could be overcome only through coordinated global actions. Canada is committed to a robust global effort to stop the spread of the virus and address its devastating health, social, economic and security impacts on people around the world. The Canadian government has been working with international partners, provinces and other stakeholders since the outbreak of the pandemic.³⁵ The **Public Health System of Canada** has been working with various international partners including WHO. This commitment with high level intersectoral collaboration has resulted in dedicated funding of \$52.6 million for 96 research teams to conduct research with collaborating institutions in Africa and Asia to study and enhance the

clinical and public health responses and to improve global health security.³⁶ The Canadian government has engaged in global health diplomacy with G7 finance ministers, multilateral organisations such as WHO, international health regulators such as USFDA and European Medicines Agency and bilateral partners at multiple levels to mobilise the resources for containing the pandemic.

Canada has mobilised more than \$2.5bn in international assistance in response to the COVID19 pandemic³⁷, which includes:

- \$1.3bn for the Access to Covid19 tools (ACT) accelerator, this critical partnership ensures equitable access to Covid19 tests, treatments and vaccines.
- Over \$740mn in funding for humanitarian and development assistance to respond to the urgent needs stemming from the Covid19 pandemic.
- \$541mn to adapt existing funding arrangements with partners to ensure their activities are able to address urgent needs in developing countries resulting from the pandemic.

In addition, in April 2020 Canada extended a \$1bn loan to IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust in relation to Covid19 pandemic. Since May 2020 Canada has also provided more than \$70mn in temporary debt service relief for the poorest countries through the G20 and Paris Club agreed Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI).³⁸

Canada's contribution in the Multilateral Organisations

Canada has been addressing the global health security through its active participation and contributions to the multilateral institutions such as WHO and PAHO. Canada's commitment to these organisations reflects its middle powermanship and liberal internationalists values.

World Health Organisation

Canada is dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all of their diversity, and it works with WHO to achieve these goals through its 'Feminist International Assistance Policy.' This includes implementing equity-based strategies to improve basic healthcare, strengthen health systems, and close disparities in sexual and reproductive health and rights. Canada is a fervent supporter of these causes in WHO governing bodies.

In the year 2020–2021, Canada is the eighth largest overall donor to WHO and the fifth largest Member State, with a total contribution of US\$ 212 million. Canada has given more than Can\$ 900 million to WHO over the past ten years in support of global health priorities, such as the COVID-19 response and the eradication of polio. In addition to providing more than Can\$30 million to WHO to support 10 target countries in delivering critical health services and bolstering primary health care in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery, Canada also contributed Can\$100 million to WHO in support of the Health Systems & Response Connector. Additionally, Canada contributed \$15 million to fund WHO's COVID-19 Strategic Preparation and Response Plan, which was centred on the Africa Region.³⁹

Pan-American Health Organisation

In addition to acting as the WHO Regional Office for the Americas, PAHO is the specialised health specific agency of Organisation of American States (OAS). PAHO is the main regional organization capable of mobilizing and coordinating hemispheric action on regional

health challenges, especially public health hazards, because of its high convening power and hemispheric membership.

Since 1971, Canada has been a member of PAHO. Canada has a significant chance to further its goals for general health through its involvement with PAHO. Canada is the second largest contributor of assessed contributions to PAHO and in 2022 the Canadian government announced a \$15 million Canadian dollar contribution (equivalent to US\$ 11.2 million) towards a Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) initiative to increase vaccine production capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴⁰ For Canada, engaging with the PAHO represents its objective to advance Canada's foreign policy and promote Canadian values through global health diplomacy while recognising that positive health outcomes in the region contribute to the economic growth. It has close ties to trade, political stability, economic expansion, human rights, and the environment. It is also commonly acknowledged that security, social progress, and economic prosperity all depend on a healthy populace.

Global Health Security Initiative and Global Health Security Agenda

Canada has taken part in numerous noteworthy international health security efforts. In an effort to improve the global response to pandemic infectious diseases and possible threats from biological, chemical, and radiological terrorism, Canada, along with seven other countries, established an informal partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001. One direct outcome of these efforts was the establishment of the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI). The GHSI is still in operation as a collaborative effort to improve international readiness for and response to bioterrorism and pandemics.⁴¹

In a similar vein, Canada played a key role in advancing the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa), an international project spearheaded by the US that supports the development of health security capability in order to enhance biosecurity and biosafety. The Global Health Security Alliance (GHSa) facilitates cooperation between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and 65 countries to improve global readiness against health threats such as antibiotic resistance and bioterrorism. By strengthening medical countermeasures, such as people deployment capabilities, it seeks to advance biosafety. Canada concluded its tenure on the GHSa's inaugural steering group.

Conclusion

As articulated by Prime Minister Trudeau in his September 2017 address to the UN General Assembly, Canada is a work in progress. This statement emphasizes Canada's ongoing efforts to fulfil its global commitments and to function as an effective global citizen. The emergence of populist support in the USA and Europe for unilateral interest pursuits currently jeopardizes collective global action to address shared health needs. With its continuous nation-building experiences and beneficial collaborative engagements in global affairs as a middle power, Canada is now well positioned to establish bold, strategic, and essential leadership in global health.

Canada's health interests are more effectively advanced through collaborative efforts to enhance health system resilience, implement sound health policies, and bolster health workforce capacity globally. This collective initiative entails Canada complying with and encouraging

others to endorse the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, the International Health Regulations, development aid commitments, and other international duties. Furthermore, Canada ought to persist in advocating for the social determinants of health framework, which emphasizes the alleviation of poverty and health disparities, while also guaranteeing fundamental necessities as a method to combat health inequalities. The escalation of fractious politics globally has fostered notions of Canada as a “beacon light,” reinforcing the remarks of former US President Barack Obama that “the world needs more Canada.”

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Domestic Realms and Gender Dynamics: Women in Medieval Bengali Families

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Introduction

The social fabric of medieval Bengal was intricately woven with patriarchal threads, shaping the roles and identities of women within the family and society at large. Rooted in religious injunctions and societal customs, women's lives were governed by rigid norms that defined their duties, relationships, and autonomy. This patriarchal framework not only dictated family dynamics but also reinforced systemic practices such as polygamy, child marriage, dowry, and the marginalization of widows, each of which left a profound imprint on women's lived experiences. By examining these practices and their portrayal in literary and historical sources, this study delves into the multifaceted challenges women faced within the family setup of medieval Bengal, illuminating the intersection of cultural traditions and gender inequality.

Polygamy System

In the history of the development of women also came certain intersecting paradoxical situations, which though they never wanted in life but had accepted under forced circumstances. The commentators of the smritis have laid down several injunctions that put more and more restrictions on the freedom of women in early medieval times.¹ The frequent occurrences of polygamy and sati show the helplessness of women. In marriage, the woman was used as a playing card only, so she also had no right to raise her voice in bringing another woman into

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the home, whether it was in the garb of political alliance, war trophies, or something else.²

Polygamy was not uncommon in medieval Bengal.³ Polygamy and debauchery were a feature in the upper-class people.⁴ With polygyny being widely accepted without any moral condemnation. However, being married to a polygynous husband was seen as an unfortunate circumstance for a woman, although the possibility of amicable relationships among co-wives was not entirely ruled out. Typically, a polygynous marriage was considered desirable from the perspective of the bride's family, especially if the groom belonged to a highly esteemed social group (*kula*), which contributed to the increase in Kulin polygyny.⁵ Among the ruling classes, both formal and informal polygyny seemed to be commonplace, and any disapproval was rooted in concerns about neglecting the responsibilities associated with political authority for personal pleasure. That polygyny was relatively common among wealthier Muslims, and it is unclear whether marrying a polygynous husband was perceived as a misfortune for Muslim women.⁶

An ideal husband was that person who loved his wives equally without showing any kind of partiality. Though, polygamy was practiced, presumably by the royal families, the well-to-do classes, and the Brahmins. From the writings of *Jimutavahana*, it seems that the husband who desired to marry a second wife sometimes used to give the first wife valuable gifts to get her assent. *Jimutavahana* lays down that if the husband, having taken the property of his wife, lives with another wife and neglects her, he shall be compelled to restore the property of the first wife which he might have taken in times.⁷

In practice, however, polygamy often prevailed in the rich and ruling sections of the society. They probably regarded plurality of wives as a proof of their wealth, reputation and social position. Moreover, the system of Kulinism also encouraged polygamy. According to the rules of the system a Kulin girl should get married to a Kulin boy. But the dearth of a Kulin boy as well as poor economic condition of the parents often compelled them to give their daughters in marriage to a polygamous husband.⁸ Occasional references to polygamy among the ordinary classes are to be found in the literary products of the period. The reason behind was the great anxiety felt for the continuity of the family. For offering the prescribed oblations to ancestors so as to secure their continuance in heaven, a son was absolutely necessary and so society permitted the husband to take a second wife, if the first one was barren.⁹

Polygamy leads to the question of relationship between the co-wives. The Mangal Kavyas of the period show there was hardly any friendly relation between them. Lahana and Khullana episode in Chandimangal clearly indicates that jealousies and quarrels persisted among them.¹⁰ Vaishnava literature on the other hand shows that there was a friendly relation between the co-wives. Sometimes two sisters were married to one person. Interestingly Mangal Kavyas also narrates the tone of the treatment which was meted out to the daughter -in-law by their mother -in-Law.¹¹

In the scenario where a man is considering marrying a second wife, he is portrayed as being eager to comfort his first wife's emotions. In the case of a husband facing financial hardship and unable to adequately support his family, he patiently tolerates his wife's continuous stream of grievances and criticisms.¹²

The household of the polygamist's family was also the proverbial home of trouble. Aided

by intelligent handmaidens, the god of quarrels reigned supreme here, and the possibility of free fights and fisticuffs in the mutual relations of the co-wives was by no means excluded. Relations between co-wives were in some cases quite happy, and generous elders, while advising maid-servants (for whom sharing a house was a source of both pleasure and profit) and kindness and care towards younger co-wives. But such cases were rare and competition for the husband's affection with the help of powerful charms and magical formulas was the general rule in a polygamous home. Consequently, it was not surprising that a girl marrying into such a family was frequently deemed to be in a difficult situation.¹³

Perhaps procreation was the real purpose of marriage. Because the sorrowful Bengali Hindu wanted to be saved from hell after death, for this he needed a son. Manu says very clearly, '*putrarthē kriyate varya prajnarthang mahabhaga.*' This belief prevalent in Bengali society comes directly from the poets¹⁴,

*Ar Joto Upachar,
Putro Binu Andhakar,
Naroke Nahik Porittrata.*

In situations where a man's desires were not met by his first wife, he had the option to consider taking a second wife. This theme is also found in Manik Dutt's "*Chandimangal*"¹⁵.

*Raja Bole Shunoh Lokkher Sdagor,
Ditio Bibaho Kori Banso Rokkha Kor.*

In a patriarchal society, women often become victims of various inequalities. Men create rules for polygamy to fulfill their desires, enjoying conjugal rights over multiple spouses. While society may accept men's polygamous relationships, women's polyandry is looked down upon. For a man, having multiple wives is seen as a sign of masculinity, but for a woman, it can be seen as an affront to her femininity, leading to jealousy and resentment towards her husband's other spouses¹⁶,

*Amar Pranonath
Baadh Sodar he,
Abe se Gela Chare Khare.
Ghorete Nahiko Baht
Kaminir Boro Sadh,
Poronari Anicho Mondire.*

In the life of Kalketu Phullora, the arrival of Chandee as the third person has thrown their relationships into turmoil. Dhanpati had two wives, Lohana and Khulna, both of whom were caught in the web of a polygamous tradition among Bengali men. Alongside them, there were two more anguished women Rombhabati, Khulna's mother, and Sushila, the daughter of a nobleman. Their dissent, agony, and opposition were against the practice of polygamy that lay at the heart of the male-dominated society. In a patriarchal society, women's opinions were not heeded.¹⁷ In the context of polygamy, women were often regarded primarily as commodities for a man's satisfaction, with their value assessed based on physical attributes rather than emotional connections. Within family dynamics, women encountered varying degrees of discrimination, at times being treated as mere possessions and at other times

forming nurturing bonds with their daughters.¹⁸

Monogamy

Monogamy was normal practice.¹⁹ In most social groups, the prevailing marital norm was monogamy.²⁰ Monogamy was most probably the ordinary custom and, in the society, there was the ideal of a peaceful family life with a single wife.²¹

Pati Ninda/Jamai Ninda (Husband Criticize)

Pati-Ninda as a genre is common in all medieval Bengali narrative poems. In a gathering whenever the hero enters, “after admiring the young stranger’s looks, one of the women tells her companions that she is miserable because of her husband’s failings which she then proceeds to describe in a couplet or so.”²² Then a second woman starts, and one by one the women unhappy for their own reasons criticize their husbands. Young women are unhappy because their husbands are old, feeble, ugly, sick, hunchbacked, lame, blind, deaf, toothless, and without sex.²³

Pati Ninda by a wife was a common casual affair in medieval society. ‘Female *Pati Ninda*’ was more or less observed in all high and low societies of that time. If a man is addicted to another woman, it does not matter; many times women doubted the character of their husbands without any evidence - such information is found in Bengali *mangalkavyas*. Similarly, it is also known that the wife is subjected to torture by the husband. Reprimanded by the Phullaras for the crime of bringing a beautiful woman from the forest, the enraged Kalketu ruled that if the matter was proved false, he would cut off his wife’s hair and nose.²⁴

*Mahavir bole jadi nar dakhaibare,
Nake chule dimu shasti kohilu tomare.*

Child Marriage

Child marriage was a common practice in medieval Bengal, and economic factors rarely hindered the institution of marriage. The eligibility for a young man to marry was not typically seen as a concern, unlike the present situation. If a man remained unmarried until the age of twenty-five, he was often deemed an old bachelor. Girls were usually wed between the ages of seven and ten, following the prevalent custom. An eleven-year-old girl was regarded as fully mature, and if girls of this age group were not married, it brought social disapproval upon their parents.²⁵

It was the custom of the society to have the boys and girls married at an early age. This is reflected in the Bengali literature of the Muslim period. The father of Majnun, the hero of the epic *Laila-Majnun*, proposed the marriage of his son even when the boy was in the *Pathsala* or primary school. At that time Majnun must have been aged less than twelve. The heroine of this epic, *Laila*, was married before she had completed her primary education. As she was still reading in the primary school, she was not aged more than eleven years.²⁶

The early marriage was very common among the Hindus. They considered it a religious duty to marry their sons and daughters at an early age, particularly the girls before the age of puberty. It is known from the Vaishnava literature that Chaitanya, the great teacher of Vaishnavism, married at the age of twelfth. Kalaketu, the hero of *Mukundaram’s Chandikavya*, was married to Phullara when he was only eleven years old.²⁷ According to R. Fitch, marriage

great store both in towns and villages in many places where we passed, of boys of eight or ten years, and girls of hue or six years old.²⁸ They marry their children so Yong because it is an order that when the man died, the woman must be burned with him so that if the father dies, they may have a father-in-law to help to bring up the children which bee married and also that they will not leave their sons without wives, nor their daughters without husbands.²⁹

It would be inaccurate to assume that young girls, upon marrying at a relatively early age, were immediately subjected to the demanding responsibilities of practical life without prior exposure. innocent amusements and diversions of their early days, in the course of which they very often created a mimic world of their own, served to sow in their minds the seeds of the higher duties of household life.³⁰

During the mid-seventeenth century, the matrimonies of young boys and girls were a customary practice.³¹ The societal norms strictly prohibited the marriage of girls at a more advanced age, leading to widespread disapproval for the parents of such girls.³² There was a genuine fear of eternal damnation for violating the sacred laws of religion, which dictated that a girl should be married before reaching puberty. This aspect of Hindu social life was particularly noteworthy during that time.³³ According to Scrafton, “They are married during their infancy, consummating the union at 14 for males and 10 or 11 for females. It is not uncommon to witness a twelfth-year-old woman with a child in her arms.” Despite the rarity of barren women, they tended to bear relatively few children because, by the age of eighteen, their beauty was believed to be waning, and by twenty-five, they were noticeably marked by the passage of time.³⁴

Custom of Dowry (*Jautuk*)

In medieval Bengal the practice of giving dowry, known as ‘*Pan*,’ existed with a significant difference the bride’s side, rather than the groom’s side as seen today, was the recipient of dowry. Refusing dowry from the bride’s family was regarded as a virtuous act. However, among lower social classes, it was more common to offer dowry to the bride’s father. These emotional expressions depicted a genuine facet of society during that period. Furthermore, the tradition included presenting gifts, whether in the form of money or goods, to the bridegroom’s father.³⁵ The dowry and different customs and socio-religious rites connected with the ceremonial aspect of the wedding.³⁶

Marriage customs and traditions varied in different societies. In Hindu society, it included practices like “*barpan*” (giving away the bride), and in Muslim society, it involved “*kanyadan*” (the gift of a daughter). Customs like “*nazar*,” (Gift) “*shikli*,” (Money) and dowry were essential social norms. Disputes, violence, and divorce were not uncommon when it came to issues related to dowry or personal faults. Therefore, wedding ceremonies often saw conflicts, separations, and even violence.³⁷

In Muslim traditions, it was customary for the bridegroom to provide a dowry to the bride, while the bride’s father occasionally offered gifts to the groom and his party, though it was not obligatory. Conversely, among Hindus, the practice involved giving substantial dowries to the bridegroom. Even within the lower classes, it was mandatory for the bride’s father to offer dowries to the groom and generously compensate the intermediary.³⁸ In the case of Phullara’s

father, he agreed to provide Kalaketu, the groom and son of a hunter, with twelve kahan cowries, and the go-between with four pan cowries, twenty betel nuts, and five seers of gur (molasses). This represented a significant financial commitment for a humble huntsman.³⁹

Also, the tradition of offering bride money (kanya-pan) was commonly observed, but it was viewed as especially virtuous to marry off a daughter without seeking this payment. Gifts, including land, were presented to the groom, along with a formal monetary gift to his father. However, the conventional dowry system in its contemporary understanding seemed to have been less widespread.⁴⁰ In a unique tradition mentioned in Manikchandrara's song, King Govindachandra married Aduna, the eldest daughter of King Harichandra of Sabar, and received Paduna, her younger sister, as part of the dowry. Paduna not only became a part of his household but also his wife in all practical aspects. Additionally, during their marriage, the king was presented with a gift of a hundred concubines to manage his household.⁴¹

The father or a representative of the bridegroom would approach the bride's father to present the marriage proposal. Upon acceptance of the proposal, the details of dowries and other arrangements were finalized. In Majnun's case, his father proposed to offer substantial dowries, including precious gold and diamond ornaments, a significant number of slaves, and numerous domestic animals for his son's marriage.⁴² Moreover, The Kulins were also in the habit of exacting their dues from their parents time and again which led often to serious troubles between the two families. Among the non-kulins, the dowry system was not compulsory and among the lower classes, the system of paying dowry to the bride's parents was in vogue.⁴³

Due to polygamy and the caste system, the dowry system started to prevail in Bengali society. In Ballal Sen's Kaulinya tradition, due to the shortage of husbands in the noble family, fathers who are in need of daughters resort to the strategy of marrying off their daughters with the greed of money and gifts. The husband also started abusing women in multiple marriages to earn money. For dowry, once the marriage turned into a business. Again, the rich merchants and the elite would happily give the son-in-law and daughter-in-law valuables including cash, jewellery, slaves, villages, or land.⁴⁴

Divorce

Divorce was reportedly common among the affluent classes of society. While a husband had the ability to take the life of his unfaithful wife without facing consequences, an unfaithful wife had no means of redress.⁴⁵ Conversely, wives could seek divorce if they could demonstrate to the local Qazi that their husbands failed to provide them with maintenance. However, dissolving a marriage often resulted in a decreased social status for the woman, which is why it was not a frequent occurrence.⁴⁶ In these situations, daughters typically accompanied their mothers, while sons remained with their divorced fathers.⁴⁷

His majesty disapproves of high dowries; for as they are rarely ever paid, they are mere sham; but he admits that the fixing of high dowries is a preventive against rash divorces. Nor does his majesty approve of everyone marrying more than one wife; for this ruins a man's health and disturbs the peace of the home. He censures old women who take young husbands and says that doing so is against all modesty.⁴⁸

Widow

Widowhood was associated with the expectation of complete celibacy and was regarded as an exceedingly unfavourable state. Women had to be exceptionally vigilant in upholding a reputation for unwavering chastity. Even the slightest and most insignificant circumstances could trigger suspicion. If the purity of a married woman's chastity came under doubt, it had severe consequences for the social standing of her husband's family. Fellow caste members would not only ostracize the family from communal dining but also potentially restrict marital relations.⁴⁹

After the death of their husbands, the wives had to live in complete chastity and to avoid all kinds of luxury and exciting food such as meat, fish, etc. The position of the widows in society was not at all enviable. They were often looked upon as inauspicious and were very seldom allowed to take part in the different rites and ceremonies. They seem to have been encouraged by the people to immolate themselves in the funeral pyres of their husbands.⁵⁰

Due to the practice of marrying girls before they reached puberty, parents often had to lament the premature widowhood of their daughters. Widow remarriage was prohibited in the upper classes of Hindu society. Widows endured harsh conditions; they were excluded from participating in social events, and their presence at occasions like weddings was considered unlucky.⁵¹ The plight of girl widows was genuinely distressing. With the loss of their husbands, they found themselves stripped of most social privileges enjoyed by married women. Widows led austere lives and were restricted from using betel leaves, fancy clothing, and ornaments. In some cases, out of affection, parents permitted their widow-daughters to use "*sindoor*" (red powder) and "*patsari*" as substitutes for vermilion and gold bracelets.⁵² Women lacked proprietary rights, leading to their complete dependence on their husbands. Widows, in turn, relied on their sons for support.⁵³

From the injunctions of the different writers regarding the various austerities that a widow should practise it is clear that widows, in accordance with the views of Manu were not allowed to remarry.⁵⁴ This is not surprising when remember that during the early medieval period not only had the widows to practise many austerities but also the custom of widow-burning was prevalent in different parts of India and orthodox Bengali Brahmins were most probably trying to introduce it in Bengal.⁵⁵

Widowhood was considered to be the worst curse of a woman's life. As a result, they were deprived of all kinds of happiness. It has been mentioned in the book "*Atbhutsagar*" that as soon as she became a widow, the boundary line was broken. In Brhaddharma Purana, widow women are forbidden to eat all kinds of arousing things. It has been opined that youth, various attires, keeping good hair and beautifying the body are not good for widows.⁵⁶

Conclusion

the social fabric of medieval Bengal was profoundly influenced by patriarchal norms that shaped women's lives, particularly within the institution of marriage and family. Marriage practices, including polygamy, child marriage, and dowry systems, emphasized the commodification of women, reducing them to instruments for lineage preservation, social alliances, and economic gain. The idealized notions of monogamy and harmonious family life

coexisted with systemic gender inequalities, reflected in literary accounts and societal norms that documented the emotional and physical toll on women. Widowhood, marked by severe austerities and exclusion, further underscored the marginalization of women, leaving them vulnerable to societal and economic exploitation.

These practices reveal a complex intersection of religion, caste, and societal expectations, where women's autonomy and agency were continually suppressed. However, the lived experiences of women, as captured in literary and historical texts, also hint at resistance and solidarity in the face of adversity, providing glimpses into the nuanced dynamics of gender and power in medieval Bengal. This intricate social setup highlights the enduring impact of patriarchal structures on family and societal relationships, shaping the lives of women in profound and multifaceted ways.

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Integrating Multidisciplinary Approach in School Education: A Path to Holistic Education in Light of NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023

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Abstract

This article explores the integration of multidisciplinary approaches into the school education, aligning with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. These frameworks advocate for a holistic, flexible, and student-centered approach that transcends traditional subject boundaries to foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The research highlights the benefits of multidisciplinary education, including enhanced cognitive, emotional, and social development, and better preparation for 21st-century challenges. It also addresses the challenges of implementing such an approach, including teacher resistance, curriculum constraints, and assessment issues. Strategies and suggestions for effective integration are discussed, such as professional development for teachers, curriculum flexibility, and the use of technology. Ultimately, the integration of multidisciplinary learning is essential for preparing students to tackle complex global issues and shaping an innovative and adaptable future workforce.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary, National Education Policy, National Curriculum Framework. Holistic Education.

Introduction

The educational landscape in India has undergone significant changes in recent years,

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particularly with the initiation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. These reforms aim to provide a comprehensive, inclusive, and holistic educational experience for students, ensuring that learning is not confined to traditional boundaries but is integrated, interdisciplinary, and student-centered. One of the most transformative ideas within these reforms is the emphasis on multidisciplinary approaches, which aims to break down silos between subjects and encourage a more interconnected way of learning. This research article seeks to explore the concept of integrating multidisciplinary approaches in the school education curriculum, analyzing its potential to promote holistic education in the context of NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023. The article first discusses what is multidisciplinary approach then the need for multidisciplinary approaches in the school curriculum, followed by an examination of the key principles outlined in NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023. It then explores the advantages of this approach and highlights the challenges, strategies and suggestions for its effective implementation.

What is Multidisciplinary Approach?

According to NCF-SE 2023, Multidisciplinary refers to “combining or involving more than one discipline or field of study”¹. In the context of education, a multidisciplinary approach integrates knowledge, concepts, and methodologies from different academic subjects to explore and address a particular topic or problem. Rather than teaching subjects in isolation, a multidisciplinary approach encourages students to draw connections between various areas of knowledge, allowing them to gain a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Mahatma Gandhi (1937) introduced *Nai Talim*, an education model that combined vocational skills, ethical education, and academic subjects. He argued that knowledge should not be restricted to textbooks but should be applied in real-life situations. He emphasized that education should integrate intellectual development, emotional growth, and practical skills to create a well-rounded individual². Rabindranath Tagore also believes that “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence”³. These perspectives on education embrace a multidisciplinary approach, blending various fields to foster comprehensive and holistic learning. Similarly, multidisciplinary approach in education refers to an instructional strategy where multiple subjects or disciplines are taught in relation to a common theme, problem, or real-world issue while maintaining their distinct boundaries⁴. For example, a project on climate change could involve elements of environmental science (understanding the science behind climate change), economics (examining the costs and benefits of potential solutions), social studies (analyzing the impact on communities), and ethics (discussing moral responsibility). This integration of disciplines helps students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity as they make connections between different types of knowledge.

The multidisciplinary approach involves experts from different disciplines working on a common issue, but each discipline maintains its own methods and perspectives without significant integration. “Multidisciplinary involves studying a research topic in not just one discipline but in several at the same time. Any topic will ultimately be enriched by the incorporation of the perspectives of several disciplines. The multidisciplinary approach overflows disciplinary boundaries but its goal remains limited to the framework of disciplinary research.

Interdisciplinarity concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. Like multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity overflows disciplines, but its goal still remains within the framework of disciplinary research”⁵. Overall, multidisciplinary learning promotes a holistic view, where students are encouraged to approach problems from multiple perspectives and think beyond the confines of traditional subject boundaries.

The Need for Multidisciplinary Approaches in School Education

The world is rapidly evolving due to advances in technology like big data, AI, and machine learning, leading to the automation of many unskilled jobs. This shift increases the demand for a skilled workforce, particularly in mathematics, computer science, data science, and interdisciplinary fields across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. With challenges like climate change, pollution, and resource depletion, there will be a greater need for skilled labor in areas like biology, chemistry, physics, agriculture, and climate science to address global needs for energy, water, food, and sanitation. “The growing emergence of epidemics and pandemics will also call for collaborative research in infectious disease management and development of vaccines and the resultant social issues heightens the need for multidisciplinary learning. There will be a growing demand for humanities and art, as India moves towards becoming a developed country as well as among the three largest economies in the world”⁶. The traditional school curriculum has often been divided into distinct subjects, each with its own scope and objectives. While this approach has its merits, it often limits students’ ability to connect ideas across different domains and see the broader picture. In contrast, a multidisciplinary approach seeks to break down these barriers by encouraging the integration of knowledge from different fields. This approach aligns with the growing recognition that real-world problems are complex and cannot be understood or solved by relying solely on one discipline.

Moreover, “India has a long tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning, from universities such as Takshashila and Nalanda, to the extensive literatures of India combining subjects across fields. According to NEP 2020, the very idea that all branches of creative human endeavour, including mathematics, science, vocational subjects, professional subjects, and soft skills should be considered ‘arts’, has distinctly Indian origins. This notion of a ‘knowledge of many arts’ or what in modern times is often called the ‘liberal arts’ (i.e., a liberal notion of the arts) must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required for the 21st century”⁷.

Multidisciplinary education is especially important in the context of preparing students for the 21st-century challenges that require a diverse set of skills. Issues such as climate change, social inequality, technological advancements, and global health crises demand knowledge and expertise that transcend traditional subject boundaries⁸. For example, solving the problem of climate change requires knowledge of science, economics, political science, and ethics. Multidisciplinary approaches provide students with the opportunity to develop these interdisciplinary skills. Moreover, research in cognitive development suggests that children learn better when they can draw connections between different areas of knowledge⁹. By integrating subjects such as mathematics, science, literature, and social studies, educators can facilitate deeper learning, fostering creativity and critical thinking.

Additionally, multidisciplinary approaches promote a more engaging and relevant learning experience by making education applicable to real-world scenarios. In the traditional curriculum, subjects are often taught in seclusion, which can make learning feel disconnected from students' everyday lives. However, when students are stimulated to see the interconnections between subjects, such as how history, literature, and science interconnect in understanding societal issues, they are more likely to develop a sense of determination and interest in their studies. This approach nurtures a more holistic view of learning, where students are not just memorizing facts, but are actively applying knowledge in practical, meaningful contexts. As they tackle real-world problems through interdisciplinary projects and collaborative learning, students also develop essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability—skills that are increasingly valuable in both academic and professional settings. Similarly, NEP 2020 states that “a holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings -intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. multidisciplinary education does not merely expand intellectual boundaries; it prepares students to navigate and solve complex challenges with a broader, more integrated perspective”¹⁰.

The Vision of NEP 2020 for Multidisciplinary Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, presents a transformative vision for the country's education system. One of its primary objectives is to foster a more holistic, inclusive, and multidisciplinary approach to education. This vision marks a significant shift from the traditional, rigid educational structure towards a more flexible, integrated model aimed at developing well-rounded learners capable of addressing the complexities of the modern world. The policy emphasizes the need to move away from rote memorization and focuses instead on nurturing critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge across various disciplines. Therefore, NEP 2020 focuses on multidisciplinary and holistic learning as a fundamental principle of the education system, stating that multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge.

“The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills”¹¹. This broad approach aims to develop not just academic intelligence, but also emotional, social, and physical skills, ensuring that students are prepared for the diverse challenges they will face in life. The integration of multidisciplinary education is seen as key to achieving this comprehensive development. By encouraging students to connect concepts and skills from different subject areas, the policy advocates for a curriculum that nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. This approach contrasts sharply with the traditional education model, which often compartmentalizes knowledge into specific subjects, limiting students' ability to make connections across disciplines. A significant feature of NEP 2020 is its focus on flexibility in the curriculum. The policy advocates for the reduction of rigid subject divisions, allowing students to choose from a wide array of subjects and combine areas of knowledge in ways that align with their interests and career aspirations. For example, students

may be able to combine mathematics with arts, or social studies with technology, in a way that encourages a more integrative and holistic understanding of the world.¹²

This flexibility supports the development of students' creativity and innovation, as they are not constrained by predefined subject boundaries but instead encouraged to explore and connect diverse fields of knowledge. Such an approach provides a well-rounded education that is adaptable to both individual needs and the ever-changing demands of society.

Another key feature of NEP 2020 is its focus on vocational education and the incorporation of interdisciplinary learning from an early stage. The policy recommends the introduction of subjects such as coding, robotics, and entrepreneurship, alongside traditional academic disciplines like mathematics, science, and humanities¹³. By offering vocational and technical education early on, students can gain practical skills that complement their theoretical knowledge. This approach not only helps bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world applications but also prepares students for a dynamic job market where skills in multiple areas are increasingly valued. Furthermore, the policy's inclusion of subjects such as coding and robotics is a clear acknowledgment of the need to prepare students for a future driven by technology and innovation.

The NEP 2020 also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools through the establishment of "School Complexes." These are groups of schools that collaborate to share resources, knowledge, and teaching expertise, creating a more inclusive and diverse educational environment¹⁴. This initiative aims to ensure that students have access to a broader range of subjects and opportunities, especially in areas where individual schools may have resource constraints. By fostering collaboration, the NEP 2020 seeks to create a multidisciplinary environment where students and teachers can benefit from collective expertise and resources, enhancing the overall quality of education.

NCFSE 2023 and the Focus on Multidisciplinary Learning

NCF-SE 2023 serves as a key policy document that elaborates on the vision for school education in India, complementing the principles set forth in NEP 2020. While NEP 2020 provides the overarching framework for educational reform, the NCF-SE 2023 focuses on offering specific guidelines for curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment. The framework highlights the importance of multidisciplinary learning, advocating for an educational approach that integrates various subjects and prepares students to tackle complex real-world problems.

A central theme in the NCF-SE 2023 is the emphasis on holistic, integrated, and multidisciplinary learning¹⁵. This approach moves beyond traditional educational silos, encouraging students to make connections between subjects such as science, mathematics, arts, language, and social studies. The framework advocates for a shift in how subjects are taught, urging schools to incorporate interconnected learning experiences that allow students to explore the links between different areas of knowledge. By integrating these diverse fields of study, students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the world and develop the critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity needed to address today's complex global challenges.

In line with this vision, the NCF-SE 2023 stresses the importance of inquiry-based, contextualized, and student-centric learning experiences. These pedagogical strategies are

designed to engage students actively in the learning process, prompting them to ask questions, explore various perspectives, and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. This shift from passive learning to active inquiry fosters a deeper understanding of subjects and encourages students to make interdisciplinary connections. For instance, a student working on a project that involves both environmental science and economics would not only learn scientific concepts but also consider the economic implications of environmental policies, promoting a more well-rounded understanding of the issue at hand. This type of learning helps cultivate the ability to think critically and solve problems creatively, essential skills in the modern world.

The NCF-SE 2023 also highlights the importance of integrating arts and humanities with traditional subjects like science and mathematics. By blending subjects such as literature, history, and social studies with scientific inquiry and mathematical problem-solving, students are encouraged to develop a holistic perspective. For example, the integration of arts in science education can encourage students to think about the ethical dimensions of scientific discoveries, while incorporating mathematics in history lessons may help them analyze trends and patterns in historical data. Such cross-disciplinary learning broadens students' horizons, making education more relevant and meaningful. "Horizontal connections with other curricular areas are necessary for the holistic and multidisciplinary learning emphasized in NEP 2020. Some curricular goals and competencies in both the Middle and Secondary Stage are designed to ensure horizontal connections between science and other curricular areas"¹⁶. Therefore, the NCF-SE 2023 builds on the principles of NEP 2020 by ensuring that the multidisciplinary approach is woven into the curriculum at every level, fostering well-rounded learners prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Though, this multidisciplinary approach is more explicitly detailed for the secondary stage in policy documents. However, elements of multidisciplinary learning are embedded across all stages in various ways. Here's a table summarizing the multidisciplinary approach as reflected in the NCF-SE 2023 across different stages of school education:

Stage	Ages	Key Features of Multidisciplinary Approach in NCF-SE 2023
Foundational Stage	3-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play-based and activity-based learning integrating language, mathematics, arts, and environmental science. • Focus on holistic development through storytelling, games, and exploration.
Preparatory Stage	8-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential and theme-based learning, connecting subjects like language, math, environmental science, and arts. • Emphasis on practical, hands-on activities and project-based learning. For instances, "The World

		Around Us (TWAU) has also been given adequate time as the Preparatory Stage is a developmentally critical time to learn essential multidisciplinary skills of inquiring about and learning from the world around the students” ¹⁷ .
Middle Stage	11-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project-based learning that integrates multiple subjects. • Introduction of vocational education alongside academic subjects. Encourages interdisciplinary connections and real-world applications.
Secondary Stage	14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Four years of multidisciplinary study’ across all Curricular Areas”¹⁸. • Flexible subject choices across arts, science, commerce, and vocational fields. • Focus on critical thinking, research, and interdisciplinary learning. • Emphasis on internships, projects, and real-world applications to connect knowledge across disciplines.

Moreover, the NCF-SE 2023 emphasize the significant role of digital technologies in facilitating multidisciplinary learning. The framework advocates for the use of online platforms, digital tools, and interactive media to enrich students’ learning experiences. These technologies can offer new avenues for integrating subjects, such as virtual simulations in science, interactive art projects, and collaborative digital platforms where students from different disciplines can work together. By incorporating technology into the curriculum, students are not only exposed to new ways of learning but also develop digital literacy and collaborative skills—important competencies for the modern workforce. Hence, “at the Secondary Stage, more advanced technologies will be brought in, such as, metallurgy, with stress on unique achievements, such as, wootz steel and rust-resistant iron. Their study will be multidisciplinary, since the former will highlight the popularity of this steel all the way to the Mediterranean world, while the latter will lead to a study of the tribal communities that perfected iron-extracting techniques, and their importance in Indian society”¹⁹. Needless to say, the study of all the themes at every level will be carried out with the same integrated multidisciplinary lens.

Advantages of Integrating Multidisciplinary Approaches

Integrating multidisciplinary approaches in education offers a range of significant advantages that go beyond traditional subject-specific learning. This approach encourages students to think critically, solve problems creatively, and develop essential skills that will prepare them for a rapidly changing world. Hence, one of the most important benefits of multidisciplinary education is the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By integrating knowledge from various disciplines, students are encouraged to make connections between

ideas and concepts, helping them develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the world. This holistic approach to learning enables students to analyze complex problems from multiple perspectives, a skill that is vital for tackling real-world challenges. For instance, a project on sustainable development might require students to apply concepts from environmental science, economics, and social studies. This ability to connect different areas of knowledge is crucial in an increasingly interconnected world, where solutions to problems often require an interdisciplinary approach.

Another significant advantage of multidisciplinary approaches is the encouragement of creativity and innovation. When students are exposed to different disciplines, they learn to approach problems from various angles, which broadens their thinking and fosters original ideas²⁰. For example, integrating the arts with science can inspire students to think about new ways of representing scientific concepts, making abstract ideas more tangible and accessible. Similarly, combining literature with history allows students to critically examine the narratives and perspectives that shape our understanding of the past. This multidisciplinary approach helps students develop the flexibility and imagination needed to think outside the box and generate novel solutions. By fostering creativity, multidisciplinary learning prepares students to be innovative problem-solvers who are capable of finding unique answers to challenges in a wide variety of fields.

In the modern workforce, employers increasingly seek individuals who can adapt to new challenges and work across different domains. The ability to integrate knowledge from diverse fields is becoming more important in a job market that values versatility, collaboration, and innovation. Multidisciplinary education prepares students for this reality by equipping them with the skills to think across subject boundaries and collaborate with others who bring different perspectives. This adaptability is essential in a world where industries are rapidly evolving, and jobs increasingly require interdisciplinary knowledge. For example, a career in sustainable business development may require expertise in both environmental science and economics. By promoting multidisciplinary learning, schools help students acquire the necessary skills to thrive in careers that demand flexibility, collaboration, and problem-solving²¹. Students who can navigate multiple disciplines are better prepared to excel in a variety of professional fields.

Multidisciplinary education supports the holistic development of students by addressing cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects of learning. Traditional education often focuses primarily on cognitive development, but a multidisciplinary approach goes beyond academics to nurture well-rounded individuals. By engaging with a wide range of subjects, students develop diverse skills that prepare them for all aspects of life. For instance, working on group projects encourages teamwork and communication skills, while engaging with creative subjects like art and music helps students' express emotions and build self-confidence²².

Furthermore, multidisciplinary education fosters emotional intelligence and social awareness, as students learn to understand different perspectives and collaborate with others. This comprehensive approach to education not only enhances academic achievement but also helps students develop the personal and social skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern life.

Challenges in Implementing Multidisciplinary Approaches

The multidisciplinary approach to education, as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023, aims to integrate knowledge from various disciplines to enhance students' learning experiences. However, several challenges hinder its effective implementation. One significant challenge is curriculum design. The NEP 2020 calls for curricula that connect different subjects, yet blending these disciplines without compromising their depth is a complex task. Beane (1997) points out that creating an integrated curriculum requires careful planning to ensure that the connections between subjects are meaningful and not superficial²³. Although the policy advocates for more flexibility in curriculum development, implementing such changes remains difficult in many educational settings.

Another challenge is the lack of collaboration among teachers. Effective multidisciplinary teaching requires teachers from different subjects to work together, but logistical barriers such as limited planning time and insufficient opportunities for joint effort make this difficult. Moreover, while the policy emphasizes the need for collaborative teaching, there is still a lack of professional development programs to equip educators with the necessary skills to collaborate across disciplines.

Assessment also presents a significant challenge. The NEP 2020 calls for a shift from traditional assessments to more competency-based, project-oriented evaluations, but such assessments are not yet widely adopted. The current system tends to focus on individual subjects, which does not align with the goals of a multidisciplinary approach. Drake and Burns (2004) argue that assessing students' ability to synthesize knowledge across disciplines requires the development of new, more complex assessment tools. Transitioning to these new methods is a daunting task for educators accustomed to traditional testing.

Finally, institutional support plays a crucial role in overcoming these challenges. For a multidisciplinary approach to be effective, schools need to provide flexibility in schedules, sufficient resources, and professional development opportunities. The NEP 2020 stresses the importance of institutional backing, but many schools still face structural barriers such as rigid timetables, limited funding, and resistance to change. These constraints limit the ability of educators to implement an integrated curriculum effectively.

Strategies and Suggestions for Effective Integration

Effective integration of a multidisciplinary approach requires teacher training to promote collaboration and design lessons that link different subjects. This can be achieved through ongoing workshops, seminars, and collaborative planning sessions, which align with the NEP 2020's emphasis on continuous professional development. Curriculum flexibility is another key strategy, allowing educators to adapt content and teaching methods to connect various subjects meaningfully. The NEP 2020 advocates for curricula that encourage multidisciplinary learning, which can be facilitated by offering elective courses or project-based learning opportunities. Additionally, technology can play a pivotal role in supporting integration by providing platforms for collaboration, access to diverse resources, and interactive learning tools that bridge subject boundaries.

Building on these strategies, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to create a more integrated and holistic educational system. Policymakers should ensure flexible curricula that encourage multidisciplinary learning, as emphasized in the NEP 2020. They should also provide sufficient funding for teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills needed for cross-disciplinary teaching. Educators must adopt innovative teaching methods, such as project-based and experiential learning, to help students connect knowledge across subjects²⁴. Schools should foster collaboration among teachers by allocating time for joint lesson planning and professional development sessions. Additionally, integrating technology can enhance interdisciplinary learning by providing digital resources and interactive tools that promote critical thinking and problem-solving²⁵. Finally, stakeholders, including parents and industry leaders, should be actively involved in shaping curricula that align with real-world applications. By implementing these strategies, education systems can develop well-rounded learners prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

Conclusion

Integrating multidisciplinary approaches into the education system is essential for fostering holistic education that prepares students for the complexities of the modern world. The NEP 2020 and NCFSE, 2023 provide a clear vision for transforming the education system to embrace this approach, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for their academic, personal, and professional development. While challenges exist in implementing this vision, the benefits of multidisciplinary education are undeniable, offering students the opportunity to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. In sum, a shift towards a multidisciplinary, student-centered approach in education is not just a curricular change but a paradigm shift that has the potential to shape the future of India's education system. By embracing these reforms, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can help create an educational experience that is truly holistic and prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century.

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A Textual Analysis of Mining and Metallurgy: The Maurya and Sunga Times

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Abstract:

Metallurgy and mining made significant contributions to India's growth. India is acknowledged for possessing an abundance of diverse natural resources. Throughout antiquity, common metals included lead, tin, mercury, copper, iron, gold, silver, and silver. During Maurya Period (322 BCE – 185 BCE): In agricultural productivity and military strength Iron was a significant metal during this period. The Arthashastra, a treatise on statecraft attributed to Chanakya (Kautilya), provides insights into the economic policies of the Mauryan Empire, including regulations regarding mining and taxation. The region of Bihar and Jharkhand, known for its rich mineral deposits, likely served as significant mining centres during this time. Mining operations were likely supervised by the state to ensure regular supply and revenue generation. The Sunga dynasty (185 BCE – 73 BCE) succeeded the Maurya's after the decline of the Mauryan Empire. During this period, there was continuity in mining and metallurgical activities. Although the Sunga period is often characterized by political instability, economic activities such as mining and metallurgy continued to thrive.

It has been discovered that iron artefacts from the 11th and 12th centuries BCE were made in Southern India. This paper makes an attempt to describe the importance of mining and metallurgy in the national economy as existed during the Maurya and the Sunga times.

Key Words: Archaeology, Sites, Cultural development, Economic, Manufacturing Process.

Introduction

India was the primary hub for the development of iron metallurgy at the start of the first millennium BCE. During these peaceful years, technological advancement and iron metallurgy competence were acquired. India's successful iron production was largely due to the push-

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and-pull bellows' ability to produce air blast¹. Metallurgical technology evolved significantly during the politically stable Mauryan period (322–185 BCE). By the year 300 BCE, southern India was using the crucible expertise to produce high-quality steel. Using this process, crucible containing iron, charcoal, and glass was heated until the iron melted and absorbed carbon. Wootz steel was the original type of crucible steel. Before the Common Era, Wootz steel was sold from ancient India to China, the Arab world, and Europe. It gained popularity in the Middle East, where it quickly acquired the name Damascus steel.

The exact date and place of the introduction of iron artefacts and ironworking into India have long been a source of debate in research. This controversy is also related to the equally contentious issue of whether ironworking and artefacts are related to the purported arrival of western immigrants in the second millennium BCE, as is sometimes proposed based on the Rigveda. The beginnings of ironworking in India were traced back to between 700 and 600 BCE around the middle of the 20th century². The dating was then pushed back towards the second millennium BCE, a period that some academics had supported earlier in the early twentieth century, due to a combination of a link with Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and the development of radiocarbon dating.³

The foundation of the large Mauryan Empire with a strong and centralised government is a unique event in Indian History. Besides the foundation and consolidation of the large Mauryan Empire, this period also witnessed the expression of economic unity in the country. The fall of the Mauryan Empire must have caused a setback in the economy of the country. But India soon recovered and advanced towards economic progress. The economic prosperity of India during this period can be viewed from its agricultural, mineral, and industrial products market-towns, large number of seaports and foreign trade, as mentioned in the Arthasāstra of Kautilya, the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Greek writings and other literary works. To discuss all the economic aspects of this period is not our present theme and this paper makes an attempt to describe the importance of mining and metallurgy in the national economy as existed during the Maurya and the Sunga times. A careful operation of mineral resources and the rate at which mineral development takes place are among the principal indications of a country's economic development. Kautilya believed that mines were the source of treasury (*ākaraprabhavaḥ kosah*); and the earth whose ornament is treasury could be acquired by means of treasury and the army.⁴ Regarding the mineral wealth or the richness of Indian soil, Megasthenes says : "It has also underground numerous veins of all sorts of metals, for it contains much gold and silver, copper and iron in no small quantity and even tin and other metals, which are employed in making articles of use and ornament, as well as the implements and accoutrements of war ."⁵ Among all the metals, gold is the most common occurrence in the Greek accounts.⁶ It is referred to in the *Mahabhārata* that the Kirātas, Daradas, Śuras, Yamakas, Audambaras, and such other kings of the North-Western Himālayas. brought to Yudhishthira alongwith other articles of tributes gold of great splendour procured from the mines.⁷

Archaeology

Six early iron-using sites in India have been identified by Chakrabarti (1976): Baluchistan, the Northwest, the upper Gangetic valley and the Indo-Gangetic divide, eastern India, the

central Indian regions of Malwa and Berar, and the megalithic south of India.⁸ The first known centre of iron use appears to be in central India.⁹

Tewari states that iron use “was prevalent from the early 2nd millennium BC in the Central Ganga Plain and the Eastern Vindhyas.”¹⁰

In India, the first records of melted iron go back to between 1300 and 1000 BCE.¹¹ These early discoveries are also found in regions such as the Deccan, and Central India—not northwest India—is where the oldest evidence of smelted iron is found.¹² Furthermore, the dates for iron in India are not any later than those in Central Asia, and some researchers (Koshelenko, 1986, for example) claim that the dates for smelted iron in India may even be earlier than those in Iran and Central Asia.¹³ Gregory Possehl observed that “the Iron Age is more of a continuation of the past than a break with it,” meaning that the Iron Age did not necessarily entail a significant social transformation.¹⁴

It is suggested by archaeological findings that India was “an independent and early centre of iron technology.”¹⁵ Shaffer states that the “nature and context of the iron objects involved [of the BRW culture] are very different from early iron objects found in Southwest Asia.”¹⁶ Iron technology development was not as advanced in Central Asia as it nor was the evolution of iron technology always associated with Indo-Iranian immigration.¹⁷

In addition, J.M. Kenoyer (1995) notes that a “long break in tin acquisition” is required for the Indus Valley region to produce “tin bronzes.” This observation raises the possibility of either a dearth of migrants from the northwest who could have obtained tin or a lack of communication with Baluchistan and northern Afghanistan.

MINING OPERATIONS

The richness and high development of mining operations fully corroborated by the evidences of Kautilya. In the Arthasāstra, we find that there were two classes of mines, viz. land mines and ocean mines and expert superintendents were appointed in charge of each class.¹⁸ The miner (*khanaka*) referred to by Katyāyana¹⁹ indicates that mining was undertaken to a very great extent and mining revenue (*ākarikam*)²⁰ was a great source of income to the state. Amongst the precious metals Patanjali mentions gold (*hiranya* or *jātarūpa*),²¹ silver (*rajata*), *sisa*. Iron (*ayas*), *loha*,²² tin (*trapu*)²³ and bell-metal (*kāmsya*).²⁴ Kautilya has given the most detailed information on mining and manufactures “He has pointed out that with those possessed of the knowledge of the science dealing with copper and other minerals (*sulbadhātuḍāstra*), experienced in the art of distillation and condensation of mercury (*raspaka*) and of testing gems, aided by experts in mineralogy and equipped with mining labourers and necessary instruments, the superintendent of mines (*ākarādhyaksha*) was to examine mines which appeared to have been once exploited or which might have been newly discovered on plains or mountain slopes possessing mineral ores, the richness of which could be ascertained by weight, depth of colour, piercing smell and taste.”²⁵

Kaumilya’s detailed descriptions offer valuable insights into ancient methods of geological exploration and mineral identification. His emphasis on visual, physical, and behavioural characteristics of minerals demonstrates a sophisticated approach to resource management and metallurgy, reflecting the importance of these materials in ancient economies and societies.

Kautilya has given clear indications for geologists to ascertain the deposits of gold, silver, copper and other important minerals. “ He has pointed out that the heavier the ores, the greater should be the quantity of metal in them (*satvafddhih*). He has written that liquids which ooze out from pits, caves, slopes or deep excavations of well-known mountains; which have the colour of the fruit of rose-apple (*jambu*), or mango, and of fan-palm, which are as yellow as ripe turmeric, sulphurate of arsenic (*haritâla*), honey comb and vermilion; which are as resplendent as the petals of a lotus, or the feathers of a peacock or parrot; which are adjacent to any mass of water or shrubs of similar colour; which are greasy(*chikkana*), transparent (*viðadâ*), and very heavy are ores of gold (*kañchanika*). Likewise, liquids which, when dropped on water, spread like oil to which dirt and filth adhere, and which amalgamate themselves more than cent percent (*satâdupariveddahârah*) with copper or silver. Of similar appearance as the above (*tataprâtirû pa-kam*), but of piercing smell and taste, is bitumen²⁶ Those ores which are obtained from plains or slopes of mountains; which are either yellow or as red as copper or reddish yellow; which are disjoined and marked with blue lines: which have the colour of black beans (*mâsha*), green beans (*mudga*) and sesamum; which are marked with spots like a drop of curd and resplendent as turmeric, yellowmyrobalan, petals of a lotus, aquatic plant, the liver or the spleen; which possess a sandy layer within them and are marked with figures of a circle ora svastika, which contain globular masses (*sagulikâ*); and which, when roasted do not split, but emit much foam and smoke are the ores of gold (*suvargadhâtavah*), and are used to form amalgams with copper or silver (*prativâpârthâstâmrarûpya-vedhanâh*).²⁷ Those ores which have the colour of a conch-shell. camphor, alum, butter a pigeon, turtle dove (*vimalaka* (a kind of precious stone), or the neck of a peacock; which are as resplendent as opal (*sasyaka*), agate (*gomedaka*), cane-sugar(*guda*), and granulated sugar (*matsyandika*); which have colour of the flower of *kovidâra* (*Variegata*), of lotus, of *pâtali* (*Bignonia suaveolens*), of *kalâya*, of *kshauma*, and of *atasi*, which may be in combination with lead or iron (*adîjana*); which smell like raw meat, are disjoined grey or blackish white, and are marked with lines or spots; and which, when roasted, do not split, but emit much foam and smoke are silver ores.²⁸ Those ores which are obtained from plains or slopes of mountains, and which are heavy, greasy, soft, tawny. green, dark bluish-yellow (*harita*), pale red, or red are ores of copper.²⁹ Those ores which have the colour of *kâkamechaka*, pigeon, or cow’s, bile, and which are marked with white lines and smelt like raw meat are the ores of lead.³⁰ Those ores which are variegated in colour as saline soil or which have the colour of a burnt lump of earth are theories of tin (*trapu*).³¹ Those ores which are of orange colour or pale red (*pandu-rohita*), or of the colour of the flower of *sinduvâra* (*Vitex Trifolia*) are the ores of *tÖkshana* (iron) .³² Those ores which are of the colour of the leaf of *kânda* or of the leaf of birch are the ores of *vaikrantaka*. Pure, smooth. effulgent, sounding (when struck), very hard (*æitastßvrah*), and of little colour (*tanurâga*) are precious Stones.³³ As regards the importance of precious metals gold and silver were the most desirable forms of wealth in preference to all others. Probably it was because of this that *Kautilya* gave good attention to the analysis, classification, and processing of these important precious metals. He has pointed out that *Jâmbûnada* that which is the product of the river Jambu (near Mt. Meru); *æâtakumbha*, that which is extracted from the mountain

Ātakumbha; *vainava*, that which is the product of the mountain Venu and ūṅgaœuktija, that which is extracted from ūṅgaœuktija (Suvarṇabhūmi) are the varieties of gold,³⁴ And further that which is of the colour of the petals of lotus, ductile, glossy, Incapable of making any continuous sound (*anādi*) and glittering is the best; which is reddish yellow (*raktapīṭa*) is of middle quality; and that which is red is of low quality.³⁵ *Tutthodgata* that which is extracted from the mountain Tuttha; *gaudika*, that which is the product of the country known as Gaudo (*kāmarūpa* region); *kāmbuka*. That which is extracted from the mountain Kambu, and *chākravālīka*. that which is extracted from the mountain *Chakravāla* are the varieties of silver. Silver, which is White, glossy, and ductile is the best; and that which is of the reverse quality bad.”³⁶

Kaumilya’s treatise on metallurgy and gemology showcases his extensive understanding of the science and practical applications of mineral resources. His methods for ore purification and metal treatment indicate advanced technological knowledge, while his detailed classification of gems reflects a deep appreciation for their aesthetic and material value. This holistic approach to natural resources underscores the economic and cultural importance of these materials in ancient society, illustrating a blend of scientific inquiry and practical utility.

Kautilya has also discussed the methods by which impurities of ores, whether superficial or inseparably combined with them, can be got rid of and the metal melted. “This could be possible when the ores are chemically treated with alkalis (*kshāra*) and with a series of other compounds and powders. For permanent softness (*mṃdustambhana*) the metals are treated with the powder of cow’s teeth and horn.³⁷ Besides gold, silver, copper, lead and tin etc., Kautilya shows all round acquaintance With gems (*mani*), diamonds (*vajra*), coral (*pravāla*) and pearls etc., Indian and foreign several varieties and forms of gems are mentioned, viz. Kaua, that which is obtained from the mountain Kūa (or Koti between Malaya and the Sea); *mauleyaka*, that which is found in the mountain Mūleya or Malaya (a part of Malaya, also called (Karḍivana); *Pārasamudraka*, that which is found beyond the ocean (from Mt. Rohana in Ceylon), *saugandhika*, that which possesses such pleasant colour as that of the red lotus flower, or that of the flower of Pārijāta, or that of the rising sun; *vaidūrya*, *pushparāga*, *gomūtraka*. *gomedaka*, *indranila*, *nandaka*, *Sravanmadhya*, *aitavṃshi* and *sūryakānta* (sunstone) are the other forms of gems. Varieties of inferior gems are also mentioned, e.g., *vimalaka*, *sasyaka*, *añjana-mūlaka*, *pittaka*, *sulbhaka*, *lohitaka*, *mygāsmaka*, *jyotirasaka*, *māleyaka*, *ahichchhat-raka*, *kūrpa*, *pratikūrpa*, *sugandhikūrpa*, *kshīravaka*, *œuktichūrōaka*, *œilāpravālaka*, *pulaka*, *œuklapulaka* etc.”³⁸

As regards the qualities and defects of gems Kautilya mentions that “hexagonal, quadrangular, or circular, possessed of dazzling glow, pure, smooth, heavy, brilliant, transparent, and illuminating are the qualities of gems, while faint colour, sandy layer, spots, holes, bad perforation, and scratches are the defects of gems”.²⁵

Diamonds of several varieties and as well as their sources are also enumerated in detail. *Sabhārāṣṭraka*, that which is found in the country of *Sabhārāṣṭra* (i.e. in the Vidarbha Country); *Madhyamarāṣṭraka*, that which is found in the Kosala country; *Kāstirarāṣṭraka*, that which is found in the Kashmir region, *Ārikanaka*, that which is found in the vicinity of mountain, Vedotkaa; *Maḍimantaka*, that which is found near the mountain Maniman or

Manimanta, *Indravânaka*, that which is found in the Kalinga country.³⁹ Different colours of diamonds are also mentioned by Kautilya, e. g., like that of a cat's eye, that of the flower of œirîsa, the urine of a cow, the bile of a cow, like alum (*sphaika*), the flower of mâlati, or like that of any of the gems. Big (*sthûla*), heavy (*guru*), hard(*prahârasaham*), regular (*samakoika*), refractive of light and brilliant are mentioned as the best (*praeastam*) and while that which is devoid of angles (*na^o takonam*), uneven (*niraœerikam*), and bent on one side (*pâraevâpav^o tam*) are mentioned as inauspicious (*apraeasta*).⁴⁰

Alakandaka (that which is found in the mouth of the river Barbara) and *vaivarnaka* (that which is obtained from the ocean near the island of Yavanas) are mentioned as the two varieties of corals.²⁸ Patañjali²⁹ also mentions gems (*mani or âema*) of various varieties,³⁰ viz. *lohitaka*, *sasyaka*, *œatadhara*³¹ and œauvâdanshtra³². He also mentions vaidûrya gem, obtained from the mountain vâlvâya.³³ Corroborative references to these precious stones are also found Pliny, Ptolemy, and the Periplus. Pliny gives a long list of precious stones and calls India the great producer of the most costly gems³⁴ This list includes diamond, beryl, opal, sardonyx, onyx, carbuncle, carnelian, amethyst, and agate. Beryls, says Pliny, were rarely found outside India, while Ptolemy specially mentions Pounnata (in the south) as their source.³⁵ According to Ptolemy diamonds were obtained from the town of Kosa, from the territory of the Sabarai and from the mouth of the river Admas³⁶ These places have been respectively identified with the Berar territory extending to the rives Varadâ, the region of Sambhalapur and the Sank branch of Vaitarni river³⁷. According to the Periplus agate and carnelian were worked for the rocks of the Deccan trap to export to the west.³⁸ Ptolemy records that Mt. Sardonyx (i.e Satpurâ region) was the place which supplied Carnalien.³⁹

India was also rich in pearls (muktika) and the sea and rivers were exploited to procure them. Mahabharata mentions the desirous persons (*narâh Kâmena samyutâh*) going into the depth of the ocean (*samudram vâ visantyanye*) to acquire wealth.⁴¹ Oyster -shells and other miscellaneous things are said to be the wombs of pearls.⁴²

Kautilya mentions various varieties of pearls, such as *tâmraparnika*, that which is produced in the *Tâmraparnî* (a river in the Pândya country); *Pândyakavâtaka*, that which is obtained in *Pândyakavâtaka* (a mountain known as Malayakoti in the Pandya country); Pâûikya, that which is produced in the river known as Pâœa; *Kauleya*, that which is produced in the river Kûla (in the island of Singhala); Chaurneya, that which is produced in the *Chûrna* (a river in Kerala); *Mahendra*, that which is obtained near the mountain Mahendra; Kârdamika, that which is produced in the Kardama (a river in Persia); *Srautasîya*, that which is produced in Srotasi (a river falling in the sea Barbara); *Hrâdiya*, that which is produced in a deep pool of water known as Hrada; and Haimavata, that which is obtained in the Vicinity of the Himâlayas.⁴³ According to the Periplus, pearl fisheries were operated off colchi (i.e. korkai or kolkai on the Tâmrarni river in the Pândya kingdom) and the coast country (Cholamandalam).⁴⁴ Another site of pearl-fishery mentioned in the Periplus lay in the lower Ganges.⁴⁵ The tortoiseshell which figures in the Periplus⁴⁶ as an important export from India may be a southern product. Pliny mentions Perimula (i. e. Chaul on the west coast) as a centre of pearl fishery. He also gives a long list of precious Indian stones and calls India the great producer of the costliest pearls and gems.⁴⁷ Kautilya mentions the qualities of good and

bad or inauspicious pearls. That which is big, circular, without bottom (*nistalam*), brilliant, white, heavy, soft to the touch., and properly perforated are mentioned as the best; while that which is like *masûra*, that which consists of three joints (*tripuaka*), that which is like a tortoise. that which is semicircular, that which is double (*yâmakâ*), scratched, of dark-brown or of blue colour and badly perforated are inauspicious.⁴⁸

MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Kautilya and others have attached much importance to the mineral wealth. It is stated that those mines are the best which yield rich ores, are easily accessible and capable of being operated at small cost.⁴⁹ While the ancient teachers were of the view that a small mine yielding products of high value such as diamonds etc, is to be preferred. Kautilya expresses himself in favour of a large mine even if it yields products of comparatively small value, “He rightly argues that the later command a continuous sale, while articles of high value find few purchasers.”⁵⁰ All mines were clearly state property, but not all of them were to be worked directly by the state. In fact, it is stated that a mine costly in its working should be leased out for a fixed number of the shares of the output or for a fixed rent (*bhâgena prakrayenavâ*) and that only a light mine should be worked by state directly.⁵¹ So far as salt mines are concerned, these seem to be all intended to be leased out for a share on hire.⁵² Workers in the state-run mines may be upposed to be long to the same categories as the workers on crown lands, namely serfs (*dâsa*), labourers (*karmakâra*) and persons paying off their fines by personal labour (*danpratikartr*).⁵³ In addition, those disgruntled with the regime were also posted in the mines⁵⁴ Mine labourers or other persons were severely punished for stealing mineral products or carrying on mining operations without licence.⁵⁵ It is laid down that the produce of the various mines should be turned into articles of use in the respective workshops or factories (*karmântas*). The Superintendent of metals (*lohâdhyaksha*) was to carry on the manufacture of copper, lead, tin, *vaikrantaka* (mercury), brass (*arakûta*) *vritta*, *kamsa* (bronze or bell-metal), *tâla* (sulphurate of arsenic), and *loha*, and of other commodities (*bhânda*) that could be prepared from them⁵⁶. The greater importance, however, is attached to the manufacture of gold and silver, which was under the supervision of the Superintendent of gold (*suvarnâdhyaksha*).⁵⁷ The Superintendent of ocean mines (*Khanyâ-dhyaksha*) was to collect the products of ocean mines, such as conch-shells, diamonds, precious stones, pearls, corals, and salt (*kshâra*) and also to regulate commerce in them.⁵⁸ The Superintendent of salt (*lavanâdhyaksha*) was to collect in time both the money rent (*prakraya*) and the quantity of the shares (*bhâga*) of salt due to the state.⁵⁹ Kautilya has also directed that the yield of mines was to be utilized for the development of other minerals in the country and also that commerce in commodities manufactured from mineral products was to be centralised. The state was to keep both mining and commerce in minerals as State monopoly.⁶⁰

We have discussed above the mineral resources of the country and their exploitation. In the metal industries many handicrafts attained to considerable magnitude and the metal work of all types was pursued during this period. The literary works of this period invariably mention goldsmiths, silversmiths, blacksmiths, and other workers in metals,⁶¹ The contemporary specimens of metalware found from the archaeological excavations at various sites have revealed the regular use of metal for various purposes. These specimens not only show the

use of metal for different purposes, but also show the technological advancement and the craftsmanship of the earlier period.

Conclusion:

The paper demonstrates India's leadership in metallurgy and resource management in the ancient world, showcasing a blend of scientific inquiry, technological innovation, and practical application. Detailed descriptions of gems and their characteristics, as per Kautilya and corroborated by Greek and Roman sources, highlight India's prominent position in the global gem and jewellery trade. Resources like gold, silver, gems, and pearls were integral to the economy, contributing to wealth accumulation and trade with regions as far as the Middle East and Europe. Mining operations were well-organized under expert supervision, as outlined in the Arthashastra by Kautilya. The state derived significant revenue from mining activities, with classifications such as land and ocean mines.

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6. Herodotus (III.106) writes there is abundance of gold there, partly dug partly brought down by the rivers." Megasthenes (Fragm. XXIX; cf. Str. XV. i.57; cf. also Curtius VIII.9) also mentions gold supply from river beds, The ant gold referred to by Greek writers (Herodotus III. 102; Megas. Fragm. XXXIX; cf. Str. XV. i. 44; Meg. Fragm. XL; cf. Arrian, Ind. XV) and as mentioned in the Mahābhārta (, 52. 2-4) was actually mine gold obtained by the Dardai or Daradas. Pliny (VI.22) mentions that 'gold is very abundant among the Dardae, and the silver among the Setae.' As regards the identity of these mines it cannot be doubted that there were gold mines in Daradistan or the Tibe-tan highlands or farther west in the Himalayan tracts (Ind. Ant. Vol. IV, P. 225 f).
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19. *III. i. 145.*
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22. *Ibid.*, IV. 3.104
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24. *Ibid.*, VIII. 2.3
25. *Arthaġâstra*, II, 12.1
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27. *Ibid*, II, 12.5
28. *Ibid*, II, 12.6
29. *Ibid.*, II. 12.12
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31. *Ibid*, II, 12.14
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33. *Ibid.*, II, 12.16-17
34. *Ibid.*; II, 13.3
35. *Ibid.*, II, 13.4-6
36. *Ibid.*, II, 13.13-15
37. *Ibid.*, II, 12.8-11.
38. *27. Ibid.*, II, 11.38-42
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40. *Ibid.*, II. 11.29-33, 36- 37. *Saugandhika*, *Indranila* etc. are regarded as *adhikā-ra-sabdas* or generic names of various types of gems and the Words following each understood as varieties of these. Most of these names have no doubt references to colour but *Vaidūrya*, *Māleyaka* and *Ahichchhatraka* apparently refer to the place of their origin. vide, Kangle, R. P., *The Kautilya Arthaġâstra*, Part II, p. 114.
41. *Mahabharata*, XII, 167. 33; *Jataka*, III. P. 370; *Anguttara Nikaya* (IV. 199) mentions several treasures beneath the ocean.
42. *Arthasāstra*. II. 11.3; Megasthenes (Arrian, *Ind.*, VIII) informs us about the knowledge of how pearls were procured-The oyster, which yields this pearl is there fished for with nets, and that in these same parts the oysters live in the sea in shoals like bee-swarms; for oysters, like bees, have a king or a queen, and if any one is lucky enough to catch the king he readily encloses in the net all the rest of the shoal. The fishermen allow the fleshy parts of such as they catch to rot away, and keep the bone, which forms the ornament; for the pearl in India is worth thrice its weight in refined.

43. Ibid., I, 12.2
44. Per. Sec. 59; Megasthenes (Arrian, Ind., II).
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46. Per. Secs. 17.63
47. Pliny. Vi, 54
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50. Ibid., VII, 12.20-23
51. Ibid., II, 12.23-24
52. Ibid., II, 12, 36-37
53. Ibid., II, 24.2
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56. Ibid., II, 12.25-26
57. Ibid II, 13 and 14
58. Ibid., II, 12.34-35
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60. Ibid., II, 12.18, 47-48, cf. also Manu. VI. 71; Yaj. II. 178
61. Milindapanho, 331; Mahāvastu-Avadāna, III, 112-114 and III 442-443



A Comparative Study of Indian Folk Tales and Western Fairy Tales: Impact on Children's Development

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Abstract

This comparative study explores the premise that Indian folk tales foster fair-minded individuals through practical wisdom, rich values, ethical behaviour, communal values, social harmony, and cultural ideals, while fairy tales chiefly lead to escapist fantasy by abridging moral issues and emphasising whimsical elements. Indian folk tales, such as those from the Panchatantra, Jataka tales and Amar Chitra Katha Mythological stories, use frame narratives and didactic approaches to convey complex moral lessons, develop critical thinking, and promote ethical decision-making. These stories feature diverse, realistic characters who succeed through cleverness, ingenuity, and resourcefulness. In contrast, fairy tales follow linear narratives with clear-cut moral dichotomies, archetypal characters, and a substantial reliance on charmed and magical intrusion. While folk tales teach fundamental moral lessons and encourage imagination, they often oversimplify ethical complexities and reinforce traditional social hierarchies and gender roles.

Academically, Indian folk tales teach precious values, social norms, and cultural literacy, helping young minds develop practical problem-solving skills, critical thinking and emotional resilience. Whereas fairy tales merely provide emotional catharsis through their phantastic elements and happy endings, which may not always equip progenies with tools for navigating real-life intricacies. This study highlights how Indian folk tales emphasise communal sacrifice and cleverness for collective benefit, while fairy tales focus on personal gain. Indian folk tales shape open-minded individuals by promoting practical wisdom and ethical conduct. This understanding can help educators and parents choose stories that best support the moral and ethical development of tiny-tods.

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This comparative study finds that Indian folk tales foster fair-minded individuals by promoting practical wisdom, useful skills, ethical behaviour, and cultural values. On the other hand, fairy tales lead to imaginary creation or virtual worlds.

Key Words: tales, fairy, folk, princess, moral, values, imagination, Indian, Western, culture

Introduction:

Initially, folk and fairy tales were part of oral traditions before being written down. Fairy tales and Indian folk tales provide pedagogical and cultural literacy. It also serves as a means of preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and traditional values. Folktales from different regions of India help children learn about their country's diverse cultural practices and beliefs. This comparative study has a set of objectives-

1. How do the moral and ethical lessons conveyed in Indian folk tales and Western fairy tales shape children's understanding of right and wrong?
2. How do cultural values embedded in these narratives influence the development of social and ethical behaviour in children?
3. Can a balance between the practical wisdom of Indian folk tales and the imaginative escape of Western fairy tales provide a more holistic approach to moral and emotional development?
4. How can educators and parents effectively use these storytelling traditions to prepare children for real-world challenges while fostering creativity and emotional resilience?
5. How effectively do Indian folk tales and Western fairy tales encourage critical thinking and decision-making skills in children?
6. How do the individualistic focus of fairy tales and the communal emphasis of Indian folk tales reflect broader societal values?
7. What are the long-term psychological effects of engaging with narratives focused on magical resolutions versus those rooted in practical problem-solving?
8. How do Indian folk tales and Western fairy tales differently portray gender roles, and what implications do these portrayals have for gender socialization?

Moral and Ethical Lessons

Indian fairy tales stimulate and encourage imagination and creative thinking, providing a foundation for exploring fictional worlds and understanding metaphorical language. Indian Folk Tales from the Panchatantra, Jataka tales, Indian Fairy Tales, Hitopadesha, Kathasaritsagara, Folk Tales from India, Amar Chitra Katha, Tales of Tenali Rama, regional stories like those from Vikram and the Vampire (Baital Pachisi) other collections emphasize practical wisdom, cleverness, and ethical behaviour. "Fairy tales are critical for children's developmental stages, particularly between ages 4 and 5, when they start differentiating between reality and make-believe." (El'koninova 1985-86, p24).

Indian folk tales present characters with nuanced moral choices, reflecting the complexities of real life and encouraging critical thinking and ethical decision-making. Fairy tales often depict a black-and-white moral universe where good and evil are delineated, potentially oversimplifying complex ethical issues. Impact on perception from "Cinderella"

and “The Ugly Duckling” Before this young girl had even entered kindergarten, she had already deduced that she was somehow inferior to other girls who do meet that ideal. Most fairy tales originated in Europe, often collected and published by authors like the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Charles Perrault.

Social-Historical and Cultural Values Inclusivity

Indian folk tales reflect the rich cultural, and religious diversity of India, incorporating elements social fabric of India, integrating elements from Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and various regional traditions. They often emphasize social harmony, communal values, and respect for nature. Stories from the Jataka tales reflect Buddhist values such as compassion and selflessness. Where as many Indian folk tales have ancient origins, dating back to the Vedic period and reflecting centuries-old cultural values and social norms. Many tales highlight the importance of community, cooperation, and mutual respect. “The Rabbit and the Elephant” illustrates how cooperation and intelligence can help smaller, weaker individuals succeed against stronger adversaries. On the other hand, fairy tales primarily reflect European cultural values and social norms, which may not always resonate with or represent the diversity of other cultures. Tales collected by the Brothers Grimm often reflect medieval European social hierarchies and gender roles. Fairy tales frequently focus on individual heroism and personal achievement, sometimes at the expense of communal or cooperative values.”Jack and the Beanstalk” emphasizes individual bravery and risk-taking over communal effort. Most classic fairy tales have roots in medieval European folklore and were later collected and published by authors like the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault.”Sleeping Beauty” and “Little Red Riding Hood” are based on older folk tales that were formalized in the 17th and 19th centuries. “Cinderella” portrays the dichotomy of the kind and virtuous Cinderella versus her wicked stepmother and stepsisters, with little room for moral ambiguity. Often reflect the social hierarchies and gender roles of their times, which can provide insight into the historical context but may also perpetuate outdated stereotypes. The emphasis on royal characters and the often-passive roles of female protagonists in many fairy tales reflect historical social structures. “Fairy tales reflect collective unconscious processes, providing early exposure to cultural norms and gender identities for children”.(Louise,1996). Many Indian folk tales emphasize community, social harmony, and collective well-being. These values promote fairness by encouraging cooperation and mutual respect. While fairy tales also reflect cultural values, they are often specific to European traditions and may not encompass a broader range of cultural perspectives. Fairy tales frequently focus on individual heroism and personal achievement, which, while inspiring, may not always emphasize the importance of community and collective action.

Indian mythology and myths often have sprawling narratives with multiple story arcs and interconnected characters. They may contain epic battles, divine interventions, and intricate plot twists that span generations. The storytelling style can be highly poetic and symbolic, drawing on rich cultural imagery and metaphors to convey deeper meanings. Western Fairy Tales: Western fairy tales typically follow a more linear narrative structure, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. In the Jataka tales, the Bodhisattva often faces moral dilemmas that highlight virtues like compassion, honesty, and self-sacrifice.

Psychological and Emotional Impact

Indian folk tales have real-life applications by dealing with actual situations and moral complexities and help children develop practical problem-solving skills and a nuanced understanding of ethical behaviour. The story of “The Four Friends” from the Panchatantra teaches the importance of teamwork and strategic thinking. The often complex and layered narratives build emotional resilience and help children understand and cope with the complexities of human relationships and social dynamics. The Jataka tales, through the life stories of the Bodhisattva, teach children about compassion, sacrifice, and resilience. Fairy tales depict escapism by providing a deviation from reality and comfort through fantastical elements and happy endings, offering a sense of hope and reassurance. Fairy tales often provide an escape from reality through magical and fantastical elements, which can be entertaining but may not always contribute to practical life skills. “Alice in Wonderland” offers a whimsical escape but lacks practical moral lessons. And “The Little Mermaid” offers a tale of love and sacrifice that ends on a hopeful note.

On the contrary, Indian folk tales have moral fortification. They aim to instil moral values, resilience, and practical wisdom in listeners, often through the use of allegory and metaphor. Serve to strengthen community bonds and shared cultural identity through collective storytelling. They also cover a wide emotional range, from humour and wit to tragedy and pathos, reflecting the complexities of human life. They reflect realistic scenarios by dealing with realistic scenarios and practical problems, Indian folk tales help children develop problem-solving skills and a fair-minded approach to life. While they can provide emotional catharsis and reinforce the triumph of good over evil, fairy tales might not always equip children with tools for dealing with real-world complexities.”The Loyal Mongoose” teaches the consequences of rash decisions and the importance of trust. Moral and ethical lessons in these tales often build emotional resilience and a balanced perspective on life’s challenges. Tales of the Bodhisattva in the Jataka stories often involve overcoming personal suffering for the greater good.

Narrative Techniques, Structure and Resolution

Indian folk tales often have complex, interconnected narratives that can offer multiple perspectives on a situation. This complexity can be seen as fairer in providing a more nuanced understanding of human behaviour. “Language in fairy tales operates as a social practice influenced by societal structures.” (Fairclough, 2001).

Many Indian folk tales have open-ended or ambiguous conclusions, reflecting the uncertainties of real life. This can be viewed as a fair representation of the complexities and unpredictability of human experiences. Indian myths often have sprawling narratives with multiple story arcs and interconnected characters. They may contain epic battles, divine interventions, and intricate plot twists that span generations. The storytelling style can be highly poetic and symbolic, drawing on rich cultural imagery and metaphors to convey deeper meanings. Indian folk tales often use frame stories, where a primary story contains multiple embedded tales, as seen in the Panchatantra and the Kathasaritsagara. This technique helps convey multiple lessons and perspectives within a single narrative structure. The Panchatantra employs a frame narrative to link various animal stories, each teaching a different moral lesson. Whereas Fairy Tales have typically followed a straightforward, linear plot with a clear

beginning, middle, and end, which makes them easy to follow.”Cinderella” follows a linear progression from her life of hardship to her eventual happy ending. Fairy tales often conclude with a definitive happy ending where good triumphs over evil. While satisfying, this can be seen as less fair in acknowledging the complexities and potential unresolved aspects of real-life conflicts. But both are rich in symbolism and archetypal characters, fairy tales use these elements to convey deeper meanings and universal truths. The characters of the wicked witches and vampires symbolize evil and the trials one must overcome to achieve goodness and success. Although all tales follow a didactic approach, stories often include explicit moral lessons at the end, ensuring the message is clear to the audience.

Representation of Characters

Indian folk tales feature a variety of characters, including humans, animals, and deities, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. This diversity promotes empathy and understanding of different perspectives.”The Wise Old Bird” from the Panchatantra shows how even small creatures can exhibit wisdom and leadership. Empowerment of characters often succeeds through cleverness and resourcefulness rather than physical strength or magical intervention. In many tales, the trickster character uses wit to overcome stronger adversaries, teaching the value of intelligence. Empowerment through the cleverness of characters, regardless of their social status or physical strength, often succeeds via intelligence. This can be seen as fairer in promoting the idea that anyone can overcome challenges.

On the other hand, Fairy tales often feature archetypal characters such as the noble prince, the innocent maiden, and the evil witch, which can reinforce stereotypes. “Snow White” portrays the protagonist as a passive figure saved by a prince, potentially reinforcing traditional gender roles. Success in fairy tales often relies on magical intervention or dependency rather than personal effort or cleverness. “Sleeping Beauty” is saved by a prince’s kiss, highlighting a reliance on external, magical solutions. Such fairy tales are often cherished for their whimsical storytelling and lessons driven also have negative effects on a child’s psychology. Many have unrealistic beauty standards and fairy tales feature princes/ princesses who are described as exceptionally beautiful, setting unrealistic beauty standards for young children. This can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem when children compare themselves to these idealized characters. Some fairy tales contain dark and frightening themes, including witches, monsters, and evil stepmothers. Exposing children to these themes at a young age can lead to fear and anxiety as they have fertile imaginations.

Gender Stereotypes

Fairy tales often reinforce gender stereotypes, portraying boys as strong and adventurous while girls are portrayed as passive and dependent on male characters for rescue. This can limit children’s perceptions of gender roles and their own capabilities.”More positive representation of genders, noting that a truly feminist fairy tale empowers the main character regardless of gender.” (Kukendal & Sturm 2007, p 40)

This can reinforce feelings of helplessness and dependency rather than encourage children to take initiative and solve their own problems. Princesses are typically saved by princes, reinforcing the idea that girls are less capable and need male validation or assistance to

succeed. This can edge children's understanding of gender diversity and equality, potentially leading to self-limiting beliefs about their own abilities based on their gender. "Cinderella" highlights potential misinterpretations of family dynamics that can be mitigated through positive communication. "A study of Louisiana State University students found that women favored stories like Cinderella and Snow White, while men preferred tales with male protagonists or animal characters." (Collier, 98-99). They should rather take proactive steps to solve their own problems or overcome adversity. This can reinforce harmful stereotypes about gender and agency, teaching children that passivity and dependency are desirable traits, rather than encouraging them to take initiative and assert control over their own lives." Fairy tales often reinforce traditional gender roles: men are portrayed as authoritative and sometimes violent, while women are obedient, polite, and use wit to survive." (Neikirk, 2009 p7). Some valuable educational implications to limit the stereotypical gender misconceptions in children's literature are presented to both parents and teachers.

Unrealistic Expectations about Love and Relationships

Many fairy tales culminate in a "happily ever after" ending with the protagonist finding true love and living blissfully ever after. This can create unrealistic expectations about romantic relationships and perpetuate the idea that finding a partner is the ultimate source of happiness. Children may grow up believing that love should be effortless, devoid of conflict, and capable of solving all their problems, which can lead to disappointment and disillusionment in real-life relationships.

Lack of Diversity Traditional fairy tales often reflect the cultural biases and norms of the societies in which they originated, resulting in stories that lack diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. Characters in these tales are typically portrayed as white, heterosexual, and conforming to conventional gender roles, which can marginalize children from diverse backgrounds who do not see themselves represented in these stories. This lack of representation can contribute to feelings of exclusion, alienation, and low self-esteem among children who do not fit the dominant cultural narrative.

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Case Study 1: "The Blue Jackal" (Indian Folk Tale) vs. "The Ugly Duckling" (Fairy Tale) – In 'The Blue Jackal' - A jackal accidentally dyes himself blue and convinces other animals that he is a divine creature, only to be exposed and learn a lesson about honesty and authenticity. In 'The Ugly Duckling' - A misfit duckling endures hardship and ridicule until he transforms into a beautiful swan, emphasizing themes of personal transformation and self-acceptance. Both stories involve personal growth, but "The Blue Jackal" emphasizes cleverness and ethical behaviour, whereas "The Ugly Duckling" centers on an external, magical change.

Case Study 2: "The Lion and the Rabbit" (Indian Folk Tale) vs. "Hansel and Gretel" (Fairy Tale) - In 'The Lion and the Rabbit' - A clever rabbit outwits a powerful lion to save himself and other animals, highlighting intelligence and strategic thinking. In 'Hansel and Gretel' - Two children use their wits to escape from a witch, focusing on themes of bravery and resourcefulness. "The Lion and the Rabbit" reflects the communal and cooperative values prevalent in Indian culture, whereas "Hansel and Gretel" incorporates elements of

European folklore and fairy tale tradition.

This comparative study illustrates how Indian folk tales can contribute to developing fair-minded individuals by promoting practical and ethical values, whereas fairy tales often provide a more escapist and fantastical approach, potentially leading to a different type of moral and psychological development.

Conclusion

This work asserts that Indian folk tales are “far fairer” than fairy tales can be interpreted in several ways. This comparison can be explored through numerous lenses such as moral lessons, depiction of characters, cultural values, and narrative structure. The fairness of Indian folk tales compared to fairy tales can be argued based on their moral complexity, diverse character representation, cultural inclusivity, and nuanced narratives. Indian folk tales often reflect a broader range of human experiences and ethical dilemmas, which can be seen as fairer in providing a more comprehensive and realistic portrayal of life. However, both genres have their own unique strengths and continue to offer valuable lessons and entertainment to audiences worldwide. Fairy tales often lack diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture, presenting a narrow view of the world that may not reflect the experiences of all children. This can contribute to feelings of alienation and exclusion among children who do not see themselves represented in these stories. The interpretation of the stories in ways that foster healthy psychological development. Folk and fairy tales have influenced various forms of Indian art, literature, and performance, including dance, theatre, and film and adapted into children’s books, TV series and modern retellings. Western fairy tales popularized by Disney and other media, becoming part of global popular culture. They are frequently reinterpreted and re-imagined in literature, film, and television, often with modern twists that challenge traditional narratives and are heavily commercialized, leading to a wide array of merchandise, theme parks, and multimedia adaptations. They have positive effects like early literacy development, building resilience in children, cultural literacy, etc and the negatives are unrealistic ideas of love, an outdated sense of reality, low self-esteem, etc but the good results they are giving out are much better than the bad they have in it. Messages of how looks can label a person as good or bad are harmful to children. Modern feminist approaches by retellings invite a modern, feminist gaze while pulling back the curtain to reveal the appalling lack of options our protagonists are faced with. They develop a sense of imagination, morality, justice, and honesty; enrich their childhood, and offer encouragement and hope. Folks and fairy tales can be valuable in therapeutic contexts, helping children process difficult emotions and situations.

