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UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Labourers in India and Corona Pandemic: The Coping Strategies

Bibhuti Bhushan Malik* and Nirakar Mallick†

Corona pandemic brings out sufferings in manifold and the labourers especially are the hardest hit in India. The author analysed the coping strategies for labour and advocated adequate measures by providing job and ration cards to make them entitled to the benefit of MGNREGA. It is also prescribed that food security vis-à-vis set up small-scale industries in their native locality by providing easy loans could be a laudable measure to arrest and address the impending crisis of labourers.

Introduction

Now especially during the very recent time, almost all the emerging discussions about the Corona pandemic are general and overly simplified. Because the Corona has global implications and the ongoing debates regarding the vicissitudes of the pandemic are compartmentalised whimsically. The outbreak and prevalence of the pandemic are possibly non-stoppable within a short time and going to be unending as viewed by various experts in the field of the Corona study. In such a happening of tumultuous situation, the civic life and career of all people are going to be at risk across the globe.

Our frame of reference not here merely confining to singular health parameter, i.e., patients, doctors, nurses, and hospital managerial staff but a

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possibility of intensification of the more acute pandemic which may cause and bring endemic for the entire global situation. Because the Corona has manifested multilayer complexities and far-reaching consequences which is fast spiraling high to adversely affect minimum normal life and human development cycle. The pandemic has ever-lasting and deep-rooted societal implications. The pandemic has had affected every existing social institution and fabric. Also, every people and section of society are almost facing endangered. So we need to broaden our canvas portraying the real image and effect of the pandemic from a transdisciplinary and global context.

Nevertheless, we need to focus upon here the people who are poor and the most vulnerable to the existing Corona pandemic. In this regard, the migrant labourers are the most vulnerable and hardest hit people. A significant chunk of the Indian workforce has been left reeling on the roads without any objectives and hopes. Most of them represent migrant labourers who preferably work in the far-off metropolitan city to earn their livelihood. However, in the present scenario of the crisis, they do not become only unemployed, but they also are ended up facing a stereotype of inbuilt hostile behaviour of the people of their respective native village.

Corona Pandemic and Migrant Labourer

At the very outset, it is needed to understand the socio-economic background of the vulnerable people who are regarded as poor migrant labourers. They are indeed out-migrant labourers and hail from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and other poorer states. Such labourers and the labour class have suffered the most, be it directly or indirectly, in wake of the global Corona pandemic. In midst of the problem, it is not only pertinent but mandatory to examine the cause and consequence wherein the poor people bore the maximum brunt. The first point regarding the issue of a labourer is that most of them are migrant people who, partly willingly and coercively, moved out of their ancestral home in search of an avenue to sustain their livelihood. The second viable point is that they are forced to leave out their family members at their respective native land owing to the cause of almost abject poverty, the impossibility of sustenance of their family in the urban area. If we view the present problem with the lens of socio-economic inequality, poverty, and unemployment, then a different picture emerges that the labour class has no other option and alternative but forced to sell their labour with a hope to earn a minimum livelihood. In other words, they as a human are converted into a commodity and the labour they invested in course of their sedulous work ultimately turns out similar to the perishable commodification of labour. They are practically deprived of the economic source of land and capital. The only thing that they have learnt to live is to sell their labour to sustain their minimum life and livelihood. For this hope, they are compelled to migrate to metropolitan centre and other developed parts of the country. Poverty and

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poorness are the primary cause of their out-migration to dispel them even unwittingly. This migration has two-prong aspects: economic and social. The point to reckon here is, why the labourer migrates and what are the economic and social causes behind the migration? This structural question of labour hunts us to relook into the problem of global human crisis in the midst of the corona pandemic.

In the village economy, the small farmers are mostly poor. They are landless labourers and are marginal landholders. Agriculture is the single largest source of income and employment option available to them. But due to lack of proper irrigation, regular flash floods, the rising price of fertilisers, and agriculture aids most of the time the crop and yielding are used to be much below the desired level. They do not have the necessary tool, technology, and infrastructure to bring in innovation to enhance the total value of their labour while using the land available to them. Besides this, the rural habitats do not have cold storage, lack of proper supply of electricity and irrigation. The hardship of poor cash crops and similar other constraints often force them disenchantment towards agro-based activities. Further unavailability of the market within their vicinity of affordable distance is another debilitating factor since they fail to sell their surplus produces to meet their requirements. On the contrary, they are only forced to sell their product at menial prices or minimum support price (MSP), which is fixed by the government.

In this regard, the government should have taken a proper step and adequate measures to provide technical expertise removing the handicap to ensure a regular crop cycle. The agricultural produce procured at the MSP and fixed by the government is not competitive compared to the market price. Rampant corruption practice existing in the public sector has led to the fact that the agricultural output is procured lower than the MSP fixed by the government. These cumulative problems act as the push factor necessarily causing the vicious cycle of poverty. Due to the above factors and the continued prevalence of disguised unemployment in agriculture, rural people are compelled to migrate to urban areas. Such a trend has unexpectedly also led to the population explosion in the urban area. The labourers display their skill and try auguring rapid development process in the urban area where they put them to work tirelessly. Nevertheless and surprisingly, their service and work have led to the mushrooming of some other kinds of problems in cities too.

After the globalisation process started in 1991, it has increased manifold problems. The role of the welfare state is now almost negligible. Adequate resources are not available in the hands of the state. The general public at the same time has the dominant perception that the government can never be short of capital. If we consider such a hypothetical situation, the general opinion is that the government is keeping its hands away from the merging crisis on the pretext that it has a lack of resources. This picture is not only prevalent in the Indian context but also other parts of the globe. This reflects that the state in

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totality is ironically backing out from its foremost duty and responsibility towards the people and their welfare.

Further, the perception of the people-centric welfare state is also gradually losing its orientation and significance. This has resulted and resurfaced the problem of the small and marginal farmers along with the labourers. The policy of economic liberalisation under a globalised system will have an adverse effect upon people of the labourer class. The liberalisation theory and similar testament assume that the fruits of the market economy will have a trickle-down effect and will benefit the poor labour class more to a phenomenal extent. It is certainly based on the presumption that if growth is driven by the trickle-down principle, that will automatically lead to the development of all. It means that if the wider development takes place at the centre owing to the flow of the massive capital, the benefit will percolate down further and lead to the development of states, and subsequently to the existing lower-level local bodies, and ultimately to the mass people who will benefit from it and so as the labourer at large.

Corona and the Labourer

In a crisis like the Corona pandemic or during any such special period of economic recession, the labourers are the most vulnerable community. The Corona pandemic affects them and their family adversely, and that is why they compromise with many of their basic needs in order to cope with the evolving situation. The problem is expected to continue for another two to three years. One of the main problems likely to arise in the aftermath of the Corona pandemic is the shortage of food grains; the labourer will probably be the most vulnerable class to suffer from the crisis and may reach the verge of starvation. Some studies reveal that the labour problem will not only give rise to the economic problem but going to deepen social crisis as well. Some of them which can be foreseen in advance is domestic violence, physical violence, quarrel in the communities and family, depression, and many other socio-psychological consequences. It will severely and negatively affect the women and children which is likely to increase in due course of time.

A study conducted by S. Mohan Kumar and Surjit Singh (2011) refers to the possible policy solutions which can be referred here to observe the marked difference. It infers that the pandemic will have a long-lasting and direct effect on the poor workers of the unorganised sector. Other similar studies of the recent past undertaken by Sengupta and Pal (2020) and S Rukmini (2020) observed notable points relating to the large suffering of the labourers in different organisations. Studies of such kinds covering a multitude of aspects of the labour point out that the comprehensive nature of the problems encountered by the labourers in their day-to-day life and the triggering indifference and apathy of the ruling machinery have had intensified other problems for the labourers in totality.

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The governments are gradually and diplomatically addressing and distancing themselves from the problem. They have already shown their inability to allocate necessary funds from the general budget and to increase the social relief fund. So it will have two types of far-reaching effects - the funds which are meant for relief of the labourers and the marginalised sections and groups will be compromised at the larger level. The second effect will impact the social life of the marginalised communities and groups of people who primarily are working-class labourers. The budget allocated for health and education sectors if curtailed put the people into further difficult situations to suffer in hunger and starvation. Their social life will take a significant setback due to the emerging pandemic as the people of marginalised communities do not have land, nor do they possess any belongings which they can mortgage in the bank to get some money or even loan too. In this way, the situation will be increasingly intensifying social menace among the poor labourers very soon in the coming days.

Coping Strategies

1. The small scale and particularly cottage industries, which are located in the rural, countryside and are also regarded as the backbone of the Indian economy, suffer a lot during the pandemic. The government must fund these industries in a viable manner to revive them and increase their productive capacity. Most importantly, the government should come forward and provide a market to sell their produces and goods. This may help augur a significant share of the Indian workforce to find somewhat an alternative near to secure employment source. One of the harsh realities which India is facing is regional discrimination. Most of the migrant labourers hail from the lesser developed states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. The government needs now to focus on this issue and ensure that development occurs on holistic fronts. This may help the labourers to find employment nearby to their habitation and state. About 70 per cent of the workforce is dependent upon this sector, and during the period of recession or loss of profit, they are out of their work of livelihood and sustenance. The kind of work or employment provided to them in the unorganised sector is seasonal. So, the government should envisage some sort of pro-people policy that can benefit the labourers in the coming days when most of them if rendered unemployed. It will also help in reducing the anxiety level of the labourer people at large.
2. In the year 2005, the Indian parliament passed a rural employment guarantee act which is considered to be a boon in this period of crisis to tackle the issues of providing cash to the hand of the labourers by engaging them in the activities of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

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Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The World Bank called the MGNREGA a stellar example of rural development, but the migrant workers who have returned to their native place after this pandemic may not have the job cards and other necessary eligibility requirements to avail of its stipulated benefit. What is warranted at this critical juncture is to provide job cards and engage them in the activities of MGNREGA as soon as possible because it is almost three years since the migrant labourers have last earned and spent during the transit period?

3. The government should provide free ration by not invoking any so-called formality by asking for address proof, Aadhaar card so that they will access ration after showing their poor migrant status. The government at the centre and state level should make the rule strictly mandatory for ration dealers of the local area that black marketing (kalabazari) is not found in any way at any place, and if so the government will punish them severely besides imprisonment at least for one year. Food has a long history as a subject of debate in India, out of which the right to food and the national food security act emerged to provide another kind of solace to the poor migrant workers at this hour of crisis. Nevertheless, the question is, since the workers are not present in their village; hence, they have not enrolled in the ration card and will be deprived of getting the benefit of the public distribution system (PDS). What is required at this point is to enroll them in the list without any further delay by which they will not starve without food? Though there is no dearth of food grain as 77 million tonnes along with 40 million tones rabi procurement is available, without proactive steps, it may not be possible to adequately handle the situation; the government announced the policy of 'one nation and one ration card,' but to implement it as earliest in true sense is the challenge and needs to be given utmost priority at the earliest. Secondly, all the households at least for the coming two-three years should be schematically bracketed as 'priority' households entitled to receive 35kg of food grains per household by easing 'general' household entitlement to the extent of 20 kg per household. This looks viable to cover a total of 90 per cent of the rural and urban sparse population, including the migrant labourers.
4. The immediate and appropriate challenge to overcome the Corona pandemic effect is to go for skill mapping of the migrant labourers who have come back from distant city centres to their native locality. The effect of the Corona pandemic is so profound that the migrant labourers may not like to go again to the cities to earn their livelihood, and indeed, they would be otherwise like to engage in the work they are skilled in, provided they get it in near to the residence and or native locality. The initiative of the government and intervention can be more effective if the skill mapping is done and have a database to set up the

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required small skill base centres in their inhabiting locality, which is not in operation presently. In this regard, if the government can take the necessary onus of setting up the centre and link it with the market with the minimum required support, it will boost the economy and solve the hardship of the labourers.

5. It required at this point is to engage and involve the agencies already active in the development sector, especially the focused, skilled-based Non-Government Organisation (NGO) working proactively in such local area? The network of volunteer organisations can be systematically used to map the skill and identify the interventions required for their understating of the local situation and need.
6. The establishment and functioning of the cooperative societies to develop food processing and packaging in local pockets will boost the economy and make the labourers more self-sufficient and reliant in their local area. What is required is if the agricultural products in the same locality can develop such a mechanism to a large extent, the issue of small and marginal farmers can be addressed?
7. It is required to have a rescue package to initiate and provide loans to establish local-based industries. Nevertheless, the challenge to facilitate a hassle-free loan to migrant labourers is yet to be tested. However, adequate support to get a loan to establish their small-scale industry at the local level will revamp difficulties faced by the rural agro-based industries.
8. The expansion of the beneficiary base of the Ujjwala Yajona needs to broaden to cover the family of the migrant worker. It is because most of the migrant people's households do cook with biomass such as dried cow-dung, firewood, dry weeds, or crop residues. Due to such materials used, the entire house gets to smoke causing severe other kinds of problems. Furthermore, the spread of smoke inside their respective houses does also intensify severe health-related hazards like asthma and lung, further affecting more children and aged people.
9. The initiative of the Uttar Pradesh government by prohibiting some provisions of the Labour Act is essential to give the relaxation from the binding of the provisions of the labour laws to start-up an initiative under the Prime Minister Koushal Vikash Yojana. The provisions in labour and act, which give them an opportunity for 'licensing/ inspector raj' is the bottleneck to set up the small scale industries and one of the significant attributes of the migration of labourers.
10. The nature of employment in the agricultural sector is seasonal and disguised in nature as farming is for subsistence. At this point and need of the hour is to establish an agricultural hub where the agricultural products can be processed. Wheat flour mills, rice mills, sugar mills have to be established with government support. These types of

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agriculture clusters already exist in India. However, most of them are established in developed areas and urban centres. So, the cost of transportation lessens profit. Also, steps should be taken to establish these agriculture sectors near the rural area so that maximum profit can be availed and regional disparity can be addressed. This will help to restrain the migration of workers.

11. One of the most neglected areas in recent times has been the alluring manufacturing sector, particularly small-scale industry which has not got adequate support from the government. The negligence of the small-scale industry has led to its/their closure and robbed the possibility of employment of a large chunk of the workforce. Since independence, many small-scale industries have acted as a driving force for large-scale industries. The closures of the small-scale industries have had a direct impact on the output of the large industries. As a result, we have seen that India has been regularly witnessed negative growth in the manufacturing sector for the last several years.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the Covid-19 or the Corona pandemic is not mere locational or situated within a specific- fixed social boundary. Its fast occurrence very adversely affected the poor people, especially the labourer class in India. Continuation and uncertainty in the Corona pandemic is seemingly profound and may have many-sided negative consequences at the wider level. Though the people across territorial boundaries suffered immensely, but in the Indian case, the worst is observed for and among the working class and labourers. A holistic approach vis-à-vis welfare policy via an empirical method of implementation may help increase the minimum support price and awareness among the labourers. The MGNREGA along with PDS and other similar government drives, initiation, and action-oriented programmes in this backdrop and wee hours could be the major tenable catalyst to address and redress the immediate confronting problems of the hardest hit labourers in India.