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Challenges to World Order in the 21st Century: From the Indian Perspective

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Abstract:

The 21st century world order faces significant challenges, particularly from India's perspective. Shifts in global power dynamics, marked by China's rise and increasing multipolarity, threaten existing norms. Geopolitical tension, including border disputes and China's Belt and Road Initiative, challenge India's strategic interests. Global issues such as terrorism demand collective responses, yet multilateral institutions struggle with inefficiency and bias. Economic inequality and the populist backlash against globalization further destabilize the liberal order. India as an emerging power, advocates for a rule based multilateral system that reflects equitable representation and emphasizes inclusive development and security. The study will highlight the major challenges to World Order in the 21st century from Indian perspectives.

Key Words: World Order, Liberal Order, Rise of China, International Rule Based Order, United States, India, Russia, Shared Political Order, Multi-Polar World

Overview

A stable world order is a rarity. Typically, it emerges only after significant upheaval, which creates both the conditions for and the desire to establish something new. Achieving stability requires a balanced distribution of power and widespread acceptance of the principles that govern world affairs. It also depends on adept statecraft, as world order is not a natural phenomenon but a deliberate construction. No matter how favourable the initial conditions or how strong the motivation, the creation of such an order demands creative diplomacy, robust institutions, and effective mechanisms to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to challenges. Over time, however, even the most well-managed world orders begin to unravel.

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The balance of power that once supported them becomes skewed, and the institutions that upheld them often fail to evolve with new realities.¹

Henry Kissinger, an American diplomat and political scientist who served as United States Secretary of State, observes that there has never been a genuine “world order”. Throughout history, civilizations have shaped their own concepts of political order, often viewing themselves as the centre of the world and considering their principles universally applicable. For instance, China envisioned a world cultural hierarchy with its emperor at the apex. In Europe, Rome perceived itself as surrounded by barbarians; after Rome’s collapse, European societies developed the idea of a balance of sovereign states and sought to extend this concept worldly.² In its early centuries, Islam viewed itself as the world’s sole legitimate political entity, destined to expand indefinitely until the world was unified under religious principles. Similarly, the United States emerged from a belief in the universal applicability of democracy, a conviction that has shaped its foreign policies ever since. Today, world affairs unfold on a world scale, bringing these historical concepts of world order into contact. However, there is no agreement among the major world actors on the rules, limits, or ultimate direction of this process. The result is growing tension. The primary challenge of the 21st century is how to create a shared political order in a world marked by divergent historical perspectives, violent conflict, advancing technology, and rising ideological extremism.³

World Order after the WW II

The world order we live in today was established in 1944-45 to address the challenges faced by the United States and its Western European allies. This order built both political and economic institutions. The United Nations Organization (UNO) was created in 1945 to manage political and security issues. The UN Security Council had five veto-wielding members—the US, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the UK, France, and Taiwan—to handle matters of war and peace. Shortly after, a conference in the US led to the creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions (1944), such as the World Monetary Fund (IMF), which aimed to prevent currency devaluation, and the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), established in 1945 to finance the reconstruction of war-torn European economies. In 1947, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was established, later evolving into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, with the mandate to regulate multilateral trade. Since the US was the largest shareholder in these institutions, the 20th century came to be known as the “American Century”, or more accurately, “Pax Americana”, referring to a period of relative peace and stability under US leadership.⁴

Therefore, a liberal world order was created by the United States to promote capitalism and democracy through building alliances and multilateral institutions. Its supporters portray the liberal order as an open, rules-based and multilateral system that operates through consent rather than coercion. In reality, the liberal order is a club of the West. To other countries, its benefits, such as market access, aid and investment, and the provision of a security umbrella, were offered selectively and conditionally.⁵

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 1991, former President George H.W. Bush made a significant declaration: the world political structure had entered a “new world

order". This new order, he suggested, would bring diverse nations together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of humanity, such as peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law. In a broader sense, this new order promised to foster greater world cooperation, especially among major world powers, often facilitated by institutions like the United Nations. It emphasized collective security and shared expectations for world behaviour, aiming to curb the use of offensive force by rogue states. Bush concluded his speech by asserting that the United States bore a "burden of leadership" and remained "the beacon of freedom in a searching world". Since then, the United States economic growth, military strength, and political influence have continued to cement its status as a world superpower.⁶

G. John Ikenberry argues that the United States became the "first citizen" of the liberal order, providing hegemonic leadership that anchored alliances, stabilized the world economy, fostered cooperation, and championed the values of the "free world". Western Europe and Japan emerged as key partners, tying their security and economic futures to this extended liberal order. Following the end of the Cold War, the liberal order expanded outward. Countries in East Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America underwent democratic transitions and became increasingly integrated into the world economy. As this post-war order grew, so too did the governance institutions that supported it.⁷ The US-led liberal international order once appeared to be thriving, but now both the system and its primary backer are facing significant challenges, leaving the future uncertain. Various factors contribute to this crisis: military and economic missteps, economic stagnation affecting the middle and lower classes in developed countries, a populist pushback against globalization, rapid technological advancements, and, perhaps most critically, a changing global balance of power.⁸

Challenges to World Order in the 21st Century

In the 21st Century, there is a growing sense that the rules and institutions that have governed world affairs since 1945, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, are beginning to fray. Two major forces are challenging the world system. **First**, the balance of power is shifting. A system once dominated by the United States is now giving way to rising powers, particularly China, which seeks a greater role in world affairs. **Second**, and perhaps more critically, the norms, values, institutions, and practices that have long shaped this world order are believed to be losing their appeal and legitimacy. Francis J. Gavin argues that it was wise statesmen who constructed this world order, one that brought both security and prosperity to the United States and its allies.⁹ Now, it has undoubtedly entered a period of uncertainty and flux. In recent years, many Americans have begun questioning the nature and extent of their country's involvement in world affairs. It is not only the Great Recession or dissatisfaction with the US experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that have fuelled this disillusionment with what Americans once proudly called their world leadership. The rationale for deep world engagement is increasingly being forgotten or actively rejected by many, who wonder why the United States needs to play such a prominent role on the world stage.¹⁰

China has been striving to assert its influence within multilateral structures, even though it does not adhere to the liberal values upon which these frameworks were built. Adding complexity is the intertwined economic relationship between the U.S. and China, despite their strategic rivalry. Surrounding these two powers is an emerging multi-polar system, with states

like Germany, France, India, Japan, Russia, and others holding significant influence. These regional and global players are manoeuvring to balance their positions between the U.S. and China. The situation is further complicated by the absence of a comprehensive security framework capable of both managing great power conflicts and accommodating the interests of all key actors.¹¹ While China appears willing to support some aspects of the order, particularly those related to economics, such as trade and investment, it avoids endorsing its political foundations, such as democracy and human rights. Moreover, China's initiatives like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) suggest an alternative vision for global economic governance. If these efforts succeed, they could reshape trade, investment, and development patterns and potentially lead to the emergence of a Chinese-led international order, especially across Eurasia and possibly extending globally.¹²

Scholars are actively debating the future trajectory of the world order. Will it evolve into a new Cold War? What direction will China choose to take? As we near the end of the third decade of the 21st century, the so-called trade war between China and the United States reflects the fluctuations in the international landscape and the uncertainties caused by the actions of the world's sole superpower, the United States.¹³ Fu Ying contends that global power is now more fragmented than ever before. There is a growing consensus that no single major power will dominate the world in the future. Even the strongest nations will need to collaborate with others to address global challenges and manage international affairs.¹⁴

Parag Khanna in his famous book *The Future is Asian: Global Order in the 21st Century* highlights that in the 19th century, the world was Europeanized. In the 20th century, it was Americanized. Now, in the 21st century, the world is undergoing irreversible Asianization. This transformation extends far beyond China, encompassing a multi-civilizational order that stretches from Saudi Arabia to Japan and from Russia to Australia. This emerging system connects five billion people through expansive networks of trade, finance, and infrastructure, collectively accounting for 40% of global GDP. While China has played a leading role in establishing the new Silk Roads across Asia, it is not acting alone. The region is reverting to a stable, multi-polar structure reminiscent of pre-colonial times, with India and Southeast Asia rising as key economic and strategic centres.¹⁵

The Rise of China

Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty argues that China's spectacular rise has fundamentally shaken the world order. Never in human history has there been such a massive transformation of a country as large as China. The scale and impact of this change have been astonishing. This transformation has led to a shift in the world economy, diminishing the hegemony of the developed Western economies. The economic transformation of China is undoubtedly the most significant development since the economic reforms began in China in 1978.¹⁶ Today, China is the largest merchandise exporter in the world, running significant trade surpluses with almost all major economies. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a geo-economic and geo-strategic game-changer. China's military modernization, particularly its naval expansion, should leave no doubt about its intention to become a great power and dominate the Indo-Pacific region. With economic power shifting to Asia, an inevitable power shift is occurring, with China flexing both its economic and military muscle. The BRI has attracted many Asian

countries, who expect to benefit from China's growing geo-economic influence.¹⁷

Zhou Bo contends that no country casts a more significant shadow over the 21st century than China. Its remarkable rise, driven by the opportunities presented by globalization, has not placed it in outright opposition to the existing world system. While China has resisted adopting Western democratic ideals, it is the very openness of the world order that has facilitated its ascent over the past four decades. This underscores a broader point: the path to prosperity is no longer confined to liberal democracy. Also China's growing prominence does not signal an intention to export its ideology or social system to others, nor does it aim to enforce a new, dominant model for the "world order".¹⁸

David M. Edelstein argues that China has become increasingly assertive in the South China Sea, raising questions about its long-term intentions. As China's influence continues to grow, it has steadily expanded its presence across Asia, facing minimal resistance thus far. On the other, the United States is experiencing relative decline, Russia has regained strength, and China has developed the capability to act with greater assertiveness. In response, the United States is increasingly focused on the long-term challenges posed by these powers, which in turn are likely to heighten strategic concerns in Washington.¹⁹

Moreover, China's growing economic strength has bolstered its confidence to propose innovations to the current world order, arguing that simply maintaining the existing system is insufficient to address emerging world challenges. For instance, while globalization has fuelled economic growth, it has not benefited all nations equally, exacerbating the income gap between developed and developing countries, as well as between rich and poor regions in the World South and North. Chinese leaders emphasize that China does not seek to replace existing institutions but rather to supplement and strengthen them. Through initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China positions itself as a constructive partner in world governance, aiming to address gaps in development and infrastructure while reinforcing certain aspects of the current world system.²⁰ Xueying Zhang highlights that China is spearheading the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which has attracted over 65 member countries. This institution plays a crucial role in funding China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), designed to enhance regional connectivity and shared prosperity across Asia and beyond. Building on these efforts, China has proposed the concept of a "community of common destiny", reflecting the natural evolution of its interactions with the world order. This vision emphasizes collective development and mutual benefits. Moreover, China positions itself as a responsible world player, presenting an alternative to trade protectionism and economic nationalism, advocating for open and inclusive world economic practices.²¹

Looking from the Indian Perspective

India's Foreign Minister, S. Jaishankar, emphasizes that the inevitability of change and the importance of adapting to it, both on an individual and national level. He highlights that while change can lead to disintegration and harm (as seen with the USSR, Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya), it can also foster growth and success (as demonstrated by China, South Korea, and ASEAN). The key is finding a balance between continuity and change. He suggests that, in response to a world that is rapidly evolving—due to societal shifts, technological advances,

and changing world relationships—India’s foreign policy must also evolve. By acknowledging this dynamic, India can better navigate world relations in a way that is both pragmatic and forward-thinking.²²

The world order has undergone a significant shift towards discontinuity. Looking from Indian perspective, several key changes are evident: India has become a more influential player on the world stage. The distribution of both economic and political power has become more balanced across the world. The United States, as a dominant power, is recalibrating its foreign policy, including its relationship with India. The rise of China has fundamentally altered the world landscape. Additionally, the expectations, opportunities, and challenges in India’s neighborhood now demand a more proactive role from the country.²³

In a notable shift, former Foreign Secretary of India, Vijay Gokhale emphasized that “India has moved on from its non-aligned past”, highlighting that India is now an aligned state, but one based on specific issues. He stressed that it is time for India to actively participate in the rule-making process, asserting that in a rules-based world order, India would have a stronger position within multilateral institutions. The future of India will be largely determined by the role New Delhi is able to carve out, reflecting the changing priorities of India’s foreign policy establishment. During the Modi government, strategic autonomy is being redefined as a goal that can be achieved through stronger partnerships, rather than by avoiding them.²⁴ By taking this approach, India appears to be signalling that in today’s complex world environment, strategic autonomy and non-alignment are not necessarily inter-connected. For example, by participating in the “Quad”, India strengthens its strategic autonomy in relation to China. Similarly, when engaging in trilateral talks with Russia and China, India boosts its strategic autonomy against a U.S. administration, which challenges the foundations of the world economic order. Harsh V. Pant asserts that India is now in a position to define its bilateral relationships on its own terms and should continue to engage more closely with countries that can support its rise to regional and world prominence.²⁵

Uzair Younus argues that three key shifts in the world order have been pivotal in boosting India’s world prominence: **terrorism**, **climate change**, and **the rise of China**. In the aftermath of 9/11, the world consensus on the unacceptability of terrorism—especially when used by states for strategic purposes—created an opening for India. Leveraging its expanding economic ties with the world, India actively engaged with world powers, including China, while also making bold commitments to address climate change.²⁶ The changing geopolitical landscape, where China’s rise is increasingly seen as a strategic challenge by the United States and its allies, provided India with an opportunity to position itself as a critical player in counter-balancing China. This shift facilitated stronger US-India strategic relations and deepened ties with nations such as Japan, Australia, and France.²⁷

At this historic juncture, the relationship between India and the United States is crucial for maintaining a world order characterized by peace and security, where nations can rise together to face future challenges. There is no doubt that the US presence in Asia provides stability and certainty for India. New Delhi also values a US-centric world order, which is grounded in shared values and a mutual understanding of stability. The US presence in Asia plays a key role in ensuring the peaceful resolution of disputes and fostering economic progress.

While India has the capability to address the challenges posed by a rising China in the coming future, it can do so more effectively through cooperation with its allies. Therefore, it is essential for India and the United States to strengthen their collaboration in military, economic, and security matters to ensure the success of the US's rebalance to Asia.²⁸

Democratic and Rules Based World Order

Former External Affairs Minister Smt. Swaraj emphasized that India's world engagement is deeply rooted in its civilizational ethos, which values co-existence, pluralism, openness, dialogue, and democratic principles. She asserted that India's success has been a driving force for growth, peace, and stability, acting as an anchor for regional and world progress. India advocates for a democratic, rules-based world order. Smt. Swaraj outlined five key principles that define India's world engagement. **First**, India has worked to rebuild strong ties with its immediate neighbors. **Second**, India is shaping its world relationships in a way that aligns with its economic and development priorities. **Third**, India aims to become a world human resources powerhouse by connecting its youth to world opportunities. **Fourth**, India is fostering sustainable development partnerships that are grounded in universally recognized world norms and principles of good governance. **Lastly**, India is actively working to reinvigorate world institutions and organizations. Smt. Swaraj also touched upon the challenges facing both India and the world community, highlighting that terrorism remains one of the most critical world threats today.²⁹

Former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind emphasized that India aspires to be a rule-maker in a multi-polar world. New Delhi seeks to establish a rules-based world order that does not make distinctions between "good" and "bad" terrorism. He stated, "India is committed to a world order characterized by strong, rules-based multilateral institutions, multi-polarity in world governance, and investment and connectivity projects that are viable and sustainable". He further affirmed, 'as a responsible power, India seeks to be both a rule framer and a rule custodian'.³⁰

Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty argues that India's strategic approach in this evolving world order will primarily focus on advocating for a multi-polar world structure. This stance directly challenges China's vision, as China seeks to challenge the United States and assert itself as the new hegemon in Asia, with aspirations for world dominance. A China-centric world order, however, cannot be stable. China has no history of being a world hegemon, and its authoritarian governance, which lacks democratic decision-making and transparency, makes it ill-suited for a leadership role on the world stage. Moreover, China has not demonstrated a capacity to create and protect a world order that upholds public goods. Given these dynamics, the current phase of the world political order will require India to form coalitions with like-minded countries to ensure that the world moves towards a more multi-polar configuration.³¹

According to Monavvar Alam, India, as the world's most populous and vibrant democracy, has a crucial role to play in shaping the new world order. India is now poised to adopt a more pro-trade, assertive, and proactive stance in world affairs. The era of Nehruvian idealism—marked by non-intervention and non-alignment, which characterized India's foreign policy for the past seventy years—is now behind. India is moving towards a more engaged and assertive role on the world stage, reflecting the changing dynamics of both its domestic growth and

world aspirations.³²

Conclusion

From an Indian perspective, the challenges to the 21st-century world order are multifaceted and complex, involving shifts in global power, economic inequalities, and the evolving nature of global governance. The rise of China, with its assertive policies and influence, has led to a shift in the traditional balance of power, creating strategic challenges to the global order.

However, India has consistently advocated for a **democratic and rules-based world order**, believing that global stability and peace depend on respecting democratic values, international law, and fair governance. This vision aligns with India's own democratic principles and its emphasis on justice, equity, and global cooperation. As a large democracy, India views the promotion of democracy and human rights as essential elements of new world order.

The evolving India-US relationship plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the global order, particularly in the context of shifting geopolitical dynamics, economic interdependence, and shared democratic values. Both nations, as large democratic powers with significant global influence, are pivotal in advancing a rules-based international order, promoting peace, security, and sustainable development. Their growing strategic partnership reflects a broader alignment of interests, and their relationship is key to addressing contemporary global challenges.

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Analysing Strategic Fault Lines Between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the Multi-Dimensional Concept of Borders

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Abstract

The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a defining feature of West Asia geopolitics, rooted in historical, ideological, and geopolitical fault lines. While both nations strive for dominance in West Asia and leadership of the Islamic world, their divergent political, economic, and religious frameworks have fostered enduring tensions. These tensions have manifested in proxy conflicts across Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, complicating efforts toward regional stability and peacebuilding. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 marked a turning point, transforming Iran into an Islamic Republic and intensifying ideological and sectarian divides with Saudi Arabia. This ideological schism has since evolved into a broader power struggle influenced by the involvement of external powers such as the United States, Russia, and China, further embedding the rivalry within global power dynamics. This article explores the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of the Iran-Saudi rivalry, highlighting its impact on regional stability and governance. It also examines the role of cultural, ideological, and non-physical borders in shaping the rivalry, emphasising how these intangible dimensions complicate border management in contemporary world politics. Understanding the multi-dimensional nature of this rivalry is crucial for formulating effective foreign policies that mitigate its destabilising effects on West Asia and beyond.

Keywords: Iran-Saudi rivalry, West Asia, geopolitics, Sectarian conflict, Proxy wars, non-physical border, Regional instability

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Introduction

The relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia is one of the most intricate and enduring rivalries in contemporary geopolitics. For decades, this relationship has been marked by fluctuations, uncertainty, and persistent tensions. At its core, the rivalry is a struggle for dominance over West Asia and leadership of the Islamic world, shaped by a complex interplay of ideological, geopolitical, and economic factors. While both countries seek influence across West Asia, they do so through divergent frameworks, resulting in enduring rivalry that have manifested in proxy wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.¹

To understand the dynamic between these two countries it is essential to know that the roots of the schism trace back centuries, with Arab-Persian cultural and sectarian tensions forming a historical backdrop. However, the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia was not always hostile. Diplomatic ties were formally established in 1928, years before Saudi Arabia gained international recognition in 1932. During this period, both nations shared common goals, including preserving their monarchies and pursuing economic stability. Despite these early collaborations, rivalry emerged as both the Al Saud and Pahlavi dynasties vied for influence over the Gulf region. This competition, while shaped by ideological undertones, was more about geopolitical aspirations than fundamental doctrinal religious differences.²

Furthermore, the modern genesis of the rivalry started in Iran with the 1979 Iranian Revolution that drastically transformed the dynamic of the relations, marking a turning point between Iran and Saudi. Iran's shift from a pro-Western monarchy to an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini was seen by Saudi Arabia as a profound ideological threat. The revolution not only established a governance model that challenged Saudi Arabia's monarchical system but also sought to export revolutionary ideals across the region, intensifying sectarian divides. The revolution laid the groundwork as a contemporary security dilemma, with both nations deeply suspicious of each other's intentions and actions within the region.³ For Riyadh, Khomeini's Islamic Revolution was a signal of ideological confrontation, creating enduring tensions that continue to destabilise West Asia.⁴

This rivalry is further complicated by the involvement of external powers, particularly the United States, China and Russia. These actors, each pursuing their strategic interests in the region, have deepened the ideological and geopolitical divides between Tehran and Riyadh. The Cold War-era alignment of Saudi Arabia with the US and Iran's partnerships with Russia reflect how external interventions have amplified regional tensions, embedding the rivalry within the larger framework of global power politics.⁵

The fault lines between Iran and Saudi Arabia extend beyond political and economic competition. Rooted in religious, cultural, and ideological differences, these divides shape the very concept of borders, transforming them into constructs of identity rather than mere physical demarcations. These non-physical boundaries, ideological influences, sectarian loyalties, and cultural affiliations play a crucial role in defining the rivalry and complicate the task of border management in the modern era.⁶ Managing these soft borders requires navigating zones of influence and identity that transcend territorial lines, creating challenges for regional stability.

This article explores the strategic fault lines between Iran and Saudi Arabia, focusing on the historical, geopolitical, and ideological underpinnings of their rivalry. It argues that this

conflict is central to the instability of West Asia, obstructing efforts toward cooperation and peacebuilding. By examining these dynamics, the article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of this rivalry and its implications for regional stability and diplomacy, highlighting the need for innovative strategies to mitigate its destabilising effects.

Objectives

1. To analyse the ideological and sectarian divides that underpin the rivalry and their impact on regional politics.
2. To assess the influence of external powers in exacerbating or mitigating the Iran-Saudi rivalry.
3. To explore the role of proxy wars in extending the rivalry across West Asia.
4. To investigate how non-physical borders, such as cultural and religious identities, shape the rivalry.

Research Questions

1. How do ideological and sectarian divides between Iran and Saudi Arabia shape their geopolitical strategies and influence regional politics?
2. What role do external powers, such as the United States, Russia, and China, play in exacerbating or mitigating the Iran-Saudi rivalry?
3. How have proxy wars in countries like Syria, and Iraq extended the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia across West Asia?
4. In what ways do non-physical borders, such as cultural and religious identities, redefine the dynamics of the Iran-Saudi rivalry?

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilising both primary and secondary data sources alongside case study analysis to explore the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The methodology is structured to provide an in-depth understanding of the ideological, sectarian, and geopolitical dimensions of the rivalry and its impact on West Asia. Primary data sources include speeches, and interviews from regional leaders and key stakeholders. These sources provide firsthand insights into the motivations, strategies, and policy orientations of both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Secondary data sources comprise academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and credible reports from international organisations. These are used to contextualise the rivalry within broader historical and geopolitical frameworks, as well as to analyse its contemporary manifestations, such as proxy wars and ideological divides. The research incorporates case study analysis to examine specific regional conflicts, including Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. These case studies highlight how Iran and Saudi Arabia extend their rivalry through proxy wars and influence zones, providing concrete examples of their geopolitical strategies and the implications for regional stability. A thematic analysis approach is used to categorise data into key themes, such as ideological and sectarian divides, the role of external powers, and the concept of non-physical borders. Additionally, comparative analysis is conducted to evaluate the strategies and influence of both states within these case studies. Finally, international relations theories, including realism and constructivism, are applied

to interpret the findings, offering a theoretical lens to understand how cultural, religious, and ideological constructs shape state behaviour and the power dynamic of the rivalry.

Key Findings and Analysis

1. The ideological and sectarian divides between Iran and Saudi Arabia significantly influence their geopolitical strategies and regional dominance. The rivalry, although seemingly based in the Sunni-Shia divide, transcends religious doctrine, exploiting patriotism and Islamism as tactics of influence. Both countries construct narratives that interweave national pride with religious identity, mobilising support both domestically and regionally. Iran presents itself as the protector of Shia communities, portraying its actions as a counter to Sunni oppression, whereas Saudi Arabia asserts its role as the stronghold of Sunni Islam and the guardian of Islam's sacred sites.⁷ This sectarian rhetoric masks nationalist objectives, as both countries pursue regional supremacy under the pretext of ideological and religious justifications.⁸

Religion and politics are intricately connected in both Iran and Saudi Arabia, with their governance structures and foreign policies mirroring their distinct religious ideologies. The Islamic Republic of Iran incorporates Shia theology into its governance, advocating its revolutionary model as a substitute for monarchical rule. This has resulted in support for Shia militias and movements in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, complicating stabilisation efforts in these regions. In contrast, Saudi Arabia utilises Wahhabism as a fundamental component of its domestic and foreign policy, exploiting its religious authority to mitigate Iran's influence. The interconnection of religion and politics establishes inflexible structure and foundation, wherein ideological compromises are perceived as existential threats.⁹ This inflexibility hinders political cooperation and perpetuates regional instability.

Patriotism exacerbates these challenges, as both countries exploit nationalist sentiment to rationalise their actions. Iran employs anti-imperialist discourse, portraying itself as a proponent of autonomy and opposition to Western hegemony. This patriotism frequently conceals its sectarian agenda, evident in its interventions in Iraq and Yemen. Likewise, Saudi Arabia presents its policies as protecting Sunni Islam and Arab unity. However, these narratives frequently conceal its quest for regional dominance. The combined influence of patriotism and Islamism enables both countries to galvanise support while mitigating criticism of their actions as essential for ideological and national preservation.¹⁰

The Iranian Revolution shows the use of religion and nationalism as methods of manipulation. Initially, it motivated Arab nations with its anti-imperialist principles; however, as Iran started exporting its revolution, it unveiled a sectarian agenda focused on Shia supremacy. This transition alienated numerous Sunni-majority Arab nations, which progressively aligned with Saudi Arabia. Iran's involvement in Iraq reflects this dynamic.¹¹¹² Following the 2003 U.S. invasion, Tehran leveraged Shia solidarity to strengthen its influence by backing militias and political parties to consolidate its strategic position. Saudi Arabia, in response to Iran's expanding influence, supported Sunni tribes and leaders ostensibly to ensure balanced sectarian representation. In Yemen, Iran backs the Houthi rebels, positioning itself as their ally in a sectarian conflict, while Saudi Arabia heads a coalition aimed at reinstating the Sunni government, characterising its intervention as a safeguard of regional stability.¹³ The exploitation of patriotism and Islamism intensifies the region's ideological challenges. Entrenched religious

elites in the two countries hinder political innovation, sustaining stagnation and instability. The prevalence of sectarian rhetoric, combined with an emphasis on nationalist and ideological superiority, hinders substantial collaboration and perpetuates a cycle of conflict that destabilised West Asia.

2. External powers, mainly the United States, Russia, and China, significantly contribute to intensifying the Iran-Saudi rivalry, frequently fostering instability instead of resolving tensions. Their interventions escalate military engagement, enforce economic sanctions, and cultivate diplomatic standoffs, thereby entrenching the region in cycles of violence. By supporting opposing factions, these powers turn local conflicts into global geopolitical arenas, extending violence and creating peace more elusive. The United States has significantly influenced the intricate relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia, shaping their interactions through its geopolitical strategies. During the Cold War, both Iran and Saudi Arabia were allies of the United States, receiving military and economic assistance to counter the expansion of communism.¹⁴ The 1979 Iranian Revolution fundamentally transformed U.S.-Iran relations, shifting Tehran from a close ally into a strong opponent. Therefore, the United States concentrated its efforts solely on Saudi Arabia, deepening its alliance with Riyadh through military defence, advanced weapons, and economic partnership. This divergence intensified the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as Tehran increasingly perceived U.S.-supported Saudi influence as a direct threat to its regional ambitions.¹⁵

Saudi Arabia's dependence on the U.S. arises from its historically weak military capabilities, requiring external assistance for its security.¹⁶ Since the 1940s, Riyadh has sustained a strong alliance with Washington, bolstered by the Saudi's extensive oil reserves. The United States' dedication to securing oil supplies and maintaining market stability reinforced this alliance, which Riyadh considered vital for its protection against internal and external threats.¹⁷ Following 9/11, U.S. engagement in West Asia escalated significantly under the pretext of the war on terror, reshaping regional politics and solidifying Saudi Arabia as a fundamental element of American policy.¹⁸ The 2003 U.S. led invasion of Iraq significantly changed the region, allowing Iran to expand its influence by backing Shia factions and militias in Iraq, while Saudi Arabia collaborated with the U.S. to mitigate Iranian aspirations.¹⁹ This intervention transformed Iraq into a geopolitical arena, intensifying the Iran-Saudi rivalry and destabilising the Gulf region.

The United States' involvement in the Saudi-Iran rivalry is also apparent in its stance on Iran's nuclear program. The 2018 withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the implementation of severe sanctions through the maximum pressure campaign weakened Iran's economy and escalated regional tensions.²⁰ This caused Tehran, escalated its support for proxy factions in Iraq, Yemen, and Syria, thereby exacerbating its competition with Riyadh.²¹ The United States' alignment with Saudi Arabia, especially its backing of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis while framing the rivalry as a Sunni-Shia struggle. This alignment strengthens Riyadh's position while perpetuating regional instability.²²

On the other hand, Iran has fostered relationships with other global powers, including Russia and China, to mitigate U.S. influence. Russia's military assistance to Iran, especially

in Syria, has reinforced Tehran's dominance in the Levant, where both countries support the Assad regime against Saudi-backed opposition forces.²³ This alliance underscores Iran's capacity to leverage geopolitical shifts to its advantage. At the same time, China's extensive economic investments in Iran, represented by a 25-year strategic agreement, have furnished Tehran with essential support in the face of U.S. sanctions. These alliances enable Iran to counter isolation and pursue its regional aspirations, thereby exacerbating its competition with Saudi Arabia.²⁴

The engagement of external powers such as the U.S., Russia, and China has entrenched West Asia in cycles of rivalry and strife. As the U.S. strengthens Saudi Arabia by means of military and economic support, Russia and China enhance Iran's strategic and economic stability. This external interference intensifies the Iran-Saudi rivalry, converting regional conflicts into global arenas.²⁵ Initiatives such as Saudi Vision 2030, which seeks to diversify Riyadh's economy by reducing dependence on oil and natural gas while fostering a new political and economic framework and modernising society, further challenge Iran's ideological and geopolitical narrative. Riyadh's pursuit of global partnerships to reinforce its regional dominance is perceived by Tehran as a challenge to its authority.²⁶ The competing agendas of external powers sustain instability, making peace unattainable and complicating regional power dynamics. Mitigating this rivalry requires limiting external interference and promoting cooperative, regionally-driven solutions to re-establish stability in West Asia.

3. The Iran-Saudi rivalry has spread through proxy wars in countries such as Syria and Iraq, where local and regional dynamics interconnect, fostering a cyclical relationship that sustains instability. In order to understand this rivalry thoroughly, it is essential to analyse how internal factors, including sectarian divisions, national interests, and the repression of dissent, influence external relations between states.²⁷ The Arab Spring, initially a movement for political reform, transformed into a battleground for Iran and Saudi Arabia to assert influence and suppress opposition movements that posed a threat to their spheres of power. Both nations utilise a wide range of tools, including financial assistance, military support, and ideological narratives, to exert their influence in the region.²⁸ The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, however, manifests differently in each nation, influenced by local political dynamics and regional aspirations. These dynamics have turned localised conflicts into arenas for extensive geopolitical rivalry, resulting in catastrophic effects on regional stability.

The Iran-Saudi rivalry in Syria is exceptionally pronounced, as both countries exploit sectarian narratives and strategic interests to enhance their influence. Iran has consistently backed Bashar al-Assad's Alawite regime, perceiving Syria as an essential link to Hezbollah in Lebanon and a pivotal element of its regional strategy. Positioning its engagement as a protection of Shia sacred sites and a confrontation with Sunni extremism, Iran provided military advisors, proxy militias, and significant financial resources to reinforce Assad's authority. Whereas, Saudi Arabia has supported Sunni opposition groups, framing its assistance as a protection of Sunni-majority communities and a strategy to mitigate Iran's expanding influence in the Levant. Riyadh provided weaponry and financial support to insurgent groups, aiming to undermine Assad's regime and curtail Tehran's influence in Syria. The outcome has been an extended and catastrophic civil war, transforming Syria into a proxy conflict zone for both

rivals and exacerbating regional instability.²⁹ This conflict highlights how regional politics can influence local crises, with the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia exacerbating violence and hindering peace initiatives.

In Iraq, the competition manifested differently yet remained equally significant. After the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the disintegration of Saddam Hussein's regime created a power vacuum that both Iran and Saudi Arabia attempted to occupy. Iran used Iraq's Shia majority to establish strong ties with Shia political factions, militias, and religious authorities. By ingraining itself within Iraq's political and security frameworks, Iran aimed to secure a friendly government in Baghdad and minimise U.S. and Saudi influence. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia aimed to bolster Iraq's Sunni minority, presenting its engagement as a means of neutralising sectarian representation and safeguarding Iraq's Arab identity from Iranian influence. The rivalry escalated as both countries mobilised support for their allies, deepening sectarian divisions and jeopardising Iraq's shaky efforts at stability. The emergence of ISIS exacerbated the situation, with both Iran and Saudi Arabia undertaking measures to counter the group while at the same time leveraging the conflict to enhance their influence.³⁰

The proxy wars demonstrate how the Iran-Saudi rivalry exacerbates instability throughout West Asia. The interaction between local and regional politics causes a vicious cycle, wherein internal conflicts are intensified by external aspirations, and regional ambitions provoke internal strife. The rivalry perpetuates violence and hampers reconciliation by intertwining national interests, religious ideology, and the search of power. Resolving this rivalry needs a sophisticated comprehension of its local and regional aspects and cooperative strategies that emphasise peace and stability rather than geopolitical rivalry.

4. Cultural and religious identities, as non-physical borders, have significantly redefined the Iran-Saudi rivalry by establishing intricate layers of influence that transcend physical boundaries. These borders are not physical demarcations but rather emerge from entrenched ideological disparities, historical resentments, and the politicisation of identities.³¹ They allow both countries to extend their influence beyond their borders, affecting political dynamics, governance structures, and societal affiliations throughout West Asia.

A significant approach in which non-physical borders influence this rivalry is through the strategic usage of religious ideologies. The Sunni and Shia divisions are frequently underlined yet the rivalry also pertains to the overarching struggle for legitimacy and the hegemony within the Islamic realm. Iran uses its revolutionary Shia narrative to challenge conventional monarchical systems, presenting an alternative governance model that it endeavours to promote. This ideological border isolates Saudi Arabia, which perceives itself as the guardian of Sunni Islam and the legitimate leader of the Muslim community. Their divergent views have heightened competition, as both countries assert their exceptionalism in representing the true path of Islam, leaving ideological reconciliation challenging.³² Cultural narratives significantly contribute to the definition of non-physical boundaries. The Persian identity of Iran and its historical legacy as a civilization-state shape its regional ambitions. This stands in opposition to Saudi Arabia's Arab-centric narrative, which emphasises the unification of the Arab world under Sunni leadership.³³ The cultural differences intensify the rivalry, as each nation's identity influences its view of regional allies and foes. For instance, Saudi Arabia underscores its

Arab identity by establishing alliances with Sunni-majority nations, whereas Iran seeks to extend its influence by appealing to non-Arab Shia communities in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. The interaction of cultural identity establishes unseen boundaries that influence alliances and rivalries throughout the region.

Cultural and religious identities serve as crucial instruments for Iran and Saudi Arabia in exerting political influence and consolidating dominance. Iran's revolutionary paradigm attracts not only Shia communities but also marginalised populations, establishing itself as a protector of the oppressed and allowing alliances beyond its sectarian base, exemplified by its support for Palestinian organisations such as Hamas.³⁴ Saudi Arabia uses its economic influence and religious leadership to establish loyalty networks among Sunni-majority countries, presenting its initiatives as a means of protecting Sunni Islam and maintaining regional stability, thus reinforcing relationships with nations such as Egypt and Sudan, despite the absence of direct religious or cultural ties.³⁵ Moreover, both countries exploit these identities internally to suppress dissent and reinforce internal power. Saudi Arabia defines opposition as a threat to Sunni orthodoxy and national unification, whereas Iran portrays dissent as plots devised by outside forces.³⁶ The combination of ideological narratives with political strategies highlights the effective application of non-physical borders in both foreign policy and governance, thereby establishing the authority of ruling elites, hindering reform, and exacerbating their competition while intensifying instability throughout West Asia.

Non-physical borders consequently restructure the Iran-Saudi rivalry by establishing intangible yet strong frameworks of influence. These borders establish alliances, justify interventions, and exacerbate divisions that sustain regional instability. Addressing this element of the rivalry needs an in-depth understanding of identity construction and manipulation, emphasising shared cultural and religious heritage as potential bridges rather than barriers. Only by surpassing these non-physical boundaries can the region progress towards enduring peaceful coexistence, stability and cooperation.

Conclusion

The Iran-Saudi rivalry is a multifaceted rivalry that transcends physical boundaries, manifesting in ideological, religious, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions. It is deeply rooted in the Sunni-Shia divide, yet its impact extends beyond sectarianism, intertwining nationalism, governance models, and external influences. Both nations have strategically mobilised religious and cultural identities to assert dominance, shaping regional and domestic politics. Iran's revolutionary model appeals to marginalised groups, framing itself as a defender of the oppressed, while Saudi Arabia employs economic power and religious authority to forge alliances and solidify its leadership among Sunni-majority states. This rivalry perpetuates instability through proxy wars, suppression of dissent, and the politicisation of religious identities. The involvement of external powers such as the United States, Russia, and China further complicates the conflict, transforming localised conflicts into global battlegrounds. While the U.S. strengthens Saudi Arabia through military and economic means, Russia and China bolster Iran's resilience, exacerbating the geopolitical competition. Proxy wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen exemplify how this rivalry fuels instability, turning domestic crises into arenas of broader geopolitical contention. Non-physical borders, including cultural and ideological

narratives, redefine this rivalry by creating intangible frameworks of influence. These boundaries shape alliances, justify interventions, and deepen divides, perpetuating cycles of violence and hindering peace efforts. Addressing the Iran-Saudi rivalry requires a nuanced understanding of its local, regional, and global dimensions. Emphasising shared cultural and religious heritage could serve as a bridge to mitigate tensions. By fostering collaborative, regionally driven solutions and reducing external interference, there is potential to move toward stability and cooperation, crucial for transforming West Asia into a more secure and unified region.

Recommendations

To address the Iran-Saudi rivalry and promote regional stability, a comprehensive approach is essential. Establishing platforms for regional dialogue, facilitated by neutral mediators such as the United Nations or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), can help address shared challenges like terrorism, economic development, and proxy warfare. Confidence-building measures, including non-interference agreements, communication hotlines to prevent miscalculations, and phased reductions in proxy warfare, are crucial to reducing hostilities. Emphasising the shared Islamic heritage and cultural ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia could foster mutual understanding through initiatives like joint cultural exchanges and academic collaborations. Additionally, international powers should limit their interference, as it often exacerbates tensions, and instead support regionally-driven solutions by providing diplomatic or financial assistance for peacebuilding efforts. Addressing underlying grievances is equally important, with both countries needing to tackle internal issues such as sectarian divides, governance challenges, and the suppression of dissent to create a more stable domestic and regional environment. These steps, if implemented with sustained commitment and cooperation, can pave the way for de-escalating the rivalry, fostering collaboration, and achieving long-term peace and stability in West Asia.

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India and I2U2: Strategic Impacts and Future Prospects

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Abstract

The I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) has emerged as a strategic partnership with the aim to enhance cooperation in the field of economics and overcoming the different challenges such as technology, trade, energy, and food security. This unique quadrilateral framework provides India a platform to strengthen its global position, expand strategic alliances, and enhance economic growth by deepening ties with key players in the West Asia and the West. This research paper aims to examine how I2U2 creates opportunities for India to strengthen its presence in West Asia and to analyze the grouping's role in addressing pressing global challenges.

Key Words: I2U2, West Asia, Geo-politics, Geo-Economics, Minilaterals

Introduction

In July 2022, India, Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) unveiled a new minilateral alliance called the I2U2 during a hybrid summit. Minilaterals are informal, focused initiatives designed to address specific threats, contingencies, or security challenges, typically involving a small number of states with shared interests.¹ A key feature of minilateralism is its emphasis on common goals, allowing countries to cooperate on critical issues without requiring full alignment on all matters. These initiatives are often characterized by a limited number of participants, an ad hoc nature, and voluntary outcomes and commitments.

Each of the four countries has distinct inspirations for joining the I2U2 alliance. For India, it offers a platform to enhance its strategic engagement with West Asia. Moreover, India

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enjoys strong bilateral ties with the other three nations, creating a solid economic incentive for its involvement in the alliance. For Israel, the I2U2 represents an extension of the Abraham Accords and offers a fresh opportunity to create a platform that unites its longstanding partners, the U.S. and India, with its newer ally, the UAE, fostering broader economic and strategic collaboration.² The UAE sees the I2U2 as a dynamic and goal-oriented coalition. It believes that this partnership, leveraging the strengths of its members, can effectively address global challenges, particularly in areas such as food security, energy, and water. For the United States, the I2U2 presents an easy opportunity to build on the momentum of the Abraham Accords, fostering both bilateral and multilateral ties with its allies, particularly in West Asia. It also serves as a strategic tool to counter China's growing influence in the region, especially in areas such as investment, innovation, and technology. I2U2 holds huge potential, offering opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration. The United States brings extensive capabilities across various sectors, India offers a vast pool of human resources and talent, Israel excels in advanced technologies, and the UAE is fostering innovation, attracting start-ups, and committing substantial investments.³

Key Factors Driving the Formation of I2U2

In terms of global socio-economic security, the world is currently facing a new set of challenges beyond traditional threats. While global growth was already at risk, the COVID-19 pandemic, growing competition for global dominance, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war have made the economic and social consequences of slow growth more apparent. Disruptions to supply chains, trade wars, energy insecurity, and geopolitical-economic issues have all hindered efforts to recover the global economy. The creation of I2U2 is considered a key outcome of the Abraham Accords, aiming to facilitate the normalization of Arab Israeli relations. Israel has recently established diplomatic ties with four Arab League countries: the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. As the geopolitical, economic, security, and social dynamics of the region evolve, new diplomatic dialogues are emerging. The primary reason the four I2U2 members appear united is their shared focus on two main objectives: expanding their regional geopolitical influence and ensuring global socio-economic security.⁴

- ***Abraham Accords:***

The Abraham Accords are bilateral agreements aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, as well as between Israel and Bahrain, signed on September 15, 2020. These agreements were mediated by the United States. The accord has paved the way for significant geopolitical shifts and their subsequent impacts in West Asia. These agreements marked the recognition of Israel's sovereignty by both the UAE and Bahrain, as well as the beginning of Israel's diplomatic relations with Arab countries. This development has also led to the emergence of new geopolitical and geoeconomic alignments, including mini-lateral organizations such as I2U2. Additionally, the Accords aim to alleviate conflicts by emphasizing potential areas of cooperation, including science, art, medicine, and commerce, with the goal of maximizing human potential and fostering closer ties between nations.⁵ The focus on economic and technological collaboration within the Abraham Accords is partly driven by the Gulf countries' desire to leverage Israel's technological and scientific

advancements. Meanwhile, Israel also sees investment opportunities in Gulf nations like the UAE.

- ***Countering Turkey's growing influence in the region:***

Turkey's main interests in West Asia can be classified into economic, diplomatic, and geopolitical categories. Converging interests are primarily economic, while diverging interests are political in nature. Turkey's growing focus on its relations with the West Asia is driven not only by shifts in global politics but also by factors such as the Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey and the water dispute with Syria. In recent years, Turkey has progressively strengthened its influence through military, political, and economic involvement, frequently positioning itself as a regional power. West Asia has become a foreign policy priority for Turkey, evident in its efforts to mediate the Arab Israeli conflict, its active engagement with the Arab League, contributions to U.N. peacekeeping forces in Lebanon and NATO forces in Afghanistan, its leadership role within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the strengthening of ties with Syria, Iran, and Iraq.⁶ Countries in West Asia, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, have begun to reconsider their strategic priorities in response to Turkey's expanding role. They view Turkey's policies particularly under President Erdogan as a challenge to regional stability, with its support for Islamist groups and its aggressive foreign policy potentially threatening the balance of power. In this context, minilateral alliances like I2U2 act as a countermeasure to Turkey's influence by enhancing diplomatic and economic ties among the member nations.

- ***Countering China's Influence in West Asia Region***

Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects across the West Asia region, including roads, railways, ports, and energy pipelines. These investments have allowed China to strengthen its economic ties with key West Asian countries, while also gaining leverage in the region's political landscape. In response to this growing influence, the I2U2 aims to counter China's growing geopolitical and economic influence by involving India, Israel, and the UAE in the G7's "Partnership for Infrastructure and Investment" initiative.⁷ The United States views I2U2 as a tool to extend its infrastructure investment and transparency efforts into West Asia, offering a counterbalance to China's competing initiatives. The evolution of I2U2's objectives align with the US's broader strategy of using the G7 to challenge China's global geo-economic influence, especially through the BRI. By focusing I2U2 discussions on practical issues such as infrastructure, health, food security, and energy, the US likely hopes to strengthen its efforts to compete with the BRI. Additionally, India aims to expand its infrastructure presence in West Asia through this new initiative, further countering China's influence in the region.⁸⁸

- ***Emphasis on Economic Collaboration***

While the Indo-Pacific Quad primarily focused on defense and security, the I2U2 appears to prioritize economic cooperation over security collaboration. I2U2 has identified six key areas for cooperation and investment: water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security. The partnership aims to leverage private sector capital and expertise to modernize infrastructure, establish low-carbon development pathways for industries, enhance public

health, and foster the growth of critical emerging and green technologies within the member countries.⁹ I2U2 brings together Israeli innovative technology, US global industrial expertise, Emirati economic resources, and Indian market leadership to create sustainable, competitive opportunities that can benefit the global economic landscape today.

Strategic Implications for India

The West Asian region has been important for India's foreign policy since it considers West Asia as a strategic hub with significant geopolitical and economic implications. The West Asia and India share cultural exchange, historical linkages, and contacts among their civilizations. Likewise, the strategic location of this region greatly influences India's hunt for intense bilateral relations with West Asian countries. India's relations with the West Asian countries are based on two pillars, one is India's export of cheap labour to the GCC States and secondly, its import of energy resources from the region to support its growing economy. India maintains strong ties with GCC countries and receives substantial remittances annually. According to reports, between 2021 and 2022, India received \$87 billion in foreign remittances, with a significant portion coming from the GCC countries, second only to the United States.¹⁰

After its creation I2U2, India can expand the supply chain mechanism and secure investments from Israel, the UAE, and the US. As part of its 'Look West' policy, India's wants to foster peaceful and economically advantageous relationships with West Asia which resulted the formation of I2U2 grouping.¹¹

During its first virtual summit which was held On July 14, 2022, the two announcement made by the group which is a \$2 billion investment and technological assistance for agricultural initiatives in two Indian states, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh; and support for a hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat. It shows a clear indication of India's benefit from the groups. The groups providing a platform for sustained mobilization of capital from the UAE that is supported by Israeli and American technologies and championed by Washington.¹²

Another significant initiative from the I2U2 summit is the UAE's \$2 billion investment in developing food parks in India. These projects will leverage Israeli and U.S. climate-smart agricultural technologies, clean tech, and renewable energy solutions to enhance crop yields, ultimately addressing food insecurity in both South Asia and West Asia.¹³ India's agricultural sector stands to benefit significantly from the support of the Israeli and UAE governments, along with private sector involvement, leading to increased agricultural output. Additionally, with India's rapidly growing start-up ecosystem, the country is well-positioned to gain from I2U2's focus on start-ups, waste management, private capital investment, and access to technical expertise. The initiative also aims to develop hybrid renewable energy projects combining wind and solar power to support energy conservation and promote sustainable trade. This clean energy project aligns with India's Paris Agreement commitment to reducing carbon dependence. Through I2U2, India benefits from the opportunity to collaborate with Israel and the UAE, strengthening its strategic presence across West Asia.

The UAE, currently India's third-largest trading partner, recently signed a free trade agreement with India, aiming to boost bilateral trade from \$59 billion to over \$100 billion within five years. Both countries are now prioritizing economic collaboration through I2U2. During 2017, India and UAE signed 14 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)

agreements, which addressed India's strategic food priorities through creating Emirati Indian cooperation frameworks in food processing, maritime transport, and freight logistics and warehousing.¹⁴ The growing partnership between India and the UAE not only strengthens their economic ties but also supports India's efforts to attract foreign investments, boost economic growth, and address the challenges of extremism and terrorism. Likewise, UAE is also India's fifth-largest crude oil supplier, accounting for 8% of India's oil imports, there is substantial potential for enhanced collaboration in the energy sector, tapping into the vast opportunities for energy cooperation.¹⁵ India is the third-largest energy consumer globally, relying on imports for 85% of its energy needs, making it the world's most import-dependent nation by percentage.¹⁶ India's oil import bill reached \$119 billion in 2021–2022, and the country is projected to become the world's largest energy consumer by 2035.¹⁷ The UAE invested in two win-win oil storage facilities in India which will enhance India's energy security. Contrarywise, an Indian consortium was awarded a 10% stake in the UAE's Lower Zakhum offshore oilfield in 2018, making it a cross-investment engagement. Likewise, Reliance Industries signed up with ADNOC in 2021 to develop a \$2 billion chemicals facility in Ruwais.¹⁸

Since the 1990s, Israel has significantly deepened its ties with India, with notable progress in negotiations for a free trade agreement amid growing economic cooperation. Bilateral trade between the two nations rose from \$200 million in 1992, when India established its embassy in Tel Aviv, to \$6.35 billion in 2021. Additionally, the Haifa Port project, initially awarded to China despite warnings from the Pentagon, was reportedly granted to a joint Indian -Israeli consortium, which will operate the port until 2054.^{19,20} In 2017, the Indian Prime Minister made a historic visit to Israel, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 70 years. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu highlighted its significance. The visit is considered a turning point in India's stance toward Israel. Currently, both the countries cooperating in various sector such as science and technology, telecommunication, smart cities, trade, and in the field of defense cooperation.²¹ In 2017, India and Israel signed a defense deal, followed by a 10-year defense cooperation agreement in 2021.

During the visit a joint project of US\$ 40 million India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) also establish.²² Followed by this in 2018 the two countries signed nine agreements in various sectors, including cyber security, oil and gas, solar energy, space science, air transport, medicines, and film production.²³ The cooperation includes the joint development of an air defense system, along with India acquiring drones, radar systems, cybersecurity solutions, and communication technologies. Additionally, India accounts for approximately 43% of Israel's total global arms exports.²⁴ They also increase their cooperation in the field of space sector and have jointly worked on TecSar and RISAT satellites.²⁵

India's wish to become a food supplier for the West Asia and beyond depends on its ability to boost agricultural productivity, which depends on the efficient management of its water resources. To achieve this goal, India's partnership with UAE, Israel's agritech and clean tech are delivering essential support. For example, Israel created 29 agricultural centers of excellence across India 29 from 2012 to 2015 which will provide a platform for the hasty transfer of technology and best exercises. The above centers provided training to approximately 150,000 Indian farmers during 2019. Likewise, Israeli agricultural companies have significantly

transformed India's farming and water management sectors. Such as, ADAMA Agricultural Solutions, a leading Israeli crop protection firm, operates a formulation plant in Gujarat and a research and development center in Hyderabad. In 2019, ProFit Agro Ltd, an important Israel innovative agricultural solution, launched India's first Hydroponic Raft System in Bengaluru, contributing to the country's transition toward industrialized agriculture.²⁶

Israel's support for the food corridor is also driven by its collaboration with India in innovative technologies and the promotion of start-ups. Several of India's leading companies have invested in Israel's innovation ecosystem, while Israel has significantly contributed to the development of India's innovation landscape. A joint venture was also set up to establish a production facility for drip irrigation system by Israel manufacturer Metzer and Indian pipeline manufacturer Skipper. This Israeli drip irrigation technology will assist India to address rising water shortages.²⁷

For the betterment of water resources management in India, during 2023 both India and Israel signed a letter of Intent to establish Centers of Water Technology (COWT) in the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras and the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee separately. This will help India to achieve its needs, on sustainable management solutions for the Indian water sector. For agricultural development, during 2023, a letter of intent signed between Indian Council of Agriculture Research and MASHAV, Israel's agency for International Development Cooperation on Establishment of India-Israel Innovation Centre for Agriculture (IIICA).

The formation of I2U2 improves India-U.S. relations by increasing their collaboration into multilateral frameworks. I2U2 reflects the strategic convergence between India and the U.S. in responding rising challenges, such as regional instability, global food insecurity, and climate change. India also plays a significant place in Washington's approach to the Indo-Pacific as well as in its efforts to reshape US engagement with West Asian countries. The USA administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy views building on "India's continued rise and regional leadership" as a key line of effort. The US, on the other hand, is the largest trading partner for India and the second-largest foreign investor.²⁸ Recognizing the importance of technology, the United States and India have been working to strengthen their strategic technology partnership. In 2023, they launched the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), aimed at fostering an open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem built on mutual trust and confidence.²⁹ They are also expanding their collaboration in the fields of earth and space sciences, as well as space technologies. The I2U2 agenda emphasizes sustainable development projects, such as renewable energy, water conservation, and food security, benefiting both countries by fostering green technology and strengthening resilient supply chains.

The India-U.S. Major Defense Partnership has emerged as a vital pillar of global peace and security. In 2005, the two nations signed the New Framework for the India-U.S. Defense Relationship, laying the groundwork for closer collaboration. Building on this, in 2012, both countries launched the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), a landmark effort to foster sustained leadership focus on their bilateral defense trade.³⁰ This initiative emphasizes co-production and co-development opportunities, further strengthening the partnership. By

2022, U.S. military sales to India had reached an impressive \$22 billion, making the United States one of India's leading defense suppliers. Another critical area of cooperation is addressing shared experiences of terrorist threats, such as the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. and the 26/11 Mumbai attacks in India. The I2U2 framework offers a platform for both nations to collaborate on preventing terrorist activities and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. Notably, in 2018, a meeting of the Counterterrorism Joint Working Group was held, where both countries assessed global threats posed by terrorist groups. They committed to enhancing information sharing and exchanged views on efforts to counter the financing and operations of regional and global terrorist organizations.³¹ Due to China's growing hegemony in Asia and the Indo-Pacific, India has encountered numerous challenges, including issues related to regional security, economic relations, and trade ties. To effectively counterbalance China's influence, India recognizes that addressing these challenges self-reliantly is not possible. Consequently, India has adopted a strategy to strengthen its partnerships with nations that can bolster its capabilities and strategic position.³² In this context, India has deepened its collaboration with the United States through initiatives such as the Quad bloc and the I2U2 grouping. These partnerships aim to enhance security, foster cooperation, and support India's efforts to maintain stability and balance in the region.

Conclusion

The I2U2 framework offers India exceptional opportunities to expand trade, attract investments, and foster innovation, thereby bolstering the Indian economy. With its emphasis on investment and technology, this collaboration enables India to strengthen its manufacturing capabilities and startup ecosystem, complementing the "Make in India" initiative. Furthermore, it aligns with India's objective of becoming the world's third-largest economy within the next decade. This alliance also elevates India's stature in global politics. By partnering with nations that share common values and interests, India can assume a more influential role in shaping international events while advancing its economic and security goals. Additionally, West Asia holds significant strategic importance for India. The region hosts the largest Indian diaspora, approximately 7 million individuals, contributing to the highest remittances India receives. Moreover, 60% of India's energy imports are sourced from this region. Through the I2U2 grouping, India gains valuable opportunities to deepen strategic ties with the West Asian region, enhancing both its economic and geopolitical interests.

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Emerging Trends of Radicalization and Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh: Security Implications for India

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Abstract

The India-Bangladesh migration corridor is one of the largest migration corridors in the world, where minorities, as well as people from the majority community, have moved due to various social, political, economic, religious and cultural push and pulls. The Bangladeshi illegal migration to India is interlinked with the rising terrorism and extremism in Bangladesh. This embodies security risks for India. While during the freedom movement, Bangladeshi masses were more into linguistic nationalism, i.e. Bangla nationalism against the pre-dominant Urdu-Islamic identity, slowly, this linguistic nationalism turned into religious mobilization, propagated by quite a good number of well-grounded organizations and political parties, with backing from Pakistan. Such mobilization gave rise to the formation of new radical groups in Bangladesh, which resulted in an international nexus of terror and fundamentalist organization and started anti-India activities. The Bangladeshi government's failure to fight the radicalized elements has also facilitated the same. It has resulted in anti-India as well as anti-minority, especially Hindu sentiments in Bangladesh. This paper examines the game play of rising extremism and infiltration from Bangladesh, the rise in the number of new terror and fundamentalist outfits, the challenges they pose, and India's emerging security concerns.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Migration, National Security, and India's Neighborhood

Introduction:

Migration as a human activity is very normal and natural, but the advent of nation-states,

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the rise in religious extremism, and the strategic use of Illegal Immigration and infiltration by countries and other stakeholders against each other have forced people as well as nations to deliberate upon it. On the one hand, Illegal immigration leads toward a kind of uncontrollable situation where the dividing line between locals and foreigners, legal and illegal migrants, becomes blurred. On the other hand, it also raises several serious questions in front of the host land, like Border security, political manipulation, social disharmony, law & order, and cultural and economic challenges.

Myron Weiner rightly points out that we have given very little attention to the geopolitical impact of illegal immigration, prominent theories of migration studies pay very little attention to international relations and theories of international relations pay very little attention to migration. Regarding the India- Bangladesh migration corridor and their relationship, the role of rising radicalisation cannot be ignored. Therefore, understanding the background is very important in scrutinising the relationship between Illegal Immigration and radicalization in Bangladesh.¹

Bangladesh won freedom from Pakistan with the help of India's Peace Keeping Mission in 1971, which supported the Bangla nationalist movement against the pre-dominant Islamic identity. Bengali people in Pakistan were facing exploitation based on their linguistic, social, and cultural identities and political representation. This exploitation was at its peak in 1971, which led to the Bangla mobilisation against Pakistan.

In the movement, people from different communities participated and worked to ensure the freedom of Bangladesh, which was pushed by India's intervention with Soviet support. During this phase, there were two prominent opinions: the first was supporting the formation of Bangladesh, and the other one was supporting Pakistan in maintaining the status quo. The latter viewpoint later became the basis of radicalisation and terrorism in Bangladesh and started having a spill over in India. After independence, the second category of people started trying to turn linguistic nationalism into religious identity by targeting minorities in the country and spreading anti-India rhetoric in favour of Pakistan.

This got speed during the military rule in Bangladesh and started instigating separatists and radical forces in India, which posed security challenges for the same. During this period, Indian terror groups like ULFA also got support from Bangladesh-based terror groups and some of them based themselves in Bangladesh only.

As far as the nature and source of radicalisation and extremism in Bangladesh is concerned, there has been a huge debate about it. As Arefin & Ritu argue *"Explicit support by the military rulers for Islamic orthodoxy, the culture of political opportunism in democratic regimes, and weak governance are some of the major political drivers of radicalization and religious extremism in the country."*²

It can be said here that the political leadership directly or indirectly assists religious extremism at some point in time. In this case, the economic theory of migration does not properly justify the Bangladeshi case in the context of illegal migration. It is a politically manipulated and religiously motivated act that led to the persecution and exodus of people. The economic theory of migration undermines these political and religious measures that influence society. This oversimplification of such concepts leads to neglecting important variables like

radicalisation and religious fundamentalism.

Islamic fundamentalism has played role in the overall growth of radicalisation in Bangladesh. Initially, the foundation of Bangladesh was laid on principles such as Nationalism, Socialism, democracy and secularism, but slowly they were replaced by military rulers with pro-Islamic provisions. This state-led religious extremism has changed the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of Bangladesh.³

This Islamic orthodoxy had linkages with Pakistan and other West Asian countries or Muslim countries. Bangladesh's first PM, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who added a Muslim component to his policy towards West Asia to keep the region's economic importance in mind. It was later capitalised on by military rulers, where the term "secular" was replaced by "Muslim" and later resulted in extremism.²

This background of the formation of Bangladesh and the clash of identities became very important here since the India-Bangladesh migration corridor is one of the largest migration corridors, i.e. 10th in the world. With around 15 million illegal immigrants residing in India, the number is still constantly growing.⁴ Here, minority communities, as well as people from the majority community, have drifted into India due to various factors and impacted hugely. Terror outfits can easily manipulate it and can pose a direct threat to India's national security.⁵

In the end, it can be stated that Islamic orthodoxy has caused a serious law and order situation in Bangladesh and has become a major socio-political issue, but it has always been under-researched. 'Despite being seen as a moderate Muslim country, Islamic radicalisation and militancy have become a major concern since the nationwide serial bomb blasts in 2005'. Here, it is very important to understand the genealogy of radicalisation in Bangladesh to examine the role of different stakeholders in the insurgency in the region.⁶

This paper discusses the introduction of rowing fundamentalism, extremism and radicalisation in Bangladesh and continuously increasing illegal immigration. It traces the historical foundation of radicalisation in Bangladesh to assess the economic justification of migration and deconstruct the oversimplification of the concept. It then talks about the challenges India faces because of growing radicalisation and increasing infiltration and illegal immigration from the Bangladeshi side. The objective of the paper is to analyse the influence of radicalisation and Islamic orthodoxy on the outflow of people towards India, its linkages to different terror and radical groups, and the threats it poses to the national security of India.

Islamic Orthodoxy and Violent Extremism in Bangladesh

During the formative phase of Bangladesh, four cornerstones of its constitution, i.e. Secularism, Democracy, Nationalism, and Socialism, were identified to learn from its past and develop an equal society. After General Ziaur Rahman's government was formed in 1977, the term secularism was dropped, and he started referring to the Quran for the rule. While Bangladesh's first government worked to improve its ties with India and Soviet Russia, the Zia government turned to Pakistan, China, and Saudi Arabia.

Jasmin Lorch points out the role of the military governments of General Ziaur Rahman and Muhammad Ershad in the radicalisation during the initial phase. General Ziaur Rahman removed the ban on religion-based politics, which finally resulted in the approval of Islam as

the state religion under Ershad's rule in 1988, and slowly, this state-sponsored support of Islamization laid the foundation of extremism. During this period, the ban from Jamaat-e-Islam (JEI) was also revoked, which was banned by Awami League in 1971; it was also responsible for the anti-India discourse during the initial years and also criticised India's decision to revoke Article 370 as well. Bangladesh Nationalist Party also supported Islamic radicalisation from its very inception and was also supported by JEI in the elections of 2018. Later, organisations such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (Huji) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahedeen (JMB) became popular in the early 2000s.³

While, the first government was trying to improve ties with India, International terrorist organisations like ISIS and Al Qaeda were spreading their wings in Bangladesh as they started working with the radical and extremist organisations of Bangladesh and India. This radicalisation finally resulted in attacks against minorities in the second decade of the 21st century. The increasing Islamic terror activities in the NE region has deep links with terrorist groups like ISIS and infiltration is one of the gravest threats in front of India, and it is posing challenges to the integrity and sovereignty of the Indian state. The problem of illegal migration is planned, organized and run by selective organizations and their supporters that are sitting in Pakistan under the conspiracy to divide Assam from India.⁷

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in response to a question asked in the Rajya Sabha, a huge number of infiltrates try to enter India from the Indo-Bangladesh border. The data below provides details of failed infiltration efforts. This number has been on the rise in recent times.⁸

Table 1- Infiltrators arrested while infiltrating the India-Bangladesh and India-Pak Border

Year	India-Bangladesh Border
2010	Infiltrators arrested- 1600
2011	Infiltrators arrested- 817
2012	Infiltrators arrested- 1383
2013 till January	Infiltrators arrested-209

Source- Ministry of Home Affairs' response in the Rajya Sabha, 06 March 2013, starred question no. 127.8

During the initial phase, illegal immigration was part of the larger Pakistani strategy to divide Assam from India⁹. Afterwards, it got affiliated with Islamic radicalization in Bangladesh, which resulted in the large-scale migration flow towards India. Kumar calls it to be incomplete dream of dividing Assam and argues that the root cause of illegal immigration lies in this intention only.¹⁰ He further states that the IM towards India is not simple but chained, where those who have already reached assist others to come, settle and get fake documents.⁹ It shows that the problem of infiltration and illegal immigration is part of a larger strategy of Pakistan to divide Assam, and therefore, Islamic fundamentalism was supported by them.

This dream is very much visible in the statements of Pakistani leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who raised the Assam issue and argued that Pakistan's controversy with India is not

just about Kashmir; Assam is also a point of contestation¹¹. He argued that few of the Muslim-dominant districts of Assam should have been given to Pakistan during the partition, and their inclusion in India was wrong. Sheikh Muzib-ur-Rahman supported the theory of 'lebensraum' (India should hand over geographical space to Bangladesh) and believed that Assam should have been handed over to Bangladesh. Moinul Haq Choudhary supported the formation of Pakistan based on the two-nation theory; he stayed in Assam after the division to divide it. He also said that he would be able to annex Assam to East Pakistan within a decade.

Former Governor of Assam, S.K. Sinha had already focused on this issue in 1998 when he stated that the influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh has led to a change in the demographic pattern of states like Assam and calls it a grave concern. He further states that it is threatening to reduce the Assamese people to a minority in their own state, as happened in Tripura and Sikkim. He argues that it has undermined our national security as well. He further adds that "The long cherished design of Greater East-Pakistan/Bangladesh, making inroads into the strategic land link of Assam with rest of the country, can lead to severing the entire land mass of the North-East, with all its rich resources from the rest of the country. This will have disastrous strategic and economic consequences."¹²

Such statements and activities from the neighbouring country have laid the foundation of this Islamic radicalization and initiated the state-led illegal immigration, first from East Pakistan and then from Bangladesh to India, which became complex in the background of growing radicalization.

The same was accepted by Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the then CM of West Bengal while responding to the questions related to terrorist attacks. He stated in 2002 that illegal migration is interlinked with ISI and its anti-India propaganda. Here, he also highlighted that it is connected with various other insurgent outfits like Kamtapur Liberation Army (KLO) and ULFA, which are operating from Bangladesh.¹³

Role of International terror linkages in growing extremism in Bangladesh

Radicalization Extremism in Bangladesh has been highly impacted and motivated by Pakistani attempts to increase its presence in Bangladesh from the very beginning. ISI played a direct role in Bangladesh during the initial Islamic struggle. Slowly, other Pakistan-based terrorist organizations also found an opportunity and started playing a role there. Minority migration from Bangladesh for their survival is a different kind of migration flow, but radicalization-led migration, influenced by the Islamic radical identity, is a potential threat to India. Pakistan was also trying to regain some influence in Bangladesh and wanted India to pay the price of 1971.

The Zia government talked about 7 factors of Bangladeshi nationalism- territory, people irrespective of religion, Bengali language, economic life, culture, religion, and the 1971 legacy. According to Lintner, talking about religion while favoring one religion is contradictory, while the concepts of religion and linguistic identities are also contradictory in Bangladesh's case.²⁵ He argues that radicalization in Bangladesh desires to make a Muslim state excluding minorities and favor Muslims in other countries like India, which has built the foundation for international cooperation of extremist units.²⁴

In an interview, Osama Bin Laden once said that in all parts of the world, there are areas where strong Jihadi forces are present, from Bosnia to Sudan and from Burma to Kashmir. Therefore, it threatens our national security and borders; it is used for political manipulation, badly impacts social harmony and order, and poses economic and cultural challenges. Another upsurge in extremism, violent activities and terrorism took place during 2004-2005 in Bangladesh when corruption was also at its peak. Awami League took some action to fight against it and improve the condition. The High Court also banned the JI for its radical and extremist ideology.¹³

J.N. Roy highlights the security threats faced by India because of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. He argues that illegal immigrants are linked to terrorist groups in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and they are aimed at disrupting the Indian system. He also highlights the role of radical Muslim organisations like the Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) and their linkages with international terrorism. He points out the role of some more organisations like Muslim Sevak Sangh, Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami (HUJI), Islamic Reformation Protest of India (IURPI), which have linkages with Bangladeshi Jamaat-e-Islami and Pakistan ISI, and Islamic Chhatra Shibir.¹⁴

These organisations directly or indirectly play a key role in impacting India. They facilitate migration and use it for their political gains. It sponsors violence and unrest, supplies weapons and tactical advice and provides guerrilla training in India. Pakistan's High Commission itself has worked as the centre of ISI activities to build a network of terror organisations, including terror groups of Jammu and Kashmir, North-East and Bangladesh.¹⁵

Growing extremism, supported by extremist and terror outfits in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, has facilitated infiltration activities on the India-Bangladesh border, and it has posed serious security concerns for India. The next part of the paper deals with this. It provides detailed information on how it has been playing a key role in spreading anti-India rhetoric and facilitating criminal activities as well as terror attacks in India.

Infiltration, Illegal Immigration and the Security Concerns for India

The term 'security' is generally defined as the 'absence of threat' or the 'state of being safe', but different scholars interpret the nature and scope of security in multiple ways. Initially, traditionalists and wideners debated limiting or increasing the scope to non-political and military aspects. Slowly, security studies expanded to other domains of human existence, such as economic, social, environmental, and human security, which resulted in the evolution of concepts like non-traditional security.¹⁶

The rise in terrorism and extremism across the world has forced academia to revisit the domain of security studies. The attack of 9/11 played a key role in it, which has made it gain more attention in the field, and slowly, it became a general trend to consider illegal immigration and infiltration from a security point of view.

As far as India's case is concerned, it has been impacted by Illegal Immigration and infiltration very badly since radical and separatist organizations in India do have affiliations with international terrorist organizations, which support such inflow and make Illegal Immigration complex and more dangerous. This poses a serious threat to India's national security.

Political use and manipulation of immigrants have led to appeasement politics in India, which has hampered the interests of local people and created a feeling of resentment. Migrants and infiltrates owning land in India and having fake documents are other important issues. On the other hand, extremist groups in Bangladesh have had support from many organisations from within and outside the country since the very formation of Bangladesh, and they tend to impact India negatively in any possible way.¹⁷

Because of the long-term impact of illegal immigration, local people become concerned about their economic, political, and cultural interests, which get challenged by the people who come from outside. India's northeast faced a similar challenge when the Assam movement took place. *"It is adversely affecting our economy and social environment; creating law and order problems wherever they are present in sizeable numbers. Hence, the danger due to ongoing immigration is extremely known."*¹⁸

An uncontrolled inflow of people also becomes a financial burden on the state and local people. Illegal immigrants are those who migrate to earn better opportunities and get ready to work for low wages, which also becomes a matter of conflict between locals and migrants. Accommodating many outsiders becomes challenging and a potential security threat to a country. Sometimes, people migrate for various push and pull factors like earning and better opportunities, which burdens the host land.¹⁰

Another challenge is related to the cultural identity of locals; illegal immigrants that come from Bangladesh also pose cultural challenges. Locals started protesting against such unwanted cultural impact through the Assam Movement, which later resulted in the Assam Accord in 1985. Sanjay Bhardwaj focuses on the inter-state and international relationships impacted by illegal transnational activities and ethno-cultural conflicts¹⁹.

According to the data provided, the security personnel have seized a huge amount of fake Indian currency, narcotics and also cattle. Various organisations that intend to impact India negatively carry out these illegal activities.

Table 2- Seizures of Arms, Currency, Narcotics, and Cattle at the India- Bangladesh Border

Year	Arms (In Nos.)	Fake Indian Currency notes (In Rs.)	Narcotics (In KGs)	Cattle Seized (In Nos.)
2010	70	3226900	9292	101381
2011	45	4486300	8598	135291
2012	38	6609900	3161	120724
2013 till January	5	711000	298	12131

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs' response in the Rajya Sabha, 06 March 2013, starred question no. 1278

Other than these illegal activities, several terror attacks have also taken place in past. People have been found to have connections with terror and extremist organisations, which has created serious concerns for India. In 2014 also, a terrorist attack was carried out in Burdwan, West Bengal, in which 19 terrorists were involved, including 4 Bangladeshi nationals. The NIA later found that some people from local Madrassas and Masjids were also involved in the terror attack.²⁰ These Madrassas have international links with the Madrassas of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

In this case, Habibur Shiekh, an operative of a terror outfit and a trainer at Simulia mosque, was arrested. He used to spread religious hatred and intolerance among people for anti-India and terror activities. In the attack, some Bangladeshi religious teachers were also involved who were settled in India and had fake documents.²⁰

In another incident, Assam Police arrested a Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMD) operative in the Nalbari district of Assam. During the investigation, he told the police that a top JMB terrorist had conducted training of young people to join their organisation in Nalbari. During the lecture, he also played the Burdwan blast video to motivate them to join the outfit.²¹

Bodh Gaya Attack of 2018 was an important case which was directly connected with illegal immigration infiltration and Islamic fundamentalism. It was carried out to avenge alleged attacks on Rohingyas in Myanmar to bring this issue to the attention of the Indian government. In this attack, terrorists targeted Buddhist temples and symbols of Buddhist faith.

The NIA identified 6 names who were involved in the attack; the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh mastermind of the attack, Mohammad Jahidul Islam Alias Kausar, was arrested by NIA along with Adil Alias Assadullah. Adil Alias Assadullah was also a member of Majlis-Ash-Shura (the highest body of JMB). He was involved in several other attacks also in Bangladesh and was later sentenced to jail, but he escaped.²²

Special NIA Court gave 5-year imprisonment to two people for their links with the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen²³, and the Special Task Force also found an incriminating document in the phone of a Madrassa teacher affiliated with the Jamaat-e-Mujahideen (JMB) Bangladesh.²⁴ Such cases have proven that the internationalisation of radicalisation and terrorism has posed several security threats for India, and it is directly connected to Illegal Immigration. These extremists and terror groups target and recruit such people residing in India or Bangladesh to work against India and wage proxy war.

These arrests and involvement of terror outfits, as well as terrorists from Bangladesh, have made it very clear that infiltration and illegal immigration are directly linked with the international nexus of terror outfits, and it has been impacting India badly.

New Emerging Trends and Implications for India

It is argued that terrorist incidents in Bangladesh have been on a decline in recent years because of the Awami League's intolerance policy toward radicalization and radicalized groups. But in reality, radicalization and the number of such organizations have increased. According to recent updates, new small terrorist and radical organizations are emerging in huge numbers in Bangladesh. It can be seen here that extremism in Bangladesh has reached the ground,

and it is posing serious security threats to India.

It is very difficult to map these small organizations because of their small size and unique way of functioning. Transnational trafficking of goods, animals, and drugs is also seeing an upsurge, which is of great concern for India. On a daily basis, people are caught by the police and security forces for illegal activities and trafficking in this region.

Radical movements in Bangladesh have tried to instigate anti-India emotions over a period of time, which has posed strategic challenges in front of India from the very beginning. On the one hand, the Awami League is in India's favour when it comes to ideological affiliations, and BNP and its affiliates are more inclined toward China and Pakistan. However, over a period of time, both of them have worked with such radical groups and intended to get support from them. Madrassas in Bangladesh are crucial in determining the people's belief system through education. The role of these Madrassas in the political sphere of Bangladesh must also be addressed.

Because of poor literacy rates and infrastructure, people go for education at these Madrassas; they are also engaged in recruiting and training Islamic militants. The number of these Madrassas is constantly increasing, divided into two categories: Aliya Madrassas, which are run with government support, and Dars-e-Nizami or Deoband-style Madrassas which are totally independent.²⁵ These Madrassas have links with Madrassas in India, and they provide them with tactical advice.

There has been a shift in it as well; Mostafa and Doyle researched the background of the Islamic Militants who were killed by Bangladesh's authorities in Operations, attacks and gunfights, and they found that 73 per cent (38 out of 52) of such militants were from secular educational institutions. It shows that the Islamisation of Secular institutions has taken place. They also mention here that 90 percent (41 out of 52) of militants were students.²⁶

In the new form of radicalisation in Bangladesh, youth and females are also being recruited, as Munir argues that youth were radicalised and used for the Holey Artisan Bakery attack. It proved that youth from any educational and socio-economic background could be the targets of radicalisation. He provides brief information about the attack, where mainly 5 young people were involved, most of whom were well-educated and from an urban background. This case denied the economic theory of migration, which believes that the poor condition of illiteracy is responsible for increasing radicalisation.²⁷

Munir also argues that young minds are being recruited here because they are easy targets and can be manipulated easily; they have no police records, so it becomes easy to work openly, and they have operational freedom in comparison to other people with a criminal background, and some additional skills that older generations lack.¹⁰

On the other hand, the role of females is also increasing in radicalisation; it has challenged and changed the notion that terrorism has a gender. Jihadist feminism is strengthening its roots in Bangladesh. Initially, they used to play more sedentary roles, but now they have started playing more prominent roles such as combat activities, handling social media accounts, and mentoring the members. This form of radicalisation is less noticeable, but it is growing in reality. Radical groups in Bangladesh are proactively working to impact India's image badly

and create anti-India rhetoric in response to the criticism and protests of Indian PM Narendra Modi's visit; Bangladesh had to arrest 300 members of the Islamic group Hefazat-e-Islam over deadly protests. Such incidents are increasing daily, which is a serious concern for India.

Conclusion

Religious extremism poses serious security threats since it uses illegal immigrants, infiltrates and Indians who are ready to work against India. While scholars have discussed and debated illegal immigration in detail, its complex nature and interlink with other important factors have been ignored in academic discourses because of its implication and misinterpretation by academia, but it cannot be neglected that it has hugely impacted the countries. Illegal Immigration is not a simple economically motivated human activity but a politically manipulated and religiously motivate done.

The Indian government has constantly taken steps to deal with the problems of the National Register of Citizens, the Citizenship Amendment Act, diplomatic pressure, border management, and infrastructure building. However, more than these steps are needed since the problem is becoming more dangerous.

A committee like the Group of Ministers should be formed to revisit the domains of India's border security for a holistic understanding of the complex nature of Illegal immigration and infiltration. We need to form India's National Security Strategy, which will include issues like illegal immigration and its impact on Indian national security.

Since India is witnessing the "Sonali Adhyaya" of its relationship with Bangladesh, and the Awami League is in power, it might be easy to work together for border management and securitisation. But if government changes in Bangladesh and pro-Pakistani and anti-India forces unite again, it can lead to complexities for India. India needs to work with the Bangladesh government to target the networks of radical groups to avoid spillover in the near future. India needs to work on a counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategy to curb spillover incidents in the neighbourhood.²⁸

India also needs to be careful about the Geopolitical impact of Illegal Immigration since it has the potential to impact the relationship of India with other Islamic countries. Bangladesh has never recognised the problem of Illegal immigration, which is a concern for India. When India passed Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) to allow persecuted minorities of India's Muslim neighbouring countries, i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, to get Indian citizenship, Radical Islamic groups in these countries tried to fabricate anti-India rhetoric, which can become a factor in the relationship of with these countries.

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India-United Kingdom Relationship: Evolution, Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

India and the UK have a multifaceted and dynamic partnership based on a common history, democratic values, and a commitment to global development. The collaboration has developed from its colonial origins into a modern strategic partnership encompassing trade, investment, technology, defence, and cross-cultural exchanges. Since the UK has a sizable Indian diaspora that supports its economy and India is a sizable market for UK investments and exports, trade agreements have improved the two countries' economic relations. The goal of the 'Free Trade Agreement' (FTA) between India and United Kingdom is to increase bilateral trade and open doors for both countries' development. In UK, Indian diaspora acts as a dynamic cultural link between the two countries, fostering mutual understanding and interpersonal relationships. However, problems persist, including conflicting perspectives on historical narratives, immigration regulations, and geopolitical goals.

Keywords: Free trade agreement, 2030 roadmap, foreign direct investment, PIOs, NRIs.

Introduction

India and the UK have neither shared a cordial nor hostile relations. After Indian independence, both the countries resisted warming up the bilateral ties due to their colonial baggage. During the cold war period, the two countries had ups and downs in their relations, but after the end of the Cold war, bilateral relations got advanced. Although India and UK had differences in their relations, yet there was no conflict between them.¹ As both countries balance historical sensitivity with an eye toward the future while navigating the difficulties of a changing international order, their relationship continues to evolve. By using their steady skills and fostering greater cooperation, India and the UK are well-positioned to

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form a partnership that advances security and prosperity globally. India and the UK often agree on global issues including multilateralism, counterterrorism, and climate change. The Commonwealth, G20, and UN are just a few of the international organizations they collaborate with to show their commitment to solving global issues. India and UK have primarily agreed on five sectors for their proposed “2030 roadmap” which are “People-to-People contacts, Trade and Prosperity, Defence, and Security, Climate Action and Health.”²

Historical linkages

India and UK have been sharing historical connection. A long-time company rule and colonial rule in India has brought the two countries closer through the legal system, language and culture. But the atrocities and massacres committed by the Britishers in the past still haunts the minds of Indians. The Indian government and its people are still waiting for a formal apology from the UK for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.³ India and UK have the ‘pulling together’ and ‘pushing apart’ factors in their bilateral relations. The English language, parliamentary democracy, and the significant Indian diaspora are the pulling together factors between the two. However, the colonial past is the cause that is pulling people apart.⁴

After independence, India continued with the British system in the areas such as administration, education, economic activities and political institutions for decades. India joined the Commonwealth of Nations considering that it can be a platform to raise the voice in favor of other colonized nations. India was never in favor of any military alliances, but the UK not only imitated the formation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but remained an active member. Similarly, on the issues of Kashmir, Hyderabad and Goa, UK voiced against India.¹ India’s non-alignment approach during the cold war was not adored by the UK as the latter was in close alignment with the USA. India’s “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” with Soviet Union also irked the UK.⁴

UK’s rectification of its policy towards India

British supremacy has never allowed the UK to consider India as equal as them. The UK did not pay the attention India receives worldwide. The UK foreign policy prioritized its neighbours, middle east, USA, China etc. and the list didn’t find India. The UK’s overly sympathy towards Pakistan is another reason for the spoiled relationship between the two. India expected that UK could have asked boldly to Pakistan to dismantle the terrorist groups flourishing on their soil.³

In 1962, when China invaded and attacked India, the UK sympathized with India and became the first country to supply arms. It was conveyed that the UK cabinet agreed to send fifteen of its bomber squadrons but by that time China unilaterally went for a ceasefire. It was the phase when UK decided to have neutral stance on Kashmir issue and remained neutral during Indo-Pak war in 1971.¹

With the growth of the Indian economy and development process, Mark Field, UK Minister, responsible for ‘State for Asia and the Pacific’ was compelled to say that India-UK relations has been the “relationship of equals.” The UK has realized India’s surge at the global level. Now, UK assumes that supporting India for permanent seat in the ‘United Nation Security Council’ (UNSC) is in their interest and this will boost the democratic voices in the organization.