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UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Sacred Complex of Amarkantak: An Anthropological Study

D.V. Prasad*

Amarkantak is the origin place for three major rivers such as Narmada, Sone, and Johilla which attract pilgrims from different parts of India. Out of three rivers, Narmada is the most revered since it is considered as the daughter of Lord Shiva as well as a lifeline to three states such as Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. The location of these three rivers made Amarkantak one of the prominent Hindu pilgrimage centres which in due course developed as a sacred complex attracting specialists i.e., pandas (priests), sadhus (ascetics), and sants (saints) from different parts of India. Interestingly Amarkantak is situated in a tribal-dominated area. The majority of them visit Amarkantak and offer worship to goddess Narmada and Lord Shiva during Makara Sankranti, Maha Shivaratri, Dusserah, Narmada Jayanti along with Hindu pilgrims. Various cultural activities are organised under great tradition and little traditions around Amarkantak. The paper makes an attempt to document the emerging patterns of the sacred complex at Amarkantak and tries to examine the continuous interaction of great and little traditions around it.

Introduction

The globalisation process not only impacted the world economies but also facilitating the interaction of diverse traditions and exchange of ideas and cultures. This transculturation process led to a new kind of syncretic living across the nations, urban centres, and places of religious significance. The origin sources of rivers, pristine forests, hill valleys, and

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other natural landscapes emerged as sacred centres. Subsequently, these places are paving way for the peaceful co-existence of diverse traditions. However, the native identities are still maintained by the continuous practice of respective rites, rituals, and other sacred activities by popularising certain sacred centres. It is evident from the observance of elaborate ceremonial and ritual performances at various Hindu temples including organisation of car festivals, circumambulation to pilgrim centres, the celebration of *utsavas*, *jatras*, *melas*, etc. Thus, Indian civilization and culture are understood through the continuous interaction of great and little tradition which is, in turn, creating a national identity. Vidyarthis (1961) concept of sacred complex catalytic in highlighting various facets of Hindu spiritual life including a source of livelihood to dependent communities through trade and tourism in India. It is also catalytic in spreading the message of cultural ethos to even remote places including indigenous communities through cultural performances.

The scientific studies of the sacred complex in India were initiated in the post-Independent era through the application of western methodological perspectives to understand the multifaceted network of social relations at Hindu pilgrimage centres. Based on the conceptual framework of Robert Redfield and Mckim Marriott, Vidyarthis (1961) initiated a systematic study of these centres by using ethnographic description for the inclusive understanding of the Indian civilization. According to Vidyarthis, the sacred complex is a synthesis of sacred geography, performances, and specialists which is crucial to delineate the organisation of the centres and its people. Wherein sacred complex symbolises unity in diversity as it is the meeting place of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and traditions. These centres also generate livelihoods, improved transport facilities, and adjust to the changing scenario through innovations from time to time. Through his methodology and empirical data, Vidyarthis scrutinised the western scholars' concepts like little and great tradition, cultural specialists, performances, media and reframed them in the Indian context. Later on, many scholarly works were undertaken by western as well as Indian scholars testing the theoretical concepts of the sacred complex.

Initially, the need for sacred systems and centres in the integration of diverse traditions of Indian civilization was attempted by Cohn and Marriot (1958). In the course of time studies on the sacred complex were undertaken by Makhan Jha (1971), Saraswati (1975), Sahay (1975), Patnaik (1977), Goswami and Morab (1975), Chaudhury (1981), Narayan (1983), Kumar (1991), Samanta (1996), Behera (2003), Mishra (2004), etc., at various Hindu temples and analysed the undercurrents of sacred complex of different pilgrim centres. The studies of Sahay (1974), and Upadhyayaya (1974) pinpointed the significance of emerging sacred geography at sacred complexes which are base for secondary urbanisation. Further, the empirical

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studies made by Bose (1967), Freeman (1971), Preston (1980), Goswami, and Morab (1970) highlighted the occupational and religious change due to the impact of emerging temple traffic at the Hindu temples in India. Out of these, some temples are responsible for secondary urbanisation and others are just increasing the temple traffic. Whatever may be the case, these centres facilitate the continuous interaction of diverse traditions which reflects the complexity of Indian civilization.

Similarly, Amarkantak with the origin of three pious rivers emerged as a sacred complex that attracts a multitude of devotees, pilgrims, and tourists from different parts of the country. With the increasing temples and population, Amarkantak is also declared as *nagar parishad* (municipality) by district administration which is in turn responsible for the creation of infrastructure, roads, communication facilities, etc. Though it is not expanded in comparison to other sacred centres like Kashi, Puri, and Ujjain, but the floating population of *sadhus*, *sants*, pilgrims, ascetics, and *parikrama* (circumambulation) devotees made Amarkantak a unique place in Hindu pilgrimage. In due course, this floating population attracted the attention of the state government that in turn led to a movement towards the protection of the Narmada river.

Under these circumstances, this study attempted to know the emerging patterns of the sacred complex of Amarkantak which is located in the Maikal hills of Satpura range in Madhya Pradesh. With the belief systems in Hindu mythology, devotees observe the world's longest river *parikrama* on foot, which reveals the significance of rivers in daily life. Besides, the tribal groups such as Gond, Baiga, Panika, Agaria, and many other communities do visit the sacred place and offer worship. With the expansion of pilgrims and monasteries of different denominations interacting with local communities and spreading the message of great tradition to their hinterlands. Before understanding this interaction of traditions, it is essential to understand the sacred geography of Amarkantak with its location, historicity to understand the factors responsible for the development of the sacred complex and its role in maintaining the syncretic tradition of mutual existence of diverse cultural ethos in the region.

Study Area

The Amarkantak is located at the eastern extremity of the Maikal Hills of the Satpura range. In 1995 Amarkantak was recognised as *nagar parishad* by the Anuppur district administration of Madhya Pradesh. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Amarkantak enumerated as 8,416 consists of 4,514 male and 3,902 female individuals with an average of 181 persons per square kilometers. The gradually increasing population of Amarkantak demonstrates that the sacred centres are also responsible for urbanisation in the remote region.

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At present, the total population of Amarkantak is increased by more than 10 per cent since 2011. Besides, unofficial settlements are common by the floating population who made temporary shelters in isolated areas. Out of 15 wards of the *Nagar Parishad*, 10 wards (1 to 8 and 14 to 15) are dominated by Gond followed by Baiga and Panika. In the rest of the wards (9 to 13), Hindus (95.51 per cent) are the predominant population followed by Muslim (1.28 per cent), Christian (0.30 per cent), Jain (1.21 per cent), Sikhs (0.11 per cent), and other communities (1.46 per cent). Hindu population including castes such as Brahmin, Nai, Kewat, Ahir are predominantly found in Amarkantak. Thus, the concentration of diverse community households in Amarkantak facilitates continuous interaction among different cultural traditions. Amarkantak is having another important feature is that three linguistic zones such as Bhagelkhand, Gondwana, and Chhattisgarh are found at the main Narmada temple. Though Hindi is the official language, *Chhattisgarhi*, *Bundelkhandi* and other tribal dialects are widely spoken in the area.

Amarkantak is not only the origin place of the Narmada, Sone, and Johilla rivers but also enriched with natural resources in the form of the *Achanakmar* bio-sphere reserve. The Narmada originates at Amarkantak proper in Maikal hills. Whereas Sone river originates just one and a half kilometers distance from the Narmada popularly known as *Sonebhadra* in the same Maikal hills. Johila river originates from Jaleswar which is popular as *Johiladevi*. It is a major tributary of Sone which flows North West to meet the Sone river at Bali in the Umari district of Madhya Pradesh.

Historically, the well-known poet Kalidas mentioned this place as *Amrakuta* with its lofty ridges crest in his famous work *Meghaduta*. It is believed that sage Markandey and Yudhistira started a debate on the origin of Amarkantak which in due course has become *Rewakhand Purana*. The historical name of Amarkantak is *Amrakut* which is mentioned as *Rikshparvat* valley known as *Mandhata* in *Puranas*. It is believed that about 1000 years ago Suryavamshi Samrat gave the river name *Narmada*. The popular oral stories regarding the origin of the rivers reveal that while Lord Shiva meditated intensely that his sweat pooled at a tank and started overflowing in the form of a river i.e., Narmada. Another legend says that two teardrops of Lord Brahma fell from heaven that became Narmada and Sone. Likewise, Amarkantak has a wide reference in *Matsya Purana* that mere sight of Narmada *kund* clears all the sins. Hence devotees throng this place for sacred dip and *darshan* of the Narmada *kund*. Since it is attracting pilgrims from all over India, a sacred complex is emerging and popularising the Hindu traditions through its *parikrama*, regular *Aarati*¹, a celebration of *Narmada Jayanti*, etc. To maintain the sanctity of Amarkantak, the sale of alcohol and non-vegetarian food is strictly prohibited in the Area. Thus, reverence

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towards *Maa* Narmada was evident throughout Amarkantak when people confront, they greet each other with the *Narmadehar*² slogan.

Methodology for Data Collection

The present micro-level study is a synthesis of primary as well as secondary data. For this study, personal interviews with the pilgrims, *sadhus*, *sants*, sacred specialists, and tourists who frequently visit Amarkantak were undertaken. To understand sacred geography, a transact walk was made along with key informants such as *ashram* (monastery) employees, students, teachers, etc., and the details of sacred geography in and around Amarkantak were collected. Case studies were carried out from the visiting devotees who are undertaking *mundane*³, sacred performances, *shraddha*⁴, etc. The researcher interacted with *sadhus*, *parikramavasi* and participated in the sacred performances at *ghats*⁵, *ashrams*, and temples to understand the sacred performances, their process, and dynamics involved in it.

Sacred Geography of Amarkantak

Lofty mountains, diversity of flora, and fauna attract pilgrims from different parts of India to the Amarkantak. The origin of pious rivers made this place a cultural conglomeration of great and little traditions. Due to this reason, many temples, *ashrams*, monasteries came up, and these centres are testimony to the development of the sacred complex. Expansion of religious centres and settlement areas during the last few years made impetus for the development of new educational institutions, medical facilities, conveyance etc. establishes the Amarkantak as a melting pot for diverse cultural patterns of the sacred complex. The immaculate architectures in a group of temples such as Pateleswar, Shiv, and Karana *mandir* combinedly popular as *Pracheen Mandir*, *Mai-ki-bagiya*, *Sonmuda*, *Sonbhadra Kund*, and Hanuman temple are the main sacred centres located near the main Narmada temple. Shri Mahameru Yantra *mandir* and Amareswar *mandir* are newly come up centres with the significance of Narmada *Kund*. Apart from these sacred centres, *Kalyanashram*, *Shivogopalashram*, *Mrityunjayaashram*, *Shantikuti*, *Rajarajeswariashram*, *Jainashram*, *Kapilmuniashram*, *Chandrikaashram*, *Markandeyaashram*, *Sukdevanandashram* (*Haati Maharaj*) are major *ashrams* contributing a lot to the growth of sacred geography surrounding Amarkantak. Existences of Gurudwara, Jain temple, Kabirdham, and so on are testimony to the syncretic nature of Amarkantak which in turn paved the way for the perpetuation of cultural pluralism at Amarkantak.

The premises of the main Narmada temple consists of 24 temples surrounding to *Narmadaudgamsthal* i.e., *kund* (*origin tank*). The *kund* is located at the centre of the temple complex where the *jatashankar* temple is situated just opposite to it. At the right hand side of Narmada temple, Sri Suryanarayana temple and Lakshminarayana temple, Rohinimata temple

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closely attached to the *kund*. Just opposite to the main *kund*, Narmada temple situated where an idol of Narmada deity is present exactly the opposite direction of *sanctumsanctorum* where Lord Amarkanteswar and Goddess Parvati idols are worshipped. At the entrance of this temple is seated by the deities such as Annapurna, Sriram Durbar on right, and the small *sanctorum* of Lord Karthikeya, Sri Narayan, Dakshineswar, Hanuman, Sri Gorakhnath, Sri Vishnu, Sri Dasavtar, Sri Lakshmi Narayan temples also exists. A big *hawanmandap*⁶ is located in front of the main temple to carry out *yagna*⁷. The temple complex also comprises the temples of Tripurasundari, Durgamata, Sri Siddeswar Mahadeo Mrityunjayajap temple, Sriram Janaki temple, Radha Krishna temple, Varaharudra Mahadeo temple, etc. In these temples, separate priests are present and officiating worship on regular basis. After the Narmada *darshan*, the devotees do visit all these temples since they are located in the same complex and offer prayers. A *banyan* tree is located at a corner of the temples which is worshipped by the devotees and ties the knots for fulfilling their vows. A *prashad* counter is also located inside the complex which is operated by Narmada Devasthan Board to sale *Prashad*⁸ and sacred service tokens are provided to the devotees.

In front of the main temple, another *kund* is developed which is known as Gandhi *kund* where pilgrims take a sacred dip at first instance and go for goddess Narmada *darshan*. Local people also take a bath every day in this *kund* and visit the temples as a part of their daily routine. A small Hanuman temple is situated under a big *Peepal* tree besides Gandhi *kund*. It is built in 2012-13 where a priest offers regular *arati*. Devotees tie *maulidaaga* (sacred thread) to this tree for the fulfillment of their vows as devotees believe that it is an abode of Lord Vishnu and hence every Saturday they light a lamp with *til* mixed *sarson* oil to get rid of the wrath of Lord Sani Bhagawan. On *Somvati Amavasya* day, a special *puja* is made under this tree to get the blessings of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi.

Just opposite to Narmada arch, a group of temples such as Shiv temple, Pataleswar, and Sri Karana temple popular as *pracheenmandir* exists that are built by Kalachuri kings during 1041-1073 A.D. Adi Shankaracharya built *Surya kund* to specify the origin of Narmada at this temple complex. The famous *rangmahal* where *Maa* Narmada takes a rest in the night and plays *chousat*⁹ is also located in its premises. The idols of Sri Omkareswar and Badri Narayan are worshipped regularly at *rangmahal*. To conserve the ancient structures, the Archaeological Survey of India has been maintaining the *pracheen mandir* and restricting the movement of the general public through entry fees.