The UK government is now keen to do business with India and to work bilaterally and at the multilateral platforms too.⁵

After Narendra Modi won the election in India, the UK delegation was quick to visit India under the leadership of Foreign Secretary Priti Patel. In 2015, when Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi visited the UK, his counterpart David Cameron stated in a joint conference that ‘we are natural partners.’ Though the first fifty years (1947-1997) did not witness the natural partnership.⁴

Indian and the UK are now committed towards a partnership which delivers for both the countries equally. The two nations have prepared a roadmap for 2030 envisioning deeper people to people connections, revitalized trade and business, and technological collaboration which brings the betterment in the lives of common citizens. Both the countries want to maximize their defense and strategic cooperation so that Indian ocean and Indo-Pacific region could be more secured.⁶

Political Engagement

In the 2030 roadmap, both the countries ensure frequent high-level visits so that bilateral institutional mechanisms can be improved. They agreed for biennial India-UK summits for effective cooperation at ministerial level. The two nations also decided to support each other at international forums such as UNSC, UNFCCC, WTO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, G20 etc. To strengthen the democratic structure of both the nations, there is a need for regular exchanges between parliamentarians, bureaucrats, judges, public institutions and executive agencies.⁶ The recent high-level visit from India includes PM Modi’s UK visit in 2015 and again in 2018. From UK side, Prime Minister Theresa May visited India in 2016.⁶

Economic and Trade Relations

The economic ties between both countries are important because these two rank in the top seven places in the world economy with USD 5 trillion GDP together. India and the UK economic relation is strong and have a lot of potential for growth in both the goods and services sectors. Investment has been the prime component of bilateral ties between the UK and India. More than 1.6 million Indian expatriates, who account for over 6% of the UK’s GDP although making up less than 2% of its total population, are essential to promoting bilateral trade and investment. The UK market is home to several large Indian corporations, and the number of new corporate players is growing. The UK is still keen to explore the potential of the Indian market. Both our exports to and imports from the UK have declined. During 1998 and 1999, UK’s trade with India was at its peak and UK was ranked as second largest partner of India. On contrary, India ranks 14th among its trading partners in 2019-20.⁷ The two nations’ merchandise trade reached USD 15.45 billion between 2019-2020, with India profiting from the Net trade. The Department for International Trade’s data in 2019–2020 shows that after funding 120 ventures and generating 5,429 job opportunities in UK. In 2019, India surpassed US and ranked 2nd while investing through FDI. There are 654 Indian companies presently working in the UK, generating GBP 41.2 billion revenues, according to the “CII-Grant Thornton India Meets UK Report 2020.” These companies employed 110,793 people and paid over GBP 461.8 million in corporation taxes. Indian companies such as Tata

group, Wipro, Kotak Mahindra, HCL, Tata Mortin etc. have marked their strong presence in UK. Similarly, UK became 6th largest stockholder while investing in India followed by “Mauritius, Singapore, Netherlands, Japan and USA” which amounts USD 28.39 billion. An annual “India-UK Financial Markets Dialogue” was established to offer information and insights in an effort to strengthen bilateral collaboration.⁷

India’s primary exports to the UK are petroleum products, textiles, power-generating machinery, pharmaceutical and medical items, metal manufacturers etc. The primary items that India imports from the UK include non-ferrous metals, industrial machinery, metalliferous ores and metal scrap, beverages, electrical appliances and machinery, professional-scientific instruments, and chemicals etc. In order to receive UK’s SMEs investment in India, the High Commission of India, London launched the “Access India Programme” (AIP) in 2017. Companies looking to invest in India, namely those aiming to establish manufacturing facilities as part of the “Make in India” initiative, were the main focus of the AIP program.”²

Defence and Strategic cooperation

In November 2015, the two nations inked “Defence and International Security Partnership” (DISP) to give the strategic way for strengthening defence ties between India and the UK. The two nations will collaborate on principles, training, and other areas that are critical to the efficacy of defence. Through these partnerships, our two nations will be able to share strategic capabilities, such as defence technology and production in areas of mutual interest. There are around 70 UK based companies providing materials for aircraft or helicopter manufacturing at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The UK is having interest in Indo-Pacific region as a part of its strategy and for that it is deploying Carrier Strike Group (CSG) in the Indian ocean region. Therefore, there is another area of interest between the two to enhance as maritime cooperation.⁶

Education and Research Collaboration

The UK has been the favoured destination for Indian students studying higher degrees. In the 2021-2022 session, there are 1,26,535 students studying in UK’s universities and other institutions.⁸ UK perceives India as a crucial partner in Science and Technology. The two countries are in a talk for the Global Innovation Program (GIP) which will help Indian sustainable innovations and can be transferred to other developing countries. The UK has been ranked second pursuing partnership in Science and Technology. The two countries are cooperating in an institutionalised manner where “UK-India Education and Research Initiative” (UKIERI) and “UK Research and Innovation” (UKRI) are engaging with each other.⁶ The both countries should expand their cooperation as India has come up with New Education Policy. They should work on mutual recognition of qualifications, partnerships among higher institutions and encourage two-way mobility of students, researchers and academicians. The two nations should promote the exchange of ideas through think tanks, libraries and universities through regular interactions.⁷ Enhancing collaboration in education, India and UK signed an MoU for Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications in 2022. During G20 Bali Summit 2022, India and UK jointly announced a scheme for Youths as Young Professional Scheme. Under this scheme, the 3000 young graduates (18-30 years) of the both countries will be given to work

in each other's country.⁸

Cultural Exchanges

Culture can play a significant role in revitalising the India-UK bilateral ties. Due to shared history of centuries, India and UK have commonalities in culture. The Indian diaspora is promoting rich civilizational culture of their native country. Indian cuisines have special recognition in the UK. It has changed the taste of the natives there. Indian street foods and restaurants are becoming popular.⁸ In 1980s cultural relations between the two countries was the concern of small groups such as tandoori restaurants in UK's streets and British visiting India.⁹

Indians have revolutionised the UK's food industry. The fusion of both countries' cuisine gave birth to unique dishes. Indian culture is not restricted to food only. There are also celebrations of Indian festivals such as Holi and Diwali. Indian Bhangra got embraced by UK's pop culture. Indian cultural associations and events such as London Mela and Leicester Diwali bring the native and Indian communities together.¹⁰

India established a cultural centre as 'The Nehru Centre' in London in 1992. It has emerged as a premier cultural centre promoting Indian culture through music, dance, movie screening, theatres, exhibitions, talks, lectures etc. The centre is focused on broadcasting role play of British and Indian artists for greater cultural understanding. The Nehru centre also works as a facilitator between the cultural bodies of the both countries.¹ Ayurveda is also a part of ancient India culture. During PM Modi's visit in 2018, an MoU was signed to establish 'Ayush Centre' at St. Charles Hospital, London and under this MoU an amount of 1,10,000 pounds was sanctioned. The 'Ayuryoga' programme was also launched in November 2020 to raise awareness about ayurveda and yoga in UK.⁶

Multilateral Engagement

The United Kingdom has always been a vocal supporter of India's permanent seat in the 'United Nations Security Council' (UNSC) for the last two decades.⁶ The UK offered support to India for its aspiration to join the 'Nuclear Suppliers Group' (NSG). In her statement, Theresa May, UK Prime Minister told, it "continues to be a strong advocate of early Indian membership of the NSG" during her visit to New Delhi.¹¹ According to Penny Mordaunt, the International Development Secretary, UK has joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which is headed by India, to give more than one billion poor people access to clean, cheap and renewable energy. UK will further assist the ISA in developing 'solar water pumping system' so that farmers get less costly solar energy cheaper than diesel pumps to irrigate harvests.¹²

Indian Diaspora

The strong presence of the Indian diaspora became an institutional mechanism for the UK to boost people to people links. These links advanced educational and economic collaboration which further facilitated the emergence of politicians having Indian roots in UK such as Priti Patel and Alok Sharma. In 2015, Priti Patel stated that "Indian diaspora played a vital role in UK-India links, since building ties between our two great nations-the UK and India- isn't just an activity for governments but every member of the UK India diaspora community... through business, trade and investment, tourism, education, culture or family

ties, plays a part in strengthening the relationship between the two nations.”⁴

When it comes to migrant settlement, Indian diaspora is the largest ethnic minority communities. People of Indian origin (PIOs) in UK are 1.6 million and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are 3,51,000. The PIOs and NRIs are consist of 2.5% of total UK’s population but contribute 6% in country’s GDP. Until 2021, there were 16 Member of Parliaments of Indian origin and five of them had key ministries.⁶

The Indian community in the UK has transformed itself into an established and influential diaspora. Since their settlement in the UK, Indians went for pursuing higher degrees and this made them employable and competitive. Around 50% of the Indians have degree level education and 40% of them are working as professionals and performing managerial duties. There are 654 Indian diaspora owned companies in the UK with turnover of 1,00,000 pounds annually. These companies have given around 1.74 lacs jobs to the native population. These companies are working in different sectors ranging from hospitality, pharmaceuticals, real estate to food and beverages.¹³

Khalistan issue

The separatist movement by Khalistani extremists has been a burning issue between the India-UK relations. There is a section of Indian diaspora in UK who are supporting Khalistani movement from UK’s soil. The Indian government has repeatedly raised its concern with the UK authorities. On 19th March, 2023, the extremist holding Khalistani flag attacked the Indian High Commission, London. India summoned the UK diplomat in Delhi and lodged a strongest protest.¹⁴ Therefore, to strengthen the bilateral ties, the both countries need to counter Khalistani movement jointly.

Prospects

India and UK have to utilise their potential for the envisioned roadmap 2030 set by them jointly. There are many areas such as Digital health and tele-medicine, ayurveda and yoga where both the countries have to work for mutual and larger benefits. The two nations have to explore the possibilities in sectors like cyber security, clean and green energy and transportation. Terrorism and extremism have been one of the major reasons for the two country’s damaged relations for a long time. The UK has to ensure India that any anti-India activities will not be proper on UK’s soil. Both the UK and India are dedicated to meeting their sustainable goals. India aspires to develop 450 GW of renewable energy capacity in 2030, while UK has enacted legislation to attain ‘net zero greenhouse gas emissions’ in 2050. In an effort to promote greater collaboration, India and the UK have decided to mobilize private sector investments for Green India. The two countries are appreciating the ‘Enhanced Trade Partnership’ which further paves the way for ‘Free Trade Agreement’ (FTA).⁶

Conclusion

The India-UK relations has witnessed multiple ups and downs. Now both the governments should act positively so that the adverse past relationship could not affect the present-day ties. The ‘people to people’ ties between the two countries can heal the historical wound given by the Britishers as colonial rulers. The Indian diaspora has immense potential, and the Indian government has to have a good connection with their diaspora in making the bilateral

ties better. The Indian diaspora has hugely invested in the UK in different sectors providing jobs to the locals. By engaging with them, the Indian government can attract their investments in different parts of India. On the other hand, the Indian diaspora as a flagbearer of India's culture and traditions can help the Indian government in promoting yoga, ayurveda.

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Junior Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Sciences: An Exploratory Process Evaluation

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Abstract

The Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences is a cornerstone initiative by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India to support and nurture research talent. This study presents an exploratory process evaluation of the scheme, examining its key components, including selection, joining, fund disbursement, upgradation to Senior Research Fellowship (SRF), institutional transfers, and monitoring mechanisms. Data were collected through surveys and interviews with fellows and research scholars, complemented by insights from existing literature. Findings reveal that while the scheme effectively promotes meritocracy, inclusivity, and financial support, systemic challenges persist. These include accessibility barriers, delays in fund disbursement, inconsistent institutional support, and variability in monitoring practices. Additionally, concerns regarding the assessment of practical research aptitude and the effectiveness of mentorship were identified. Despite these issues, the scheme is widely recognized for its significant contributions to research capacity-building and academic development in Humanities and Social Sciences. This paper highlights actionable recommendations to address operational inefficiencies and enhance the scheme's impact, emphasizing the need for standardized practices, better communication channels, and targeted policy interventions. These improvements are critical to ensuring the JRF scheme fulfils its potential as a transformative instrument for advancing scholarly research and knowledge production in India.

Keywords: Junior Research Fellowship, Humanities and Social Sciences, University Grants Commission, research funding, process evaluation.

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Introduction

Research and innovation are cornerstones of academic and societal progress, driving advancements in knowledge, policy, and practice. In India, the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences plays a pivotal role in fostering research talent and promoting scholarly pursuits in disciplines essential to understanding and addressing societal complexities. Administered by the UGC, the JRF scheme is designed to identify and support meritorious individuals, enabling them to pursue advanced research leading to their doctoral degree and contribute to the nation's intellectual and academic landscape. The JRF scheme operates within a broader framework aimed at nurturing a vibrant research ecosystem in India. It provides financial assistance to qualified candidates, enabling them to enrol in M.Phil. or Ph.D. programs and focus on their research endeavours without financial distractions. Beyond financial support, the scheme incentivizes excellence by offering opportunities for upgradation to SRF based on demonstrated research progress. This tiered structure not only motivates scholars to maintain high standards of academic rigor but also enhances their capacity to undertake meaningful research.

Despite its critical importance, the JRF scheme faces several challenges that hinder its optimal implementation and impact. Persistent issues such as accessibility barriers for candidates from underprivileged backgrounds, delays in administrative processes, and inconsistencies in institutional support mechanisms (results of the pilot study) still exists. These challenges underscore the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the scheme to identify systemic gaps and propose actionable recommendations for improvement.

The significance of such an evaluation is twofold. First, it provides insights into the operational efficiency of the scheme, shedding light on how effectively it supports scholars across various stages, from selection to completion. Second, it highlights the lived experiences of fellows, capturing their perspectives on equity, inclusivity, and institutional processes. By addressing these aspects, the evaluation aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on higher education policy and research funding in India.

This paper seeks to undertake an exploratory evaluation of the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences, focusing on key processes, including selection, joining, disbursal of funds, upgradation to SRF, institutional transfers, and monitoring. Drawing on primary data from fellows and secondary insights from literature, the study examines the scheme's strengths and identifies areas requiring policy interventions. The findings aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the scheme's effectiveness and offer recommendations to enhance its impact on India's research ecosystem.

The subsequent sections detail the methodology employed in this study, followed by a presentation of results and their discussion. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations to address the identified challenges, ensuring that the JRF scheme continues to play a transformative role in advancing research in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Methods:

Philosophical Assumptions: This study is grounded in a critical realist research paradigm (Bhaskar, 1975), integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate the JRF

scheme. The research employs ontological, epistemological, axiological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Ontological Assumptions: Recognizing the stratified reality of JRF stakeholders, the study acknowledges the diversity of perceptions and experiences associated with the fellowship program.

Epistemological Assumptions: The study values multiple sources of knowledge, including document analysis, participant surveys, and interviews, to construct a holistic evaluation.

Axiological Assumptions: The researcher's neutrality and ethical considerations ensure an unbiased analysis, upholding the credibility of the findings.

Methodological Assumptions: A mixed-methods approach was employed to integrate quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the JRF scheme.

Rhetorical Assumptions: The study adopts an impartial and academic tone, presenting findings systematically to inform and engage a scholarly audience.

Research Design

A Sequential Explanatory Transformative Mixed Methods Research Design was adopted, combining descriptive and exploratory techniques to investigate the implementation and outcomes related to the processes of the JRF scheme. The design emphasizes both the measurable impacts and subjective experiences of stakeholders.

Sampling Procedure

The target population included Junior Research Fellows (JRFs), Senior Research Fellows (SRFs), and research scholars in Humanities and Social Sciences, administrators, and experts associated with the scheme. The sampling frame included current and former JRFs, SRFs and research scholars in Humanities and Social Sciences, along with the administrators associated with the JRF scheme in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi only. A stratified purposive sampling approach was employed to ensure diverse representation among participants. The study included 240 respondents (120 JRFs or SRFs and 120 non-JRFs) for quantitative analysis, out of which 20 JRFs and 20 non-JRFs completed their coursework and were in first year of their research, 30 JRFs and 30 non-JRFs who were in the mid of their research, 30 JRFs and 30 non-JRFs who were about to submit their thesis within a year, 20 JRFs and 20 non-JRFs who have submitted their theses on or after January 01, 2012, and 20 JRFs and 20 non-JRFs who have submitted their theses before January 01, 2012. 13 participants for qualitative interviews were recruited using maximum variation sampling technique to maximize the representation of various characteristics and experiences (Patton, 2002) and the sample size was determined based on the concept of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data Collection Tools

The data collection involved three main instruments:

Questionnaire: Structured questionnaire consisting of 41 items was developed to capture quantitative data on research scholars and fellows' experiences and perceptions of the JRF scheme. In the scope of present paper, only six of these items were relevant.

Interviews: Unstructured interviews provided qualitative insights from fellows and

administrators, enabling the exploration of nuanced themes.

Document Analysis: Policy documents, reports, and guidelines related to the JRF scheme were analysed to contextualize findings.

Standardization of Tools

The questionnaire was piloted and refined through a pre-try-out (on 10 participants and final try-out (on 20 participants) phase to enhance reliability and validity. The tool was standardized using the trustworthiness framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability which answers about the truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality.

Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data collection was conducted through online and in-person surveys. The questionnaire covered demographic details, perceptions of fellowship benefits, and challenges faced. Qualitative data collection was conducted through either virtual or in-person in-depth interviews. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and provide suggestions for improving the fellowship scheme.

Data Analysis Techniques

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data. Quantitative analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data analysis, incorporating coding, categorization, and theme development to extract meaningful insights.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All participants were assured of anonymity, and data was securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Results

Selection

Table 1: Selection Process of JRF is Standardized

Options	JRF Qualified		Total (Percent)
	No (Percent)	Yes (Percent)	
Strongly Agree	7 (2.92)	6 (2.50)	13 (5.42)
Agree	51 (21.25)	63 (26.25)	114 (47.50)
Neutral	6 (2.50)	8 (3.33)	14 (5.83)
Disagree	48 (20.00)	33 (13.75)	81 (33.75)
Strongly Disagree	8 (3.33)	10 (4.17)	18 (7.50)
Total	120 (50.00)	120 (50.00)	240 (100)

		Responses								
		Non-JRFs			JRFs			Total		
		N	Per cent	Per cent of Cases	N	Per cent	Per cent of Cases	N	Per cent	Per cent of Cases
Bases for Selection	Objective Examination	119	61.66	99.17	118	55.14	98.33	237	58.23	98.75
	Subjective Examination	29	15.03	24.17	36	16.82	30.00	65	15.97	27.08
	Merit	3	1.55	2.50	5	2.34	4.17	8	1.97	3.33
	Interview	25	12.95	20.83	31	14.49	25.83	56	13.76	23.33
	Group Discussion	17	8.81	14.17	24	11.21	20.00	41	10.07	17.08
Total		193	100	160.83	214	100	178.33	407	100	169.57

The analysis of the selection process for the JRF scheme reveals key insights into its functioning, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. The eligibility criteria for the scheme are largely considered well-defined. However, the selection process for the JRFs is seen by 52.92 percent of the participants as the standard one, whereas 41.25 percent of the participants still see it as unstandardized (see Table 1). Moreover, 98.75 percent of participants view the objective examination as an important component of selection, but 27.08 percent, 23.33 percent, and 17.08 percent of the participants also state that subjective examination, interview or group discussion, respectively should be utilized along with the objective examination to increase its validity (see Table 2). The main concern being the inability of objective examination alone to assess the research aptitude of the candidates, as 36.25 percent of participants expressed concerns about whether the criteria adequately assess research aptitude beyond theoretical knowledge, pointing to a potential gap in the evaluation of practical research skills, with only 50 percent of respondents acknowledging its focus on research aptitude through the UGC-NET/JRF examination (see Table 3). While the examination's emphasis on subject knowledge and its objective multiple-choice format was appreciated by many respondents, some participants highlighted the lack of components to evaluate real-world research abilities. Some also suggested introducing situational or project-based assessments to complement the current theoretical approach.

Table 3: Research Orientation of Scheme

Options	JRF Qualified		Total (Percent)
	No (Percent)	Yes (Percent)	
Strongly Agree	12 (5.00)	10 (4.17)	22 (9.17)
Agree	37 (15.42)	28 (11.67)	65 (27.08)
Neutral	15 (6.25)	18 (7.50)	33 (13.75)
Disagree	41 (17.08)	49 (20.42)	90 (37.50)
Strongly Disagree	15 (6.25)	15 (6.25)	30 (12.50)
Total	120 (50.00)	120 (50.00)	240 (100)

The accessibility of the JRF examination emerged as a critical concern for many candidates, particularly those from rural areas or Tier-3 cities, where 45 percent reported challenges in accessing preparation resources such as study material or coaching facilities. Language barriers

also posed an issue, with 30.83 percent of respondents noting that non-English question papers sometimes included interpretative challenges due to linguistic nuances. Despite these concerns, the scheme's inclusivity, particularly for reserved categories, was widely recognized, as 67.74 percent (126 out of 186) of reserved-category respondents found the selection process equitable. Similarly, 73.33 percent (55 out of 75) of female respondents highlighted the scheme's supportive role in advancing their research careers, though systemic barriers such as societal expectations were reported as limiting factors for participation.

Several challenges were identified in the implementation of the selection process. Excessive competition was highlighted by 61.53 percent (8 out of 13) of respondents as a significant barrier, with the growing number of applicants making the process disproportionately challenging for many aspirants. Additionally, some experts raised concerns about the validity of the selection process in gauging long-term research potential, suggesting that supplementary mechanisms, such as interviews or research proposals, might enhance its effectiveness. While 76.92 percent (10 out of 13) of participants viewed the selection process as transparent and merit-based, qualitative feedback revealed logistical inefficiencies, including delayed results and technical issues during online exams, which occasionally undermined perceptions of fairness.

Joining

The analysis of the JRF scheme's joining process in Humanities and Social Sciences reveals both strengths and challenges that shape the experiences of newly selected fellows. While 75.83% of participants found the UGC's structured guidelines and the three-year validity for fellowship activation adequate, 27.91% reported delays in securing M.Phil. or Ph.D. admissions due to seat limitations or institutional processes, resulting in missed activation opportunities. The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system was commended for its transparency, yet 33.33% of fellows experienced delays in financial onboarding due to administrative backlogs or incomplete paperwork, causing financial strain for economically weaker candidates. Institutional support during the joining process was inconsistent, with some universities providing robust assistance while others left fellows to navigate complex procedures independently. Communication gaps between the UGC, institutions, and fellows further compounded these challenges. Despite these issues, the majority acknowledged the scheme's benefits, including streamlined financial support and departmental guidance, while recommending improvements in flexibility, standardized support, and clearer communication to enhance the onboarding experience.

Disbursal

The disbursal of funds under the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences emerged as a critical aspect influencing the experiences and satisfaction of fellows. The study revealed both positive outcomes and significant challenges associated with the financial disbursement process. The introduction of the DBT system has been a transformative step in ensuring that fellowship funds are transferred directly to the beneficiaries' accounts, bypassing intermediaries. This system was widely appreciated, with 65.55 percent of respondents acknowledging the

transparency and efficiency it brought to the disbursement process (see Table 4).

Table 4: DBT is Better Than Institutional Disbursal

Response	Number of Responses(Percent)
Yes	78 (65.55)
No	25 (21.01)
Neutral	16 (13.45)
Total	119 (100.00)

However, despite the structural improvements introduced through DBT, delays in fund disbursal were a common concern. 61.66 percent of respondents reported experiencing irregularities in the receipt of monthly fellowship payments (see Table 5). These delays often stemmed from administrative backlogs, either at the institutional or central level, causing financial stress for fellows who rely on the stipend for living expenses and research costs. Such issues were particularly challenging for fellows from economically weaker backgrounds, who indicated that late payments disrupted their ability to meet academic and personal obligations.

Table 5: Regular Disbursal of Funds

Agreement Level	Number of Responses(Percent)
Strongly Agree	4 (3.33)
Agree	23 (19.17)
Neutral	19 (15.83)
Disagree	61 (50.83)
Strongly Disagree	13 (10.83)
Total	120 (100.00)

The study highlights several concerns related to the JRF scheme's financial processes and support mechanisms. A key issue was poor communication regarding delays, causing uncertainty and frustration, particularly among new fellows unfamiliar with procedures. While 3.07% of participants (4 out of 13) suggested a centralized grievance redressal system, existing mechanisms were deemed inadequate, as queries often reverted to the institutional level. Variability in House Rent Allowance (HRA) allocation was another concern, with fellows in smaller towns perceiving inequities in city categorization; 23.07% recommended re-evaluating HRA criteria to better reflect living costs. Despite these issues, the financial support enabled fellows to focus on research, with 41.25% finding the stipend amount adequate and many valuing contingency funds for research expenses (see Table 6). However, most participants emphasized the need for periodic stipend revisions to address inflation and rising living costs.

Table 6: Recommended Change in Fellowship Amount

Options	JRF Qualified		Total (Percent)
	No (Percent)	Yes (Percent)	
Substantially Increased	11 (4.58)	6 (2.50)	17 (7.08)
Slightly Increased	60 (25.00)	64 (26.67)	124 (51.67)
Not be Changed	34 (14.17)	32 (13.33)	66 (27.50)
Slightly Decreased	12 (5.00)	14 (5.83)	26 (10.83)
Substantially Decreased	3 (1.25)	4 (1.67)	7 (2.92)
Total	120 (50.00)	120 (50.00)	240 (100)

Upgradation from JRF to SRF

The results on the transition from Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) to Senior Research Fellowship (SRF) under the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences identified both strengths and challenges in the process. A majority (69.23%; 9 out of 13) found the criteria for upgradation, such as submitting a progress report and undergoing expert evaluation, clear and reasonable, appreciating the merit-based structure that incentivized productivity. However, 38.46% (5 out of 13) reported delays in the evaluation process due to logistical inefficiencies, leading to extended periods of JRF-level funding despite SRF eligibility, causing financial strain. Additionally, 30.76% (4 out of 13) highlighted dissatisfaction with inconsistent evaluation standards across institutions, citing variability in rigor and fairness, and recommended greater transparency, including detailed feedback on progress reports.

Administrative inefficiencies further hindered timely upgradation, with 30.76% (4 out of 13) mentioning procedural delays and a lack of institutional support for navigating requirements. Despite these challenges, the increased financial support at the SRF level was widely appreciated, enabling better management of research expenses during critical stages, such as fieldwork and publication. Fellows also valued the professional recognition associated with the SRF designation, which boosted morale and credibility, underscoring the importance of improving the upgradation process.

Transfer

The study on institutional transfers during the JRF scheme tenure in Humanities and Social Sciences identified both the necessity and challenges of the process. Transfers, often prompted by academic, professional, or personal reasons, were acknowledged as essential for maintaining research continuity. However, the process was marked by procedural complexities, with participants reporting delays in approvals, inconsistent institutional policies, and unclear guidance. The lack of standardized protocols and centralized communication among the UGC, originating institutions, and receiving institutions further compounded the challenges, requiring fellows to navigate multiple offices and causing interruptions in research activities.

Fellowship disbursement during transfers was a significant concern, with two out of three participants experiencing stipend delays, including one case of a gap exceeding a year. These disruptions caused financial strain, particularly for fellows reliant on the stipend for

research and personal expenses. Despite these issues, participants valued the transfer provision for enabling alignment with better academic environments, resources, and supervisors, which enhanced research outcomes and satisfaction. To improve the process, respondents emphasized the need for streamlined procedures, centralized coordination, and robust administrative support to minimize disruptions and ensure smooth transitions.

Monitoring

The monitoring mechanisms associated with the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences emerged as a crucial factor influencing its effectiveness and outcomes. The study revealed a mixed perception among participants regarding the adequacy and consistency of monitoring processes, which are intended to ensure accountability, progress, and alignment with the scheme's objectives.

Table 7: Proper Research Monitoring

Number of Options Selected	JRF Qualified		Total (Percent)
	No (Percent)	Yes (Percent)	
Yes	43 (17.92)	39 (16.25)	82 (34.17)
No	56 (23.33)	65 (27.08)	121 (50.42)
Do not know about UGC Monitoring	21 (8.75)	16 (6.67)	37 (15.42)
Total	120 (50.00)	120 (50.00)	240 (100)

The results on the monitoring process under the JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences highlights its critical role in maintaining research standards but reveals significant challenges in implementation. While 34.17% of respondents recognized regular progress evaluations as valuable for guiding fellows, 50.42% raised concerns about inconsistencies in how these evaluations were conducted across institutions, citing variable rigor and a lack of standardized criteria (see Table 7). Additionally, 15.42% of respondents, mostly in the early stages of research, were unaware of the monitoring process.

The absence of a centralized framework led to fragmented practices, with delayed or overlooked evaluations in some cases, compromising accountability. About 38.46% (5 out of 13) of fellows reported receiving inadequate feedback, reducing the developmental value of the process. Mentorship was another area of concern, with significant variability in supervisor engagement due to factors like high student-to-supervisor ratios and administrative burdens. Participants also criticized the procedural focus of monitoring, which often prioritized formalities over meaningful discussions on research quality, methodologies, and findings.

Despite these issues, monitoring was seen as essential for ensuring accountability and academic standards. Respondents suggested improvements such as standardized evaluation criteria, better supervisor training, and supplementary workshops or check-ins to enhance the process, fostering a more supportive and impactful research environment.

Discussion

The JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences, primarily reliant on the UGC-NET/ JRF examination, emphasizes academic merit and importance of subject knowledge in the selection process. However, the scheme's focus on theoretical knowledge over practical research skills has been critiqued, echoing Santos' (2022) call for a broader evaluation

framework that includes situational and project-based assessments. Accessibility challenges, particularly for candidates from rural or Tier-3 cities, are significant, as identified resource disparities are a barrier to equitable access. Addressing these disparities through subsidized coaching and improved linguistic inclusivity could enhance equity for improving minority inclusion in research programs. While the JRF scheme shows inclusivity for reserved categories, systemic barriers persist, particularly for women and economically disadvantaged candidates. The need for additional support measures is underscored by the findings of Sturm, who advocate for policy adjustments in scholarship schemes to enhance inclusivity and equity in higher education (Sturm, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of a standardized recruitment system in India's higher education sector, as discussed by Posselt, contributes to inconsistencies and potential biases, suggesting a need for standardized recruitment practices to ensure fairness and transparency (Posselt, 2016). These insights collectively highlight the necessity for policy reforms in the JRF scheme to address these multifaceted challenges, ensuring a more equitable and effective system for nurturing research talent in the humanities and social sciences.

The process of transitioning from result declaration to fellowship activation is crucial for the effectiveness of fellowship schemes, as it involves several challenges and opportunities for improvement. The three-year validity period for fellowship activation is generally considered sufficient, but delays in securing admissions to research programs, indicate gaps in institutional capacity and coordination. This is consistent with the findings of Miloslavsky and Dua, who emphasize the need for an optimized transition process to ensure a better match between programs and candidates, thereby enhancing trainee support and reducing bias in the application process (Miloslavsky & Dua, 2022). The introduction of the DBT system has improved transparency in financial onboarding, aligning with Miloslavsky and Dua's observations, yet administrative inefficiencies and document processing delays remain significant hurdles (Miloslavsky & Dua, 2022). Austen et al.'s recommendations for streamlining these processes and enhancing institutional support mechanisms are echoed in the evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, which underscores the importance of aligning individual and institutional benefits to enhance the student experience (Austen et al., 2018). The disbursal of funds through the DBT system, while transparent, faces delays in monthly stipend payments, corroborating Miloslavsky and Dua's findings on administrative backlogs (Miloslavsky & Dua, 2022). This issue is particularly pressing for fellows from economically weaker sections and could be mitigated by implementing a centralized grievance redressal system (Miloslavsky & Dua, 2022). The success of fellowship programs, such as the NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship and the Health System Impact Fellowship, in supporting career development and readiness, highlights the importance of structured support and mentorship in overcoming these challenges (Clough et al., 2017; Kasaai et al., 2023). The establishment of communities of practice, could further enhance collaboration and innovation across programs, providing a supportive network for fellows during their transition. Addressing these challenges through greater flexibility in activation timelines, improved administrative processes, and enhanced support mechanisms could significantly improve the effectiveness of fellowship scheme.

The variability in HRA allocation reflects broader concerns about cost-of-living disparities across regions. This issue is compounded by the fact that current HRA policies in India,

despite being lucrative in recent pay commissions, require periodic reviews to align with economic realities and ensure equity (Kumar, 2017). The challenges in HRA allocation are mirrored in the housing allowance systems of other countries, such as New Zealand and the Czech Republic, where allowances are seen as regressive and complex, respectively, necessitating reforms to address these disparities (HALÍŔOVÁ, 2022; Majid, 2022). In the context of research fellowships, the upgradation from JRF to SRF is crucial for maintaining research motivation. However, delays in evaluation processes and inconsistent institutional practices hinder this transition, as identified by Laxmanbhai and Patel (Laxmanbhai & Patel, 2023). Standardized evaluation criteria and feedback mechanisms, as recommended by Laxmanbhai and Patel, could mitigate these issues (Laxmanbhai & Patel, 2023). Furthermore, administrative inefficiencies in procedural requirements further obstruct timely upgradation, suggesting a need for dedicated support systems at the institutional level, as advocated by Laxmanbhai and Patel (Laxmanbhai & Patel, 2023). Institutional transfers, essential for accommodating evolving research needs, are similarly fraught with procedural complexities, with delays and inconsistencies in institutional policies acting as significant barriers. Standardized protocols and improved communication between the UGC and institutions are necessary to reduce administrative burdens and ensure continuity in research activities (Akbarialiabad et al., 2023). Addressing these systemic issues through policy reforms and enhanced administrative support can significantly improve the effectiveness and equity of both housing allowances and research fellowship programs.

Monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring research accountability and quality, as they provide a structured approach to evaluating progress and outcomes. The importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is underscored by its role in improving governance and service delivery. The integration of M&E in present settings emphasizes the need for structured and systematic evaluations to achieve sustainable quality improvements. Participation of various stakeholders in M&E processes, particularly in Responsible Research and Innovation, enhances the effectiveness of these mechanisms by fostering learning and trust (Monsonís-Payá et al., 2023). The development of specific M&E strategies can demonstrate the adaptability of monitoring processes to different research contexts, ensuring comprehensive governance and oversight. Technological advancements, like the E-Logbook System for fellows can further optimize monitoring by providing centralized platforms for documentation and evaluation, thus reducing data loss and improving process efficiency. Institutional support and training for supervisors are vital for enhancing mentorship and engagement, which are often limited by high student-to-supervisor ratios (Monsonís-Payá et al., 2023). Additionally, embedding interventions into strengthened M&E systems can guide policy-making and improve program implementation through feedback and data-driven decision-making (OECD, 2023). The integration of constructive feedback, developmental discussions, and periodic check-ins, as proposed by various studies, can significantly enhance the utility and effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms in research and educational settings (Anggaraa et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The JRF scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences under the UGC is a vital initiative that supporting India's research ecosystem, fostering academic growth, and encouraging

high-quality scholarly contributions. This exploratory process evaluation provides valuable insights into the scheme's operational dimensions - selection, joining, disbursal, upgradation, transfer, and monitoring – identifying both its strengths and areas for improvement. Key findings indicate that while the scheme demonstrates a strong foundation in meritocracy and inclusivity, challenges persist in accessibility, procedural efficiency, and equitable support mechanisms. These challenges are particularly pronounced in addressing practical research aptitude, ensuring timely fund disbursal, streamlining institutional transfers, and fostering effective monitoring and mentorship. The variability in implementation across institutions underscores the need for standardized practices and enhanced coordination among stakeholders. To maximize the scheme's impact, targeted interventions, such as practical skill assessments, better resource accessibility, improved administrative processes, and mentorship training, are essential. By addressing these systemic gaps, the JRF scheme can better fulfil its objective of nurturing research talent and advancing knowledge in Humanities and Social Sciences. Future research could explore longitudinal outcomes of the scheme, examining its long-term effects on academic careers, research quality, and societal contributions, thereby providing further insights to refine and enhance its implementation.

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Exploring the Role of Schools in Promoting Social Inclusion and Diversity in Indian Society

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Abstract

This research explores schools' pivotal role in fostering social inclusion and diversity in Indian society, scrutinizing strategies' effects on students. The comprehensive literature review offers a panoramic vista of social inclusion and diversity in educational realm, underpinned by pertinent theoretical frameworks, and illuminate both achievements and chasms in the existing body of research. In research methods, interviews with school administrators, educators, and students hailing from diverse backgrounds and extensive literature reviews were employed to understand schools' unique contexts, mechanisms, and student outcomes. This multifaceted approach is instrumental in gaining insights into the unique contextual intricacies that schools navigate, the mechanisms deployed to nurture social inclusion and diversity, and the outcomes experienced by their students. The results section unveils Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations (CMOCs) within schools and communities, revealing the factors facilitating or hindering diversity. The discussion delves into these CMOCs, linking them to existing discourse,

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and proposes ways to optimize mechanisms for better outcomes. Finally, the research outlines compelling avenues for future exploration, casting a spotlight on the relevance of parental and community engagement in the crusade for enhanced social inclusion and diversity within the schools.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Diversity, Schools, Indian Society, Educational Policy, Context-Mechanism-Outcome.

Introduction

The importance of social inclusion and diversity in education is highlighted by various sources (Banks, 2015; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019; UNESCO, 2017). Inclusive education not only ensures equal access but also fosters intercultural competence and constructive connections among students from diverse backgrounds (Barrett, 2018). Studies demonstrate the positive impact of inclusive education on academic achievement through differentiated instruction and collaborative learning (OECD, 2018; NASP, 2019) while enhancing personal and social development, including self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Konecni-Upton, 2010). Furthermore, inclusive education challenges stereotypes and discrimination, promoting comprehension and compassion (Juvonen et. al., 2019). It offers pupils the necessary abilities for thriving in diverse societies and engaging in social cohesion and justice (Council of Europe, 2018; Halder and Squires, 2023). This approach aligns with human rights principles (UN, 2006) and ensures the rights and participation of every learner.

In India, promoting social inclusion and diversity in the education system has become a significant concern, supported by policies such as the National Education Policy 2020, CBSE, and NCERT (CBSE, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2020; NCERT, 2009). Indian research highlights the importance of inclusive practices and accommodating diverse learning needs (Gale et. al., 2022; Kundu & Rice, 2019; Yadav, 2015). Recognizing these principles creates equitable and respectful educational environments, contributing to more inclusive and just societies. In the Indian context, social inclusion and diversity extend beyond education, targeting social disparities and ensuring equal opportunities (UNDP, 2018). The Indian education system acknowledges the need for inclusive practices and equal opportunities, underlined by research conducted in India (Chakraborty & Saha, 2018).

Existing literature on inclusive education in Indian schools offers insightful information on contemporary practices. Nampoothiri (2013) stresses the necessity of addressing social exclusion, while Vyas (2022) emphasize creating inclusive learning environments. Gudadur (2022) discusses challenges and strategies, Alur (2008) focus on policies, and Ainscow and Miles (2008) explore inclusive education's role in promoting social inclusion. Taneja-Johansson, Singal and Samson (2023) addressed challenges faced by students with disabilities. Kaur et.al. (2022) highlight school leadership, Kumari et. al. (2019) discuss teacher education, and the NCPEDP study (2020) examines disability statistics. Bajoria (2014) sheds light on discrimination faced by Dalit students, and Singal (2008) explores inclusive practices and pedagogies. Galkiene and Monkeviciene (2021) discuss Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, and Singal (2016) examine parental involvement and perception. Singal (2014) emphasized community engagement, Tiwari, et. al. (2015) explored teachers' perspectives,

and Kumari et. al. (2019) assessed the efficacy of professional programs. Ahmad (2015a) discussed technology and assistive devices, Lersilp et. al. (2016) explored assistive technology, and Waitoller and Artiles (2013) examined collaborative partnerships. Sawhney (2015) discussed support systems, and Ahmad (2015b) addressed assessing of students with disabilities. Finally, Pradhan (2023) delved into alternative assessment methods.

The literature review has advanced our comprehension of schools' crucial roles in fostering social integration and pluralism, yet persistent research gaps exist, encompassing marginalized groups, long-term effects, community perspectives, intersectionality, policy implementation, and teacher preparedness. Filling these gaps will inform policy development and expand our knowledge of social inclusion mechanisms in Indian schools through a comprehensive investigation into strategies, their impact, contextual factors, mechanisms, success factors, and challenges.

Methods

Philosophical presumptions that support a constructivist viewpoint, acknowledge subjective experiences, and place an emphasis on social justice, humanistic ideals, cultural relativism, and critical inquiry serve as the foundation for the current investigation. A thorough investigation of inclusive education methods is made possible by the qualitative inquiry, and individuals with pertinent experiences are chosen using the purposive sample technique. Data saturation established the sample size of 48 individuals, which included administrators (8), instructors (20), and students (20) from various backgrounds. As means of gathering data, semi-structured interviews and a comprehensive review of the literature were conducted. The collected data was examined using thematic analysis to find recurrent themes and patterns. The results were utilised to create CMOCs, which highlighted the factors that support or obstruct diversity and social inclusion in schools. Prioritising ethical issues allowed for the preservation of data, informed permission, privacy, and anonymity.

Results

In the pursuit of a more inclusive and diverse society, schools play an important role in fostering an environment that promotes social inclusion and embraces diversity. Recognizing the significance of this role, many schools in numerous nations, which include India, have implemented initiatives to establish an accepting learning setting that celebrates and acknowledges the variety of origins, identities, and abilities of their learners. Present results aim to explore the initiatives undertaken by schools in India to promote social inclusion and diversity, highlighting the strategies and approaches employed and their impact on students' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences.

Theme 1: Promoting Inclusion and Cultural Diversity in Education

The adoption of awareness programs, cultural exchange initiatives, and inclusive practices in schools has positively impacted students' knowledge, comprehension, and acceptance of social inclusion and diversity. Also, because of these efforts, the development of empathy, teamwork, and social integration through positive interactions and various activities has been observed. Inclusive learning environments have improved students' sense of belonging, academic success, and engagement, while reducing bullying and prejudice through clear

regulations, educational activities, and community involvement.

However, challenges like resistance to change, limited resources, language barriers, preconceptions, biases, and prejudices persist. Schools are tackling these challenges through public awareness campaigns, resource allocation, support networks, language assistance, cultural responsiveness, and anti-bias instruction. Continuous commitment and support are highlighted as essential for creating and maintaining inclusive learning environments benefiting all students.

Promoting cultural diversity in schools has benefits such as fostering cultural understanding, empathy, respect, and appreciation among adolescents, ultimately improving their well-being and academic achievement. Embracing diversity creates a welcoming environment where children feel valued, welcomed, and empowered. Interaction with people from different cultures enhances critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. However, challenges like stereotypes, biases, and language hurdles may hinder inclusion, requiring assistance and resources to overcome. Resistance to cultural diversity programs can be addressed through open discourse, fair representation, and avoidance of marginalization. To promote understanding and inclusion, schools should offer diversity education programs, cross-cultural exchanges, language support, dispute resolution tactics, and cultural activities. Additionally, training on cultural sensitivity for teachers and staff is crucial for establishing an educational setting that embraces diversity and supports the integration of all students. Table 1 summarises the important CMOCs relevant to promoting inclusion and cultural diversity.

Table 1: CMOCs Related to Promoting Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

Sr. No.	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
1.	Adoption of inclusive practices in schools	Positive interactions and activities	Increased understanding and acceptance of diversity
2.	Inclusive learning environments	Sense of belonging and academic success	Reduced bullying and prejudice
3.	Challenges in promoting inclusion	Opposition to change, limited resources, language barriers, biases, and prejudices	Difficulties in achieving inclusivity
4.	Efforts by schools	Public awareness campaigns, resource allocation, support networks, language assistance, cultural responsiveness, and anti-bias instruction	Addressing challenges and promoting inclusivity
5.	Continuous commitment	Ongoing support and dedication	Creation and maintenance of inclusive learning environments
6.	Cultural diversity in schools	Cultural understanding, empathy, respect, and critical thinking	Improved well-being and academic achievement
7.	Overcoming barriers	Assistance and resources	Overcoming stereotypes, biases, and linguistic hurdles
8.	Strategies for promoting inclusion	Diversity education programmes, cross-cultural exchanges, language support, dispute-resolution tactics, and cultural activities	Fostering understanding, appreciation, and inclusion
9.	Teacher and staff training	Cultural sensitivity training	Creating an inclusive educational environment

Theme 2: Addressing Socio-Economic Inequalities and Promoting Gender Equality in Education

Schools addressing socio-economic inequalities aim to grant equitable access to quality education, fostering academic success and closing achievement gaps. They create inclusive, supportive environments, empowering students from disadvantaged backgrounds and breaking cycles of poverty. Limited resources can hinder opportunities and affect student achievement, but allocating adequate resources, implementing inclusive policies, providing diversity training, and celebrating diversity can mitigate these challenges. Active parental involvement, facilitated through communication, workshops, and partnerships with community organizations, is crucial. Targeted interventions like personalized learning, academic support, and enrichment activities bridge achievement gaps, and collaboration with external stakeholders and continuous evaluation ensures progress. Promoting gender equality in schools yields positive outcomes, ensuring equal access to education, reducing gender disparities, and fostering empowerment and confidence among students. Such initiatives favourably affect motivation, academic achievement, and well-being while nurturing positive social relationships and challenging biases. Challenges like biased curriculum choices and gender-based harassment persist but require comprehensive policies, inclusive practices, and support systems for resolution. By valuing and respecting all genders, schools contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society. Table 2 summarises the important CMOCs related to addressing socio-economic and gender inequalities.

Table 2: CMOCs Related to Addressing Socio-Economic and Gender Inequalities

Sr. No.	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
1.	Schools addressing socio-economic inequalities	Equal access to quality education and inclusive environments	Promotion of academic success and student engagement
2.	Empowerment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds	Breaking the cycle of poverty through social mobility	Improved social and economic opportunities
3.	Limited resources and stigma	Resource allocation, inclusive policies, diversity training, and parental involvement	Mitigation of challenges and improved student achievement
4.	Targeted interventions	Personalized learning, academic support, and bridging the achievement gap	Reduced disparities in academic performance
5.	Collaboration with stakeholders and continuous evaluation	Collective effort and ongoing assessment	Effective implementation of strategies and continuous improvement
6.	Promotion of gender equality in schools	Comprehensive policies, inclusive practices, and support systems	Empowerment, academic success, positive social relationships, and inclusive school culture
7.	Challenging biases and fostering inclusivity	Addressing biased curriculum choices and gender-based harassment	Nurturing an equitable and inclusive educational environment

Theme 3: Assisting Students with Exceptional Needs

Findings reveal that assisting students with exceptional needs in schools guarantees equitable access to education and promotes intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Inclusion advantages peers and students with impairments and their peers by fostering empathy and understanding. Individualised education plans, specialised training, and assistive technology assist students with exceptional needs reach their full potential and achieve better post-school results. Limited resources, social isolation, poor curricular modifications, and a lack of knowledge and training among instructors constitute the primary challenges. To address these issues, schools should prioritise financing and resources, foster an inclusive culture, give staff training, adjust curriculum, and engage with parents and support agencies. Schools may take these actions to establish an atmosphere in which all students feel supported and appreciated, supporting their success and well-being in an equitable education system. The major CMOCs related to supporting children with exceptional needs have been tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: CMOCs related to assisting students with exceptional needs

Sr. No.	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
1.	Assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Equal access to education through appropriate accommodations, resources, and support services	Academic, social, and emotional growth, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance
2.	Assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Inclusive education and support	Increased empathy and understanding among students, benefiting both children with exceptional needs and their peers
3.	Assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Individualized education plans, specialized instruction, and assistive technologies	Unlocking the potential of children with exceptional needs, enhancing cognitive development, and equipping them with essential life skills
4.	Assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Inclusive education	Improved post-school outcomes, such as higher rates of employment and independent living
5.	Assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Creating a positive and inclusive school climate	Challenging societal stigmas and stereotypes surrounding disabilities
6.	Addressing challenges associated with assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Prioritizing adequate funding and resources for inclusive education	Ensuring equitable and effective support for children with exceptional needs
7.	Addressing challenges associated with assisting children with special needs in schools	Creating a culture of inclusivity and raising awareness	Combating social isolation and stigmatization
8.	Addressing challenges associated with assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Professional development and training for teachers and staff	Enhanced quality of support through inclusive practices and strategies
9.	Addressing challenges associated with assisting students with exceptional needs in schools	Adapting the curriculum and assessment methods	Accommodating the individual capabilities of children with exceptional needs
10.	Addressing challenges associated with assisting children with exceptional needs in schools	Collaboration with parents, families, and the wider community	Enhanced support available through partnerships with advocacy groups and support services

Theme 4: Student Attitudes and Experiences in Promoting Social Inclusion and Diversity

Results indicate that inclusive educational practices have a favourable effect on students' attitudes towards social inclusion and diversity. In inclusive classrooms, students learn together, fostering understanding, respect, and empathy. Teachers' inclusive pedagogical approaches and collaboration are valued by students. An inclusive learning environment shapes students' perceptions, enhancing self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Exposure to diverse perspectives encourages students to challenge biases and stereotypes, promoting inclusivity beyond school. Interacting with diverse peers cultivates empathy and respect, positively impacting academic performance. Challenges include peer pressure, biases, discrimination, and limited resources. Ongoing support, awareness programs, and inclusive policies are necessary to overcome these challenges. Overall, promoting social inclusion and diversity in education has significant benefits and requires continuous support and inclusive policies. The major CMOCs related to student attitudes and experiences in promoting social inclusion and diversity have been tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: CMOCs related to student attitudes and experiences in promoting social inclusion and diversity

Sr. No.	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
1.	Education and Social Inclusion	Exposure to Inclusive Educational Practices, Inclusive Classrooms, and Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches	Positive Attitudes towards Social Inclusion and Diversity, Understanding, Respect, Empathy, Broadened Perspectives, Challenging Stereotypes, Self-esteem, Sense of Belonging, Appreciation for Differences, Challenge to Biases and Stereotypes, Inclusive Behaviors, Academic Performance
2.	Challenges in Embracing Social Inclusion and Diversity	Peer Pressure, Societal Biases, Stereotypes, Discrimination, Exclusion, Language Barriers, Cultural Differences, Limited Resources	Hindrance to Full Acceptance of Diversity, Impact on Sense of Belonging, Barriers to Inclusive Education
3.	Importance of Social Inclusion and Diversity in Education	Inclusive Learning Environment, Exposure to Diverse Perspectives	Improved Perceptions of Self and Others, Empathy, Respect, Academic Performance
4.	Need for Support and Inclusive Policies	Ongoing Support, Awareness Programs, Inclusive Policies	Overcoming Challenges, Fostering an Inclusive and Diverse Educational Landscape, Inclusive Society
5.	Teacher's Role in Promoting Social Inclusion and Diversity	Implementation of Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches, Collaboration, Active Participation, Personalized Learning	Enhanced Student Engagement, Improved Learning Outcomes, Empowered Students, Cultivation of Inclusive Behaviors
6.	Impact of Social Inclusion and Diversity on Peer Relationships	Interacting with Diverse Peers, Exposure to Different Perspectives	Cultivation of Empathy and Understanding, Formation of Stronger and More Respectful Peer Relationships, Promotion of Inclusive School Culture
7.	Role of School Support in Overcoming Challenges	Ongoing Support, Awareness Programs, Inclusive Policies	Mitigation of Peer Pressure and Societal Biases, Overcoming Language Barriers and Cultural Differences, Increased Access to Resources, Improved Sense of Belonging and Inclusion
8.	Long-term Effects of Social Inclusion and Diversity in Education	Continued Exposure to Inclusive Practices, Ongoing Support and Awareness	Development of Lifelong Inclusive Attitudes and Behaviours, Contribution to a Diverse and Inclusive Society

Theme 5: Challenges and barriers to promoting social inclusion and diversity in schools and suggestions to overcome them

Promoting social inclusion and diversity in schools is crucial, but it comes with various challenges. Stereotypes and prejudices among students and staff hinder inclusivity and must be addressed through awareness programs and positive interactions. Limited resources, including funding and specialized staff, pose obstacles that require advocacy for adequate support. Language barriers impede communication and academic achievement, necessitating language support programs and cultural sensitivity training. Cultural misunderstandings can be bridged through exchange programs and open dialogue. Lack of teacher training calls for equipping educators with inclusive strategies, and resistance to change requires clear communication. Parental involvement necessitates active engagement and partnerships. Inadequate policies impede progress, so comprehensive policies outlining commitment to inclusivity and addressing discrimination are essential. By addressing these challenges, schools can establish inclusive educational spaces that embrace diversity and promote social inclusion. The major CMOCs related to challenges and barriers to promoting social inclusion and diversity in schools have been tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5: CMOCs related to challenges and barriers to promoting social inclusion and diversity in schools and suggestions to overcome them

Sr. No.	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
1.	Stereotypes and prejudices among students and staff in schools	Implementation of awareness programs and education on cultural competence	Dispelling prejudices, reducing biases, promoting inclusive interactions, and minimizing discrimination and exclusion
2.	Limited resources in schools, including funding and specialized staff	Advocacy for adequate support from educational authorities	Ensuring equal access to quality instruction for learners from diverse backgrounds
3.	Languages and communication barriers	Language support programs and cultural sensitivity training	Effective communication, improved academic achievement, and enhanced social interactions
4.	Cultural misunderstandings due to limited exposure to diverse customs and traditions	Cultural exchange programs and open dialogue	Fostering understanding, appreciation for diverse cultures, and promoting inclusivity
5.	Lack of teacher training and awareness	Professional development programs and inclusive strategies	Creating inclusive classrooms and a supportive learning environment
6.	Resistance to change	Clear communication and education on the benefits of social inclusion	Overcoming resistance, fostering a shared vision, and creating an inclusive school community
7.	Lack of parental involvement in promoting social inclusion and diversity	Active engagement and partnerships between parents and educators	Promoting a sense of collective accountability and creating an inclusive environment
8.	Inadequate policies and guidelines	Comprehensive policies outlining commitment to inclusivity and addressing discrimination	Establishing a foundation for an inclusive and supportive school environment

Discussion

The research results provide significant insights regarding the role of schools in promoting social inclusion and diversity in Indian society. The researchers have examined strategies and initiatives in schools and their impact on students' attitudes, aligning with existing literature on inclusive education. Zollers et. al. (1999) study underscores the positive impact of inclusive education programs on academic performance and intergroup relationships. In contrast, Kumaravadivelu (2003) found persistent challenges related to stereotypes and prejudices in an Indian context. The research highlights the role of awareness programs and cultural competence education in addressing these issues. Resource constraints, as discussed in the Ministry of Education report (2021), parallel findings in the research, where limited resources are identified as a significant barrier. Adequate funding and fair distribution of resources are essential for successful inclusive practices.

The challenges of language barriers, parental involvement, teacher training, resistance to change, policy development, stereotypes, resource limitations, and training of cultural sensitivity are in line with previous studies (Johnson et al., 2020; Mamidi, 2017; Musgrave & Bradshaw, 2019; Papakosma, 2023; Pillay & McLellan, 2010; Puttick et al., 2021; Ruggs & Hebl, 2012; Shepherd, 2022; Tienda, 2013; Tiwari et.al., 2015; Verma, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Cultural misunderstandings and the importance of cultural exchange programs and teacher training align with the findings of Hofstede (1986), Tiwari et. al. (2015), Puttick et al. (2021), and Juvonen et. al. (2019). Resistance to change and the need for clear communication and parental involvement resonate with Green et al. (2020), Shepherd (2022), and Baquedano-López et. al. (2013). Inadequate policies and the necessity of comprehensive anti-discrimination policies are consistent with Mpu and Adu (2021) and Zwane and Malale (2018).

While the research has limitations, it underscores the significance of inclusive practices, awareness programs, resource allocation, language support, parental involvement, teacher training, policy interventions, and stakeholder engagement in developing equitable learning spaces for students from diverse backgrounds. Future research might explore a broader context to further enhance our comprehension of these crucial aspects.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has examined the complexities and significant impact of promoting social inclusion and diversity in schools. Key findings emphasize addressing stereotypes, overcoming limited resources, tackling language barriers, fostering cultural understanding, providing teacher training, addressing resistance to change, promoting parental involvement, and establishing clear policies as crucial steps. Present findings are in line with available literature, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to create inclusive educational settings.

The research offers valuable insights and recommendations for educators, policymakers, and school leaders to devise efficient strategies that assist social inclusion and diversity. However, it acknowledges limitations, like the reliance on literature review and interviews. Subsequent studies ought to explore the specific experiences of students, parents, and educators and assess the long-term effects of these initiatives on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Comparative studies across diverse educational and cultural

settings can offer more valuable insights.

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Navigating the Intersection of Human Rights and Policing: Key Challenges and Critical Issues

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Abstract

The concept of human rights is deeply rooted in the dignity of individuals, has evolved as the cornerstone of democratic societies worldwide. The aftermath of the two World Wars and the creation of the United Nations catalyzed the formalization of human rights through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequent covenants. In India, the ethos of human rights dates back to ancient texts, with their principles enshrined in the Constitution, which has guided the nation's democracy for decades. The police, as a critical organ of the state, bear the dual responsibility of safeguarding these rights and maintaining law and order. However, a paradox exists wherein the very institution charged with upholding human rights is often implicated in their violation.

This paper explores the multifaceted relationship between the police and human rights, emphasizing the challenges and contradictions inherent in their roles. It highlights historical legacies, occupational stress, cases of police brutality, custodial deaths, and procedural violations underscore the urgent need for reforms to align policing practices with democratic values and human rights principles. Suggestions for transformative policing include raising public awareness, enhancing human rights education for police personnel, revising training methodologies, engaging NGOs, enforcing strict penalties for violations, and fostering community policing. Recruitment reforms and the inculcation of ethical and professional attributes in police personnel are also emphasized. Policing in a democracy like India necessitates a delicate balance between maintaining public order and protecting individual rights. The vision of a compassionate and impartial police force that respects and upholds human rights is attainable through systemic reforms and collective effort, fostering trust and ensuring justice for all citizens.

Keywords: Human Rights, Human Rights, Policing in India, Police Reforms, Custodial Deaths,

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Police Brutality, Procedural Violations, Occupational Stress, Community Policing, Ethical Policing.

Introduction

The idea of human rights, though of comparatively recent origin, is about the perennial search of human being for good life. Truly it is founded on human dignity. From the middle of nineteenth century, the movement started for requiring the state to realize that it had the responsibility of ensuring minimum conditions of good life for everyone within its domain¹. After the two world wars the world community was convinced that all human beings around the globe were entitled to certain rights which every state must safeguard. The idea of institutionalizing such safeguards gave birth to the United Nations which soon after its creation formulated UDHR and two major covenants on human rights (ICCPR & ICESCR). Besides these, hosts of declarations, resolutions, conventions, treaties and other instruments have been adopted for the recognition and realization of human rights of different persons on specific issues.

Respect for human rights has always been one of the main concerns of every democratic society. The UN Charter and the adoption of UDHR was a momentous event in the promotion and protection of human rights everywhere. Since then, the basic premise that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birth right of all human beings has generally been accepted and expressed by all nations within their domestic sphere. The most important development in human rights movement at national levels, since the war was the incorporation of the Bill of Rights in almost every country's constitution made sense then around the world². It is in recognition of the importance of these rights towards the goal they intend to secure.

In India, the concept of human rights stretches back to the age of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. The Constitution makers of free India reflected the primacy of human rights in the Constitution while handing down to us our Constitution under which we have practiced democracy for more than half of a century. Human rights are usually framed as the rights of the individual in relation to the state³. The values of freedom and respect for human rights form the very basis of democracy. Democracy actually provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. In a democratic country, the police is one of the means by which state seeks to meet its obligation to protect some of the fundamental rights like right to life, liberty and security of persons, right to fair trial, equal protection of laws etc.

Role of Police in Democracy

A police organization is a civil agency of the government and is responsible for the enforcement of laws, regulation of conduct, protection of life and property and observance of laws for social, economic and political growth. As such, the police administration plays a key role in the process of development⁴. The role of the police as an administrative agent of criminal justice hardly needs to be emphasized. It is rightly said that 'a policeman is the axis on which the rule of law rests and rotates. It is he, who enforces the law, maintains the public order, keeps the lawless elements in check, brings the offender to book and by his constant vigil preserves the coherence and solidarity of the social structure⁵.

In a democratic society, every organ of the State ought to be accountable to the people and this applies more appropriately to the police than others, as the police represent the law and order of the organized society. The basic and fundamental problem regarding the police today is how to make it function as an efficient and impartial law enforcement agency⁶. It should be fully motivated and guided by the objective of service to the public at large, upholding the rights and liberties of the people. With this end in view, the question of accountability of the police assumes great significance as it is directly related to its performance in a democratic society⁷.

Human Rights and Police

The paramouncy of the functions of law enforcement and order maintenance in a society presents the police organization as a key agency of its criminal justice system. The police symbolize law and provide a coercive legal arm to bring the deviant and the trespasser to book⁸. While the legal functions of the police are very sharply defined in various Acts and Statutes, the role of police as a social service agency has been left vague and unidentified.⁹ In a democracy, the police being visible symbol of the authority of the government are expected to safeguard the interests of the society and the individual citizens with regard to their basic rights.

Despite the new democratic, secular, socialistic, welfare and humanitarian values vouched for in the Constitution, the Indian Police, by and large follows the philosophy of para-militarism associated with the mechanism of awe, threat and coercion. In other words, the democratic philosophy of the Constitution hardly gets reflected in the organization of Indian police. The National Police Commission in the preamble of its first report expressed that the basic and fundamental problem regarding the police today is how to make them function as an efficient and impartial law enforcement agency fully motivated and guided by the objectives of service of the public at large, upholding the Constitutional rights and liberty of people¹⁰.

Police and human rights have a very close relation and they go hand in hand either as a control body for executing human rights or as a promoting body for violating human rights. The police is the most visible agency of the government and is often in the limelight of community scrutiny and evaluation. Ironically, the police authority charged with protecting and promoting human rights as well as bringing to justice those who violate them, is also the entity that is most often the violator of human rights¹¹.

The police have to play a major role in discharging the human rights obligations. It has to protect the life, liberty and property of individual citizens and also to maintain peace and tranquility in the society. Even a criminal expects freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.¹² Similarly, a victim of crime expects that the perpetrator of the crime should be prosecuted and punished adequately. The physical security and respect for human dignity are the common expectations from the police. In fact, it is the police who has to uphold the rule of law by safeguarding the interests of the law-abiding and getting the guilty punished.¹³

However, owing to several reasons, some of them may be historical, the police in India do not enjoy the confidence of the people and the public sees the police as an agency of the state

that functions as an instrument of oppression¹⁴. Violation of human rights by the police occurs partly because of the functions they have to perform and their manner of performance. 'Life and liberty', the most basic human right is the main casualty¹⁵. Human rights are violated by the police either in the name of security of state or maintenance of law and order. As there is a direct and critical inter-relationship and inter-dependence, between policing and human rights, policing can be a positive or negative factor in securing respect and ensuring protection of human rights.

The police and society have drifted apart from each other thus, weakening the sound foundations on which alone can be built an efficient and competent police system¹⁶. In democratic setup, police is one of the means by which the state seeks to meet its obligation to protect some of the fundamental rights like 'right to life, liberty and security of persons', 'right to fair trial', 'equal protection of laws' etc. But the real picture discloses that human rights are violated by those who have the responsibility of their protection. It is a paradox that human rights are protected by law and yet are often at risk from law enforcers. The police must be the trusted protectors and servants of pluralistic societies and never agents of the power structure. They are, it is true, only one of the elements in the law enforcement¹⁷.

Police and Human Rights Problems

In modern democratic societies, the police is vested with the authority to use legitimate and situationally justified force against the lawbreakers and offenders. This mandate of the police to use counter-violence to prevent or curb violence raises the key issue that the police themselves should not indulge in unnecessary or excessive use of force¹⁸. But the true picture of the police actions presents something else. Torture is a sanctioned practice in the administration of justice in India. The police regularly violate the UN CODE of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the guidelines for the use of firearms. Torture, extortion, and rape take place with impunity in police custody across the country¹⁹. It has been observed that police in India believe more in fists than in wits and more in torture than in culture. This is the reason probably that a democratic country like India does not trust on one of the most important administration organs i.e. the police. The police, very often, instead of promoting and protecting human rights violate them callously. Allegations of police brutality and human rights violations are being constantly received from different parts of the country²⁰. The police being in direct interface with people often charged with various human rights violations which result from their misconduct. This can be explained by any of the three scales of norms violation.

i. Violation of Procedure

As the police have the power to arrest, it is frequently abused by them. Violation of procedure is normally done while exercising powers under the preventive Sections of laws like S. 107, 109 CRPC and are often used to extort money by the unscrupulous police officers. Likewise, illegal detentions, frequent summoning of respectable to the police station, etc. are further illustrations of violations of police procedure.

ii. Violation of Criminal law

The second type of violation includes violation of criminal laws which include fabrication

of false cases, refusal to register cases, corruption and other outright activities.

iii. Illegal Use of Force

This is the most often resorted violation as it involves the use of excessive force in the shape of third-degree methods. Police often violate human rights and use third-degree methods against human beings like stamping on the bare body, beating on spine or bare feet, giving live electric shocks, laying on ice slabs, denying food and water, parading the victim in public by blackening face and many more.

There are many instances when the police excesses have tolled heavily on the lives of the individuals. The Bhagalpur eye blinding case and many more like this show the apathy of police towards the sanctity of human rights. This incident of police brutality, wherein police blinded thirty-one under trials by pouring acid in their eyes, shook the entire nation. Other noted cases of human rights violations by police include the Bhagpat incident in UP (1978), the Hashimpura massacre (1987), the Lokhandwala complex shootout (1991), the Muthanga incident (2003)²¹, the Forbesganj incident (2011) and many more. Recently, the death of Arun Bharath (21 yrs.) due to torture in custody of police in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu²², the killing of Vinod Sharma, a resident of Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir by police of Gulabi Bagh police station in North Delhi²³ and death of Manoj Kumar by police of Reasi police station in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir²⁴ are some instances of deaths in police custody lamenting violation of human rights by police.

Factors responsible for negative attitude of Police towards Human Rights

Although a lot has been detailed about the violation of human rights by police but it is also necessary to look at the other side of the coin and to analyse why the premier law enforcement agency is involved in committing human rights violations. Is it the organizational behavioral pattern or the personal attributes of the police personnel that make them disrespect the human rights of others, it also needs to be analyzed to have a better understanding of the issue²⁵. Generally, the factors responsible for the non-respectful behavior of police towards the human rights of others include:

1. Historical aspects as to origin

The colonial approach is still prevailing and getting transferred in the minds of police regarding the use of excessive force and causing brutalities and thereby resulting in violations of human rights.

2. Occupational stress

The proportion of the police force in comparison to the total population is very low and this occupational stress many times leads to either non handling or bad handling of cases before them resulting in human rights violations.

3. Overburden i.e. they have to perform multifarious duties

The police is responsible not only for the maintenance of law and order and suppression of crime but also for providing VIP security, maintaining traffic of vehicles, preventing terrorist activities and communal activities, providing help during natural calamities, helping correctional

institutions, helping the people in development works, to do election duties and many more. Their workload has increased substantially and it is reported that they work 16 hours a day. This overburdened work scenario often makes them less sensitive to human rights protection.

4. Political pressures

The politicisation of crime or criminalization of politics, too, directly or indirectly influences police functioning. This leads to many criminals getting scot-free or violation of human rights, in which police also get involved, maybe unwillingly. The nexus between political leaders, bureaucrats, and criminals has been highlighted by Vohra Committee report also and at times police have to compromise to meet the orders of their political superiors.

5. Corruption

Materialism and consumer culture is also making inroads in the psychology of police personnel to fulfill their artificial desires and this indulges them in bribery, corruption, favoritism, etc.

6. Leadership failure

Sound leadership is the quintessence of any organization and when top leaders succumb to pressures at the cost of national or organizational interest then the subordinate formations too start forging their equations against the basic tenets of the organization and the police leadership has failed miserably to lead the organization effectively on the path of maintaining the sanctity of human rights.

Besides the reasons stated *supra-traditional* investigation methods, lack of modernization of police, Power to curtail liberty, terrorism-inflicted areas and disturbed areas, the social complexities and changing patterns of crimes, which occasionally deviate the police functioning, also are responsible for the commission of violation of human rights by police²⁶.

Suggestions for better policing

There is no denying to the fact that at present the public image of the police has reached its nadir. Time and again questions are raised about the imperviousness, wooden headedness, brutality, corruption, and arrogance of the police. Frequent violations of human rights by police often raise the brows of the people²⁷. For the effective police functioning and promotion and protection of human rights by police, certain suggestions have been made.

i. Raising human rights awareness among people

In India, a considerable number of the population is illiterate and ignorant of their rights. Even the educated ones are not aware of their rights vis-a-vis the police. The public in general should be made aware of their rights so that they can prevent its violation.

ii. Human rights education for police personnel

There is often not enough realization about the crucial role of the police in protection of human rights in the police personnel and therefore, it is suggested that human rights education be must for the police personnel and more particularly for the constables, sub-inspectors, and inspectors who share a cutting edge with the people and are having a direct interface with them.

iii. Change in traditional methods of training

It is further suggested that the traditional methods of training should be changed and a three-tier training programme for constables, sub-inspectors, and inspectors should be provided to enhance human rights consciousness in the police at all levels.

iv. Effective role of NGOs

The Non Governmental Organizations can also play an effective role in preventing police excesses and human rights violations by keeping a vigil over the working and functioning of the police organization and bringing to public notice violations of human rights, if any.

v. Strict penal provisions for abuse of human rights by police

An effective way to reduce police excesses is to punish the guilty officers. The violators of human rights should be punished and no leniency towards the erring official should be shown. Initiation of departmental enquiry is also suggested against such police personnel.

vi. Developing the concept of COMMUNITY POLICING

The police is basically meant for the service of people and this concept should be made to be imbibed by the organization by developing the concept of community policing. This will surely help in preventing human rights violations at the hands of police.

vii. Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection in police should be from all groups, castes, religions and communities. This would ensure mutual respect for each other and thus, lesser violations of human rights

In addition to the suggestions aforementioned, the police personnel must inculcate in themselves the basic qualities of becoming good police personnel. These include honesty, judgment, tact, common sense, politeness, firmness, knowledge of investigation and evaluative techniques, ability for public relations, integrity, sensitivity, and power to resist temptations, impartiality and respect for rule of law. If these are adhered to, it is hoped that police would no longer be accused of human rights violations.

Conclusion

Policing a democracy has always been difficult. In a country like India which is the largest democratic state in the world the role of police in realization of human rights cannot be underestimated. However, looking at the existing realities of gross violations of human rights at the hands of police, it seems a bleak future. And a lot is required to be done to make our police an effective instrument for protecting human rights. Balance is required to be established and maintained between the performance of its functions by police and human rights protection. Only then the main purpose of police i.e. serving the people can be achieved. We hope to look forward to a compassionate and courteous police force which would strive to uphold the human rights of one and all without fear or favour and without prejudice to the rights of others. The legacy of colonial policing, combined with systemic issues such as occupational stress, political interference, inadequate training, and corruption, has contributed to a strained relationship between the police and the public. Cases of custodial torture, extrajudicial killings,

and procedural violations erode public trust and undermine the democratic ideals of justice and equality.

To bridge this gap, a comprehensive approach is required, focusing on human rights education for police personnel, strict accountability measures, and the promotion of community policing. Building an ethical and professional police force demands recruitment reforms, leadership accountability, and the inculcation of values such as impartiality, sensitivity, and respect for the law. NGOs, civil society, and the judiciary also have vital roles to play in ensuring police accountability and fostering a culture of human rights protection. Ultimately, a balance must be achieved between the effective performance of policing duties and the protection of human rights. A reformed and empathetic police force, committed to upholding the principles of democracy, can transform public perception and reinforce the social contract between citizens and the state. By addressing systemic challenges and fostering a culture of respect for human rights, India can strive toward a future where the police are seen not as agents of oppression but as trusted guardians of justice and liberty for all.

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Unveiling the Core Dimensions of Globalization

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Abstract

Globalization is described as a multifaceted phenomenon that has been characterized by increased interdependence among nations, communities, and individuals. The process has been referred to as a “condition,” “system,” and “force,” with the dominant notion being that the world is “shrinking” due to rapid advances in communication and transportation technologies. Borders are less significant, and money, goods, ideas, and cultural trends are free to move. The two were perfectly depicted in how the 2008 worldwide financial crisis echoed through each and every corner of this world when economic turmoil engulfed the United States.

Globalization has occurred historically in waves-from early colonial explorations to modern economic integration-and the new powers which emerged are China and India. The three major institutions at this stage are the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO. Alongside them, the neoliberal credo, liberalization and globalization plus privatization, force if they can, that critics will often term, more a mode of modern colonization. Globalization, though primarily an economic concept, deeply impacts social, cultural, and political dimensions and changes identities and relationships across borders. Understanding globalization needs be recognized far beyond just economics to highlight the complex web of human connections that form our world today.

Keywords: *Globalisation, Interdependence, Turmoil, Neoliberalism, Privatisation, Shrinking, Exploitation*

Globalization: “A Double-Edged Sword of Interdependence and Inequality”

The term globalization has been given various labels like- process, a condition, a system and an age. However, the most popular definition of the term is that it refers to the increased

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pace with which the world is becoming interconnected and thus the world can be said to be 'shrinking' as a result of the process. It has also been called 'time-space compression'. It is global web that has bound together the fortunes of nations, communities, and households. It is the movement towards greater interdependence and integration. Globalization produces such global interdependencies and interconnections that national borders and geographical obstacles do not matter when it comes to movement of money, ideas, goods, cultural and political trends, etc.. Economic recession in one region of the world creates instability in countries that are thousands of miles away. For example, the global financial crisis of 2008 started from the US and it created impacts all over the world.

Trade and technology are the two forces that drive the process of globalization. Globalization is development system that nations throughout the globe are doing efforts to follow. The theory holds that government impose tariffs over commodities cross territories, then economy is slowed. Globalization is based on the principles of free markets which means nation enable items from other nations to be sell in the markets. Government are unable to differentiate between domestic and international producers of items. It allows for unrestricted competition amongst products from throughout the world. Thus the consumer gets a variety of choices in the marketplace. Companies from around the world can set up their factories in any other country and can employ citizens of that country. Because of low labour costs, most countries have shifted their manufacturing work from the developed to developing countries. This creates more employment for the locals. On the other hand, we see that more and more companies want to set up factories in countries where they can pay low wages to labour and low taxes to local governments.

Waves of globalization:

Current phase of globalization is not new in world history. When we discuss the Silk Road in Central Asia that linked China and Europe throughout the middle Ages or trading by European companies in other nations during imperial tenure, trade have existed in the earlier time as well. The 'scale and nature' of global interconnection makes globalization exclusive to modern times. Human civilizations have previously merged to establish an isolated global system in the past. It took place in about 3 phases. The 1st wave, globalization was mostly explored by Europeans travelling across the world such as India, and existing colonization there, known for age of discovery. According to American Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein's notion of 'world system', the capitalist financial underpinning of globalisation was established in 16th century. This tenure spanned about 1450 to 1850 AD(**Wallerstein,1974**) The 2nd wave spanned 1850 to 1945 marked an expansion of European Empires. After the completion of II World war, advancement in sciences, travel and transportation, communications, and information technology have increased global interconnectedness. The downfall of the powers of Axis and the de-colonization of 3rd World countries revitalize worldwide exchanges. The Reagan in the United States began in the early 1980s and the Thatcher government in UK, debt crisis, neo-liberal Washington Consensus, enactment of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), disintegration of Soviet Union and the demolition of the Cold War all contributed to countries acceptance of capitalism as the only viable economic order capable of producing capital. Third phase began in the 1960's and is still going on. In this phase new economic

powers like Japan, India, China, Brazil, and South Africa have evolved as the most rapid globalizers.

India is today one of the fastest adopters of globalization policies. Its GDP has grown consistently at a high rate due to impressive growth in industrial manufacturing and the service sectors. But globalization-led growth has caused serious inequality between the rich and the poor in India. “Despite a stupendous increase in national GDP, India is still ranked poorly in the overall Human Development Index”(Stiglitz,2002)

Some regions of the world are more integrated to the global economy as compared to others. Hence globalization affects different areas of the world differently. Globalization has replaced the welfare state with the competitive state. In other words, earlier the governments had the responsibility to take care of critical needs of their citizens like health, and schooling. But due to the rollback of the duties of the government under globalization policy, the government has given these duties to the private bidder and whoever shall offer the most ‘competitive price’ (i.e. low price) gets to look after these sectors. This is called the competitive economy.(World Economic Forum,2019)

World Bank, WTO, IMF: The Triad of global trade

Three international organizations stand out as major contributors to globalization. These three work together to make and enforce global economic norms and their policies are constantly in sync with each other. They were created as a result of a conference held at a place called Bretton Woods between leaders from the following countries: Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the US, and Canada in the year 1944. The aim of the conference was to plan the world economy after the World War II. The triad promotes the triple agenda of liberalization, privatization, and globalization. They promote these agendas throughout the developing countries by implementing the SAP (Structural Adjustment Programmes). SAP prescriptions follow an economic idea called neo-liberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic theory that promotes *laissez faire* capitalism. The term *laissez faire* literally means ‘leave alone’. Neoliberal economists believe that governments must have only a limited role in economic and social affairs of the country. Only then the markets can function effectively.(Harvey,2005) It demands trade liberalization, privatization (i.e. governments must not be the major job creator, rather it should be the private firms), and fiscal austerity (which means that the governments can’t spend more money than what they earn in revenues). This is also called the ‘Washington consensus’. Through these strategies, globalization aims at breaking down the national barriers to trade and lead to the creation of a global marketplace.

WTO organization was formerly known as GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and its mission was to develop worldwide trade laws with the goal of lowering national trade barriers.

IMF goal was to restore economic stability at international level following world war II and to make it easier to exchange currencies when dealing across borders.

World Bank was founded to reconstruct the economies of European nations that had been demolished during the World War II. In 1950’s it began providing loans to semi-peripheral nations from the global South. It provides loans to member countries for development projects

like dams, roads, airports, bridges, agriculture and education.

“Globalization or connections & interactions across different nations of the world has various dimensions” (Steger,2017) which can be listed as-

Economic: International market integration, trade & multinational production is seen as major cause of globalisation. The process of integration has impacted nearly every aspect of modern life- making markets work on more efficient lines, increasing competition amidst buyers & sellers, lessening of warfare or face to face military conflicts, distribution of wealth, amongst others. Foreign Direct Investment, Technological Innovation, rise of Economies of Scale have helped in enhancing technology transfer and enabling industrial restructuring. However, this interdependence between nations also finds and affected by instability of markets.

In the economic realm, the most visible illustration of globalization is the formation of Global Value Chains (GVCs), in which a single commodity is manufactured by integrating parts from all over the world. The GVC involves five main process viz. research and development, engineering, manufacturing, marketing, sales and services, with each of these steps is outsourced to a foreign site in a globalized production process.

Corporate Globalization: In this process of globalization, account of the majority of industrial production. An Multinational Corporation is a corporation has its availability in 2 or more than two nations. Globalization has substantially improved MNCs commercial prospects because they can readily sell their products globally without paying excessive taxes to govt. improved modes of transportation and communication.

Outsourcing and off-shoring have become the new business model. Outsourcing is the practice of moving work over national borders to be completed at a lower price whereas off-shoring is the process of constructing factories in areas where raw materials and human labour are low. Because the two variables are abundant in India, China, and Africa, the MNCs have been increasing their presence in these regions. Thus US and British banks serve their customers in through call centres in Asia; while popular clothing and sporting businesses like Nike, Reebok, etc. develop their products in the US & Europe. The promoters and supporters of globalization list some of the following benefits of this phenomenon:

- Globalization increases opportunities
- Free trade creates wealth
- Global trade eventually benefits everyone involved
- Sharing of ideas, information, technology, and capabilities enriches human life across national borders
- Globalization promotes the best use of human and natural resources in a given economy
- Globalization makes available good quality products at cheap prices

The national govt. are significant players in protecting home and outside markets for subsidies, preferential bidding and contract awards, export credits, development aid, trade and investment agreements, and military aggression. The IMF and World Bank, the WTO and specialised UN agencies provide the economic and financial architecture for globalisation, while organization such as Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

and the World Economic Forum function as the forums for determining rules of capitalist global governance. The MNCs are headquartered in Europe, North America, Korea and Japan, which shows the asymmetry in interconnections between global North and the global South. TNCs keep buying up smaller ones. These are called mergers or acquisitions. The top TNCs of the world have more wealth than the GDPs of most countries. Eg: Apple's worth in the year 2018 was \$1 Trillion. Critics of globalization call it 'corporate globalization' or 'globalization from beyond' (Vestergaard & Wade, 2018; Sullivan, 2020).

TNCs have boosted their fortunes through FDI into the developing economies. Nike for instance has subcontracted 100% of its production to workers in Taiwan, China, Malaysia, Korea and Thailand.

The Belt and Road initiative- The developing nations are now taking the initiative in globalization is China's One Belt One Road (OBOR). Through this ambitious project, China is reviving (and expanding) the trade routes its ancient Silk Route which connected it to Central Asia and rest of the world. It is building roads, railways, bridges, and tunnels to connect China with countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Political: Globalization is the triumph of the market over government. There is a movement towards a unilateral integrated system, where state is a rational actor, however not so powerful, under the cast of new players. It is the interactions with the environment that are responsible for evolution of political systems. With the changes in surrounding ushered by new forces, conditions of functioning are also impacted. This is why there are new demands and constraints juxtaposed with limited resources, that the sovereign powers of the state are questioned by supranational governance & regulations.

Some of the scholars who are *hyperglobalists* (people who passionately favour globalization and free trade) argue that globalization is bringing an end to this idea of the nation-state because it is reducing this power of nation governments to control their economies and societies. Thomas Freidman, a leading American advocate of globalization says that globalization has moved 'farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper' today. On the other hand, other group of scholars are skeptical about the effects of globalization. They argue that nation-state still remains the principal actor in global politics. However, the truth is that due to globalization new kinds of international actors (like Multi-National Corporations, International NGOs, etc.) beside the nation-state have indeed emerged and are playing their part in international decision-making processes.

Globalization has shown its effects in the military sphere also through global arms trade and spread of WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction). Even terrorism has acquired global dimensions due to the forces of globalization. The terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS have effectively used the latest means of telecommunications to build a global network. This is the reason why they are able to get new recruits from around the world, disseminate their message and execute their activities at a global scale.

Growth of regional and International Organizations: With globalization, governments have come to realize that without coming together in multilateral forums, they can't solve their problems because each country's problem today is tied with other countries' issues. In other words, issues have become transnational in nature. So there is an explosive growth in

forums like the annual G20 (group of twenty leading economies of the world) summit, Dublin Group (which come along the drug enforcement agencies from EU, US and other nations in order to make policies for prevention and control of drug trafficking), Economic Action Task Force (which brings together government experts from various nation to tackle issue of money laundering and terror financing) etc.. International military groups like NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organizations), ANZUS, etc. have been formed by countries to tackle their strategic and security needs collectively. Political groups like EU (European Union), MERCOSUR (Southern American Common Market), AU (African Union), ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association), etc. have been formed by groups of countries in order to bring themselves closer together politically as well as economically. In all these regional groups, the trade between member countries is fast and hassle free and there is a desire among them to make this movement of goods, money and people more free. Thus we see that through such groupings, the world is indeed trying to come together (**Keohane & Nye, 2000; Sutherland, 2006**).

Social: Globalization has had different impacts upon men and women. Lower government spending on health and infrastructure has adversely affected women's health particularly in the poor and developing nations. On the other hand, globalization has also altered the gender relations between men and women as more women are entering the public sphere. Their educational and employment opportunities have also increased. With globalization have come western notion of modernity has helped in breaking the traditional view of women as mere home-makers and care-givers. Now it is routine to see women being lawyers, judges, doctors, CEOs of MNCs, running banks, joining the military etc..

The ill effects of globalization are mainly because the countries implementing globalization policies are not prepared. For globalization's benefits to reach everyone evenly, the governments need to prepare an educated and a healthy workforce. This requires increased government spending on health and education. Government must allocate resources like land, power, and water to people in a fair manner.

Cultural: Human cultures have intermingled and borrowed from each other since a long time in history. But in the current times, this has acquired an extent and depth that has never been seen before. This is due to the forces of globalization. Internet, satellite broadcasting technologies, and other means of communication has facilitated the growth of a set of values around the world viz. individualism (i.e. the idea that the individual rather than the family/ community/ nation is the primary unit of society and his rights and needs are paramount) and consumerism (i.e. the idea that we live to consume; the more we can buy things, the more meaningful role we play in society; the more we consume, the better citizen we are). The transnational media organizations have a huge role to play in cultural globalization. Through advertisements, TV shows, and music, the media companies shape peoples' desire to consume. They encourage people to consume more than they need to. In the domain of news, TV, entertainment, and films it is a very small group of media TNCs that dominate the global culture industry and most of these TNCs are American. Hence globalization has immensely popularized American culture in all parts of the world. American TV programmes are so popular around the world that they have turned it into a global 'gossip market'

In the cultural sphere, globalization also produces hybridization, i.e. the combining of various cultural forms and styles derived from around the world. For example, when Mac Donald's, the American fast-food chain opened its branches in India, it introduced products like 'Mc Aloo tikki', 'Mc Paneer burger', that were American in form but had significant Indian content to it. It also made sure that its outlets were 'family friendly' keeping in mind the Indians' families preference for eating out together rather than alone as it often happens in the US. All of this is a part of the MNC mantra of globalization- 'think globally, act locally'. There is a global spread of pop culture, global media corporations (like CNN), communication networks. At the same time there has been a backlash against globalization though increased nationalism and ethnic pride.