Within a kilometer distance from Narmada temple, Sri Mahameru Yantra *mandir* is situated which is still under construction by Guru Sukhdev Mahadanandji. *Maa* Tripuraji idol is established inside the *sanctorum* and outside 64 *yogini* idols are enshrined in temple architecture. *Sonemuda* is the

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origin place of two holy rivers namely Sone and Bhadra and water from these two *kunds* joined at this place to become *Sonebhadra*. There exists a famous tourist sunrise viewpoint at an elevation to glance at the dense forest view of Amarkantak. *Maa-ki-bagia*¹⁰ is a garden place where goddess Narmada's childhood idol is present. It is believed that the goddess used to play and collect flowers and fruits from this garden during her childhood. Out of the many indigenous varieties of the flora of Amarkantak, the *gulbakawali* flower is an important one that is used for making indigenous medicine for the treatment of the eye. The idols of Shankar, Uttarmukhi Hanuman, and other deities are also present in this complex. Sri Sarvoday Digambar Aadinath temple was initiated in 2000 and it is still under construction within a kilometer distance from Narmada temple.

A Gurudwara is established on the bank of Narmada where it is believed that Sant Kabir took rest after *darshan* of *maa*. Narmada and later on proceeded to a secluded place and did *tapasya* (penance) which is popular as Kabir Chabutara. Due to this reason, a statue of Sant Kabir is presented inside the Gurudwara. It is maintained by Guru Nanak Sewa Samiti. Kapildhara, *Dudhdhara* and *Durgadhara* are the major waterfalls in the Amarkantak area that attract not only pilgrims but tourists across the state. Dhunapaani is a place where devotees of Narmada *parikrama* take shelter and undertake sacred dip believing that by doing their sins are removed by *Maa* Narmada.

An indigenous *Badadev* shrine is located in *mela* ground and Kapila Sangham is visited by Gond tribals from surrounding Amarkantak as well as distant places. On *Makar Sankranti* day, Gond visit this place in large number from Dindori, Balaghat, Thakthapur for *darshan* and spend the whole day at *mela* ground where the number of indigenous stalls was arranged and provide information regarding the origin tales of gods and goddesses, their glory and kingdom, the significance of nature, etc. During *Sawan Purnima*, *kheer mahotsav* is celebrated at this place where *bhajan* and *keertan* take place along with *Badadevpuja*. During Navratri, Maha Shivaratri, Holi, and other Hindu festivals, they also lit *diya* and offer *puja*. Sunday is observed as the main *puja* day at this place. During Maha Shivaratri, tribal pilgrims take a sacred bath at Narmada *kund* and proceed to Jaleswar on foot to offer pious Narmada water to Jaleswar *Phallu*. With the expansion of sacred geography, the *mohallas* (hamlets) surrounding Amarkantak are also increasing day by day. At present, Balco area, Jamuna Daddar, Baratiare come up in and around Amarkantak. Continuous *bhajans* and *keertans* were recited at Rathore *Samaj* who hailed from Dindori Ram temple and established a temporary *ashram* in Kapila Sangham where installed the deities of Lord Sani, Kapil saint, and Lord Hanuman.

In six kilometers distance from Amarkantak another sacred zone is located which is popular as Jaleswar *dham* where three *phallus* have naturally

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existed in a triangular manner whose reference was found in Markendeya and Skandh *puranas*. However, nearly 35 years back *mahant* Shri Naresh Phulji built an *ashram* and *goshala* (cowshed) in its premises and overview its regular *arati* and worship. An important feature of this centre is the location of Johila *kund* in the form of the well from where the concerned river originates and flows towards Anuppur. In front of Jaleswar *dham*, *mata* Annapurneswari temple exists which has a very recent origin of about two decades. Due to legal intricacies, the idols are not installed to date but now the case resolved in favour of trust and hence they installed the idols formally on 27th April 2021. Despite this, regular offerings were going on at this temple and devotees tie *chunri* (red sparkle cloth) to the temple and offer dry coconut. Devotees are given rice as *prashad* which is taken to their respective native places and offer *annadan*¹¹ by mixing the rice brought from this temple. In front of Annapurneswari temple, Shri Shri Maa Siddhi Daatritemple is there. It was established by Shri Guru Dattatreya Sant Sewa Ashram and offers regular worship to the deity.

Within a half-kilometre distance from Amarkantak, Shri Amareswar temple was constructed in 2009 by Swami Mahendranandji *maharaj* where a *phallu* having 11 feet in height and 51-ton weight made with *Jilheri* stone is a major attraction to pilgrims as well as tourists. In front of this mammoth *Shivaling*, 12 replicas of *jyotirlingas* such as Bhimeswaram, Vaidhyanatham, Omkareswar, Mahakaleswaram, Mallikarjunam, Somanathan, Gurumeswaram, Kedarnatham, Traimbakeswaram, Viswanatham, Nageswaram, Rameswaram are installed in two lanes. On the rooftop the deities of *naokanya*, Agrasen saint, Adi Sankaracharya, Lord Hanuman idols are also installed in the same sequence in two rows.

Devotees frequent to Jaleswaram *dham* on Maha Shivaratri and *Sawan* month in large number to offer *abishek*¹² to the *phallu*. Observance of cultural performances such as Bhagawat *katha*, Ramayan *katha*, Satynaraya *katha*, *bhajans* and *keertan* by *sadhu* and *sants* attracts not only local people but also the pilgrims. At present government and private holiday homes, guest houses, private resorts, hotels are operating to accommodate visiting officials and pilgrims at Amarkantak.

Further Amarkantak is close to *Achanakmar* bio-sphere reserve where indigenous tribes who worship Lord Shiva tridents (*trishul*) along with *Badadeo* and *Buradeo* in the form of Sarai wooden poles. Tribal shrines in surrounding villages do witness the existence of *Phallu*, tridents, *kalash* and *chimta*. Billamgarh cave is a classic example of this syncretism, which is located nearby Karangara village located at a six kilometers distance from Jaleswar *dham*. This village is inhabited by Baiga population. Earlier it was a sacred place of Baiga tribe but slowly Gond tribals have taken over it as they started worshipping *Phallu* i.e., a symbol of Lord Shiva. A big *jatra*¹³ is observed every year in the month of February during *Makar Sankranti* which

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is popularly known as *Madai*. Wherein Baiga, Gond, Kol, and other non-tribal communities participate in the *mela*.

The majority of the tribal villages of Gond, Agaria, Panika, Dhulia, and others are surrounded by Amarkantak have *gaogossain*, a village shrine, which is located near the *sarai* or *kammar* trees. Other tribal deities such as *thakurdeo*, *dharti mata*, *agni deo*, *ghamsaan deo*, *dulha deo*, *narayan deo* are worshipped by tribals during annual and agricultural festivals such as *bidri*, *haryali*, *jawara*, etc. Thus, the emergence of sacred centres in and around Amarkantak led to the celebration of various performances consisting of both great and little traditions. These performances are also a major attraction for the pilgrim who visits Amarkantak on these festive occasions.

Sacred Performances

Narmada *Jayanti*, *Maha Shivaratri*, *Vasant Panchami*, *Navratri* are major festive occasions celebrated at Amarkantak with a lot of pomp and devotion. During these occasions, devotees throng to this place to offer prayers, vows and perform life cycle rituals. Prior to *darshan*, devotees make the sacred dip at *Gandhi kund* at first instance and pay their vows in temple precincts. Later, they proceed for *darshan* of main Narmada temple and the surrounding gods and goddesses located in the temple area. The rice, flowers, and coconut are the major items offered to goddess Narmada.

At Jaleswar, devotees offer *bhanga*, *ganja*, *dhatuira*, *bel* leaves, rice, hibiscus flower, *sami* (a variety of wild tamarind leaves), *raakh* (ash), *ber* (wild fruit), *aam-ka-bhog* to *Phallu*. Since it is believed that Lord Shiva likes whatever people dislikes and thus devotees offer different varieties of flower or leaves. There is no restriction on offerings to Lord Shiva. Devotees also render cow service at the cowshed located at the sacred zone.

To inculcate devotion, the visiting pilgrims or artists perform *Ramleela*¹⁴, *Ramayan katha*, *Bhagawat katha*, *bhajans*, and *kirtans* free of cost at the temple precincts. The temple authorities offer free boarding at the temple *ashram* and food is provided on behalf of the temple. *Bhagawat katha* is being performed by *yajman* who are having vows on the premises of temple. The concerned *ashram* of the temple offer *annadaan* (free distribution of food), *bhandara* (*prashad* distribution) during *Shivaratri*.

Offer of *arati* is a regular phenomenon in Amarkantak such as main Narmada *khund*, Ramghat, Kalyan *ashram* and Mrityanjaya *ashram*. At Narmada *Kund*, a special *arati* is regularly offered at 7 p.m. in the evening in presence of pilgrims or devotees. Just prior to this event, ascetics from different *ashrams* recite *keertans*, *bhajans*, songs in praise of *Maa* Narmada at the temple precincts. Further, special *arati* also offered at Ramghat at 6.30 in the evening. At Gurudwara regular worship is offered by *granthi* (priest) according to their religious tradition. Vaisakhi and Guru Nanak Jayanti are celebrated in grand manner at this centre where people irrespective of caste,

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creed and religion participate. During Maha Shivaratri, special *langar* (free distribution of food) is arranged for two days continuously to the visiting pilgrims.

Shradha at Ramghat

This process is also known as *pretkarma* wherein *yajman* rush to Amarkantak on the tenth day after the cremation to offer *pinda*¹⁵ to the deceased ones. Both tribal and non-tribal communities perform *shradha* at Ramghat as per Hindu tradition whereas Gond community observe *shradha* at *Puskardamghat* based on their own tradition.

Every day people visit the *ghat* from nearby villages of Pendra road, Podki, Rajendragao, Budhar, Anuppur, etc., and even far away places like Jabalpur, Udaipur, Indore, etc. The majority of them belong to backward communities like Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and Other Backward Classes. As *panda* stated that *dwija* (twice-born) visit Kashi for *asthivisarjan*¹⁶ and *shradha*. This ceremony was officiated by a priest who is known as *Maha Brahmin* or *Mahapatra* who perform the rites at Ramghat from early morning to evening. The visitors may come at any time during the day time and hence the *panda* wait the whole day at the *ghat*. After sunset, they left the place as it was not auspicious to perform these rites at night. In case anyone comes late due to the failure of vehicles, they were advised to stay in *ashram* or lodge and perform *shradha* on the next day morning. *Shradha* ceremony was initially taken by a *panda* who migrated from Anuppur and at present, his descendants (third generation) are practicing the traditional occupation on a rotation basis. Sometimes, they go on field visits for doing rites at the respective villages where they are offered brass vessels, cloths, *dakshina*, etc.

The *Maha Brahmin* was assisted by other specialists such as *Nai* (barber), *Safaiwala* (sweeper), *Dhobi* (washerman), and *Gumasta* (secretarial staff) at the place of rites. Though no fixed *dakshina* (fee) is paid, they were given a lumpsum of Rs. 150/- to 200/- per *yajaman* which is redistributed among them except barber. The charges of the barber are fixed at the rate of Rs. 50/- which is shared equally by *Nagar Parishad* and the barber. Even for *Shradha* also there is no fixed amount is charged from the visitors, depending on their economic condition, the *yajaman* offers the *dakshina* ranges from Rs. 551 to Rs. 11,051. Besides this *dakshina*, *yajman* also contributes rice, *dal*, vegetables, coconut, *supari* to the Brahmin for *annadan* and the accompanying relatives also offer *dakshina* to *panda* and take blessings of the *panda*. After completion of the rites, *asthi* (ashes of the dead) and *pinda* are immersed in the river Narmada with the assistance of *dhobi*. Their performer and the relatives take bath and cook food at the nearby place which is consumed and distributed to the destitute present at the event. In the case of other religious persons such as Jain, Sikhs, *Kabirpanthis* die at Amarkantak, they perform *agnisanskar* (cremation) on the bank of river Narmada. But the

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last rites were performed as per their tradition at their respected residence, *ashram, mohalla* etc.

Performance of *Shradha* by Gond

Since 2000 onwards, Gond *samaj* is performing the *shradha* rites at Kapila Sangam *Badadev* temple. In December 2020, *shradha* centre is shifted to *pushkar dam ghat*, where Gonds offering *pinda* to their ancestors and immersing *asthi* after *puja* to *Budadev* installed under a *sal* tree. Actually, *Saaj* tree is considered as *Badadev*, the chief deity of Gond. But due to non-availability of *Saaj* tree at the present place, they installed *Badadev* under *sal* tree. To officiate the last rites, three volunteers i.e., *bhumka*, *asthipujari*, and assistant are appointed by Gondwana Sewa Trust and giving a monthly honorarium to the specialists. They also record the details of the visitors in a register and charge Rs.501 fee for *shradha* ceremony. A receipt is also issued to the relatives on behalf of the trust.

On *dasgatra*¹⁷ day, relatives of the deceased person come to this place and perform last rites as per Gond tradition. Unlike the engagement of the barber at Ramghat, Gond bring their *nath* (affinal relatives of the dead) from their village who perform *mundan* to their *saga* (blood relatives) and they accept *dakshina*, rice, *gamsha* (new cloth) for their services. However, *Thakur* (barber) also conducts *mundan* on payment basis in case *nath* is absent. After *mundan*, person who performs *shradha* prepares *pinda* with rice flour and water similar to Hindu tradition. Further, five leaf cups filled with turmeric rice, vermilion, *mahuwa*, *jawa*, *teel*, *dhoop* are also kept besides the *pinda* and perform last rites by acknowledging *Budadev*, *Badadev*, and goddess Narmada. Though *shradha* is exclusively act of *saga* (blood relatives) members, *nath* (affinal relatives) members do accompany and offer worship to *asthi* and assist them at every stage. Afterwards, they immerse the *asthi* and *panda* at Puskardam and all the members take bath in Narmada.

Once again, Gond offer *puja* inside the *shradha* centre in presence of the images of *Badadev* in the form of a trident, goddess Narmada, Lakshmi, Lingo, Gondwana logo photo frames, tridents, *diya*, peacock feathers, etc. The *puja* material consists of *koyaphool* (dried *mahuwa* flowers), *haldi chawal* (turmeric mix rice), *sindhur* (vermillion), and *chandana* (sandal paste). All these are placed in front of the deities and *puja* is offered by *asthi pujari*. After completion of *penharati*, it is declared that process is completed. After completion of *puja*, they purchase a plastic tin to carry Narmada water, *dhaga* (sacred thread), *Badadev* photo, *murra* (perched rice), *chironji* (sugar crystals), *pankhi* (bamboo made hand fan), Gondwana flag, peacock feathers, etc., from them.