Technological: Technology is seen as main facilitator for the process of globalisation. Advances & developments are main driving force- where technology is described as socialized knowledge of producing goods and services. It is the market that is main force behind technological innovations. the revolution of informational technology are both informational and world, under historic circumstances, innovations occur and struggle is carried out in a worldwide web of interactions. Nano technology, plastic money, optic fibres etc. have led to new horizons on trade & exchange. Instant access to goods & services facilitated by technology have led to 'distributed intelligence'. It has also made democratic governance more complex. The argument is that globalisation is seen as moral necessity, but then what kind of vision we seek for the global system when accessibility & affordability of technology, goods & services along with it are unequal. (Castells, 2000)

Ecological: Scientists estimate that 2/3rd of the farmlands are 'somewhat degraded' and 1/3rd have been 'strongly degraded'. 1/2 the worldwide wetlands have already been deteriorated and the biodiversity of freshwater ecosystems is seriously threatened. Three-quarters of world agricultural genetic diversity has been disappeared since 1900. The world oceans are being filled with plastic. The widespread concern about health of glaciers, ozone layer, and oceans. Govt. all across world are come together in multilateral forums to handle change in climate. Globalization based on the capitalism throughout the globe and capitalism on heavy industries capable of mining minerals from the earth like gas, coal, petroleum etc. As a result with increasing globalization, leads to increased industrialization and pollution. Nations that are quickly industrialize (like China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria) are simultaneously experiencing significant environmental degradation. For further economic development, there must be market demand for manufacturing of items. As Globalization promoted by consumerism which leads people to buy and consume more than they need. While earlier a family had a single telephone, a single TV set and a single car, today we see that everyone in the family has or wants to have each of these items exclusively for themselves. This is the product of materialism as well as the concept of individuality. Individualism emphasizes that privacy is more important than the idea of sharing. So we see that the cultural values of globalization are responsible for increased stress on the environment.

Ideological: Globalization has a strong ideological side too. An ideology is a set of beliefs which give people a prism through which they look at the world. It tells people not only how the world is but also how it should be. Ideologies are used to give legitimacy to political

actions as well as to defend existing power structures. It helps people identify the good from the bad. Globalism is the ideology of globalization. Through the positive portrayal of values of free market, consumerism, individualism, choice, and freedom in the media globalism creates a favourable climate for globalization. Instead, globalism has popularized slogans like- TINA ('There is no alternative'), and 'end of history' (a quotation by American scholar Francis Fukuyama, according to whom once Communism came to an end with the fall of the Soviet Union, Capitalism had won once and for all and that free market was the only way left in which economies could grow). These slogans portray free market and globalization as some kind of natural force like gravity or weather. An impression is also created that no one is in charge of globalization and that it enriches everybody. This truth is that most of the benefits of the globalization process has gone to countries of the World War I and to elites of the 3rd world. The truth is that the US, which is the largest and the strongest military and economic power in the world, sets an agenda for global economic integration and that it dominates the 'triad' (i.e. World Bank, IMF, and WTO) of globalization. The truth about globalization is that inequality has grown stupendously as a result of globalization. Today, 26 richest people on earth own as much as the poorest 3.8 billion (3800 crores) people. In the ten years following the 2008 world financial crisis, number of billionaires in world doubled up. Everyday 10,000 people die because they can't afford the costs of hospitals and medicines (Oxfam Report 2018).

Another ideological justification that is constructed to support the idea of globalization is that it promotes democracy. This is not necessarily true. For example, China is the leading globalizer in the world today. Its OBOR project is worth trillions of dollars, but it is not a democracy. UAE is another shining example of globalization but it is also not a democracy. Other dictatorships or authoritarian governments like Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia follow free market and globalization policies.

Criticisms of globalization

It has been pointed out by critics that the world was much more connected economically, politically, and culturally in the period between 1870 and 1914 as compared to today. They say that globalization is a myth that hides the fact that under its garb it is basically the dominance of the US and the West that is being spread globally. **(Piketty, 2014)** The bulk of the global trade is actually carried out between the developed countries of the world, which are concentrated in North America, Europe, and in East Asia (viz. Japan and Korea). As compared to the age when European countries had colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (together they called as 'global South'), today countries of these three continents are much less integrated into the global economy. When people say that the global South is being globalized, what they actually mean is that the elites in the global South are doing increasing amount of business with remaining parts of the world, whereas the vast proportion of the population in these countries remain untouched by the positive effects of globalization. This has resulted in a sharp increase in wealth inequality and income inequality in these countries. **(Rodrik, 2018)** Despite globalization, national boundaries are growing in significance as more and more nationalist governments are coming into power around the world viz. Duterte in Phillipines, Erdogan in Turkey, Modi in India, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Shizo Abe in Japan, Trump in the US,

etc.. These leaders have increased the emphasis on national identity over the concept of 'world citizenship' which is promoted by globalization, many of them believe in implementing economic policies which favour domestic goods and domestic industry over foreign ones. This can be seen as a reaction to globalization. This may be the start of an era of de-globalization. It may be true that globalisation expands the opportunities & choices, promote economic efficiency, create growth and yield profits. However, when gaps between rich and poor, developed and undeveloped are on rise, issues of inequality, injustice, insecurity, poverty, malnutrition, increase in rampant cases of non-traditional security dimensions like narcotics, terrorism, pandemics etc. then surely globalisation has brought huge disadvantages also. It may have ushered unprecedented human advance for some but has also lethally reduced opportunities for others. On one hand, that is integrating economy, culture and governance but at the other hand, it is fragmenting societies. The nationalist leaders mentioned above have effectively capitalised on these failures of globalization and their appeal to people is based on the idea that they will rectify the wrongs done to people by globalization policies. One of the leading critics of globalization is former World Bank economist and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz. He says that although globalization has worked, but it lacks a fair implementation. Although economic growth and living standards are improving, but it is not same for developing and developed countries. The developed countries have cornered the bulk of the profits of globalization whereas only a handful of the elite population living in developing countries have benefitted.

The ease and increase in the financial flows across national borders has created the situation where sudden international flight of capital crashes stock exchanges and countries' economies overnight. Many a time, an economic emergency in one country causes a ripple effect in other countries very quickly. For example, in the 1990's the govt. of Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, and the Philippines allowed foreign capital to move into their countries easily. This created a rush of capital in these markets. However once the investors realized in the year 1997 that staying there any longer would cause them economic losses, they began withdrawing their money from these countries suddenly. As a result, the stock markets and the value of currency in these countries completely collapsed. Foreign banks refused to help out these economies (which were referred to as the 'Asian tigers'). The government had to put in nearly all its money to rescue the stock markets. This led to fall in economic output, a sudden fall in wages, and sudden rise in unemployment. The social and political impacts of that devastating economic meltdown which was a direct result of globalization, is felt even today. **(Wade, 1998& Krugman, 1998).**

Conclusion:

The structure of globalization is obviously not autonomous machinery for MNCs and TNCs. Instead, corporations operate under a pretty much complicated system of interdependencies supported by national governments as well as international organizations. Governments have become great catalysts to these corporations in mechanisms, such as: subsidies; preferential biddings; export credits; and aid for development. This state involvement proves that economic globalization is coupled with political objectives in terms of furthering national interest, even to military force to dominate markets.

From an institutional perspective, it is the World Bank, IMF, WTO and specialized UN agencies, which provide financial and infrastructure for globalization. These institutions develop and impose rules and regulations, through which multinational corporations can venture into any geographical region. However, it is viewed as biased and promoting the interests of developed, industrialized, and resourceful countries. Such global venues as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Economic Forum provide forums to develop a model of governance in an effort to harmonize economic relationships on Earth.

This configuration represents a gross power imbalance with most MNCs located in Europe, North America, Korea, and Japan. In such a scenario, rules are set by the global North at the expense of the global South, resulting in a cycle of dependency and inequality. Conclusion In this regard, globalization cannot be seen as merely an economically driven process but, rather, as a politicized process that represents power structures and economic imbalances within the contemporary world order.

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Tribal Education: Issues and Concerns of ST Girls of Odisha

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Abstract

Education would help to abolish gender inequality, develop potential, and increase socio-economic status in the community. Formal education is an agent of transformation. Informal knowledge of an Indigenous community is not accustomed to the modern institutional formal education system. Odisha is regarded as the homeland of tribes and more particularly 62 tribal communities are living in the state. Statistical data reveals the overall literacy rate and quality of education among ST girls are recorded as low when compared with other social groups. There are some promising prospects and on going government intervention goals to address these issues. Some gaps that are reflected while implementing developmental programs have remained to represent the low literacy of girls. Despite this, they cannot conquer the transformation brought out by industrialization and urbanization. The tribal people have been undergoing the problem of both inclusion into and exclusion from the dominant development paradigm of the country. This paper explores the actual issues and challenges prevailing among the tribal girl's students in the attainment of their education. It aims to analyse the attitudes of the family members towards their girl's education. The present paper uses secondary data collected from the Census of India, government records, the economic survey of Odisha, annual reports of the Ministry of Tribal Welfare, the Department of Education, as well as a few local newspapers and educational statistics. Based on collected secondary sources and findings which have a substantial impact on the quality of education for tribals, researcher suggests there is a need to appoint tribal teachers, design an unbiased language curriculum, and involvement of tribal parents to engage in the educational process which significantly impacts the quality of education for the tribals.

Keywords: *Tribe, girl child, female literacy, cultural deprivation, Progress.*

Introduction

Education is one of the powerful instruments to achieve the status of an individual. It is

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also regarded as a key instrument of equalizing opportunity for poor, downtrodden classes/castes, women, and tribes. The socio-economic development of ST depends on educational advancement. When India's Constitution was framed in 1950, it was decided that special provisions should be made for backward communities' educational and economic advancement. For this purpose, tribal communities in all states were listed and placed under a schedule whence they came to be known as the Scheduled Tribes. ¹

Unity in diversity is one of the most spectacular features of the population. A tribe is a group of people, usually staying in a forested locality, endogamous, a common dialect and a common territory are all the criteria of this social group. Tribes in India have spread across the length and breadth of the region.

Prof. S.C Sinha has tried to define the category, of the tribe as essentially a preliterate group living in relative isolation in hills and forests or in the plains of forests who are apparently outside the threshold of hierarchic civilizational.

Odisha occupies a special position for the rich and colourful tribal scenario. It is recognised as 3rd highest tribal population homeland of about 9590756 which is 22.85% of the state's total population according to census 2011. (SCSTRI, 2022) Census data (2011) reveal that these Indigenous groups are lagging in their educational attainment when compared to the general population in terms of school enrolment. ²

The fact is that tribal communities have been isolated from the mainstream of culture. They lack the positive traits of modern society and thus constitute a simple, illiterate, and backward society. These features can only change on account of education, modern occupations, new technology, etc. if the transformation elements are directed towards the mainstream society.

Among different tribal groups, the dropout rates of tribal girls are higher than those of boys. Tribal girls are neglected particularly in education at the primary and secondary stages across Odisha. The enrolment of tribal girls at the secondary level is very prominent compared to others. Their enrolment and attendance rates are much lower in rural areas. Their role is confined to cooking and taking care of children. Their needs are ignored by developed society. Here, it brings us to consider, why the literacy rate among tribal girls low?

Various developmental initiatives are implemented for tribals, education is one among such activities. Which facilitates the overall socio-economic development as well as mobility in these communities. Following the rapid process of social change, we are now engaged in purposeful social and economic development by spreading programs of rural reconstruction and planned urbanization. Implementations of various policies and programs are planned to provide inclusive education as a solution for the healthy assimilation of tribal communities. Thus, education is a tool for the creation of human values and freedom of power for tribal social transformation. Hence low enrolment in girls' education is the major reason because of their parental backwardness and isolation.

Literature Review

The provision for socio-economic development and the gap in literacy level of tribal communities among the mainstream section is still widening. Even though, enormous efforts by the government to build educational attainment are still a milestone. The importance of

education for the development of tribal communities also has been highlighted in NEP-2020. One of the primary goals of the schooling system must be to ensure that children are enrolled in and attending school. The policy acknowledges equitable and inclusive education for all. ³

For Learner (1962) Education is, therefore, undoubtedly one of the keys that unlocks the doors to modernisation, providing the most important tools of the transition from traditional to modern sectors. Hence, literacy is both the basis and agent of modernization.

A brief theoretical review is useful to highlight what has already been done in the field.

The notable work of Rath and Mishra (1974) is based on 171 scheduled tribes and 247 Scheduled caste college students of Odisha. They found that the majority of parents of tribal students are illiterate and poor. During the cultivation period, it was observed that the dropout rate is more due to the involvement of children in their familial duties like sowing, weeding, planation, and harvesting activities.

Shah and Patel pointed out that “Educational attainment of the family members, those who have been able to attain a certain level of education usually aspire for their children at least as much as higher than their own level of educational achievement. The study environment and parental motivation play an important role in the younger generation to obtain education.

Gautam, V. (20014) identifies that the causes of high dropout rates in tribal schools are due to the wrong medium of instruction, the appointment of Non-tribal teachers in tribal areas, and the communication gap between the teachers, tribal students, and tribal parents. The importance of the mother tongue as a medium of education has very often been emphasized. Both mediums of instruction and teaching materials in schools are based on regional or official languages. Oriya is the predominant regional language spoken by more than 80% of the population. It is the official language of the state. There is no provision to teach the mother tongue of tribal children. ⁴

In this context, researchers have proved that language is the wheel of transmission. The communication skill and teaching language of the teacher allows the expression of their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and information in the school. It is also a communication for boosting relationships and conveying feelings.

Even a study conducted by Mohanty (2009) concluded that there is a greater advantage of the mother tongue in society, as it helps not only in socioeconomic mobility but also in the social integration of linguistic minorities.

Srivastava (1971) discussed the teachers do not attend schools regularly, the educational incentives do not reach schools on time, parents have a negative mentality towards sending their children to school, their roads are hilly and dangerous because of wild animals, their fair and cultural festivals affect the attendance in schools. Moreover, girls are also engaged in household work. Hence lack of strong achievement motive has played a negative role in the educational achievement of students.

Pradhan and Sanjay Kumar (2011) describe that despite special significant initiatives like Ashram schools, introducing Vernacular at the primary level, and teaching in local dialects, the tribal are still lagging behind the non-tribal.

As Xaxa (2011) observed traditional tribal society was not aware of formal education. It

was the Christian missionaries who introduced this alien phenomenon of education to tribal society. The school and its environment were alien to the traditional tribal milieu. Tribal students do not feel comfortable in the new external environment. Also as those engaged in imparting knowledge were strangers to their society. ⁵

In this context, the literature reveals that the low enrolment, low attendance, and low educational achievement of tribal girls due to socio-economic conditions, cultural deprivation, parental motivation, parent income, parental awareness, and environmental factors are mainly responsible for tribal girl's education. The other causative factors are rigid school hours and mediums of instruction. Girls' parents do not find the existing curriculum useful in practical life. They do not consider the importance of education. This kind of attitude of parents by which girls children are unable to get regular education.

Literacy trends of Tribal girl

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 focuses on “Equitable and Inclusive Education” which focuses on the idea that no child should be left behind to get an educational opportunity based on their background and socio-cultural identities. One of the primary goals is to increase student participation from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and their Gross Enrolment Ratio.

However, the Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) is to build especially for girls students and the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls. The objectives of NEP-2020 for equitable and quality education for girl children are being met through specific provisions under Samagra Shiksha.

In addition, the NEP-2020 has underlined four stages based on the styles of learning best suited for those age groups — foundational stage, preparatory stage, middle stage, and secondary stage. The Policy gives the highest priority to achieving universal Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. The ability to read, write, and perform basic operations with numbers is a necessary foundation and indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. ⁶

Hence, literacy helps to understand the population's quality in terms of education. As expected, the tribal girl's poor educational attainment is a matter of concern. The data on literacy can be analysed from various angles covering gender and types of groups. Girls are especially vulnerable, and *Adivasis* girls face the same social constraints. Despite overall changes in the level of education, conspicuous gaps in basic education among boys and girls continue to persist. Statistics reveal the coastal area is more developed than the other regions (north, south, and west) of the state. Among all the 62 tribal social groups, the tribes are the most deprived and marginalized in all the 3 regions of the state.

Table-1

Sl.	District	Male	Female	Total
1	Anugul	72.55	51.19	61.86
2	Balasore	61.47	38.71	50.06

3	Bargarh	75.47	54.30	64.86
4	Bhadrak	53.21	33.60	43.49
5	Bolangir	67.78	42.34	54.93
6	Boudh	77.88	50.17	63.84
7	Cuttack	68.87	46.79	57.93
8	Deogarh	73.17	51.67	62.38
9	Dhenkanal	70.82	50.04	60.39
10	Gajapati	55.39	32.83	43.66
11	Ganjam	60.71	38.89	49.71
12	Jagatsinghpur	76.06	55.05	66.55
13	Jajpur	59.68	35.48	47.60
14	Jharsuguda	78.78	58.70	68.72
15	Kalahandi	63.31	35.84	49.39
16	Kandhamal	72.12	45.58	58.34
17	Kendrapara	70.70	54.01	62.39
18	Keonjhar	65.22	41.56	53.24
19	Khordha	79.42	58.64	69.33
20	Koraput	46.20	25.37	35.36
21	Malkangiri	44.91	26.25	35.23
22	Mayurbhanj	65.28	41.36	53.11
23	Nabarangapur	49.46	28.02	38.54
24	Nayagarh	78.62	54.20	66.29
25	Nuapada	65.13	37.73	51.01
26	Puri	83.08	64.71	74.62
27	Rayagada	47.87	26.72	36.69
28	Sambalpur	76.00	55.59	65.76
29	Subarnapur	77.38	56.39	66.78
30	Sundargarh	73.98	56.39	65.08
	Total	63.70	41.20	69.02

Source: [https://stsc.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-03/Population %26 Literacy-2011.pdf](https://stsc.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-03/Population%20Literacy-2011.pdf)

The evidence is that the tribal literacy rates vary across regions in terms of districts. As per the census 2011, district-wise literacy rate indicates Puri is the highest at 74.62 and Malkangiri is low at 35.23. Female literacy is the highest in Puri at 64.71 and lowest in Koraput at 25.37. In Koraput many children suffer from poor health and parents insist their children work rather than go to school. Unfortunately, the girl child has to work in the fields, for cow herding, cleaning, cooking, collecting firewood, and taking care of siblings. It is well understood that just like in Scheduled tribes female literacy is a matter of concern same way

Scheduled tribe girls drop out is rampant. Even today, there are problems of low levels of learning achievements and lower participation of girls among tribes. It is, therefore, necessary to take a special approach to these problem areas and groups.

There is a significant difference between literate and non-literate person in respect of overall attitude of the concerned individuals.

Table: 2
Literacy rate

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Male	13.90	18.25	24.96	40.16	56.74	66.81
Female	1.80	2.33	4.29	11.29	25.74	43.56
Total	7.80	10.20	14.50	25.58	41.13	54.99

Source: (Census of India ‘ 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 & 2011)

. Table-2, reveals Literacy rate has increased from 1961 to 2011 male literacy has gone up to 10%, 56.74(2001) to 66.81(2011). Despite this improvement female literacy is alarming. Likewise, the percentage of literacy of tribal women was 43.56 as of 2011. (Female child engagement) It is, therefore, necessary to take a special approach to these problem areas and groups.

Table-3
Percentage Enrolment of ST students to all categories

Year	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
1195-1996	8.8	6.1	4.9
1996-1997	9.2	6.3	4.9
1998-1999	9.6	6.7	5.1
1999-2000	9.4	6.9	5.0
2000-2001	9.7	7.2	5.4
2002-2003	9.7	6.9	5.4
2003-2004	9.8	7.5	5.6
2004-2005	10.5	8.1	5.6
2005-2006	10.6	8.5	5.7
2006-2007	10.8	8.5	6.1
2007-2008	10.8	8.2	6.3
2009-2010	11.2	8.6	6.3
2010-2011	11.0	8.7	6.4

(Source: Educational Statistics MHRD,2011)

Table 3 states, that the literacy rate of a particular state represents the development of that area and the responsibility of the state towards these communities. As can be seen from the table, there is improvement in the 2010-2011 since 1995-96. From 2000 to 2003 primary enrolments were constant at 9.7%. The enrolment at the secondary level is shown to be

lower than all two of these parameters.

Concerning all the above, again, forced early marriage, motherhood, and compulsory labour, as well as domestic labour, are the persistent causes. However, parental motivations and awareness of their parents about the value of modern education adversely impacted on daughter's education. Thus, girl's education is suppressed by family, community, culture, and marriage. During festivals tribal children do not go to schools which increases irregularities of schooling and leads to drop out of children from schooling. A clear link exists between sociocultural practices and school attendance, school completion, and dropout at Primary, middle, and secondary stages. Tribal girls are still struggling to attain equitable educational access. In a patriarchal regime of girl child is involved with the traditional role. Even as the girls are going to school and may also perform well in their studies, limits are set on their educational advancement.

Problem-related to tribal girls Education

Formal education and literacy are the symbols of modernity. Education acts as the connecting force between tradition and modernity. Education helps increase the earning capacity of the individual and reduces inequality and poverty. However, literacy, low enrolment, attendance rate, high dropout rate, and low performance in all the stages of education. There is still inequality among women and girls in tribal areas. As per census figures, the literacy rate for STs in India has improved from 47.1% in 2001 to 59% in 2011. While no female student is seen above class VII.

The Constitution says "Primary education is free and compulsory for all". Article 45 of the constitution states that the State shall endeavor to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 6 to 14 years. The Constitution of India has provided many safeguards for the welfare and development of the tribal. Through there are many factors that are responsible for tribal girls education. Odisha's tribal literacy percentage is comparatively low compared with all other communities.

Researchers analysed that teachers and parents play a very significant role in a child's life. A teacher can help students to impart knowledge and think critically. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping student's personalities and the creation of knowledge. Their encouragement and mentorship can positively influence tribal girls, motivating them to pursue higher education. However, in the remote tribal areas, the non-tribal teacher's discriminatory attitudes and regular absenteeism affects largely the quality of education.

Hence, the major problem is that the teachers are disinterested in the tribal students because of poverty, remoteness, and inaccessibility to common facilities. The teachers are mostly appointed from the non-tribal belts, unaware of tribal life and culture. The teacher must speak a tribal language. Only he/she can be in a position to act as a friend, philosopher, and guide for students. The lack of basic comforts in tribal belts discourages them from working in tribal areas. Hence teachers are reluctant to accommodate in tribal areas. It affects the paucity of teachers and teacher's interest in tribal areas. Before they enter the tribal belt, they start processing their files for transfer.⁷

Moreover, the tribes are closely related to the forest. According to Roy Burman, the new

laws are seeking to protect the tribals which led to greater exploitation for the tribal. It appears that development is possible only with the involvement of local people.⁸

Therefore, a wide gap is noticed between teachers, students, and their parents. The lack of cordial relationship among them to remain alien to one another for years. The existing Curriculum, uniform pattern, timings, and holidays do not suit the Indigenous community. A separate holiday calendar for tribal areas should be taken in account in their harvesting period, festivals, rituals celebrations, etc. It would create a comfortable atmosphere for especially tribal girl students.

Furthermore, financial weakness and poverty among the tribal population of Odisha are causes of educational backwardness among the tribes. Parents are more worried about their daughter's marriage than education. Girls who are married early are most likely to drop out of school. Mostly parents develop the idea "*Jhia janama Paraghraku*" and "*Jhia janama Roseigharaku*" (daughters are born to move to another family after marriage and they are in charge of household chores and domestic cooking). Early marriage makes them more vulnerable to education. Girls are married in tribal societies generally after puberty. The marriage age of the tribal females is less than 15 years and depends on social values. This can lead to a higher risk of tribal girls permanently dropping out of school.

In some communities, tribals take pride in having more than one wife. The more number of women a tribal man marries, more economic support he gets from them. Here the earning capacity and support to the family determines her position and status in the family.

However, the academic environment of the family is a broad concept at home that contributes towards academic achievement and better life chances for the child. Tribal parents do not have any aspiration to send their girl children to school. Parental support to engage their daughter in school. On the other hand, they desire that their children should engage in some economic activity to supplement the family income. There is no parental support for the education of a girl child. All the parents are in abject poverty. The parents cannot afford school and tuition fees. Most of the tribal parents are farmers and labourers. And most of the tribal fathers are addicts to local *mahua* liquor. They also have little knowledge about the benefits of education in the modern world. Hence children are the supplements for the family income by collecting *mahua* flowers or other forest products.

Tribal women are very laborious and earning units of the family from an early age. When producing the seasonal demands the poor tribal mainly depends on the labour force of their school-going children. Many of them are migrating to urban areas as domestic workers. They are also unable to cope with the Socio-cultural change and development process that would impact the mainstream society on advancement, prosperity, social literacy, and upliftment. Hence attendance goes down and during the season of harvesting crops the collections of minor forest produce and of forests, feasts, and festivals. The policymakers and planners must look into the problems of tribal and plan policy accordingly.⁹

Despite the fact to spread education among tribal, the government has started an innovative residential school. One of the milestones for the establishment of the residential educational institution provides education with residential facilities in a conducive to learning. The educational needs of the tribal children are primarily addressed through residential schools called ashram

schools. There are 705 ashram schools in Odisha. Ashram schools were instituted to provide residential facilities for those living in remote areas without having school facilities in their vicinity. Studies reveal that there are multidimensional issues in ashram schools in India. For girls, lack of personal safety serves as a major deterrent. These residential school hostel girls are misbehaved and sexually assaulted by non-tribal teachers. They are found murdered and in a state of insecurity, abuse creates a sense of alien environment. They face challenges of lack of teacher, quality education, an alienating environment, and an unsympathetic atmosphere that results affects their personal growth further creating caste and class discrimination. Therefore, traditionally running an ashram school is not acceptable in contemporary society.¹⁰

The lists of lacunas are lack of skilled tribal teachers, medium of instruction and instructors, parental awareness and poverty are the major constraints on tribal girls' enrolment in formal education.

There is bewilderment in tribal development because the government administrative machinery is an impersonal omnibus. In other words, development is measured only in terms of money spent by the ruling government. Development should signify both quantitative and qualitative achievement.

Educational Development Initiative for Tribal Girls

While referring to tribal development, Sen (1999) stated that the capabilities of human beings are adequately addressed by the deprivations faced by these groups. Even though, the Government of India has launched some schemes for the educational development of the tribes through free education, residential educational institutions, Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojna, Adivasi Shiksha Rinna Yojana, have been an identified developmental; initiatives for tribal girls. Schemes aim to provide financial assistance, free education, scholarships, hostel facilities, free distribution of textbooks, and garments, and imparting special coaching to prepare them for the requirement of state and all-India public services as well as reservations for seeking admission to IITs/IIMs courses.¹¹

The Government of India started a scheme, known as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) in the year 2001-2002 in partnership with the local self-government and state Governments. It aims to allow children to learn, increase enrolment, and reduce the dropout rate at the primary school level, a mid-day meal scheme has been introduced.

Odisha state government has established 164 High schools, 173 Girls High schools, 61 Higher secondary schools, 766 Ashram Schools, (Elementary Level), 505 *Sevashrams*, (primary Level), and 19 Educational complexes to provide education facilities to students belonging to the particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), 2 secondary training school, 1 B. Ed. College and 13 *Eklavya* Model Residential schools (EMRS) are managed by the Odisha Model Tribal Education Society.¹²

During the year 2016-17, 21 high schools have been upgraded to higher secondary schools, besides upgrading 65 ashram Schools to high schools. Pre-Matric scholarship is being paid @ Rs. 600 and Rs. 630 per month for all the SC/ST students studying in the Residential school of ST & SC and M.E schools and high schools of S & ME Dept. Including the hostels of special ST Hostels of ST & SC development department.

All educational amenities like school uniforms, reading & writing materials, and payment of HSC Exam fees are provided to the students free of cost besides providing incident facilities in the hostels such as Cots, Blankets, Utensils, Mosquito nets, etc. The State has explored the ANWESHA-Urban Education Programme for ST/SC children intending to provide the best educational opportunities to ST/SC students through public schools in partnership with urban educational Institutions of the State. The state government has also been responsible for bearing the cost of their education.

In recent years to solve the problem of school distance and transportation, the Odisha state Government introduced the AKANSHYA urban hostel complex for post-matric ST/SC students from remote pockets to continue their higher studies in free hostel accommodation in urban areas.

Whereas, sociologist Durkheim mentioned education is above all a social means to a social end-the means by which society guarantees its survival. The teacher is society's agent, the critical link in cultural transmission. It is the teacher's task to create a social, moral, being. Through him, it is the teacher's task and the glory of education. The school had a crucial and specified function to create a new being.

A large number of teachers have undergone attitudinal training which has had a significant impact on the attitudes of non-tribal teachers towards tribal children. A committed teacher is one who commits or binds oneself to teaching and certain behaviour when employed as a teacher. The state has also provided Career Counselling for the students of Class IX and above with information on various career opportunities in different sectors in their surrounding environment.

Findings

The above discussions make us aware that rights are those essential components of life, that enable individuals to develop their personality as well as to transfer the society. Therefore, the Indian constitution guarantees the Right to education. An educated person in a community contributes a great share of national development. Several factors have been found, that are responsible for the dropout of female students. The inferior status of tribal girl children is linked to their traditional role. No doubt the community is still in its initial stage to understand the importance of education in schools. It is increasingly evident that lack of sufficient awareness and orientation of tribal parents constrain girls' children from school. The socio-cultural practices and socialization have a direct link to the achievement of girl's education.

However, not only parent's level of education but also traditional values are responsible for lower literacy among tribal girl children. Parents and family must be co-partners with the school in their children's learning and development. Educated parents should motivate and recognize the value of education. Parents can communicate with teachers to update their child's progress daily. This is very true in tribal contexts, the perception of parents on this education; most often drives their children either in the right or in the wrong direction depending on their positive or negative outlook.

It is to be noted government policy is also an important aspect of the overall change in tribal girls. The mobilization and involvement of parents must be two major objectives for

group and community leader's efforts to implement educational developmental programmes to achieve the societal needs of girls' education. Governmental effective capability represents shifts in tribal India's structure and Framework. Educated parents motivate their children to study and understand the impact of education. Parents may interact with the teacher for the daily progress of their child. Additionally, the role of Political leaders and community leader's efforts also enhance educational opportunities for these girls.

Suggestions

To tackle the learning obstacles of marginalized tribal children. The school's relationship should not be limited to the current group of parents and families. An inclusive and integrated educational environment can be viewed as a solution. In the dimension of inclusiveness and wholesome education, the government must assert a system of free discrimination, equality, and social justice. The most important finding of this work girl students have failed and excluded practices at home. At regular practices for a fixed number of hours to obtain good results at school. It is strongly suggested that all family members are well aware of the education of their girls and the Mother's initiative towards children's education is a higher priority. No one in the family could teach and clear their doubts at home. Therefore, we will focus on how parental perceptions or motivation affect access of the girl child to education. If girls more often are kept at home to help with chores and if they must do housework after school while brothers are allowed time for homework girls have less access to education.

The planners and policymakers may be taken into consideration to uphold tribal traditions, festivals, and sentiments need to be considered in the education calendar. Parents should be motivated to send their children to schools if there is no provision for feeding children.

Lord Krishna said in the Gita "*Yoga Karmasu Kausalam*. It means that the Yoga (teacher) is competent in the duties. The teacher's competency reflects his teaching behaviour and teaching skills. We can't ignore the role of the teacher. Teacher is the backbone of any nation. Students are future citizens. That is why teachers are regarded as the architects of the country. Student success reflects primarily on the responsiveness and willingness of the teacher. Those teachers serving in tribal belts enable cultural connections between formal education and local indigenous knowledge.

It is an observable fact that people differ from one another. Therefore, teachers should assign the task of motivating parents to enroll their daughters in schools. Those parents are hesitant to do, so due to ignorance, lack of knowledge, and weak financial conditions. They should support and encourage better education for their girls. This attitude should be improved through proper counselling and guidance. The cordial relationship between teacher and student has a greater influence on a girl's education. Higher authorities of the education department must seriously look into the issue of non-tribal teachers serving in remote tribal areas and their absenteeism.

In the absence of such extent, the school environment should be friendly, healthy, and comfortable for marginalized tribal daughters. It is suggested to appoint female teachers and tribal language teachers in the tribal area. Government policies must physically present remote tribal areas and organize parent awareness programmes to facilitate girls education in the

district by Govt. The education department must emphasize improving the basic reading, writing ability, and numeracy skills of tribal students through innovative methods. These support mechanisms will address the barrier and answer to better tribal girl's education.

Conclusion

The symbol of civilization, a tool for economic betterment, and enhancement of all-round development should not be denied for tribal girls with the name of socio-economic disability and gender barrier. To live in society education provides one of the unique socio-cultural identities connected with the all-around development. From the above discussion in this paper, it comes to know that the government of Odisha has now taken several steps for ST girls into schools and expanding opportunities for improvement in their well-being. Moreover, they are still illiterate and their awareness of the literate outer world is very low. They have a cultural fear and negative mentality in their mind of a civilized community.

However parental indifferent attitude towards education, special education facilities, engagement of children in household chores (tending cattle, cooking, and looking after young children), and parental sifting from different places are highly responsible educational achievement of pupils. We need to focus on parental care, sincerity; awareness, and a positive mind set toward education will help improve tribal girl's education. The availability of elementary schools and secondary schools will not only support the further education of already enrolled girls but also work as a motive for many other girls in their village who wish for education. The government should review every year by school parent's teacher meetings and assessments of students. To reduce the impact of poverty and financial burden on a daughter's education, giving a stipend to enrolled girls is a good solution.

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Ramayana as a Cultural Diplomacy in Indonesia

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Abstract

The stories of the Ramayana entered Vietnam and Cambodia through a mixture of sources; they came from Java in part, and from India directly through the eastern route. Many nations that have accepted the Ramayana have done it in a way that effortlessly integrates it into their own cultures. The epic has been adapted for local settings in a few locations, where notable towns, locations, mountains, rivers, and lakes are given Indian names. Episodes and characters have been nationalized, and their Indian heritage is progressively becoming less noticeable. This is especially true in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Java, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos where the Ramayana has been completely integrated and people rarely acknowledge its Indian roots.¹ The article seeks to analyse the role of Ramayana as an important means of cultural diplomacy between Bharat and Indonesia.

Introduction

The Rama tale's pervasiveness across Asia highlights the close cultural linkages that exist between Bharat and the larger Asian continent. Hindu literature sparked a great deal of attention and respect, especially the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These enormous works were accepted and included with the Sanskrit Sutras and the Buddhist Pali Canon, creating a complex web of spiritual and cultural ties. Early in the Christian period, the epic story of the Ramayana set out to travel via several routes from India to Asia. The narrative was transported

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by land from Punjab and Kashmir into China, Tibet, and East Turkestan via the northern route.² The epic was conveyed by water over the southern route from Gujarat and South India to the Malayan Peninsula, Sumatra, and Java islands. The story was also transmitted from Bengal to Burma, Thailand, and Laos via the eastern route, another overland route.³

It is important to have good relations with Indonesia to boost relations with countries with whom, a rich culture is shared for ages.⁴ Prime Minister Narendra Modi while attending the ASEAN summit in 2023 in Jakarta reaffirmed the need to bolster relations and share good deals on matters of Health, Tourism along with formulating strategies to deal with new challenges like terrorism, extremism and geo-political conflicts, one of which is a security breach of China in Indo-Pacific (ASEAN Summit 2023).⁵ He emphasized reinventing the historical and geographical connection between the region and Bharat. In 2022 also, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bali, Indonesia for the G-20 leaders' summit, wherein he re-imposed his faith in strong relations with different countries of the world (G20 Summit, 2022).⁶ It is believed that early in the Christian period, a spike in Indian commerce with Southeast Asia led to the spread of Indian culture throughout the region. According to this perspective, Indian influence spread through active trading networks rather than by invasion, forceful occupation or colonialism. The subsequent dissemination of India's rich cultural legacy was made possible by a wide network of economic exchange. When native kingdoms grew, they enthusiastically assimilated Hinduism's principles into their social structures, accepted Sanskrit as their official language, and embraced Indian ideas of kingship and governance.⁷ The impact of Bhartiya values in Indonesia was a thorough and profound process that had a long-lasting impact on many aspects of local culture. The fundamental components of values system, traditions, scripts and language which have their roots in Indian alphabets, were introduced by this cultural interchange. This exchange also brought stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata to the world, as well as facilitated a profusion of other works in the fields of mathematics, philosophy, astrology, medicine and so on.⁸ Indian art, dance, architecture, and sculpture were all influenced by the country, weaving a complex web of cultural fusion that enhanced and broadened Indonesian history and its linkages with Bharat.

Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Buddhism were all practised at this time, providing a rich religious life. Majapahit became a symbol of prosperity in the region. Somehow that could not last long due to the influence of Muslim traders on the land, which came from Gujarat part of India. Hence, Islam emerged as a new religion in Indonesia parallel to Buddhism and Hinduism. Thus Roesnadi (1975) quotes the continuation of cultural traditions passed on from India as an important way of life in Indonesia. From storytelling to practising rituals, performing dance and puppetry, Ramayana and Mahabharata as Indian epics have found a place in Indonesia's art forms, performance, socio-political and cultural life.⁹

RAMAYANA IN INDONESIA

It was only fitting that the ageless Rama stories accompany the ancient Hindus who travelled to the legendary country of wealth, Suvarnabhumi, which may have been either Java or Sumatra. The aphorism cited before did not necessarily indicate the pinnacle of his adoration, but the legacy of him travelled with them. We discover a beautiful tapestry of poetry and myths glorifying this holy hero throughout Sumatra and Java. Rama's legacy

became so ingrained in the culture that elaborate reliefs and colourful pictorial depictions of his epic journeys may be seen in Java's Hindu-era temples. These stories are treasures that the Javanese have preserved over the ages, inherited from their Hindu ancestors. This enduring legacy still serves as an inspiration today. The dramas, shadow plays, and other narrative genres that the Javanese create are influenced by this rich literary past. The Rama stories continue to be a source of inspiration because they are timeless, encourage innovation, and uphold a hallowed mythology that is timeless.

The flourishing of culture and religion persisted throughout the 7th and 8th centuries CE, as evidenced by the establishment of the Ho-ling Kingdom, Mataram Kingdom, and Srivijaya Kingdom in Sumatra, as well as in Central Java.¹⁰ These kingdoms serve as permanent reminders of the vast knowledge flow and the significant influence of cross-cultural exchanges on the archipelago's history and civilization. The presence of notable brahmins and monks who travelled and resided in the archipelago, making a lasting impression on the spiritual landscape of the area, is largely responsible for the rich tapestry of religious legacy that the region possesses. Among these holy men were Sakyakîtri, who lived in the distinguished Srivijaya, and GuGavarman, who settled in Javadvîpa. At the renowned Nalanda, another great person from Kâñcî, Dharmapâla, taught for thirty years.

During their journeys, the well-known Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra also stayed in Srivijaya, a hive of spiritual activity (Poerbatjaraka, 1974).¹¹ Atiœa arrived in Srivijaya in the eleventh century and studied there for twelve years, during which he underwent a transforming voyage to Tibet. These spiritual trailblazers were instrumental in the dissemination of religious doctrine throughout the archipelago, resulting in a vibrant interchange of religious and cultural ideas that has endured for centuries. The spiritual life of the archipelago was significantly impacted by the entrance of Indian religious leaders. As Indic cultural aspects moved to Indonesia, the Nalanda Mahâvihâra became a key nexus (Bernet Kempers, 1933).¹² Centres of Buddhist study developed by the 7th century CE in Srivijaya (Sumatra) and Ho-ling (Java), demonstrating the close ties to Indian religious traditions. The copper-plate inscription at Nalanda, which documents the establishment of a town and monastery on behalf of ruler Balaputradeva of SuvarGadvîpa, the ruler of Srivijaya, about 860 CE, embodies this link (Coomaraswamy 1965, 198).¹³ However there was not always harmony in the archipelago's relationship with India. Attacks by the Chola Kingdom on Srivijaya between 1007 and 1025 CE strained the relations between these territories (Coedes, 1975).¹⁴

The Ramayana theme is shown in reliefs on the inner railing of the temple. The amalaka motif is affixed to the finial at the top of the temple. The temple's top is similarly decorated with amalaka motifs. In Prambanan, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma temples were built depicting scenes from the Ramayana story and that from the life of lord Krishna. Candi Prambanan built by the Sailendra dynasty in the 9th century stood as the tallest temple built in southeast Asia, dedicated to lord Shiva in central Java. According to the Siwagrha inscription, Prambanan was built around 856 CE (Pandya, 2022).¹⁵ In the first half of the tenth century, eastern Java developed a blend of Shaivite and Buddhist influence while coinciding with the rise of Hinduism and Buddhism in the region of Bali and Sumatra. The concept of Devraja, the belief in God King grew, while Shiva and Buddha were seen and worshipped together by

people of the region. One of the manuscripts of Java named Sutasoma from the 14th century CE mentions the equal status of Shiva and Buddha (Pandya, 2022).¹⁶ Not just temple architecture, but also sculptures found in the form of Vishnu and Buddha resemble the Amravati style which came from south India to the region and has also been influenced by Gupta, post Gupta and Pala period styles of sculpture.¹⁷

Stories of Rama, Ravana, Hanuman and Sita have been widely popular in Indonesia to date and have been textually and orally transmitted for over a thousand years in the islands of Bali and Java. Ramayana has been written in major languages that flourished over time in the region named old Javanese, old Sundanese and Malay and further written in the language of Indonesia named Bahasa Indonesia which was developed in the early twentieth century. Tales from Ramayana were recited, read, chanted and sung from the ninth century onwards in the times of early Hindu Buddhist kingdoms that were in place at that time (Pandya, 2022). The earliest ninth-century form of old Javanese Ramayana prevalent was named Kakawin which consisted of a poetic form using Sanskrit words, based largely on Indian Sanskrit *kavya* written by Valmiki. With the spread of Islam, Rama stories circulating orally were given the name of Hikayat Seri Rama, which uses the Malay language (Pandya, 2022). Ramayana is etched in the life of Indonesia in various ways. Rama stories are written on palm leaves, reflected on stone, and wood and painted on paper, cloth and even illustrated in comic books of the region. Ramayana traditions are kept alive in performing arts as well in the form of Wayang Kulit which is the theatre of shadow puppets and through dance dramas known as Wayang Wong (Saran, 2005).¹⁸ Ramayana episodes could be found in the form of narrative reliefs engraved on the stones of the Prambanan temple in central Java. Dancing figures that closely mimic the *karanas*, or stances, described in Bharata's third-century *Natyashastra*, a foundational text on Indian aesthetics, surround the Shiva temple in Prambanan. The poetry in the Ramayana Kakawin and the imagery found in the Ramayana reliefs both demonstrate a profound understanding of Bharata's philosophy of *rasa*. These creative manifestations speak powerfully to the love that Javanese people had for drama and dance in the ninth century - a tradition that is still very much alive today in the Ramayana plays that take place in the Prambanan temple complex. The revered Muslim saint Sunan Kalijaga, who spread the teachings of the Prophet to Java in the sixteenth century, also bestowed upon its people the timeless epic of the Ramayana.¹⁹ Hailed as the first great Dalang, or puppeteer, Sunan Kalijaga wove tales recounted to him by Yudhistir, the eldest of the Pandavas. Javanese Islam, characterized by its Sufi influences, embraced a broad-minded and inclusive spirit.²⁰ This openness allowed for the continuation of cultural expressions like music, dance, and theatre, in which the Ramayana remained deeply ingrained. Thus, the rich tradition of storytelling through the Ramayana flourished under the harmonious blend of religious teachings and artistic heritage. Kakawin Ramayana of the ninth century left an indelible mark on the Ramayana traditions in the country as Ramayana has focused on the dimensions of statecraft, governance and ethics due to which Ramayana is viewed as sacred till day. Kakawin Ramayana and its episodes have been a guiding light for kings in the region, as one of the episodes of the death of Ravana and advice by Rama to Ravana's brother Vibhishana to perform last rites of Ravana before assuming the throne of Lanka. This episode in the form of a discourse between

both is known as Asta-brata or eight vows and is revered a lot by people in the literary traditions of Java (Saran, 2005). This episode is taken as a motivation for kings to cultivate attributes that symbolise that of gods because deities reside in the king and hence king should behave in a just manner. Poet of old Javanese kakawin Ramayana defines attributes of a king similar to Indra who gives rain to the world, whereas it is the responsibility of a king to be generous in order to make ruled ones happy. A king should also be punishing wrongdoers justly, as Yama does with the evils. Further, as Surya or sun absorbs water slowly, but not forcefully, similarly poet of Kakawin Ramayana urges the king to be kind and gentle with his demands from people.²¹ With regards to the Moon, it is written that as the moon is always gentle and merciful and makes the world happy, so king should also act sweetly and show kindness to the world. As Agni destroys everything that comes in contact, a king is also required to be strong enough to crush his enemies. Also, as Kubera holds all the luxury and prosperity of life, the king should have all luxurious things and wealth but should not delve into excess drinking, dressing, eating and wastage. This is the level of interpretation of Ramayana episodes in Javanese Ramayana by the poet and it also reflects the depth of embeddedness of Ramayana lessons in the life of people in the region. These lessons, which are called the Asta-brata, or eight vows, have enduring value. The Javanese rulers of Surakarta and Yogyakarta have accepted the knowledge that Rama taught Vibhisana (Wibisana in Kakawin Ramayana), according to Javanese scholar “Soewito Santoso” (Saran, 2005).²² Politicians and others holding public office in Indonesia still find great direction from it, as they continue to consider its values for wise governance. Generation after generation, Asta-brata’s lasting impact continues to influence politics and ethics. Temple of Panataran, one of the largest Hindu temple ruins complexes found in East Java also presents testimony to the popularity of Ramayana.²³ A significant sculptural narrative found in Panataran temple in east Java dating back to the fourteenth century represents an episode from Ramayana, depicting the role of Hanuman in finding Sita in Lanka. The sculptural narrative reflects the magic powers of Hanuman in uprooting the garden and setting Lanka aflame, thus accomplishing the mission of Rama by involving in the battle of Lanka to finally defeat Ravana and kill Kumbhakara.

Ramayana in Prambanan (Lara Jonggrang)

Prambanan is a village in a special district of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, known for a complex of beautiful temples made around the ninth century based on the theme and ideas from Hinduism and specifically Ramayana. The best set among the complex of temples seems to be called Lara Jonggrang also known as Prambanan temple or Candi Prambanan, which is a 9th-century Hindu temple complex located in central Java, Indonesia. Prambanan is one of the largest Hindu temples in southeast Asia and is a testament to the rich bond between India and Indonesia.²⁴ In the relics of Lara Jonggrang, we can find a complete pictorial representation of Ramayana from Balakanda to Uttarakanda finely engraved on the walls. It represents the willingness of rulers and people to preserve the message and teachings of Ramayana for future generations, thus this huge exercise to put Ramayana on walls of temple complex could be found and work has been done to preserve this religious architecture as a testimony to symbolise relations between India and Indonesia.²⁵ This representation of Ramayana has never been done anywhere in the world, so perfectly and completely. Apart from major

temples representing reliefs on the Ramayana story, small areas dedicated to the worship of Durga goddess in her manifestation as Mahishasuramardini, Ganesha in elephant-headed form and sage Agastya are found in the complex, representing the huge influence of Indian sages and God, goddesses in divine form.²⁶ According to Zoetmulder (1974), Ramayana Kakawin was based also on Lara Jonggarang. This temple is dedicated to the rich spiritual and belief system of Hindu culture as deities worshipped and carved here on the walls of temple premises represent Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu. Three deities in India are termed tri murti or three deities, highly revered and worshipped all over India. Interestingly, the Prambanan temple compound is dedicated to these three deities of Hinduism. The architecture of the Prambanan temple conforms to the traditions of Hindu belief in Vastu Shastra, as it has adhered to the architectural traditions and system found in India. Temple reflects Hindu conceptions (Weiner, 2018).²⁷ Weiner (2018) defines the role of different kings in building the Prambanan complex, construction of the same started with the orders of King Rakai Pikatan, belonging to the Hindu Sanjaya dynasty of central Java.²⁸ The temple was completed around 856 AD. Prambanan is a major temple complex with the remains of 224 smaller temples encircling six large temples set on an elevated courtyard. Upon departing from the central complex, the temples exhibit a remarkable architectural hierarchy as their height and dimensions progressively diminish. Mirroring the greater wall around the main complex, a smaller wall envelops the smaller temples. The 47-meter-tall central Shiva temple dominates Prambanan and powerfully anchors the surrounding temple constructions' circular mandala arrangement (Bhargava, 2012).²⁹ The three biggest and holiest temples in the Prambanan complex are a stunning homage to the Hindu trinity. Shiva's imposing temple dominates the landscape, with Brahma's and Vishnu's temples on each side. Three smaller temples, one for each of the fabled animals that act as the gods' chariot, friend, and protector-Hamsa, the beautiful swan, Garuda, the magnificent winged creature, and Nandi, the unwavering bull-run parallel to these celestial sanctuaries. When combined, these temples provide a harmonious picture of mythological guardianship and heavenly presence. The most elaborate of the three enormous temples is the Temple of Shiva, which has a series of exquisite sculptures along its interior walls that vividly depict incidents from the ancient Indian epic The Ramayana. There are four chambers in this temple, one of which is an inner sanctuary where a statue of Shiva is kept. A massive statue of Ganesha, the son of Shiva, is located nearby in another room. Dedicated to Batara Guru, a venerated Shiva incarnation in Javanese Hinduism known for granting talents, prophecy, and other human skills, is the chamber on the southern side. There is a statue of Nandi, the holy bull calf that acts as Shiva's chariot and gatekeeper (vahana), in front of the Shiva Temple. While the Temple of Vishnu is embellished with elaborate sculptures that portray Krishna's epic fights along its terrace, the Temple of Brahma carries on the captivating story of Ramayana on its walls.³⁰ Collectively, these temples weave a magnificent tapestry of devotion and legend that demonstrates the spiritual depth and artistic talent of ancient Java.

The temple is a woven tapestry of beautifully carved panels with narrative bas-reliefs that vividly depict scenes from the Hindu epics of the Ramayana and the Bhagavata Purana. The inner balustrades of the gallery that encircles the three great temples are decorated with

these elaborate bas-reliefs. Starting at the east gate, visitors take a trip through these stories, turning left to round the temple gallery. During the pradaksina ceremony, pilgrims keep the shrine to their right as they go in a clockwise manner. Starting from the balustrades of Shiva's temple, the epic story of the Ramayana flows smoothly to the temple of Brahma. A sequence of bas-relief panels on Vishnu's temple balustrades tells a distinct tale, narrating the exploits of Lord Krishna from the Bhagavata Purana. The tragic kidnapping of Sita by the demon king Ravana is depicted in the Ramayana bas-reliefs in striking detail. The acts of bravery, devotion, and the victory of good over evil are aptly shown in the heroics of Hanuman, and his army as they assist Rama in saving Sita.

The story of Rama's life and events in Ayodhya till the necessity to fight Ravana and save Sita, along with various other threads connecting the plot to understand the battle of Lanka and its reasons. Reliefs found in Shiva temple are magnificent and prove to be of great source of knowledge to all from across the world to understand Ramayana and its storyline in India. Till now, this has been one of the best representations of Ramayana we find in countries apart from India but connected finely with spiritual knowledge. To add further, the Brahma temple depicts scenes on a comparatively narrow gallery than that of The Shiva Temple as reflected in the work of Saran & Khanna (2004).³¹ The sequential portrayal of episodes from Ramayana is mentioned below to understand the coverage that Ramayana had on the walls of temple complexes in Indonesia which stand intact today and represent the glory associated with lessons of Ramayana.

Ramayana has been covered via engravings on the Brahma temple in Lara Jonggrang temple complex and the story is being carried further specifically yuddhakanad, Uttarakhand as mentioned in Valmiki Ramayana. From preparations for battle to tactics being adopted in order to beat Ravana and defeat his army, we find elaborate descriptions on reliefs. From tales involving the famous episodes from Valmiki Ramayana, we find the same level of accuracy on the reliefs in the way Lara Jonggrang Ramayana is depicted. Till today, even in wayang performances, Ramayana ends with feasting and celebration by people all over, in the same manner, Ramayana begins with gods appealing to lord Vishnu to stop the menace of demons and Ravana, engraved on Shiva temple, similarly, we find that it ends with a scene of celebration being undertaken by people in presence of scrumptious and delicious dishes and joyous performance as seen on the reliefs found from the Brahma temple.

The ancient text of Kakawin Ramayana in Bali has been inscribed on palm leaves, which could be understood by a few dalangs who were able to read it, while the majority of people in Bali could not read it. Hence, it was orally transmitted to the people in the area. Recitation of old Javanese Kakawin Ramayana in Bali was made simple through the usage of oral literature. Later, Kakawin was also translated into English and easy language. Sarga 1 to 5 refers to the early times of the five sons of the king of Ayodhya Dasharatha and the episode of banishment of lord Rama to the forest and their conflict with Ravana's sister.³² Further, sarga 6 to 11 theorizes the beauty of Sita and Ravana's efforts to seduce and later kidnap Sita. Also, it mentions the role of the monkey in bringing back Sita and negotiation practice. Sarga 12 to 18 defines the division of beliefs between Ravana and his brother in the matter of kidnapping Sita and the success of Rama and his army in crossing the sea to set a plot for

war.³³ In Sarga 19 to 23, we find mention of Ravana's army losing to the prowess and abilities of Rama in fierce battle. Sarga 24 to 26, in the end, represents the scene from the victory of Rama and his unification with Sita. Adopted as "Adikakawin," this Kakawin is recognized as the first, most extensive, and most refined literary work in the Javanese Hindu style. It is thought to have been written by the renowned author Yogiswara in Balinese culture (Dwityasa, 2023).³⁴ Every line of the "Ramayana Kakawin" captures the rich tapestry of Javanese Hindu history, and it is revered not just for its grandeur and grace but also for its deep effect on the literary legacy of the area.

Kecak dance is one of the most captivating dance performances based on Ramayana in Bali, Indonesia. In this adaptation, the male chorus represents the armies of Hanuman, creating a living barrier against Ravana's forces (Salvini, 1971).³⁵ About two hundred men form expansive circles, with the central area serving as the stage for the action. They orchestrate their movements into a mesmerizing symphony, swinging their arms, heads, and bodies in harmony, chanting the word 'kecak' with a variety of stresses and intonations. The intricate rhythmic patterns created by different sections of the group complement the narrator's spoken or sung words, enhancing the drama and dynamism of the performance. The Kecak dance is unique in that it uses just the human voice to produce a "musical" performance devoid of any instruments. It tells tales from the ancient Hindu epic the Ramayana while acting as both a dance and a theatre. Kecak dance performance goes up to one hour and the story of Ramayana sets its basis. This dance starts with a depiction of the story of Rama and Sita's exile in the forest. The performance incorporates an episode of Ravana changing its form to a golden deer in order to abduct Sita, thereby setting the ground for the battle between Rama and Ravana.

Wayang is also known as shadow theatre or puppetry show in Indonesia. Wayang is a traditional theatre form existing in Indonesia mainly in Java, Sumatra, and Bali. The origin of the word Wayang has come from bayang which means shadow thus it is considered shadow theatre puppetry, performed with the help of dalang (Javanese word) who recites, narrates the story and moves all the figures (Wayang, 2016).³⁶ Indonesian Wayang is a captivating traditional art form that combines breathtaking visual craftsmanship with dramatic performances.

Due to similar historical backgrounds and interests, India and Indonesia have a strong historical, cultural, and economic relationship. Their collaboration is essential in tackling regional and global issues as two of Asia's biggest democracies and G20 members. Deeper economic cooperation, improved maritime security cooperation, and coordinated measures to address climate change and the menace of illegal trafficking are all necessary to strengthen this connection. India and Indonesia can fully realize the potential of their strategic alliance by promoting people-to-people connections, utilizing complementary geostrategic positioning of both countries by advocating for an Indo-Pacific that is governed by laws and free from the suspicious presence of countries aiming at encircling the region to dominate country-specific interest. Both countries can thus work together to create a more wealthy, inclusive, and stable future for the area and beyond.

Conclusion

Ramayana is a moral, ethical, and life-guiding epic as it is much more than just a fairy tale. The principles of loyalty and truth are deeply ingrained in Indonesian culture and daily life, representing a remarkable shift in values. This wonderful tale is a perfect union of knowledge, strength, and beauty. The Ramayana's transforming power is revealed, enthralling audiences and imparting its timeless lessons via the beauty of dance and the enchantment of narrative. The public diplomacy programs may be extremely important in establishing alliances and encouraging greater awareness and engagement among the citizens of the two nations. The real relevance of this is that it might have a direct bearing on how Indonesia and India are using Ramayana as a means of foreign policy. It would take a coordinated effort involving public-private partnerships and proactive participation from MEA leaders and civil society to accomplish this.

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Revitalizing Bharatiya Knowledge System in Modern Education: Insights and Applications from NEP 2020 Integration

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Abstract

Since NEP 2020 introduced the integration of the Indian Knowledge System into India's education system, there has been extensive discussion about its significance and applicability. This study examines the structure, methodologies, and effectiveness of the Bharatiya Knowledge System (BKS) in modern education. In today's era of rapid globalization and technological progress, BKS is crucial, offering insights and solutions to contemporary challenges across various domains. Its relevance lies in providing a holistic framework for addressing challenges at spiritual, intellectual, ethical, individual, and societal levels. Revitalizing BKS can contribute to a more sustainable, harmonious, and enlightened future, aiding in reclaiming India's rich heritage and indigenous cultures within the education system.

Key words: Bharatiya knowledge System, modern education, relevance, NEP 2020, pedagogy, NCF, ancient India, 21st Century, governance, revival, *guru-shishya parampara*, gurukul, vedas.

Introduction:

The Indian knowledge tradition (also known as the Hindu Intellectual Tradition) is one of the oldest and most unique systems in the world. Modern education is considered as a

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commodity to buy or sell in market education. The education of today is about learning and earning money for daily breads. But the *guru-shishya parampara* in the Indian knowledge system has given a new definition to the education tradition in India. When we think of Indian knowledge tradition, the first and foremost thing that comes to mind is the ‘*Vedas*’. The Vedas include wide-ranging characters of human life like social order and policy. Several Ancient civilizations agreed with India’s high value of knowledge system. There has been a continuous series of *Rushis*, *Munis*, *Acharyas* and *Granthas* teaching and learning in the *gurukul* structure. The pupils of the *gurukuls* study *Vedas*, *Smritis*, *Vedangas* and *Stutis*. Nalanda and Taxila were the two giant gurukuls that existed in the history of India’s knowledge tradition. The richness of India’s knowledge tradition can be traced when we analyse that the land of India is home to a bunch of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Carvakism. These India born religions are being followed by billions of people on earth today. Indians do have untraceable past knowledge tradition flowing from the sacred scriptures of the Gita, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which are all time relevant and guide to build a virtuous society. Unfortunately, today’s knowledge system is tilting to the westward which is only a thousand years old. This study is intended to take us to explore the potential and relevance of the Indian knowledge system in contemporary.

As commented by the historian Max Muller and the mathematician Hermann Weyl over empirical Indian Logics and Philosophy:-

Max Muller said, “The science of logic and grammar were, as far as history allows us to judge, invented or originally conceived by two nations only, by Hindus and Greeks.” And

Hermann Weyl said, “Occidental mathematics has in past centuries broken away from the Greek view and followed a course which seems to have originated in India and which has been transmitted, with additions, to us by the Arabs; in it the concept of number appears as logically prior to the concepts of geometry”.

Ancient India Knowledge Tradition

The ancient knowledge system was tested to be excellent and beneficial to meet India’s personal and social requirement. The entire knowledge system of the time had clear goals and objectives to meet. Training of the mind and shaping the thinking principles of human were the fundamental and core subject of all subjects. It is also called “*Manan Shakti*”. The fundamentals of any individual life such as rights, liberty, equality, fraternity and world peace are professed by the Ancient Knowledge Traditional thousand years back to the western ward philosophers propagated¹

Indian intellectuals, over thousands of years, developed rich and diversified fields of knowledge. These include philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics and economics. The depth and thorough understanding developed in the Indian knowledge tradition over society, history, culture etc. that they are capable of enhancing today’s higher education.

Perusing knowledge (*jnana*), wisdom (*prajna*) and truth (*satya*) in India has always been regarded as the most respected aspiration for any individual in society. Charaka, Sushruta, Varahamira, Brahmagupta, Arya Bhatta, Nagarjuna, Gautama, Mahabir, Panini, Gargi and Maitreyi are the product of aforesaid Indian education in ancient time. These personalities

have made an indelible contribution to the IKT. Several disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, surgery and other subjects were taken to an advanced stage by their contributions. Apart from this, healthy bodies and minds of humans are the high priority of the IKT (NCERT)². The education system of India at that time had sufficiently emphasis on the development of essential norms like self-reliance, humanity and self-control in each individual in gurukuls.

Like today's generation education system, the IKT had ample scope for brewing both formal and informal education. The formal learning includes home, temples and chaturpadis and formal education in the gurukuls, pathshala and native education center. Most of the instructions are delivered in oral form. Gurukuls were the residential learning center for students which are mostly situated on the bank of river, surrounded by mountains and a natural setting.

Ancient India is generally guided by two education systems a) Vedic and b) Buddhist. The language Sanskrit was used as the language in the Vedic era, whereas the language *Pali* was used in Buddhist learning systems. Both the education system had the similarity of methods of teaching to some extent. Both education systems in Ancient India focused on developing and teaching morality, humanity and being honest. The motto of the ancient education system was to develop discipline in students³.

The great institutions of Ancient India

Taskshashila is the earliest university in ancient India which was founded in 700 BC in the present day Punjab region of Pakistan. More than 10,500 students across the globe come to university to study 60 subjects. The contribution of Taskshashila flourished in the world during the rule of Gandhara.

In the fourth century BC, Chinese travelers Xuanzang and Yizing mentioned in their writing about the greatness of Nalanda University in the world. Students from different parts of the world, like Central Asia, China, Korea and Tibet came to Nalanda for their education. Hiuen Tsang also visited Nalanda. At the same time, the then Indian physician the Sushruta, did modern plastic surgery in medical. Vikramshila University- enriched the legacy of the Indian knowledge system during the Dharmapala, the ruler of the Pala dynasty. Buddhist tantras, metaphysics, philosophy, Sanskrit and ritualism were the dominant subjects in the school. The king also promoted the dissemination of Buddhist learning by sending Buddhist monks to different parts of the world. Vallabhi University was developed in the era of the Maitrak Dynasty. This university was famous for the establishment of a library which was said to be the richest in various subjects like geography, Buddhist literature, mineralogy, botany and medicine. The so-called Pythagorean Theorem first occurs, according to the Fields Medalist mathematician Manjul Bhargava, about 800 BCE in Baudhayana's Shulba Sutra⁴

Apart from these reputed universities, there are many other learning institutions, like Jagaddala University, Kanthaloor vikrampura vihar, Nagarjan Vidyapeeth and Sompura Mahavihara, known as the capital of knowledge at their time.

The academic of ancient India covers an extensive range of subjects such as philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, grammar, poetry, architecture, sociology as dharma-shastra, medicine, politics as *niti shastra*, economy as *artha sastra*, geography, military science, logic, weaponry,

mining, shipbuilding, biology, trade and commerce, agriculture and veterinary science. Despite several attacks and destruction of Indian literature in the ancient period by external invaders, there have been continuous collective efforts to safeguard the existing valuable ancient literature. Among the surviving literature are the 64 kalas (occupational skills) and, craft, 18 significant Vidyas (theoretical science) and most importantly, the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva) and other auxiliary vedas (Dhanurveda, Ayurveda, Gandharvaveda and Silpa), many Puranas, Dharmasastras and Vedanga. The 18 *vidyas* in ancient India include ritual, philology, astronomy, phonetics and grammar. There are several *kalas*, *veda*, *puranas*, rituals and crafts are now being followed and practiced in different corners of India people. These also existing of the culture, worship, festivals, customs and tradition villagers⁵.

Mahabharata and Ramayana - these are two major holy books of Hindus which were written in Sanskrit language in ancient India. Both are known for their lengthiest size in the world literature. Ramayana and Mahabharata consist of about 100,000 verses and 18 books. The Mahabharata is three times bigger than the Bible of Christianity. It was also regarded as an encyclopedia in ancient time. Rishi Ved Vyasa wrote the great Mahabharata in the 4th century BC. The book importantly focuses on *Kaal* (time), *Duty* (Dharma) and the morals of life. This is not only a huge book about moral philosophy but also the Mahabharata a pioneers in the fields of politics, history, geography, art, literature and culture. The importance of the Mahabharata is not only practiced or realized in India, but the civil society of southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Malaysia have been following in their daily life. The innumerable advice, principles, teaching and lesson of Mahabharata touched every aspect of human life. The great preacher of non-violence principle in the Indian freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi, was inspired by the *Srimat Bhagwad Gita*. His philosophy and principles were derived from the holy book of *Gita*. It would not be wrong to say that Mohand Das Karamchand Gandhi became a great Mahatma for the world because of *Srimad Bhagwad Gita*. Such is the impact of ancient Indian knowledge on the history of India⁶.

Kautilya is considered as the founder of political thinking in Indian tradition. He focused on all aspects of statecraft, as public administration, military establishment, monetary, foreign affairs, fiscal policy and social welfare. He is also enlisted as a realist thinker in international political thought who emphasis on administration compared to religious well-being. His philosophy was linked to several references from earlier thinkers Manu and Bruhaspati, but his ideas of politics and policy revolve around the state craft and welfare in the kingdom. Kautilya deliberated on the structures of governance and emphasis on the administrative system of the state where he confirmed and categorized the jobs of different departments and their head. Kautilya has minutely travelled the high importance of the espionage system, correctional administration and judicial system in the state. He is the first person in ancient India and modern India as well, who spoke about the need for good governance. Kautilya's contribution to all aspects of political life have been relevant to administrative and diplomatic thoughts. *Arthashastra* is one of his master pieces which comprehensively discusses statecraft, policy, economy and military strategy. Kautilya's principles of state craft are relevant in the 21st century to deal with the opposing nations⁷.

Ramanucharya- a leading light in the Hindu religion born in Sriperunbudur in southern India in 11th century. He became popular during the 11th and 12th centuries because of his profoundness in Theologian and philosophy. His spiritual teaching interest took him to Srirangam where he disseminated the worship of Lord Vishnu. Ramanuja's life and philosophy is centered on devotion to the devotion of Lord Vishnu and pursuit of spiritual wisdom. The entire philosophy and spirituality is sourced from the ancient Hindu texts, the Vedas, the Bhagabat Gita and Brahmasutra. Ramanucharya's philosophy, teaching and his system are known as Vishistadvaita. The Vishistadvaita advocated the non-dualism of god and the almighty in the universe. The preservation of his body after death in Ranganathswamy temple in Tamilnadu is remarkable, and is followed as one of the sacred tradition. This preservation of the body for more than 800 years unearths the potential of ancient India's knowledge system over chemical science. Unlike modern chemical methods of preservation, the process of preserving his body relied on natural and ancient practices. We are only educated about the Egyptian practice of preserving their mummies, but we should also recognize, admire and respect equally the natural practice of preservation through our ancient techniques.

Yoga has made a significant contribution in awakening the consciousness of the modern world to retain a sound health, mind and society for the past 2500 years. Presently, the practice of Yoga is celebrated in every corner of the world because of its urgent necessity in today's busy life. The Government of India took the ancient Indian practice of Yoga to the International forum (United Nation) for its worldwide adoption. The world community also agreed to follow up the practice and observed International Yoga Day on 21st June every year⁸

. In sum, it is a matter of pride for all Indians that the creation of the Ancient Yoga Sutra, which was documented in 400 CE in Patanjali, is shouldering to guide the globe to a sound future of billions of lives on the earth^{9, 10}

Indian Knowledge System in National Education Policy 2020

The prominence and eminence of India's all knowledge systems are practiced in every corner of India be it in the villages or metro-Politian city. The Indian Knowledge System includes a wide variety of fields such as Art, music, yoga, dance, science, medicine, astrophysics, mathematics, geography, archery and many more endless list of subjects. Each of us in India have been practicing and benefiting from ideas of thousands of the IKS knowingly or unknowingly in our everyday life. The IKS have been playing undeniably a great role to make all walk of our life grow prosperous. Only because the IKS is not incorporated outwardly in our education system, their relevance is poorly regarded in previous education system.

However, India's NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of ancient knowledge traditions in the modern education system. The NEP 2020 also consider the ancient knowledge system as a guiding principle. Moreover, The University Grant Commission (UGC) took no time to not only to incorporate, but also designated the all Indian Knowledge System as significant part of the curriculum in various degree courses of Higher Education curricula. The UGC has published a detailed 'white paper' called "Guideline for Incorporation of Indian Knowledge Higher Education Curricula" to offer the IKS as an mandatory course in UG, PG in subjects

like, math, science, astronomy, architecture, education, health, arts, literature, agriculture, textiles, metallurgy, polity and economy. The relevance of the IKS is described in the courses from Vedic period to Modern time¹¹. Today the world is experiencing the joy of practicing the Yoga sutra which is one of the elements of the IKS.

The IKS consists of three categories known as Jnan, Vigyan and Jeevan Darshan which are developed from observation, experience, practices, and experiments and through rigorous analysis. This tradition of validating and putting into practice has impacted our education, arts, law, manufacturing, justice, arts, administration, trade and commerce of today. Mostly, the objective of education in ancient India was to understand ourselves on a fuller scale. But since British education has entered into our education system, our own rich knowledge tradition, ethos and practices are undermined in the name of modernization. Regrettably, the colonial attitude of education system and policies continued to replace our age-old traditional knowledge system even after independence¹².

In a discussion between the Vice Chancellors of two distinguished universities Mahatma Gandhi University and Behrampur University. Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University emphasized on intrinsic relationship between NEP 2020 and India's rich knowledge traditions. He acknowledged the very inclusion of significances of regional languages in NEP 2020. As per his understanding, the regional languages in the education system have somehow played as barrier in smooth functioning of academic curriculum but on the other hand, they are the flag bearer of India's richness in diversity in languages and culture. In continuation of the argument, Prof. Geetanjali (VC, Behrampur) her deep regards regional languages by expressing that, "language should not be hindrance to learning and understanding, she gave an example as such, the 'millet' is now served in elite class of Indian Airlines as desert but the same is hardly known to the local at home". Therefore, sustaining mother languages in our education system will take our progress to a new height¹³

Though, the NEP 2020 has given special importance to the ancient knowledge system in its curriculum. New chapters are added to the schools and higher education system regarding India's ancient knowledge tradition. Inserting the IKS in the NEP 2020, India wants to instill national heritage of intellectual pride among the students about how India has experienced a richest tradition of knowledge system in the world. This will help the younger generation to identify themselves proudly in every forum in the world. The first generation of the NEP 2020 are being acquainted with unconquerable scholars of ancient India, and they are namely; Charaka, Shushruta, Varahamira, Chanakya, Panini and Brahngupta. The NEP is based on ancient India that continues to inspire us now. The torch of knowledge was built on intellectual fervor when the majority of the globe was still in the dark and it served as a magnet to draw students from all over the world^{14, 15}

Relevance and Importance of Indian Knowledge System

According to Ministry of Education, Indian Knowledge System is now a day's regarded as 'Indian Way'. As mentioned in the previous themes that the IKS is mainly consist of Jnan, Vignan and Jeevan Darshan which have developed out of experience, experimentation, observation, rigorous analysis and practice¹⁶.

The Great Scientist of all time Albert Einstein express his gratitude in such a way as “We owe a lot to the ancient Indians, teaching us how to count. Without which most of modern scientific discoveries would have been impossible”. Apart from the mathematics, the IKS is flourishing all field of life and they have derived from holy book of Srimat Bhagabat Gita, Vedas and puranas. The four pious vedas vividly covers each and every aspects of human, living and non-living beings on this earth. The Vedanta philosophy, which comprise of Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic science are found much relevant for modern world in diverse way. Furthermore, the footprints of the IKS is boldly found in the fields of Indian language, culture, philosophy, governance, economy, statecraft, polity, administration and India’s foreign policy¹⁷.

At this age of ultra-modern stressful world, all human beings are looking for five important components in their life such as a) well-being b) stress management c) sustainable living d) spiritual growth and e) innovation. The inclusiveness in the approach of Indian traditional medical system, also called as Ayurveda which advocates human life style with natural mending way and conservation of health. For the stress management, the Yoga is the panacea cure experienced by non-Indian in several countries. Particularly activities like *asanas* (posture), *pranayama* (breath control), and contemplation are tested effective to handle stress, mental calmness and increasing heartiness¹⁸. The concept of sustainability is another gift of the IKS which is found in every great policy of India’s foreign relation. Starting from the innovation of Non-alignment to Panchasheel¹⁹ with China to as of now tagline of India’s G20 presidency “one earth, one family, one future” and “the world is one family” (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam), it is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the *Maha Upanisad*²⁰. When the world economy was blooming behind the rapid industrialization by compromising the environmental health of the earth, the IKS from the beginning preaches for resource conservation and preservation, and stands against irrational use earth resources and . At present, environmental concern is the prime subject in almost every programme of international importance which is one of the fundamental principle of IKS.

The principles of the IKS are day by day becoming more relevant to the every aspect of human life. Be it individual, community, society, country and international level the Indian Knowledge Tradition hold the potential to give a universally acceptable shape that would be righteous and virtues path for the future world.

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Forest Protection Redefined: The T.N. Godavarman Case and Its Continuing Relevance

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Abstract

The T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case is a landmark moment in India's environmental jurisprudence, significantly reshaping the landscape of "forest protection" and "biodiversity conservation" in the country. Initiated in 1995, this case saw the Supreme Court of India addressing the unlawful exploitation of forest resources, illegal mining, and encroachment, leading to a series of directives aimed at "preserving India's forests". The Court's intervention redefined the concept of forests, extended the interpretation of forest land, and reinforced the application of the "Forest (Conservation) Act 1980". It emphasized the need for comprehensive regulations on deforestation, mining, and the protection of tribal rights within forest areas. This case marked a pioneering effort to hold the government accountable for forest preservation and fostered judicial activism in environmental law.

Despite its initial success, challenges persist, such as illegal logging, deforestation, and the pressure of development projects in ecologically sensitive zones. The Godavarman case, however, continues to be relevant in the context of India's ongoing struggles with balancing development and conservation. It has set a legal precedent for 'Sustainable Forest Management', 'Environmental Accountability', and judicial oversight, which remains instrumental in contemporary forest governance. This paper explores the key aspects of the case, its lasting impact on forest protection, and the challenges and opportunities it presents for forest conservation in India today.

Keyword: Forest Conservation, Judicial Activism, Sustainable Forest Management Development, Exploitation of Natural Resources and Environmental Jurisprudence

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1. Introduction

The case was initiated by T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, who was a landlord from the Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu. He filed a petition under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution in the Supreme Court in 1995. T.N. Godavarman's concern stemmed from large-scale deforestation, illegal logging, and unsustainable forestry practices in his ancestral lands and surrounding forest areas in the Nilgiris. He sought the intervention of the Supreme court to prevent the destruction of forests and ensure effective implementation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

The T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case is a landmark legal case in India that significantly shaped the discourse on 'forest conservation' and 'environmental protection'. The case stands as a testament to the power of judicial activism in ensuring the protection of India's natural resources, particularly its forests, from unchecked exploitation. The case also reflects the role of the judiciary in interpreting environmental laws to protect the environment for future generations.

2. The Background of the Case

In 1995, T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, an environmental activist, filed a petition before the Supreme Court of India, seeking the protection of forests in India from unlawful felling, mining, and encroachment. The primary issue involved the mismanagement of forests and the violation of forest conservation laws by state and private entities, including illegal mining and deforestation activities in ecologically sensitive areas. The Supreme Court, taking cognizance of the petition, initiated a series of orders and directions aimed at 'preserving forest lands' and ensuring their sustainable management.

The T.N. Godavarman case is a pivotal moment in India's environmental history, showcasing the judiciary's proactive stance in forest conservation. This landmark case began in 1995 when T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, a former princely state ruler, filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India to address the widespread deforestation and mismanagement of forest resources. The case's impact has been profound, setting new legal precedents and redefining the country's approach to forest protection.

3. Key Developments in the Case

Establishment of Guidelines for Forest Protection: The Supreme Court issued comprehensive directions, including the ban on tree felling in certain forest areas, the regulation of mining in forest regions, and the halt of non-forestry activities in reserved and protected forests. **Implementation of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980:** The Court emphasized the importance of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), ensuring that any diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes required 'prior approval' from the Central Government. **Institution of Forest Committees:** The Court mandated the establishment of Forest Advisory Committees at both the state and central levels to monitor forest diversion requests. **The Role of State Governments:** In subsequent orders, the Court directed State governments to submit compliance reports on forest conservation measures, ensuring accountability for the protection of forest lands.

Different High Courts and Supreme Courts have used the Godavarman case as a

benchmark while pronouncing judgment on various other cases. The judgment has addressed multiple environmental issues, ranging from encroachments of forest lands to wildlife conservation, the regulation of mining activities within forest areas. These are some of the important issues involved in Godavarman case;

- (a) **Defining Forests:** The most important contribution of the Godavarman case was the Supreme Court's interpretation of the term 'forest'. The court was of the view that "forest" must be understood in its dictionary sense.
- (b) **Illegal Encroachments:** The Court directed the state forest departments to identify and remove all types of illegal encroachments in forest areas.
- (c) **Industry:** The Godavarman case affected wood-based industries. This includes different occupations and industries such as sawmills, paper mills etc. Due to this decision by the court, thousands of sawmills and factories were closed which were operating either illegally or without any valid permit or licenses in forest areas.
- (d) **Afforestation:** The Supreme Court emphasized the need for taking active steps for afforestation in order to compensate for deforestation.
- (e) **Mining:** Court asked the state forest department to scrutinize different mining activities in the forest areas. The Court even imposed a ban on mining activities in ecologically sensitive regions.
- (f) **Wildlife Protection:** Court directed the state government to take more stringent actions for wildlife protection.
- (g) **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA):** One of the main outcomes of the Godavarman case was the establishment of CAMPA funds. CAMPA fund is utilized for afforestation and reforestation activities.
- (h) **Constitution of Central Empowered Committee (CEC):** The SC recognizing the need for a specialized body to assist in the adjudication of complex environmental matters, **constituted the CEC in 2002**, the major contributions of CES as follows,
 - (i) It gave detailed report about illegal mining in Goa in year 2012
 - (ii) It presented a report in 2014 criticizing the Odisha Government over the production of iron ore and manganese without environment clearance or beyond the period of environment clearance in the mining leases in the state.
 - (iii) It reported the matter filed before it by the Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and others regarding alleged illegal diversion of forest lands for non-forest uses in the region in Karnataka.
 - (iv) It rejected the doubling of railway tracks from Castle Rock in Karnataka to Kulem in Goa, which was accepted by SC in May 2023.

The principles established by the T.N. Godavarman case remain highly relevant in today's context of rapid urbanization and climate change. The case has set a precedent for judicial intervention in environmental matters, demonstrating the judiciary's crucial role in safeguarding natural resources. It serves as a reminder that effective forest conservation requires not only stringent laws but also active participation from all stakeholders, including the government,

judiciary, civil society, and local communities.

4. Judicial Interventions and Innovations

The Supreme Court's intervention in the 'Godavarman case' led to several innovations in environmental jurisprudence. These include:

- (a) **Expanding the Definition of Forests:** The Court broadened the definition of what constitutes a 'forest', extending it beyond the officially recognized areas to include lands that have the characteristics of forests, irrespective of the presence of legal titles.
- (b) **Dealing with Non-Forest Activities:** The Court made it mandatory for 'State governments' to take proactive steps to curtail illegal activities, such as mining, 'poaching, and 'deforestation' which were undermining the forest ecosystem.
- (c) **Protection of Tribal Rights:** The Court also directed measures to protect the rights of indigenous communities, ensuring that tribal areas within forests were safeguarded from displacement.

The court evaluated and examined the National Forest Policy and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, this was covered aspects of deforestation, it also examined the word 'Forest' under Section of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, this section speaks about no State Government or any other authority can be use of land of the forest for any non-forestry activities through the prior permission of the Central Government, this means all forest ventures require the permission of the Central Government.

5. Impact of the T.N. Godavarman Case

- (a) **Strengthening Forest Laws:** The Godavarman case led to the reinforcement of forest conservation laws in India, particularly through the application of the Forest Conservation Act, which empowered the Centre to regulate the diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes.
- (b) **Legal Precedents:** It created an important 'precedent' in environmental law by reinforcing the notion that the right to a 'healthy environment' is intrinsic to the right to life under article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- (c) **Sustainable Forest Management:** The case introduced sustainability as a core principle in forest governance, urging both government bodies and the private sector to account for ecological balance and biodiversity preservation when undertaking forest-related activities.
- (d) **Environmental Accountability:** The case institutionalized the idea of accountability in forest conservation, compelling state governments, local authorities, and corporations to ensure that all activities in forested regions were sustainable and environmentally responsible.
- (e) **Ban on Tree Felling:** Court banned the felling of trees in the adjoining areas of the forest.
- (f) **Environmental Clearance:** After the decision on Godavarman case, more stringent frameworks were established for granting environmental clearance.

- (g) **Protection of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries:** The Court made it mandatory for all states to identify and notify national parks and sanctuaries.

6. *Continuing Relevance and Challenges*

- (a) **Expansion of Forest Areas:** The Godavarman case laid the groundwork for broader conservation efforts, which led to the creation of more protected areas, wildlife sanctuaries, and national parks.
- (b) **Judicial Oversight:** The case established a model of judicial oversight in forest conservation, which continues to shape forest governance today. It demonstrated the judiciary's critical role in holding the government accountable for its environmental obligations.
- (c) **Evolving Challenges:** Despite the case's impact, India continues to face challenges related to forest protection:
- (d) **Encroachment and Deforestation:** Forest encroachment and illegal mining activities remain persistent issues in certain regions of the country.
- (e) **Climate Change:** The changing climate poses new risks to forest ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and overall forest health.
- (f) **Balancing Development and Conservation:** There remains a tension between development projects, such as infrastructure and mining, and forest conservation, especially in ecologically sensitive areas like the 'Western Ghats', 'Himalayas', and 'Northeast India'.

7. *The Way Forward*

Enhancing Forest Policy: Policymakers need to enhance forest policies by incorporating newer technologies for forest monitoring, data collection, and early detection of illegal activities.

Collaborative Conservation Efforts: Greater collaboration between local communities, State governments, and NGOs is essential for long-term forest conservation efforts.

Protecting Biodiversity: Focusing on biodiversity preservation alongside forest protection can help mitigate the environmental impact of human activities.

Legal and Institutional Strengthening: Strengthening legal frameworks for forest protection and increasing institutional capacity at the ground level will ensure better enforcement of conservation laws.

8. *Conclusion*

The T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case remains a foundational moment in India's environmental history, significantly altering how forest resources are managed and protected. While the case's immediate impact has been profound, its continuing relevance highlights the need for ongoing vigilance and adaptation to the evolving challenges in forest conservation. The case serves as an enduring reminder that forest protection is not just a legal responsibility but an ethical obligation to future generations.

The T.N. Godavarman case stands as a landmark in India's environmental jurisprudence, fundamentally redefining forest protection and governance. The Supreme Court's judgments in this case have not only expanded the definition of "forest" to encompass ecologically significant areas but have also enforced stringent regulations to curb deforestation and promote

sustainable management. This case has set a precedent for environmental accountability and has empowered citizens and organizations to actively participate in the preservation of natural resources. The continuing relevance of the T.N. Godavarman case lies in its affirmation of the judiciary's role in environmental conservation, serving as a blueprint for future legal interventions aimed at safeguarding the planet's precious ecosystems. The legacy of this case reminds us that vigilant legal frameworks, coupled with public engagement, are crucial in addressing contemporary environmental challenges and ensuring the longevity of our natural heritage.

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Limble, Dangle and Spivak's Perspective on Dalit Literature and Marxism in Indian Literature

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Abstract:

Indian literary history and theory, as well as the teaching of Indian literatures, are blatantly silent about Dalit literature and marginal voice. Yet, Dalit cultural and critical productions make a noteworthy critical intervention in the thinking and writing about Indian society, history, culture and literature. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Jotirao Phule, who influenced him greatly interrogated the dominant, casteist constructions of Indian identity and social structure prevalent at the core. Through his examinations of Indian history, mythology and the sacred texts of Indian society, Ambedkar made a powerful case for a distinct Dalit identity. His work enabled future generations of Dalits to assert themselves as subjects through political activism, organizing, and literary and critical writing. Inspired by the work of Ambedkar, writers like Limble have produced an important body of literature that narrates Dalit reality and lived experience of the subaltern.