On *pitrapaksh*¹⁸ day, devotees offer *pitradarpan* to their dead ancestors at Jaleswar Johilaghat. It is believed that the unsatisfied souls get pacified at Jaleswar *dham*. Due to this reason, *yajaman* visits the place with the priest and

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conducts rites. Later on, the *pinda* is immersed in Johila river. For this, they give some donations to the Jaleswarashram. Even people do carry *asthi* to Gurudwara for *antimardas* (last rites) and after worship, the ashes are immersed in Narmada.

Jhaalar Sanskaar (Mundan or Offering of First Hair)

Generally, those who have a vow at Amarkantak to offer first hair, *mundan* is observed from six days of childbirth to till eleven years based on economic capabilities of the family. It is believed that if child cries during *mundan* are auspicious as it ensures treasure to his maternal uncle. After cleaning the shaved head with *atta* bowl, oil mixed turmeric paste is smeared on a shaved head. Then the child is asked to take bath at *kund* and taken for Narmada *darshan*. People throng on an auspicious occasion to remove the first hair of the child. Generally, *mundan* is observed on *treyodasi*¹⁹ as *mundan muharaat*. People from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh also visit Amarkantak to offer first hair of their children.

River Circumambulation (Narmada Parikrama)

It is one of the world's largest river circumambulations performed by Narmada devotees after taking *Vrat* (vow) at Omkareswar temple. The *Yatra* covers the north and south coast of the Narmada river from its origin place i.e., Amarkantak to the Gulf of Kambhat where Narmada merges in Arabian Sea. Originally *Yatra* duration is meant for three years three month three days by foot without carrying any belongings along with them (Paranjypte, 1991). But now the duration is reduced to a great extent such as within three months for walkers, 20 to 25 days for two and four-wheelers. Devotees who are willing to undertake *Parikrama*, first go to Omkareswar and offer *puja* and take *Parikrama Deeksha*²⁰ from the temple priest. Prior to initiation of *Parikrama*, *Mundan* is performed by the concerned individual and the local priest provides a small water bottle (sacred river water), goddess Narmada photo, ritualised rice with small *Phallu* to them. The *Puja* material such as *Chandan* (sandalwood), *Sindur* (vermilion), *Dhoop* sticks, *Agarbatti* (incense stick), matchbox, sugar crystals given by the priests is kept in a small cloth bag and perform *Puja* daily in the morning and evening during the *Yatra*. Besides this sacred material, *Parikramavasi* carries *Kamandal* (garland of rosary), *Lathi* (elongated stick), *Dari* (sleeping mat), two pairs of white cloths, plate, tumbler, *Parikrama* route map, etc., along with them. Further, they also carry a self-explanatory declaration *Parikrama* letter wherein they take signature and seal of the *Ashram* authorities wherever they took shelter located on both sides of the river coast as a part of the evidence for successful completion of *Parikrama*.

During their *Yatra*, morning devotees offer *Puja* and start walking throughout the day with intermittent halts for tea and *Prashad*. At daybreak,

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they halt at *Ashram*, school, village community hall and accept the food served by them. In case of no facility, they go for *Biksha*²¹ from the villagers and take shelter in the temple. On average each person walks 35 to 40 kilometers per day. *Parikrama* come to standstill during *Chaturmas* (rainy season). Generally, devotees avoid the rainy season or in case anyone enters the *Chaturmas* during *Parikrama*, the *Yatra* is stopped and take shelter at the nearby *Ashram*. Again, *Parikrama* is initiated after completion of *Chaturmasa* from the place where they stopped.

During *Parikrama* period, the devotees observe ascetic life and do not remove hair, nails, etc. Throughout their marathon walking, they are not supposed to lie and indulge in theft. Even whatever money is donated to them by the villagers, merchants, and philanthropists are spent on their way to children in the form of distribution of sweets or toffees. In connection with food, the consumption of onion and garlic is strictly prohibited. Even the villagers are aware of it and hence they prepare *prashad* accordingly and offer to *Parikramavasi* where ever they take shelter. After completion of *Parikrama*, they visit once again Omkareswar for *darshan* and offer *Abhishek* with the water carried from Amarkantak. Again, they undergo *Mundan* and return to their native place. After reaching home, they organise *puja* with Satyanarayana *katha*, Brahmin *Bhojan* (feast) at their home by inviting relatives, neighbours, and friends. Devotees believed that by doing this *Parikrama*, family problems, the prolonged diseases are meted out with the blessings of goddess Narmada.

Pilgrims may also start this *Yatra* from any place on the bank of river Narmada and finish by reaching the same place. Soon after they reach Ankaleswar in Gujarat where Narmada merges in the open sea, the devotees cross over the boat and offers flowers, vermilion, and turmeric. Finally, the devotees return to Omkareswar located in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh. In due course of time, many changes are taken place in *Parikramaavrat* that now pilgrims are undertaking this circumambulation in tour operated vehicles like buses, cars, mini vans and completing within 20 days. Poor people, *Sadhus*, and individuals who had vows still opt for the *Parikramaavrat* by foot in a separate route meant for such a tedious journey.

Sacred Specialists

The enormous growth of temples and *Ashrams* attracted a large number of specialists such as *panda*, *sadhu*, *yogini* (women ascetics), *mahatma* (male ascetics), vendors, and other occupational groups like *nai*, *dhobhi*, *safaiwala*, etc. Every *Ashram* maintains its own temple priests who offer regular *arati* and worship. The Brahmin of Amarkantak also renders services in celebration of rites-de-passage at temple precincts as well as nearby villages. They also perform *yagnas* and recite sacred *kathas* during ceremonial occasions. Besides, the priests of Gond are also present in Amarkantak to

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celebrate their annual festivals, agricultural and life cycle rituals from time to time. Some of the tribal people also engaged as *safaiwala* to clean *kund*, *ghat*, and temple premises.

Initially, three Dwivedi families migrated from Rewa, Gobiri, and Khor Koti who at present offering regular *puja*, *arati*, and other sacred activities at the main Narmada temple. They divided the duties on the basis of shifts according to the Hindu calendar. Main priests offer worship at *sanctum sanctorum* and its precincts followed by seven priests for *teertha* (field). Three priests are sitting at *udgamsthal* and one at *hatisewak*²² who guides the devotees to crawl under the belly of a broken elephant stone statue for good fortune and accepts the offerings instead of it. The caretaker also undertakes cleaning of temple, *kund*, *prashad* utensils of the temple.

Pretkarmaor shradha ceremony was performed by another sect of brahmins who hail from Anuppur long back and divided the work in similar to main priests at the *ghats*. The priests at the main temple do offer field services in and around Amarkantak since they had clients not only from neighbouring areas but from distant places like Udaipur, Jabalpur, Bhopal, Indore, etc. Priestly services are offered to the villagers like officiating of Lord Satyanarayana *katha*, marriage and initiation ceremony, *Karmakand* (funeral rites), *Rudrabhishek*, *Grihapraवेश* along with life cycle rituals.

At Jaleswar, a Naga Sadhu is offering sacred services at the main temple who is assisted by a *sadhvi*, assistant, and students. Students during leisure time are engaged in the distribution of food, arrangement of *bhandara* on festive occasions, and facilitating the *Abhishek* services. An Agarwal community member is appointed as a priest at Annapurna *Mandir* who is offering regular *arati* and *puja*. At Amareswar *Mandir*, three Brahmin priests are offering services who stay in the temple premises. Every *Ashram* is having a sacred centre inside its premises and maintains its own specialists Brahmin as well as *Sadhus*. Some are paid a minimum monthly honorarium and others are doing service free of cost. Such specialists are provided food and shelter by *Ashram* authority that in turn extend their sacred services to the pilgrims and accept generous donations.

Extension of Great Traditions

The surrounding villages of Amarkantak were inhabited by Gond, Baiga, Panika, Kol, and Agaria communities for ages. Though they were nature worshippers by tradition, the emergence of the sacred complex at Amarkantak has had a great influence on their socio-cultural and religious life. During Navratri, even indigenous people also observe fasting and take part in regular worship and performing *puranic* recitation at *puja pandals* in respective villages. During *Ramnavmi*, tribals arrange *jawara*²³ and offer worship at their sacred place. On the ninth day, all the sprouted ones are taken to Narmada river for immersion (*visarjan*). During the celebration of

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Durga Navratri and Ganesh Chaturthi local tribal communities also arrange *pandal* by installing the idols with the assistance of Brahmin by collecting donations from all the villagers. The worship is continued till its *Visarjan* in Narmada. Sometimes *hawan* is also arranged by the tribals by inviting Brahmin priests from Amarkantak. Throughout the *sawan* month, the tribal villagers offer *Kanyabhajan*²⁴ where little girls were invited and offer specially prepared food.

During auspicious occasions, native tribal dance forms are known as *Karma, Suwa, Tapadi, Jharpat, Bilma, and Dassara* are performed at the temple complex. Interestingly, both tribal and non-tribal communities do observe Lakshmi and Govardhan *puja* during Deepawali festival. On the day of the festival, cow worship is made, and one adult member of the tribal family keeps *upavaas* (fasting). In the evening when the cows return to the village, they offer worship to Goddess Lakshmi and light the lamps in front of the houses. On the next day, all the villagers assemble at one place where dried cow dung cakes are burnt and offer *puja* by giving *arati*. During this auspicious occasion, no villager ventures outside the village nor undertake the economic activity. In midst of the gathering, the cows and calves are decorated and the children below 12 years were asked to crawl under the calf. Thus, the great traditions of Amarkantak have had an impact on the tribal communities as they are celebrating Hindu festivals with a lot of pomp and show.

Mela (Religious Fair)

A big *Mela* is frequently held at an open place of Amarkantak during festive occasions for a period of four to eight days. Besides the local population, merchants from Pendra, Rajendragoon, and Anuppur along with people from far away places arrange shops in *Mela*. Neighbouring villagers, tourists, pilgrims visit the *Mela* in large numbers and purchase agricultural and domestic implements, furniture, vessels, plastic items, ornaments, new cloth, bags, crockery, cosmetics, sweets, toys while enjoying entertainment in the form of circus, *nautanki* (drama), dance shows, giant wheel, and children amusement items. Evening cultural programmes, tribal dances, *bhajans*, children amusement centres are frequent during these days. It attracts a large number of people from diverse cultural traditions including indigenous ones who interact with each other and exchange cultural elements. These *melas* are used as a medium to spread the message of both great and little traditions to interior villages. For example, on Makar Sankranti, *Gondwana Samaj* arranges open *Sabha* (meeting) where clan elders, religious specialists, political leaders educate their brethren about Gond history, religion, folklore, customary practices. In this *Mela*, shops with exclusive tribal products such as medicinal herbs, religious symbol printed cloth, calendar, tribal literature, etc., are sold to the visitors. This *Mela* is also

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used as a platform to disseminate awareness on developmental programmes, merry-making, marriage negotiations, etc. Thus, fairs associated with festivals at open places in Amarkantak attract a wide variety of population where diverse cultures and traditions overlap each other which in turn contributes to the emergence of the sacred complex in the Maikal hills.

Conclusion

From the above-empirical observation, it is observed that immaculate temple architectures, monasteries of various denominations, offering of various sacred services and performances, inhabitation of diverse ethnic groups, indigenous tribal customary practices and traditions led to the development of unique sacred complex at Amarkantak region. The growth of the sacred geography of Kabirdham, Gurudwara, Badadev, and so on surrounding the Narmada temple in recent times has been contributing to acculturation and continuation of diverse traditions that eventually led to the development of a composite culture. At Amarkantak people hailing from different areas meet together and exchange cultural elements through their religious practices. Thus, the sacred networks evolved over a period of time not only strengthen the common bondage of diverse cultures but *bhajans*, *keertans*, and other sacred performances attracting the people with animistic traditions. Regular practice of great tradition at this centre impacted the tribes of Amarkantak region to offer worship of goddess Lakshmi, Durga, Ganesh, and Govardhan on auspicious occasions. Apart from this, they venture Amarkantak to celebrate life cycle rituals such as *mundan*, ear piercing, first feeding, *shradha* ceremony and celebrate annual Hindu festivals such as Makar Sankranti, Maha Shivaratri, Holi, Ramnavmi, Durgashtami, etc. Thus, the great traditions are penetrated into the interior tribal villages, and veneration of Narmada has become a way of life in the form of *Narmadehar* slogan that echos throughout Amarkantak.

At the same time, tribal traditions do appear at this centre in the form of ethnic dance forms, medicine herbs, customary practices, etc. Indigenous communities collect wild herbs from the forest and sale in front of the temples. People suffering from eye problems, skin diseases, and so on a visit to this place for herbal treatment of their ailments. The sacred centres around Amarkantak co-exist with the modern initiatives related to the mode of travel, relaxed diet norms, etc., to attract more pilgrims to Narmada *Parikrama*. With the growth of population, occupational mobility is also observed as the sacred specialists engaged in petty business, shops, and private jobs.

Thus, the sacred complex of Amarkantak demonstrates the adaptation to the secular life in a geographically isolated place and accomodating the sectarian tendencies. This trend helps in narrowing the fissiparous attitudes among the people. At this juncture, it is noteworthy to

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mention enormous growth of temple traffic in and around Amarkantak testifies the hypothesis of Vidyarthi's theoretical proposition of the sacred complex of a Hindu place of pilgrimage reflects a level of continuity, compromise, and combination between great and little traditions. The existence of Ashrams, Jain Mandir, Gurudwara, Kabir Chabutara demonstrates the secular character Amarkantak that in turn facilitates the unique character of unity in diversity of our country. It is acting as a catalyst for attracting pilgrims which in turn paved the way to the provision of a source of income to the native people who depended on temple traffic for their livelihood. Participation of a large number of merchants, petty traders, political workers, volunteers, casual visitors, indigenous people during *Mela* also contributes to mutual exchange of cultural traditions. Thus, an emerging sacred complex of Amarkantak reinforces Vidyarthi's premise that these centres facilitate the continuous interaction of diverse traditions which reflects the complexity of Indian civilization and its nature of unity in diversity.

End Notes

1. Divine fire made with camphor in a special brass device every day in the evening at 7.30 pm at the origin place of the Narmada river.
2. Prasing the goddess Narmada.
3. Shaving the first hair of child.
4. It is a kind of ancestor worship wherein living relatives pay debts to pacify the dead souls.
5. Bathing structures built on the bank of the river.
6. A roof top structure exclusive built to make sacred fire.
7. Performing rite in front of sacred fire.
8. Religious offerings given to devotees.
9. A kind of game played with cowries.
10. Devotees believe that Narmada goddess used to play at this place during her childhood.
11. Free distribution of food.
12. Purification or cleansing the Phallu with water, milk, and other ingredients vowed by pilgrims.
13. A religious fair observed once in a year.
14. Playful drama about life of Lord Rama.
15. Pinda is a rice-ball made with rice flour, milk, water to offer their ancestors.
16. Immersion of ashes of deceased in river.
17. Funeral rites observed on tenth day of the deceased.
18. A sixteen day period in which soul of the dead ancestors wanders and bless their kith and kin who offer Shradha.
19. Holy day during Shukla Paksha in the month of Margashirsha of Hindu Calendar.
20. A vow to conduct journey on foot on either bank of Narmada river with utmost respect and devotion. During this period, pilgrim is supposed to live pious life with severe restrictions on food, sleep, etc.

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21. Collection of food by begging.
22. Care taker of sacred elephant and horse at Narmada temple precincts.
23. a traditional practice of dibbling the seeds of wheat in a basket which is filled with soil and every day water is poured.
24. On the occasion of Dusserah, girl child is venerated as goddess Durga and married women take blessings by touching her feet after worship.

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Sustainable Livelihood: A Study of Integrated Dairy Development Programme in Gujarat

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Integrated Dairy Development Programme (IDDP) under Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) launched in 2007 is one of the major interventions in the state of Gujarat to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor tribal households through dairy farming. Selected tribal households, mainly landless and small farmers, were provided milch cattle through soft loans to support their low level of income. The present paper looks into the impact of the programme on beneficiary households and the challenges they face. The paper finds income of beneficiary households has improved due to the intervention. The SWOT analysis clearly shows that there is potential for making small-scale dairy farming a sustainable economic activity for the poor among tribals in the state provided the Programme Implementing Agencies make effort to address their concerns.

Introduction

For centuries, Indian farmers have taken up animal husbandry as a supplementary activity ensuring a regular supply of milk and its products for their daily needs. While male progenies of cows and buffaloes provide relief in times of drought by tilling the land for cultivation, female progenies provide milk to households in the rural areas. Cow dung is still the prime source of energy and fuel for most of the rural households. Farmers sustain

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these domesticated animals with byproducts of crops grown and fodder from grazing lands known as '*gauchars*' owned collectively by the village community. There is hardly any effort from the owner to increase the yields of animals because of a lack of commercial interest as well as scope (Vaidyanathan, 1988). With an increase in urbanisation and a rise in income, the demand for milk and milk products increased in urban areas (Kurien, 1997). The birth of the 'Kaira milk cooperative' in Anand district of Gujarat, established to supply milk to Mumbai became an important milestone in the history of the dairy sector in India as it later went on to become the cornerstone for the white revolution (Kurien, 1997).

In independent India, the promotion of animal husbandry, especially the rearing of milch-cattle was undertaken as an important anti-poverty measure. The constraints inhibiting the promotion of small dairy farming as an alternative sustainable source of livelihood for landless and small farmers are lack of knowledge about modern dairy farming practices, the dominance of low yield local breed, lack of infrastructure for marketing milk and milk products, and other institutional support (Singh and Bohra, 2006). Under the Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP), launched in the 1970s, beneficiaries were provided with soft loans (in some cases, free of cost) to start small-scale dairy units. Various studies in past have pointed out emphasis on livestock development and milch cattle under IRDP without looking into location-specific constraints resulted in failure of most of these projects (Shylendra and Bhiridikar, 2005; Ghosh, 1998; Dreze, 1990).

Jean Dreze (1990) points out, IRDP became more of a mechanism to provide subsidised credit to the poor rather than to generate income. Subsequently, self-help groups (SHGs) and voluntary organisations came to promote small-scale dairy through the promotion of micro-finance. However, the new system could not address the existing constraints to the extent desired and posed newer challenges in terms of restriction of capital formation in agriculture and rural enterprises (Kalpana, 2005).

Banking on a strong co-operative movement in Bombay province from pre-independence times, Gujarat gradually built up a strong co-operative led dairy sector starting with 'Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producer's Union Limited' (known as Anand model) with emphasis on inclusion of small dairy farmers. Scholten and Basu observed, 'the political and socio-economic networks in Gujarat were conducive to cooperative dairy development in the post-independence period, adding the dimension of regional politics to the institutional politics of dairy development' (Scholten and Basu, 2009). The co-operative model helped overcome the twin issues of poverty and small livestock holders' inaccessibility to the market. In due course, the small-scale dairy unit became an effective anti-poverty measure in rural areas of the state (Shah, 2006). The milk cooperatives ensure that the members irrespective of their land and economic status are paid

competitive prices for their produce, get access to all the necessary infrastructure required to develop a dairy farm, and get an assured market for their produce (Kurien, 1997; Patel, 2003).

Integrated Dairy Development Project (IDDP) in Gujarat

The Tribal Sub-Plan Area (TSP) constitutes 18.0 per cent of Gujarat's geographical area. Tribals mostly concentrated in the eastern part known as '*purvipatti*' covering 14 districts and 48 talukas, constitute 14.8 per cent of the total population. They depend mainly upon subsistence farming and on migration as agricultural labourers or casual labourers to other parts of the state or neighbouring Maharashtra. The human development indices for the tribal population lag behind other social groups in the state (Visaria, 2014; Shah, 2014). Different interventions to improve the status of tribals in the state have had limited success due to the design of the specific programmes (Shah & Pathak, 2014).

In 2007, the Government of Gujarat launched *Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana* in tribal areas to address issues related to livelihood, education, and infrastructure. One of the components was the Integrated Dairy Development Project (IDDP). Since its inception, the project targeted poor tribals below the official poverty line (households falling in 0-16 BPL score) and latter transient poor households with BPL scores between 16 and 20. The responsibility of implementation was entrusted to respective district dairy cooperatives or Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Designated as Programme Implementing Agencies (PIA) they have autonomy in choosing the type of asset (cow/buffalo) and the breed that suits local conditions. The PIAs also provide assistance to develop fodder plots, water storage facilities, and different ancillary services along with infrastructures like milk collection centres, storage facilities, and cattle sheds. Development and Support Agency (D-SAG) under Tribal Development Department, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar acts as the nodal agency for supervision of PIAs.

The village-level dairy unions (*Dudh Mandalis*) were entrusted with the task to select beneficiaries with BPL households with 0-16 score with a special preference for women. All selected households were provided with one milch animal and a female calf initially and subsequently another pair upon repayment of half of the loan for the first pair. In five years, It was envisaged that over a period of five years each beneficiary would have four milch animals out of which at least two would be providing milk for sale enabling regular cash income. Such a gradual approach helped reduce the overall project cost considerably and ensured the provision of good quality cattle to beneficiaries. Financial assistance was provided in the form of soft loans with interest of 4 per cent per annum; the Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs) for which, were deducted from the sale of milk.

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Apart from the animal, the project provides necessary inventories, infrastructure, health services for cattle, and training with a nominal charge as listed in table 1. There is also a provision to replace a poor quality animal or in the event of premature death. Table 1 highlights the various components of the IDDP project since its inception. Keeping in view the rise in prices of good quality milch animals the government has increased the unit cost.

Table 1
IDDP Project Components from its Inception to Present Date (in Rs.)

Components of IDDP	2007-10 (Initial phase)	2011-13 (2 nd phase)	2013 onwards (Third phase)
Loan amount (GTDC)	13000	20000	20000
Subsidy (GOI)	10000	10000	10000
Subsidy (GOG)	0	0	12400 (If beneficiary is women)
Insurance (GOI)	800	800	2000
Transport cost (GOI)	0	1000	1000
Utensils for collection and storing milk (GOI)	250	1000	1000
Veterinary care (GOI)	0	1200	1200
Cattle feed (GOI)	1200	1800	1800
Training (GOI)	400	400	400
Managerial expenditure (GOI)	5% of total grant	5% of total grant	5% of total grant (GOI) + Rs. 2600 (GOG)
Beneficiary contribution	N.A.	2000	2000
Total unit cost	26500	39400	44070 (if the beneficiary is a woman), otherwise Rs. 54400
The actual contribution of GOG to one unit of animal	0	0	15000 if the beneficiary is women (12400 as subsidy and 2600 towards management cost), otherwise Rs. 2600

Source: Development and Support Agency (D-SAG), Tribal Development Department, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar

Objectives

The nodal agency D-SAG undertakes periodic evaluation of the project. In 2014-15, Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), Ahmedabad evaluated the IDDP programme with the objectives to assess whether assistance under IDDP has (i) improved economic conditions of beneficiaries; (ii) quality of assistance provided to them; and (iii) shortcomings in the current implementation strategy and ways to overcome these challenges.

Data Collection and Methodology

The study selected 100 beneficiaries of IDDP each from the 43 tribal talukas. Thus a total of 4300 beneficiaries were selected for the study. Along

with the beneficiaries, 20 households from each taluka from a similar socio-economic group were selected as a control group for comparison. Therefore, a total of 860 non-beneficiary households were covered. Since the actual distribution of beneficiaries was found to be skewed across talukas (15 talukas had 5000 beneficiaries or more while the rest had less than 1000), the sample design was adjusted accordingly. Within each village, all the beneficiaries were listed and then chosen through a scientific random sampling method. The field study used a pre-tested household schedule for primary data and discussions with different officials of implementing agencies were held to assess their point of view on the current situation and for the collection of secondary information. Focus groups discussions (FDGs) were also conducted with both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in all selected villages.

The talukas were clubbed into four major agro-climatic regions (South Gujarat Heavy Rainfall Zone (SGHRZ), South Gujarat Medium Rainfall Zone (SGMRZ), Middle Gujarat Zone (MGZ), and North Gujarat Zone (NGZ)¹. In total, there were seven district dairy cooperatives and two PIAs/NGOs (AKRSP-I and GRISERV- BIAF). These NGOs are implementing the programme for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in districts of Surat and Tapi.

Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Households

Nearly half of the respondents were living in kutcha houses, though the proportion is a little higher among non-beneficiary households. Though most of the households had electrical supply, only 15 per cent of the beneficiary and 8 per cent of the non-beneficiary households had amenities like piped drinking water or a toilet in their premises. Less than 30 per cent of the beneficiary or non-beneficiary households owned any two-wheelers. The ownership of arable land was lowest in SGMRZ (46 per cent) followed by SGHRZ (64.6 per cent). In the remaining two zones more than 97.0 per cent of beneficiaries owned land. The landholding pattern was similar for non-beneficiaries and so was the average landholding size which was less than 2 acres for both. The beneficiaries who owned some parcel of land belonging to the 16-20 BPL score while landless fall in 0-16 of BPL score. 66 per cent beneficiary and 52 per cent for non-beneficiary households had some source of irrigation predominantly bore-wells.

Occupation and Income of Sample Households

While agriculture was reported to be the major occupation of the head of the household (only occupation of the head of the household considered here) for 74.0 per cent of beneficiary households in MGZ and NGZ; less than half of the heads of beneficiary households from the other two regions reported it to be their main occupation. More than 50.0 per cent

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of beneficiary households in MGZ and NGZ reported dairy farming to be their secondary occupation while 43.0 per cent or less relied on dairy farming in the other two zones. Among non-beneficiaries, 46.0 per cent in NGZ reported dairy to be their major secondary occupation followed by 38.0 per cent in MGZ. In the other two regions, less than 15.0 per cent enlisted dairy as their major secondary activity. Nearly one in four households among non-beneficiary households reported casual labour as a major secondary occupation (Table 2).

Table 2
Occupation Profile of Household Head in Sample Households (%)

List of Occupations	Beneficiary					Non-Beneficiary				
	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total
<i>Main occupation as</i>										
Agriculture	49.4	36.8	74.0	73.4	60.9	37.4	34.3	70.2	78.6	54.8
Livestock	19.0	13.6	9.1	12.8	13.2	3.3	2.2	2.0	5.0	2.9
Agriculture Labour	10.8	19.8	8.1	8.4	10.8	15.4	16.9	5.3	7.1	10.9
Casual labour	7.1	19.3	5.1	2.8	7.6	26.8	37.1	18.9	5.7	22.7
Government job	0.3	0.1	1.2	0.7	0.7	1.6	0.0	0.7	0.7	0.8
Private job	1.6	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.1	2.8	1.7	2.3	2.1	2.3
Self-employed	10.9	6.8	0.8	0.3	4.5	11.4	7.3	0.3	0.0	4.8
No response	0.7	2.4	0.9	0.6	1.0	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.7
Total respondents	1208	706	1699	687	4300	246	178	302	140	866
<i>Secondary occupation as</i>										
Agriculture	10.3	8.6	17.0	15.0	13.4	13.4	7.3	13.6	9.3	11.5
Livestock	43.7	43.5	50.7	52.5	47.9	16.7	11.2	38.4	46.4	27.9
Agriculture Labour	11.1	13.2	2.6	7.4	7.5	12.6	15.2	9.3	10.0	11.5
Casual labour	15.5	15.0	18.6	12.1	16.1	25.2	22.5	28.5	26.4	26.0
Government job	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Private job	1.1	1.0	0.6	1.0	0.9	1.6	0.6	1.3	0.0	1.0
Self-employed	6.2	3.1	0.4	0.3	2.4	5.3	1.1	1.0	0.0	2.1
No response	11.9	15.4	10.0	11.4	11.7	25.2	42.1	7.9	0.0	19.9
Total respondents	1208	706	1699	687	4300	246	178	302	140	866

Source: Field Survey reference year 2013-14

From table 3 it is quite clear most of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary households who had some land in SGHRZ and SGMRZ, cultivated only 'Khariff crops' while eschewing 'Rabi' or 'Summer' crops. Nearly half of them did not grow any crop at all. Those who raised crops did so for home consumption. In MGZ and NGZ, the majority of the tribal households cultivate cereals like corn and wheat in *Kharif* and *Rabi* seasons respectively thanks to the availability of irrigation. Less than 10.0 per cent of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary households grew summer crop and that too was mostly fodder. Less than one-third of the sampled beneficiary and non-beneficiary households had any agriculture surplus to sell in the market. The above discussion shows there is a scope for promoting alternative livelihoods in these regions and dairy could be the most favourable option.