Key Words: *Dalit, Marginal, Casteist, Hinduism subaltern*

Introduction:

Arjun Dangle, the Marathi Dalit writer, activist and editor, says, 'Dalit literature is marked by revolt and negativism, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom by a group of people who, as untouchables, are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality.' Dangle traces the origin and genesis of Dalit literature to Ambedkar and his contemporaries. 'His revolutionary ideas stirred into action all the Dalits of Maharashtra and gave them a new self-respect. Dalit literature is nothing but the literary expression of this awareness.' By the 1970s, a sufficient corpus of Dalit literature had developed so that, according to Dangle,

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“Thinking Dalit critics began to theorize on Dalit literature and its role.” (Dangle 1994, vii-viii)

Dalit writers’ theorizing about the need, role, content and form of Dalit literature constitutes their answer to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s now-famous question, *Can the subaltern speak?*

Spivak raised the question with reference to the colonizer- colonized framework within which much of the theorizing about postcoloniality and subalternity emanating from Indian and metropolitan intellectual circles has taken place. A work such as Limbale’s is a subversive move: it explodes this binary and exposes the inner contradictions that it conceals. It is very noteworthy.

Limbale establishes the Dalits’ subalternity not in a colonial structure, but in the caste-based social, cultural and economic structure of Indian society. Here, the village becomes the metropolis, and Dalits exist literally on the periphery. Dalit settlements are not only apart from the upper caste settlements, they are actually outside the boundary of the village. This physical segregation signifies other separations. Dalits do the work, live the life, eat the food and wear the garment that the upper caste Hindu will not. They draw water from a separate well, and cremate their dead in a separate space. Dalits are the upper caste Hindu’s Other. But this Other is not only separate and different, like the member of another ethno-cultural, religious or linguistic group. This Other is a part of Indian society, and yet apart from it. Inscribed in that apartness and difference is inferiority. Dalits occupy the lowest place in the social hierarchical order.

The inferior location of Dalits is not only spatial it is also normative. The Dalit is untouchable and victimized. The play of desire and revulsion works here in a very particular way. The work of the Dalits is essential for maintaining the upper caste Hindu’s purity. If they did not clean latrines, skin dead animals, and remove the carcasses, the social life of the upper caste will be unclean, polluted and diseased. And yet, just as these are revolting activities, so is the Dalit an object of revulsion, precisely for doing them, even though it is the upper caste Hindu who forces Dalits into carrying them out. Dalits enable the purity of upper caste society, and become impure in the process. This society needs the Dalits’ labour, indeed, depends on it for its elegant survival, but does not wish to be reminded of it. Scriptural authority was invoked to designate the Dalit as polluted and untouchable. Even the shadow of this Other was to be avoided. The upper caste Hindu’s obsessive preoccupation with purity and cleanliness, and the relationship of desire and revulsion that it produced, can, no doubt, be read in terms of the popular psychological framework of desire and taboo, utilized by postcolonial theorists such as Fanon, Homi Bhabha and Robert Young. Here, we are concerned with the social, cultural and political dimensions of this relationship.

The shape and nature of the Dalit’s subalternity, then, are quite unlike those produced by colonial relations. The Dalit’s subaltern status is inherited from birth and sanctioned by sacred authority. It is Very much eternal and unalterable. It should be noted.

This peculiar and very specific social condition of Dalits, indispensable to the reproduction of social life yet invisible in it, is mirrored in the realm of culture. The history of Marathi literature as narrated by Limbale shows how the alterity of this subaltern has been replicated

in culture to ensure that Dalits will not have voice or, for a long time, presence. Early Marathi literature, written during the high tide of Brahmanism, was absorbed in what Limbale calls 'the binaries of desire and freedom from desire'. There was no place for Dalits in the content of this literature. A sinister reality is this.

The space that they occupied outside the village in real life was erased in the world of literature. Thus, if society ensured its relegating the untouchable to a liminal space, literature purity by relegating the untouchable to a liminal space, literature went a step further. It ensured that the untouchable would not pollute its world even by touching that space.

In Limbale's telling, upper caste Indian society was not content with avoiding the Dalit in its literature. It also made sure that Dalits could not speak in the tongue of the upper caste. Having determined that Dalits were impure and polluted, it legislated that they were not to learn or read Sanskrit, the language of the gods and, so, the ultimate trope of Brahmanism. Thus, Brahminism exploited untouchables to the zenith.

It would appear that the upper caste men achieved in literature what they could not in real life, namely, a complete silencing, if not erasure, of the untouchable Other with no chance of being polluted by the untouchable's shadow. This erasure was not confined to the literature and culture of Maharashtra alone. A review of Indian literary history would show that the untouchable was absent from Sanskrit and other regional literatures as well. For example, of three randomly picked collections of essays on Indian literatures and culture written over twenty years, only one Hogan and Pandit's *Literary India* - contains one essay dealing with caste, and that too, in a modern novel, Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*. The untouchable Other simply had been written out of existence.

Limbale, however, seems to suggest that this was more a wish fulfillment than an accomplished fact. Limbale's invocation of Kabir as one of the originary figures of the Dalit tradition suggests that there were, in fact, people from the lowest ranks of the caste system who were making literature. They did not write in the high languages of the society, but in the vernacular of the common people. The power and impact of their work were such that those whom Limbale calls 'the high priests of literature' could not ignore them. They were, or had to be, included in literary history. However, the particularity of the experience they were writing about, as well as the space they were writing from, were not acknowledged. They were normalized into the mainstream of Brahmanical literature, as oppositional voices or as reformers. Often, as products of their time, they too accepted the legitimacy of what Limbale describes as a preoccupation with 'serving at the feet of the soul and the supreme soul'.

That, as it is known, is one of the problematics associated with subaltern speech. Often, it appears to take on the voice of the master. But the important point is that Brahmanical literature could not wish away either the reality lurking at the edges of its pure, unpolluted space, or the inhabitants of those edges, the very beings who by their labour ensured this purity and freedom from pollution. Limbale uses the term 'reformist-liberalism' to describe the politics of Dalits' inclusion in the Brahmanical literature of what he calls modern and contemporary periods. In these periods, this literature moved from erasure to containment. Unable to imagine the untouchable Other out of existence, Brahmanical literature now sought to confine it within a discourse marked by 'sympathy' and 'compassion', to use Limbale's

terms. It's a fact.

No doubt, this shift was as much the product of a changing social consciousness as of a political juncture. A variety of factors loosened the stranglehold of Brahmanism and feudalism. European colonialism, the establishment of an English public education system, the advent of industrial capitalism, the emergence of a bourgeoisie, the rise of a working class, contact with ideas of rationalism and enlightenment, on the one hand, and a nationalist anti-colonial movement, which was accompanied by the recognition in certain liberal circles of the need for social reform, on the other, doubtless contributed to the shift in the mindset that Limbale alludes to. Of no less importance was the fact that Dalits themselves were no longer prepared to be silent occupants of the liminal space to which they had been confined for centuries. Leaders like Phule spoke out with persuasive force. Closer to our time, Ambedkar organized Dalits into a force to be contended with. Phule and Ambedkar used the full force of their erudition to take apart the procedures Brahmanism had used to maintain the casteist social order of Indian society. And they complicated matters further by refusing to automatically embrace the nationalist anti-colonial movement. They were prepared to enter into strategic conversations with the colonial rulers for obtaining remedies for centuries of caste oppression. As far as Dalits were concerned, the Savarna society, with its own record, could not now expect their automatic allegiance in its fight against the British.

The representation of Dalits as objects of pity, rather than as authors of their own stories was not confined to Marathi literature alone. Critics besides Limbale have been troubled by the treatment of Dalit characters in the writings of such prominent writers as Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand. In their view, these representations do not show Dalits as they are, but as helpless and child-like people who cannot make their own decisions or take action. In Anand's novel, *Untouchable*, for example, the protagonist, Bakha, instead of opting for radical action, submits to Gandhi's pacifism, and is thus contained (Mukherjee 1998, 143).

This is not, of course, what always happened in real life anyone can understand. As Sardesai's troubled commentary on Ambedkar suggests, Dalits charted their own course of action. Though consigned to the margins of society, and to the same tasks that kept the upper caste society pure and pollution-free, they became a visible presence, and their voices began to break through the boundaries that had kept them apart. But if they could no longer be kept out or erased, Brahmanical literature could certainly keep them in their place, and thus protect the purity of its space. It is these representations of Dalits by upper caste writers, rather than those created by Dalit writers themselves, which have been the basis of any discussion of issues of caste and casteism in Literary history and theory. Thus, even a radical critic such as Gayatri Spivak, for example, has based her entire exploration of the life experiences of Adivasis or aboriginal communities, another group that has been kept outside the boundaries of the village, on the writings of the upper caste Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi, several of whose works Spivak has translated into English. She makes no use of any writing by Dalits or Adivasis themselves in her theorizing on subalternity. Limbale's book interrupts this process of writing the Dalit voice out of literary history and theory.

Dalit literature is traced by a wholesale rejection of the tradition, the aesthetics, the language and the concerns of a Brahmanical literature that, even at its best, carried within it

the signs of the caste based social and cultural order. Dalit literature reflects the pain and misery of untouchables. Instead, Dalit literature has established its own tradition with anti-caste or untouchable thinkers like Buddha, Kabir, Phule and Ambedkar as its signposts. The speaking subject of this Dalit literature is the erstwhile untouchable Other of upper caste Indian society, the occupant of the space outside the boundary of the village. The central concern of Dalit literature is how best to represent the 'authentic experience of Dalits. Literary theory, whether classical Indian with its emphasis on the evocation of emotions and feelings (rasa) or contemporary western with its preoccupation with the unstable individual identity, is not found particularly useful, given the purpose as well as the focus of this literature. The authentic experience that Limbale refers to is that of a people, not just of an individual, and it is a seemingly unalterable experience, quite unlike that of any other group or community. The poor, the colonized or the ethno-racial minority, for example, can hope to alter their condition, not so the untouchable. Flowing from the condition of untouchability is a host of experiences that are unique and distinct. A number of questions immediately arise which needs to be pondered upon. What is this unique and distinct experience? What is involved in an authentic representation of this experience in literature? And what is the purpose of such representation?

Earlier in this commentary it was discussed that the process by which society has constructed the Dalit subaltern as its Other. Dalitness is a condition for which it is very hard to find a parallel, though there may be certain similarities. Limbale compares the Dalit consciousness with that of a slave's. Other Dalit writers have drawn comparisons with African Americans and women. Marxists, such as Sardesai, have argued for links being made between caste struggle and class struggle, and have been critical of Dalit leaders for their failure or refusal to do so.

As if in answer to this criticism, Limbale defines Dalit in the broadest possible way to include all the dispossessed and oppressed of India:

'Harijans and neo-Buddhists are not the only Dalits. The term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as Adivasis, landless farm-labourers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes. In explaining the word, it will not do to refer only to the untouchable castes. People who are lagging behind economically will also need to be included'. It should be noted up.

Limbale characterizes Dalit literature as 'purposive', and describes its purpose variously and 'liberatory'. One facet as 'revolutionary', 'transformational of Dalit literature's rejection of the Brahmanical literary tradition is that it does not adhere to classical Indian aesthetics, according to which the purpose of art and literature is to evoke different emotions and feelings, such as pity, love, fear and anger. Nor, as Limbale makes clear, does Dalit literature share either the devotional literature's other-worldly concerns, or the bourgeois literature's involvement with the desires, insecurities and alienation of the individual. And, finally, Dalit literature is neither a pleasure-giving literature of fine sentiments and refined gestures, nor a narcissistic wallowing in self-pity.

Being purposive', Dalit literature is, to use an old phrase, a literature of commitment. Contemporary Marathi Dalit literature emerged from a political movement - the Dalit Panthers - which many of these writers had been instrumental in founding. Dalit writers in other

languages, though not involved in founding similar movements in their regions, also see themselves as part of a transformational movement. While some Savarna writers may write out of a personal commitment to radical politics, or form groups due to a shared ideological or social agenda, no claim is made that all non-Dalit literature is revolutionary or transformational. The claim that Dalit literature is revolutionary and transformational is not based on the fact that all Dalit writers adhere to a radical ideology, such as socialism or Marxism. It rests on the view that, in as much as transforming the condition of the Dalit and challenging the caste system is a revolutionary cause, a literature that is entirely dedicated to this cause is, by definition, radical. The source of this radicalism is considered to be the thought and actions of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Limbale argues that Dalit literature serves its radical function through its authentic representation of the Dalit reality. Through this representation, the untouchable Other finds voice to speak across the caste-line and thereby destroy the vaunted purity of the space. The Dalit no longer remains invisible. This representation populates and contaminates the previously unpolluted sites of the savarna, and forces their occupants to come face-to-face with and recognize a reality that they brought into existence. This is a deconstructive enterprise. In the process of creating their authentic representations, Dalit writers expose and deconstruct those manufactured versions and processes of history and society that have been invoked through the centuries to legitimize the caste system.

This is one facet of the revolutionary project of Dalit literature. Its other, and perhaps more important facet, is the establishment of the full humanity of the Dalit. This literature asserts the Dalits' selfhood, history and agency. They are actors here, and not the ineffectual, helpless figures of the 'liberal- reformist' upper caste authors' creation, dependent on the goodwill and assistance of the dominant society for succour. In and through this literature, Dalits are no longer a people without history, much less the subalterns of society's history, its demonized Ravana or violated Angulimala, Eklavya or Shurpanaka. Here, they are the central figures of their own history, and from this history they derive the confidence and the right to assert their humanity. In this sense, perhaps the central purpose of Dalit literature is to enable the development of a new consciousness and identity among Dalits.

There is an interesting comparison to be made between Dalit literature's endeavour to construct a Dalit-centric identity and history, and Aimé Césaire's concept of 'Negritude'. Like Césaire, Dalits have preferred an identity-based approach to politics, to Marxism's class-based approach. At the same time, Fanon's theorizing about racial identity development can be used profitably to examine the contemporary Dalit writers' location on the continuum of identity development (Fanon 1979).

There is if not incorrect, a difference between the coordinates of an older anti-caste writer activist like Phule and those of a present day Dalit writer activist such as Limbale. Such a comparison might suggest that where the older generation of writer-activists to with the ruling power of the day, the present generation has attained a level of confidence in its identity that it is ready and prepared to assert itself. The interest in the Black Nationalist movement of the African Americans, and the transformational agenda of today's Dalit literature, reflect that assertion.

Limbale argues that Dalit literature is 'unique' and 'distinct'. In this commentary, I have attempted to look at some of the key issues and considerations raised by him. The relationship of Dalits to the upper caste Indian society is unparalleled. It is a relationship of domination-subordination, constituted by invoking the power of sacred texts. The literature that Dalit writers have created emerges from this relationship, and is an integral part of the political struggle to overturn it. In a profound sense, then, this literature engages with the Foucauldian Power/Knowledge paradigm.

Literary historians and theorists concerned with Indian literature written in the regional languages as well as English have generally failed and could not figure out so far to place and to deal with the implications of Dalit literature, largely because it does not fit into their theoretical frameworks. Extremely negative responses to the rereading of Premchand's canonical Hindi short story, '*Kafan*', by Omprakash Valmiki, a Dalit writer and critic, as reported, for example, by Gautam (1996, 79), would suggest that the upper caste critics' unwillingness to seriously engage with Dalit writing and criticism is connected to their investment in Brahmanical canonical writing as universal. This view of Brahmanical literature and literary theory as canonical would have to be re-appraised and revised if Dalit writing were to be acknowledged as important. Methods and approaches of traditional Indian aesthetics are wholly inadequate to deal with the particularities of Dalit literature. Those associated with Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Studies have not fared any better in evaluating or theorizing about Dalit literature, being caught up in the binary framework of the colonizer and the colonized.

In his controversial essay, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital, Frederic Jameson proposed another way of reading the so-called third world literature. He argued that all 'third-world texts are to be read as national allegories,' and, further, that 'the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society' (1986, 69; author's emphasis). In a general sense, perhaps, Dalit literature accomplishes this, to the extent that the authentic experiences of the Dalit are a part and consequence of the conditions of India's public culture and society. But can it really be said that Dalit texts are 'national allegories', especially when Jameson defines the third world only in terms of its 'experience of colonialism and imperialism'? Yet, interestingly, even a radical critic like Aijaz Ahmad, who severely upbraided Jameson for taking this position and ignoring the fact that not all writers wrote back to the empire, being concerned, instead, about society's internal contradictions and complexities, has had nothing to say about the role and purpose of Dalit literature (Ahmad 1992, 95-122). A noteworthy point.

Conclusion:

There is, curiously if not seriously, a silence even among the most progressive, left winger critics to engage with this literature. One reason for this may be that very little of it is available in English. Most Dalit writers work in their first language, and are only now beginning to be translated. A bigger reason which can be suggested, is that their work not only does not fit into neat binaries, in fact, it complicates them by exposing how a subjugated society such as that of pre-independence India could, simultaneously, be a subjugating society and how, in postcolonial India, that subjugation could continue. A further complicating fact is that Dalit writers and intellectuals do not fit clear ideological categories. Being Dalit-centric, these

writers and intellectuals have reacted vehemently and with full potential against any attempt that seemed designed to dilute the Dalit cause. It is praiseworthy.

The segregation and unheeded Dalit literature may help the non-Dalit to formulate neat theories and approaches, based on concepts of subalternity and postcoloniality, for example. It is clear that so long as this exclusion continues, these theories and approaches will remain incomplete-much like India itself.

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Teaching Learning of Geography in the Light of the National Education Policy-2020 and NCF-SE-2023: A Pathway to Transformative Education

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Abstract

Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, fostering an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. In a rapidly changing world, marked by dramatic scientific and technological advancements, climate change, increasing pollution, and the depletion of natural resources, it is essential to provide universal access to quality education. Geography, as a discipline, studies the physical features of an area and human relationships with the natural environment. To address modern challenges, the focus of education must shift from content-heavy instruction to fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, adaptability, and innovation. Learners must be equipped to absorb and apply knowledge in novel and dynamic contexts. Pedagogy should evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and enjoyable. A well-rounded curriculum is crucial, encompassing arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports, physical education, well-being practices, vocational education, languages, literature, culture, and values. This approach ensures the comprehensive development of learners and makes education more meaningful and fulfilling. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023-mark significant shifts in India's educational landscape. They emphasize innovative approaches to subjects like Geography, ensuring that education remains relevant and prepares learners for future challenges.

Key Words: Experiential, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Multidisciplinary, Holistic, ICT

Introduction:

This introduction sets the stage for exploring how Geography education, under the guidance

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of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023, is evolving to produce globally aware, environmentally responsible, and critically thinking citizens who can contribute to sustainable development and societal well-being. It also encourages connecting classroom lessons to real-world issues like climate change, sustainable development, and disaster management, fostering a deeper understanding of global interdependencies. Both policies advocate for flexibility in the curriculum, encouraging students to explore Geography from local, national, and global perspectives, and to see the subject as a tool for problem-solving. The focus is also on inculcating skills like map reading, spatial analysis, and geographical research, making students active participants in learning.

The new education policy must provide to all students, irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with a particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. Education is a great leveller and is the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality. Initiatives must be in place to ensure that all students from such groups, despite inherent obstacles, are provided various targeted opportunities to enter and excel in the educational system. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 represent transformative initiatives aimed at reshaping the educational framework in India. NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-based education, aligning with the needs of the 21st century. In this context, Geography is viewed not merely as a subject that deals with physical spaces, but as an interdisciplinary field that integrates environmental awareness, critical thinking, and socio-cultural understanding. One of the key focus areas of these reforms is the teaching and learning of Geography. This subject holds immense potential in fostering spatial awareness, environmental consciousness, and critical thinking. In the context of NEP 2020, Geography is viewed through a multidisciplinary lens, emphasizing connecting learners to their surroundings and the world at large. The policy encourages a shift from rote learning to understanding, questioning, and applying geographical concepts in real-world scenarios. By focusing on experiential and inquiry-based learning, NEP 2020 seeks to make Geography a tool for addressing contemporary challenges such as climate change, sustainability, and disaster management. NCFSE 2023 operationalizes the vision of NEP 2020 by offering a flexible, learner-centric curriculum that promotes deep engagement with the subject, offering a structured approach to curriculum reform. It promotes experiential learning, and inquiry-based approaches. It integrates modern tools like GIS (Geographical Information Systems), promotes field studies, and encourages interdisciplinary linkages with subjects like history, economics, and environmental science. The framework also emphasizes the need for a balance between local knowledge systems and global perspectives, making Geography a bridge between traditional learning and modern challenges.

This paper discusses how Geography education under NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 is poised to create informed, environmentally conscious, and globally aware citizens. By integrating local knowledge systems and promoting interdisciplinary linkages, these frameworks aim to make Geography education relevant to the challenges of our times. The implementation of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 has led to significant advancements in the teaching and learning of Geography in Indian schools. These reforms have resulted in a shift from traditional

content-heavy approaches to more learner-centric, skills-based, and interdisciplinary methods of instruction.

Objectives:

1. To analyze the changes in Geography education introduced by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, experiential education, and competency-based approaches.
2. To explore the role of Geography in fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and environmental consciousness among students, aligning with the transformative goals of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023.
3. To assess the integration of technology in Geography education, particularly through tools like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and digital mapping, School Bhuvan NCERT, as encouraged by the new policies to enhance learning outcomes.
4. To evaluate the shift in assessment practices from traditional rote learning to competency-based evaluation, focusing on the practical application of geographic knowledge and fieldwork.
5. To examine the potential of Geography education to develop global citizenship, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development, aligning with the broader vision of the NEP-2020 and NCF-SE 2023.

These objectives aim to understand how Geography education can be transformed considering NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 to make it more relevant, dynamic, and student-centered.

Literature review

The NEP 2020 advocates for a transformative approach to education, emphasizing experiential learning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary understanding (MHRD, 2020). The policy suggests that geography education should move beyond rote memorization to focus on real-world applications, problem-solving skills, and sustainability. The concept of “learning by doing” is central to NEP 2020, encouraging teachers to adopt methods that make geography education more interactive and grounded in the lived experiences of students (Rajput, 2021). Furthermore, NEP 2020 advocates for integrating local context and indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. In the context of geography, this means incorporating local landscapes, cultures, and environmental challenges into lessons to foster a sense of connection between students and their surroundings (Dhar, 2022). By making geography education more relevant to students’ immediate environment, NEP 2020 aims to build ecological consciousness and a sense of responsibility towards sustainable development (Pandey, 2022). The NCFSE 2023 further operationalizes NEP 2020’s vision by providing a structured framework for the development of a geography curriculum. It emphasizes thematic approaches that link geographical content with concepts of sustainability, climate change, and global citizenship (NCERT, 2023). Geography education under NCFSE 2023 is expected to not only cover physical geography but also integrate human and social geography, thus encouraging students to understand the dynamic relationship between human societies and the environment. The NCFSE 2023 outlines that the geography curriculum should be aligned with the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) to help students recognize the global implications of local actions (Kumar, 2023). This integration aims to empower students to become active and informed participants in environmental stewardship. The focus on project-based learning (PBL) and case studies, as outlined in NCFSE 2023, further supports students in analyzing geographical issues from a multi-dimensional perspective, thereby deepening their critical understanding and problem-solving abilities (Sharma, 2023). Both NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 emphasize the need for interdisciplinary approaches to education, highlighting how geography intersects with subjects such as history, economics, environmental science, and political science (Chaudhary, 2023). This interdisciplinary emphasis supports a deeper understanding of complex global issues like climate change, migration, and resource distribution. NEP 2020 advocates for the integration of technology to enhance educational experiences. Digital tools, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), satellite imagery, and virtual field trips, are increasingly recognized for their potential to make geography more accessible and engaging (Rao, 2023). According to NEP 2020, the role of teachers is central to educational transformation. Geography educators are encouraged to adopt a facilitative role, guiding students through inquiry-based and experiential learning methods. (Mishra, 2023). Teacher training programs are being reoriented to ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and tools to deliver geography lessons that are aligned with the goals of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023. Teacher-led innovations, such as community mapping and environmental impact assessments, are suggested as methods to connect classroom learning with real-world contexts (Patel, 2023).

Methodology

This research paper employs a qualitative approach to analyze the impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 on the teaching and learning of Geography in Indian schools. The methodology comprises a comprehensive review of policy documents and secondary data analysis, below are the detailed steps of the methodology:

1. Document Analysis

The primary method used in this study is a detailed document analysis of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023, with a particular focus on how these policies influence Geography education.

Policy Content Analysis: A thorough examination of the specific recommendations made in NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 that pertain to the teaching and learning of Geography. Key aspects such as competency-based learning, interdisciplinary education, the use of technology, and skill development were reviewed to understand their intended impact on Geography.

Curriculum Framework Review: The NCFSE 2023 document was scrutinized to identify the prescribed changes in curriculum structure, pedagogical practices, and assessment methods for Geography education. This includes how Geography is framed within the larger context of environmental studies and its integration with other disciplines.

2. Secondary Data Analysis

A secondary data analysis was conducted to support the findings from the document

review. This involved reviewing previous academic studies, government reports, and research papers that evaluate the effectiveness of Geography teaching methods in India. Studies and papers focused on the pedagogical approaches in Geography, including case studies on experiential learning, competency-based assessments, and the use of digital tools in classrooms. Reviewing official reports from the Ministry of Education and NCERT to assess the current state of Geography education and the projected changes due to NEP- 2020 and NCF-SE 2023.

Discussion and findings -The NEP-2020 and the NCF-SE-2023 present a transformative vision for education in India, including the teaching and learning of Geography. Both documents emphasize holistic development, interdisciplinary learning, and the cultivation of skills for the 21st century.

To integrate Geography with other disciplines such as history, economics, environmental science, and technology, encouraging students to develop a comprehensive understanding of global and local systems.

1. Holistic Development and Multidisciplinary Approach

NEP 2020 encourages a multidisciplinary approach to education, moving beyond traditional subject boundaries. Geography, being an integrative subject, aligns well with this vision as it inherently connects environmental studies, history, economics, and political science. Multidisciplinary thinking should be encouraged and supported to ensure that students develop a holistic and integrated understanding of concepts as they appear in society. Any event in history needs to be interpreted in the socio-political or economic contexts of its origin; any geographical phenomena should be evaluated from its impact on space and human lives and its influence on the economy and society. Similarly, any economic concept needs to be understood from its historical and socio-political contexts.

Geography in NEP 2020: Geography provides students with insights into natural resources, climate patterns, global economics, and social systems, which are vital for making informed global citizens.

NCFSE 2023 Perspective: The NCFSE aims to embed geography within broader themes of environmental sustainability, spatial awareness, and global interconnectedness, enabling students to understand and appreciate the planet's complex systems.

2. Critical Thinking and Inquiry-Based Learning

The NEP promotes a move away from rote memorization towards critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry-based learning, especially in subjects like Geography that deal with real-world issues.

Geographical Inquiry: Geography encourages students to investigate real-world problems like climate change, urbanization, migration, and resource management. Inquiry-based methods will allow students to explore these issues, analyze data, and create solutions.

To promote field-based learning, hands-on activities, and project work that enable students to explore geographic phenomena directly, enhancing their ability to observe, question, and interpret geographical processes. Inquiry-based methods help students understand how social scientists generate knowledge. For instance, students can make and test hypotheses about

factors that influence migration in their locality or region, the genesis of various settlement patterns in their region, and why specific types of occupations are more prevalent in specific regions. To move beyond rote memorization by engaging students in analyzing geographic data, understanding spatial relationships, and applying geographic knowledge to solve real-world issues like urbanization, climate change, and resource management

NCFSE Implementation: The NCFSE 2023 stresses the importance of encouraging students to ask questions, use maps, and engage with case studies that develop analytical skills and the ability to interpret geographical data.

3. Experiential Learning and Field Studies

NEP 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, which is crucial in Geography. Fieldwork, map work, and project-based learning help students better understand geographical concepts. Geography as a subject is ideally suited for outdoor and experiential learning. Students can be taken on field trips to study landforms, ecosystems, urban planning, or rural development, fostering hands-on engagement with geographical concepts.

NCFSE's Focus on Practical Learning: The NCFSE outlines how field studies, case studies, and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can play a larger role in the curriculum, fostering students' abilities to conduct primary research and analyze spatial data.

4. Environmental Awareness and Sustainability

Both NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 emphasize environmental sustainability as a core value. Geography plays a critical role in helping students understand environmental challenges and sustainable practices. Geography education considering NEP will emphasize understanding ecosystems, climate change, environmental degradation, and the need for sustainable development. Students will be encouraged to think about solutions to global environmental problems.

NCFSE's Integration of Global Challenges: The curriculum will incorporate global environmental concerns, such as biodiversity loss, global warming, and water management, to make Geography education more relevant to today's world.

To educate students about environmental challenges, sustainable development goals, and the importance of conservation, while fostering a deep connection to natural ecosystems and promoting responsible behaviour toward the environment.

5. Technological Integration

Geography teaching will integrate new technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, and digital mapping tools, NCERT School Bhuvan, considering NEP's emphasis on digital literacy and skill development. Students will be taught to use digital tools for mapping and spatial analysis, which are increasingly important in various fields such as urban planning, disaster management, and environmental monitoring.

NCFSE's Vision for Digital Literacy: NCFSE will promote the use of technology in geography lessons to allow students to access interactive maps, global datasets, and virtual field trips, making the learning process more engaging.

6. Skill Development for 21st Century

NEP 2020 stresses the need for developing 21st-century skills like collaboration,

communication, critical thinking, leadership, social skills, productivity, and creativity. Geography, by its nature, helps students develop skills in research, data interpretation, and spatial thinking.

Collaborative Projects: Geography lessons will include group projects, research tasks, and community-based learning to foster teamwork and interpersonal skills.

Global Competence: Students will gain global competence through studying geographic phenomena across regions, encouraging a sense of global citizenship.

Creativity: Helps students develop a global awareness and be creative and innovative.

7. Inclusion and Equity in Geography Education

NEP 2020 advocates inclusive education, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have access to quality learning. This perspective will be integrated into Geography lessons by focusing on the geographic diversity of India and the world.

Representation in Curriculum: NCFSE ensures that diverse geographical areas, cultures, and regions are well-represented, making geography lessons more inclusive. For instance, it emphasizes the study of tribal regions, coastal areas, and underrepresented regions of the country.

8. Assessment Reform

The NEP calls for reforming assessments to focus on competency rather than memorization. Geography assessment, therefore, will focus more on applying knowledge and understanding systems than on recalling facts.

Competency-Based Assessments: Geography assessments will include project-based evaluations, map interpretation, and practical applications of geographical concepts rather than traditional exams.

Focus on Problem-Solving: Students may be asked to analyze real-world problems, propose sustainable solutions, and explain geographic phenomena through essays, presentations, and data-based projects.

Assessment too will be transformed in parallel to the changes in pedagogy, from primarily testing facts, to testing core capacities and Competencies.

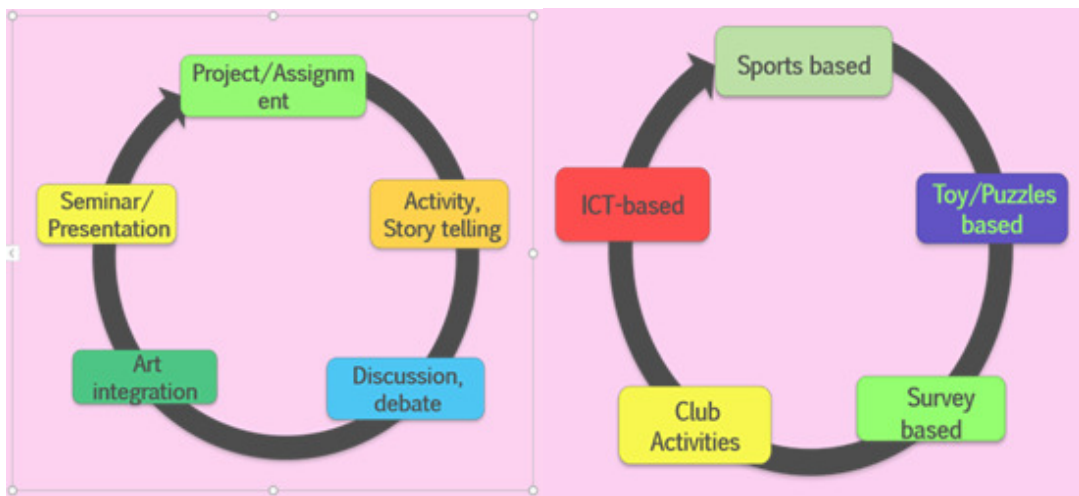
Item	No. of Item	S.No. of L.O.	Item	No. of Item	S.No. of L.O.
Oral quiz			Competency-based questions		
Portfolio			Presentation		
MCQ			Puzzles		
Very Short Ans. Questions			Group Projects		
Short Answer Questions			Individual Project		
Long Answer Questions			Any other Item (Map Skill)		

9. Promote Global Awareness and Local Relevance

To foster a balanced understanding of local, national, and global geography, helping students appreciate the interconnections between different regions while emphasizing the relevance of local landscapes, cultures, and challenges.

10. Pedagogical Considerations

The following pedagogical considerations should be kept in mind while planning for Geography/Social Science classes:



Geography pedagogy

a. Issues-based learning: Issues-based learning can be a conducive tool for acquainting students with various aspects of social realities, integrating perspectives from different disciplines in investigating the causes of problems, and thinking about relevant social action. As a subject addressing normative concerns, it is also vital that students learn much of the Social Science content by engaging with real issues in their immediate/related context. For instance, students may consider the problem of drinking water shortage in their area, which may involve engaging with questions such as – What are the available sources of water? How does water consumption differ across different parts of the region/ locality? Is there wastage that can be avoided? How is water being made accessible to all sections of society? Is there unequal distribution? What steps are being taken to purify water?

b. Conversations, discussions, and debates: Conversations are extremely vital in a Social Science classroom. These conversations should lead to focused discussions on concepts, ideas, belief systems, and value claims. Sometimes these discussions may turn into debates in the classroom. It is important to encourage such debates, as it provides students with the opportunity to put forth their perspectives, resolve conflicts, iron out contradictory ideas, and learn from each other. However, care must be taken that such discussions and debates do not hurt the sentiments of any social group. Some common topics for discussion could be on Environmentalism v/s Possibilism, climate change, diversity in clothing and types of food as

per historical and geographical reasons, and practicing democratic processes in schools.

d. Community service and field excursions: Community service is yet another engaging strategy in a Social Science classroom. It not only involves concrete experiences for learning concepts from the curriculum but also enables students to develop the desired values. Students may take up various projects to work with local government agencies to acquire first-hand experience of issues and work with people in need. Similarly, field excursions are meaningful ways of engaging with the content, e.g., nature walks, heritage walks, food walks, and visits to police stations, museums, post offices, planetariums, and government and digital archives.

f. Reflective essays: Students can write reflective essays on various topics related to the curriculum. These essays can also be used by Teachers to assess the extent to which students have learned the desired concepts and skills. For instance, a reflective essay topic could be, ‘How will dams transform agricultural productivity in India?’ ‘What are the issues and opportunities of linking rivers?’ ‘What sustainable agricultural strategies could a region adopt if its main river turns seasonal or dries up?’ or ‘Is waste management and disposal the sole responsibility of municipalities and other government agencies?’

g. Project work: Effective Social Science teaching happens when students collaborate on a project or a specific task. These could be conducting surveys and interviews (e.g., household surveys, interviews with stakeholders of the society such as village sarpanch), drawing a map of their classroom, investigating historical sources in their region, tabulating the types of bazaars/markets. Such projects should be collaboratively designed along with students with sufficient time given to collect data, analyze it, and present it in the classrooms.

h. Some specific opportunities for projects to create models and art—art-integrated: Students should be given opportunities to apply their knowledge to create models and artifacts. These could be in the form of poster-making, collections (soil samples, types of rocks, volcanoes, leaves, flowers, photographs, pamphlets), models (2-dimensional or 3-dimensional, e.g., monuments, volcanoes, still scenes), videos of rallies/haat bazaars/ book fairs/any social events in their surroundings.

i. Sports-based learning: Sports offer dynamic ways to teach geographical concepts, physical geography, and cultural connections. Examples include:

- Global Sports Events-Olympics/World Cup: Teach students about host countries’ geography, culture, and history. Explore how location influences the choice of venues.
- Cricket or Soccer Regions: Use maps to discuss countries or regions where specific sports are popular. Analyze the climate, terrain, and culture influencing these sports.
- Climate and Training-Examine how climate impacts athletes’ performance (e.g., training in hot vs. cold climates). Discuss biomes and terrains where specific sports like desert rallies or jungle marathons are held.
- Solar system – Students arrange their height and move according to planet size and rotation.

j. Toy-based learning:

- Toy Models-Globes and Maps: Interactive globes or puzzles with continents and

countries can teach spatial awareness. Building Sets (e.g., LEGO): Construct physical features like mountains, rivers, or cities to illustrate topography or urban planning.

- Vehicles and Transport Networks-Use toy trains, planes, or boats to simulate transport networks. Show how goods and people move between regions, teaching concepts like trade routes, logistics, or urban connectivity.

11. Develop Citizenship and Social Responsibility

To inculcate a sense of global citizenship and social responsibility, geographic education should be linked to contemporary global challenges such as migration, disaster management, urban planning, and socio-economic inequalities.

12. Enhance Flexible and Student-Centred Learning

To create a flexible curriculum that accommodates diverse learning styles and interests, allowing students to explore geographic topics of their choice, and fostering curiosity and self-driven learning. Helps students understand the basics of local, national, and global geography, and how to place themselves in the world.

Fieldwork: Provides a real-world opportunity for students to develop their geographical thinking.

Organizing concepts: Helps students categorize geographical knowledge of natural and human phenomena.

Creativity: Helps students develop a global awareness and be creative and innovative.

Understanding of the environment: Helps students understand how environmental and climatic factors have influenced our life.

Knowledge of natural resources: Helps students acquire knowledge of natural resources.

Knowledge of the physical and social environment: Helps students acquire knowledge of their physical and social environment.

Current Challenges

Geography teaching and learning face a few challenges in schools at present. The NCF attempts to address these systematically. Some of the key issues are as follows:

- is usually taught as a subject that focuses predominantly on the memorization of facts, such as names of geographical features across the globe, The effort to understand, discuss, and appreciate concepts is often missing in Social Science classrooms. This, in turn, makes students lose interest in the subject.
- Information in the chapters is too often transacted in the classroom with little or no connection to the life of students. Since the subject is not relevant or interesting to the students, it often ends up being boring, passive, or unrelatable.
- The content in some books is sometimes not based on verified evidence and arises from inadequate inquiry, lopsided interpretations, entrenched stereotypes, or specific biases.
- Content to progress from local to global: As much as possible, conceptual understanding should start from the local context. For example, understanding geography is best

achieved by first engaging with local terrain (streams, lowlands, uplands) in the locality, and then moving to features of the regional and national terrains.

In Geography, the content must focus on highlighting the interrelationship of human beings with their geographical environment and other life forms. Concepts highlighting the interdependence between humans and nature need to be at the core. The connection between various geographical phenomena and their socio-cultural effects must also be included.

Conclusion and Result:

The reforms brought about by NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 have revitalized the teaching and learning of Geography in India, aligning it with the demands of the 21st century. By shifting focus from rote learning to skills-based, interdisciplinary, and inquiry-driven methods, these policies have made Geography education more relevant, engaging, and impactful. Students are now better equipped to understand and address complex global issues such as environmental degradation, sustainable development, and urbanization. The integration of modern technologies like GIS, the emphasis on local and global perspectives, and the inclusion of experiential learning have enhanced both the academic and practical understanding of Geography. As a result, students are emerging as critical thinkers, environmentally conscious citizens, and global problem solvers, capable of contributing meaningfully to society by aligning geography education with sustainable development and global awareness, these policies aim to create a generation of environmentally conscious, responsible, and informed citizens. Geography will be taught not only as a subject of maps and physical features but also as a vital tool for understanding the complex interrelationships of the world, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development.

The success of these reforms underscores the importance of continuing to innovate Geography education, ensuring that it remains responsive to evolving global challenges and technological advancements. The implementation of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 has led to significant advancements in the teaching and learning of Geography in Indian schools. These reforms have resulted in a shift from traditional content-heavy approaches to more learner-centric, skills-based, and interdisciplinary methods of instruction. The incorporation of experiential and inquiry-based learning, such as field trips and hands-on projects, has enhanced student engagement with the subject. Students have shown a greater interest in Geography when they can relate it to real-world issues and personal experiences. Through activities like spatial analysis, the use of GIS, and the study of environmental challenges, students are developing critical thinking skills. They are better equipped to analyze geographical data, understand global issues such as climate change, and devise solutions to environmental and social problems. Students have become more aware of sustainability and environmental conservation. The curriculum's focus on climate change, resource management, and sustainable development has fostered a sense of responsibility toward the environment. The integration of modern technology, particularly GIS and digital mapping tools, has improved students' ability to handle and interpret geographical data. This prepares them for future academic and professional pursuits in geography-related fields. Geography education now balances local, national, and global perspectives, allowing students to appreciate the interconnectedness of the world while understanding the significance of their local environment. This has helped

students develop a sense of global citizenship. The flexible curriculum structure has allowed students to pursue their interests within Geography, fostering a more inclusive and student-centered learning environment that caters to diverse learning styles and interests.

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The Global Relevance of Gandhi's Vision: A Diasporic Outline for Peace, Justice, and Sustainability

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Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), self-rule (Swaraj), and social justice extends far beyond the Indian context in which it was conceived. His ideas have impacted on the global stage. It influenced countless social, political, and environmental movements across time and space. At the heart of Gandhi's vision was a belief that human beings, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion, could unite in pursuing justice, peace, and sustainable development. Presently, Gandhi's teachings are as relevant as ever, offering a timeless blueprint for navigating modern global challenges ranging from political oppression and economic inequality to climate change and interfaith relations.

Keywords: M.K. Gandhi, Indian Diaspora, Peace, Justice, Sustainability

Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi's vision of peace, justice, and sustainability transcends geographical boundaries, presenting a timeless framework that resonates deeply in today's globalised world. Globally, we face climate change, social inequality, and political strife. The principles articulated by Gandhi offer insight and a call to action for individuals and communities across the diaspora. His emphasis on non-violence, self-reliance, and ethical living is a guiding light for fostering harmony and resilience in diverse cultural contexts. Critically examining Gandhi's philosophy, we can uncover pathways to innovative solutions that address contemporary societal issues while promoting shared responsibility and interconnectedness. Thus, Gandhi's teachings are not merely historical artefacts; they represent a relevant and urgent roadmap for a collective

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journey toward a more just and sustainable future.

1. Non-violence and the Global Peace Movement

Gandhi's principle of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) is perhaps his most enduring contribution to global political thought. Rooted in the belief that violence begets more violence and perpetuates cycles of suffering, Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution radically differed from conventional warfare and political struggle methods. Rather than advocating for violent uprisings, Gandhi proposed peaceful resistance through civil disobedience, *satyagraha*, and non-cooperation.

This philosophy of nonviolent resistance profoundly influenced global movements for civil rights and political liberation in the 20th century. In the United States, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., inspired by Gandhi's teachings, adopted non-violence as the keystone of the American Civil Rights Movement (Lee et al., 2019). King's leadership in nonviolent protests, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington, followed Gandhi's principles and succeeded in changing societal norms around racial segregation and discrimination.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa drew heavily from Gandhi's methods, leading to the peaceful dismantling of apartheid without descending into widespread violence. Mandela's call for reconciliation and the truth and reconciliation commissions that followed apartheid are grounded in Gandhi's vision of peaceful transformation rather than revenge or punitive measures. Thus, Gandhi's non-violence remains a powerful force for social justice and human rights worldwide.

In an era marked by ongoing global conflicts whether between nations, ethnic groups, or religious communities, Gandhi's principles provide a model for resolving disputes and building peace through understanding, dialogue, and reconciliation. Non-violence is not simply a method of protest; it is a philosophy that calls for respect, empathy, and compassion as essential components of any social or political engagement.

Non-violence has been a core principle of the global peace movement for over a century, influencing major social and political movements worldwide. The idea of non-violence, often associated with figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Cesar Chavez, promotes resolving conflicts through peaceful means, rejecting physical force, and emphasizing dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. Non-violence is not merely the absence of violence but a proactive commitment to creating a just and peaceful society (Bhandari, 2019).

Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence, or *Ahimsa*, is one of the most enduring contributions to global political thought. Rooted in the belief that violence only perpetuates (Solidarity Uganda, 2023). Further violence and suffering, Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence radically opposed the conventional methods of conflict resolution, which typically relied on military force and coercion. Rather than endorsing violent uprisings or armed struggle, Gandhi proposed peaceful resistance through civil disobedience, *Satyagraha* (truth or soul force), and non-cooperation. According to Gandhi, actual political and social change can only be achieved by appealing to the oppressor's conscience and fostering a spirit of reconciliation, not through revenge or retaliation. This view fundamentally reshaped political thought and provided an alternative to the cycle of violence that often accompanies oppressive systems (Gandhi, 1948).

Gandhi's nonviolent resistance philosophy profoundly impacted global movements for

civil rights and political liberation during the 20th century. In the United States, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., deeply influenced by Gandhi's teachings, adopted non-violence as the basis of the Civil Rights Movement (Apte, 2023). King believed nonviolent protest was the most effective and morally just method of confronting racial injustice and achieving equality (King, 1963). King's leadership in key nonviolent actions, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington, which sought to dismantle institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination, directly followed Gandhi's principles. These movements successfully shifted societal norms around race relations in the United States, highlighting the transformative power of nonviolent resistance in the struggle for civil rights (King, 1963; Carson, 2001).

Similarly, in South Africa, Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid movement drew heavily from Gandhi's nonviolent methods, applying them to their struggle against the oppressive apartheid regime. While Mandela initially embraced armed resistance as a tactical response to apartheid's violence, his later emphasis on negotiation, reconciliation, and peaceful dismantling of apartheid was undeniably influenced by Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution (Mandela, 1994). The peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa is, in many ways, a testament to the efficacy of non-violence, as the country avoided widespread violence during this pivotal period. Furthermore, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which sought to heal the wounds of apartheid without resorting to punitive measures, was rooted in Gandhi's philosophy of understanding, forgiveness, and peaceful transformation rather than revenge (Tutu, 1999). These instances demonstrate how Gandhi's principles of non-violence can facilitate the peaceful resolution of deep-seated social and political conflicts, ensuring that justice is achieved without perpetuating cycles of violence.

In the contemporary world, marked by ongoing global conflicts, whether they arise between nations, ethnic groups, or religious communities, Gandhi's principles of non-violence provide a valuable model for conflict resolution. His philosophy offers an alternative to the militarisation of global politics, encouraging understanding, dialogue, and reconciliation as tools for peacebuilding. Gandhi's emphasis on empathy and compassion as essential to social and political engagement invites a more humane approach to international relations. Rather than resorting to the escalation of violence, Gandhi's non-violence calls for respect for human dignity and the cultivation of peaceful solutions through mutual understanding and collective action (Gandhi, 1948). As such, his vision of nonviolent resistance continues to inspire movements for social justice, human rights, and global peace in the present day.

Gandhi's non-violence remains one of the most influential ethical frameworks for resolving conflict and fostering social change. His teachings have shaped some of the most significant political movements of the 20th century, including the American Civil Rights Movement and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Gandhi's principles offer a profound alternative to violent resistance, emphasising compassion, dialogue, and reconciliation as critical elements in pursuing justice. In an increasingly polarised world, the relevance of Gandhi's philosophy is more urgent than ever, as it provides a path toward resolving conflicts that uphold human dignity and promote lasting peace.

2. Swaraj and Self-Rule: A Global Call for Decentralisation and Empowerment

Gandhi's concept of Swaraj (self-rule) extended beyond political independence from

colonial powers; it encapsulated a decentralised vision of governance in which individuals and communities take responsibility for their well-being and decision-making. Swaraj was about empowering individuals to govern their own lives, make ethical choices, and be accountable for their actions within their community.

This philosophy of self-governance can be applied in today's world, where centralised power structures often fail to meet the needs of local communities. Gandhi's vision of decentralisation calls for bottom-up political systems, where local governance plays a central role in shaping the future of societies. It is especially relevant in the growing disillusionment with global governance structures, which many view as distant, inefficient, and unresponsive to local needs.

Gandhi's call for Swaraj also resonates with the increasing global push for grassroots empowerment in both political and economic spheres. His emphasis on self-reliance (*Swadeshi*), the idea that communities should focus on developing their resources and financial structures, aligns with modern calls for localisation and sustainability in the face of globalisation. Whether in local food movements, community currencies, or sustainable agriculture, Gandhi's self-sufficiency and community-based governance principles offer an alternative to the prevailing economic and political systems that often prioritise corporate interests over people's needs.

Mahatma Gandhi's Swaraj (self-rule) concept extended far beyond mere political independence from colonial powers, as it embodied a deep-seated vision of decentralisation and self-governance. For Gandhi, *Swaraj* was about attaining freedom from British rule and empowering individuals and communities to take control of their lives and decisions. This philosophy encouraged people to govern themselves, make ethical choices, and take responsibility for their actions within the context of their local communities. Therefore, Swaraj represented a political, social, and moral order in which external authorities did not subjugate individuals but were free to shape their destinies in harmony with their communities. Gandhi argued that true freedom could only be achieved when people exercised control over their lives, including their economic and social spheres (Gandhi, 1948).

In today's globalised world, where power structures are often centralised and fail to address the needs of local populations, Gandhi's vision of *Swaraj* remains highly relevant. Centralised political systems frequently struggle with inefficiencies and the growing disconnect between global governance structures and the lived experiences of individuals. Many critics argue that these structures are increasingly out of touch with the needs of local communities, which often feel powerless in shaping decisions that directly affect them. Gandhi's call for decentralisation, where power is distributed locally, offers a solution to these challenges. A bottom-up political system, as envisioned by Gandhi, would enable local communities to take charge of their governance, allowing for a more responsive, accountable, and inclusive decision-making process. This shift toward localised governance could be a powerful antidote to the growing disillusionment with top-down political systems that fail to meet the specific needs of diverse communities (Gandhi, 1948; Sen, 1999).

Furthermore, Gandhi's emphasis on *Swaraj* extends into the economic sphere, mainly through his advocacy for self-reliance, or *Swadeshi*. Gandhi argued that communities should focus on developing their resources and financial systems to reduce dependence on foreign

goods and centralised economic structures. This vision of economic decentralisation directly challenges the prevailing economic systems that prioritise global corporations over the well-being of local populations. In the face of globalisation, where large multinational corporations often wield disproportionate power, Gandhi's principles of self-sufficiency and local resource management offer a timely alternative. Today, movements advocating for local food production, sustainable agriculture, and community-based currencies echo Gandhi's ideals of *Swadeshi*, where economic power is returned to local communities, reducing their reliance on global supply chains that may not align with local needs (Basu, 2004). The modern push for sustainability and environmental stewardship is also aligned with Gandhi's call for self-reliance, as it challenges the exploitative nature of globalised trade and resource extraction, emphasising the importance of local resilience and ecological balance (Shiva, 2016).

Gandhi's vision of *Swaraj* also aligns with the growing global movement for grassroots empowerment, where local communities demand greater autonomy in both political and economic spheres. In recent years, there has been a surge in interest in decentralised governance models, particularly in response to the perceived failures of centralised neoliberal systems. Movements such as participatory budgeting, cooperative economics, and community-based renewable energy projects draw inspiration from Gandhi's ideas, advocating for decision-making that is more inclusive, transparent, and directly responsive to the people affected. Gandhi's emphasis on ethical living and community accountability continues to resonate with activists who seek to dismantle unjust power structures and create more equitable systems based on local knowledge, mutual aid, and social responsibility (Nandela, 2015). As such, the relevance of *Swaraj* has grown in the contemporary era, as it provides a framework for addressing the pressing challenges of inequality, environmental degradation, and democratic deficit in today's world.

Gandhi's philosophy of *Swaraj* and decentralised self-rule offers a powerful model for addressing the deficiencies of contemporary political and economic systems. His call for local self-governance, financial self-reliance, and community empowerment remains deeply relevant in an era of growing disillusionment with centralised power structures. Whether through the push for sustainability, local food movements, or community currencies, Gandhi's vision provides an alternative to globalisation and corporate-driven politics, advocating for a future where individuals and communities have greater control over their lives, resources, and destinies. As such, the global appeal of *Swaraj* endures, offering a pathway to more just, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

3. Social Justice and Human Rights: A Call for Equality

Gandhi's commitment to social justice was grounded in his opposition to the caste system, untouchability, and discrimination. He championed the rights of the marginalised, particularly the Harijans (untouchables). He argued for a society with equal rights and opportunities regardless of caste, religion, or social status. His insistence on non-discrimination and the inherent dignity of every individual laid the groundwork for modern human rights movements worldwide.

In today's global context, where issues of racial inequality, gender discrimination, and ethnic persecution remain persistent, Gandhi's advocacy for equality and social inclusion

continues to be vital. The civil rights movement in the United States, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and the global feminist movements reflect the resonance of Gandhi's teachings on justice and human dignity. Moreover, his work to uplift the most marginalised, including women, Dalits, and tribal communities, aligns with the contemporary struggle for inclusive development and the recognition of minority rights across the globe.

Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to social justice was deeply rooted in his opposition to the caste system, untouchability, and social discrimination. His steadfast advocacy for the rights of marginalised groups, particularly the Harijans (untouchables), underlined his belief that every individual, regardless of caste, religion, or social status, should enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Gandhi viewed social justice not just as a matter of political rights but as a moral obligation, emphasising the inherent dignity of every person. His tireless efforts to eradicate untouchability and promote social and economic equality laid the foundation for modern human rights movements worldwide. By advocating for a society where people could live free from discrimination and exploitation, Gandhi challenged the entrenched social hierarchies that dominated colonial India, offering a vision of a more just and inclusive world (Gandhi, 1948). His philosophy inspired many later movements focused on equality, such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa; both found resonance in his call to eliminate racial and social hierarchies.

In today's global context, where issues of racial inequality, gender discrimination, and ethnic persecution continue to be pervasive, Gandhi's advocacy for equality and social inclusion remains vital. The persistence of these injustices underscores the enduring relevance of Gandhi's teachings on justice and human dignity. For instance, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, led by figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was directly influenced by Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and his call for racial equality (King, 1963). Similarly, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela, adopted Gandhi's principles of non-violence and social justice in their struggle to dismantle the apartheid system that oppressed Black South Africans (Mandela, 1994). These movements, which sought to eliminate systemic racial oppression, reflect the continuing global resonance of Gandhi's commitment to equality. His focus on the marginalised and dispossessed, including women, Dalits, and tribal communities, aligns with the contemporary global push for inclusive development and the recognition of minority rights. As we see in movements today, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the global feminist movements, Gandhi's vision of equality and justice continues to inform and inspire efforts to confront persistent discrimination and exclusion (Sanford, 2017).

Moreover, Gandhi's work to uplift the most marginalised groups, such as women, Dalits, and indigenous communities, remains a touchstone for the ongoing fight for inclusive social and economic development. Gandhi not only sought to eradicate untouchability, but he also called for women's empowerment, advocating for their right to education, political participation, and social recognition (Gandhi, 1948). His work aligned with the global feminist movements, which continue to challenge gender-based inequalities and advocate for women's rights worldwide. Similarly, his advocacy for the rights of Dalits and tribal communities laid the groundwork for modern movements focused on minority rights and social justice. Gandhi's

equality and social inclusion principles are integral to contemporary struggles for recognising human rights for all, particularly in countries where the marginalised continue to face systemic discrimination and violence (Shiva, 2016). His emphasis on the dignity of every individual, regardless of their social position, remains a powerful and timely call for equality in the face of global injustices.

4. Environmental Sustainability: A Vision for the Future

Perhaps one of the most prescient aspects of Gandhi's philosophy is his understanding of the relationship between human beings and the environment. While modern industrialisation has often prioritised economic growth over ecological balance, Gandhi championed a way of life rooted in simple living and respect for nature. His emphasis on self-reliance and Swaraj meant political independence and economic and environmental self-sufficiency, urging people to avoid excessive consumption and focus on what is necessary for a healthy and balanced life.

Gandhi's principle of non-violence also extended to the treatment of the natural world. His ethical framework of Ahimsa called for the humane treatment of all living beings, including animals and plants, and a sustainable relationship with the Earth. It has profound implications for the global environmental movement, especially today, as the world grapples with climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable resource exploitation.

In the 21st century, there is a growing recognition of the need to create a sustainable future that values ecological balance, resource conservation, and intergenerational justice. Gandhi's simple living philosophy, criticism of excessive consumerism, and commitment to local self-sufficiency offer relevant solutions to the challenges posed by global capitalism and environmental degradation.

Movements like Fridays for Future, inspired by Greta Thunberg's activism and the broader calls for climate justice and eco-sustainability, echo the need for moral leadership and ethical decision-making in environmental matters, values that Gandhi embodied in his life. His teachings align with ecological non-violence, which seeks to preserve the Earth for future generations while respecting its living systems.

One of the most prescient aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy is his understanding of the relationship between human beings and the environment. While modern industrialisation has often prioritised economic growth over ecological balance, Gandhi offered a fundamentally different vision of human development that emphasised simplicity, self-reliance, and respect for nature. Gandhi's Swaraj (self-rule) philosophy extended beyond political and economic independence to encompass environmental self-sufficiency. He urged individuals and communities to avoid excessive consumption and focus on living in a manner that was sustainable and in harmony with nature. This emphasis on simplicity and restraint reflected his belief that true happiness and fulfilment are not in material excess but in cultivating a balanced, ethical life. Gandhi's perspective on living has profound relevance today as the modern world grapples with the ecological consequences of overconsumption and unsustainable growth (Gandhi, 1948). His call for self-reliance was about political autonomy and creating a lifestyle that respects the Earth's finite resources. This approach directly challenges the environmentally destructive tendencies of contemporary economic systems.

In addition to his advocacy for simplicity, Gandhi's principle of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) extended to treating the natural world. For Gandhi, non-violence was not limited to human interactions but applied to all living beings, including animals and plants. His ethical framework called for humanely treating all creatures and advocated for a sustainable relationship with the Earth rooted in mutual respect and care. Gandhi argued that exploiting the natural world for human gain was a form of violence, undermining the health and vitality of the planet and its ecosystems. This perspective has profound implications for the global environmental movement, particularly in the face of ongoing challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable resource exploitation. Gandhi's vision of non-violence extended to the Earth, encouraging humans to adopt practices that promote environmental stewardship and respect for all living beings (Shiva, 2016). His teachings have become increasingly relevant as modern environmental crises demand ethical leadership and a reimagining of humanity's relationship with the planet.

In the 21st century, there is a growing recognition of the need to create a sustainable future prioritising ecological balance, resource conservation, and intergenerational justice. Gandhi's philosophy of simple living and his criticism of excessive consumerism offer valuable insights into how modern societies might address these pressing environmental issues. His call for local self-sufficiency, where communities focus on meeting their needs through locally available resources, aligns with contemporary movements advocating for sustainability and reducing ecological footprints. Gandhi's rejection of materialism and emphasis on what is necessary for a balanced life resonate with today's calls for shifting away from consumer-driven economies toward more sustainable, resilient living models. This vision of living within environmental limits challenges the dominant global economic paradigms, prioritising growth and profit over ecological well-being (Iyengar, 2022). Gandhi's critique of consumerism serves as an antidote to the culture of excess that drives the environmental degradation seen today, offering a moral framework for those advocating for sustainable lifestyles and a more harmonious relationship with the Earth.

Modern environmental movements like Fridays for Future and the broader climate justice movement echo Gandhi's call for moral leadership and ethical decision-making in environmental matters. Led by figures like Greta Thunberg, these movements demand action on climate change, emphasising the urgency of protecting the planet for future generations. The values of *Ahimsa* and non-violence, central to Gandhi's philosophy, align closely with these contemporary environmental struggles, particularly in the movement for ecological non-violence. Ecological non-violence advocates for the preservation of the Earth's ecosystems while promoting social and environmental justice, ensuring that future generations inherit a liveable planet. Gandhi's life and teachings embody these principles, as his commitment to sustainability, environmental ethics, and simple living offers a blueprint for addressing the ecological challenges of today. His moral stance on nature and his call for a balanced relationship with the Earth continue to resonate with activists around the world who are pushing for a just and sustainable future (Thunberg, 2019; Shiva, 2016).

5. Global Solidarity and Unity in Diversity

Finally, Gandhi's vision of a unified world community, grounded in respect for diversity,

offers hope for a global future marked by cooperation rather than conflict. Gandhi believed that while cultural, religious, and social diversity was to be celebrated, the unity of humankind must be recognised as the ultimate truth. His teachings on interfaith dialogue, tolerance, and the need for universal brotherhood are urgently needed in today's world, where divisions of race, religion, and ideology continue to fuel conflicts. In the context of global migration, refugee crises, and the rise of nationalist movements, Gandhi's vision of human unity and the brotherhood of humanity is a crucial antidote to society's fragmentation. His call for global peace, mutual understanding, and coexistence provides a moral compass for nations to move beyond narrow, self-interested nationalism and toward a more inclusive, cooperative, and harmonious world.

Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a unified world community, grounded in respect for diversity, offers a hopeful and transformative framework for a global future characterised by cooperation rather than conflict. Gandhi believed that while cultural, religious, and social diversity should be celebrated, the essential unity of humankind must be recognised as the highest truth. In his view, all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, are connected by shared human values and dignity. This belief in the inherent unity of humanity calls for recognising our shared responsibility toward one another, transcending differences in religion, culture, and ideology. Gandhi's emphasis on interfaith dialogue, tolerance, and the need for universal brotherhood challenges the divisive forces of hatred and intolerance in the contemporary world. As the global community becomes increasingly interconnected, Gandhi's teachings offer a moral compass that encourages mutual respect, cooperation, and empathy in addressing humanity's shared challenges (Gandhi, 1948). His vision of unity in diversity remains a powerful antidote to the rising tides of division and conflict.

In today's context, where divisions based on race, religion, and ideology continue to fuel conflicts and social unrest, Gandhi's call for unity and solidarity has never been more urgent. The world today faces significant challenges, including the global migration crisis, the displacement of millions due to war and climate change, and the rise of nationalist movements that often reject diversity in favour of exclusionary ideologies. Gandhi's vision of a world that embraces both unity and diversity is a crucial counterpoint to the forces of fragmentation. His teachings on the brotherhood of humanity advocate for empathy and solidarity, encouraging individuals and nations to transcend narrow, self-interested perspectives and work toward the common good. Gandhi's belief in the possibility of peaceful coexistence among diverse peoples serves as an ethical foundation for addressing contemporary global issues, from refugee crises to escalating ethnic and religious tensions (Sen, 1999). In an era of growing polarisation, his call for international peace and mutual understanding offers an enduring model for how societies can embrace diversity while fostering unity.

Gandhi's insistence on the importance of global solidarity also provides valuable insights in the face of the rise of nationalism, which often seeks to protect the interests of one group at the expense of others. In contrast, Gandhi's worldview emphasised the interconnectedness of all people and nations, calling for cooperation across boundaries rather than building walls. His concept of nonviolent resistance and his advocacy for peace through dialogue and understanding underscores the importance of collective action in addressing global challenges,

whether social, political, or environmental. In the context of worldwide migration and refugee movements, for instance, Gandhi's teachings urge nations to move beyond fear and suspicion and to welcome those seeking safety and opportunity. By embracing the unity of humankind and the dignity of all individuals, countries can cultivate a global community that is more inclusive, compassionate, and cooperative (Suda, 1968). In this way, Gandhi's vision of solidarity and human unity provides a moral framework for addressing the fractures and tensions that threaten global peace.

A Timeless Global Legacy

Mahatma Gandhi's vision of peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability remains relevant today, as it addresses the world's central challenges: inequality, conflict, environmental degradation, and social injustice. His teachings inspire and guide global movements for human rights, climate justice, interfaith dialogue, and nonviolent resistance. Gandhi's commitment to self-rule, social empowerment, and moral integrity provides a framework for reimagining political and civic engagement in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

As the world continues to face profound challenges, Gandhi's timeless principles remind us that progress is not measured by wealth or power but by our commitment to peace, justice, and the well-being of all living beings. By embracing Gandhi's vision of a nonviolent and sustainable world, we can build a future rooted in shared humanity, compassion, and respect for the Earth.

Mahatma Gandhi's vision of peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability remains relevant today, where inequality, conflict, environmental degradation, and social injustice remain central global challenges. Gandhi's teachings, rooted in non-violence (*Ahimsa*), self-rule (*Swraj*), and social empowerment, provide invaluable insights into addressing these issues. His emphasis on nonviolent resistance has been adopted by numerous global movements advocating for human rights, climate justice, and interfaith dialogue, all of which reflect the continued resonance of his ideas. From the Civil Rights Movement in the United States to the environmental justice movements today, Gandhi's call for peaceful, principled action in the face of oppression and injustice inspires those seeking a more just and equitable world (Gandhi, 1948). His vision of social empowerment, mainly through decentralisation and community-based governance, offers a framework for addressing the growing disillusionment with centralised political and economic structures that fail to meet the needs of the global majority. As we navigate increasingly complex global challenges, Gandhi's teachings provide a roadmap for creating societies where justice, equality, and peace can thrive.

Moreover, Gandhi's commitment to self-rule and moral integrity provides a vital framework for reimagining political and civic engagement in the modern world. His belief in the importance of individual agency, local self-governance, and ethical leadership challenges contemporary political systems that often prioritise power and wealth over the well-being of individuals and communities. When political systems are frequently marred by corruption, inequality, and the pursuit of narrow self-interest, Gandhi's insistence on moral integrity and social responsibility offers a counter-narrative to the prevailing political dynamics. His philosophy urges individuals to act with conscience, focusing on the collective good rather than personal gain. Gandhi's principles also call for a radical shift in understanding progress, suggesting that true advancement

is not measured by economic growth or military power but by the well-being of all living beings, including marginalised groups and the natural environment (Iyengar, 2022). In this sense, Gandhi's vision offers a political and civic engagement model rooted in compassion, fairness, and sustainability.

In the face of the numerous challenges confronting humanity today, ranging from escalating social inequalities to the urgent climate crisis, Gandhi's timeless principles serve as a reminder that progress must be evaluated not by material wealth or power but by our collective commitment to peace, justice, and the protection of the Earth. His non-violence and social justice philosophy is particularly relevant in an era where the exploitation of resources, environmental degradation, and social injustices continue to intensify. Gandhi's advocacy for sustainable living, rooted in simplicity and respect for the environment, offers an antidote to the consumer-driven, growth-oriented models of development that are causing ecological harm worldwide. By embracing Gandhi's call for a nonviolent and sustainable world, we can forge a path toward a future that prioritises the health of the planet, social equality, and the well-being of future generations (Shiva, 2016). This vision invites us to reimagine how we measure success and progress, emphasising the importance of cooperation, respect for nature, and social equity over material accumulation.

Conclusion:

Gandhi's commitment to social justice and human rights remains profoundly relevant today. His work to dismantle the caste system, challenge untouchability, and promote equality laid the groundwork for the global human rights movement. Gandhi's teachings on non-discrimination, dignity, and the rights of the marginalised continue to inspire movements for racial equality, gender justice, and the recognition of minority rights. In a world still grappling with persistent social injustices, Gandhi's vision of a more equitable and inclusive society offers a robust moral framework for addressing the ongoing struggles for social justice across the globe.

Gandhi's philosophy offers a profound vision for the future of environmental sustainability. His emphasis on simple living, non-violence, and local self-sufficiency presents a powerful critique of the current consumer-driven, environmentally exploitative economic development models. Gandhi's ethical framework, which calls for a respectful and sustainable relationship with the natural world, provides invaluable guidance for contemporary environmental movements. As the global community confronts pressing ecological crises, Gandhi's teachings on environmental stewardship, ethical decision-making, and the moral imperative to protect the Earth for future generations offer a path forward in the quest for sustainability and ecological justice.

Gandhi's vision of global solidarity and unity in diversity offers an essential ethical framework for a world where cooperation, tolerance, and mutual understanding are paramount. His teachings on interfaith dialogue, universal brotherhood, and the recognition of our shared humanity are urgently needed today as we confront the challenges of nationalism, migration, and intergroup conflict. Gandhi's belief in the possibility of peaceful coexistence among diverse peoples, grounded in respect for human dignity, offers a guiding principle for nations and communities seeking to foster a more harmonious and just world. As such, his philosophy

remains a powerful antidote to the world's divisions, providing a moral compass for future generations to navigate the complexities of a globalised world.

Mahatma Gandhi's legacy remains a guiding force for those seeking a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. His teachings on non-violence, self-rule, social justice, and environmental sustainability continue to resonate across global movements today. By embracing Gandhi's vision, we can build a future rooted in shared humanity, compassion, and respect for the Earth that transcends the divisions and injustices plaguing our world. Gandhi's principles remind us that actual progress lies in fostering peace, justice, and ecological balance, offering an enduring moral compass for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

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Central Asia in Europe's Strategic Vision: A Path Forward

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Abstract

This scholarly investigation aims to examine the European Union's multifaceted point of view on Central Asia, encompassing human rights considerations, energy potential, and economic collaborations. The study explores trade diversification through the Middle Corridor, analyses migration patterns between the regions, and evaluates the EU's assistance programs in Central Asia. Furthermore, it delves into the nuanced relationship between Kazakhstan and Europe, while considering the broader implications of European involvement in the region, including foreign policy strategies, prospects, and obstacles. The research methodology incorporates an extensive review of academic journals, news sources, and online materials available through digital platforms.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Europe, Central Asia, Partnership and Collaboration Agreements (PCAs), "Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs)", and "the European Union (EU)", Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the "European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)", Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), European Investment Bank (EIB) financing, Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route.

Introduction: Historically situated at the intersection of East and West, Central Asia is a huge resource-rich region that the Silk Road, ancient empires, and contemporary geopolitical rivalries have influenced. In the geopolitical calculations of major powers, including Europe, Central Asia has become an increasingly important region as the globe enters a new period of global rivalry and shifting alliances. Aiming to promote stability, security, and economic expansion, Europe is specifically improving its strategy in the region while tackling issues including energy security, geopolitical competition, and regional connectivity. EU did not prioritise 1990s Central Asia, but because of the region's abundant mineral and energy

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resources, European Union policy, makers began paying particular attention to Central Asia after the 9/11 attacks. Security concerns, such as how to stop drug trafficking, crime, and illegal migration from reaching the EU's borders while preventing state fragility and crisis preparedness, as well as the EU's emphasis on stabilising the potentially explosive Afghanistan region and combating terrorism, are the EU's main interests in the region. The EU is looking for alternative gas suppliers as a result of the January 2006 gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine, and Central Asia has become a top priority on their agenda. European commerce made significant investments in Kazakhstan as a result of the EU markets needs for energy, particularly oil. EU direct investment is significantly lower in Central Asian nations. European luxury products were sold to Central Asian markets, whereas the primary trade was cotton from Central Asia to EU markets. In addition to having the capacity to cooperate with China, the US, and Russia, Europe cherishes the moderate Islamic ideals of Central Asia. Following the creation of the EU's comprehensive policy to integrate crisis management, political ties, long-term security, and development strategy, the EU designated a special representative in July 2005 to develop the Commission's new Regional Strategy for Central Asia from 2007 to 2013. Furthermore, although the EU, PCAs serve as the foundation for ties with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, their institutional and political structure is not as strong as that what has been described. Among the institutional forms that the EU established through the PCAs are the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee with the European Parliament and the Cooperation Committees operated by the European Commission. Another is the Cooperation Council, which is an annual ministerial meeting led by the Presidency. The 1996 saw the signing of PCAs with Central Asian nations, which went into effect in 1999 and are set to expire in 2009. The "Central Asia Indicative Programme 2005-2006 and the TACIS Central Asia Regional Strategy Paper 2002-2006" both state that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have embraced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) as a framework for help, were the primary recipients of EU funds. To better understand the efficiency of border management in Central Asia, the EU launched regional programs in the region, such as the "Border Management Programme in Central Asia". This is the largest EU initiative in the Central Asian region in terms of border management and drug control, spending over 44 million euros between 2004 and 2009. The development and modernisation of effective Central Asian Customs administrations, NADIN (anti-drug measures), and CADAP (Central Asia Drug Assistance Program) are further connected in the fields. In October 2002, the Commission's Horizontal Drug Group Framework signed an action plan on drugs signed by the European Union and four Central Asian countries, except Turkmenistan. Another platform for high-level networking in the region is the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Programme (CAREC). In July 2005, the "European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)" in Central Asia was activated by the appointment of EU special representatives to Brussels offices, which increased the EU's political influence. Accordingly, "Kazakhstan considers its relations with Europe to be a priority and is currently pursuing an integration policy with all European countries".¹

EU Assistance Strategy in Central Asia and Civil Society: Connecting politically and technically despite several individual achievements, the EU's substantial aid package did

not yields, enough political benefits, and its role as a development agent has been largely passive. The EU's approaches to development in Central Asia are still influenced by the "countries in transition" model, which suggests that while the countries are on the same course as those in Eastern Europe, the change will take a little longer more time. EU aims to support developing countries through the promotion of better governance, democratic setup and human rights. The agreements with Central Asian countries refer to the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy, but the EU does not push the "democracy agenda" as strongly as the US government is currently doing. The EU can use its influence in Central Asia as a "soft power" to make participation and accountability policies are more acceptable. Additionally, EU also supports civil society, public participation, and surveillance of government actions in areas such as justice and interior programmes such as TACIS and the "European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)"²⁹

In 1992, the EU made diplomatic relations with the contemporary independent 'Central Asian nations'—Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. The EU's engagement with the region gained further momentum following international involvement in Afghanistan. European investors were attracted to Central Asia's vast mineral resources, such as oil, gas, uranium, gold, and rare metals. This interest led to European support for economic reforms in the region, including the creation of institutions and a transition to market-based economies. In 2019, the EU introduced the "New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership strategy", focusing on three main priorities such as prosperity, resilience, and 'regional cooperation'. Between 2014 and 2020, the EU allocated 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) through its development cooperation instrument, providing grants, budget support, and technical assistance. Russia's labour market remains open to migrants from 'Central Asia', which helps alleviate poverty in countries like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Meanwhile, China has made substantial investments, particularly in Kazakhstan, which now faces significant debt to China. These factors have also influenced the EU's decision to increase its focus on 'Central Asia'.

Geoeconomics and Geopolitical Landscape of Central Asian Region: Russia has historically been a dominant power in Central Asia, exerting significant influence through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and military agreements, as well as its economic and energy ties. However, since the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Russia's role in Central Asia has been somewhat diminished in favour of greater diversification by Central Asian states. From a European standpoint, Russia's decline in the region is seen both as a challenge and an opportunity. The European Union (EU) could capitalise on Russia's decreased influence to forge closer ties with Central Asia, especially in areas like trade, governance, and human rights, which align with European values. China's growing influence on the region and China's presence in Central Asia is expanding rapidly, driven largely by China's BRI project. Beijing's economic and strategic interests in Central Asia are considerable, as it seeks energy resources, security cooperation particularly related to the fight against terrorism and separatism, and a stable route to Europe. For Europe, China's growing influence poses both challenge and potential for partnership. While Central Asia may become more aligned with Chinese economic policies, Europe could find opportunities to work with China

on multilateral initiatives, such as infrastructure and trade agreements, and to reduce its dependency on Russia. Additionally, the U.S. remains focused on Afghanistan and broader security concerns, and European engagement in Central Asia has been steadily growing. The EU's Central Asia Strategy focuses on building politico, social and economic ties with Central Asia, stressing good governance, human rights, environmental sustainability, and regional stability. This contrasts with Russia's and China's more transactional and less human rights-focused engagement in the region. Central Asia faces significant security challenges, including tensions in Afghanistan, the rise of Islamic extremism, and border disputes among Central Asian states themselves. These concerns, while localized, could spill over into the larger geopolitical sphere and have implications for European security³.

European Interests and Opportunities: As Europe seeks to diversify its energy sources in the wake of tensions with Russia, Central Asia presents an opportunity to source oil, natural gas, and renewable energy. Investment in energy infrastructure, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities and pipelines, could help Europe reduce dependence on Russia, which remains a key player in European energy markets. Europe has long supported initiatives to improve infrastructure and connectivity in Central Asia, through European Investment Bank (EIB) financing. This support helps both Europe and Central Asia expand trade and economic partnerships. Europe places a strong emphasis on governance, human rights, and the rule of law in its relations with Central Asia. While this focus often creates tension with Central Asian governments, particularly on issues like freedom of expression and political participation, it also provides a platform for deeper political engagement. The region is largely affected by environmental changes, facing water scarcity, desertification, and other environmental challenges. Europe's expertise in green technologies, water management, and environmental policy could serve as a foundation for stronger ties with Central Asian countries in areas like sustainable development. Ultimately, Central Asia's role as a bridge between East and West, combined with its vast natural resources and strategic location, positions it as an increasingly vital region for European policy makers. As Europe works to recalibrate its foreign policy towards Central Asia, balancing relations with Russia, China, and regional powers, the EU could play a key role in shaping the future trajectory of this diverse and dynamic region⁴.

EU energy interest from Central Asia: Central Asia serves as a significant source of energy and raw materials for the European Union, with gold imports from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and oil from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. A MoU concerning to ingress the raw materials was established between Kazakhstan and the EU in 2022. The Caspian pipeline facilitates the transport of 80% of oil exports to the Black Sea terminal in Russia, while a minor portion of shipments utilize the Caspian route starting in 2023. European nations face logistical challenges in securing gas and oil supplies that are not independent from Russia. Turkmenistan, ranking seventh in gas exports as of 2021 and possessing the world's sixth-largest gas reserves, could play a crucial role in Europe's energy landscape. In 2021, Transcaspian resources redesigned the Trans-Caspian pipeline, which conveys gas from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan and ultimately to the EU. The European Union's ongoing support for regional cooperation in Central Asia has fostered institutionalized dialogues, including the "EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forum", EU human rights discussions, and meetings between

the “EU foreign affairs high representative and Central Asian foreign ministers”. The EU has underscored the importance of collaboration and increased interdependence among Central Asian nations. Moreover, funds have been set aside for regional cooperation and integration projects, encompassing educational and commercial exchange promotion, coronavirus pandemic mitigation, and security enhancement efforts⁵.

Regional Cooperation and “Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs)”: The EU has engaged with Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan since they gained independence. In May 2019, the EU implemented a new Central Asia policy, significantly enhancing its involvement in the region and yielding benefits for the EU. The EU’s approach in Central Asia focuses on fostering political stability and economic prosperity through regional cooperation in security, migration, and mobility. The EU has established bilateral agreements with Central Asian nations, including PCAs and the more recent EPCAs. These agreements promote the exchange of best practices to counter and prevent violent extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism financing. Additionally, they facilitate collaboration in areas such as cybersecurity, maintaining an open, free, and secure cyberspace, addressing irregular migration, combating human trafficking, managing returns and read-missions, regulating legal migration, and enhancing border control.

Drugs and Border Management: Given that Afghan opium is transported into Europe via Central Asia, the EU viewed this region as the primary focus of its efforts to combat drug trafficking and organised crime. To improve national drug reduction programs and combat the illegal drug supply and associated organised crime, the EU is working to support the development of coordinated and balanced anti-drug policies. The “Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP)” promotes EU approaches and tools in the region’s drug policy and substance addiction domains and guarantees the execution of the EU Central Asia Plan on Drugs. One of the EU’s main initiatives in the area is the “Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA)”. All Central Asian partner nations are partners in integrated border management with the EU. In addition to focussing on capacity building and institutional development, the initiative seeks to improve living conditions for those residing in border areas, combat illegal trafficking, eradicate drug trafficking throughout the region, combat organised crime, improve cross-border cooperation, and improve border management systems.

Prague Process: In April 2009, during the first Prague Process Ministerial conference, the “Prague Process Joint Declaration” was signed. This initiative was launched under the EU-funded “Building Migration Partnerships” project. The “Prague Process” typically refers to a series of initiatives aimed at improving cooperation on migration management between countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It’s often associated with the “Prague Process on Migration,” which started in 2009. The main focus of this process is to enhance cooperation between the European Union and its neighbours, particularly those in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia, on issues related to migration. The Prague Process emphasizes: developing common policies on migration and asylum to improve governance, promoting effective management of migration flows, including the prevention of irregular migration, fostering cooperation on border management, return policies, and reintegration of migrants, enhancing dialogue and partnerships with countries of origin and transit of migrants.

One important aspect of this process is addressing the root causes of irregular migration, improving the protection of refugees, and strengthening the capacity of national institutions to manage migration⁶.

Trends in European foreign policy towards Central Asia: EU developed its plan in 2019 after consulting with Central Asian specialists, the joint roadmap for strengthening ties between the EU and Central Asia that were expanded later. Over the time, the “EU-Central Asia Cooperation” has prioritised EU-Central Asia policies, particularly in 2007 and 2019. The Joint plan for 2023 has demonstrated adaptation for shifting geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-social situations. “The 2007, EU-Central Asia Strategy” prioritised democratisation while addressing politics and human rights trade and investment-which focused on economic cooperation. Economic cooperation is becoming a higher priority for the European Union than political ties. The documents that were signed after the summit discussions between the Iranian president and the heads of state and governments of France and Germany also include this inscription. The main focus of the economic presence is the growth of trade and economic ties, as European businesses are no longer able to collaborate directly with Belarus and Russia. A strategic collaboration memorandum was signed in 2022 between Kazakhstan and the EU to establish sustainable value chains in green hydrogen, batteries, and raw materials⁷.



(Central Asia and Europe Map⁸, 2022.)

EU’s Human Rights Priority and Central Asia Strategy: As the Central Objective of its 2019 strategy for Central Asia, the EU set out a wide agenda to assist democracy, human rights, Civil society, and the rule of law in the Post-Soviet Republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The policy highlights the significance of these values in the EU’s external relations by incorporating the numerous initiatives aimed at promoting democratic processes and protecting human rights. According to Central Asian local media, the EU is working to protect human rights, as evidenced by papers like the most current EU Strategy and PCAs and EPCAs, that highlight how important human rights are to the EU’s

democratic advancement. The involvement of the European Union in Central Asia is based on bilateral collaboration through the Partnership and Collaboration Agreements (PCAs) and EPCAs. The foundation of the EU's strategy is the conviction that long-term regional stability and development depends on strong, democratic institutions⁹. The EU considers Central Asia to be strategically significant, since it serves as a bridge to China, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. Despite sharing borders with China and Russia, Central Asia is nonetheless distinct in terms of wealth and trade volume with the EU, it primarily exports raw commodities. the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) or GSP+, which grants Central Asian nations including Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan preferential entry to the European Union market. The two Central Asian nations are also members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Uzbekistan joined as an observer in 2020, while Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic have been members since 2010 and 2015, respectively.

EU-Central Asian Trade and Investment: About 23.6% of all international trade with Central Asian nations in 2021 came from the EU, making it the region's largest trading partner. 2022 preliminary data shows that European Union goods trade to Central Asia increased by 77%, while EU imports of products from Central Asia continued to rise by 67%. With more than 40% of all investments in Central Asia coming from the European union, the EU is the largest foreign investor in the region. The EU's overall collaboration with Central Asia is supported by negotiations for non-preferential enhanced bilateral partnership and cooperation frameworks (EPCAs). The majority of Central Asian exports to the EU are commodities, including cotton fibre, metals, petrol, and crude oil. Machinery, transportation equipment, and other manufactured commodities make up the majority of EU exports. The EPCA, which was signed in Astana on december 21, 2015, governs the bilateral trade ties between the EU and Kazakhstan. Beginning on March 1, 2020, it becomes operative. In addition, the EU and Kyrgyzstan started an EPCA, in 2019 that hasn't been finalised or signed yet. Member states decided to proceed with the EPCA as a mixed agreement on March 29, 2023, and invited the commission to submit ideas for its signature and completion as soon as feasible. Negotiations for an EPCA with Tajikistan began in February 2023, after the council's adoption of negotiating guidelines on december 8, 2022. Closer trade and investment ties with the EU are prerequisites for Central Asian nations to join the WTO. Kyrgyzstan has been a member of the World Trade Organisation since 1998. Tajikistan joined the WTO in 2013, and Kazakhstan joined in 2015¹⁰.

The Middle Corridor and Trade Diversification: After the Soviet Union broke up, the European Union decided to pursue a "Central Asian policy". In 2005, the EU, along with the special representative, started to improve "strategic coordination and collaboration" between the "European Commission" and the Central Asian countries. Europe has special intention on the region's energy potential which was available in abundance. In 2019 EU initiated the "New Opportunities for the Stronger Partnership Initiative" to establish a new role in regional integration. For linking Europe and Asia a new linking strategy known as Middle Corridor also known as the "Trans-Caspian International Trade Route (TITR)" was established, additionally, the Middle Corridor is considered, important to keep out China and Russia's influence in Central Asia region. In 2013 a multilateral partnership was made for making the Middle

Corridor, a multimodal route for increasing the links with the East-West trade throughout Eurasia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. With the opening of the Trans-Kazakhstan railways line in 2014, travel has become short from China to the centre of Eurasia and in 2017 the upgraded “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway” between Azerbaijan and Turkey via Georgia was completed. The Middle Corridor route begins from China and Southeast Asia, linking Central Asia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and finally the European Union. Through the Global Gateway program, the EU is demonstrating its commitment for enhancing connectivity between the two areas by investing in Central Asian nations. With more than 40% of completed investments, the EU continues to be the largest investor in the region. To reduce its reliance on Russia, the EU has made a concerted effort to buy more hydrocarbon energy from Central Asia. Kazakhstan possesses 30 billion barrels of oil, which puts it in 12th place globally, and 2.4 trillion cubic meters of gas. Uzbekistan produces the fifth most uranium globally but has the second-largest uranium reserves. Since 2021, the EU has relied significantly on Central Asia and the Caspian region to diversify its energy imports of oil and natural gas. In the first quarter of the year, Kazakhstan surpassed Norway and the US as the EU’s third-largest oil supplier¹¹.

Kazakhstan and Europe: Kazakhstan is implementing several calculated steps to diversify its hydrocarbon trade and lessen reliance on the Russian route for shipment to Europe in light of the Russian war in Ukraine and mounting pressure from the regional political transition. Iran takes into account the conventional supply channels to Europe set up, during the Soviet era and denies Central Asian nations access to the Persian Gulf¹². The majority of Kazakh oil was exported via the “Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route”, which passed through the Russian port of Novorossiysk. Kazakhstan has stepped up its efforts in recent years to create alternate routes, such as the Caspian Sea corridor, in response to Russia’s conflict in Ukraine. The logistical centre for shipping oil and other commodities to Europe through Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan is now Kazakhstan’s Aktau port. The construction of routes via Kazakhstan to Europe is a vital component of China’s BRI, which uses the Trans-Caspian routes as its intermediate corridor. About 80% of all exports of Kazakh oil go through Russia via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which continues to be the major export route. There have been substantial changes to the ways that Kazakh oil is exported¹³. A crucial round table discussion on important transnational dangers, that affect the EU and Kazakhstan was successfully held, in Astana by the European Union delegation, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Kazakh government. To have a lively discussion about terrorism, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and other urgent security issues, the event gathered more than 70 specialists, government figures, and international representatives¹⁴.

Regional energy cooperation: Although the project has challenges related to regional energy dynamics, economic viability, and geopolitical factors, it has a great deal of potential to diversify energy supply routes to Europe. However, completing a project calls for intricate agreements, assessments, financial commitments, and global agreements¹⁵. The global agenda-setting aims for development cooperation, that is intimately related to the EU’s development cooperation policy, along with aligning itself with the “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” following the approval of the 2030 Agenda. Under the current financial framework, which

spans 2021–2027, the “Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)” allocates 79.5 billion euros for development cooperation instruments to accomplish the SDGs as outlined in the UN’s “2030 Agenda”. The EU is Kazakhstan’s major trading partner, making up 40% of its external trade, and Kazakhstan has the largest economy in Central Asia and is the primary location for regional trade and investment¹⁶.

Impact of Russia’s War on Ukraine on Europe and Central Asia: While Western and Southern states used to push for collaboration, Russia’s harder posture between Northern and Eastern European countries makes it an especially divisive subject for the EU. The EU adopted a two-pronged strategy of sanctions and selective engagement due to the annexation of Crimea and Russia’s military participation in eastern Ukraine. Eleven packages of sanctions against Russia have so far been unanimously approved by EU member states.

Security and defence: Ironically, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has significantly increased Europe’s reliance on the United States for its defensive infrastructure, Russia’s influence finally caused European nations to take security and defence more seriously. Europe is more worried about China’s potential to take advantage of European weaknesses to obtain strategic advantages and meddle in European systems, whereas the US sees China as an economic and structural foe. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has drastically changed Europe and brought about previously unheard-of policies in several different areas. The EU will undoubtedly become stronger than it was before, the war as a result of the energy market changes in Europe¹⁷.

Energy and economic resilience: In late spring 2022, the International Monetary Fund forecasted a 3–5% recession in nations like Slovakia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the Czech Republic. Without Russia’s war on Ukraine, which has resulted in the closure of Russian gas to Europe, the EU would have been able to continue operating, both politically and economically. Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, applied to join the European Union three days after Russia invaded his country with great force. Moldova and Ukraine are now acknowledged as viable candidates, and Georgia is now considered a possible candidate. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been acknowledged as a candidate, and Albania and North Macedonia have begun accession talks in the western Balkans. Serbia and Kosovo are slowly normalising their ties under the guidance of EU high representative. Additionally, the recent change of leadership in Podgorica may rekindle the impetus for Montenegro’s accession.

Opportunities and challenges: The change in the geopolitical environment presents both opportunities and obstacles for closer cooperation between the EU and Central Asia. The provision of investments to broaden the political and economic links between Central Asian nations is undoubtedly one of the opportunities. According to data from the European Parliament, the ‘EU’s development cooperation instrument’ gave the region 1.1 billion euros (US\$1.2 billion) in technical assistance, grant funds, and direct budget support between 2014 and 2020. Compared to the prior programming period, this amount grew by 62%.¹⁸

Conclusion: The region of Central Asia is becoming more and more significant in Europe’s strategic perspective, offering both opportunities and challenges. By focusing on areas such as energy security, infrastructure development, regional stability, and people-to-people connections, Europe can build a more robust partnership with Central Asia. However, navigating

the complex geopolitical dynamics and fostering sustainable development will require a coordinated approach that balances economic, security, and political considerations. A forward-looking strategy, grounded in mutual respect and shared interests, will help to unlock the full potential of the Europe-Central Asia relationship in the coming decades.

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Holocaust Revisionism, Revival of Anti-Semitism, and Jewish Identity Issues in Contemporary Lithuania

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Abstracts:

The current Holocaust revisionism in contemporary Lithuania is deeply rooted in the broader context of revival and rise of the new forms of anti-Semitism and Holocaust obfuscation taking place across Europe. In Lithuania Holocaust revisionism has taken the form of a political ideology supported by the political elites in relation to nation-building. Today the history of the Second World War experience of Soviet occupation and Nazi Holocaust became a big controversy of victimhood vs victory remains a key object of Historical revisionism and the trivialization or holocaust denial/obfuscation in Lithuania based on the dominant argument that Jews facilitated Soviet occupation and crimes against the Lithuanians. This has led to the revival of anti-Semitism in Lithuania. During Russia's commemoration of victory day on 9 May 2015 the above controversy and glorification of Nazism occurred in many places in Europe like Ukraine, Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, is a noticeable fact in terms of nationalist political agenda and rise of anti-Semitism. The current anti-Russian stance seems to have its roots in Hitler's conspiracy against the Jews for Bolshevism. Currently, neo-anti-Semitism and Holocaust revisionism for historical reasons is emerging as a challenge to modernization and democratic politics in the 21st century Lithuania.

Keynotes: Holocaust Revisionism, Anti-Semitism, Second World War, Jewish community, Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Genocide,

Holocaust Revisionism in Lithuania

The recent emerging phenomenon in the Eastern Europe is the widespread scourge of Holocaust denial. There have been several attempts by the revisionist to the fact that 6 million

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Jews were brutally killed by the Nazi regime. In other words, this denial is manifested in the form of attempts to minimize the genocidal horrors committed against the Jewish people and revise history. In fact, the new nationalist governments of these newly independent nations are trying to equate the crimes of communist regime with the genocides of Jews communities during the time of Second World War. Efraim Zuroff, the head Nazi hunter at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, expressed his views over the development of this phenomenon in the Eastern Europe. In this interview given to Israeli newspaper *Arutz Sheva* in 2015, at the time for International Holocaust Memorial Day, he emphasized that “In post-Communist eastern Europe, they are trying to play down the crimes of the Nazi cooperators and claim that the crimes of the Communists were just as bad, and that both of them committed genocide”. Further Zuroff elaborated “They are trying to reduce the uniqueness of the Holocaust, and even to claim that among the Communist criminals were Jews too”. This holocaust revisionist tendency could be seen the state manipulations of the holocaust history, memory and replacing the documentations related to the Jews genocide. The chief Nazi hunter reminds that the Prague Declaration of 2008 included an open attempt to connect the crimes of the Communists and the Nazis, and equate them¹.

This phenomenon can best be analyzed by examining the reactions in various countries to specific Holocaust-related issues that have emerged as central questions in Eastern Europe since the fall of Communism and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union. The Lithuania democratic country, and a member of European Union and NATO still closely following the policies of the government on Holocaust-related issues over the years could not have failed to discern a deep-seated reluctance to honestly confront its Holocaust past and especially the extensive collaboration of local Nazi collaborators in the mass murder of Jews, primarily inside Lithuania, but outside its borders as well. Very similar to other East European countries, Lithuania also followed almost same side². Zuroff (2010), wrote in *The Guardian* newspaper that “Lithuania has been the leader of an insidious campaign to try to distort the history of the Holocaust by seeking recognition that Communist crimes were just as terrible as those of the Nazis. This false equivalence would unjustly rob the Shoah of its universally-accepted uniqueness and historical significance, turning the worst case of genocide in human history into merely one of many tragedies”. Lithuanian authorities very rhetorically had tried to equate the Jews killing by Nazi Germany with crimes done by the communist regime.³

However, there have certain efforts against the holocaust denial to punish the revisionists for the false premises of the issue. For instance, in 2010, the new rightwing government in Hungary passed a law that effectively criminalized the opinion that there was only one genocide in the region during Second World War. Katz (2008) pointed out that “This was rapidly followed by a similar law passed by the Lithuanian parliament and signed by its president. Momentum for this trend picked up in 2014 when a similar law was passed by the Latvian parliament (up to five years of imprisonment)”. Furthermore, The Lithuania Young anti-fascists from Antifa Lietuva stage a march in Kaunas, Lithuania June 2013 protesting the glorification of the Lithuanian Activist Front, which unleashed murder upon Jewish citizens in 1941 in dozens of locations. The banner reads: “Real heroes rescued people instead of killing them. Remember the victims of the Holocaust”⁴ Nation building process as soon as the Lithuania declared its

independence in 1990s, the all residents living within the territories of Lithuania granted the citizenship rights. The Jews also considered as the legal citizen of the nation as used to be the part of it. Many people belonging to the Lithuanian diaspora and who are descendants of Lithuanian immigrants have the right to Lithuanian citizenship regardless of where they were born or where they live. Lithuanian immigration has resulted in hundreds of thousands of people with Lithuanian ancestry living outside Lithuania. Large waves of Lithuanian migration occurred during the 19th and 20th century, a large portion of whom were Jewish. ⁵ very rightly observed that “It is true that full, unlimited constitutional freedom was granted to the Jewish public to organize itself in communities and social frameworks on national, religious, and social bases. This public is entirely free to maintain and foster links with the State of Israel and with the Jewish Diaspora the world over, and to develop an educational and cultural network as well as its own communications media”.⁶

However, the post-independence nation building process grappled with the extremist ideas of right-wing nationalists. The nationalist forces of Lithuania started the nation building project based on the vision of national identity and culture. The minority groups including Russians, poles and Jews had to face several consequences of nationalist uprisings. The national identity was being defined in line of majority elites. The Jews communities had to face the bitter consequences; the hatred towards their past in the form of increasing Anti-Semitist assaults over their historical memories and symbols. In the other direction, the liberalization process enabled the ultra-nationalistic and anti-Semitic movements to organize themselves. Their public weight is constantly growing, reaching an extent unknown during the communist era. They conduct harsh anti-Semitic propaganda in hundreds of magazines and newspapers all over Eastern Europe.⁷ Despite too many anti-Semitic activities, no definite steps have been taken to prohibit them, especially not the dozens of anti-Semitic newspapers and magazines that daily spread anti-Semitic poison under the guise of so-called respect for freedom of expression.⁸

Holocaust Education in Lithuania

The 1990s were a golden age for revival of the many social sciences and humanities disciplines in Lithuanian academia. As in many other fields, the history and study of the Lithuanian Jewish world has evoked interest but has also presented Lithuanian society with challenges. The Holocaust and the Soviet period in modern Lithuanian history completely destroyed earlier Jewish creativity. During the whole Soviet period between 1940–1990, Jewish studies did not exist as an academic subject in Lithuania, as elsewhere in the territory of the Soviet Union.⁹

The Holocaust began in 1944 when the Lithuanian Jewish Museum, the only such institution in the USSR, was founded by returning survivors who organized the first post-war exhibition: “The Brutal Destruction of the Jews during the German Occupation.” This short-lived museum in Vilnius 1945–1948 attempted to collect and restore the treasures lost in the flames of the Second World War. However, in June 1949, the Soviet Lithuanian government’s reorganization of cultural institutions effectively liquidated the museum. In 1949, word reached the West that the Jewish Museum had been liquidated and ransacked by the NKVD.¹⁰

There was one exception to the rule of ignoring Jewish subjects of research. Research in

Yiddish dialectology by Chackel Lemchen contravened the general pattern where, for ideological and methodological reasons, studies in this field, and Jewish studies in particular, have been ignored. In the end, Lemchen's work was never presented in the framework of the Soviet academic establishment. It was simply a side product of this individual's academic interests who happened to work in the field of modern Lithuania's Jewish studies. Today, Jewish studies are but a topic in the difficult conversation on the history of Jewish-Lithuanian relations and are closely linked to the broader transformation of historical memory of the post-Soviet era. Traditionally, most Lithuanian historians are dedicated professionals specializing in a single theme during their active research career. They were able to engage Jewish topics as much as they were themselves aware of their specificity and to the extent that they knew Jewish languages. The more ideographic the issue was, and providing it lay within the local domain, the easier it was for local historians to deal with it. The beginnings of Jewish studies were admittedly modest.¹¹

In October 1993, the first academic Judaic Studies Centre, led by Prof. Meyer Shub, was established at Vilnius University. This was the first attempt to institutionalize Jewish studies in Lithuanian universities. The centre was slow to take up research because of the lack of qualified teachers and students sufficiently specialized in Jewish subjects. On April 23, 1999, a remarkable discussion on the Holocaust took place in the Seimas, the Lithuanian parliament. It included politicians, historians, archival researchers and jurists. Serious Lithuanian-language scholarship on the Holocaust ceased to be a novelty. Not everyone welcomed this development. As expected, many Lithuanians instinctively resisted the others interfering in their exclusivist nationalist narrative. Outside Lithuania this indigenous scholarship had little impact.¹²

Jewish Criticism of Holocaust Narrative of State

During the 2008, the Lithuanian government began to intensify its efforts to challenge the accepted historical narrative of the Holocaust and to more actively deflect international criticism in response to its failings in addressing specific Holocaust-related issues. The primary problems in this regard were the government's failure to punish a single Lithuanian Holocaust perpetrator despite an abundance of potential suspects, and the continuing efforts of government leaders and officials to promote the canard of historical equivalency between Communist and Nazi crimes. The failure to achieve progress on restitution also played a role. The first step which clearly marked a new phase in official Lithuania's attitude toward Holocaust-related issues was the decision in September 2007 to investigate former Yad Vashem Chairman and noted Holocaust scholar Dr. Yitzhak Arad on the suspicion of war crimes, ostensibly committed while he was a Soviet anti-Nazi partisan in Lithuania.¹³

The significant upgrade in this campaign was the signing of the Prague Declaration on 3, June 2008 by 27 Eastern European political leaders and intellectuals. Lithuanian MP's Vytautas Landsbergis and Emanuelis Zingeris played an instrumental role in formulating the document and organizing its publication, and it is Lithuania, along with her Baltic neighbours, which has ever since led the efforts to promote its recommendations and have them passed as resolutions in numerous European political forums. The best way to summarize its contents is to explain that it seeks to convince Europe that the crimes of Communism are at least equivalent to those of the Nazis and they deserve the same recognition and their victims the same

compensation, as awarded to Shoah survivors. Or as the declaration warns: “Europe will not be united unless it is able to reunite its history and recognize Communism and Nazism as a common legacy.”¹⁴

The Declaration also includes a call for a variety of practical steps which if implemented, would undermine the current status of the Holocaust. as a unique *sui generis* case of genocide and reduce it to just another of many tragedies. Thus, for example, the Prague Declaration seeks to rewrite European history textbooks in the spirit of the equivalency between Communism and Nazism, as well as to establish an Institute of European Memory and Conscience, which would then serve as a research centre for “totalitarian studies”. It would also support national research institutes “specializing in the subject of totalitarian experience,” along with a museum/memorial for the victims of all totalitarian regimes. If current experience is any indication, the national research institutes which already exist in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia for example concentrate on Communist crimes, completely or virtually ignoring those committed against Jews during the Holocaust, making them major disseminators for the revisionist narrative preferred in post-Communist Eastern Europe and especially in the Baltic.¹⁵

During the past four years, and especially in the wake of the Prague Declaration, the Lithuanian government has intensified its efforts to rewrite the accepted western narrative of World War II and especially the Holocaust, putting itself on an inevitable collision course with the Jewish community and with international Jewish organizations. The results, in practical terms, have been quite negative and have seriously exacerbated Lithuanian-Jewish relations. The fact that government ministers are actively promoting the revisionist agenda has created an atmosphere that has unfortunately only stoked the flames of local anti-Semitism even higher.¹⁶

In some cases, the revisionism on Holocaust issues and anti-Semitism are linked tighter, such as in the case of the campaign against former Jewish KGB operative Nachman Dushansky, who during the past two decades became the personification of the Jews who committed severe crimes against Lithuanians in the service of Moscow. Dushansky left Lithuania for Israel in the mid-nineties, but was wanted in Vilnius on the war crimes charges, which he denied. Given the fact that Dushansky was the only one of more than twenty officers of equivalent rank who served in the unit which is accused of committing the crimes in question, it is clear that he was singled out for punishment because he was Jewish. A documentary film on his case, shown in May 2008 was publicized using anti-Semitic themes, which emphasized the role of Jews in the Communist KGB. Dushansky’s death was reported in Lithuania as a major news event, with extensive mention of the murder of Lithuanians in the Painiai forest near Telsiai, although there is no clear evidence to implicate Dushansky in those crimes.¹⁷

The government attempts to rewrite the history of the Holocaust led to an embarrassing statement by a leading minister took place in December 2009. After Lithuanian Prime Minister Kubilius appeared on the BBC interview show “Hard Talk” and was politely but firmly questioned by the presenter Johanathan Charles regarding his country’s poor record in confronting its Holocaust complicity, Justice Minister Remigijus Simasius came to his defence the next day. According to Simasius, the fact that many Jews were killed in Lithuania does

not mean that Lithuanians are “Jew killers” a statement which is technically true but totally divorced from the history of the Shoah in Lithuania. He then compared his country favourably to the United States and Great Britain, which limited the entry of Jewish refugees during the Nazi period, as if that policy could be compared to the extensive participation of so many Lithuanians in the mass murder of Jews during the Shoah. Needless to say, Justice Minister Simasius’ grasp of his country’s wartime history aroused protests and incredulity.¹⁸

There is no question that the increasingly anti-Semitic atmosphere in Lithuania is directly linked to the ongoing controversies regarding Holocaust-related issues. The small and vulnerable Jewish community is facing increasingly blatant anti-Semitic attacks, both physical and verbal. One of the most offensive examples of the latter is a front-page story, which appeared in the right-wing Lithuanian tabloid *Vakaro Zinios* on 21, December 2011. The cover page had a usually large lead caption with the Jews and an extremely large photograph of local Chabad rabbi Sholom-Ber Krinsky in ultra-Orthodox attire. In much smaller letters the explanation is given that the Jews, in this case the local Chabad School, “see no reason to pay their Social Security taxes”.¹⁹

Another tactic employed was to say one thing to Jewish audiences and another to Lithuanians, or to emphasize different aspects of government decisions on these issues to different groups. A very good example of this policy was the 21, September 2010 decision made by the Seimas, and announced at the ceremony to mark Lithuanian Holocaust Memorial Day at the Ponar mass murder site, to designate 2011 as the “Year of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust,” which was followed a mere week later by a second decision by the same parliament to designate 2011 as the “Year of Commemoration of the Defence of Freedom and Great Losses.” If these subjects were perfectly compatible, perhaps these decisions would not appear contradictory, but when some of the people whom the Lithuanians seek to honor as “freedom fighters” actively participated in Holocaust crimes, the duplicity of the government in dealing with this sensitive issue becomes obviously apparent.²⁰ This duplicity is clearly reinforced when one sees the difference between the Seimas’ Lithuanian-language website which only notes that 2011 will be devoted to the “Defense of Freedom and of Great Losses,” while its English-language website informs the public that the same year has been designated as the “Year of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust in Lithuania.”²¹

Revival of Anti-Semitism in Lithuania

In the contemporary Lithuania the emergence of neo-Nazis associated with the adulation of Hitlerism is evident in the form of the racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic hate. The rewriting history project is also being initiated by the state. The postmodernist methodology provides a base for such metanarratives. Dovid Katz shares his experience of living in Lithuania that state have been pro-vigilance on the holocaust survivor he says, “for years, state agencies have been investigating Holocaust survivors who joined the anti-Nazi resistance, while honoring the Lithuanian Activist Front butchers, who unleashed the Holocaust in dozens of locations before the Germans even came.” Lithuanian state is even sponsoring many jovial conferences on the Jewish Holocaust and their history. The academicians who support the state’s idea and produce history in the favour of butchers are being awarded with medals. Where one side these western racist puppets propagate the idea of human rights and other they at the same

time carry the Hitler's forces to glorify the nationalist history. Katz Further condemns, "No, sir, you cannot adulate Hitler's forces and be committed to human rights at same time".²²

The state institutions hide or ignore very significant documents regarding the murders which are critically important to construct narrative of the Holocaust in Lithuania accurately. Without documentary evidences the narratives are considered hallow and dramatic. States invested power in ignoring and defeating the truth is evident at every juncture of the Jewish experiences in the present Lithuania. The all three Baltic state's governments; Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia always try to side line the Holocaust with their Russian Imperial experiences. What went awry was the idea of tackling the issues by trying to make Soviet crimes equal to Nazi crimes in the eyes of the world. The Lithuanian government reburied with full honors and glorified the 1941 Nazi puppet prime minister who had presided over the initiation of the Holocaust in his country.²³

The main reason behind Lithuanian and state not being tolerant to Jewish is the inferiority of the culture and race. As philosopher Arvydas Juozaitis says, "if we are tolerant, we will be drowned by foreign cultures and races, all manner of invaders will crowd our sacred amber beaches, against whom we have desperately defended ourselves and more or less have succeeded in defending ourselves (although, of course, not completely) during the Soviet period".²⁴

Conclusion

In the contemporary Lithuania the emergence of neo-Nazis associated with the adulation of Hitlerism is evident in the form of the racist, anti-semitic and homophobic hate. The rewriting history project is also being initiated by the state. The postmodernist methodology provides a base for such metanarratives. In the Lithuanian state, the issue of the Jewish identity, crucial for the discourse on heritage, is quite complex when it comes to definition. Starting in the fall of 2007, and even more so during 2008, the Lithuanian government began to intensify its efforts to challenge the accepted historical narrative of the Holocaust and to more actively deflect international criticism in response to its failings in addressing specific Holocaust-related issues. The primary problems in this regard were the government's abysmal failure to punish a single Lithuanian Holocaust perpetrator despite an abundance of potential suspects, and the continuing efforts of government leaders and officials to promote the canard of historical equivalency between Communist and Nazi crimes.

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The Rudimentary Tenets Undergirding Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur's Philosophy: An Extensive Analysis

○ Amrit Raj¹

Abstract

The socialist movement in India gradually moved away from Congress dominance, aligning itself with leaders who advocated resistance against aristocratic structures. This pivot spurred the rise of leaders dedicated to erecting a durable bastion for the socio-culturally marginalized, all while vigorously advocating for their class prerogatives. At the zenith of the socialist surge, Karpoori Thakur led the charge in erecting such a platform, geared towards nurturing both economic resilience and psychological fortitude among the proletariat.

This research article constitutes a unique endeavour focused on dissecting the philosophical underpinnings championed by Karpoori Thakur. It navigates through Thakur's ideological position on socialism, his intricate viewpoints on democracy, his scathing criticisms of casteism and feudalistic doctrines, his steadfast adherence to principles of political probity and combating corruption, his visionary approach towards nurturing communal concord, language policies, women's empowerment, and his penetrating insights into educational restructuring. The article meticulously unravels the complexities of Thakur's doctrines spanning across these diverse realms.

Keywords: Karpoori Thakur, EWS Reservation, Bihar, Socialism, Socialist Philosopher in India, Democracy, Reservation, Caste-eradication, Mungeri Lal Commission

Introduction

The persona of Bharat Ratna Shri Karpoori Thakur was intricate, possessing myriad

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facets that garnered both acclaim and censure, rendering him exceedingly controversial. He was a ubiquitous figure, known in every nook, cranny, hamlet, and mansion across the province of Bihar. His tireless diligence, unwavering integrity, sacrificial spirit, astuteness, tenacity, and valour left an indelible impression on all who encountered him. On one hand, for his admirers, he was the Messiah, a liberator of exploitation and oppression, and on the other hand for his opponents, he was selfish, greedy for power and a social destroyer. As a young college student, Karpoori Thakur threw himself into the tumultuous currents of the Quit India Movement in 1942, galvanized by Gandhi's resolute summons to action. This pivotal moment ignited the flame of Thakur's unwavering crusade, defined by his unyielding championing of the disenfranchised, notably Dalits and underprivileged communities. Across the span of his existence, he waged a relentless war for their economic and political enfranchisement, while steadfastly pushing for the holistic progress of both his state and the nation at large. While Mahatma Gandhi left an indelible mark on Karpoori Thakur's character, the formidable influence of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose also shaped his ideologies. Thakur's engagement in the socialist movement was fueled by the leadership of stalwarts such as Loknayak Jaiprakash Narayan, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev, and Pandit Ramnandan Mishra. He made significant contributions to this cause through active participation, aligning himself with their vision for societal reform. In the realm of philosophical ruminations surrounding Karpoori Thakur and his ideological framework.

Famous Writer of that time Hawaldar Tripathy 'Sahriday' says "Karpoori ji eludes direct comparison with any singular leader. From my perspective, if one were to entertain such a comparison, it would perhaps align more closely with Trotsky of the Soviet Revolution, whose oratory prowess and written discourse ignited fervent revolutionary fervour akin to a blazing conduit of ideological fire".¹

In a nuanced appraisal, Dr Rambachan Rai astutely observes that Karpoori Thakur, while not embodying the singular attributes of Gandhi, Ambedkar, or Lohia individually, manifests a synthesis of their ideals, thereby delineating a distinctive persona characterized by a composite reflection of their philosophies. Concurrently, echoing sentiments akin to Rai's analysis, the renowned socialist luminary Madhu Limaye underscores Thakur's visionary leadership, delineating him as a stalwart dedicated to the cultivation of societal harmony, eschewing the mere pursuit of political power for its own sake, thus encapsulating a holistic commitment towards transformative social change.²

Karpoori Thakur's perspective on socialism

During the Indian freedom movement, the dawn of socialist ideologies emerged, galvanized by the magnetic charisma and profound philosophies espoused by socialist luminaries such as Dr. Lohia, Narendra, and Jaiprakash Narayan. This ideological wave garnered the allegiance of millions of youth across India, who were drawn to the socialist movement. Among these fervent adherents stood Karpoori Thakur, a prominent figure who frequently identified himself as a disciple of Lohia, thus solidifying his commitment to Lohia's principles and doctrines.³

Karpoori Thakur says "The genesis of the socialist movement in both India and the global arena traces back to antiquity, initially driven by the aspiration to diminish the grip of oppressive

ownership structures and similar inequities; however, with the indelible imprint of Karl Marx upon socialism, a secondary interpretation gained prominence, advocating for the complete abolition of the institution of property, asserting that property should cease to exist altogether, whether through legislative means or the collective power of the people”.⁴

The beginning of the socialist movement can be traced back to Bihar, where it initially took root and proliferated through the catalytic force of the Bakasta movement. It was within the crucible of Bihar that Narendra’s activism found its epicentre, uniquely fostering an environment conducive to political engagement, intellectual stimulation, and the cultivation of social justice aspirations among the masses. He emerged as an unparalleled adept in the art of mobilization, spearheading efforts to galvanize support and instigate transformative change within the socio-political landscape of Bihar. Karpoori Thakur’s socialist convictions were not acquired through external influences; rather, they were inherent to his character from the outset. He traversed the political landscape on a humble bicycle during his campaigning endeavours from 1952 to 1962. Being economically and socially disadvantaged himself, Thakur’s social philosophy naturally evolved as a synthesis of class struggle and caste struggle, reflecting the intersectionality of his own lived experiences. During a speech delivered in Kochas village of Rohtas district on 5-7 April 1986, He articulated the imperative for individuals to defy the tyranny perpetrated by the collaborative force of law enforcement and feudal elites⁵, who indiscriminately wielded oppression and violence against rural communities. In a discourse with Dinman magazine, He astutely remarked that the bedrock of the socialist movement in Bihar has perennially rested upon the steadfast support of the left-leaning factions and the marginalized populace. This verity remained immutable even during the era of Jai Prakash Narayan’s leadership, and endures to this day, albeit with a shift in the hierarchical echelons of leadership.⁶

Thakur’s brand of socialism transcended conventional boundaries, encompassing the entirety of society, a principle he fervently advocated through various articulations within the Bihar Assembly. His vision of Samajwadi embraced a multifaceted approach, exhibiting solicitude for the marginalized castes⁷, advocating for the welfare of bullock cart drivers⁸ and rickshaw pullers⁹, championing initiatives for affordable housing to alleviate homelessness¹⁰, and promoting land improvement schemes, among other egalitarian endeavours. He was a democratic socialist.

By the time of the fourth general election in 1967, the winds of change stirred the political landscape of India, particularly in the northern regions, where the socialist movement surged with the force of a tempest. The entrenched corruption, nepotism, and perceived inaction of the Congress government had instilled a profound sense of disillusionment among the populace, prompting a seismic shift in political allegiances. Amidst this tumultuous period, emerged a formidable figure by the name of Karpoori Thakur, whose resonance within the anti-Congress movement epitomized the fervent spirit of socialism coursing through the veins of Indian society.

“कांग्रेस राज मिटाना है, सोशलिस्ट राज बनाना है।

कर्पूरी ठाकुर की ललकार, बदलो-बदलो यह सरकार

सौ से कम ना हजार से ज्यादा, समाजवाद का यही तकाजा
अंग्रेजी में काम न होगा, फिर से देश गुलाम न होगा
राष्ट्रपति के बेटा या चपरासी की संतान
भंगी हो ब्राह्मण हो, सबकी शिक्षा एक समान”¹¹

Karpoori Thakur's Views on Democracy

One such slogan, “Janata ke sath, Janata ke beech” (With the people, Among the people), exemplified Thakur’s staunch advocacy for grassroots democracy and inclusive governance.

Thakur regarded the imperative of class struggle as essential for eradicating inequality, yet he advocated for its pursuit through democratic means, eschewing the path of violence espoused by Lenin in favour of the nonviolent approach exemplified by Gandhi. He was the supporter of the Saptkranti theory of Lohiya. Hari Narayan Thakur¹² says that he was a staunch supporter of Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Phule.

Karpoori Thakur, a towering figure in Indian politics, stood as a staunch advocate for the decentralization of power, a principle he ardently championed throughout his career. Firm in his conviction, Thakur believed that the vitality of democracy hinges upon the robust participation of its citizens at the grassroots level. Central to his vision was the empowerment of local self-governance institutions, notably the Panchayati Raj system. In his view, these institutions served as the bedrock of democratic governance, enabling communities to address their unique challenges with agility and efficacy. Thakur understood that entrenched disparities and systemic injustices could not be effectively tackled from distant bureaucratic centres; instead, he advocated for a bottom-up approach where power was vested in the hands of those closest to the ground. By amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and empowering local leaders, Thakur envisaged a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, thereby fostering inclusive development and social cohesion.

During the tumultuous era of the Emergency, Karpoori Thakur staunchly contended that the very essence of democracy had been ruthlessly assassinated. Amidst the draconian measures of that epoch, he fearlessly penned missives to numerous Congress leaders, accusing them unabashedly of embodying the antithesis of democratic principles, thus unmasking their complicity in the grave assault on democratic values. In the backdrop of Vinoba Bhave’s conspicuous silence amidst the tumult of the Emergency, Karpoori Thakur, with unyielding resolve, dispatched a letter brimming with pointed queries, meticulously chronicling the egregious events unfolding during that dark period. Thakur’s missive to Bhave served as a potent indictment, confronting the revered leader with piercing questions that underscored the urgency of moral clarity and principled opposition in the face of encroaching authoritarianism.

Karpoori Thakur’s scathing critique resonates with uncompromising clarity as he exposes the stark reality veiled beneath the veneer of rhetoric. In his searing indictment, Thakur delineates a grim tableau where the very essence of democracy is supplanted by a hollow facsimile, where the spectre of dictatorship looms large in the guise of freedom, and where the ostensible call for democracy is drowned out by the cacophony of centralized power. Thakur’s piercing rebuke leaves no room for equivocation as he exposes the hypocrisy of

those who espouse lofty ideals while surreptitiously engaging in the naked dance of fascism. With unflinching candour, he lays bare the betrayal of Gandhian principles, wherein the pursuit of truth and tolerance is forsaken in favour of the blunt instruments of justice and repression. In this grim landscape, Thakur demands accountability, asking whether such egregious transgressions against democracy can ever be reconciled with the noble tenets of Gandhian thought.¹³

Following the end of the Emergency, the Janata Party assumed power after defeating the Congress in the general elections. Karpoori Thakur, victorious in his own electoral bid, delivered a compelling address in the Lok Sabha on March 31, 1977, on Democracy and Dictatorship;

“The examples of the world change that a country can be free yet its people can be slaves. Germany was free during Hitler’s time but its people were slaves. Italy was free during that time but its people were slaves. Similarly, India was free during the Emergency. But the people here were bound by the shackles of slavery, and that is why we have to ensure that the people cannot be enslaved by the rulers. For the freedom of the people and the country, strong arrangements will have to be made to control the rulers.”

Thakur’s Views on Decentralization of Power

His advocacy for decentralization was not merely theoretical but deeply rooted in his commitment to tangible, grassroots action. Thakur recognized that true democracy thrives when citizens are not merely passive recipients of governance but active participants in shaping their destinies. Through his tireless efforts, he sought to instil a sense of ownership and agency among the populace, laying the groundwork for a more vibrant and resilient democratic ethos. In essence, Thakur’s advocacy for decentralization epitomized his unwavering dedication to democratizing power and ensuring that governance remained accountable, responsive, and ultimately, grounded in the realities of everyday life.

In an Interview with Dinman Magazine, Karpoori Thakur advocates for a decentralization of power akin to the vision of Dr Lohia, emphasizing a model where the relationship between the Central government and the States mirrors that of the State and District Councils. Thakur envisions a shift away from hierarchical structures, advocating for a collaborative framework rooted in the principles of constitutional rights and autonomy. He stresses the importance of fostering a partnership based on mutual respect and empowerment, wherein local governance units, including Panchayats, operate autonomously, ensuring grassroots representation and effective decision-making. Autonomy means decentralization. There should be decentralization - political, economic and administrative. And I believe that there is no threat to national integrity from decentralization. Along with this, while defining the Chauhamba state, he said that the building of the state in our country should rest on four pillars - State, District, Block and Panchayat. The entire polity of the country should be built on these four pillars.

Thakur’s views on Corruption

In his delineation of corruption, Karpoori Thakur articulated a nuanced perspective within the legislative chamber, asserting that a singular, comprehensive definition of corruption eludes categorization. Thakur expounded that “corruption manifests when individuals, driven by various motives, be they political, economic, or otherwise, employ illicit means such as bribery

to attain their objectives. Thus, corruption is defined as the unethical utilization of corrupt practices to further one's goals, irrespective of their nature or intent. He elaborates that corruption permeates various facets of society, including electoral processes where bribery and unethical practices abound. Individuals embroiled in legal matters often encounter corrupt practices aimed at circumventing justice. Even within the judicial system, the progression of legal proceedings is contingent upon financial considerations, highlighting a systemic issue wherein monetary influence supersedes the merits of a case. Thakur's assertion underscores the pervasive nature of corruption, penetrating every echelon of society and impeding the pursuit of justice and fairness."¹⁴

Karpoori Thakur's Views on Caste, Reservation, and Women's Empowerment

“हक चाहो तो लड़ना सीखो
कदम-कदम पर अड़ना सीखो
जीना है तो मरना सीखो”¹⁵

(If you seek your rights, learn to confront, learn to stand resolute at every turn; if you desire to truly live, learn the valour of sacrifice.)

Karpoori Thakur's ideological affinity appears to align more closely with Ambedkar than Gandhi, particularly concerning matters of caste and feudalistic mindset. Thakur stands as a resolute adversary of entrenched caste hierarchies and feudalistic ideologies, mirroring Ambedkar's fervent advocacy for social justice and equality. His unwavering opposition to such structures underscores a steadfast commitment to challenging systemic oppression and dismantling caste-based discrimination. Thakur's stance positions him firmly within the realm of Ambedkarite thought, embodying a spirit of defiance against societal inequities and a relentless pursuit of egalitarian ideals. During an interview with Dinman magazine, Karpoori Thakur articulated his strategy to combat the entrenched caste system, emphasizing the promotion of inter-caste marriages as a pivotal step. Thakur acknowledged the formidable challenge of dismantling caste-based discrimination, cautioning against simplistic discussions that underestimate its complexity. He underscored the need for concrete measures, including job restoration and financial support, aimed at incentivizing inter-caste unions. Thakur's approach reflected a pragmatic recognition of the multifaceted nature of caste dynamics and a proactive stance towards effecting meaningful change.¹⁶ He staunchly advocated for reservation as an indispensable tool and potent instrument in the ongoing struggle to dismantle entrenched social hierarchies and instil a profound sense of empowerment among millions. Thakur recognized reservation not merely as a policy but as a resolute endeavour to shatter the shackles of the inferiority complex plaguing countless individuals, replacing it with a robust sense of self-assurance and dignity.

He emerged as a staunch advocate for reservation policies aimed at fostering inclusivity across all segments of society. During his tenure in 1978, following the recommendations of the Mungeri Lal Commission, Thakur spearheaded the implementation of a comprehensive reservation system in Bihar. This policy encompassed a 26 per cent reservation quota, encompassing 8 per cent for backward castes, three percent for economically disadvantaged upper castes, and an additional three percent for women from all strata of society. Thakur's

commitment to equitable representation underscored his unwavering dedication to social justice and empowerment.¹⁷

During his second tenure as Chief Minister in 1977, He undertook a decisive measure to emancipate women from the scourge of domestic violence, fortify their position within society, and cultivate an environment of peace by implementing a prohibition on alcohol in Bihar. This resolute action not only led to a tangible decrease in incidents of riots and unrest but also catalyzed a transformative shift in societal dynamics, empowering women to assert their rights and claim agency over their lives in a region previously fraught with social turbulence and gender-based violence. In his memoirs, Bhupendra Narayan Yadav recounts a series of audacious initiatives undertaken by Karpoori Thakur during his tenure as Chief Minister. Following the implementation of prohibition, Thakur elevated the status of impoverished Chowkidar-Dafadars, upgrading them from fourth-class employees receiving a mere Rs 10 per month to salaried workers earning Rs 100 monthly-an unprecedented move aimed at rectifying economic disparities and honouring their essential contributions. Furthermore, Thakur's administration distinguished itself by pioneering a mass recruitment drive for doctors and engineers. He provided them employment opportunities. It was a bold and visionary endeavour that signalled Thakur's commitment to addressing critical shortages in essential public services while fostering economic growth and social equity.¹⁸

Karpoori Thakur's Views on Language¹⁹

In the vast political landscape of Bihar, if one were to seek a fervent advocate and staunch champion of the Hindi language, none shine as brightly as Karpoori Thakur. From the inception of independence in 1947 to the present day, Thakur stands as an unwavering beacon, steadfastly advocating for the primacy of Hindi on both regional and national fronts. His unwavering commitment and tireless advocacy have cemented his legacy as a stalwart defender of the Hindi language, whose radiance continues to illuminate the linguistic aspirations of millions across the state and beyond.

In addressing the language question, Thakur akin to Dr. Lohia, staunchly contended that a select few wield power over the masses by perpetuating the dominance of English. He argued that the linguistic landscape of India suffers from a paucity of vocabulary and other linguistic nuances, yet with deliberate cultivation, indigenous languages have the potential to flourish and become enriched. Thakur's stance underscored a profound commitment to linguistic equity and the empowerment of marginalized communities through the promotion of native tongues.

He viewed English not only as a vestige of colonialism but also as a barrier to academic advancement for the marginalized, oppressed, and disadvantaged. He asserted that the imposition of English in examinations hinders the progress of these communities, depriving them of opportunities for further education. Perhaps this rationale underpinned Karpoori Thakur's actions when he assumed the role of Education Minister in the Provisional Government of 1967. During his tenure, he eliminated the mandatory requirement of English in Bihar's examinations. This strategic move had a profound impact on the demographic composition of universities, including the esteemed Patna University, which was traditionally considered elite.

Consequently, a shift occurred, with an influx of rural students from diverse castes gaining admission to these institutions. Thakur's policy decision catalyzed a transformative change in the social dynamics of higher education, broadening access and opportunities for historically marginalized communities.

When Bihar Official Language Bill 1957 was brought by the first Chief Minister of Bihar, Dr. Shri Krishna Singh 1957, Karpoori Thakur opposed this bill in the House. While opposing this bill, he also drew the attention of the members towards the Bihar Language Act 1950. Karpoori Thakur was a supporter of making Hindi the national language and he had also demanded Hindi to be made the national language by opposing the Language Bill 1957 from the Bihar Office in the House.

Karpoori Thakur's Views on Education

Nelson Mandela and Ambedkar, Karpoori Thakur wielded education as the paramount weapon in the battle for societal transformation. He firmly convinced that education alone possesses the power to effectuate profound change, he fervently championed the cause of universalizing education throughout his life. Thakur's unwavering dedication to this cause epitomized his steadfast belief that the foundations of society could only be reshaped through the dissemination of knowledge. His tireless efforts towards the universalization of education underscored his resolute commitment to empowering individuals and catalyzing broader social progress.

In the second stewardship as Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur implemented significant reforms in the field of education. One notable decision was the provision of free textbooks to every child enrolled in the first grade across the entire state, effective from April 1978. This initiative extended the existing policy of providing free textbooks in government schools. Additionally, it was decided that students in the second grade would also receive textbooks free of charge in the following academic year.

"Within four years every student from first to fourth grade would receive complimentary textbooks. This ambitious endeavour promised to significantly impact the educational landscape of Bihar, benefiting countless students across the state".²⁰

He emerged as a steadfast advocate for the Compulsory Education Scheme²¹, demonstrating unwavering dedication throughout his tenure as Chief Minister in 1977. His resolute efforts culminated in vigorous lobbying and fervent support for the scheme within the Bihar Assembly. Thakur's impassioned advocacy underscored his firm belief in the transformative power of education and his commitment to ensuring universal access to quality schooling for all children.

Karpoori Thakur's Views on Communal Harmony

He emerged as an unwavering champion of secularism, staunchly advocating for the principle of religious neutrality in both governance and societal realms. His steadfast belief in a secular state, where all religions are accorded equal treatment devoid of any bias or prejudice, defined his ideological stance. Thakur adamantly opposed communalism and religious polarization, emphasizing the imperative of nurturing harmony and mutual respect among the diverse religious fabric of society. His vision of secularism extended beyond mere tolerance

to encompass the protection of religious freedom, facilitation of interfaith dialogue, and establishment of an inclusive societal framework fostering peaceful coexistence among individuals of varying faiths. Thakur's resolute commitment to secular values manifested in his relentless efforts to safeguard pluralism, promote tolerance, and champion equality for all segments of society.²²

Conclusion

Karpoori Thakur's philosophical framework is deeply entrenched in the core tenets of social justice, equality, and empowerment, epitomizing his steadfast commitment to these fundamental ideals. His unwavering advocacy for the decentralization of power, coupled with fervent promotion of education and staunch support for reservation policies, underscores his visionary leadership aimed at uplifting marginalized communities and fostering a society grounded in fairness and inclusivity. Thakur's emphasis on grassroots governance, alongside initiatives for economic empowerment and the implementation of inclusive policies, further amplifies his enduring legacy as a stalwart champion for the underprivileged. His indelible imprint continues to inspire countless individuals and organizations dedicated to the noble pursuit of creating a more equitable society, guided by the enduring principles of compassion, integrity, and unwavering service to humanity. Through the embodiment of these values, Karpoori Thakur's philosophy remains a beacon of enlightenment, illuminating the path for those endeavouring to effect positive change in the world.

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7. See, the debate of Bihar Legislative Assembly, 19 April 1961.
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9. See, the debate of Bihar Legislative Assembly, 6 July 1956.
10. See, the debate of Bihar Legislative Assembly, 17 August 1961.
11. Karpoori Thakur's slogans served as more than mere political catchphrases; they encapsulated the essence of his socialist philosophy, language policy, and dedication to establishing equality. Through these rallying cries, Thakur sought to galvanize the masses, inspire collective action, and pave the way for a more just, inclusive, and egalitarian society Rajak, 2019. p.22.
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Language Evolution and Social Change: A Historical Perspective

○ Vadthya Kishore¹

Absrtract:

The present articles deals with “Language evolution and social change: A historical perspective”. Language is a communication system that uses symbols, words and grammar to convey meaning and allow humans to interact and exchange information. It is a fundamental and uniquely human ability that allows individuals to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas. ‘In the twenty first century, there are between 6000 and 8000 different languages spoken in the world, all of which are in a continuous state of evolving, by inter mixing or stagnating, growing or contracting.(Luke strongman, a history of language evolution- 2022) Significantly, the Language is an essential tool for knowledge, culture and human society. It plays a central role in how we express ourselves, share knowledge, build relationships and navigate the world around us. Different languages reflect the diversity of human experience and provide a window into the values and perspectives of different cultures’. However, this article based on language and evolution and social change in historical perspective can provide a comprehensive and insightful exploration. The language in society can potentially play a vital role in the integration of evidence from linguistics, anthropology, archaeology and genetics. Importantly, the Historical linguists have developed a careful set of procedures termed the ‘comparative method’ to infer ancestral states and construct language family trees.

Keywords: Language evolution, social changes, Historical Perspective of language

Introduction

The Language is a communication system that uses symbols, words and grammar to convey meaning and allow humans to interact and exchange information. It is a fundamental

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and uniquely human ability that allows individuals to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas. ‘In the twenty first century, there are between 6000 and 8000 different languages spoken in the world, all of which are in a continuous state of evolving, by inter mixing or stagnating, growing or contracting.’¹ Significantly, the Language is an essential tool for knowledge, culture and human society. It plays a central role in how we express ourselves, share knowledge, build relationships and navigate the world around us. Different languages reflect the diversity of human experience and provide a window into the values and perspectives of different cultures. However, this article based on language and evolution and social change in historical perspective can provide a comprehensive and insightful exploration. The language in society can potentially play a vital role in the integration of evidence from linguistics, anthropology, archaeology and genetics. Importantly, the Historical linguists have developed a careful set of procedures termed the ‘comparative method’ to infer ancestral states and construct language family trees.²

Significantly, the Human language is the most complicated behaviour on earth and, at least as a long way as we recognize, in the universe. Language involves each the capability to apprehend spoken and written phrases and to create real-time communiqué whilst we communicate or write. Most languages are oral and are generated thru speech. Speaking includes a diffusion of complicated cognitive, social, and organic procedures, which include the functioning of the vocal folds and the coordination of breathing with actions of the throat, mouth, and tongue.

I

Language and evolution

The emergence of language became a defining second inside the evolution of up-to-date people. It changed into an innovation that modified noticeably the person of human society. Here, we provide an approach to language evolution based totally on evolutionary game concept. We explore the approaches in which protolanguages can evolve in a non-linguistic society and how precise indicators can grow to be associated with unique gadgets. On the other hand, the Language remains in the minds of many philosophers, linguists, and biologists a quintessentially human trait.³ Importantly, the all human languages are thought to possess the same general structure and permit an almost limitless production of information for communication.⁴

In contemporary times, most theoreticians agree that language has arisen because of the interaction of three complex adaptive systems: biological evolution, human learning and through the acquisition and sustainment of human culture. However, biological evolution imposes physiological constraints, as does the human environment.⁵ Humans are physiologically adaptable and clever and may style their environments after their very own aware notion. Of human talents, language is one of the maximum complicated phenomenon and its multi valence and ubiquity make it an exceptional assets of human lifestyle. The evolution of language has been changing in various phases during the course of the time such as.....

A. The Origins of Language: Explore the theories and hypotheses concerning the

emergence of language in humans. Discuss how language may have developed as a device for verbal exchange and cooperation, enhancing our ancestors' survival and replica fees.

- B. The Role of Genetics:** Investigate the genetic elements of language development. Explain how positive genes are probably associated with language acquisition and its evolution, and talk the implications of these findings on our know-how of human evolution.
- C. Comparative linguistics:** Explore the field of comparative linguistics, which entails reading various languages to hint their not unusual origins. Discuss how this area has contributed to our information of linguistic evolution and the relationships between distinct language families.
- D. The Neanderthal Connection:** Investigate recent discoveries approximately Neanderthal language and communiqués abilities. Discuss how these findings shed light at the evolution of language in Homo sapiens and our interactions with other hominine species.

II

Social change through language

In today's world, where social media and protest signs speak volumes, we hardly need a linguist to tell us that words matter. But a language scholar can help us understand how and why words unite and align people, well as exclude and exploit. McConnell-Ginet wrote. "Words are woven into the social fabric." "Linguistic and social change go hand in hand because linguistic practices are fundamental to social practices more generally. (Words Matter: Meaning and Power-2020) The language and social change is an exchange is normally embedded in cultural alternate. As society undergoes cultural adjustments, the linguistic bureaucracy and the social meanings, may alternate. Cultural contact in all likelihood is the maximum common vector of lifestyle alternate and is regularly manifested in linguistic exchange. According to McConnel- Ginet, "Words in and of themselves are impotent and It is the socially structured practices and historically situated circumstances constituting our social lives that pour content into words, endow them with meaning and power."

Types of Language Change

According to William Labov, determined the directions of subsequent research on Social dialectologists are concerned with tracing the relationships between linguistic variation and social factors. His influential survey of the New York East Side (Labov 1972a) demonstrated that linguistic variation was not random or 'free' as previous dialectologists had tended to assume, but rather patterned systematically according to factors such as the social class, gender, age, and ethnicity of the speakers, and the formality of the style of speech they were using (see *Language and Social Class*; *Language and Ethnicity*).

Subsequent, the Language is always changing. We've seen that language changes across space and across social group. Language also varies across time. Generation by generation, pronunciations evolve, new words are borrowed or invented, the meaning of old words drifts,

and morphology develops or decays. The rate of change varies, but whether the changes are faster or slower, they build up until the “mother tongue” becomes arbitrarily distant and different. After a thousand years, the original and new languages will not be mutually intelligible. After ten thousand years, the relationship will be essentially indistinguishable from chance relationships between historically unrelated languages. In isolated subpopulations speaking the same language, most changes will not be shared. As a result, such subgroups will drift apart linguistically, and eventually will not be able to understand one another.

In the modern world, language change is often socially problematic. Long before divergent dialects lose mutual intelligibility completely, they begin to show difficulties and inefficiencies in communication, especially under noisy or stressful conditions. Also, as people observe language change, they usually react negatively, feeling that the language has “gone downhill”. You never seem to hear older people commenting that the language of their children or grandchildren’s generation has improved compared to the language of their own youth. Language change is functionally disadvantageous, in that it hinders communication, and it is also negatively evaluated by socially dominant groups. Nevertheless it is a universal fact of human history.

How and why does language change?

There are many different routes to language change. Changes can take originate in language learning, or through language contact, social differentiation, and natural processes in usage.

- A) **Language learning:** Language is transformed as it is transmitted from one generation to the next. Each individual must re-create a grammar and lexicon based on input received from parents, older siblings and other members of the speech community. The experience of each individual is different, and the process of linguistic replication is imperfect, so that the result is variable across individuals. However, a bias in the learning process for instance, towards regularization will cause systematic drift, generation by generation. In addition, random differences may spread and become ‘fixed’, especially in small populations.
- B) **Language contact:** Migration, conquest and trade bring speakers of one language into contact with speakers of another language. Some individuals will become fully bilingual as children, while others learn a second language more or less well as adults. In such contact situations, languages often borrow words, sounds, constructions and so on.
- C) **Social differentiation.** Social groups adopt distinctive norms of dress, adornment, gesture and so forth; language is part of the package. Linguistic distinctiveness can be achieved through vocabulary (slang or jargon), pronunciation (usually via exaggeration of some variants already available in the environment), morphological processes, syntactic constructions, and so on.
- D) **Natural processes in usage.** Rapid or casual speech naturally produces processes such as *assimilation*, *dissimilation*, *syncope* and *apocope*. Through repetition, particular cases may become conventionalized, and therefore produced even in slower or more careful speech. Word meaning change in a similar way, through

conventionalization of processes like *metaphor* and *metonymy*.

Language as a means of conversation undergoes a few shifts or changes at the side of the changes of the society. The exchange in languages effects from the internal and external elements of languages. In terms of outside elements, the shift or exchange in the society is pushed by such factors as groups, structures, and verbal exchange. Internally, language changes arise due to the fact new languages have emerged and old language has been forgotten and ultimately misplaced. The social changes through language is a powerful tool for transforming societies in various ways, such as

1. **Shaping perception and attitudes:** language influences how people perceive and interpret the world around them. The way issues, individuals, or groups are described can either reinforce stereotypes and biases or challenge them. By changing the language used to discuss certain topics, we can reshape societal attitudes and promote empathy and understanding.
2. **Promoting Inclusivity:** Language can be exclusive or inclusive. Inclusive language, which avoids discrimination based on factors like gender, race, or disability, promotes social equity and inclusivity. It acknowledges and respects the diversity of society, fostering a sense of belonging among marginalized groups.
3. **Mobilizing Social Movements:** Throughout history, language has played a pivotal role in mobilizing social and political movements. From the civil rights movement to the LGBTQ+ rights movement, persuasive language and rhetoric have galvanized people to demand change, challenge oppressive systems, and work towards a more just society.
4. **Legislation and Policy:** The wording of laws and policies is crucial in enacting social change. Language can be used to establish legal rights, protect vulnerable populations, and address societal inequalities. Amendments to legislation often reflect changes in societal values and priorities.
5. **Education and Awareness:** Language is at the heart of education and awareness campaigns. Effective communication can raise awareness of social issues, educate the public on critical topics, and inspire individuals to take action. It is through language that we pass down knowledge and values to future generations.
6. **Cultural Preservation:** Language is closely tied to culture. Efforts to preserve and revitalize endangered languages are essential for maintaining cultural diversity and heritage. When languages disappear, important cultural knowledge and traditions can also be lost.
7. **Media and Representation:** The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. Language used in media and entertainment can either reinforce harmful stereotypes or challenge them. Diverse and accurate representation in media can lead to more inclusive and equitable societies.
8. **Promoting Social Responsibility:** Language encourages individuals and institutions to take responsibility for their actions and their impact on society. It enables people to

call out injustices, hold those in power accountable, and demand change.

III

Historical Perspective of language

The significance of a historical perspective on language planning and language policy making Listening to past voices to inform future policy: the voice of Johan Storm.(Linn, A. 2018.) The history of linguistic fieldwork began in the nineteenth century when linguists started to explore the dialects of European languages. The most famous fieldworker of this time was Edmond Edmont who helped the Swiss dialectologist Jules Gilliéron to collect data for the *Atlas linguistique de France*. Cycling to 639 locations, he interviewed 700 dialect speakers (Chambers and Trudgill 1980, p. 20). There have been several approaches in the recent history of linguistics to account in a principled way for the fact that meaningfulness is a product of both text and context. That is, meaning cannot be explored by an examination only of text and textual structures, but inevitably has to involve a discussion of the perceptions, selections, omissions, and enrichment provided by an observing consciousness. When linguistics as a discipline expanded exponentially in the middle of the 20th century, making claims for its scientific rigor as a rule-governed paradigm, structuralist and formalist linguists were understandably reticent to stray too far into psychology.

Though, the Historical linguistics traditionally known as philology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the development of languages over time (where linguistics usually looks at one language at a time, philology looks at them all). The primary tool of historical linguistics is the comparative method, a way of identifying relations among languages that lack written records. For this reason, historical linguistics is sometimes called comparative-historical linguistics. This field of study has been around for centuries. Importantly, a historical perspective on language reveals its dynamic and interconnected nature. It highlights language's position as a reflection of human development, a marker of identity, and a motive force of social and cultural change. As we observe the historical roots of language, we gain a deeper appreciation for the intricate tapestry of human communication that has evolved over millennia. Language, and complicated and fundamental factor of human existence, has a wealthy and difficult history that spans millennia. Understanding the ancient angle of language now not handiest illuminates the evolution of human communiqués however also offers valuable insights into our social, cultural, and cognitive development.

In this connection, the Historical linguistics studies the nature and causes of language change. The causes of language change find their roots in the physiological and cognitive makeup of human beings. Sound changes usually involve articulatory simplification as in the most common type, assimilation. Analogy and reanalysis are particularly important factors in morphological change. Language contact resulting in borrowing is another important source of language change. You might be wondering why language changes. According to William O'Grady et al., historical language change is distinctly human. As society and knowledge shift and grow, so, too, does communication. The Sociological factors can play an important role in determining whether or not a linguistic innovation is ultimately adopted by the linguistic

community at large. Since language change is systemic, it is possible, by identifying the changes that a particular language or dialect has undergone, to reconstruct linguistic history and thereby posit the earlier forms from which later forms have evolved,” (O’Grady et al. 2009).

Conclusion

The study a look at of language evolution and social change isn’t always best vital for information language, but crucial to know-how what it means to be human. It is a developing and vibrant subject with crucial contributions from a ramification of disciplines and methodologies. The extent to which became historical and cultural elements contributed to the evolution of language is a topic of active debate within the discipline, but there’s vast consensus that interplay among people, way of life, and biology hold the key to a better understanding of how language developed. This information requires a joint effort throughout a spread of disciplines, which has grown especially over the past thirty years and continues to increase these days. The language and Social stability prevailing encourages maintenance of existing norms, and results in slow change. This is contrasted with the punctuation stage, in which the dominant mode is non generational, and the breakdown of social structures of events which sets off punctuation brings about the breakdown of linguistic norms.

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Potential of Multidisciplinary Research in Higher Education: Principles, Prospects, and Pathways for Effective Implementation

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Abstract

Multidisciplinary research (MR) integrates knowledge, methods, and perspectives from different disciplines to address complex issues that cannot be solved effectively by a single field alone. This paper explores multidisciplinary research's nature, approach, outcome, and significance. It highlights how multidisciplinary research fosters innovation and collaboration, emphasizing its importance in solving real-world problems. The study underscores that multidisciplinary research thrives on shared objectives, approaches, methodologies, experts, and more on a collaborative mindset. This paper also discusses the multidisciplinary research approach's challenges, benefits, and future scope, presenting a conceptual model to illustrate its framework and outcomes.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary Research, Innovation, Collaboration

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 announced in India heralded a transformative vision for the educational landscape, encapsulating the bold headline: “By 2030, one large

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multidisciplinary college in every district.” This initiative signifies a pivotal shift towards a more integrated and holistic approach to education, emphasizing the importance of multidisciplinary frameworks in higher education and beyond. The focus on creating multidisciplinary institutions is not merely a reform; it is a strategic move aimed at equipping students with the diverse skill sets necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world. In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, society faces a myriad of challenges—ranging from climate change and public health crises to technological disruptions and economic inequalities. Addressing these multifaceted issues requires integrated approaches that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Multidisciplinary research emerges as a vital strategy in this context, combining expertise from various fields to foster innovation and collaboration. As noted by Julie Thompson Klein, a leading scholar in interdisciplinary studies, “Multidisciplinary Research is not just about bringing together different disciplines; it is about creating a new understanding that can lead to innovative solutions.” This perspective highlights the transformative potential of Multidisciplinary Research in generating creative solutions by synthesizing diverse viewpoints.

This paper explores the understanding, prospects and challenges of multidisciplinary research in contemporary higher education after the implementation of NEP-2020. Specifically, it:

- Explores the understanding of multidisciplinary research and its core principles.
- Explores the prospects of multidisciplinary research in the higher education system.
- Examines challenges and propose ways forward for its effective implementation.

This paper seeks to underscore the critical importance of multidisciplinary research in shaping a resilient and adaptive educational system that meets the demands of an increasingly complex world by looking into these aspects. As we move forward, embracing Multidisciplinary Research will enhance academic inquiry and empower students to become proactive problem solvers equipped to tackle the pressing challenges of our time.

In the present study, two universities in the Lucknow district – one central university and one state university- were selected as study samples. Data was collected through interviews with 24 teachers, 40 research scholars, and 24 research project fellows working in the area of social sciences.

Key Features of Multidisciplinary Research

Multidisciplinary Research (MR) is a collaborative approach that brings together diverse fields of knowledge, methodologies, and expertise to address complex problems. In an increasingly interconnected world, Multidisciplinary Research has emerged as a critical tool for fostering innovation and developing comprehensive solutions to real-world challenges. Its distinct features and wide-ranging scope make it a vital component of contemporary research practices.

One of the primary features of multidisciplinary research is the integration of diverse knowledge bases. By bringing together researchers from various disciplines, it harnesses the strengths of each field to provide a richer and more holistic understanding of complex issues. This integration transcends the limitations of single-discipline studies, enabling researchers to

view problems from multiple perspectives. For instance, a public health crisis like a pandemic, world recently witnessed, requires not only the expertise of virologists and epidemiologists but also contributions from engineers to design diagnostic tools and social scientists to understand human behavior and implement effective public health policies.

Another essential feature of Multidisciplinary Research is the use of cross-disciplinary methodologies. Researchers employ techniques and tools from multiple fields, blending quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze data and draw meaningful conclusions. This dynamic interaction between disciplines fosters innovation, as new methods are often developed when researchers work together to address gaps in traditional approaches.

Thus, Multidisciplinary Research emphasizes shared goals and outcomes. Unlike research confined to a single discipline, multidisciplinary projects are typically goal-oriented and action-driven, focusing on solving pressing problems or achieving specific objectives. This shared vision ensures that all collaborators work toward a common purpose, facilitating better coordination and collaboration among researchers from different backgrounds.

Scope of Multidisciplinary Research

The scope of multidisciplinary research is vast and encompasses various aspects of academic and applied research. One critical area is data analysis across disciplines, where researchers combine data sets and analytical methods from different fields to uncover patterns and generate insights that might be overlooked in a single-discipline study. For instance, climate change research often integrates satellite data analyzed by environmental scientists with economic models developed by social scientists to assess the impacts of policy changes. Another important dimension is the peer review process in multidisciplinary research, which involves evaluating work from multiple disciplinary perspectives. While this process ensures a comprehensive assessment of the research, it can also pose challenges due to varying standards and expectations across fields. Researchers must navigate these differences to produce work that meets the criteria of all relevant disciplines. Multidisciplinary Research also finds significant applications in real-world settings. By its very nature, multidisciplinary research is action-oriented and seeks to address societal challenges such as public health crises, poverty, and technological advancements. For example, designing smart cities involves collaboration between urban planners, engineers, environmentalists, and policymakers to create sustainable and efficient living spaces. Such projects demonstrate the transformative potential of Multidisciplinary Research in improving quality of life and driving progress.

The key features and broad scope of Multidisciplinary Research underscore its importance in addressing the complexities of the modern world. By integrating diverse knowledge bases, employing cross-disciplinary methodologies, and focusing on shared outcomes, Multidisciplinary Research enables researchers to develop innovative solutions to multifaceted problems. Its application in data analysis, peer review, and real-world problem-solving further highlights its relevance across various domains. As challenges like climate change, pandemics, and rapid technological shifts continue to reshape society, the need for multidisciplinary research will only grow, fostering collaboration and innovation for the greater good.

Understanding on Principles of Multidisciplinary Research

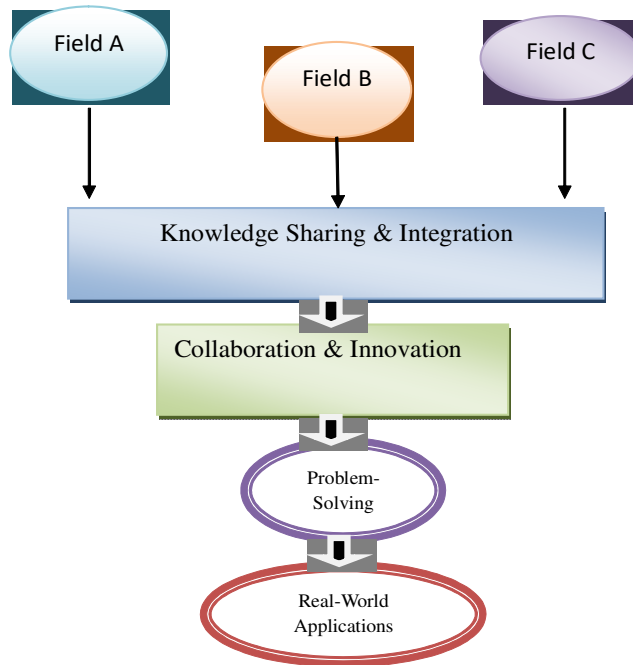
Multidisciplinary Research is a collaborative approach that brings together researchers from various academic disciplines to tackle common problems. This method transcends the limitations of a single perspective, harnessing the strengths of diverse fields such as science, engineering, social sciences, and the humanities. The integration of these disciplines not only enriches the research process but also enhances the potential for innovative solutions to complex issues. As highlighted by Molteberg and Bergstrom, “Multidisciplinary Studies addresses current, actual problems, focusing on solving them – it tends to be applied and action or policy-oriented.” This perspective underscores the practical implications of Multidisciplinary Research, which extend beyond academic settings into the realms of public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The knowledge generated through collaborative efforts can drive innovation, shape policies, and foster societal progress, making it a vital component of contemporary research. The significance of Multidisciplinary Research in educational institutions is increasingly recognized. It encourages collaboration among researchers from various fields, breaking conventional disciplinary boundaries. In an era characterized by multifaceted challenges such as climate change, technological advancements, public health emergencies, and economic downturns, the need for innovative solutions informed by diverse perspectives is more pressing than ever. Prominent scholars like Julie Thompson Klein emphasized that “Multidisciplinary Research is not merely a collection of disciplines but a dynamic interaction that leads to new insights and understanding.” This dynamic interaction allows for synthesizing different approaches and methodologies, enabling researchers to address pressing global issues more effectively. Furthermore, according to William Newell, “the complexity of the problems we face today requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates knowledge from various fields to create holistic solutions.” This assertion reinforces that Multidisciplinary Research is beneficial and essential in navigating modern challenges’ complexities.

According to NEP-2020, the four-year undergraduate program with the research component and the various Master’s degree designs are expected to boost research activity, necessitating the improvement of higher education institutions’ research capacity. Faculty and students should be encouraged to conduct studies in the areas that are pertinent on a local, regional, and national level. High-quality research in multidisciplinary fields requires a strong research ecosystem in higher education institutions where faculty and young researchers have opportunity to write research articles, develop research proposals, publish their findings, and get patents. These opportunities are likely high in Higher Education Institution Clusters due to the availability of faculty with different disciplinary backgrounds, collective resources, and a greater number of students engaging in research. (Kamala Kandi,2022).

Multidisciplinary Research Conceptual Model

The following conceptual model explains how multidisciplinary research integrates knowledge, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving:

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Multidisciplinary Research



- ***Fields A, B, and C represent diverse disciplines collaborating.***

The collaboration between fields such as **A, B, and C** exemplifies the essence of Multidisciplinary Research, where diverse disciplines converge to address complex issues effectively. This approach integrates knowledge from multiple perspectives, fostering innovation and enhancing problem-solving capacities.

- ***Knowledge Integration through Shared Frameworks***

Research demonstrates that multidisciplinary efforts are most effective when supported by shared frameworks of collaboration and innovation. Choi and Pak (2006) emphasized that multidisciplinary research allows for comprehensively integrating methods and theories from various disciplines, enabling researchers to address multifaceted problems. Bammer (2013) highlighted the importance of collaborative frameworks in aligning diverse disciplinary approaches to create cohesive strategies.

- ***Practical Problem-Solving and Real-World Applications***

The outcomes of multidisciplinary research are transformative, leading to practical applications that benefit society. Rhoten and Parker (2004) highlighted how multidisciplinary research leads to actionable public health and urban planning solutions by combining insights from various fields. National Academy of Sciences (2005) affirmed that integrating disciplines results in innovations that address real-world challenges, such as climate change and technological advancements.

Multidisciplinary Research as a Pathway to Innovation

- **Fostering Creative Solutions**

When experts from different disciplines collaborate, they bring diverse methods, tools, and theories that drive creative problem-solving. Choi and Pak (2006) noted that multidisciplinary approaches enable researchers to synthesize knowledge, leading to groundbreaking innovations that would be impossible within a single discipline. Gibbons et al. (1994) emphasized that the complexity of modern challenges necessitates knowledge co-creation, allowing for actionable and impactful solutions. For example, in climate change research, collaboration between environmental scientists, economists, and policymakers ensures a comprehensive understanding of the issue and leads to sustainable solutions, as highlighted by Miller & Wyborn (2020).

- **Encouraging Technological Advancements**

Multidisciplinary Research (MR) accelerates technological development by integrating insights from fields like engineering, artificial intelligence (AI), and medicine. Rhoten & Parker (2004) demonstrated that technological and scientific expertise convergence leads to transformative innovations in health, automation, and other sectors. National Academy of Sciences (2005) reported that multidisciplinary approaches in biomedical engineering have resulted in significant advancements in prosthetics, diagnostic tools, and AI-driven treatments. For example, advances in prosthetics exemplify this synergy, where engineering principles are integrated with medical sciences to develop innovative, patient-friendly designs (Zhou et al., 2020).

- **Real-World Applications**

The holistic nature of Multidisciplinary Research equips teams to address real-world challenges such as poverty, public health crises, or urban development effectively. Bammer (2013) highlighted the role of Multidisciplinary Research in solving complex societal problems by aligning diverse expertise and resources. Rhoten and Parker (2004) also argued that a multidisciplinary framework enhances policymakers' ability to create solutions grounded in practical realities. For example, Multidisciplinary teams tackling urban development issues bring together urban planners, sociologists, and architects to design inclusive and sustainable cities (Amin et al., 2019).

Major Finding of the Interviews of the Research scholars, Project Fellows and Teachers:

- Teachers, research scholars and project fellows have varying levels of understanding based on their exposure to multidisciplinary approaches.
- Teachers generally possess a higher theoretical understanding of multidisciplinary research due to their experience, academic exposure, and involvement in curriculum development; however, it is not much practiced at the application level.
- It has been found in the study that the teachers recognize the value of multidisciplinary research in enriching their research methodologies, enhancing research quality, and addressing complex societal challenges.
- Teachers have been found to be more aware of global trends in multidisciplinary

research due to better access to resources, funding, and research collaborations compared to the research scholars. There is a lack of a common platform for research scholars to share their views and explore the collaborative approach that brings together researchers from various academic disciplines to tackle common problems.

- Some teachers perceived multidisciplinary research as resource-intensive and challenging due to institutional silos or lack of administrative support.
- Some teachers expressed their concerns about the lack of expertise and collaboration opportunities outside their primary discipline, which may be a challenge in implementation.
- Research scholars, especially at the doctoral level, have varying levels of awareness depending on their university environment and their supervisors' influence.
- Most of the research scholars have reported a lack of institutional collaborations in implementing multidisciplinary research.
- The study found that institutional policies and academic environments in the selected universities do not support this integration. However, the institutions have started looking into it in the positive direction after the implementation of the NEP2020.
- Lack of institutional support, rigid academic structures, and discipline-specific silos have been reported by the majority of the research scholars and teachers as major barrier in the implementation of multidisciplinary research despite the positive attitude and awareness.
- Research scholars reported that they find it challenging to navigate multidisciplinary research due to a lack of guidance, limited access to funding and difficulties in balancing multiple disciplinary methodologies. They have a fear of contradiction among the research supervisors on the issue of research approach and methodology, which may hamper their research work.
- Some research scholars perceive multidisciplinary research as risky, as it may not align with traditional academic evaluation systems and their primary field of expertise.
- Research Project fellows working on funded or collaborative research projects are typically more aware of multidisciplinary research as they engage with applied research initiatives and working in different disciplines. Their awareness is due to direct involvement in multidisciplinary projects, particularly in solving real-world problems.

The Major Findings on Prospects, Issues and challenges in implementing Multidisciplinary Research -

a. Institutional and Structural Challenges

- Lack of a mandated clear institutional framework for multidisciplinary research.
- Traditional departmental silos resisting cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- Limitation of infrastructural facilities to support diverse research needs.
- Limitation of instructional and research facilities like laboratory etc to support diverse research needs.

- Insufficient funding dedicated to multidisciplinary initiatives.
- Difficulty in securing external grants for collaborative research.
- Administrative policies hindering collaboration across the disciplines.
- Limited recognition or rewards for multidisciplinary work in faculty evaluations.
- Inflexible academic schedules preventing collaborative research efforts.
- Scarcity of administrative support for promoting interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary research.

b. Cultural and Mindset Challenges

- Resistance of researchers to change entrenched in traditional disciplinary approach.
- Competition among faculty members and departments for resources and recognition.
- Perception of faculty members and research scholars that multidisciplinary and or interdisciplinary research dilutes disciplinary rigor.
- Reluctance to share data or intellectual property across disciplines.
- Limited collaboration between academia and industry.
- Insufficient incentives for faculty to step outside their disciplines.
- Lack of trust among researchers from different fields.

c. Skill and Knowledge Barriers

- Difficulty in understanding terminologies from different disciplines.
- Mismatch in research methodologies and epistemologies.
- Limited training programs for interdisciplinary skills.
- Absence of faculty with multidisciplinary expertise.
- Challenges in aligning disciplinary expertise with real-world problems.
- Lack of mentorship in conducting multidisciplinary research.

d. Student Engagement Challenges

- Inadequate multidisciplinary opportunities in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula.
- Limited funding for student projects involving multiple disciplines.
- Siloed academic pathways discouraging exploration of other fields.
- Lack of interdisciplinary research exposure during internships.

e. Administrative and Logistical Issues

- Difficulty in coordination from different disciplines.
- Time constraints for researchers balancing multiple responsibilities.
- Limited availability of tools for managing multidisciplinary projects.
- Difficulty in evaluating multidisciplinary research outputs.
- Challenges in publishing in traditional journals, which favour single-discipline

research.

- Issues of intellectual property rights (IPR) in multidisciplinary projects.
- Lack of a centralized database to connect researchers across disciplines.

f. Resource Constraints

- Limited budgets for cross-departmental initiatives.
- Lack of funding agencies that prioritize multidisciplinary research.
- Insufficient access to shared research tools and equipment.
- Uneven distribution of resources among departments.

g. Collaboration and Communication Challenges

- Communication gaps due to differing terminologies and priorities.
- Misalignment of research goals among collaborators.
- Conflicts arising from differing disciplinary paradigms.
- Geographic dispersion of collaborators.

h. Policy and Governance Issues

- Limited government policies promoting multidisciplinary research in education.
- Lack of accreditation models for interdisciplinary programs.
- Difficulty in aligning multidisciplinary research with institutional goals.
- Ambiguity in defining the scope and objectives of multidisciplinary projects.

i. Impact and Sustainability Challenges

- Difficulty in measuring the societal impact of multidisciplinary research.
- Difficulty in scaling up successful multidisciplinary initiatives.

Addressing these challenges requires institutional commitment, robust policies, and a cultural shift toward embracing collaboration and innovation.

In brief, we may conclude Cross-Group Comparison in the following way-

Aspect	Teachers	Research Scholars	Project Fellows
Awareness	High, driven by academic experience.	Moderate, varies by institution and supervisor support.	High, due to direct involvement in projects.
Perception	Valuable for teaching and research innovation but resource-intensive.	Promising for research impact but challenging due to lack of resources and training.	Essential for problem-solving but limited by project constraints.
Challenges	Institutional silos, lack of incentives.	Limited guidance, lack of funding, evaluation risks.	Short-term focus, limited career incentives.
Prospects	Curriculum innovation, mentorship roles.	Publications, global exposure, problem-solving opportunities.	Hands-on collaboration, real-world impact.

Conclusion:

Hence, Despite the various challenges, it has been found by the research scholars, project fellows and teachers of the higher education institutions that Multidisciplinary Research serves as a driving force for comprehensive inquiry, fostering collaboration and innovation. By leveraging the strengths of various disciplines, Multidisciplinary Research may enhance academic research and contribute significantly to societal advancement. As we continue to confront global challenges, the importance of multidisciplinary approaches will only grow, highlighting the need for educational institutions to embrace and promote this collaborative research paradigm. The study emphasizes the need for institutions to foster multidisciplinary initiatives by creating platforms for collaboration, offering training programs, and providing funding opportunities. It argues that nurturing an environment conducive to cross-disciplinary interaction can accelerate innovation and produce outcomes with far-reaching societal impacts. The study emphasizes that multidisciplinary research thrives on the foundation of shared objectives, diverse approaches, integrated methodologies, and the collective expertise of researchers from various disciplines, all underpinned by a collaborative mindset. This approach moves beyond the boundaries of traditional, siloed research to create a dynamic and inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are harmonized to address complex problems. Shared objectives are central to the success of multidisciplinary research. By establishing common goals, researchers from different fields align their efforts to tackle multifaceted challenges that no single discipline can fully address. Diverse approaches and integrated methodologies are equally critical. Multidisciplinary Research often involves blending quantitative and qualitative methods, creating novel techniques that leverage the strengths of each discipline. This integration enriches the research process, producing insights that are both deep and wide-ranging. Collaboration ensures that researchers bring their unique skills and knowledge to one place, fostering innovation. However, this requires more than technical expertise- it demands a collaborative mindset. Researchers must embrace open communication, mutual respect, and adaptability to navigate disciplinary differences. This mindset is the driving force that enables teams to overcome challenges such as conflicting priorities, differing terminologies, or methodological gaps.

Ultimately, Multidisciplinary Research thrives when shared objectives, diverse expertise, and a spirit of collaboration come together to push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation. It represents a transformative approach to problem-solving, paving the way for holistic solutions to the pressing issues of our time. The research concludes that as the world faces increasingly interconnected problems, multidisciplinary approaches are indispensable for addressing issues such as climate change, global health crises, and technological advancements. By breaking down silos and embracing diverse expertise, Multidisciplinary Research not only advances knowledge but also strengthens partnerships across academia, industry, and policy-making. This study calls for greater emphasis on Multidisciplinary Education and Research to prepare future generations for collaborative problem-solving and transformative discoveries.

In essence, multidisciplinary research serves as a pathway to innovation, unlocking the potential of collective intelligence and shaping a better, more inclusive future. In this context, Multidisciplinary Research emerges as a vital pathway to innovation and collaboration in a

world characterized by complexity and interdependence. Multidisciplinary Research fosters creative solutions, drives technological advancements, and generates real-world impact by integrating diverse disciplines. While challenges to implementing multidisciplinary research exist—such as institutional silos, funding limitations, and the need for interdisciplinary training—these obstacles can be overcome through robust institutional support and the establishment of collaborative frameworks. By fostering an environment encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation, educational institutions can ensure a brighter future for multidisciplinary approaches. To address today's global challenges effectively, researchers, institutions, and policymakers must embrace multidisciplinary research as the cornerstone of innovation and progress. By doing so, we can cultivate a generation of thinkers and problem solvers equipped to tackle the pressing issues of our time, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world. The commitment to multidisciplinary education and research will enhance academic inquiry and empower students to become proactive agents of change in an increasingly complex global landscape.

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Teaching Language Skills through the Poem “Mirror” by Sylvia Plath

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Abstract

Teaching language skills through poetry provides a creative and engaging way to help students develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. Sylvia Plath’s poem “*Mirror*” is an excellent choice for this purpose, as it combines vivid imagery and deep themes with accessible language. The poem’s exploration of self-perception and identity resonates with students, making it an ideal text for language learning. When used in the classroom, “*Mirror*” offers multiple opportunities for skill development. For reading, students can analyse the poem’s metaphors, personification, and symbolism to improve comprehension and critical thinking. Writing activities can include reflective essays, creative interpretations, or personal responses inspired by the themes of self-reflection and aging. These tasks not only enhance writing skills but also encourage students to connect emotionally with the text. Speaking and listening skills can be addressed through discussions, recitations, and debates. For example, students can discuss the mirror’s role as an observer or engage in group activities where they interpret the poem’s deeper meanings. Listening exercises might involve analysing how tone and rhythm contribute to the mood of the poem, improving their understanding of spoken language difficulties. Additionally, “*Mirror*” provides a platform for interdisciplinary learning. It is centred around discussions on psychology, self-awareness, and cultural values, making lessons more meaningful and relevant. By using poetry as a tool, teachers can foster an appreciation for literature while enhancing language skills in an immersive and thought-provoking way. It can be said that teaching language through “*Mirror*” by Sylvia Plath offers a rich, multifaceted approach to learning. It engages students creatively, strengthens core language competencies, and encourages them to explore deeper aspects of themselves and the world around them.

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Keywords: Language Teaching, Creative Writing, Language Skills Development, Self-reflection, Identity.

Since the rise of communicative language education, literature has made a comeback in language instruction after being side-lined for a number of decades. Since literature introduces the best and most plentiful examples of language use in a wide variety, provides authentic materials for all levels of learners, familiarises students with the culture of the language they are learning, increases motivation by involving them personally and appealing to their emotions, and enhances students' creativity, it is now generally accepted by theorists and practitioners of second language teaching that literature is an indispensable source for language teaching (Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Belcher and Hirvela, 2000; Parkinson and Thomas, 2001; Floris, 2004.) The role of literature use in improving grammar and language skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening) is highlighted in the majority of studies and articles on the use of literature in language teaching, whereas deliberate practise on vocabulary improvement is considered unnecessary because it is believed to occur naturally as a result of reading literature. This study intends to investigate whether creating activities to teach vocabulary through poetry can also enhance learners' literary knowledge and abilities. To that goal, numerous activity kinds will be recommended and illustrated with Sylvia Plath's poem "Mirror." The ideas of the lexical approach, creative thinking, critical thinking, and multiple intelligences are taken into consideration in the creation of the activities.

Most people think that Poetry is written in a highly difficult language that differs significantly from everyday speech. One way to improve fluency is to read and reread poetry through chorus reading and read-aloud exercises. Poetry's conciseness and brief lines seem approachable and less daunting to the hesitant or troubled reader. Poetry's rhythm, repetition, rhyme, and emphasis on significant words make it easier for novice readers to understand its meaning. Poetry acts as a succinct yet effective prelude to other works, as well as an introduction to ideas and subject matter. The debate over how to incorporate literature into language education programmes is just as crucial as the debate over whether to do so. Using literature as a study subject Literature as subject and resource (in language improvement classes). Where literature serves largely as an instrumental function in language classes and is employed as a means rather than an end, is better suited to achieving this goal as language progress is the primary goal of adding literature in language courses.