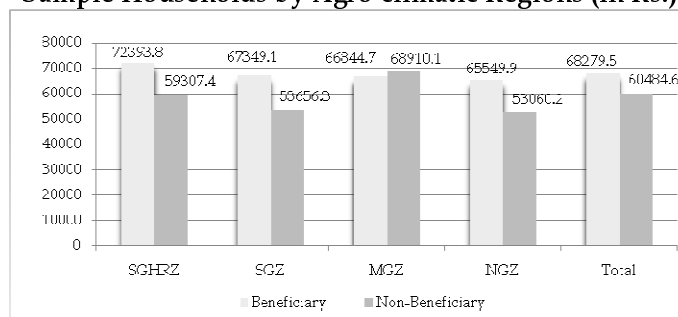
Table 3
Households Reporting Agriculture for both Sample Beneficiary and Non-Beneficiary Households

Characteristics	Beneficiary					Non-Beneficiary				
	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total
<i>At least one Kharif crop was raised</i>										
% grow cereals	64.0	34.2	92.1	83.1	73.3	51.2	32.6	80.5	77.8	61.9
% grow millets	0.5	2.8	0.0	0.4	0.9	1.6	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.9
% grow dal & pulses	0.4	2.6	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.0	1.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
% only grow fodder	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
% grow cash crops (sugarcane, cotton, castor or groundnut)	0.1	9.8	5.5	11.5	5.7	0.8	9.6	7.6	15.0	7.0
% who did not raise any crop	35.0	50.3	2.0	2.2	19.3	47.6	54.5	11.3	7.2	29.8
<i>At least one Rabi crop was raised</i>										
% grow cereals	2.1	9.4	85.8	89.1	50.1	5.0	11.8	75.2	80.8	42.0
% grow millets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% grow dal & pulses	4.2	0.7	3.0	0.4	2.6	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.7	0.9
% only grow fodder	19.7	4.5	0.5	1.1	6.7	8.9	1.2	0.3	0.7	3.0
% grow cash crops (sugarcane, cotton, castor or groundnut)	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
% grow Vegetables/fruits	5.3	0.6	0.0	0.1	1.8	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3
% who did not raise any crop	67.4	84.0	10.9	9.0	38.5	82.1	86.0	23.2	17.9	52.0
Total respondents	1208	706	1699	687	4300	246	178	302	140	866

Source: Field Survey reference year 2013-14

The beneficiaries from SGHRZ had the highest annual cash income from all activities (excluding the sale of milk) followed by the SGMRZ, MGZ, and NGZ among the sampled beneficiary households (Chart 1). One of the possible reasons for higher income for households in SGHRZ and SGMRZ could be a higher proportion of households depend upon non-agricultural income, mainly from migration to other parts of the state and outside (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Annual Average Income (excluding the sale of milk) for Sample Households by Agro-climatic Regions (in Rs.)

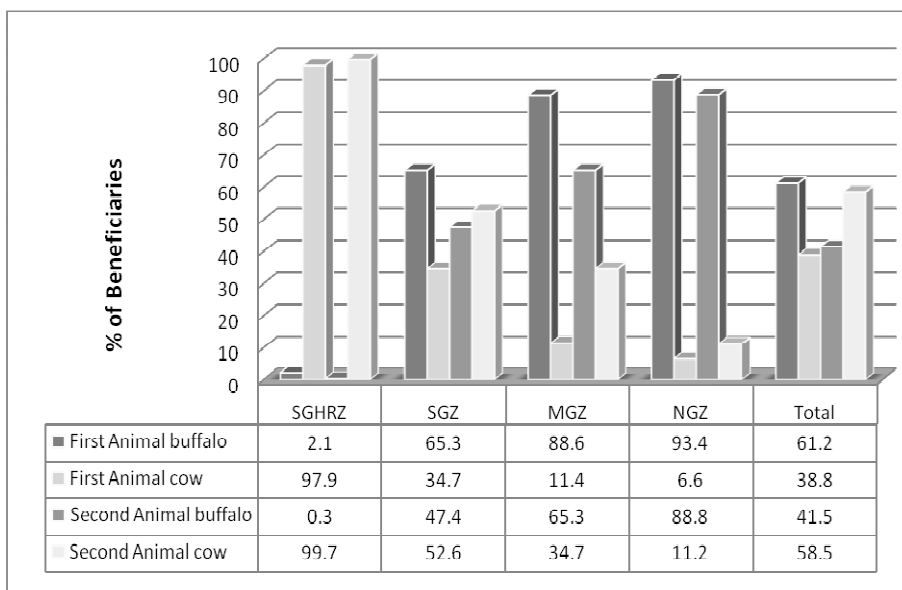


Source: Field Survey, the reference year 2013-14

Major Findings for Beneficiary Households

Since the IDDP programme is being implemented from 2007 onwards, our sample includes households who joined the programme between 2007-11 and 2011-15. Nearly 58.0 per cent of all the sample beneficiaries got their first animal before 2011 (in the first phase), the highest being in SGHRZ. The PIAs decided whether a cow or buffalo is bestowed based on the agro-climatic factor of the location. In SGHRZ mostly Holstein or Jersey cows were given while in NGZ predominantly buffalos of the Mura breed (Chart 2).

Chart 2
Distribution of Sample Beneficiaries by Types of Animal;
First and Second Animal by Agro-climatic Regions (%), 2007-08 to 2014-15



Source: Field Survey

Except for SGZ, where a third of beneficiaries reported no increase in income after joining the IDDP, in the other three regions; 85 per cent reported an increase of 11.0 per cent to 14.0 per cent.

Status of the Animal

During the study, it is found that over 80.0 per cent of the beneficiaries in MGZ and NGZ, 74.0 per cent in SGHRZ, and 61.0 per cent in SGMRZ had retained their animals. The main reasons cited for disposal were poor quality of animals or death of animals followed by lack of fodder. Though the loan amount is waived with the help of insurance and they had

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the option of replacing the animals in the project, the majority of the cases chose not to replace them. 182 first animals (4.2 per cent of total 4300 first milch animals) and 76-second animals (6.1 per cent of total 1232 second milch animals) were reported to have died. The disposals were relatively higher in areas where the beneficiaries had buffaloes. It was observed in areas where beneficiaries had the freedom to choose their own animal the disposals were lower. Therefore, one possible reason for the higher disposal of buffaloes could be that they were purchased from selected animal breeders/traders from NGZ by the respective PIAs and handed over to them.

More than half reported having milk from their animals during the study. In SGHRZ and SGMZRZ less than 10.0 per cent had another milch animal besides the ones provided but in MGZ and NGZ, nearly 20.0 per cent of them had another milch animal, mainly from low yielding breeds.

Repayment of the Loans

Between 2007 and 2011, 80 per cent of beneficiaries who got a loan for the first animal, had repaid the same while 75 per cent of those who obtained a loan for their second animal had repaid. Those who could not repay their loans cited a lack of income from the sale of milk as the reason. During the study, it was observed that a relatively higher proportion of the beneficiaries who had obtained loans during 2011-13 and 2013-14, were still repaying the same. Though the beneficiaries are not supposed to bear any additional expense over and above the loan amount as per the provision in the scheme, it is found on average; beneficiaries bore Rs. 5500 or more towards the purchase of animal and further Rs. 1500 or so for travel, accommodation, and transportation of the animal.

Status of Ancillary and Veterinary Support

The study shows a large number of beneficiaries did not avail of one or more ancillary services. Poor quality cowsheds are detrimental to animal health and milk yield, however, in SGHRZ and SGMZRZ, only one in five beneficiaries got any assistance to construct a cattle shed while the percentages were 11.0 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively in NGZ and MGZ. Nearly half of the beneficiaries in NGZ and MGZ got some assistance from vessels and utensils to store and transport milk. Except for SGZ, less than 15 per cent of beneficiaries availed some assistance for nutrition mix. Half of the 4300 beneficiaries got chaff cutter under the programme. Two out of five beneficiaries did not get any veterinary or immunisation services but this was better than non-beneficiaries. Less than one-fourth of beneficiaries got any assistance for AI (table4).

Table 4
Veterinary Support Received by the Beneficiary (2013-14)

Veterinary services	Beneficiary					Non-Beneficiary				
	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total
Veterinary service	66.5	61.6	53.3	49.1	57.7	17.9	11.8	22.5	29.3	20.1
Immunisation	65.6	57.1	49.3	49.8	55.2	19.5	10.1	24.5	39.3	22.5
Artificial insemination (AI)	24.8	18.3	26.8	26.6	24.8	7.7	3.4	15.6	16.4	11.0
Total respondents	1208	706	1699	687	4300	246	178	302	140	866
Average expenditure reported for previous year	386.0	325.0	402.0	372.0	380.0	106.8	210.8	43.2	349.4	169.20
per cent reported spending more than Rs. 1000	8.3	5.0	9.4	7.7	9.3	2.2	1.0	4.6	8.6	3.1

Source: Filed Survey

Building up of a Small Self Sustained Dairy Unit: Response from Beneficiaries

The major objective of the IDDP project was to enable poor tribal farmers to take up animal husbandry as a supplementary activity on a permanent basis is achieved when a farmer initially accepts the first pair and then gets a second pair helping her to have milk from at least two animals at any given point of time in just 5-7 years. From the study, it is found that the farmers disposed of the male calf in most of the cases but did not find the female calves except for a few cases (see table 5). In SGHRZ, one out of three beneficiaries who had a female calf along with the first animal could get milk in a year or two as the calves were in good health and while another 6.5 per cent were already giving milk to the owner. Though, these figures were lower for the other three regions. Overall a third of the beneficiaries reported having at least one healthy female calf from the milch animal which could lactate very soon. FGDs informed us the rate of survival of calves was very poor in these regions as hardly one out of two calves survived. This calls for a large-scale intervention from Integrated Calf Development Project (ICDP).

Cost of Daily Maintenance the Animal

As the beneficiaries were from below the poverty line or transient poor, they found the cost of maintaining the animal which was around Rs. 140.00 per day excluding the imputed value of green fodder collected from the field or the forest nearby, to be quite high. On the other hand, the average maintenance cost per day for non-beneficiaries was less than half (at Rs. 52.0), as most of their animals were of local breed and maintained with fodder collected from grazing lands/forests and agricultural residuals. Given the constraint of cash and other income-generating assets, such a burden becomes a matter of concern especially if the animal does not give adequate milk or remains dry for a longer period.

Milk Yield and Income from the One Unit of the Animal

Though as discussed before, very few among the non-beneficiaries had hybrid animals, comparing the milk yield of few they have with that of beneficiaries reveals that their yield is higher but the average lactation period was higher for beneficiary households for the same animal type, cow or buffalo. However, the lower average milk yield per day for IDDP animals is concerning as it reduces the net income for the beneficiary, most of whom are still repaying the loans. Again those having cows earn more than those with buffaloes. The difference is found statistically significant for these two types of animals at a 5 per cent level. As expected most of the milk was reportedly sold to dairy, as the households had hardly any other source of cash. The reason for low income could also be attributed to the fact that most of the beneficiaries were still repaying loans (Table 5).

Table 5
Average Milk Yield and Income from the One Unit of the Animal
(only last milking cycle is considered)

	Beneficiary (IDDP animal only)		Non-Beneficiary (Hybrid or upgrades animal only)	
	Cow	Buffalo	Cow	Buffalo
Total Milk yield per day (in liters)	8.81±3.2	5.7±1.8	9.6±3.4	7.8±4.0
Milk kept for home consumption (in liters)	0.9±0.30	0.8±0.40	1.09±0.5	1.3±0.5
Milk is given to dairy (in liters)	8.0±3.0	4.9±1.7	8.8±3.5	7.6±3.7
The average price received per liter from dairy (Rs.)	23.0±6.7	30.0±9.5	24.80±3.0	32.0±10.1
Average lactation period (days)	213 ± 85	208.1±85	215±90	198±85
Net income from the sale of milk (in Rs.)	23326.44 ± 17333.50	21749.80 ± 13093.05	31748.0 ± 25747.00	20250.20 ± 12073.30
Income from the bonus (in Rs.)	3960.00 ± 428.0	1542.2 ± 572.2	5904.30 ± 630.2	1678.2 ± 432.2
Income from the selling of cow dung (Rs.)	1572.30 ± 340.00	2186.3 ± 363.9	2159.14 ± 340.6	1900.3 ± 413.4

Source: Field Survey

Note: ± refers to deviation from mean value. For non-beneficiaries less than 6 per cent had any hybrid animal. Out of 866 non-beneficiary households, one-third have some milch animal mostly of local non-descriptive breeds. The mean test between income from the sale of milk for the cow provided under IDDP and the income from cow milk for the non-beneficiary shows the income for non-beneficiary is significantly higher for the latter ($t=31.245$, $p<0.05$). However, the difference in mean score was statistically not significant for buffalo between the two groups.

Rate of Return on Per Unit of Investment for a period of Five Years

A Rate of Return (RoI) analysis from one pair of milch animals with a female calf has been calculated from the data collected from the field survey. This is undertaken conservatively by taking the highest possible value while computing the cost and lowest value of income based on reported data. The analysis showed, over a period of five years, total income

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from a pair of milch animal and female calf to be Rs. 3,97,531, the total cost towards maintenance to be Rs. 2,83,738.60 thus yielding a net profit of Rs. 1,13,792.4. The RoI towards all his investment will be 1.4 times over a period of 5 years (40 per cent in total or 8 per cent per annum). If the beneficiary acquired one more animal and calf, the RoI could further go up as cost will come down due to the law of Increasing Returns to Scale. A savings account in a national bank gives on an average 6.0 per cent interest per annum. Thus the study concluded taking up dairying would be more economically beneficial to the beneficiary households in long run.

Additional Impacts of the IDDP Project on Households and Community (Qualitative Assessment)

The IDDP project envisages that dairy farming will help beneficiaries to earn a sustainable income and reduce distress migration. With an improved standard of living, they would be able to educate their children and access better health care for themselves. The state government gave additional subsidies to women beneficiaries to empower them financially. With the additional income at their disposal, women could now afford to consume milk themselves and for their children, earn some respect and improve their say in household functioning. Many women were able to join self-help groups which further help them in pursuing economic independence. The programme also aims to strengthen local dairy cooperatives through a participatory approach leading to more democratisation in villages. The members of the village dairy cooperatives forge stronger bonds as they have to meet regularly to select other beneficiaries, discuss issues related to their animals and services provided by the PIA, and charter new ways for additional economic prosperity to villagers.