If we talk about learning through activities, we find that different groups of activity are separated. Pre-reading exercises are designed to familiarise students with the concepts of the poem, activate existing knowledge, aid in prediction, and, to increase their drive, and, if necessary, to introduce some vocabulary terms and grammatical structures. While reading, students can participate in exercises that will aid in comprehension, practise understanding and using the poem's lexicon, and examine its literary elements. The main goals of post-reading activities are to help students write and speak more effectively. This stage is also known as a production stage because it asks students to produce using the language items they have already practised. Teaching language skills through Sylvia Plath's "*Mirror*" provides a unique and immersive way to engage students in exploring language while reflecting on themes of identity and self-awareness. The poem's rich imagery and layered meanings offer

a fertile ground for developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. By incorporating thoughtful pre-reading activities, educators can guide students to connect personally with the poem, making the learning experience both meaningful and impactful. Before reading the poem, asking students to choose a metaphor to describe themselves sets the stage for exploring figurative language. This activity encourages them to reflect on their personality and identity in creative ways. For instance, a student might compare themselves to a “tree,” symbolizing growth and resilience, or a “stream,” representing adaptability and change. Such metaphors not only stimulate imagination but also introduce students to the concept of symbolism, which is central to the poem. When they encounter the mirror in Plath’s work, they can better appreciate its role as a metaphorical device representing truth, self-reflection, and impartiality. Another engaging activity involves examining the title of the poem, “*Mirror*,” and brainstorming words they might expect to find in it. Terms like “reflection,” “truth,” “image,” or “glass” may come to mind. This exercise sharpens their inferencing skills and builds anticipation, making their encounter with the text more engaging. It also helps expand their vocabulary and inspires them to recognize how these words contribute to the poem’s deeper meanings. By actively predicting content, students enter the poem with curiosity and a sense of involvement. The pre-reading discussion can also extend to the connotations of “mirror” and “lake.” While a mirror typically symbolizes clarity, truth, and self-awareness, it can also evoke feelings of vulnerability or vanity. A lake, on the other hand, suggests depth, mystery, and transformation, offering a contrast to the static, unyielding nature of a mirror. Exploring these ideas encourages students to think critically about the symbols they will encounter, setting the stage for richer analysis and interpretation. When students finally read the poem, these pre-reading activities enhance their understanding of its themes and structure. They can grasp how the mirror’s depiction as an unfeeling, truthful observer shifts when it transforms into a lake, adding complexity to the narrative. The discussions about metaphors and symbolism prepare students to unpack the poem’s layers, making it more accessible and thought-provoking. As students look deeper into the poem, various language skills come into play. For reading comprehension, they analyse Plath’s use of imagery and personification, identifying how these techniques convey the mirror’s perspective. Writing activities might include reflective essays on the themes of self-perception or creative pieces inspired by the symbols in the poem. Speaking and listening skills are developed through classroom discussions, where students share their interpretations and engage with differing viewpoints. The personal connection fostered through pre-reading activities makes the poem even more impactful. Students who have thought deeply about their metaphors or anticipated the poem’s themes are better able to relate to its message. For example, a student who likened themselves to a “mirror” during the pre-reading activity might find parallels in the poem’s portrayal of reflection and truth. This personal engagement transforms the poem into a mirror of their own experiences, deepening their connection to the text. Moreover, “*Mirror*” goes beyond language teaching by addressing universal themes such as aging, identity, and self-perception. These ideas resonate particularly with students, especially those who are going through their own journeys of self-discovery. By tying these themes to the students’ lives, teachers can make the learning process more relatable and memorable. Discussions about the emotional and psychological implications of

the poem encourage students to think critically and empathetically, broadening their understanding of literature as a reflection of human experiences. Teaching language skills through Sylvia Plath's "*Mirror*" demonstrates how poetry can serve as both a linguistic tool and a means of personal growth. The pre-reading activities encourage creativity, curiosity, and introspection, enabling students to approach the poem with a strong foundation and an open mind. As they explore its themes and symbolism, they not only develop essential language skills but also gain a deeper appreciation for literature's power to illuminate life's complexities. This approach makes learning a transformative experience, one that stays with students long after they've put the poem aside.

Teaching language skills through Sylvia Plath's "*Mirror*" offers an enriching and creative approach that blends poetry, vocabulary development, and emotional exploration. The poem's depth and symbolic resonance make it an ideal tool for language teaching, where students can develop a stronger grasp of figurative language while engaging with themes of identity and self-awareness. A powerful way to introduce the poem is by integrating metaphorical thinking into vocabulary teaching. Before reading, students can be asked to describe themselves using metaphors, an activity that encourages creativity and self-reflection. For instance, someone might say, "I'm a sunflower" to express happiness or "I'm a river" to symbolize adaptability. This activity helps students connect with the poem's central device—the metaphorical mirror—by prompting them to see language as a means of capturing abstract emotions. Building on this idea, students can explore metaphors tied to specific moods. A person feeling sad might say, "I'm a wilted leaf," while someone feeling hopeful could write, "I'm a seed waiting for spring." Tiredness could become "I'm a fading ember," and excitement might find expression as "I'm a spark igniting a fire." These metaphors not only build emotional vocabulary but also encourage students to think about how language can vividly convey complex feelings. This practice aligns seamlessly with the themes of "*Mirror*", where the mirror and the lake serve as metaphors for self-reflection and transformation.

As students anticipate the poem's content, they can also engage in predicting the language it might contain. For example, when they hear the title "*Mirror*", they might expect words like "reflection," "truth," or "clarity." Such predictions sharpen inferencing skills and create excitement about discovering how these words are used in the poem. The conversation can then shift to exploring the connotations of "mirror" and "lake." A mirror often suggests truth and objectivity, yet it can also carry associations of vanity or self-critique. On the other hand, a lake might symbolize mystery, transformation, and emotional depth. These discussions set the stage for understanding the poem's use of symbols and prepare students to appreciate the deeper layers of meaning in Plath's writing. When students finally read the poem, their earlier explorations with metaphors and connotations enrich their understanding of its themes. The poem's shift from the static clarity of the mirror to the dynamic, mysterious depths of the lake reflects the emotional and psychological journey it describes. Students are better equipped to interpret how the metaphors reflect universal experiences such as the passage of time, the search for identity, and the struggle with self-perception. Through this process, they connect personally with the text, seeing it not as a distant literary artifact but as a reflection of their own experiences. The activities surrounding the poem naturally integrate with broader language

skill development. As students analyse its imagery, structure, and tone, they refine their reading comprehension. Writing exercises can involve crafting personal reflections on the poem's themes or creating their poetry inspired by the mirror and lake metaphors. These activities not only enhance their writing skills but also foster creativity and emotional expression. Classroom discussions further contribute to speaking and listening practice, as students share their interpretations and respond to others' perspectives. This approach transforms "*Mirror*" into a multidimensional learning experience. Students don't merely learn about language; they experience its power to capture emotions, express identity, and inspire introspection. The integration of vocabulary-building activities, metaphorical exploration, and literary analysis makes the poem an engaging and versatile teaching tool. It bridges the gap between technical language skills and the emotional resonance of poetry, creating a holistic educational experience that leaves a lasting impression on learners.

In conclusion, using Sylvia Plath's "*Mirror*" to teach language skills offers a deeply meaningful approach that connects both emotional growth and linguistic development. This poem, with its vivid imagery and powerful metaphors, allows students to explore complex themes such as identity, aging, and self-perception, while also strengthening their language abilities. Through thoughtful pre-reading activities and discussions, students can form personal connections with the text, which in turn makes their learning experience richer and more impactful. By asking students to reflect on their own metaphors for different moods before reading the poem, they engage in a creative exercise that primes them to better understand the figurative language within "*Mirror*". This not only broadens their emotional vocabulary but also helps them realize how metaphors can be powerful tools for expressing abstract feelings. These pre-reading activities encourage students to think about how language reflects their internal worlds and prepares them to analyse how Plath uses the mirror and lake as metaphors for self-reflection and transformation. The poem's themes parallel with students on a personal level, particularly as they go through their own journeys of self-discovery. The image of the mirror as an unflinching, objective observer and the lake as a more fluid, transformative symbol speak to the struggles and complexities of identity that many students are experiencing. As they read "*Mirror*", students are not just interpreting the text; they are engaging with their own reflections and thoughts about who they are and how they see themselves. Furthermore, the integration of vocabulary teaching into this exploration of "*Mirror*" enhances students' ability to express themselves. The exercise of finding metaphors for different moods not only helps students expand their vocabulary but also sharpens their ability to communicate emotions and ideas more clearly. Through this process, they become more skilled at using language to articulate their thoughts, whether in writing, speaking, or creative exercises. Ultimately, teaching "*Mirror*" is not just about analysing a poem or expanding vocabulary; it's about helping students understand how language can serve as a tool for self-expression and self-discovery. By the end of the lesson, students will have not only improved their language skills but also gained a deeper understanding of the ways in which literature reflects life's complexities. Through this integrated approach, poetry becomes more than just a subject to study—it becomes a pathway to greater emotional and linguistic intelligence, equipping students with the tools to navigate their world with greater confidence and clarity.

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Reimagining Identity in Times of Turmoil: Gender Dynamics in Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife*

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Abstract

This paper delves into the portrayal of insurgency and its impact on personal lives, particularly through the lens of gender, in the literature of Assam, focusing on Mitra Phukan's novel *The Collector's Wife*. Against the backdrop of the prolonged insurgency in Assam, the narrative follows Rukmini, the wife of a district collector, as she grapples with the repercussions of political unrest on her personal life. Through a close analysis of Rukmini's character, the paper examines the ways in which violence and political upheaval shape her identity and relationships, shedding light on the broader socio-political context of Assam during the era of student agitation and the Assam movement. By exploring Rukmini's experiences, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between gender, violence, and personal identity in the literature of Assam.

Keywords: Assam Movement, Identity, Insurgency, Political unrest, Violence.

Insurgency is a dark phase in the history of the Northeast. The problems that Assam and all of the Northeast faced were due to the dictatorship rule of the political government as well as the rise of militants. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines "Dictatorship" government as a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in a dictator or small clique. After the partition of India, AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) 1958 was regulated

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in the states of the Northeast which gave special powers to the forces to maintain law and public order. These powers were often misused by the officials. The people of Assam in the double turmoil one by the army and second due to the militants suffered agony and harassment. It affected their personal life too.

Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* is a fiction which is set in the backdrop of Assam during the 1980s, it brings forth the socio-political condition of the state as well as the whole of the Northeast. The student protest, movement of outlawed militant organizations, political movements, kidnapping, extortion, and bloodshed form the background of the story. The main concept of the story lies in the gendered realities existing amidst the insurgency issues, student unrest, border crossings, etc. The novel depicts the hard time of hatred and violence along with the gendered prejudices of society against women which affected their lives.

The Collector's Wife is a captivating tale set in Parbatpuri that revolves around Rukmini's life. She has been married to Siddharth for a decade, but unfortunately, they haven't been blessed with a child yet. Siddharth is the District Collector of Parbatpuri, and Rukmini, his wife, is an educated and beautiful woman hailing from an aristocratic family. Currently, she works as a part-time lecturer at Deenanath Saikia College and receives a modest salary of 1000 rupees. Despite her qualifications, Rukmini has expressed her dissatisfaction with teaching, as she finds it challenging to engage students with limited knowledge of English grammar and cultural exposure. Nonetheless, she continues to pursue it because of a lack of better options, given the frequent transfers that Siddharth's job entails. Rukmini often finds herself struggling with her identity, as she is mostly known as the wife of DC and not for her individuality. Despite living in Parbatpuri for two years, she still feels like an outsider and doesn't participate much in the town's gossip.

This dissatisfaction is compounded by Siddharth's preoccupation with work, leaving Rukmini feeling isolated and longing for companionship. As Siddharth's absences become more pronounced, Rukmini finds solace in an intimate relationship with Manoj Mahanta, a tyre salesman. The revelation of her pregnancy adds a layer of complexity to Rukmini's already tumultuous life, especially when she discovers Siddharth's own infidelity. Amidst the backdrop of insurgency, Rukmini's internal turmoil and quest for identity take center stage, offering a poignant exploration of personal agency and societal expectations.

Political affects Personal

Rukmini's life may seem comfortable and secure at first glance as she resides in a beautiful bungalow atop a hill, seemingly unaffected by the difficulties faced by the common people. However, at a deeper level, Rukmini's life is not without its troubles. Whenever any "incident" occurs in the district, the resulting fear and uncertainty affect her as well. In Mitra Phukan's novel *The Collector's Wife*, the author provides a detailed account of the netizens' opinions on the bureaucrats and the MOFEH (Movement for an Exclusive Homeland), which is used in place of ULFA in the text. Although they publicly discuss and criticize the actions of government officials, they avoid commenting on MOFEH in public.

The District Commissioner plays a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of the town and its residents. However, there have been instances where the bureaucrats have faced criticism

from the people of Parbatpuri, who felt that their concerns were not being adequately addressed. It's worth noting that the DC's residence is situated on a hill overlooking the cremation ground, which has historical significance as a place where some locals sought retribution against their colonial oppressors "by making sure that the smoke from their funeral pyres rose in the direction of the DC's house" (*The Collector's Wife*, 21). Even when any epidemic raged in Parbatpuri, the mourning relatives of the victims felt satisfied with the very thought that "the disease-ravaged bodies were being offered at the feet of the one person who was supposed to be responsible for the well-being of the district" (*The Collector's Wife*, 22).

MOFEH was an organization in Assam, which was set to demand an exclusive homeland in Assam only for Assamese. The movement which started with petition and silent demonstration, took the form of violence. Many of the other organizations merged up or cloned themselves in the name of the most powerful of them. Some of these were dacoits in the name of insurgents and some were the terrorist groups fulfilling their selfish demands, keeping human lives at stake. Many of the inhabitants of the town were informers of the MOFEH. From the banks, they knew how much wealth one had for extortion. The crime rates were continuously increasing in the state. The local newspapers used to be filled with reports of new incidents of extortion, looting, and unarmed citizens being gunned down. During a particular period marked by unrest, individuals were often observed casting wary glances around them while discussing insurgents. The situation was quite tumultuous and as a precautionary measure, people tended to avoid grocery shopping in the evenings and instead preferred to do so during the daytime. Even officials were not immune to the risks posed by the prevailing conditions. Sadly, the SP, who was entrusted with overseeing the security of the town, met with an untimely demise while dining with his family at a hotel. Nandana Deuri, the wife of the SP grieves:

So sudden. We were laughing-we were just beginning to eat...Deuri was sitting there, just opposite the door that leads outside- he seemed to see something, I mean he stopped laughing, and his eyes, they became frightened. I turned around but I could only see a hand with a gun, coming out from the door- I saw a finger on the trigger, yes I saw it distinctly. There was a terrible sound. When I looked back again, Deuri wasn't anywhere. He was on the floor. He didn't even speak. He looked at me, but I think...God, what's happened! What! (*The Collector's Wife*, 172)

After the unexpected death of her husband, Nandana Deuri found it difficult to reconcile with what had happened. Unfortunately, the MOFEH group had the ability to infiltrate any area, execute their plan, and disappear without leaving any trace. Even Anil, the driver of Rukmini's car, was affiliated with the MOFEH group, but no one was aware of it. Anil was assigned to keep a watchful eye on Rukmini since she was the wife of the DC, and there was a possibility that other pseudo-insurgent groups may target her. The safety of the bureaucrats' lives may also be in question, considering the MOFEH group was able to breach the DC's security. This raises concerns about the state's security and whether civilian life is safe from such breaches.

The death of SP, affected Rukmini's life too for Siddharth becomes more involved in his work and Rukmini's loneliness increases. The lack of companionship from Siddharth makes

her turn to Manoj Mahanta, with whom she takes a one-night stand and later becomes pregnant with his child. When Siddharth comes to know of Rukmini carrying others' child in her womb he doesn't tell her to abort. Since life seems uncertain in Parbatpuri, death is more reachable. He tells Rukmini:

Living here in Parbatpuri, I've come to respect life. Life and birth. Life is so cheap here. Death is everywhere. Sudden Death, like Deuri's. Long drawn-out deaths, agonizing ends, as life seeps out, drop after painful drop, through bullet holes in the body. I've seen so many deaths, constituted so many inquiries into so many killings in last two years since coming here. There's death everywhere, even on the daily road to my office, at the foot of my own home. (*The Collector's Wife*, 315)

The conception of a life within Rukmini's womb is perceived as an accomplishment for Siddharth, despite the fact that the child is not biologically his. He prepares himself to assume the role of a father to the child. However, the course of events takes a tragic turn when Manoj is taken captive by the MOFEH. Siddharth is tasked with leading a rescue operation to free Manoj, which ultimately leads to the death of both individuals. The aftermath of this expedition leaves Rukmini devastated. Not only does she grieve the loss of her unborn child, who will never experience the love of a father, but she is also haunted by the countless fatalities resulting from the entanglement of personal and political matters.

Gender Dynamics during the Movement

This intertwining of personal and political themes in *The Collector's Wife* offers a nuanced exploration of gendered realities in Assam. While the movement initially rallied all inhabitants, irrespective of gender, for the cause of the nation-state, a deeper examination reveals disparities in opportunities for women. Mahatma Gandhi's call for women to participate in the freedom struggle resonated across India, including in the Northeast, where brave female soldiers sacrificed their lives for the cause. However, despite their contributions, the struggle for a unified national identity often overshadowed efforts to secure separate identities for women. Instead, it perpetuated gender bias, relegating women to subservient roles within the home and community even as they fought alongside men for a common cause.

Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* also presents the moment of crisis for women created by the conflict for nationhood. She refers to the student agitation of Assam that has taken a toll on the education system and has deprived women of their due status as well. She gives a regional identity to the women participating in the student movement by removing the petty identities that separate mankind. She comments on the dressing of the girls through her protagonist Rukmini's psyche:

The girls in the group, who usually wore the ubiquitous and practical Salwar-kamiz to college, were now dressed in simple yet traditional *mekhela sadors* to emphasize their regional identity. As she looked at the eager, bright young faces of the boys and girls, she couldn't help noticing the facial features and contours before her. The almond eyes, the golden skins of the Mongoloid, the curly hair of the Austric, the dark complexions of the Dravids, and the fine features and fair coloring of the Aryans, were all present in the crowd of young faces before her. And they wanted to rid the land of foreigners! (*The Collector's Wife*, 91)

The novelist no doubt deals with the foreigner's issues simplistically in her novel without going into the political rhetoric of who the foreigners are. However, she has made the point that the regional identity is ascertained by the common dress code of females belonging to different racial backgrounds. Since the Assamese language has been in a privileged position in northeast India, and because of Assam's close contact with mainland India, the state has witnessed growth and development quite rapidly when compared to the other frontier North-eastern states. The Assam agitation has in a way hampered the student community at large and women in particular. Gender disparities are ignored, and a common cause is brought to the foreground- the regional identity. Rukmini feels the irony of the situation and tries to talk to students, but the demand for a "Golden Homeland" is a priority for them. Bondona, one of Rukmini's students, in the novel, says:

My mother knows that I am doing-running around organising processions, moving out on the streets at all hours of the day and night, spending so much time with men who are not related, and she knows that this will jeopardize my chances in the marriage market, probably quiet irrevocably. But she supports what I do. So does my father. (*The Collector's Wife*, 181)

Studies suggest that the consequences of Assam Agitation have far worse effects on the female than their male counterparts. The life of a spinster like Bondona in Assamese society can be very difficult.

In her paper titled "Gendered Citizenship and Representation: Women's Contribution to Peace Building in Naga Society," Anungla Aier argues that a woman's social identity is primarily derived from their membership in the clan unit, in addition to their parents. However, the female identity has historically been subject to exclusion within patriarchal discourse. The representation of women in literature, such as myths, folktales, and histories, has offered a limited, coercive identity. It is worth noting that the career options for boys in the movement differ from those of girls, such as Bondona, whose future may seem uncertain. This duality highlights the complex nature of such movements.

Conclusion

Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* thoughtfully depicts the intricate intersection of political and personal domains and the subject of identity over ethnicity during the Assam Agitation. The novel poignantly captures the impact of public events on people's lives, emphasizing the uncertainty of life for both civilians and the bureaucrats. Furthermore, it beautifully explores the emotional complexities that a woman experiences while being caught between these situations, effectively weaving together the personal and political aspects seamlessly.

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How to Live in an Unjust World? A Close Study of Postcolonial Concerns along with the Views of Saadawi

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Abstract

This study looks into the complexities of living in an unjust world, particularly through the lens of postcolonial concerns and the insightful perspectives of Nawal El Saadawi. Postcolonial theory examines the lingering effects of colonialism on societies, identities, and power structures, offering a kind of structure for understanding systemic injustices. Saadawi, a pioneering Egyptian feminist, writer, and psychiatrist, provides a critical viewpoint on how oppressive systems—rooted in patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism—intersect to perpetuate inequity.

By analyzing Saadawi's works and their alignment with broader postcolonial discourse, this research highlights strategies for resistance and survival in an unjust world. Key themes include the dismantling of patriarchal norms, the reclaiming of indigenous identities, and the critique of neocolonial power dynamics. Through close readings of Saadawi's writings and contextual discussions, the study explores how her advocacy for gender equality, human rights, and cultural authenticity contributes to a broader understanding of justice in postcolonial societies.

Ultimately, this work highlights the resilience of marginalized communities and the transformative potential of critical thought and activism. It offers a roadmap for challenging systemic oppression, drawing inspiration from Saadawi's commitment to equity and liberation.

Keywords: Postcolonial, systemic injustice, patriarchy, neocolonialism, gender equality.

The concept of justice has always been a central concern in human history, as individuals

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and societies struggle with the idea of fairness, equality, and the moral right to resist oppression. In a world dominated by systemic inequalities, the question of how to live in an unjust world becomes not just philosophical but also practical. This concern becomes even more significant when viewed through the lens of postcolonial theory, which critiques the everlasting effects of colonial rule on modern societies. It interrogates the structures of power, identity, and culture that continue to shape the lives of formerly colonized nations and communities. Alongside this discourse, the works of Nawal El Saadawi, a pioneering Egyptian feminist, author, and psychiatrist, offer a unique perspective on surviving and challenging injustice, particularly as it intersects with gender, race, and class. Living in an unjust world requires individuals and societies to contend with layers of systemic oppression. These injustices often stem from historical contexts, such as colonialism, patriarchy, and economic exploitation, which have left indelible marks on the global socio-political landscape. The legacy of colonialism, in particular, continues to affect the identities, cultures, and economies of nations that were once subjugated. Postcolonial theory provides a framework to analyse these important effects and highlights the mechanisms through which they persist. This theoretical approach, championed by thinkers such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, emphasizes the need to deconstruct colonial narratives and reclaim indigenous voices. It challenges us to reimagine justice by understanding the complexities of power dynamics and cultural hegemony. Nawal El Saadawi's contributions to the discourse on justice and liberation are significant in this context. Her works, rooted in the lived realities of women in postcolonial and patriarchal societies, shed light on the dual oppression faced by marginalized groups. Saadawi's writings emphasize the intersectionality of oppression, where colonial legacies, gender discrimination, and economic inequalities converge. For Saadawi, addressing injustice requires a holistic approach that critiques both external colonial powers and internal societal structures that perpetuate subjugation. Her feminist ideology is not isolated from broader societal issues but is deeply intertwined with the need to challenge authoritarianism, religious dogma, and socio-economic disparities. The intersection of postcolonial theory and Saadawi's views creates a rich foundation for examining the question of living in an unjust world. Postcolonial concerns focus on dismantling the remnants of colonial ideologies, such as the privileging of Western norms and the economic subordination of the Global South. Saadawi's feminist lens adds a deeper layer, emphasizing how patriarchy serves as both a product and perpetuator of these unjust systems. Together, these perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of global and local struggles for justice.

A key aspect of surviving in an unjust world is understanding the mechanisms that sustain inequality. For postcolonial societies, these mechanisms often include the practice of economic dependency, cultural alienation, and political instability. The global economic system, characterized by neocolonial practices, ensures that wealth and resources remain concentrated in former colonial powers, while former colonies are left struggling with poverty and underdevelopment. Cultural imperialism, another byproduct of colonialism, erodes indigenous identities by promoting Western values as superior. These forces create a sense of alienation and self-doubt among the colonized, further entrenching inequality. Saadawi's critique of patriarchy parallels these postcolonial concerns, as she views the oppression of women as a

microcosm of broader societal injustices. Her works, such as *The Hidden Face of Eve* and *Woman at Point Zero*, explore the dehumanization of women in patriarchal and religiously conservative societies. Saadawi does not shy away from exposing how these structures are often complicit in upholding colonial and authoritarian regimes. For her, the liberation of women is inseparable from the liberation of society as a whole. This interconnected approach makes Saadawi's perspective particularly relevant in addressing the multifaceted nature of injustice. Living in an unjust world also demands strategies of resistance and resilience. Postcolonial theory emphasizes on the importance of reclaiming autonomy through cultural revival, political activism, and intellectual critique. Writers and thinkers from postcolonial societies have used literature and art as tools to challenge colonial narratives and assert their identities. Similarly, Saadawi's works serve as both a critique of oppression and a call to action. Her bold and unapologetic stance against systemic injustices inspires individuals to resist conformity and fight for equality. Moreover, both postcolonial theory and Saadawi's views highlight the importance of collective action in achieving justice. For postcolonial societies, this often involves movements for political independence, cultural revival, and economic self-sufficiency. Saadawi's emphasis on solidarity among oppressed groups echoes this sentiment, as she advocates for a united front against all forms of exploitation. Her activism, which often put her at odds with political and religious authorities, exemplifies the courage required to challenge deeply entrenched systems of power. It can be said that living in an unjust world necessitates a deep understanding of the structures that sustain inequality and the courage to challenge them. Postcolonial theory and Saadawi's feminist perspective provide invaluable insights into the nature of injustice and the strategies for resisting it. By examining the intersection of these discourses, this study aims to shed light on the ways in which individuals and societies can go through adversities and transform an unjust world. The journey toward justice is fraught with challenges, but it is through critical thought, activism, and solidarity that lasting change can be achieved.

In a world where unfairness is widespread, people face a challenging task of dealing with and standing up against the unequal treatment and oppression that exist all around them. Nawal El Saadawi, a well-known feminist writer and activist from Egypt, effectively captures the importance of speaking out and opposing such injustice with her quote.: "When we live in a world that is very unjust, you have to be a dissident" (Moallem 98). This statement encapsulates Saadawi's perspective on the necessity of actively opposing and challenging unjust systems. To gain deeper insights into living in an unjust world and developing effective strategies for resistance, it is invaluable to engage with the theories of postcolonial thinkers. By analysing the works of postcolonial theorists and incorporating Saadawi's views, we can explore multifaceted approaches to understanding and addressing injustice in all its manifestations.

Postcolonial theory offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending the enduring consequences of colonialism, recognizing the power dynamics and structures that underpin contemporary global systems. It illuminates the historical legacies and ongoing processes that have contributed to the perpetuation of social, economic, and political inequalities in a postcolonial world. Through the lenses of postcolonial thinkers, we gain insights into the

complexities of power, domination, and resistance, providing a fertile ground for analysing and critiquing the systems that sustain injustice (Fanon 15; Said 23; Bhabha 56).

Central to understanding the lived experiences of injustice is the concept of intersectionality, a core tenet of both postcolonial theory and Saadawi's feminist perspective. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously, as their identities intersect with categories such as race, gender, class, and more. This lens highlights the interconnected nature of systems of oppression and emphasizes the need for nuanced analyses that account for the intricate interplay of power dynamics in an unjust world (Hill Collins 74; Crenshaw 1250; Saadawi qtd. in Moallem 104). In this exploration, we will draw upon the works of influential postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi K. Bhabha, among others. Their insights provide critical perspectives on the lasting impact of colonialism and the mechanisms by which it shapes and perpetuates injustice. Additionally, by incorporating the views of Saadawi, we will delve into her feminist lens that examines the intersectionality of gender and colonialism, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by women within postcolonial contexts. By analysing postcolonial theories alongside Saadawi's perspectives, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the injustices that persist in our world and explore strategies for challenging and transforming oppressive systems. This examination will equip us with the tools necessary to navigate an unjust world with greater empathy, criticality, and resilience.

Living in an unjust world presents numerous challenges, as individuals grapple with systems of inequality, discrimination, and oppression. To effectively understand and navigate this reality, it is valuable to draw insights from postcolonial theorists and incorporate the views of influential figures such as Nawal El Saadawi. Postcolonial theory offers a framework for analyzing the enduring legacies of colonialism and the power structures that sustain injustice. Meanwhile, Saadawi, an Egyptian feminist writer and activist, brings a unique perspective on the intersectionality of gender and colonialism. By integrating these two perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in an unjust world and explore strategies for addressing and transcending its inherent inequities. This analysis will dive deeper into key themes of postcolonial theory and Saadawi's views, including the recognition of colonial legacies, intersectionality, the power of speaking truth to power, grassroots activism and solidarity, cultural and literary resistance, and the intersection of gender and colonialism. By engaging with these ideas, individuals can develop a more nuanced approach to living in an unjust world and contribute to the ongoing struggle for justice and equality. Postcolonial theory offers valuable insights into the ongoing effects of colonialism, emphasizing how historical injustices have shaped contemporary power structures. It recognizes that the world's division into colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, has left lasting scars on societies worldwide. By acknowledging the enduring impact of colonization, individuals can better understand the underlying mechanisms of injustice and inequality that persist today. Moreover, postcolonial theory emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in comprehending and addressing injustice. It recognizes that individuals experience oppression and marginalization based on multiple intersecting factors such as race, gender, class, and more. By adopting an intersectional lens, we can grasp the complexity of power dynamics and recognize that different forms of

oppression are interconnected. This broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive analysis of injustice and enables more inclusive and effective strategies for change. Nawal El Saadawi, known for her bold and unapologetic feminist activism, offers a unique perspective on living in an unjust world. Saadawi has consistently challenged patriarchal systems and their intersection with colonial legacies. Her work draws attention to the specific forms of oppression faced by women in postcolonial contexts, shedding light on the ways in which gender and colonialism intertwine and reinforce each other.

Saadawi's fearless approach to speaking truth to power has been a cornerstone of her activism. Through her writings and activism, she exposes the oppressive structures that perpetuate injustice, pushing for transformative change. By daring to question and critique existing power structures, Saadawi inspires others to challenge the status quo and envision alternative ways of living and organizing society. Grassroots activism and solidarity are also integral to living in an unjust world. Postcolonial theorists emphasize the power of collective action, advocating for communities to unite and mobilize against oppressive systems. Saadawi's work reflects this call for grassroots organizing, as she urges individuals to come together, raise their voices, and actively resist oppressive structures. By fostering solidarity and building alliances, marginalized communities can effectively challenge and dismantle the systems that perpetuate injustice. Furthermore, postcolonial theory highlights the role of culture, literature, and art as sites of resistance. By reclaiming and celebrating marginalized cultures, challenging dominant narratives, and amplifying alternative voices, individuals can subvert oppressive power structures and reimagine more equitable futures. Saadawi's literary works serve as a powerful testament to this resistance, as she uses her writing to bring attention to social inequalities and empower those who have been silenced.

Postcolonial theorists and Saadawi offer valuable insights into understanding and addressing the injustices that persist in our world. Postcolonial theory, developed by scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi K. Bhabha, provides a critical framework for comprehending the lasting consequences of colonialism on societies and individuals. Frantz Fanon, in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, explores the psychological and social impact of colonization on the colonized people. He examines the dehumanizing effects of colonialism and the ways in which it perpetuates systems of oppression. Fanon's analysis helps us understand the deep-seated structures that sustain injustice and the importance of resistance as a means of reclaiming agency and dignity. Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism* exposes the ways in which Western knowledge production has perpetuated stereotypes and constructed power imbalances between the West and the "Orient." By critiquing the Eurocentric lens through which the non-Western world has been represented, Said challenges us to question dominant narratives and to recognize the inherent biases that underlie systems of injustice. Homi K. Bhabha's work, including *The Location of Culture*, emphasizes the complexities of identity and the in-between spaces where cultures intersect and hybridize. Bhabha argues that these liminal spaces offer possibilities for subverting dominant power structures and imagining alternative futures. His ideas encourage us to critically engage with the interplay of power and agency within postcolonial contexts. Nawal El Saadawi's feminist perspective adds an important dimension to the analysis of injustice. Saadawi examines

the intersectionality of gender and colonialism, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women within postcolonial societies. Her work exposes the ways in which patriarchal systems reinforce and intersect with other forms of oppression, calling for a comprehensive approach to dismantling unjust structures. By incorporating the views of postcolonial theorists and Saadawi's feminist lens, we gain a more deeper understanding of the multiple layers of injustice and the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression. These perspectives emphasize the need to challenge dominant narratives, disrupt power dynamics, and actively work towards creating more equitable and just societies. In analyzing the theories of postcolonial thinkers and integrating Saadawi's insights, we can develop strategies for resistance, transformation, and the pursuit of social justice. By recognizing the historical legacies of colonialism and the complexities of intersecting power structures, we can navigate an unjust world with greater awareness, empathy, and the determination to effect meaningful change.

Nawal El Saadawi stands as a pivotal figure in Arab feminism, bridging the gap between global feminist movements and the unique struggles faced by women in the Arab world. Her works challenge deeply entrenched patriarchal systems, cultural norms, and religious interpretations that have historically marginalized women in the region. Arab feminism, as articulated by Saadawi, emphasizes the importance of reclaiming agency while addressing the intersection of gender, class, and colonial legacies. Unlike Western feminism, which often focuses on individual rights, Arab feminism, through Saadawi's lens, advocates for collective liberation tied to broader societal transformation. She underscores that the oppression of women in Arab societies cannot be disentangled from the region's postcolonial realities and authoritarian structures. Saadawi's fearless critique of these systems not only positions her as a trailblazer for Arab women but also as a universal voice against all forms of injustice (Amal 03).

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Postcolonial Perspectives in the Writings of Virginia Woolf

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf, a seminal figure in modernist literature, has often been examined through various critical lenses, including feminism and psychoanalysis. However, her works also offer rich material for postcolonial analysis, revealing different engagements with issues of empire, race, and identity. Woolf's novels and essays, although primarily centered on the experiences of the British middle and upper classes, subtly interrogate the colonial structures of power and their impact on both colonizer and colonized. In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's narrative strategies—such as stream of consciousness and shifting perspectives—serve to highlight the fragmented nature of identity, an idea that parallels with postcolonial theories of hybridity and cultural dislocation. Characters like Septimus Warren Smith and the Ramsay family reveal the psychological effects of imperialism, not only on those within the colonies but also on the colonizers themselves, who are depicted as complicit yet conflicted. Woolf's essays, particularly *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*, further explore the intersections of gender and empire, critiquing the patriarchal and imperial foundations of British society. She highlights how the same structures that oppress women within Britain are extended to subjugate colonized peoples, suggesting a link between domestic and imperial domination. Moreover, Woolf's engagement with the idea of “the outsider” reflects postcolonial concerns with marginality and otherness. Her awareness of the limitations of her own perspective as a white, upper-class woman leads to moments of self-reflexivity in her writing, where she acknowledges the partiality and privilege of her viewpoint. It can be said that Virginia Woolf's work, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, offers a critique of the cultural and psychological dimensions of British imperialism, revealing how deeply intertwined issues of gender, class, and race are within the context of the British Empire.

Keywords: *Post-colonialism, Identity, Modernist, Cultural, Marginality, Imperial*

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Virginia Woolf, a central figure in the modernist literary canon, is often celebrated for her innovative narrative techniques and genuine exploration of gender, identity, and mental illness. While much of the scholarly attention on Woolf has focused on her feminist and psychoanalytic themes, a postcolonial reading of her works reveals a critique of British imperialism and its effects on both colonizers and the colonized. Although Woolf's primary focus was on the social and psychological landscapes of the British middle and upper classes, her works subtly engage with issues of empire, race, and cultural dislocation. This paper explores these postcolonial dimensions, examining how Woolf's novels and essays reflect the complexities of British imperial identity and the broader implications of colonialism.

Scholarly analysis of Woolf's oeuvre has traditionally concentrated on her feminist perspectives and her critical exploration of the psychological advancements of her characters. Feminist critics have long praised Woolf for her keen insights into the lives of women, particularly in how she addresses the limitations imposed by patriarchal society and the struggles women face in their quest for autonomy and creative expression. Psychoanalytic readings of Woolf's work, meanwhile, have looked into her portrayal of mental illness, trauma, and the unconscious, drawing connections between her personal experiences and the psychological depths of her characters. However, beyond these well-trodden paths of feminist and psychoanalytic critique, Woolf's writings offer a fertile ground for postcolonial analysis. Despite Woolf's primary focus on the British middle and upper classes, her works subtly interrogate the power dynamics of empire, raising critical questions about race, cultural displacement, and the psychological consequences of colonialism. Her engagement with these themes, although less overt than her feminist or psychoanalytic concerns, reveals a kind of awareness about British imperial identity and its pervasive influence on both the colonizer and the colonized. Woolf lived and wrote during a time when the British Empire was a dominant global force, and although her works do not directly address the colonies or the lives of the colonized, they nonetheless reflect the cultural and psychological effects of imperialism. The ambivalence, fragmentation, and dislocation experienced by her characters can be seen as mirroring the broader uncertainties of a nation struggling with the moral and existential questions posed by its imperial pursuits. By examining Woolf's works through a postcolonial lens, one can uncover a subtle yet significant critique of the imperial ideologies that shaped British society. This paper seeks to explore these postcolonial dimensions in Woolf's writing, focusing on how her novels and essays highlight the ideas associated with British imperial identity and the broader implications of colonialism. Through close readings of *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and her essays such as *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*, this study aims to illuminate Woolf's engagement with the themes of empire, race, and cultural dislocation, revealing a rich and genuine critique of the British Empire embedded within her modernist framework.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, one of Woolf's most acclaimed novels, the character of Septimus Warren Smith serves as a powerful symbol of the psychological fragmentation caused by the experience of empire. Septimus, a World War I veteran suffering from severe shell shock, embodies the deep ambivalence and anxiety that lay at the heart of British imperial identity during this period (Snaith, 2002). His mental disintegration can be seen as a microcosm of the

broader disintegration of imperial authority and certainty, reflecting the crisis of identity that Britain faced as it struggled with the aftermath of the war and the decline of its global power (Koppen, 2009). Septimus's trauma is not only a result of the horrors of war but also a manifestation of the psychological burden imposed by the imperial project. The war, which was driven by the competition for colonial dominance, leaves Septimus deeply scarred, both physically and mentally (Fussell, 1975). His inability to reconcile his wartime experiences with the values and expectations of post-war British society mirrors the broader difficulties faced by Britain as it struggled to maintain its imperial identity in a rapidly changing world (Bhabha, 1994).

Woolf uses Septimus's character to critique the glorification of war and the imperial ideals that justified it. Septimus's breakdown is a direct consequence of his exposure to the brutal realities of imperialism, revealing the destructive impact of these ideals on the individual psyche. The discord between the imperial rhetoric of honor, duty, and sacrifice, and the horrific experiences of those who were sent to enforce these ideals, is starkly illustrated in Septimus's descent into madness (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000). His hallucinations, flashbacks, and overwhelming sense of guilt are symptomatic of a deeper existential crisis, one that questions the very foundations of the imperial project (Koppen, 2009). Moreover, Septimus's condition is treated with a lack of understanding and compassion by the society around him, reflecting the broader failure of British society to acknowledge the human cost of its imperial ambitions. The medical establishment, represented by figures like Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw, seeks to normalize Septimus's behavior, dismissing his trauma as a mere failure of nerves rather than recognizing it as a symptom of a much larger crisis (Showalter, 1987). This dismissal can be seen as a metaphor for the denial of the realities of colonial oppression and the psychological toll it exacted on both the colonizer and the colonized. The refusal to confront the true nature of Septimus's condition mirrors the British Empire's refusal to confront the moral and ethical implications of its actions (Snaith, 2002). Woolf's portrayal of Septimus also touches on the theme of otherness, a key concept in postcolonial theory. He is an outsider in post-war British society, marked by his mental illness and his inability to conform to societal expectations. His sense of alienation and his perception of the world as hostile and indifferent parallels with the experiences of colonized peoples, who were often rendered invisible or marginal by the imperial powers (Said, 1993). Woolf uses Septimus's marginalization to critique the broader exclusionary practices of British society, highlighting how those who deviate from the norm are silenced and dismissed (Mao, 2010). Septimus's ultimate suicide can be seen as a rejection of the imperial values that have shattered his identity and left him without a sense of belonging. His death is a tragic but powerful statement against the forces that have driven him to despair, underscoring the destructive impact of imperialism on the individual. Woolf's depiction of Septimus's struggle with his identity and his place in the world reflects the broader crisis of identity faced by Britain as it began to reckon with the consequences of its imperial past (Snaith, 2002).

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf continues her exploration of identity and imperialism, this time through the lens of domestic life and the dynamics of a British family. The novel's setting on the Isle of Skye, a remote island in Scotland, serves as a metaphor for the colonies, with

the Ramsay family representing the British colonizers who bring their domestic power structures into foreign spaces. Through her portrayal of the Ramsay family's holiday on the island, Woolf subtly critiques the assumptions of imperial dominance and reveals the underlying tensions and contradictions of imperial ideology (Mao, 2010). The Ramsay family, led by the authoritative Mr. Ramsay, embodies the patriarchal and hierarchical values that define the British Empire. Mr. Ramsay's domineering presence and his insistence on intellectual and moral superiority reflect the attitudes of the British ruling class, who saw themselves as the rightful leaders of the empire. His need for validation and his fear of failure mirror the anxieties of an empire struggling to maintain its dominance because of growing challenges (Mao, 2010). Woolf's depiction of Mr. Ramsay's character can be seen as a critique of the rigid and authoritarian mindset that characterized British imperialism, highlighting the insecurities and vulnerabilities that lay beneath its surface (Briggs, 1994). Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, represents the softer, more nurturing side of imperialism, which sought to justify colonial rule through the rhetoric of benevolence and civilization. Her role as the caretaker of the family and her efforts to maintain harmony and order reflect the imperial ideology that sought to present colonialism as a civilizing mission, bringing order and progress to the "savage" lands (Parry, 2004). However, Woolf also exposes the limitations and contradictions of this ideology through Mrs. Ramsay's character. Her efforts to impose order and unity often mask deeper tensions and conflicts, both within the family and in the broader context of the empire (Said, 1993). The island setting in the novel *To the Lighthouse* further reinforces the novel's engagement with imperial themes. The Isle of Skye, distant from the British mainland, serves as a liminal space where the boundaries between the colonizer and the colonized become blurred. The Ramsay family's temporary occupation of the island can be seen as a metaphor for the transient and precarious nature of colonial rule, where the colonizers impose their presence on a foreign land, only to be eventually displaced by the forces of time and change. Woolf's portrayal of the island as a place of both beauty and isolation reflects the ambivalence of the colonial experience, where the promise of adventure and discovery is accompanied by the fear of loss and displacement (Parry, 2004).

Time and memory, central themes in the novel *To the Lighthouse*, also parallels with the colonial experience. The novel's exploration of the passage of time, the impermanence of human achievements, and the persistence of memory echoes the experience of empire, where the past and present are in constant tension, and the future is uncertain (Mao, 2010). The Ramsay family's struggle to come to terms with the passage of time and the inevitability of change mirrors the broader struggle of the British Empire to reconcile its past glories with the realities of a changing world. Woolf's use of shifting perspectives and fragmented narrative structures reflects the fragmented and contested nature of imperial identity, where different voices and experiences coexist in a complex and often contradictory relationship (Briggs, 1994; Parry, 2004). Lily Briscoe, the novel's artist figure, represents an alternative to the imperial mindset embodied by the Ramsay family. Her struggle to complete her painting and her resistance to traditional gender roles can be seen as a rejection of the rigid and hierarchical values of imperialism (Froula, 1986). Lily's creative vision that seeks to capture the fleeting and the ephemeral, contrasts with the Ramsays' desire for permanence and stability. Her

ultimate success in completing her painting represents a triumph of individual creativity and a rejection of the imperial ideology that seeks to impose order and control on the world (Froula, 1986). Woolf's portrayal of Lily Briscoe also reflects the theme of marginality and otherness, central to postcolonial theory. As a woman and an artist, Lily occupies a marginal position in the patriarchal society represented by the Ramsays. Her struggle to assert her identity and her vision about societal expectations mirrors the struggle of colonized peoples to assert their own identities and voices. Woolf uses Lily's character to critique the exclusionary practices of both patriarchy and imperialism, highlighting the ways in which those who deviate from the norm are marginalized and silenced (Mao, 2010).

Virginia Woolf's essays, particularly *Three Guineas* (1938) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929), offer deeper insights into the intersection of gender and empire, revealing her critical understanding of how these structures of power are interrelated. While Woolf is often celebrated for her exploration of gender and the position of women in society, her essays also engage with broader themes of imperialism and colonialism, highlighting the connections between patriarchal oppression within Britain and the subjugation of colonized peoples abroad.

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf explicitly links the oppression of women to the broader imperial context. She argues that the patriarchal systems that deny women economic independence and intellectual freedom are the same systems that drive the expansionist policies of the British Empire. Woolf critiques the ways in which these power structures reinforce each other, suggesting that the marginalization of women within British society is part of a larger pattern of domination that extends beyond national borders. The essay challenges the reader to consider how the liberation of women is not just a domestic issue but is also inherently connected to the dismantling of imperial power. By drawing parallels between the experiences of women in Britain and those of colonized peoples, Woolf broadens the feminist discourse to include a critique of empire, emphasizing that true freedom for women cannot be achieved without addressing the broader structures of oppression that exist within imperialism.

A Room of One's Own is another significant work in which Woolf explores the intersection of gender and empire, albeit in a more implicit manner. The central aspect of the essay, that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction," speaks to the material conditions necessary for women's creative and intellectual freedom. However, this assertion also carries with it an implicit critique of the economic foundations of empire. Woolf's focus on the importance of financial independence and private space highlights how wealth and privilege—often acquired through imperial exploitation—play a crucial role in determining who has the freedom to create. Woolf's awareness of her own privilege as a white, upper-class woman is evident throughout *A Room of One's Own*. She acknowledges that her ability to write and think freely is a product of her social and economic position, which, in turn, is connected to the wealth generated by the British Empire. This self-reflexivity adds a layer of complexity to her arguments, as Woolf recognizes the limitations of her perspective and the complicity of her class in the perpetuation of imperial dominance. Her reflections suggest a broader critique of the social and economic structures that uphold both gender inequality and imperial power, urging readers to consider how these issues are interrelated. Moreover, Woolf's essays often explore the ways in which imperial ideology shapes domestic life and gender

relations within Britain. She critiques the glorification of war and military power, which are closely tied to imperial conquest, and examines how these values are internalized and perpetuated within British society. She further argues that the same patriarchal values that valorize war and conquest abroad also manifest in the subjugation of women at home, reinforcing a culture of domination and control. Her work challenges the reader to see the connections between the personal and the political, the domestic and the imperial, and to recognize that the fight for gender equality is inseparable from the struggle against imperialism. In these essays, Woolf does not merely advocate for women's rights in a narrow, domestic sense; instead, she presents a vision of feminism that is deeply interconnected with broader social and political struggles, including the fight against imperialism. By linking gender oppression to imperialism, Woolf expands the scope of feminist critique, calling for a more comprehensive approach to liberation that addresses the underlying power structures that oppress both women and colonized peoples. Her work encourages a rethinking of feminism as not just a struggle for equality within existing systems of power but as a revolutionary force that seeks to dismantle those systems altogether.

Woolf's engagement with the concept of "the outsider" is another avenue through which her work can be read from a postcolonial perspective. In her essay *The Leaning Tower* (1940), Woolf discusses the importance of the outsider's perspective in literature, arguing that those who are marginalized by society—whether by gender, class, or race—are best positioned to critique its structures. This idea parallels with postcolonial theories of marginality and otherness, where the colonized subject is seen as an outsider within the dominant culture (Bhabha, 1994). Woolf's own position as an outsider to the literary establishment, due to her gender and non-conformist views, allows her to offer a critique of the British Empire that is both subtle and hollow. In her fiction, this outsider perspective is embodied in characters that exist on the margins of society. Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* are both outsiders in different ways—Septimus due to his mental illness and war trauma, and Lily because of her gender and artistic ambitions. Both characters challenge the dominant cultural narratives of their time, offering alternative ways of seeing and understanding the world that disrupt the certainties of imperial power. Virginia Woolf's work, when examined through a postcolonial lens, reveals a complex and critical engagement with the issues of empire, identity, and cultural dislocation. Her novels and essays offer a critique of British imperialism, highlighting the psychological and cultural effects of empire on both colonizer and colonized. Woolf's exploration of gender and imperialism, her use of outsider perspectives, and her subtle interrogations of colonial power structures make her a significant figure in postcolonial literary studies. While she may not have directly addressed the issues of empire in the same way as her contemporaries, Woolf's work nonetheless provides valuable insights into the cultural and psychological dimensions of colonialism.

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Gender-wise Differences in the Attitude of Secondary Students toward Accountancy

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Abstract:

This study investigates the effect of gender on the attitude of Secondary students towards Accountancy. A total of 150 Secondary school students participated in this study that were selected randomly, from various schools of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. The responses of students were collected through a self-developed 3-point attitude scale which consisted of 45 items related to five dimensions: Family Environment, Study Habits, Syllabus, Teaching Methodology, and Classroom Environment. Data collected was further analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings depicted that there was no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of female and male students. The study is of great significance for Accountancy teachers so that they are not gender-biased when teaching Accountancy. It is of equal significance for other stakeholders who are related to the education of Accountancy so that they are also not gender-biased in making their decisions related to Accountancy education.

Keywords: Attitude, Accountancy, Secondary Student, Gender

Introduction:

A lot of factors play a significant role in impacting the academic life of a child. Some of these factors are purely individual like interest, attitude, aptitude, etc while others are social like family environment, social background, gender-wise discrimination etc. Many times, education is stereotyped by society like girls do better in Arts and Boys do better in Science, or that boys are better than girls at logical reasoning. Even after remarkable examples where

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girls and boys both excel in every field, people still tend to follow such conceptions. In a country where patriarchal thoughts still dominate, it is likely that the attitude of girls towards a subject that involves numbers and calculations could be different from the attitude of boys. Accountancy is one such subject in the field of Commerce which involves numbers, calculations, lengthy formats, and rules.

For every Commerce Student, Accountancy is a very important subject as it involves recording, presenting, and interpreting monetary transactions of the business. It enables a student to know how money and its related transactions are dealt with in the business. Accountancy helps to develop creative, logical and analytical skills among students. It makes them work with numbers and analyse the business situation rationally.

The syllabus of Accountancy in various Boards i.e. U.P. Board, C.B.S.E. Board and I.S.C. Board is almost the same and includes most of the Accounting for Partnership Firms and Companies.

Positive Attitude of students towards a subject can be a motivating factor in their Achievement. Since Accountancy is a core subject for Commerce students with lots of numbers and calculations, it is important to know if there are any differences in the attitude of boys and girls who study Accountancy at Secondary Level.

Dr. Chawla C, Dr. Jain V. and Mahajan T. (2013) in their study titled “A Study on Student’s Attitude towards Accountancy Subject at Secondary School Level- With Reference to Moradabad City” revealed that the majority of the students mainly boys were of the opinion that they like the subject, the teachers and the methodology of the teachers and believed that the subject is of their interest regarding future aspects. The female/girl students were of not-so-different opinions but they nevertheless think that the subject is not quite up to for them especially the numerical/practical questions as they were lengthy and always of confusing nature for them.

Kumar (2014) in his study on the attitude of Secondary Students towards Accountancy concluded that the students (both male and female) have positive attitude towards their subject accountancy, accountancy teacher and the methodology used by the teacher for teaching Accountancy.

Since the findings of the above studies vary the Researchers considered it essential to conduct another study and find out whether there are differences among the attitude of Secondary students of U.P.Board, C.B.S.E. Board and I.S.C. Board towards Accountancy with reference to their gender.

For the purpose of this study, the Researcher considered **Attitude** as a predisposition to respond to a particular object in a generally favourable or unfavourable way and by **Secondary Students**, the Researcher meant all students studying in standard XI and XII in C.B.S.E., I.S.C. and U.P. Board governed Schools in Lucknow. As far as **Gender** is concerned, the researchers took into account Male and Female gender only.

The **Objectives** of this study are: -

1. To study differences in the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of U.P. Board.

2. *To know the difference between attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of C.B.S.E. Board.*
3. *To know the difference between attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of I.S.C. Board.*
4. *To know the significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at Secondary level irrespective of their Board of Education*

It is **Hypothesised** that:

1. *There is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of U.P. Board.*
2. *There is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of C.B.S.E. Board.*
3. *There is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of I.S.C. Board.*
4. *There is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level.*

The **Delimitations** of this study are: -

- *The study is delimited to schools of Lucknow only.*
- *The Study is conducted on students studying Accountancy at the Secondary level.*
- *All the data is collected during one academic year.*

The **Limitation** of this study is that *Responses of students were collected through a 3-point Rating Scale developed by the Researchers themselves.*

Methodology:

- **Type of Study** : Descriptive Research .
- **Population** - All Secondary students of Lucknow district studying Accountancy.
- **Sample** - 150 students (25 Female of U.P. Board+25 Males of U.P. Board+25 Females of CBSE Board + 25 Males of CBSE Board+25 Females of ISC Board + 25 Males of ISC Board).
- **Sampling Method** – The sampling techniques was *Purposive Sampling* and data was collected through Google Form.
- **Tool for Data Collection**- A *3-point Rating Scale* was prepared having 45 statements. Each statement had options for Agree, Disagree and Undecided. The statements were based on the following dimensions: - Study habits of students (SH), Family environment(FE), Classroom environment (CE), Teaching Methodology (TM) and

Syllabus(S) of Accountancy. The marking was done as follows:- For Positive Statements:-1. Undecided, 2. Disagree and 3. Agree and in reverse order for negative statements. The Face validity of the Tool was determined by the Expert Accountancy teachers teaching at the Secondary Level and experts in the field of psychology and education.

- Statistics for Data Analysis: - The collected data was tested for Normality and it was found *Not Normally distributed*. So, the researcher used *Non-Parametric Tests* for data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Objective 1. To study differences in the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of U.P. Board.

For the above objective, the data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test. The Results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender-wise Mean Ranks, N and Mann-Whitney U-Value of Attitude Towards Accountancy of U.P. Board Students.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Ranks</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U Value</i>
Female	25.12	25	303.000
Male	25.88	25	

From Table 1, it can be seen that the Mann-Whitney U-Value is 283.000 which is not significant. It indicates that the mean ranks of Attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students of U.P. Board do not differ significantly. Thus, the Null Hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of U.P. Board* is not rejected. It may, therefore, be said that both Female and Male Students of U.P, Board were found to have a similar attitude towards Accountancy.

Objective 2. To know the difference between attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of C.B.S.E. Board.

For the above objective, the data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test. The Results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender-wise Mean Ranks, N and Mann-Whitney U-Value of Attitude Towards Accountancy of C.B.S.E. Board Students.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Ranks</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U Value</i>
Female	25.12	25	303.000
Male	25.88	25	

From Table 2, it can be seen that the Mann-Whitney U-Value is 303.000 which is not significant. It indicates that the mean ranks of Attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students of the C.B.S.E. Board do not differ significantly. Thus, the Null Hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female*

and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of C.B.S.E. Board is not rejected. It may, therefore, be said that both Female and Male Students of C.B.S.E. Board were found to have a similar attitude towards Accountancy.

Objective 3) To know the difference between attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of I.S.C. Board.

For the above objective, the data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test. The Results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender-wise Mean Ranks, N and Mann-Whitney U-Value of Attitude Towards Accountancy of I.S.C. Board Students.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Ranks</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U Value</i>
Female	25.36	25	309.000
Male	25.64	25	

From Table 3, it can be seen that the Mann-Whitney U-Value is 309.000 which is not significant. It indicates that the mean ranks of Attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students of I.S.C. Board do not differ significantly. Thus, the Null Hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level in schools of I.S.C. Board* is not rejected. It may, therefore, be said that both Female and Male Students of I.S.C Board were found to have a similar attitude towards Accountancy.

Objective 4. To know the significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at Secondary level irrespective of their Board of Education

For the above objective, the data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test. The Results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Gender-wise Mean Ranks, N and Mann-Whitney U-Value of Attitude Towards Accountancy of Secondary School Students.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean Ranks</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U Value</i>
Female	74.01	75	2700.500
Male	76.99	75	

From Table 4, it can be seen that the Mann-Whitney U-Value is 2700.500 which is not significant. It indicates that the mean ranks of Attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at Secondary School level do not differ significantly. Thus, the Null Hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male students studying at the Secondary level* is not rejected. It may, therefore, be said that both Female and Male Students studying at Secondary School level were found to have a similar attitude towards Accountancy.

Conclusion:

From this study it is concluded that the attitude towards Accountancy of Female and

Male Students studying at Secondary levels in schools of U.P.Board, C.B.S.E.Board and I.S.C.Board is similar i.e. it is not significantly different. Also, no differences were seen in the dimension-wise attitude towards Accountancy of Female and Male Students studying at Secondary levels i.e. both Female and Male students had similar attitude towards Accountancy concerning their Family Environment, Study Habits, Syllabus, Teaching Methodology and Classroom Environment.

Suggestion for Further Study:

After conducting this study, the Researchers felt that although the Attitude of students towards Accountancy at Secondary Level is similar for both- Females and Males, yet stereotyping choice of subject based on gender is much more prevalent. Efforts must be made to give away such a mentality and to be more accepting towards the child's choice of subject. All stakeholders in the field of Accountancy and its education must not be gender-biased in making their decisions. Further attempts could be made to see the gender differences in the choice of Accountancy as a subject and child's attitude towards it, for a wider population, so that results can be generalised.

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Impact of Decision-making Capacity on Self-Reliance with Mediating Effect of Self-Confidence: A Study of Women Members of SHG in Bihar

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Abstract

SHGs have appeared as pivotal instruments for socio-economic empowerment, particularly among women in rural India. Bihar, a state with significant gender disparities, has witnessed the proliferation of SHGs as a means to address women's empowerment. However, the effectiveness of SHGs in fostering women's empowerment, particularly in terms of decision-making capacity, self-reliance, and self-confidence, remains a subject of inquiry. This study investigated the relationship between Decision-making capacity (DMC), self-reliance (SR), and self-confidence (SC) among women members of SHGs in the Saharsa, Samastipur, and Kaimur districts of Bihar. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for informing policy interventions aimed at enhancing women's empowerment and agency within SHGs and beyond.

The study adopts a survey research design within a descriptive framework, employing self-constructed questionnaires with a 5-point rating scale to collect primary data from 641 SHG women in Bihar. Multi-stage sampling technique is used to select participants from Kaimur, Samastipur, and Saharsa districts. Data analysis includes frequency analysis, ANOVA, correlation and regression analysis, along with Sobel test analysis for mediation, using SPSS version 25. The results showed significant differences in the SC, SR and DMC of the respondents based on their districts. Further, it was also revealed that DMC and SC influence SR significantly and positively. Findings also confirmed the significant impact of DMC on SR with mediating effect of SC. These findings highlight the crucial role of DMC in fostering SR

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among SHG's women. The mediating effect of SC suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing decision-making skills may lead to increased SR through a pathway of greater SC.

Keywords: Decision-making capacity, Self-Reliance, Self-confidence, Women, SHG.

1. Introduction

The establishment of SHGs has brought significant socio-economic benefits to women striving for empowerment. One of the primary outcomes of these groups is the enhancement of financial inclusion, providing women with access to credit and savings facilities. This access enables them to invest in livelihood activities and better manage financial shocks. Additionally, SHGs serve as platforms for skill development and entrepreneurship training, equipping women with the necessary knowledge and resources to start their ventures. This has led to a diversification of income sources and increased economic independence among SHG members. Furthermore, SHGs foster social capital and collective action among women, promoting solidarity and mutual support, and serving as vehicles for disseminating crucial information on health, education, and government schemes (Qazi Moin, 2021). This empowerment marks a paradigm shift towards inclusive development and gender equity in Bihar.

Bihar, particularly the districts of Saharsa, Samastipur, and Kaimur, has historically faced challenges in women's socio-economic empowerment. Despite progress, these areas continue to grapple with issues such as low literacy rates, limited employment opportunities, and social barriers. In this context, the potential of self-reliance and cooperation emerges as key drivers for empowering women. Self-reliance equips women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to navigate their economic and social realities. This includes vocational training, financial literacy programs, and access to microcredit (Rao, 2020). On the other hand, cooperation through collective action strengthens women's bargaining power, enabling them to access resources, markets, and influence policy decisions (Abdullah & Rai, 2018). SHGs and women's cooperatives are prime examples of this cooperative power.

Bihar faces significant gender disparities, with the female labor force participation rate being a mere 10.8%, compared to the national average of 25.9% (World Bank, 2021). Additionally, the NSSO Survey (2019) reveals a low literacy rate of 54.6% among Bihar's women. These factors contribute to a cycle of limited opportunities and economic dependence, hindering their overall well-being. Self-reliance, therefore, becomes a crucial first step towards empowerment. Government programs like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) offer vocational training in various sectors, fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2020). Microfinance institutions (MFIs) also play a vital role by providing access to credit, enabling women to start small businesses, which has been shown to positively impact women's economic participation and decision-making power within households (Rahman, 2019).

However, self-reliance alone may be insufficient without the collective power of cooperation. SHGs formed by women provide platforms for mutual support, knowledge sharing, and collective bargaining. These groups not only facilitate access to credit but also create networks for marketing products and addressing social issues (Singh et al., 2020). The Jeevika program in Bihar exemplifies this by providing women with microfinance, skill development,

and market access, while also fostering a sense of community and leadership within SHGs. The impact of Jeevika has been significant in promoting economic empowerment, enhancing decision-making power, and encouraging social participation among women in these districts.

Thus, investigating the impact of decision-making capacity on self-reliance, with the mediating effect of self-confidence among women in SHGs in these districts, is particularly significant and holds the focus of this study.

1.1. About the study area

The study is conducted on three selected districts of Bihar namely- Saharsa, Kaimur & Samastipur.

Bihar has nearly 58% of its population under 25 years old. Children make up 48%, with 89.9% in rural areas. The state has the highest population density in India, at 1,106 people per square kilometer. The 2020 adult literacy rate was 68.15% (78.5% males, 57.8% females). Poverty affects 33% of backward classes and 42% of Scheduled Castes.

- **Saharsa District:** Saharsa, established in 1954, has a population of 1.9 million and a sex ratio of 906 females per 1,000 males. It is mainly agricultural, with significant brick production and some industries. The density is 1,125 people per square kilometer. The literacy rate is 54.57%, with 8.24% urban population and 38.8% under 15 years old.
- **Kaimur District (Bhabhua):** Kaimur has a population of 1.63 million, with a sex ratio of 920 females per 1,000 males. The literacy rate is 69.34% (79.37% males, 58.40% females). Hinduism (89.54%) and Islam (9.55%) are the major religions. Agriculture is the main economic activity. Hindi, Urdu, and Kurukh/Oraon are the primary languages.
- **Samastipur District:** Samastipur has a population of 4.25 million and a density of 1,467 people per square kilometer. The sex ratio is 911 females per 1,000 males. The literacy rate is 61.86%, with 3.47% urban population. Major religions are Hinduism (89.18%) and Islam (10.62%). The main languages are Hindi (60.74%) and Maithili (30.79%).

1.2. Research Objective

- To evaluate the Impact of DMC on SR with mediating effect of SC.

1.3. Need and Significance of the study

This study explores how DMC influences self-reliance among women in SHGs in Saharsa, Samastipur, and Kaimur districts of Bihar, with a focus on the mediating effect of self-confidence. Understanding this relationship is crucial as it highlights the importance of empowering women through enhanced decision-making skills and self-confidence, thereby fostering greater SR and economic independence. The findings can inform policies and programs aimed at strengthening women's roles in community development and improving their socio-economic status.

2. Literature Review

Extensive evidence from the decision-making and cognitive science literature indicated

that individuals consistently demonstrated SC that is not well-calibrated. This phenomenon is well-documented in numerous studies and has been examined thoroughly by various scholars. For instance, research conducted by Ashley N. D. et al. (2013) and Deborah J. M. et al. (2015) provides compelling evidence that individuals frequently over estimated or underestimated their abilities and knowledge, leading to decisions that do not accurately reflect their true capabilities. This misalignment between perceived and actual competence has significant implications for understanding human behavior and improving decision-making processes. Ma, S., et al., (2023) discovered that the process of calibrating human self-confidence significantly improves overall team performance among humans and fosters a more rational and judicious reliance within team dynamics. Zabelina, E., et al., (2018) studied self-reliance among small business entrepreneurs in Russia, that found the motivational element of self-reliance (self-sufficiency and internality) influenced the choice of entrepreneurial career the most.

Al-Rashdi and Abdelwahed (2022) conducted a comprehensive study that highlighted the statistically significant and positive effects of both EE and SE on WE. Contrary to these findings, their research indicated that PE negatively influences WE. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that Self-efficacy and Family Support play a crucial role in significantly enhancing WE.

The existing body of literature corroborates the positive impact of the various dimensions of empowerment—namely, EE, SE, and PE—on Women’s Empowerment (Khan et al., 2021; Nayak, 2018). This literature also underscores the predictive capabilities of Self-efficacy in advancing Women’s Empowerment (Batool et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016; Sandhu & Ahmed, 2018; Sabri et al., 2021). Several studies have demonstrated that various elements, including economic progress, technical skills, social capital, entrepreneurial positioning, SC, entrepreneurial performance, education, and self-esteem, play a mediating role in WE. These factors collectively contribute to enhancing women’s capabilities and opportunities, thereby fostering an environment where they can thrive and achieve their full potential. (Qahir et al., 2022; Sulistyani & Suhariadi, 2022).

However, despite these extensive findings, the literature still lacks substantial evidence regarding the impact of decision-making capacity on SR, particularly when considering the mediating effect of SC. Recognizing this gap, the researchers identified the need to explore this relationship in the context of women who are members of SHGs in Bihar. Consequently, they developed a conceptual framework (Figure-4) to investigate and confirm these relationships comprehensively.

While there is a broad consensus on the positive contributions of Economic and Social Empowerment to WE, and the significant roles of Self-efficacy and Family Support, the negative impact of PE, as revealed by Al-Rashdi and Abdelwahed (2022), adds a nuanced understanding to this field. Moreover, the proposed investigation into the decision-making capacity and Self-confidence mediating Self-Reliance among SHG women in Bihar promises to fill a critical gap in the existing literature, offering new insights and potential pathways for enhancing Women’s Empowerment.

The present research investigated the relationship between decision-making capacity,

self-confidence, and self-reliance among women members of SHGs in Bihar, specifically focusing on Saharsa, Samastipur, and Kaimur districts. The chosen districts (Saharsa, Samastipur, Kaimur) represented diverse realities within Bihar, a state with low female literacy rates and limited economic opportunities (World Bank, 2021; NSSO Survey, 2019). Understanding these limitations was crucial when examining the impact of decision-making and self-confidence on self-reliance. These socio-cultural factors needed to be considered when studying the impact of interventions like SHGs. The reviewed literature highlighted the positive influence of SHGs on fostering SC, SR, and DMC in women across India (Mahato et al., 2022; Aggarwal et al., 2020).

Participation in SHGs created a safe space for women to share experiences, support one another, and develop their skills. This collaborative environment fostered a sense of accomplishment and belonging, leading to increased self-belief and confidence (Mathur & Aggarwal, 2017). By gaining access to microfinance and credit through SHGs, women became economically empowered. This financial independence allowed them to make their own choices, manage resources, and invest in their ventures, fostering self-reliance (Sonam, 2023; Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015).

SHGs often operated with democratic structures, encouraging women to take on leadership roles and participate in group decision-making. This experience equipped them with negotiation, communication, and problem-solving skills, translating into

greater confidence and ability to make decisions in their personal and professional lives (Singh, 2014). Studies by Deshmukh and Naik (2017) and Vinodhini and Vijayanthi (2016) explored the correlation between SHG participation and increased self-confidence among women, highlighting the impact on their personal lives. Kapoor (2019) examined the role of SHGs in promoting entrepreneurship among women in Noida, India. This entrepreneurial journey fostered self-reliance and decision-making skills as women navigated business challenges. Setia, et al., (2020) impact analysis in Hisar district highlighted improvements in decision-making autonomy among women associated with SHGs.

Studies revealed that SHGs empowered women by fostering self-confidence, self-motivation, and entrepreneurial skills (Chaudhury & Misra, 2018; Rachit & Shalini, 2017). Participation in SHGs enhanced women's decision-making autonomy (Tyagi & Kathpalia, 2021). SHGs provided a supportive environment where women could access resources and training, leading to increased self-reliance (Chaudhury & Misra, 2018).

Setia, et al., (2020) conducted an impact analysis of SHGs in Hisar district, emphasizing improvements in income levels and decision-making autonomy among women. Similarly, Devi and Narasalah (2017) examined the empowering effects of SHGs on women in Andhra Pradesh, highlighting socio-economic progress and agency. Arunkumar et al. (2016) provided empirical evidence of SHGs' transformative effects on women's lives, while Tripathy (2021) evaluated the impact of SHG membership on women's empowerment in agriculture across rural India.

Studies highlighted the potential of SHGs in empowering women across various aspects (Cheek & Corbett; Dave & Vasavada, 2022; Kumar et al., 2018; Kumar & Kumar, 2022; Kumar & Nayak, 2021; Mallick et al., 2020; Navas, 2015; Nayak & Panigrahi, 2020). Key

takeaways include: SHG participation enhances decision-making skills and self-confidence (Cheek & Corbett; Kumar & Nayak, 2021; Mallick et al., 2020). SHGs empower women economically by facilitating access to credit and fostering business ventures (Kumar & Kumar, 2022; Navas, 2015). SHGs contribute to social empowerment by promoting leadership, group norms, and social consciousness (Dave & Vasavada, 2022; Kumar et al., 2018; Mallick et al., 2020).

3. Research Methodology

In the present research, self-reliance is defined as the ability of women members of SHGs to independently meet their needs, make decisions, and solve problems within the SHG context. Self-confidence is assessed as the perception of these women regarding their ability to handle various stressful situations and perform effectively. Decision-making capacity is defined as the understanding, reasoning, and expression of choice among SHG women.

The study adopts a survey research design within a descriptive framework, employing structured questionnaires with a 5-point rating scale to collect primary data from 641 SHG women in Bihar. Multi-stage sampling technique is used to select participants from Kaimur, Samastipur, and Saharsa districts. Data collection occurred from January to February 2023, yielding 641 usable questionnaires after obtaining consent from participants. The scoring process involves 15 items measuring self-reliance, along with its dimensions: self-confidence (6 items) and decision-making capacity (9 items). Data analysis includes frequency analysis, ANOVA, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis, along with mediation analysis, conducted using SPSS version 25.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of 641 SHG women in Bihar reveals several key insights. In terms of district distribution, Saharsa, Samastipur and Kaimur represent 35.9%, 32.8%, and 31.4% of the sample respectively. Regarding age, the majority of SHG women fall within the 31 to 40 years category, constituting 42.3%, followed by 25.1% in the 41 to 50 years group. Moreover, Hinduism is the dominant religion among SHG women, with 85.8%, while Muslims account for 14.2% of the sample.

Concerning caste, a significant proportion of SHG women belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), comprising 42.6%, followed by Other Backward Classes (OBC) at 34.8%. Additionally, most SHG women speak Bhojpuri (50.2%), followed by a combination of Hindi and Bhojpuri (34.9%). Marital status indicates that the vast majority of SHG women are married (94.2%), while widowed women constitute a smaller proportion (5.8%).

In terms of educational qualification, a majority of SHG women have received primary education (55.4%), followed by secondary education (34.3%). A smaller percentage holds higher secondary education (3.3%) or graduation (5.0%), while 2.0% fall into the “Others” category.

4.2. ANOVA Analysis: Difference in the SC, SR and DMC of the respondents from Saharsa, Samastipur and Kaimur districts of Bihar.

H0 1: There is no significant difference in the SC, DMC and SR of the respondents as per their districts.

Table 1- Descriptives and ANOVA Analysis

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation		
SC	Saharsa	230	3.44	1.286		
	Samastipur	210	3.89	.887		
DMC	Kaimur	201	4.40	.850		
	Total	641	3.89	1.109		
	Saharsa	230	2.80	1.232		
	Samastipur	210	3.39	.978		
	Kaimur	201	3.55	1.195		
	Total	641	3.22	1.187		
SR	Saharsa	230	2.74	1.361		
	Samastipur	210	3.31	.910		
	Kaimur	201	3.71	1.034		
	Total	641	3.23	1.195		
ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SC	Between Groups	99.649	2	49.824	46.238	.000
	Within Groups	687.487	638	1.078		
	Total	787.136	640			
DMC	Between Groups	68.697	2	34.348	26.309	.000
	Within Groups	832.954	638	1.306		
	Total	901.651	640			
SR	Between Groups	102.542	2	51.271	40.320	.000
	Within Groups	811.287	638	1.272		
	Total	913.828	640			

From the results, it can be seen that the p-value comes out to be less than 0.05 in case of all the three dimensions, therefore it can be concluded that there is difference in the Self-confidence, Self-reliance and Decision-making capacity of the respondents from Saharsa, Samastipur and Kaimur districts of Bihar.

Figure 1-District * SC

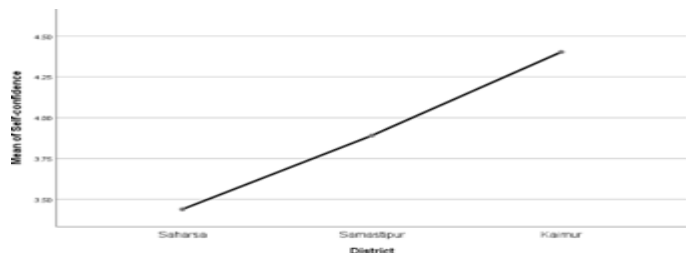


Figure 2- District * DMC

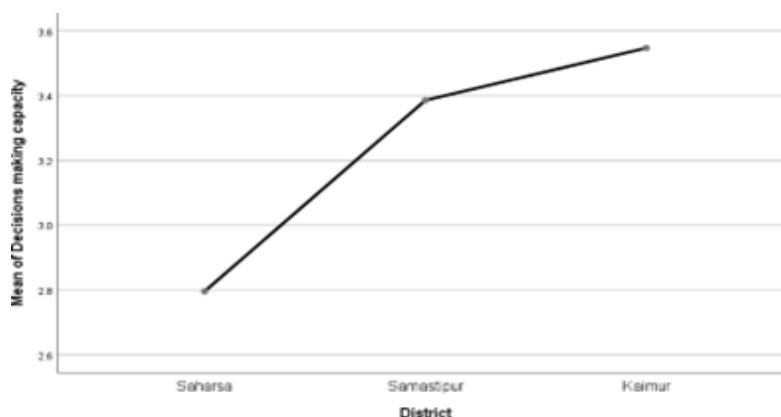
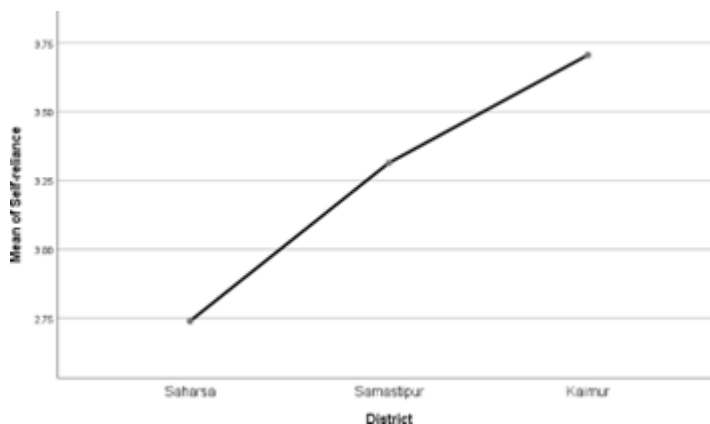


Figure 3- District * SR



4.3 Correlation Analysis: Relationship between SR, SC and DMC.

Table 2- Relationship between SR, SC and DMC.

Correlations				
		SR	SC	DMC
Pearson Corr.	SR	1.000	.733	.883
	SC	.733	1.000	.470
	DMC	.883	.470	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SR	.	.000	.000
	SC	.000	.	.000
	DMC	.000	.000	.
N	SR	641	641	641
	SC	641	641	641
	DMC	641	641	641

Interpretation- The above table shows that the strongest correlation is between self-reliance and decision-making capacity (0.883), followed by self-reliance and self- confidence (0.733). Further, the significance values (Sig.) for all correlations are 0.000, indicating very strong statistical significance.

4.4 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Impact of IVs- Decisions making capacity and Self-confidence on DV- Self-reliance.

- **H0 1:** There is no significant impact of **DMC** (IV) on **SR** (DV) and **SC** (IV) on **SR** (DV).

The model explains 91.00% of the variance in self-reliance and the F-statistic (3208.56) is significant ($p < .000$) indicating that the model is statistically significant.

Table 3- Impact of IVs- **DMC** and **SC** on DV- **SR**.

Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstd. Coeff.		Std. Coeff.	t	Sig.	Corr.		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	-.723	.055		-13.219	.000			
	SC	.439	.015	.408	30.217	.000	.733	.767	.360
	DMC	.696	.014	.692	51.282	.000	.883	.897	.611

a. Dependent Variable: **SR**

Interpretation- The Standardized coefficient (beta) for **Decisions making capacity** is 0.692 & significant ($p < 0.05$) leading to the rejection of H01. Further, it means that, a one- unit increase in decision-making capacity is associated with a 0.692 standard deviation increase in self-reliance. In case of **Self-confidence** the Standardized coefficient (beta) is

0.408 & significant ($p < 0.05$) leading to the rejection of H02. Further, i a one-unit increase in self-confidence is associated with a 0.408 standard deviation increase in self-reliance. It can be inferred that the decision-making capacity has a stronger effect on self-reliance compared to self-confidence.

4.5 Correlation Analysis: Relationship between Self-confidence and Decisions making capacity.

Table 4- Relationship between **SC** and **DMC**.

Correlations			
		SC	DMC
Pearson Corr.	SC	1.000	.470
	DMC	.470	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SC	.	.000
	DMC	.000	.
N	SC	641	641
	DMC	641	641

Interpretation- The above table shows that there is a positive (0.470) and significant ($p < 0.05$) Self-confidence and Decision-making capacity.

4.6 Regression Analysis: Impact of IV- DMC on DV-SC.

- **H0 1:** There is no significant impact of **DMC** (IV) on **SC** (DV).

The model explains 22.10% of the variance in self-confidence and the F-statistic (181.176) is significant ($p < .000$) indicating that the model is statistically significant.

Table 5- Impact of IVs- DMC on DV-Self-confidence.

Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstd. Coeff.		Std. Coeff.	t	Sig.	Corr.		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	2.473	.112		22.063	.000			
	DMC	.439	.033	.470	13.460	.000	.470	.470	.470

a. DV: Self-confidence

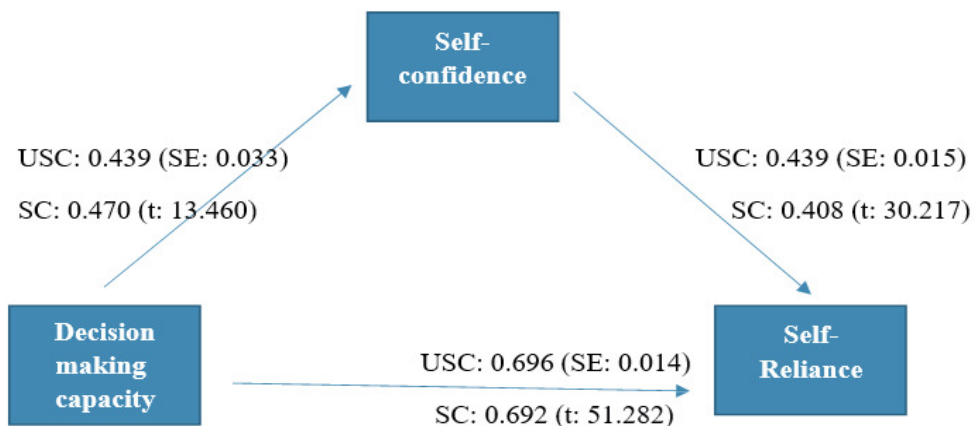
Interpretation- The Std. coeff. (beta) for **DMC** is 0.470 & significant ($p < 0.05$) leading to the rejection of H01. Further, it means that, a one-unit increase in DMC is associated with a 0.470 std. deviation increase in SC.

4.7 Mediation Analysis: Impact of DMC on Self-Reliance with mediating effect of Self-confidence.

In the present study, **DMC** is Independent Variable (IV); **SR** is Dependent Variable (DV) and **SC** is Mediator Variable (MV).

- **H0 4:** There is no indirect significant relationship between **DMC** and **SR** with mediating effect of **SC**.

Figure 4- Mediation Effect Model



The Sobel test evaluates whether the decrease in the impact of the independent variable, upon incorporating the mediator into the model, is substantial.

Table-8 Sobel Test Statistics

	Input		Test statistics	Std. Error	p-value
a	.439	Sobel test	12.110	0.01	0.00
b	.439	Aroian test	12.104	0.01	0.00
S_a	.033	Goodman test	12.116	0.01	0.00
S_b	.015				

A significant p-values (usually < 0.05) indicates that the indirect effect of decision-making capacity on self-reliance through self-confidence is statistically significant, rejecting H0 1 that there's no such effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an impact of decision-making capacity on SR with mediating effect of SC in case of Women members of SHGs in Saharsa, Samastipur and Kaimur districts of Bihar.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The analysis of SC, **SR**, and **DMC** across Saharsa, Samastipur, and Kaimur districts reveals substantial disparities among women in these regions. Notably, significant differences exist in self-confidence levels, with Kaimur boasting the highest proportions of women exhibiting very high SC, while Saharsa shows the lowest. Likewise, the variability in DMC is stark, with Samastipur leading in high decision- making capacity and Saharsa lagging behind. Furthermore, self-reliance levels also vary significantly, with Kaimur demonstrating the highest proportions of women in the high and very high self-reliance categories, contrasting sharply with Saharsa.

These findings emphasize the diverse socio-cultural landscapes shaping women's empowerment across the districts. Regression analyses further elucidate the relationships between these variables. DMC emerges as a key determinant of SR, exerting a notably stronger effect compared to SC. This suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing DMC skills among women may have a more pronounced impact on fostering self-reliance. Moreover, the significant impact of DMC on SC underscores its multifaceted role in influencing women's agency and empowerment.

However, the mediation analysis, while affirming the direct influence of decision- making capacity on self-reliance, does not reveal a statistically significant indirect effect through SC. This suggests that while self-confidence plays a role in shaping self- reliance, other factors beyond self-confidence may also contribute to the relationship between DMC and self-reliance.

These findings highlight the complex interplay of factors influencing WE and agency in decision-making processes. Tailored interventions addressing the unique socio- cultural contexts and underlying determinants within each district are essential for fostering greater levels of empowerment and autonomy among women. By acknowledging and addressing these disparities, policymakers and practitioners can work towards creating more inclusive and equitable pathways to empowerment for women across diverse settings.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings, here are some recommendations:

- Develop programs and initiatives tailored to address the specific needs of each district. For example, Saharsa might require programs that specifically boost self-confidence and decision-making skills among women.
- Further research is needed to explore the factors contributing to the observed variations across districts. This could help in developing more targeted interventions.
- WE through workshops and training programs that enhance their decision-making abilities could have a positive spillover effect on self-confidence and self-reliance.
- Encourage and support initiatives that promote SR among women, such as entrepreneurship workshops, access to micro-loans, and skill development programs.

By implementing these recommendations, we can work towards closing the gap in self-confidence, self-reliance, and decision-making capacity among women across different regions.

List of Abbreviations	
Women empowerment	WE
Economic Empowerment	EE
Political Empowerment	PE
Decisions making capacity	DMC
Self-Help Groups	SHGs
Self-confidence	SC
Self-reliance	SR

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Exploring the Intersection of Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Education

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Abstract

The advent of technology has revolutionized each and every aspect of life. The same is true for the field of education. The latest technologies have made education more interactive, learner-centered, flexible, interesting, and much more. One such technology is immersive technology, which levels up reality by leveraging 360 spaces. These technologies create, display, and interact with new experiential content. It immerses the user in a new digital reality by overlaying digital elements over the physical world. Such technologies include Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Mixed Reality, Holograms, Haptics, Mixed Reality, Extended Reality and Telepresence. Among these, Augmented and Virtual Reality are most commonly used, and the use of VR headsets and metaverse games are the most common examples of VR and AR, respectively. These are transforming education by providing engaging, motivating, self-learning, personalized, collaborative experiences that enhance understanding and retention. In the field of education, applications of AR and VR include interactive textbooks and learning materials, virtual labs and simulations, field trips and medical reconstruction, interactive language exercises, customized learning experiences, therapeutic applications, soft skill training, etc. They provide safe learning environments, personalized learning, an improved learning environment, collaboration and social interaction, and enhanced engagement. These technologies have enormous capability to evolve and make more contributions in the field of education. This paper explores the field of immersive technologies, their existing use and their scope in the near future.

Keywords: *Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Immersive Technologies, Mediating*

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Introduction:

The advent and the technology integration in the educational sector has remodelled the landscape of education with the reshaping of traditional methods of teaching and learning. It offers unprecedented opportunities by giving access to education, personalized learning, interactive and engaging learning tools, collaboration, communication, remote learning, flexibility, enhancing teacher abilities, research and innovation, etc. Through the promotion of active learning, collaborative and cooperative learning, creative learning, integrative learning, and evaluative learning, ICT (information and communication technology) has a profound impact on education in terms of knowledge acquisition and absorption (Raja and Nagasubramani (2018)). Among them, the interactive and engaging tools play an important role in enhancing traditional classroom settings. Immersive technology offers technology that attempts to imitate a physical world with the help of the digital or stimulating world. This is done by creating a surrounding sensory feeling (Pavithra et al., 2020). These immersive technologies can be the model of reality, a complete fantasy user interface or a mixture of both. They can bring realistic environmental effects like wind, seat vibration and light. Diverse forms of immersive technologies exist like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented reality (AR), Mixed reality (MR), Extended reality, 360-degree videos, Haptic technology, etc. Each of these types has its unique applications and has the potential to contribute and transform sectors such as education, entertainment, healthcare and more. Here, Mixed reality combines elements of both Virtual reality and augmented reality virtually, where the digital and physical objects coexist, and they interact in real time. This requires spatial computing and advanced sensors. Examples of mixed



Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/coolarts223/art/Students-in-a-modern-technological-school-960808234>

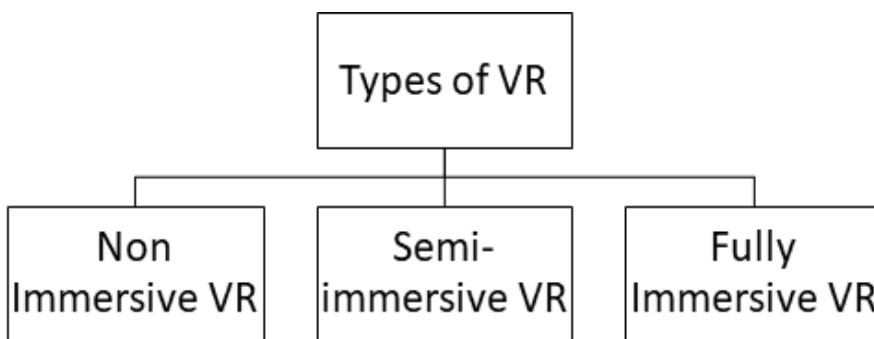
reality are Microsoft HoloLens and Magic Leap One. Extended reality (XR) is an umbrella term which has VR, AR, and MR included in it. Here all virtual and real environments combine and human-machine interactions are generated by computer technology and wearables. 360-Degree Videos are the immersive videos where the user is allowed to look in every direction

from one point, thus providing a panoramic view of the scene. Examples of this technology are YouTube 360, Facebook 360, etc. There is one more technology known as Haptic technology which involves tactile feedback, simulating the sense of touch by applying forces, vibrations or motions to the users. Examples are Haptic gloves and haptic suits like the Tesla suit. Spatial computing involves digital processing and interaction with the physical world by incorporating AR(Augmented Reality) and MR (Mixed Reality). Sensors and spatial awareness are included to interact and manipulate digital and physical world objects. Examples of spatial computing are Google Project Tango, Apple’s ARKit, etc. Project mapping technology turns objects which are often irregularly shaped into a display surface for the projection of the video.

The objects can be mapped digitally and made to display visual content. Examples of this technology are interactive art installations, building projections for events and advertisements. The technology of Volumetric Capture records a three-dimensional space to be displayed in a 3D environment. By the use of this technology, highly realistic 3D models and scenes can be created. Examples are Microsoft Mixed reality capture Studio, 8i, etc. There is also Augmented Virtuality (AV), which refers to the integration of real-world into a virtual environment. Unlike AR, which sums up digital elements to the real world, AV brings real-world objects into a virtual space. Among these immersive technologies, the trending realities are Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR).

Immersive technologies offer relevant, obtainable and engaging training solutions to the diverse sectors like e-commerce, shopping tools, healthcare, education, marketing, advertising, art, gaming, etc. This technology has put a new dimension to education as it taps into the different senses of human beings. Earlier, the multimedia systems which were used in education only included two senses using two communication channels, namely audio and video. Whereas these immersive technologies not only employ visual and audio but also use olfactory and haptic media (Santos & Peslak, 2022).

Virtual Reality



Virtual reality creates an artificial world where the person can interact through the sense of his vision, audio, tactile, etc. These interactive experiences aim to supplement the current world. Virtual Reality can also be said as computer generated 3D environments. The users are able to immerse themselves to different degrees in the artificial computer world. VR is a

combination of 3D still images, computer gaming, computer assisted instruction, equipment simulators, etc.(Mishra, 2021). Users associate with this virtual world through the VR headsets, controllers, haptic gloves or suits. The key features of virtual reality are that VR provides a fully immersive experience by isolating users from the real world and making themselves immersed in the environment which is computer generated, interaction, 3D environments and sensory engagement by engaging multiple senses including sight, sound and touch.

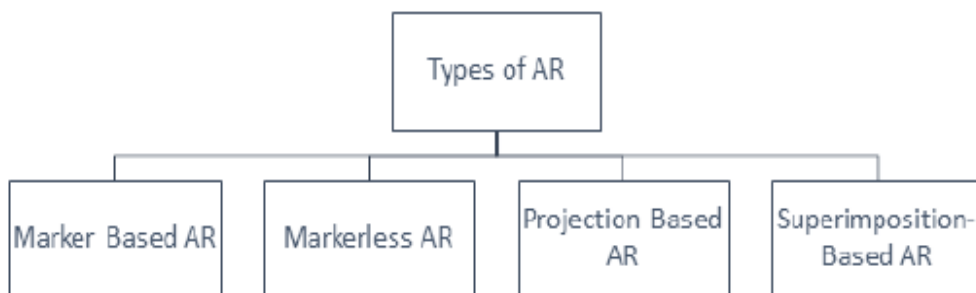
There are three types of VR, namely non-immersive VR, semi-immersive VR and fully immersive VR.(Musa et al., 2022). The non-immersive VR provides a virtual environment, but it does not immerse the user. It is accessed through the computer screen. For example, video games are played on the computer. The semi-immersive VR offers a little more immersive experience as compared to the latter. It often uses large screens to create a sense of depth. For example, flight simulations to create a realistic training environment. The fully-immersive VR completely immerses the user in a virtual environment using VR headsets and motion tracking. For example, VR gaming systems like Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and Playstation VR, etc.

Virtual reality has many applications in the field of education. VR can create entirely virtual classrooms where, in the same physical space, students from different locations can interact and meet. VR can also create simulated environments like oceans, outer space or historical settings, thus providing deeper understanding of the subject.(Lege & Bonner, 2020). With the help of VR, real world tasks and procedures such as surgery, welding, real hands-on practice without the real-world risks. VR can also be used to simulate social situations and role-playing scenarios for teamwork, developing communications, and leadership skills. VR is also useful for the purpose of special education by providing customized learning experiences and for therapeutic applications. VR can be designed to meet the requirements of students with special needs by offering personalized learning experiences. VR can support therapies for students with ADHD, autism and other conditions. VR can help in global collaborations by enabling students from around the world to work together on projects and permitting them to attend lectures together, thus breaking the geographical barriers. VR can also bring educational resources to students in remote areas, thus promoting digital equity. Virtual events, conferences, workshops and guest lectures can also be conducted by VR, thus, enhancing the engagement and interactivity of virtual events. It also enables remote participation and networking in virtual environments. Virtual Career fair and recruitments can be conducted with the help of VR. Simulating job interviews and professional interactions can be done. In research and development, VR can also help in conducting user studies and usability testing of VR applications. It also helps in exploring the pedagogical and cognitive impacts of VR on education. In addition, VR also helps in administrative and operational applications by offering virtual management and facilities planning, immersive training for campus security and emergency response, visualization and simulation for campus infrastructure and operations.

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality (AR) is the technology which superimposes digital information such as images, videos and 3D models(Chandrasekera & Yoon, n.d.) onto the real-world environment, thus, enhancing the user's perception of the real world by adding sensory inputs generated by

the computer(Yildiz, n.d.). The key features of AR include overlaying of digital content, real-time interactions, the use of sensors and cameras and its accessibility. AR can be accessed through a variety of devices like tablets, smartphones, AR glasses and head-up displays.



There are four types of AR, namely Marker-based AR, Markerless AR, Projection based AR and Superimposition AR. Marker-based AR uses visual markers such as QR codes or images to trigger the display of digital content(Shankar et al., 2023). For example, AR business cards display additional information when scanned. Markerless, AR uses features of the physical environment, such as the geometry of surfaces, in order to place digital content. For example, Pokémon Go, where the creatures in the digital world appear in the user's real-world locations. Projection-based AR projects digital images onto physical objects in the real world. For example, interactive exhibits in museums that project information onto artifacts. Superimposition based AR substitutes a portion of the real world view with an augmented view, thus enhancing the user's perception of that object. An example of augmented reality in education is learning about the human body by overlaying the images of the actual person and describing its parts. The devices which support augmented reality are mobile devices, head up display, AR glasses (Google glasses, meta 2 glasses, Laforge AI eyewear, etc.), AR contact lenses, etc.

There are numerous uses of Augmented reality in educational space and one of them is field trips and historical reconstruction. A classroom can be changed into a historical site, museum or distant planet by providing real life experience without leaving school. Historical events and ancient civilizations can be recreated by allowing the students to know their past (Yildiz, n.d.) Furthermore, virtual labs and simulations are also the applications of AR in the field of education. AR apps are there which enable the students to conduct virtual experiments safely and repeatedly, enhancing their understanding of difficult concepts and theories. Medical training can also be done with the help of AR, where the medical students can use AR to explore 3D models of human anatomy, practicing surgical procedures and performing virtual dissections. Traditional textbooks can be made more interactive with the support of AR. The textbooks which have AR capabilities, permit learners to scan images or text with a device to view interactive 3D models, animations and videos. There are AR flashcards which bring subjects like biology or astronomy to life by demonstrating 3D models and when scanned they will show detailed information. In addition, learning of language can also be done with the

assistance of interactive language exercises. AR apps can create virtual shopping experiences to learn vocabulary and phrases in context. AR tools for education and training are Civilizations AR, Anatomy 4D and froggipedia.

When AR and VR are used in education, it proves to be beneficial. It enhances engagement by giving interactive and immersive experiences to the students. It also improves the understanding by visualizing complex concepts in 3D, which helps students to grasp difficult subjects more easily. VR and AR also provide safe learning environments since the simulations provide a risk-free environment for experimenting and practicing skills. They also provide personalized learning, hence tailoring education according to student's learning styles and paces. Virtual environments foster collaboration and communication among students, thus enhancing social learning.

Along with the positive aspects, there are challenges and considerations in these technologies while implementing them in the area of education. They can be expensive, requiring investment in hardware and software (Shankar et al., 2023). Students and teachers need to be trained effectively. For accessibility to every learner, including those with disabilities, is also an issue. In India, there are also challenges in the implementation of AR and VR. Firstly, the cost and accessibility of these technologies are expensive, with which many schools may struggle. The schools in rural areas lack the necessary infrastructure, like high-speed internet, electricity, and computer labs. The digital divide in India is a prime issue in remote schools. Both the teachers and the students lack the unavoidable digital skills to effectively use AR and VR tools. Hence, it is very necessary to train the teachers and students; this can be done by incorporating these into the curriculum and conducting in-service and pre-service teacher trainings. There is a shortage of high-quality curriculum-aligned AR and VR educational content. Developing this kind of content requires quality time, skills, and money. There are technological challenges and pedagogical integration of AR and VR into curriculum. Long-term use of VR headsets can cause health risks like hearing loss, weak eye sight, and motion sickness. There are equity issues in the integration of AR and VR into the curriculum. There is a need for clear policies and regulations around the use of AR and VR in education, which will include guidelines on privacy, data security, and ethical concerns.

The concept of AR and VR is not only on the paper, but it is also being implemented at the ground level. For example, in Kendriya Vidyalaya there are virtual reality labs where students explore subjects like science, history and geography through immersive experiences. Delhi Public School (DPS) has introduced AR-enabled textbooks. Chinmaya Vidyalaya has implemented VR in their classrooms to teach complex subjects. Other schools, like The Heritage School, Gurgaon, Eklavya school, Birla High school, etc. These technologies are being increasingly adopted in the Indian education system, thus making learning more interactive, immersive and engaging. NEP 2020 also advocates the integration of technology into the curriculum to create a tech-savvy educational ecosystem.

Indian Government Initiatives in AR and VR

The GoI (government of India) has also recognized the potential of Augmented Reality and Virtual reality and has taken a handful of initiatives to integrate and promote these

technologies. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is an ingenuity to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. One of its main components is the Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs), which provides students access to AR and VR. The digital India Programme, Skill India mission, BharatNet Project, etc. NEP 2020 emphasizes the use of technology in education, including AR and VR in order to produce more interactive and immersive learning experiences, Centre of excellence in AR/VR to promote research and development in this field, SAMVEDAN (sensitizing aspirational and meaningful venture development in augmented reality and AI for nation building), ISRO has been exploring the use of VR for training astronauts and conducting virtual simulations for the missions, etc. These initiatives are helping to generate a more innovative and technologically advanced society, thus preparing India in the succeeding time.

Conclusion:

Immersive technology offers many ways to enhance, blend or replace reality by providing users with new levels of interaction and engagement. Challenges still remain but can be overcome by ensuring equitable access to technology, which can be done by addressing the digital divide. The evolving technology will undoubtedly shape the succeeding time of education by providing new right set of circumstances for the learners and educators. As this immersive technology is unabating to evolve, its applications and impact are expected to rise significantly.

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A Review-based Analysis of the Benefits of MOOC Courses during the COVID-19

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The corona virus has caused the world's condition to become abnormal during the past several years. The COVID-19 virus has altered our daily lives. Our social lives were mostly affected by this infection. Students acquire their social skills in the classroom setting, where social life begins. Thus, our educational system was reliant on technology throughout this epidemic. The education industry begins operations over the Internet. Online learning serves as the starting point for the teaching-learning process. As a result, MOOCs are crucial in this scenario. Massive open online courses impacted many students. This paper's primary goal is to list the advantages of massively open online courses (MOOCs). Data were collected using a qualitative technique and a content analysis method. This study examines the literature to address how, in the context of COVID-19, we can reap the benefits of using technology in education. The advantages of MOOC courses are defined by means of systematic reviews, which provide these responses. The researcher specified that 20 studies be examined. The study's findings demonstrate the advantages of MOOCs for college students. A systematic review of existing research is used to show the advantages or benefits of MOOC courses.

Keywords: Benefits, MOOCs, Covid- 19, Online Courses.

Introduction

Now in this digital era, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) provides an interactive platform for all students, professors, and teaching assistant to interact through the social media discussion on the course forum and get feedback quickly. Learners learned their courses at their pace or speed. This platform is free for all learners, they do their work and assignments with the help of it. MOOCs were firstly introduced in 2006 and were a popular mode in 2012.

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Dav Cormier was given the term MOOCs in 2008.



Figure: 1Massive Open Online Course

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MOOC_poster_mathplourde.png

During the lockdown situation, every school ceases due to a corona virus attack. Because of this virus, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) would be suggested that everyone should maintain their social distance and followed the instruction given by it. In this situation, the role of technologies was increased. School education started online mode. The content delivery process starts with the help of the internet or online. (Bates, 2018. Allen & Seamen 2016). Web-based content delivery and online interaction at higher education. Recent studies have identified the intrinsic educational value of MOOCs and advancement in the field of e-learning (Gamage Fernando and Perera, 2015, Sanchez, 2016).

Benefits of MOOC courses

MOOC courses are free for all but pay some charges certification for that. The platform of MOOC where all the participants interact with them via the web-based online forum. There is all learning aspirants have collaborated. Technology enable platform allows to participant can learn from it anytime and anywhere. This learning forum enhances the learning outcome or achievement at a highly meaningful level of learning. MOOC courses were a rich platform where all the professors, teachers, and learners interacted with each other freely. It improves well-being through socialization, lifelong learning, and for re-skilling and employability (Bahler&Fisseler, 2007, Vila, Pallisera&Fullana, 2007).



Figure-2 Benefits of MOOC

Source: <https://jeckukas.org.in/JEC-engineering/MOOCs-NPTEL-SWAYAM>

Literature Review

Francisco Iniesto, PatricMcAndrew, ShaileyMinocha and et.al. (2016) describe that MOOC courses have available many opportunities at a huge level which cost is very low. Many distance Universities suggested that the online learning provided accessibility to these courses gives the best achieved through the approaches of MOOCs. A mixed-method of research was used by the researcher. The qualitative method of research helps to identify the viewpoint of educators and the expectation of users. The quantitative method analyzed how to improve the educational resources and adapted to their need.

Ms. SandychrisInchiparamban and Dr. SudhaPingle (2016) describe the need for the course MOOC. This paper defined the conceptual aspect of it, the need of it's in the present scenario, and the benefits and challenges of face to continue to proceed with these courses.

Judy Harris and Christine Wihak (2018) explained the non-formal education in the form of open education resources and MOOCs. Researchers have analyzed the literature review from the three fields. The two sections are – 1) Overview of the three pieces of literature. 2) Analysis and classification of recognition of non-formal over the three fields. This researcher suggested that the recognition of non-formal education is available for all parties that seem to benefit from it. There is a positive effect on the quality of non-formal education and the qualification status of candidates or participants has social and economic benefits.

Marina Lepp, TaunoPaltsKasparPapil and et.al. (2018) introduce the learning programming of MOOCs and identify the problem which is faced by the presenters and participants. The researcher found the solution to it. The main aspect of this paper is to introduce the troubleshooter and takes the feedback of participants on using troubleshooters. The result of this study is that the troubleshooter plays a very helpful part in programming for the participant in need of extra assistance.

Stephanie J. Blackmon (2018) describes the process of making courses and analyzes the experiences of professors to develop and deliver MOOCs. Some faculty members were excited about preparing or develop of this courses and some of the faculties faced difficulties and feel more pressure to create these courses. The researcher investigated both aspects of experienced which have experience and difficulties faced by the faculty members or professors developing and delivering the courses of MOOC.

Stephen Wilkins and KataiinaJuusola (2018) studied transnational higher education. The author firstly discussed the benefits and drawbacks of transnational higher education for the stakeholders of host and home countries. The result shows that this study's host and home countries have more cosmopolitan in the field of transnational higher education but it is a complex study for the stakeholders in both countries.

YousefAljaraideh (2019) identified the benefits and challenges MOOCs for the faculty members at Jerash University. This study is descriptive. 130 faculty members at Jerash University were selected as a sample. This study mainly focused on the barriers when using its and finds the benefits or advantages of these courses for faculty members.

John Kerr, Vicki H.M. Dale, and FanniGyurko (2019) evaluated the mapping framework of MOOC design and measured the experiences of learners and academic technologies. The

nature of this study is qualitative which collected the data from 12 semi-structured interviews with nine academic and 3 learning technologies.

Martha Cleveland-Innes, Sarah Gauvreau Gloria Richardson and et.al. (2019) investigated the benefits and challenges of technology enabling learning using the community of inquiry in the classroom of higher education.

Xiaobin Li (2019) describes Chinese review literature on distance higher education and MOOCs. The role of these courses in china and find out the benefits, challenges, and opportunities of it. The researcher conclude their study with the help of a Chinese literature review and also reviewed the English international journals, articles on distance higher education, and courses of MOOCs related to China.

Amin Ullah Khan, Dr. KashifUllah Khan and et al. (2020) describe the factor influencing MOOCs, especially in the situation of Covid-19. The main purpose of this study is to identify the factors which are responsible for enhancing the retention of MOOC participants. This study was conducted on Pakistanis participants who joined online courses using social media interaction.

JosemariaElizondo- Garcia and Katherina Gallardo (2020) explained the interaction of learner learner practices of peer feedback on xMOOC. In this study, the researcher found that most of the participants are too much willing to interact with their peers and participate in the activities related to peer feedback. This study found that the discussion forum is not more acceptable than the peer assessment activities. It gives a better learning environment to enhance their social interaction platform.

Rakesh Kumar Meet and Devkant Kala, (2020) defined the MOOCs through a systematic review from 2013 to 2020. The researcher found that 102 studies are published in peer-reviewed journals and conferences. The method of this study was mixed. This study is based on the digital technologies of the period of Covid-19. So, researcher finds online platform to enhance learning and teaching.

NourAwniAlbelbisi and Farrah Dina Yusop, (2020) explained the MOOCs role and initiatives in Malaysian University and analyzed the published work from 2014 to 2018. This paper mainly focuses on the initiatives of it and what's the issues that find the implementation of this in higher education at Malaysian University. The researcher reviewed the 25 studies to analyze the nationwide MOOC initiatives in the higher education system in Malaysia.

NergizErcilCagiltay, KursatCagiltay, and BerkanCelik (2021) described that MOOC courses have increased enrollment in years but decreased the certificate rates among enrolled learners.

RabiaVezne (2020) studied teacher satisfaction through the massive open online courses. The researcher found the most important issue, especially in the area of teacher education in Turkey. The main focus of this study is to know the opinion of teacher education candidates related to MOOCs and identify their satisfaction with these courses. The result of this study has the positive effect of MOOCs on the candidates for teacher education and they are too much satisfied with the courses.

Bing Wu (2021) described the online reviews of MOOCs on the discussion forum through

social interaction. The largest platform for MOOC is Coursera selected as the research object and gathered data from the participant on the discussion forum have a significantly positive effect on an online review of MOOC.

Farnaz Tajik and Mahdi Vahedi (2021) assessed formal education during the period of the pandemic (Covid-19) when there was all the world have a lockdown situation and all the schools were started online. So the researcher has surveyed the teachers and students of school closure and how schools were carried out their work in Iran? This survey mainly focused on the medium of interaction during the situation of quarantine. The researcher took 92 k-12 instructors and 593 k-12 students are part of this survey. This study showed that the most of participants used social media. The correlation between gender, teaching methods, education methods, age, and technologies have a meaningful relationship. The main finding of this student survey shows that older students have used social media for the educational meeting.

Merilin Sade, ReelikaSuviste, and PiretLuik (2021) develop a MOOCs instrument and measure its post-impact of it. This study is based on Estonia University. They had organized the many programming on MOOCs. In this program, 14,000 people attended. Live participants who had attended this program were analyzed by the researcher. For the validation and developed scale through the confirmatory factor. The sample of this study of over 10,000 participants and only 60% of the participants were completed. The researcher collected data through an online questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to 8418 on their valid E-mail addresses. Only 1261 participants answered this questionnaire. The researcher used the SPSS version 26 and AMOS version 26 for the analysis of data. Finally, the learning experiences from MOOCs are the highest for the participant and the lowest for the new contacts.

Dr. OdielEstrade Molina and Dieter Reynaldo Fuentes Cancell (2022) described the satisfaction of the participants of MOOCs and their typologies (xMOOC, cMOOC, iMOOC, etc.). The author systematically analyzed the literature. The researcher applied the PRISMA protocol for the review of the related study and analyzed the engagement and neglect in the courses of MOOCs. This study finds the relationship between engagement and dropout rate in the courses of it.

Research Methodology

This paper used a qualitative method, especially in the field of MOOCs. Related to the MOOC author done the review was published in the year 2016-2022. Qualitative and quantitative both the published research work done in this study. The literature review has studied the benefits of these courses during the situation of pandemic (Covid-19). All unpublished articles, thesis, and dissertation have not been included in it. All the review of the literature was published in a different journal. A total of 20 research articles were reviewed and published from 2016 to 2022 which were available on ERIC, Google scholar, and the Academia electronic database. These reviewed works proved the benefits or advantages of the courses of MOOC and identify the interest area of research of it.

Analysis

In this study, the author reviewed the 20 studies through the online database. Some studies

related to the qualitative aspect of research which is analyzed the interest of participants, how to get benefits from these courses, and what the challenges have faced in organizing, developing, executing, and delivering the content or programmers of MOOCs. The quantitative aspect of it described the achievement, viewpoint, and expectation with it. So that these courses or programs have a high percentage to enroll the participants or candidates but low percentages to get completing these courses. But this percentage during the pandemic participant enrolment and completion of these courses has increased.

Conclusion

This study filled the gap in the previous researches with the help of a review of related literature. This study investigated the benefits of MOOC courses during the pandemic situation. These courses provide easy access for everyone and these programs have a flexible and interactive platform where all the participants have to collaborate through the online environment. These participants can continue their educational achievement through it, this condition when all the sectors cease and maintain their social distance to end the chain of coronavirus. These courses play a very essential role for all learners at higher education.

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Integrating SDGs into Teacher Training: Challenges, Opportunities and Road Ahead

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Abstract:

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 providing a blueprint for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, Goal 4 aims at inclusive and equitable quality education for all and education is the cornerstone of achieving other goals. India takes pride in its sustainable practices like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum and is poised to play the dominant role in integrating SDGs with society and education in general and teacher education in particular. Integrating SDGs into teacher training promotes global citizenship, sustainability and has other societal and pedagogical benefits but its path is ridden with practical, cultural and other resource challenges. These challenges can be addressed through collaborative and multi faceted efforts.

Keywords - SDGs, sustainability, teacher education, integration

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, represent a universal call to action with goals of poverty, protecting the environment, and securing prosperity for all by 2030. Comprising 17 interconnected goals, the SDGs are designed to address the global challenges that humanity faces, including education and social inequality, climate crisis, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The urgency of these goals is underscored by the recognition that the world is at a critical juncture; the decisions made

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today will have profound implications for future generations. The SDGs not only provide a framework for global development but also emphasize the need for collaborative efforts among nations, sectors, and stakeholders to achieve sustainable outcomes (United Nations, 2015).

SDGs and Education

Among the SDGs, Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all”, is particularly significant. Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful driver of sustainable development. Education for sustainable development is an integral element of SDG target 4.7. It plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty, promoting gender equality, and fostering economic growth. The importance of education extends beyond individual benefits; it is integral to the realization of all other SDGs. For instance, educated individuals are more likely to contribute to their communities, engage in civic activities, and advocate for sustainable practices. Furthermore, education enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for addressing complex global challenges such as climate change and social inequality (UNESCO, 2017).

The connection between education and sustainable development is further emphasized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes that education is a key enabler for achieving all SDGs. Specifically, Goal 4 aims to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030. This goal is crucial, as literacy and numeracy are foundational skills that empower individuals to participate fully in society and the economy. Moreover, Goal 4 seeks to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including education for sustainable development and global citizenship (United Nations, 2015).

In addition to Goal 4, other SDGs are intricately linked to education. For instance, Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Education is a powerful tool for achieving gender equality, as it equips women with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in the workforce, make informed decisions, and advocate for their rights. Goal 8, which promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, also underscores the importance of education. Moreover, Goal 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries, highlights the role of education in promoting social equity. Access to quality education can help level the playing field for marginalized and disadvantaged populations, thereby reducing disparities in wealth, health, and social status. Ensuring that all individuals have access to quality education is a crucial step toward eradicating poverty and creating more equitable societies (OECD, 2018).

Despite the recognized importance of education in achieving the SDGs, significant challenges remain. According to UNESCO, approximately 258 million children and youth were out of school in 2018, with millions more attending schools that lack basic resources and qualified teachers (Out-of-School Children and Youth, 2020). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in education, with millions of learners worldwide facing disruptions in their education, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities. These challenges underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to ensure that education

systems are resilient, inclusive, and adaptable to the changing needs of society (World Bank, 2020).

In conclusion, the Sustainable Development Goals represent a comprehensive framework for addressing the pressing challenges facing humanity. Education, as highlighted in Goal 4 and its interconnections with other goals, is a critical component of this framework. By prioritizing education and ensuring that all individuals have access to quality learning opportunities, we can pave the way for a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all. The realization of the SDGs hinges on our collective commitment to fostering education that empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and promotes sustainable development.

Literature review

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, represent a global framework aimed at addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. Education is recognized as a pivotal element in achieving these goals, particularly through Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all (UN, 2015). A growing body of literature explores the intersection of SDGs and education, highlighting theoretical frameworks and practical applications in teacher training programs.

Theoretical frameworks surrounding SDGs in education often draw upon constructivist and transformative learning theories. Constructivist approaches emphasize the importance of experiential learning and critical thinking, enabling students to engage with complex global issues (Brundiers & Wiek, 2017). Transformative learning theory, as articulated by Mezirow (1997), underscores the role of education in fostering critical consciousness and empowering learners to effect social change. These frameworks provide a foundation for integrating SDGs into educational curricula, promoting not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of competencies necessary for sustainable development.

Research on the integration of SDGs into teacher training programs reveals both challenges and opportunities. A study by Tomas et al. (2015) highlights the necessity for pre-service teacher education to incorporate sustainability principles, arguing that educators must be equipped to teach SDGs effectively. This aligns with findings from Brandt et al (2019), who emphasizes the role of teacher training in shaping pedagogical practices that prioritize sustainability. However, challenges such as curriculum overload and a lack of resources often hinder the effective implementation of SDG-related content in teacher education (Nketsia et al., 2020).

Additionally, previous studies indicate that professional development programs for in-service teachers are crucial for fostering an understanding of SDGs and their relevance to local contexts. For instance, Biasutti et al (2019) found a training course on intercultural education for Italian teachers created an environment for teachers to reflect upon their teaching approaches and practices thereby improving intercultural pedagogical abilities among primary and middle school teachers. The literature suggests that collaborative efforts among educational institutions, policymakers, and communities are essential to create a supportive environment for integrating SDGs into teacher training (UNESCO, 2018).

In conclusion, the integration of SDGs into education, particularly through teacher training

programs, necessitates a comprehensive understanding of theoretical frameworks and practical challenges. Continued research is essential to develop effective strategies that empower educators and foster a sustainable future.

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Teacher Training Programs : Opportunities

The integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into teacher training programs is essential for cultivating a generation of educators equipped to address contemporary global challenges. The SDGs, established by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering sustainable development across various dimensions, including social equity, economic growth, and environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2015). Incorporating these goals into teacher training not only enhances the pedagogical skills of future educators but also significantly benefits students and society at large.

First, embedding SDGs in teacher training fosters a holistic educational approach. Educators trained in these principles are better prepared to teach students about sustainability, equity, and global citizenship (Goller & Rieckmann, 2022). This preparation can lead to more informed and engaged students who understand their roles in promoting sustainable practices (UNESCO, 2017). Furthermore, teachers who integrate SDGs into their curricula can inspire students to think critically about pressing global issues, thereby cultivating a generation of proactive problem-solvers (Huckle & Wals, 2015).

Second, the incorporation of SDGs in teacher training enhances the professional development of educators. Training programs that emphasize sustainability encourage teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods and interdisciplinary approaches, which can lead to improved educational outcomes (Evans et al., 2017). As educators become more adept at integrating these goals into their teaching, they also contribute to a culture of sustainability within their schools, influencing colleagues and the broader educational community (Rieckmann, 2018).

Moreover, the societal benefits of integrating SDGs into teacher training are profound. Educators equipped with a strong understanding of sustainability principles can play a pivotal role in shaping future citizens who are aware of and committed to addressing societal challenges (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019). This, in turn, creates informed individuals capable of making decisions that promote social equity.

In conclusion, the incorporation of SDGs into teacher training programs is a strategic imperative that promises significant benefits for students, educators, and society. By preparing teachers to embrace these goals, we can cultivate a more sustainable future, fostering a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also motivated to contribute positively to the world.

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Teacher Training Programs: Challenges

The integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into teacher training programs is essential for fostering an educational environment that promotes sustainability and social responsibility. Despite the expected successes, several challenges remain in the integration of

SDGs into teacher training programs. A common theme across the literature is the need for ongoing support and resources for educators. As noted by Nolet (2013), this requires more comprehensive training and access to materials that can help the teachers effectively teach sustainability topics. Additionally, such initiatives in teacher training need to be in line with national level educational policies with societal and economic reverberations. However, several other challenges and obstacles impede this integration, including practical difficulties, resource constraints, and cultural barriers. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensure that future educators are equipped to contribute effectively to the SDGs.

Practical Difficulties

One of the primary practical difficulties in integrating SDGs into teacher training programs is the lack of a standardized curriculum that incorporates these goals. Many teacher training institutions operate under rigid curricular frameworks that do not prioritize or include sustainability education (UNESCO, 2017). Consequently, teacher educators may lack the necessary training and resources to effectively incorporate SDGs into their teaching practices. Moreover, the existing pedagogical approaches may not align with the interdisciplinary nature of the SDGs, which require a holistic understanding of various subjects (Filho et al., 2017).

Additionally, the development of appropriate assessment methods to evaluate the effectiveness of SDG integration poses a challenge. Traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture the complexities of sustainability education, leading to a lack of meaningful evaluation of student learning outcomes (Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008). This situation may discourage educators from fully engaging with the SDGs in their teaching, as they may perceive a lack of accountability or support for such initiatives.

Resource Constraints

Resource constraints are another significant barrier to the successful integration of SDGs into teacher training programs. The economical impact of Covid has drawn resources away from education aggravating the lack of resources in teacher training. Many educational institutions, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, face financial limitations that hinder the development of comprehensive sustainability curricula (UNESCO, 2018). Limited funding can restrict access to essential resources, such as training materials, workshops, and expert consultations, which are necessary for effective SDG implementation.

Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure to support sustainability initiatives can exacerbate these resource constraints. For example, in a developing country like India, the technological gap is particularly pronounced in rural and underserved areas, where teacher training programs may struggle to provide adequate support for integrating sustainability into their curricula.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers also play a significant role in hindering the integration of SDGs into teacher training programs. In many contexts, educational systems are deeply rooted in traditional practices that may not prioritize sustainability or global citizenship (Torres, 2017). This resistance to change can be compounded by a lack of awareness or understanding of the SDGs among educators and stakeholders within the educational system. Without a shared

vision and commitment to sustainability, efforts to integrate the SDGs into teacher training may falter.

Moreover, cultural perceptions of education can influence how sustainability is perceived within the curriculum. Colonial mindset creates resistance to integrating the SDGs, as educators may prioritize content that aligns with traditional economic goals over sustainability-focused education reflecting the inclination towards materialism over spirituality.

Addressing the Challenges

To address these challenges, a multifaceted approach is necessary. First, the development of a standardized framework for integrating SDGs into teacher training programs can provide a clear roadmap for educators. Such a framework should emphasize interdisciplinary learning and include guidelines for effective pedagogical practices that promote sustainability (UNESCO, 2017). Collaborations between educational institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations can facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources.

Second, securing funding and resources is critical for supporting the integration of SDGs into teacher training programs. Governments and educational institutions should prioritize investments in sustainability education and seek partnerships with private sector organizations to enhance resource availability (UNESCO, 2018). Additionally, leveraging technology can help bridge resource gaps by providing access to online training and educational materials.

Lastly, addressing cultural barriers requires a concerted effort to raise awareness and promote a shared understanding of the importance of sustainability in education. India takes pride in its ancient roots of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum - the world is one family and teacher training needs to incorporate its traditional educational practices which are steeped in sustainability and common welfare into teacher education. Professional development programs for educators can emphasize the significance of the SDGs and provide strategies for integrating these goals into their teaching practices (Rieckmann, 2018). Engaging with local communities and stakeholders can also help foster a culture of sustainability, ensuring that the integration of SDGs is contextually relevant and supported by the broader community.

The integration of SDGs into teacher training programs is fraught with challenges, including practical difficulties, resource constraints, and cultural barriers. However, by adopting a strategic approach that includes developing standardized frameworks, securing necessary resources, and addressing cultural perceptions, these challenges can be effectively mitigated. Ultimately, equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainability is essential for achieving the SDGs and fostering a more sustainable future.

Conclusion

As the deadline to achieve SDGs in 2030 draws nearer, the focus should be upon supporting integration of sustainability and teacher education outcomes through multifaceted approaches like curriculum infusion where new training modules specifically focussed on SDGs are made compulsory, community engagement where civic engagement and volunteerism are promoted and project- based learning where real-world projects related to SDGs are incorporated in assessments. Further research is needed to evaluate effectiveness of SDG-related activities in promoting sustainable practices in teacher education and identify best practices in which

technology can be used to support the inclusive and equitable integration. The literature review demonstrated that teacher training programs that successfully integrate SDGs employ a variety of strategies, including experiential learning, community collaboration, and peer-learning networks. The outcomes achieved highlight the potential for these programs to enhance educators' capacity to teach sustainability and foster a culture of global citizenship among students. However, addressing the challenges of resource availability and policy alignment is essential for the long-term success of these initiatives.

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Indian Knowledge System and Translanguaging Practices

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Abstract

The Indian knowledge system and translanguaging practices of teachers in India are closely intertwined. Translanguaging refers to the flexible use of multiple languages by teachers and students in the classroom, which aligns with the multilingual and diverse nature of Indian society.

Studies have found that expert Indian teachers of English engage in complex translingual practices that are inclusive of their learners' languages, prioritizing learner participation over strict adherence to monolingual norms. These teachers leverage the students' full linguistic repertoire to facilitate learning, rather than insisting on an "English-only" approach. This reflects the rich heritage of multilingualism in India and the need to celebrate, rather than suppress, the country's linguistic diversity.

The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) initiative by the Ministry of Education aims to promote interdisciplinary research and the preservation of India's traditional knowledge across fields like arts, literature, agriculture, and science. Embracing translanguaging practices in the classroom can support the goals of IKS by allowing students to draw on their diverse linguistic resources to engage with and disseminate India's vast knowledge systems. This approach recognizes the value of India's multilingual reality and empowers students to participate actively in the learning process.

The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) initiative is highly relevant to the concept of

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translanguaging in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India through embracing multilingual practices, leveraging prior knowledge, promoting contextual appropriateness, developing inference generation, decolonizing education, and fostering holistic development

In summary, the translanguaging practices of expert Indian teachers align with and can support the objectives of the Indian Knowledge Systems initiative, by leveraging the country's linguistic diversity to facilitate learning and the preservation of traditional knowledge.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Translanguaging, Multilingualism, English Language Teaching (ELT), Linguistic Diversity

Introduction

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) refers to the systematic transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. It is a structured system and a process of knowledge transfer, not a tradition. The Indian Knowledge System is founded on Vedic literature, including the Upanishads, Vedas, and Upvedas. The NEP-2020 (National Education Policy) takes this rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought as its guiding principle. The Indian Knowledge Systems include Jnan, Vignan, and Jeevan Darshan, which have evolved through experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis. This tradition of validating and putting into practice has had an impact on education, arts, administration, law, justice, health, manufacturing, and business. This has influenced Bharat's classical and other languages, which were passed down through textual, oral, and artistic traditions. It incorporates knowledge from ancient India, its successes and challenges, and a sense of India's future aspirations specific to education, health, environment, and indeed all aspects of life.

Key Components of IKS

Vedas and VedâEgas:

The Vedas are the oldest surviving literary works, comprising four main texts: Zigveda, Yajurveda, Sâmaveda, and AtharvaGaveda. The VedâEgas are six auxiliary sciences related to the Vedas, including (Eikcâ (phonetics), Kalpa (rituals), VyâkaraGa (grammar), Chhandas (metrics), Niruktam (etymology), and Jyotica (astronomy).

Itihâsa and PurâGa:

These include epic stories like the RâmâyaGa and the Mahâbhârata, as well as various PurâGas that provide historical and mythological accounts.

Dharmaûâstra:

This category includes texts such as the Manusm[ti, Yâjñavalkya-sm[ti, and Parâûara-sm[ti, which deal with moral and ethical principles.

Darúana and Nyâya:

The Darúana refers to the six orthodox and six heterodox systems of Indian philosophy. Nyâya, or logic and epistemology, is a key component of Indian philosophical thought.

Upavedas:

These are four additional texts related to specific fields: Âyurveda (health-care),

Dhanurveda (archery), Gandharva-veda (dance, music, etc.), and Sthâpatyaveda (architecture).

Historical and Contemporary Context

The IKS has a rich history, with contributions from ancient scholars like PâGini, Yâska, and Bhart[hari]. Modern initiatives, such as the Indian Knowledge Systems initiative under the Ministry of Education, aim to promote IKS in education and research. This includes integrating IKS into curriculums, funding research projects, and training teachers and researchers in various fields.

Objectives and Vision

The objectives of IKS include:

- Preserving traditional knowledge
- Conducting interdisciplinary research
- Applying Indian knowledge to solve contemporary problems
- Promoting holistic education and cultural expression
- Integrating traditional wisdom with modern knowledge in a balanced approach

Indian Knowledge System in Education

The IKS will be introduced in a scientific manner into school and higher education curricula. The IKS will include both tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional learning methods, such as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, games, governance, politics, and conservation. Specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) crop cultivation, natural farming, and so on will also be offered. Secondary school students will also have the option of taking an engaging course on Indian Knowledge Systems as an elective. The policy recognizes that students should learn about India's rich diversity firsthand. This would include simple activities like student tours of various parts of the country.

This will not only promote tourism, but will also help to raise awareness and appreciation for India's diversity, culture, and traditions, as well as knowledge of the country's various regions. Under the 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' initiative, 100 tourist destinations in the country will be identified, and educational institutions will send students to study these destinations and their history, scientific contributions, traditions, indigenous literature, and knowledge, among other things, to supplement their knowledge of these areas.

Currently, 32 IKS Centers have been established to catalyze original research, education, and dissemination of IKS. 75 high-end inter-disciplinary research facilities are currently under construction, including projects in ancient metallurgy, ancient town planning and water resource management, ancient rasayanshastra, etc. projects are being put in place. Around 5200 internships on IKS have been offered. Conducted 50 faculty development programs, workshops, and a national/international conference. More than 8000 HEIs have begun adopting IKS in their curriculum and worked on the digitization of 1.5 lakh books.

Indian Knowledge System Integrating Traditional and Modern Knowledge

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) integrates traditional and modern knowledge through

several key approaches:

1. Historical and Contemporary Integration:

- The IKS aims to integrate traditional Indian knowledge with modern scientific knowledge to develop more sustainable technologies, innovative healthcare solutions, and other contemporary applications.
- This integration is meant to preserve traditional knowledge while applying it to solve modern problems, promoting values like social harmony and holistic education.

2. Educational Framework:

- The Indian National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 emphasizes the inclusion of IKS as a foundational component of the curriculum. This policy aims to encourage the next generation to recognize the significance of traditional knowledge and to integrate it seamlessly into the current educational framework.
- The NEP-2020 also calls for teacher training programs to equip educators with the knowledge and skills required to integrate IKS into their pedagogical practices.

3. Community Engagement and Management:

- Incorporating traditional and modern knowledge can lead to creative problem-solving and sustainable practices. Indigenous knowledge systems are crucial for maintaining cultural heritage, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering cross-cultural understanding.
- The integration of IKS in management can benefit areas such as sustainable development, tourism, food security, natural resource management, and cultural preservation.

4. Research and Multidisciplinary Approach:

- The IKS framework supports multidisciplinary research, aiming to attract Indians and foreigners and gain worldwide acceptability. This approach is designed to support the integration of traditional and modern knowledge in various fields, such as philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, and literature.

5. Cultural and Spiritual Understanding:

- The IKS vision includes pursuing spiritual understanding, holistic education, scientific inquiry, and cultural expression while collaborating globally. This holistic approach aims to integrate traditional wisdom with modern knowledge in a balanced manner.

Overall, the IKS integrates traditional and modern knowledge by preserving and applying ancient knowledge systems, incorporating them into contemporary educational frameworks, and promoting their use in various fields to address modern challenges.

Translanguaging Practices

Translanguaging refers to the flexible and strategic use of multiple languages by multilingual speakers to maximize communicative potential. It involves:

- Combining elements from different languages and using the languages of learners to

teach and learn content and languages

- Switching between languages within a single conversation or activity
- Going beyond the boundaries of named, discrete languages and viewing an individual's linguistic repertoire as a unitary system

Translanguaging is different from code-switching, which is more about the grammar and mechanics of switching between languages. Translanguaging takes a more holistic view of an individual's language use. The term “translanguaging” was coined in the 1980s by Cen Williams in Welsh as *trawsieithu* to describe the practice of using two languages in the same lesson, which differed from many previous methods of bilingual education that tried to separate languages. The concept gained traction later due to research by Ofelia García and others. Translanguaging is seen as a valuable pedagogical approach in multilingual classrooms, as it validates students' full linguistic repertoires and allows them to engage more effectively with content and communication. It supports students in comprehending complex content, developing academic language skills, and expressing their identities. Translanguaging describes the natural and strategic use of multiple languages as an integrated system by multilingual individuals and communities. It is a concept that challenges traditional views of bilingualism and monolingualism.

Translanguaging Practices in India

Translingual practices are and have always been essential to communication in India. As a linguistically diverse country, the flexible blending of features from different languages is common in interactions ranging from home to market, from street signs and advertisements to cinema and high literature (Meganathan 2017). Translanguaging (García 2009) and translingualism (Canagarajah 2013) have replaced the term “code-switching” to describe the act of blending languages. These terms recognize that translingual practices do not involve “switching” between separate systems, but rather draw on resources from a single, unified languaging system that is appropriate to context and interlocutor. Canagarajah (2013) refers to the competence underlying such practices as ‘performative competence and Anderson's (2018) concept of “translingual competency.” García (2009, 140) defines ‘translanguaging’ as the act of bilinguals can access different linguistic features or modes of what are described as autonomous languages in order to maximize communicative potential, according to the definition used in this article. For much of the twentieth century, approaches to language teaching disseminated from historically monolingual communities in Europe and North America tended to favor target-language-only teaching (Hall and Cook 2012), which Cook (2010) refers to as ‘intralingual’ approaches. However, the recent multilingual turn (García and Li 2014; May 2014; Sembiante 2016) has questioned the monolingual assumption, arguing for approaches to education that are more inclusive of learners' holistic linguistic resources. While this reorientation is significant, as part of the predominantly western discourse on the history of 20th century, learners' prior language resources were used more pragmatically.

Indian Knowledge System and Translanguaging Practices

Languages are the vessels that transmit traditional knowledge, folklore, and values from one generation to another. By preserving and promoting regional languages, India ensures the continuity of its rich cultural heritage, as these languages are intrinsically linked to the customs,

rituals, and identity of different communities.

The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) initiative is highly relevant to the concept of translanguaging in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India.

1. **Embracing Multilingual Practices:** The IKS approach encourages the use and valuing of learners' entire linguistic repertoire, including their first language (L1) and second language (L2). This aligns with the translanguaging philosophy, which sees the strategic use of multiple languages as a natural and beneficial practice for language learners.
2. **Leveraging Prior Knowledge:** The IKS framework recognizes the importance of activating learners' prior knowledge, cultural experiences, and indigenous wisdom as a foundation for new learning. This is a key principle of translanguaging pedagogy, which seeks to build on students' existing linguistic and conceptual knowledge.
3. **Promoting Contextual Appropriateness:** The IKS initiative emphasizes the need for "English appropriately" rather than "English only" policies. This resonates with the translanguaging approach, which encourages the use of different languages based on the communicative context and learning objectives.
4. **Developing Inference Generation:** The proposed translanguaging reading model for Indian ESL learners focuses on developing their inference generation abilities through peer interaction and the strategic use of L1-L2 connections. This aligns with the IKS emphasis on applying traditional knowledge systems to address contemporary educational challenges.
5. **Decolonizing Education:** The IKS initiative aims to reduce Western influences and promote a more balanced, India-centric approach to education. This dovetails with the translanguaging perspective, which challenges the monolingual bias in language teaching and advocates for the inclusion of diverse linguistic and cultural resources.
6. **Fostering Holistic Development:** The IKS framework encompasses not just academic knowledge, but also the philosophical, spiritual, and practical aspects of life (Jnan, Vignan, and Jeevan Darshan). This holistic approach resonates with the translanguaging emphasis on developing learners' communicative competence across various domains.

Conclusion

Linguistic diversity in India is a treasure that needs to be celebrated and preserved. It is integral to the country's cultural heritage and knowledge systems. By promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism, India can ensure the continued transmission of traditional knowledge, enhance cognitive abilities and foster social inclusion. However, it is crucial to address the threats posed by the dominance of English and the lack of standardization to maintain the linguistic diversity that is the hallmark of India's cultural richness. The implementation of the Indian Knowledge Systems initiative is a significant step towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. While it faces challenges and criticisms, the initiative aims to decolonize Indian education, enhance cognitive abilities, and foster social inclusion. By integrating IKS into curriculums and promoting interdisciplinary research, India can continue to be a leader in knowledge and preserve its

cultural legacy for future generations.

However, the implementation of IKS in education is not without its challenges. There are concerns about the potential for indoctrination, the integration of IKS into technical and professional courses, and the need for more autonomy and support for institutions and individuals to bring IKS into the curriculum. Overall, the inclusion of IKS in modern Indian education is a significant step towards preserving the country's cultural legacy, promoting interdisciplinary learning, and fostering a sense of identity and pride among students. As the initiative continues to evolve, it will be crucial to address the challenges and ensure a balanced and effective integration of traditional and contemporary knowledge systems.

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Assessing the Digital Divide of Pupil Teachers and Educators in Secondary Teacher Training Institutions: A Study of Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh

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- Rahul Balmiki²
- Prof. Harishankar Singh³

Abstract

The integration of technology in education has become increasingly significant, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the transition to online learning. However, this transition has also exposed existing disparities in access to digital resources and technological skills among student teachers, often referred to as pupil teachers, in secondary teacher training institutions. This paper presents a study conducted in Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh, aimed at assessing the digital divide among pupil teachers and educators in secondary teacher training institutions. The survey method under descriptive research was used. The study employed two tools to collect data from 480 pupil teachers and 100 teacher educators. These tools were prepared by the researcher, namely the Digital Divide Scale for Pupil Teacher (DDSPT) and the Digital Divide Scale for Teacher Educators (DDSTE). The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to bridge the digital gap and

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ensure equitable access to technology-enhanced education for all pupil teachers. The findings indicate that 50.32% of pupil teachers in secondary teacher training institutions in the Hardoi district face a digital divide. Rural pupil teachers encounter inequalities in physical access to technologies at home and at institutions, largely due to being first-generation learners and socioeconomic status (SES) issues, along with the lack of ICT infrastructure. Additionally, 60% of teacher educators are averagely affected by the digital divide, with the majority falling into the average category

Keywords: Digital Divide, Pupil Teachers, Teacher Educators, Secondary Teacher Training Institutions

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of technology in education has revolutionized traditional teaching approaches, ushering in the era of online teaching platforms. This shift, particularly prominent in secondary teacher education institutions, has prompted a critical examination of the digital landscape, revealing disparities in access and readiness. The swift evolution of information and communication technologies has reshaped educational paradigms, highlighting the necessity for educators to adapt to online teaching methodologies. Despite the myriad benefits, a persistent digital divide threatens to create discrepancies in access to educational resources and opportunities among both educators and students. This divide encompasses variations in access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and proficiency in utilizing digital tools. Recognizing the specific challenges faced by teachers and students within educational institutions is vital for devising targeted interventions to bridge these gaps. This study aims to investigate the digital divide among educators and students within these institutions and evaluate their preparedness for effective online teaching.

Review of related literature

NTIA (1999) defined the digital divide as the gap between individuals with access to ICTs and those without. Initially, the discourse on the digital divide incorporated a perspective of technological determinism.

Ritzhaupt et al. (2020) identified seven critical elements contributing to the digital divide, including socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, education level, language proficiency, geographical location, and age. Discusses how these factors lead to disparities in access to information and communication technology. The concept of the digital divide has been delineated into three distinct orders, each capturing different dimensions of disparities in the realm of digital technology. **First**, the initial tier, known as the first-order digital divide, revolves around variances in access to the Internet and digital technologies (*van Dijk, 2020*). **The second-**digital divide, the focus transitions to digital competence and utilization, as expounded by various scholars (*Corkin et al., 2022; Castaño Muñoz et al., 2022*). **Lastly, the third-**order digital divide encapsulates differentials in outcomes derived from the utilization of digital technology (*Zhao et al., 2022; Lutz, 2019; Ragnedda and Ruii, 2017*). **Werfhorst et al (2021)** demonstrated that schools and students vary in their readiness for digital education. However, school variation in digital readiness is not systematically related to student composition

by SES and migration background. little evidence for a hypothesized ‘multi-level’ digital divide, which would result from systematic gradients in the readiness of school environments for digital education by student composition. More important drivers for a digital divide during the COVID-19 pandemic are the ICT skills students have, which are strongly related to students’ socioeconomic background. For digital education to be effective for every student, it is important that schools focus on improving students’ digital skills.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the level of digital divide among pupil teachers of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh
2. To study the level of digital divide among teacher educators of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh

Delimitation of the Study

- The study is delimited to Hardoi district only

Method

Given the purpose of the study, the “Survey Method” under descriptive research was used in this investigation.

Population

The population of this study consists of all secondary teacher training institutes in the 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Sample

The district from the state of Uttar Pradesh was chosen at random for the study by the researcher using the lottery method. The district chosen in this manner was Hardoi. Once more, the secondary teacher training institutes, pupil teachers and teacher educators that make up the study’s sample were chosen at random. 480 pupil teachers and 100 teacher educators from 10 B.Ed. colleges connected to LU in the Hardoi district make up the study’s sample.

Tool

In this study, the researcher employed two distinct tools to gather data and assess the level of digital divide among pupil teachers in secondary teacher training institutions in Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh. Both tools were designed by the researcher to capture relevant information and insights necessary for achieving the study objectives effectively.

- The **Digital Divide Scale for Pupil Teacher (DDSPT)** was employed by the researcher to collect the necessary data for this study. This 24-item Likert-type scale is organized around four major dimensions: A. Availability of ICT infrastructure, B. Attitude towards technology, C. Technology-using skills, and D. Technology-related applications. This scale was created and standardized by the researcher specifically for the study.
- The **Digital Divide Scale for Teacher Educators (DDSTE)** was employed by the

researcher to collect the necessary data for this study. This 24-item Likert-type scale is organized around four major dimensions: A. Availability of ICT infrastructure, B. Attitude towards technology, C. Technology-using skills, and D. Technology-related applications. This scale was created and standardized by the researcher specifically for the study.

Analysis & Interpretation of the Data

The analysis technique used in this data appears to be the calculation of frequencies and percentages within specified class intervals. This is a form of descriptive statistics, specifically used for categorical data (in this case, the levels of the Digital Divide). Each class interval represents a range of Digital Divide scores, and within each interval, the number of observations (frequency) and its percentage of the total are calculated. This technique helps in understanding the distribution of the Digital Divide scores among the sample population. Additionally, the data is presented in a tabular format for clear visualization and interpretation.

In this paper two objectives are being analyzed which are as follows

Objective 1: To study the level of digital divide among pupil teachers of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh

Table 01:

Level of Digital Divide (DD) among Pupil Teachers of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district

Digital Divide(DD)	Class Interval	N	Percentage
Extremely Low	50-59	2	0.41%
Below Average	60-69	33	6.87%
Average	70-79	206	42.91%
High	80-89	213	44.91%
Extremely High	90-99	26	5.41%
	Total	480	100 %

Table 01 indicates the level of Digital Divide among pupil teachers of secondary teacher training institution of Hardoi district. The percentage of pupil teachers falling in the extremely low category in the class interval 50-59 is 0.41. The percentage of pupil teachers with reference to below average, average, high and extremely high is 6.87, 42.91, 44.91 and 5.41 percent respectively. The highest Digital Divide is indicated in the class interval 80-99 which is 50.32 %. The main reason is that rural pupil teachers encountered inequalities in physical access to

technologies both at home and at secondary teacher training institution.

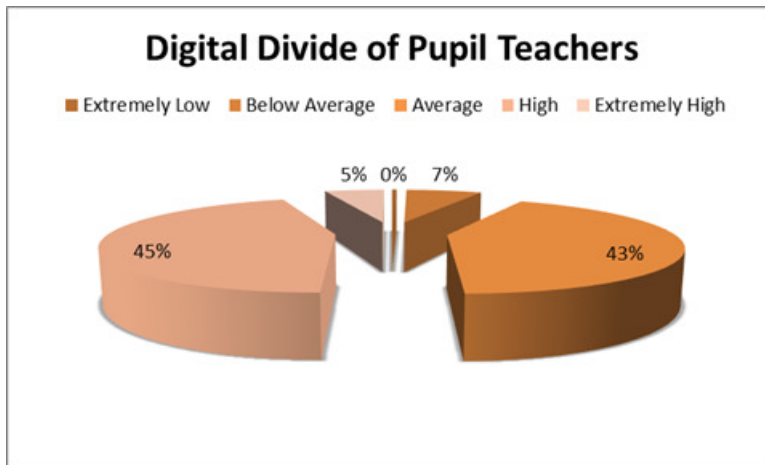


Figure 4.01:

Figure 01 shows the graphical representation of level of digital divide of the pupil teachers at secondary teacher training institution of Hardoi district. 44% of the pupil teachers are having high digital divide. Maximum pupil teachers fall in this category. High level is followed by average with 42.91% of the pupil teachers falling in this category. Only 6.87% of the pupil teachers are below average for digital divide. 0.41% is in the extremely low category which means they are facing a digital gap due to being a first generation learner and problem of SES and lack of availability of ICT infrastructure

Objective 2: To study the level of digital divide among teacher educators of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh

Table 02:

Level of digital divide among teacher educators of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh

Digital Divide(DD)	Class Interval	N	Percentage
Extremely Low	50-59	1	1%
Below Average	60-69	10	10%
Average	70-79	60	60%
Above Average	80-89	23	23%
High	90-99	5	5%
Extremely High	100-109	1	1%
	Total	100	100%

Table 02 indicates the level of **digital divide** among teacher educators of secondary teacher training institution of Hardoi district of **Uttar Pradesh**. The percentage of teacher educators falling in the extremely low category in the class interval 50-59 is 1. The percentage of Teacher Educators with reference to below average, average, above average, high and extremely high is 10, 60, 23, 5 and 1 percent respectively. The highest digital divide is indicated in the class interval 90-109 i.e., 6% which is minor digital divide among teacher educators

The researcher has found digital divide in the dimension of availability of ICT infrastructure among the rural and urban teacher educators which indicates that teacher educators of urban area have more knowledge and access to the ICT tools and Infrastructure as compare to the teacher educators of rural area. Further researcher has found digital divide in the dimension of attitude of using technology among the rural and urban teacher educators which indicates that teacher educators of rural area have better attitude towards using technological tools and apps as compare to the teacher educators of urban area.

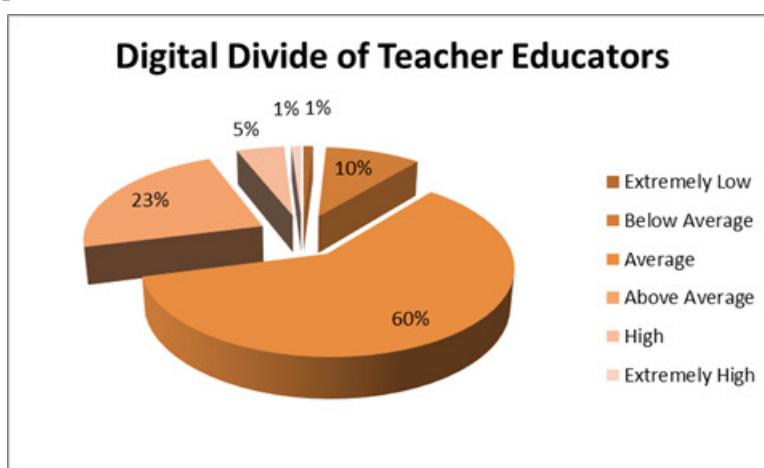


Figure 02: Level of digital divide among teacher educators

Figure 02 shows the graphical representation of level of digital divide among teacher educators of secondary teacher training institution of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh. 60% of the teacher educators are averagely faced digital divide. Maximum pupil teachers fall in this category. Average level is followed by below average with 10% of the teacher educators falling in this category. Only 23% of the teacher educators are above average are having digital divide. 5% are in the high category which means they are not having ICT related divide. The percentage falling in the extremely high category is almost negligible with 1% of digital divide

Major Findings

- It was found that 50.32 %. Pupil teachers of secondary teacher training institutions of Hardoi district have Digital Divide. The main reasons are that rural pupil teachers encountered inequalities in physical access to technologies at home and at secondary teacher training institutions. They are facing a digital gap due to being a first generation learner and the problem of SES and lack of availability of ICT infrastructure.

- It was found that 60% of teacher educators are averagely faced digital divide. Maximum pupil teachers fall in this category. The average level is followed by below average, with 10% of the teacher educators falling in this category. Only 23% of the teacher educators are above average are having a digital divide. 5% are in the high category, meaning they do not have an ICT-related divide. The percentage falling in the highly high category is almost negligible, with 1% of digital divide

Conclusion

The findings indicate that 50.32% of pupil teachers in secondary teacher training institutions in the Hardoi district face a digital divide. Rural pupil teachers encounter inequalities in physical access to technologies at home and at institutions, largely due to being first-generation learners and socioeconomic status (SES) issues, along with the lack of ICT infrastructure. Additionally, 60% of teacher educators are averagely affected by the digital divide, with the majority falling into the average category. This is followed by 10% in the below-average category, while only 5% are categorized as having no ICT-related divide. Addressing these disparities is crucial to ensuring equitable access to digital resources and opportunities for both pupil teachers and educators in the district.

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Challenges and Remedial Measures in North Indian English Language Learning

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Abstract

English proficiency is crucial in India, yet many students, particularly in Northern India, face significant learning challenges. This study investigates these challenges, their connection to demographics, and the efficacy of current remedial strategies in this diverse region. This study investigated the challenges and remedial measures associated with English language learning among 768 students aged 18-30 in Northern India, examining the influence of demographic factors. Data were collected using a self-constructed questionnaire administered online and offline across ten states and union territories. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and analyzed data using factor analysis and chi-square tests. Factor analysis revealed three key challenges: limited classroom resources and support, difficulties with English linguistics, and a lack of extracurricular practice and community value. While gender and location (urban/rural) showed no significant association with perceived challenges or remedial measure usage, significant variations were found across states, highlighting the importance of state-specific factors. Factor analysis also identified two key areas for remedial measures: enhanced classroom practices and curriculum, and extracurricular enrichment combined with personalized support. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions tailored to the unique context of each state, focusing on improving classroom instruction, fostering community support, and providing personalized learning opportunities to enhance English language education in Northern India.

Keywords: English, Problems & Challenges, Classroom and Educational Environment, Socio-cultural Factors, Remedial measures

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1. Introduction

English has become a global language, playing a crucial role in academic, professional, and social spheres. In India, English holds a significant position, serving as an official language and a lingua franca connecting diverse linguistic communities. While English proficiency is widely recognized as a valuable asset, the reality is that many Indian students, particularly in Northern India, face significant challenges in acquiring this language. This struggle has far-reaching implications, impacting their educational attainment, career prospects, and overall social mobility. This study aims to investigate these challenges, explore their connection with demographic factors, and examine the efficacy of current remedial strategies employed in Northern India.

The importance of English in India is undeniable. It is the language of higher education, competitive examinations, and much of the formal employment sector. Fluency in English is often perceived as a gateway to better opportunities and a higher social standing. This perceived value has fueled a growing demand for English language education across the country. However, the quality and accessibility of this education vary significantly, creating disparities in English proficiency levels. Northern India, with its diverse linguistic landscape and varying levels of access to quality education, presents a unique context for examining these disparities.

Existing research has highlighted various challenges faced by English language learners globally. These include linguistic barriers, such as difficulties with pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension (Wau, 2022; Afzal, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Alisha et al., 2019). Psychological factors, such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and low motivation, also play a significant role (Ying et al., 2021; Fitriati, 2016). Furthermore, technological limitations, particularly in regions with limited internet access, can hinder online learning and access to resources (Sukmawati et al., 2022; Erlangga, 2022; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Ineffective teaching methodologies, large class sizes, and a lack of qualified teachers can further exacerbate these challenges (Seyoum et al., 2022; Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

While these general challenges are well-documented, it is crucial to understand the specific context of English language learning in Northern India. This region is characterized by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and linguistic factors. The linguistic diversity, with numerous regional languages and dialects, can influence how students perceive and learn English. Socio-economic disparities can impact access to quality education, resources, and exposure to English outside the classroom. Cultural factors may also play a role in students' attitudes towards English and their motivation to learn it. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how these demographic factors—such as location (urban/rural), socio-economic background, gender, and educational level—interact with the challenges of English language learning in Northern India.

Moreover, it is vital to examine the remedial measures currently in place to address these challenges. Are these measures effective? Are they accessible to all students, regardless of their background? Do they adequately address the specific needs of learners in Northern India? By identifying the most pressing problems, analyzing their association with demographic factors, and evaluating the effectiveness of existing remedial strategies, this study aims to

provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the development of more targeted and effective interventions that can improve English language education and empower students in Northern India to achieve their full potential. This research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the landscape of English language learning in this region and inform strategies for creating a more equitable and effective learning environment for all students.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The present study seeks to fulfill following objectives-

1. To identify the most pressing problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English.
2. To analyze the association between demographic factors and problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English.
3. To identify the most important Remedial measures taken to solve problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English.
4. To analyze the association between demographic factors and remedial measures taken to solve problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English.

1.2. Need and Significance of the study

This study is significant because it addresses the critical need to understand and mitigate the challenges faced by English language learners in Northern India. English proficiency is increasingly vital for academic and professional success, yet many students in this region struggle to achieve fluency. By identifying the most pressing problems and challenges, the study aims to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Furthermore, analyzing the association between demographic factors and these challenges will allow for more targeted interventions. Critically, the study also seeks to identify and evaluate the remedial measures currently employed, and how these measures relate to demographic factors, enabling a more informed and effective approach to supporting English language learners in Northern India. This research has the potential to contribute significantly to improving English language education and enhancing opportunities for students in the region.

2. Literature Review

Several studies explored challenges within English-medium instruction (EMI). Online English language learning presented its own set of challenges. Erlangga (2022) reported comprehension difficulties, technical issues, internet constraints, poor communication, and reduced learning effectiveness among Indonesian students. Sukmawati et al. (2022) noted that while online learning offered benefits, technological barriers posed significant obstacles. Rahman et al. (2022) examined online speaking courses, highlighting challenges related to distance, technology adaptation, and workload management. Syahadri (2022) found Indonesian students struggling with unclear materials, pronunciation difficulties, and limited practice in online settings. Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020) focused on the pandemic's impact, noting internet connectivity and reduced interaction as major challenges for Indonesian EFL students.

Ying et al. (2021), in a literature review, identified low motivation, lack of self-confidence, and limited vocabulary as key hindrances. A related study at Nanjing Tech University (cited in Ying et al., 2021) pinpointed anxiety and fear of mistakes as dominant barriers. Hadijah (2014) explored the multifaceted nature of speaking challenges, including limited linguistic knowledge and personal factors like shyness. Alsalihi (2020) highlighted societal discouragement and overcrowded classrooms as contributing factors. Islam et al. (2022) compared public and private university students in Bangladesh, finding speaking challenges across the board. Fitriati (2016) emphasized the role of psychological barriers. Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) found students struggling with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, lack of exposure, and low confidence. Thornbury (2005) discussed knowledge and skill factors in speaking.

Writing English also proved challenging. Wau (2022) found students struggling with various aspects of academic writing. Seyoum et al. (2022) explored challenges in argumentative writing instruction. Alisha et al. (2019) identified inadequate vocabulary, poor grammar, and spelling errors as key writing difficulties. Moses & Mohamad (2019) examined the challenges of writing instruction in elementary schools.

Other studies focused on different aspects of English language learning. Afzal (2019) emphasized the importance of vocabulary knowledge. Khan et al. (2020) examined reading challenges among elementary students. Ponmozhi and Thenmozhi (2017) explored challenges faced by rural high school students, influenced by socio-economic factors. Wulandari (2010) examined challenges among first-year students in Indonesia. Sai et al. (2013) focused on adult distance learners. Tsimpli et al. (2019) examined multilingual education in India. Ali (2019) advocated for problem-based learning. Chau (2021), Nguyen (2022), and Pham (2021) advocated for integrating ICT into ELT. Fook and Sidhu (2015) identified cognitive difficulties, language barriers, and cultural differences in higher education.

Research gap

While existing research may address general English language learning challenges, there's a gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by students in Northern India, particularly how these challenges are associated with demographic factors. Furthermore, the effectiveness of current remedial measures and their relationship to student demographics in this region remains under-explored, hindering targeted interventions.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed an exploratory survey and cross-sectional design with a quantitative approach to investigate the problems and challenges and remedial measures in learning English by students of Northern India. Utilizing a quota sampling technique, the research encompassed a sample size of 768 respondents aged 18 to 30 years, drawn from various states including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Chandigarh. Data were collected through a self-constructed structured questionnaire featuring close-ended questions, dichotomous items, multiple-choice questions, and Likert scales, administered both online (via Google Docs and social media) and offline (through scheduled appointments and paper-based distribution).

The primary data collected were analyzed using statistical tools including reliability analysis,

frequency analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and chi-square analysis, performed with SPSS version 25 and MS Excel 16. The study also adhered to ethical considerations by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and guaranteeing voluntary participation. To determine the levels of dimensions, scores for each were aggregated, and the range, minimum, and maximum values were computed. Class intervals were established by dividing the range by five, and each level was categorized from VLL (VLL) to VHL (VHL). This structured approach ensured a comprehensive analysis of the problems and challenges and remedial measures in learning English among the student population in the study area.

Table 1-Determination of levels

		Problems & Challenges	Remedial Measures
N	768	768	768
Mean		16.09	30.97
Std. Deviation		4.951	5.384
Range		24	36
Minimum		6	9
Maximum		30	45
Class Interval		4.8	7.2
VLL (1)		6-10.8	9 – 16.2
LL (2)		10.9-15.7	16.3 – 23.5
ML (3)		15.8-20.6	23.6 – 30.8
HL (4)		20.7-25.5	30.9-38.1
VHL (5)		25.6-30.4	38.2-45.4

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 2-Reliability Statistics

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Problems & Challenges	0.710	06
Remedial Measures	0.704	09

Interpretation:

The reliability analysis shows strong internal consistency across both scales.

4.2 Demographic Profile of respondents

Table 3- Demographic Profile of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
Age		
From 18 years to 21 years	288	37.5
From 22 years to 25 years	240	31.3

From 26 years to 29 years	168	21.9
Above 30 years	72	9.4
Total	768	100.0
Gender		
Male	432	56.3
Female	336	43.8
Total	768	100.0
Religion		
Hindu	348	45.3
Muslim	204	26.6
Sikh	96	12.5
Christian	48	6.3
Others	72	9.4
Total	768	100.0
Educational Qualifications		
Intermediate	84	10.9
Graduation	240	31.3
Post-Graduation	192	25.0
Technical/Professional Degree	204	26.6
Other	48	6.3
Total	768	100.0
Family Monthly Income		
Below Rs. 25000	72	9.4
Between Rs. 25001 to Rs. 50,000	120	15.6
Between Rs. 50001 to Rs. 75,000	180	23.4
Between Rs. 75001 to Rs. 1,00,000	240	31.3
Above Rs. 100,000	156	20.3
Total	768	100.0
Place of Residence		
Urban	420	54.7
Rural	348	45.3
Total	768	100.0
State		

U.P.	168	21.9
Haryana	89	11.6
Punjab	102	13.3
Jammu & Kashmir	79	10.3
Himachal Pradesh	42	5.5
Uttarakhand	44	5.7
Ladakh	80	10.4
Rajasthan	57	7.4
Delhi	59	7.7
Chandigarh	48	6.3
Total	768	100.0

4.3 Factor Analysis: Identifying the most important Factors of Problems & Challenges faced by all north Indian students.

The KMO value of 0.828 and the significant Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 4- Factors of Problems & Challenges

Component	Initial Eigenvalues and Rotated Component Matrix		
	Total	% of Variance	Factors
1	5.312	35.416	28. I believe that my native language influences my English language proficiency. 24. I don't get enough practice in speaking English in my classes. 25. My teachers provide adequate support for learning English. 26. I enjoy participating in English language activities (e.g., debates, quizzes). 23. There are not enough resources (books, audio-visual aids, etc.) available for learning English. 27. My family does not encourage me to learn English. 20. I have trouble with reading comprehension in English. 21. Writing in English is difficult for me. 22. The English language teaching methods used in my school are ineffective.
2	3.469	23.124	19. Understanding spoken English is difficult for me. 18. I struggle with the vocabulary used in English. 16. I find it difficult to understand English grammar rules. 17. Pronunciation of English words is challenging for me.
3	1.592	10.612	29. I do not have opportunities to practice English outside of school. 30. My community does not value the learning of English.

Interpretation:

Factor analysis reveals three key challenges for North Indian students learning English: 1) **Classroom Practice & Resources:** This factor encompasses insufficient speaking practice, inadequate resources, lack of teacher support, ineffective teaching methods, and family discouragement. 2) **Linguistic Difficulties:** This includes challenges with spoken English comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. 3) **Lack of External Practice & Community Support:** This factor highlights the absence of opportunities for English practice outside school and a lack of community value placed on English language learning.

Chi-Square Analysis: Association between demographic factors and problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English

- **H₀ 1:** There is no significant difference in Problems & Challenges between male and female respondents.

Table 5- Crosstab- Gender * Problems & Challenges

Crosstab								
			Problems & Challenges					Total
			VLL	LL	ML	HL	VHL	
Gender	Male	N	25	170	159	62	16	432
		%	5.8%	39.4%	36.8%	14.4%	3.7%	100.0%
	Female	N	10	158	101	50	17	336
		%	3.0%	47.0%	30.1%	14.9%	5.1%	100.0%
Total		N	35	328	260	112	33	768
		%	4.6%	42.7%	33.9%	14.6%	4.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests								
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)				
Pearson Chi-Square		9.267 ^a	4	.055				

Interpretation-While slightly more females report *Very High* challenges, overall, the distribution of perceived English learning challenges (Very Low to Very High) is statistically similar between male and female students ($p > .05$). Therefore, we accept H₀ 1.

- **H₀ 2:** There is no significant difference in Problems & Challenges between urban and rural respondents.

Table 6- Crosstab- Place of Residence * Problems & Challenges

Crosstab								
			Problems & Challenges					Total
			VLL	LL	ML	HL	VHL	
Place of Residence	Urban	N	23	181	133	68	15	420
		%	5.5%	43.1%	31.7%	16.2%	3.6%	100.0%
	Rural	N	12	147	127	44	18	348
		%	3.4%	42.2%	36.5%	12.6%	5.2%	100.0%
Total		N	35	328	260	112	33	768
		%	4.6%	42.7%	33.9%	14.6%	4.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests								
Value			df		Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square			5.837 ^a		4			
					.212			

Interpretation:

While slightly more rural students report *Very High* challenges, overall, the distribution of perceived English learning challenges (Very Low to Very High) is statistically similar between urban and rural students ($p > .05$). Therefore, we accept H0 2.

- **H₀ 3:** There is no significant difference in Problems & Challenges and state of respondents.

Table 7- Crosstab- State * Problems & Challenges

Crosstab								
			Problems & Challenges					Total
			VLL	LL	ML	HL	VHL	
State	U.P.	N	0	61	63	38	6	168
		%	0.0%	36.3%	37.5%	22.6%	3.6%	100.0%
	Haryanaa	N	4	55	18	11	1	89
		%	4.5%	61.8%	20.2%	12.4%	1.1%	100.0%
	Punjab	N	14	40	26	15	7	102
		%	13.7%	39.2%	25.5%	14.7%	6.9%	100.0%
	Jammu & Kashmir	N	1	35	30	10	3	79
		%	1.3%	44.3%	38.0%	12.7%	3.8%	100.0%
	Himachal Pradesh	N	3	12	18	3	6	42
		%	7.1%	28.6%	42.9%	7.1%	14.3%	100.0%
	Uttarakhand	N	2	13	17	6	6	44
		%	4.5%	29.5%	38.6%	13.6%	13.6%	100.0%
	Ladakh	N	0	38	33	9	0	80
		%	0.0%	47.5%	41.3%	11.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	Rajasthan	N	3	23	18	9	4	57
		%	5.3%	40.4%	31.6%	15.8%	7.0%	100.0%
	Delhi Chandigarh	N	4	27	22	6	0	59
		%	6.8%	45.8%	37.3%	10.2%	0.0%	100.0%
		N	4	24	15	5	0	48
		%	8.3%	50.0%	31.3%	10.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		N	35	328	260	112	33	768
		%	4.6%	42.7%	33.9%	14.6%	4.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests								
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)					
Pearson Chi-Square	103.561 ^a	36	.000					

Interpretation-

The distribution of perceived English learning challenges (Very Low to Very High) varies significantly across different states ($p < .001$). While some states, like Haryana, show a higher concentration of students reporting lower levels of challenges, others, such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, have a greater proportion reporting higher levels. Therefore, we reject H0 3.

Factor Analysis: Identifying the most important Factors of Remedial Measures

to enhance English proficiency from the perspective of all north Indian students

The KMO value of 0.828 and the significant Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 8- Factors of Remedial Measures

Component	Initial Eigenvalues and Rotated Component Matrix		
	Total	% of Variance	Factors
1	3.95	43.925	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Schools should provide students with supplementary study materials, such as workbooks and practice exercises in English.2. Incorporating more interactive and engaging methods, such as group discussions and role-plays, will enhance English proficiency.3. Incorporating multimedia resources such as English language learning apps, videos, and podcasts will be beneficial.4. Regular English language workshops and seminars should be mandatory for students to improve their skills.5. The existing English curriculum should include more practical applications, such as writing emails, reports, and presentations.
2	2.14	23.837	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Encouraging students to watch English movies, listen to English music, and read English literature in their free time will support their learning.2. Personalized feedback and tailored remedial programs for students struggling with English should be implemented.3. Encouraging students to participate in English language competitions, debates, and public speaking events will enhance their confidence and skills.4. Integrating language learning software and online courses into the school curriculum can provide additional support.

Interpretation- Factor analysis suggests two key areas for remedial measures: 1) Enhanced Classroom Practices and Curriculum: This includes supplementary materials, interactive methods, multimedia resources, mandatory workshops, and a curriculum focused on practical applications. 2) Extracurricular Enrichment and Personalized Support: This encompasses encouraging engagement with English media, personalized feedback and remedial programs, participation in English events, and integration of online learning resources.

Chi-Square Analysis: Association between demographic factors and remedial measures taken to solve problems and challenges faced by students of Northern India in learning English.

- **H₀ 1:** There is no significant difference in Remedial Measures between male and female respondents.

Table 9- Crosstab- Gender * Remedial Measures

Crosstab							
			Remedial Measures				Total
			LL	ML	HL	VHL	
Gender	Male	N	30	181	188	33	432
		%	6.9%	41.9%	43.5%	7.6%	100.0%
	Female	N	22	125	158	31	336
		%	6.5%	37.2%	47.0%	9.2%	100.0%
Total		N	52	306	346	64	768
		%	6.8%	39.8%	45.1%	8.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests							
			Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square			2.177 ^a	3	.537		

Interpretation:

While females show a slightly higher percentage of *Very High* remedial measure usage, the overall distribution of reported remedial measure usage is statistically similar between male and female students ($p > .05$). Therefore, we accept H₀ 1.

- **H₀ 2:** There is no significant difference in Remedial Measures between urban and rural respondents.

Table 10- Crosstab-Place of Residence * Remedial Measures

Crosstab							
			Remedial Measures				Total
			LL	ML	HL	VHL	
Place of Residence	Urban	N	28	155	205	32	420
		%	6.7%	36.9%	48.8%	7.6%	100.0%
	Rural	N	24	151	141	32	348
		%	6.9%	43.4%	40.5%	9.2%	100.0%
Total		N	52	306	346	64	768
		%	6.8%	39.8%	45.1%	8.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests							
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square		5.496 ^a	3	.139			

Interpretation:

The distribution of reported remedial measure usage is statistically similar between urban and rural students ($p > .05$), although there are slight variations in the percentages across different levels of remedial measures. Therefore, H₀ 2 is accepted.

- **H₀ 3:** There is no significant difference in Remedial Measures and state of respondents.

Table 11- Crosstab- State * Remedial Measures

Crosstab							
			Remedial Measures				Total
State	U.P.	N	LL 8	ML 77	HL 72	VHL 11	
		%	4.8%	45.8%	42.9%	6.5%	100.0%
	Haryana	N	14	45	25	5	89
		%	15.7%	50.6%	28.1%	5.6%	100.0%
	Punjab	N	8	25	62	7	102
		%	7.8%	24.5%	60.8%	6.9%	100.0%
	Jammu & Kashmir	N	1	36	38	4	79
		%	1.3%	45.6%	48.1%	5.1%	100.0%
	Himachal Pradesh	N	0	14	19	9	42
		%	0.0%	33.3%	45.2%	21.4%	100.0%
	Uttarakhand	N	1	15	22	6	44
		%	2.3%	34.1%	50.0%	13.6%	100.0%
	Ladakh	N	11	48	17	4	80
		%	13.8%	60.0%	21.3%	5.0%	100.0%
	Rajasthan	N	5	18	30	4	57
		%	8.8%	31.6%	52.6%	7.0%	100.0%
	Delhi	N	2	16	34	7	59
		%	3.4%	27.1%	57.6%	11.9%	100.0%
	Chandigarh	N	2	12	27	7	48
		%	4.2%	25.0%	56.3%	14.6%	100.0%
Total		N	52	306	346	64	768
		%	6.8%	39.8%	45.1%	8.3%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests							
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square		95.954 ^a	27	.000			

Interpretation:

The adoption of remedial measures varies significantly across different states ($p < .001$). Some states, like Haryana and Ladakh, show a greater reliance on *Low* level of remedial measures, while others, like Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, and Chandigarh, indicate a higher concentration in the *Medium* and *High* categories. Therefore, $H_0 3$ is rejected.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

This study investigated the challenges and remedial measures associated with English language learning among students in Northern India, examining the influence of demographic factors. Factor analysis identified three key challenges: limited classroom resources and support (including insufficient speaking practice, inadequate resources, lack of teacher support, ineffective teaching methods, and family discouragement), difficulties with English linguistics (encompassing spoken English comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation), and a lack of extracurricular practice and community value placed on English language learning.

Interestingly, while gender and place of residence (urban/rural) did not significantly influence the *overall* perception of challenges or the *overall* reported use of remedial measures, the *distribution* of challenges and remedial approaches *did* vary significantly across different states. This suggests that state-specific factors, such as curriculum design, teacher training programs, availability of learning resources, and community attitudes toward English, play a crucial role in shaping the English language learning experience. The significant variation across states underscores the importance of moving beyond generalized interventions and adopting a more nuanced, context-specific approach. For instance, some states might benefit from increased investment in teacher training focused on communicative language teaching, while others might prioritize providing access to quality learning resources in underserved rural areas.

The study also identified two key areas for remedial measures: enhanced classroom practices and curriculum (including supplementary materials, interactive methods, multimedia resources, mandatory workshops, and a curriculum focused on practical applications) and extracurricular enrichment combined with personalized support (encompassing encouraging engagement with English media, personalized feedback and remedial programs, participation in English events, and integration of online learning resources). These findings suggest a need for a holistic approach to remediation, addressing both the formal learning environment and the learner's engagement with English outside the classroom.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions emerge. First, policymakers and educational administrators should consider the unique context of each state when designing English language curricula and implementing interventions. This requires conducting needs assessments to identify the specific challenges faced by students in each region. Second, investing in teacher training programs that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to address diverse learner needs is crucial. This includes training on effective teaching methodologies, differentiated instruction, and the use of technology in language teaching. Third, increasing access to quality learning resources, both within and outside the classroom, is essential. This could involve providing supplementary materials, developing online learning platforms, and establishing community learning centers. Finally, promoting a supportive environment for English language learning within the community is vital. This could involve raising awareness about the importance of English proficiency, encouraging families to support their children's learning, and creating opportunities for students to practice English in real-world contexts. Future research could explore the specific factors within each state that contribute to the observed variations in challenges and remedial approaches, as well as investigate the long-term effectiveness of different intervention strategies. By adopting a more context-sensitive and evidence-based approach, it is possible to significantly improve English language education and empower students in Northern India to achieve their full potential.

6. Educational Implications

This study's findings have several key educational implications for Northern India. Targeted resource allocation for materials, technology, and teacher support is crucial. Curriculum enhancement should prioritize interactive methods and practical application. Teacher training

must equip educators to meet diverse learning needs. Extracurricular programs should offer out-of-class English practice. Community engagement is vital to promote English proficiency. Personalized learning and targeted remediation are necessary. State-specific interventions should address unique regional needs. Further research should explore state-level factors and evaluate intervention effectiveness.

7. Limitations and Future scope of study

This study has limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias. The cross-sectional nature limits the ability to establish causal relationships. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to track language development over time. Qualitative studies could explore students' lived experiences in greater depth. Comparative studies could examine the effectiveness of different intervention strategies. Research could also investigate the role of specific socio-economic and cultural factors within each state.

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सत्राची फाउंडेशन, पटना
शोध, शिक्षा एवं प्रकाशन की समाजसेवी संस्था

यह संस्था -

- साहित्यिक सम्मान देती है।
- शोध पत्रिकाएँ प्रकाशित करती है।
- पुस्तकें प्रकाशित करती है।
- सेमिनार आयोजित करती है।
- राजभाषा/राष्ट्रभाषा सेवियों को प्रोत्साहित करती है।
- शोधकर्तओं को स्तरीय शोध के लिए प्रोत्साहित करती है।
- नेट/जेआर.एफ. के अभ्यर्थियों को निशुल्क मार्गदर्शन देती है।
- हिन्दी साहित्य के शिक्षार्थियों को प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के लिए तैयार करती है।