Table 6
Major Impacts of IDDP on Beneficiary Households (% of responses)

Selected Impact of IDDP on households	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total
Economic Impact					
Helped in daily needs	40.1	44.0	37.5	41.3	39.8
Helped in children's education	27.4	26.4	26.9	25.3	26.7
Helped in increasing annual income	29.5	25.7	29.0	26.7	28.3
Total responses	1749	909	2838	1218	6714
On household's quality of life					
Helped in getting proper food because of additional income	31.9	35.9	41.3	39.7	41.0
Now consume milk and milk products	52.8	48.8	53.9	49.3	52.1
Total responses	1559	885	2590	1081	6115
Institutional Impact on Households					
Participation in Gram Sabha has increased	20.8	12.5	24.5	27.4	22.3
Became member of village dairy	74.9	82.6	69.8	64.5	72.1
Having bank account now	2.7	1.3	3.5	4.5	3.1

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Selected Impact of IDDP on households	SGHRZ	SGMRZ	MGZ	NGZ	Total
Became part of SHG	1.1	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.4
No impact felt/cannot say	0.5	3.0	2.2	3.7	2.1
Total responses	1281	711	2014	847	4853

Source: Field Survey

Table 6 gives details of some of these positive impacts of the programme. The major responses were, 'cash income from dairy helps in meeting household daily needs, additional income improves food availability for the household and milk becoming staple diet of these households' from beneficiary households. At the institutional level, the households were able to become part of the village dairy and its functioning.

From the 4560 responses received from all 4300 beneficiaries, nearly 33.0 per cent of the responses were 'IDDP has helped to increase the economic prosperity of the village community'. Another 30.0 per cent of responses were 'IDDP has increased participation in village matters'. This has resulted in increasing participation in Gram Sabhas. People now value participation in public forums to raise their concerns. Another 10.0 per cent of responses recognise that 'development of common fodder plots and drinking water facilities due to increase in the animal population in the village has occurred post IDDP'².

Impact of IDDP on Migration

Except for SGHRZ, there was a decline in migration in the remaining three regions. 753 households out of 4300 beneficiary households were migrating outside their district before joining the project. This number decreased by 41 households to come down to 712 afterward. Region-wise, out of the 753 total households who reported any migration, 474 (63.0 per cent) were from MGZ region comprising Vadodara, Panchamahals, and Dahod districts. After joining the programme 439 of these households (61.6 per cent) reported migration. For SGHRZ and NGZ regions, 93 and 51 households respectively had reported migration before joining the programme which came down to 64 and 45 households respectively after joining the programme.

However, the SGMRZ region which had reported migration from 135 households saw increased migration to 164 households post IDDP. The family is likely to see migration if the perceived economic benefit is higher and there is someone else to take care of the animal. The skilled tribal youth would like to move outside their villages for better opportunities rather than remaining tied to animal rearing. However, if there is distress migration then the promotion of IDDP will be effective in addressing the same.

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Impact of IDDP on Women's Status

The Government of Gujarat gives additional subsidies to women beneficiaries to purchase quality milch animals under the IDDP programme which is designed to promote dairying among women from tribal households. We got a mixed response when we asked women beneficiaries about their experiences while participating in the IDDP programme. There were 1608 (37.4 per cent) women in the sample of 4300 respondents. 40 per cent of these women reported 'they kept money received from the sale of milk with themselves'.

However, nearly two-thirds of women beneficiary cum respondents reported their 'work burden has increased after joining the IDDP'. Cleaning the cattle shed, feeding, bathing, and milking the animal became their responsibility. It is likely they are inadequately compensated for such drudgery as men of the households collect payment after depositing milk at the dairy facility. Men also took up some related outdoor activities like the collection of fodder and grazing animals. So gender division was clearly visible with women stuck with indoor activities which usually took two and a half hours and men taking up outdoor activities which on average took less than 40 minutes.

When asked about specific benefits from the programme, 5811 responses were received from 1608 women beneficiaries. In these responses, 40.0 per cent informed that 'the extra income has helped them to run their family better', another 20.0 per cent were of the opinion that 'household is getting milk' to consume which was not before joining the project' and other major responses in the range of 10 per cent -16 per cent were about 'the additional income helped to purchase another milch animal, access to money from the sale of milk which was not earlier' and 'no need of earning from manual labour'.

SWOT Analysis of Implementation of IDDP in Gujarat

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) analysis is a simple but useful framework for analysing a project's potential and sustainability. It helps in adopting measures to increase the strengths, minimise threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities of the project. Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the project while opportunities and threats are external. Findings from the SWOT analysis are presented below.

Strengths

Nearly 80.0 per cent of the beneficiaries were happy with the programme. Even landless tribal communities like Kotawalias, Kathurias, and Halpatis were able to maintain their animals. Data shows the average milk yield per day for beneficiary households was 8.1 liters for

upgraded/cross-bred cows while the same for buffalos was 5.7 liters. The state averages were 7.0 to 10.0 liters per day for upgraded/cross bred cows and 5.0 to 5.5 liters (NDDDB, 2013). Budgetary allocation, especially support from the state government has increased over the years. Almost all dairy unions in tribal districts had participated in its implementation with the project covering practically all the tribal talukas of the state. The state has an excellent well-developed network of milk collection centres, chilling plants, roads, transportation, and modern milk processing plants throughout the tribal belt in Gujarat. The state also has seven breeds of cows and five breeds of buffalos which are of high-yielding breed and native to the state giving them a wide variety of options to choose from once they become more confident in rearing dairy animals. An extra income of Rs. 20000 (observed from the data) in the hands of 74000 households (as per information available with us before the survey) injects Rs. 148 crores annually in the rural economy which in coming years will likely increase giving a boost to demand for the industrial and manufacturing sector.

Weakness

As per the present study, the ancillary and veterinary services were not reaching half of the beneficiaries. The average yields, especially among buffalos were at least a liter less than their non-beneficiary counterparts. Though it is difficult to conclude from the current survey but it suggests that first-time dairy farmers need further skills in dairy farming. Lack of hygienic cattle sheds observed in 80.0 per cent of the beneficiaries could adversely impact the health of the animal yielding low yield and income. The high costs of maintaining the animal reduce the income from the activity. As seen from the study, most of those who had disposed off the animal had done so because of lack of fodder. Artificial insemination reaches very few beneficiaries which hamper the scope of building quality livestock from the project. For economically viable dairy farming the average duration of the lactation period should be 300 days, but the data shows for buffalos the cycle is less than 200 days and for cows, it is 215 days. This particular issue needs to be addressed on a priority basis. During the field survey, many complaints were reported about the low-fat content of the milk which lowers the income of dairy farmers.

Opportunities

There is a scope for integrating the Integrated Calf Development Project (ICDP) with IDDP which will boost the supply of quality heifers and increase the survivability of female calves. Large-scale integrated fodder development projects could be undertaken by dairies or corporates to provide better quality fodder at cheaper prices to farmers who hold very little or no land. Tribal regions are dotted with various small and large dams

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near which fodder plots can be developed in common lands by nearby villages. Such plots could cater to the needs of nearby areas as well. The government could undertake a dedicated project to ensure the supply of quality artificial semen to boost the livestock of the nearly one lakh beneficiaries at an affordable price. The women-led SHGs could be provided with finance and technology to produce various milk-based products like beverages, ice-creams, and cakes for the local market. As the actual number of women participating in dairy farming is very low, a policy to increase their numbers in the administration of village dairy may lead to improvement. It was found women hardly control the income they earn from dairying so a separate account can be opened in their name (Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana already facilitates this) or their existing MGNREGA accounts can be used to transfer proceeds from the sale of milk. The MGNREGA fund can be used to build cattle sheds and other infrastructures for livestock in the village. The mechanism of settling insurance claims in case of the death of an animal could be made easier to enable farmers to purchase new milch animals.

Threats

The major threat to the project is the ever-spiraling price for quality animals, especially buffaloes. The market needs to be diversified and regulated to ensure only standard animals are provided. The state government can take measures to establish breeding centres to grow healthy calves/heifers for the project. The inability of tribal dairy farmers to arrange for fodder is a major threat to the sustainability of small dairy farms created in the project. The transparency in determining the quality of the milk is also not satisfactory for most of the beneficiaries. Measures should be taken to educate farmers on how to maintain healthy fat content for better remuneration. The poor quality of veterinary care supplied by the state could adversely affect the sustainability of dairy farming as the services provided by private doctors are prohibitively expensive for the poor farmers. Some of the beneficiaries in the survey reportedly disposed off the animal because it failed to conceive after repeated costly attempts at insemination. The price of animal feed is increasing at a faster rate than the price of milk. Often a few elites from the village who control the village '*dudh mandalis*' are not fair in the distribution of assistance provided under the project. In some of the villages bordering neighbouring states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, it was found the subsidised animals were being resold for a premium. Though few in number, if allowed unchecked such leakages could adversely impact the outcome of the project. Some of these constraints mentioned above were found in an earlier evaluation of the same IDDP project along with procurement of milch animals (Mishra, 2014).

Conclusion

The IDDP project has made considerable inroads in providing alternative sustainable livelihood for the poor tribal households in Gujarat. On average it has boosted the income of these cash-starved families by Rs. 20000 annually. Overall satisfaction level was found to be very high. Still, there are persisting issues and new challenges to the sustainability of the project as outlined in the SWOT analysis above. The state of veterinary and ancillary provisions and provision of fodder for the cattle is the cause of concern for the long-term sustainability of the project. In terms of dairy development activities in tribal areas, three areas need particular attention. First, procurement of graded and crossbred dairy cattle, either through self-help groups/milk cooperatives depending upon local needs and constraints could be a better idea than a centralised approach being pursued at present. Second, reducing the morbidity risks associated with dairy animals needs urgent attention through the improvement of veterinary services. Third, research on identifying and developing local breeds suitable in a given area will help tribal farmers to overcome difficulties in adapting to the requirements of the milch animals procured from distant places. The constraints faced by first-time poor tribal households in dairy farming can be addressed through recognising constraints due to local agro-climatic conditions, diversifying livelihood options for regular and sustainable income, and helping dairy farmers to adopt and adapt to new technological and scientific solutions to small scale dairying. A programme like IDDP should help in creating an institutional environment that encourages women to participate in dairying and enables them to own the enterprise and have control over the returns from these dairy-related activities.

End Notes

1. The classification for agro-climatic zones is based on the availability of water (rainfall), climate, crop, and quality of soil and taken from <http://agropedia.iitk.ac.in/content/agro-climatic-zone-gujrat>. Since we have collected data taluka-wise and not district-wise, these agro-climatic groups may consist of more than one district and multiple PIAs.
2. Here we have reported responses for all beneficiaries, not region-wise.

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Emerging Challenges for Access to Maternal and Child Health Services: Lesson Learned and Future Strategy

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Proclaiming nationwide lockdown by the Indian government was the right decision to control infections and fatalities due to COVID-19. The emerging concern was about demographic and health scenario possibly emerging in the country followed by the lockdown. Notably, availability and access of healthcare services like Ante Natal Care, delivery, post-delivery care to access to family planning services, and child healthcare at both the facility and the community level got interrupted. The rapidly evolved epidemic stressed the entire healthcare system, especially the frontline community health workers such as ASHA, AWW, ANM, including other health workers. Since the frontline health workers are engaged with COVID-19 management, general public health services and facilities for Maternal & Child Healthcare (MCH) including other health and nutrition services had been disrupted. The study provided evidence and possible strategies to combat the gap other than documenting the gap and challenges faced by the women in availing services including access to family planning services and services delivery by community health workers due to emerged pandemic situation.

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Introduction

The newly emerged COVID-19 disease spread from the newly discovered corona virus first originated from Wuhan city of China in November 2019. The symptoms of it are similar to that of pneumonia, common flu such as fever, malaise, and cough (Guo et al., 2020; Singhal, 2020; Yi et al., 2020). Covid was recognised as a pandemic by World Health Organisation in March 2020. People having weak immunity and having been exposed to the virus directly or indirectly have a higher likelihood of being infected. Although, many people infected with it experienced mild to moderate respiratory illness and recovered without requiring special treatment during the first wave but during the second wave the situation was not the same as that of the first wave resulting in the very fast spread and high fatality across the country is well known. It is a more severe illness with a greater risk of death particularly among the elderly and especially among those with other chronic underlying conditions crossed the age of 45 years (Zhou et al., 2020).

Globally, COVID-19 disease affected all the countries and all the countries struggled a lot to overcome the pandemic, which is a formidable challenge before the health system and threatening to healthy lives (WHO, 2020). Notably, the pandemic initially broke into developed countries, already has achieved health transition. Gradually, it spread to other countries of less and least developed. In India, the first case had reported in the last week of January 2020. India belongs amidst the bottom cohort of countries in terms of life expectancy, which is mainly driven by the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases like hypertension, diabetes, cancers, heart, and lung disease, and stroke (WHO, 2020).

Although the country still facing threats of high maternal mortality and child mortality keeping the country far away from achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). However, reduction in maternal mortality including neo-natal and child mortality in the past two decades has been appreciated globally (Singh, 2018). It made possible due to accelerated effort on quality care for women including routine immunisation for children and timely treatment for life-threatening childhood diseases like Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) and diarrhea. According to the national family health survey, 2015/16; still only one in every five women is completing antenatal care. Moreover, close to four-fifth of births taking place in health institutions seems doubled compared to 2005/06. 62 per cent of children are completing full immunisation (IIPS & ICF, 2017).

But, the emerging pandemic is posing a serious threat to the health of people, especially to women and newborns. Spreading infections, the national lockdown has hindered provisions of antenatal, delivery to postpartum care due to this public health emergency. The unprecedented lockdown may also be problematic for access to contraceptive and family

planning services which may directly lead to increased risk of unwanted pregnancy is another threat and burden on the available healthcare system. Another threat is an irregularity in timely vaccination for immunisation services among children may respond to an increase in life-threatening diseases. The emerged public health challenges are also overburdened by the paucity of the health infrastructure and human resources across the country.

The available health infrastructure and human resources to tackle this pandemic are major challenges confronting the country. National Health Profile-2019 reports total availability of 7,13,986 beds in government hospitals, which amount to be 0.55 beds per 1000 population and around 915 government allopathic doctors per million populations. These differentials are even more glaring in rural areas compared with urban areas of the country. It is a threat for the country where still 69 per cent population is living in rural areas (Mitra, 2020). Currently, the three-tier rural health care system is facing a shortfall of health facilities. Those are 18 per cent of the health sub-centre, 22 per cent of the primary health centre, and 30 per cent of the community health centre as of March 2018. It is well accepted that although the number of facilities has increased in past years but the workforce availability is substantially below the recommended levels as per World Health Organisation. In the rural areas still 32 government hospital beds are available for every one lakh population and even most states have significantly fewer number of rural beds than the national average. Like, in Uttar Pradesh there are 25 beds for every one lakh population in rural areas. In the case of Rajasthan and Jharkhand, it is 24 and 23 beds respectively (Mampatta, 2020). Maharashtra which remained highest on caseload has 20 beds on every one lakh population and the lowest in Bihar 6 beds per lakh rural population. On the human resources front, 82 per cent shortage of specialists in Community Health Centre (CHCs) which includes 85 per cent shortage of surgeons, 75 per cent shortage of obstetricians and gynecologists, 86 per cent shortage of physicians and 83 per cent shortage of pediatricians is reported in 2019 (MoHFW, 2020).

Hence; in the light of emerged pandemic, provisioning of health services delivery, lack of health infrastructure and healthcare human resources, there is a need to explore challenges at two levels: one at the demand side, and another at the supply side. As many women would have remained deprived to access the services at the demand side, community health workers remained engaged in catering the services for the pandemic keeping them away from their maternal and child healthcare services and responsibilities at the supply side. The study also explored evidence on strategy for service delivery by community health workers at the time. So, this study is important to accumulate evidence on challenges and frame future strategies to combat the existing health system gap other than

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documenting the problem and threats experimental by women in availing the MCH services including access to family planning services.

Lockdown, Access to Contraceptives and Possibility of Unwanted Pregnancy

The decision on nationwide lockdown was important to break the spread of COVID-19 infections but raised concern was about emerging demographic scenarios post lockdown. The global debate and discussion on the possibility of unwanted pregnancy and the baby boom were on the rise, other than gender-based violence (Raushan, 2020). It will manifest a great impact on future demographic outcomes and additional pressure on the functioning healthcare system (UNFPA, 2020).

The phenomena of increased unintended pregnancy will happen for the reason of low contraception access and high unmet need. As per the fourth wave of NFHS; the contraceptive prevalence rate in the country is still only 53 per cent of which 36 per cent is contributed by female sterilisation only (IIPS & IFC, 2017). High unmet need in rural areas where the fertility rate is high is another concern. The lockdown lowered the availability and accessibility of contraception and use of it (Raushan, 2020). Importantly, access to family planning services has also affected at very large. During the specified period, the condom user had declined by 19 per cent, Oral pills user by 12 per cent, IUD insertion by 28 per cent, and sterilisation by 68 per cent (MoHFW, 2020).

The projection had added that if lockdown remains continue for six months, close to 70 lakh unintended pregnancies may take place, gender-based violence may occur to additional 310 lakh cases and close to 470 lakh women would not access modern family planning methods in low-and middle-income countries (MLICs) (UNFPA, 2020). In India, where many large populated states face the threat of high fertility, low use of contraceptives, and the high pregnancy rate; possibilities of high unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and high unwanted birth can not be ignored. One reason may be intimate partner violence as it increases two times more risk of unwanted pregnancies (Raushan & Raushan, 2017). Author study based on the fourth wave of NFHS has found that the women who experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months are 1.59 times more likely to have unwanted pregnancy with more in case of sexual violence in India.

The latest estimate by UNICEF added that under the shadow of the pandemic, around 1160 lakh babies will be born with the highest (201 lakh) in India, followed by 135 lakh in China, 64 lakh in Nigeria, 50 lakh in Pakistan, 40 lakh in Indonesia and 33 lakh in the United States of America in the next nine months since the declaration of pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). Although, many of these countries have high neonatal mortality rates. So, the repercussion of expected high unwanted pregnancy will be either possibility of high demand for abortion measures or to deliver.

Access to Maternal and Child Healthcare Services

Another issue is the availability of healthcare services and access for women and children like antenatal care, delivery, and post-delivery care at both health facilities and the community level. The critical health services have also been severely disrupted during the period like child immunisation schemes, nutrition-related interventions, ante-natal checkups, institutional deliveries, postnatal care, etc. that are important for the welfare of pregnant women and newborns including children as well. The emerged havoc restricted to access maternal and child healthcare services across the world with more within the MLICs. A study by the Guttmacher Institute projected that there would be at least a 10 per cent decline in coverage of pregnancy and newborn care-related services that would have fatal for the lives of mothers and newborns. In the numerical term, it will lead to an additional 170 lakh women who are giving birth experiencing major obstetric complications, and 260 lakh additional newborns will experience major complications in absence of appropriate care. This would result in an additional 28000 maternal and 168000 newborn deaths (Riley et al., 2020).

While during the lockdown; the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare keep the priority for all essential health services related to mother and child, all states put an emergency response to Covid-19 over any other essential healthcare-related services. They continued it even after the lockdown was lifted. Apart, stigma and adequate information gap on the spread and treatment of Covid-19 have also exaggerated the difficulties for women from vulnerable communities. The situation is more disastrous as the emerged pandemic and sudden lockdown intensified the restrictions which ultimately led to a dire situation for the pregnant and those women whose deliveries were very close. The impact would have been drastic, especially among the marginalised people who remained more vulnerable in such unusual circumstances. Evidence and the media reports revealed the situation emerged due to the COVID-19 followed by the unprecedented lockdown. Few shreds of evidence mentioned as:

'In April, three years old boy died in Jehanabad district of Bihar due to non-availability of the transport services, and the ambulance facilities were not made possible when referred from the Jehanabad district hospital to Patna Medical College Hospital, Patna. They were made to run from one hospital to another. This happened because the child did not get timely treatment due to unavailability of ambulances and the nationwide lockdown was in force.' (News NDTV, 12 April 2020).

In another case:

'In Noida, a 30-year-old pregnant woman having breathlessness and low blood pressure died in an ambulance in June 2020 because of not getting timely treatment. She had been returned away by eight hospitals within the span of 13 hours due to lack of beds across the hospitals.' (Muttreja, 2020).

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In another case, the pregnant woman from a marginalised community denied the treatment resulted in the stillbirth:

'In April, a 22-year pregnant woman from Buxar district of Bihar was denied treatment for complications developed in the later stage of the pregnancy. The pregnant woman and her mother were repeatedly returned away by the government health facilities, the woman later delivered with stillborn in a private hospital, nearly 30 kilometres away from where she lived.' (Muttreja, 2020)

Overall the lockdown posed challenges to pregnant women, especially for those in the latter stages of their pregnancies. They were unable to visit gynecologists for routine checkups due to the restrictions imposed by the lockdown. As most deliveries usually take place in nearby small private nursing homes, their closure pushed to a decline in institutional deliveries across the country. The latest available health management information system data revealed that there was a 13 per cent decline in ANC services utilisation between April-June 2020 compared to the same period of the year 2019. The decline was a very high of 47 per cent in Delhi to 44 per cent in Jharkhand, 29 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, 19 per cent in Bihar, 7 per cent in Kerala, and Gujarat each and one per cent in Karnataka. However, there were some states where more ANC was observed for the same period like in Tamil Nadu it was 12 per cent more, 3 per cent more in Telangana and Himachal Pradesh each, 4 per cent more in Odisha.

The institutional deliveries also declined by 19 per cent during April-June 2020 compared to April-June 2019. At the state level, the decline varied drastically from a high of 35 per cent in Jharkhand followed by 34 per cent in Gujarat, 30 per cent in Maharashtra to 18-20 per cent in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, etc. to 5-8 per cent in Haryana, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, etc. Except in two states Sikkim and Tripura, all the states and UTs have recorded a decline in institutional deliveries during the period.

Possible Threats For Sustainable Development Goals

In the recent past in 2018, World Health Organisation had appreciated India for its tremendous progress in combating the threat and reduction of maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by a high of 77 per cent from 556 per lakh live births 130 per lakh live births between 1990 and 2016. However, the current MMR remained below the target of Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) and needs to put India on track to achieve the SDGs target of MMR below 70 per lakh by the year 2030. But, the pandemic posed a challenge and it really seems not plausible to achieve it. However, the challenges are not alone for India, but most of the low and middle-income countries in the world.

It is also important to discuss about the decline in maternal and child mortality was made possible due to push and increased access to quality

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Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services. Coverage of essential maternal health services has doubled since the year 2005, the proportion of deliveries in government facilities almost tripled from 18 per cent to 52 per cent between 2006 and 2016 (IIPS & ICF, 2017). Second, the state subsidised demand-oriented financing such as *Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram* has accelerated institutional deliveries in the country, especially in rural areas. Third, the country has put additional effort into autonomy, empowerment, and female literacy which push forward to better access to mother and child-related health services with some limitations (Singh, 2018). Further *Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritoa Abhiyan* also pushed ANC services, access obstetric complications, and tracking of high-risk pregnancies which was important for further gains to achieve the SDG targets.

Among the children, poor health other than mortality will be increased as a result of the emerging pandemic. At the same time; health systems response and developmental including civil societies organisations to respond for child health is found decreased. Despite progressing on safe and effective immunisation process for more than 50 years; increasing cases of measles in recent years has resulted in more than 140000 children died in 2018, most of them were preventable. It is also estimated that millions of children including infants missed and will continue not getting their required essential vaccinations worldwide due to pandemic.

Against this already emerged backdrop; in 24 countries measles vaccination campaigns had been halted to help avert further spread of COVID-19 during 2020. Together more than 1170 lakh children in 37 countries have been impacted due to the suspension of scheduled immunisation activities, like many lives in regions with a high case of measles. This astonishing number does not include such infants who may not be vaccinated because of routine immunisation services disruption in the time of COVID-19. It is also stressing that children below 12 months are more prone to death due to measles complications. The risk of exposure will increase daily if the circulation of the measles virus is not stopped (WHO, 2020).

WHO has emphasised the importance of maintaining the essential services and considered immunisation as one of the core health services that must be offered to target children (Hollander and Carr, 2020). Special efforts and strategies are required for such vulnerable child populations to reduce the risk of morbidity and mortality. However, it was suggested on mass vaccination campaigns to postpone following recommendations and instructions required to combat transmission of the COVID-19 virus at the time (WHO, 2020). In the country, newborns including young children face challenges to get vaccinated due to the break of the supply chain amid the nationwide lockdown. The BCG vaccination declined by 20 per cent, measles by 20 per cent, Polio by 31 per cent, DPT-3 by 31 per cent, and Vitamin-A

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(9th dose) by 32 per cent between April-June 2020 compared to April-June 2020.

The pandemic had decelerated the programme and strategies which were catalysing the reduction in maternal mortality other than the reduction in child morbidity and mortality in the country. Denying pregnant women timely care and treatment is a setback for India in achieving the committed development targets globally. Importantly, needy women are stressed with fear of getting infected with COVID-19, triggered by the contradictory views around disease transmission from mother to child. Even healthcare personnel too, have faced challenges in streamlining deliveries and consultations in the wake of an ongoing pandemic.

In the month of September 2020; the Union Health Minister during a programme on maternal, newborn, and child health had clearly mentioned that the maximum impact of COVID-19 has been felt by women, children, and adolescents; however Health Ministry had issued guidelines to ensure all healthcare services to such vulnerable groups. It was also mentioned that India is transitioning towards the moderate phase of maternal mortality and timely access to comprehensive obstetric care would avert many maternal deaths. The Health Minister had added about ensuring services availability remained in focus for such a group despite the health systems being under severe strain due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

COVID, Community Health Workers, and Services Delivery

The rapidly evolved epidemic had stressed the entire healthcare system, including the frontline community health workers (CHWs) such as ASHA, AWW, ANM, and other health workers. CHWs at the community level are well trusted and accepted as advocating on behalf of patients and act as a bridge between the patients and health personnel in communicating the information in local acceptable dialect to ensure patients are connected to required care (Peretz et al, 2012). Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) are health workers at the community level functioning as the first point of contact in rural areas. ASHA plays a pivotal role where there is often limited or no direct access to healthcare facilities. An ASHA worker is a catalyst in motivating women to push for institutional deliveries, sensitising for timely vaccination of children, promoting family planning access to treating mild illnesses with first aid, keeping demographic records of the serving villages/localities, and working for the village sanitation.

During the pandemic, all the ASHAs including other community health workers engaged in supporting COVID-19 management. It ranges from surveillance, contact tracing, screening of returning migrants, awareness, and facilitating service access from diagnostic to treatment for COVID-19 infected people including others. They were also well prepared to address stigma, fear, and misinformation related to COVID-19 providing

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accurate information on time. This also included the ranges of information like transmission and precautions that people can act to protect themselves and their surroundings including access to care and support.

Since the frontline health workers are engaged with COVID-19 management, general public health services and facilities for maternal and child healthcare (MCH) including other health and nutrition services had been disrupted. However, there is evidence to managing and providing the healthcare essential services to the needy and pregnant women. The story of ASHA worker Anjana (Bagota, Madhya Pradesh); Kavita (Madhya Pradesh), and ANM Kiran (Sheikhpura, Bihar) are the evidences (UNFPA, 2020) on delivering essential maternal healthcare services and coping mechanisms during the pandemic and the lockdown period in India.

The delivery of essential healthcare services and counseling done by Anjana narrates:

'Anjana recognises crucial aspects about ensuring healthcare access to women and girls at the grassroots level. She came in contact with women who returned from Delhi, being in the third trimester of pregnancy. She counseled her for 14 days of isolation, provided IFA tablets, ensured for TT injection was administered, and conducted regular check-ups till both the women delivered safely. She also faced a challenge in routine visits to the village as people were barred on several occasions for the reason that she may put the people into quarantine. To overcome such problem, she communicated through neighbours to disseminate advice and information to many pregnant women, and also talk to such women through their windows to provide services including safety measures and precautions other than advice on consuming nutritious foods'.

In another coping mechanism to ensure the services delivery to the needy and pregnant women, Kavita's story seems on the same line:

'From July 1 to 15, Kavita was involved in state government-led campaign against COVID-19 and counsels every day over 30 houses about safeguard against the COVID-19. But with returned migrant populations, the workload was increased manifold. Initially, she was looking after women and children only. During the time, Kavita with her team followed each returning woman with a complete medical history of pregnancy and ensured about IFA tablets, TT injections other than the routine checkups. She narrated although it was a tough job as stigma, fear, and issues related to quarantine and isolation for returned migrants. But counseling and consistent effort worked and people become more receptive'.

The story of ANM Kiran in delivering timely services during a challenging time is a symbol of thousands of frontline healthcare workers. She managed and delivered her timely services. She mentioned:

'ANM Kiran of 52 years age always remained motivated in assisting pregnant women with required medical facilities during a challenging time of COVID-19. During the lockdown, she was on duty in the labour room where she helped women in safe delivery along with counseling women and their relatives about social distancing and protection. Whenever she gets calls from ASHA about a

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woman going into labour pain, she quickly arranged an ambulance to reach the health facilities. Kiran never gets disheartened and overcomes all challenges and managed to ensure timely services to needy women and others'.

As the country was already stressed with a shortfall of health infrastructure to human resources-both medical and non-medical, suddenly additional pressure emerged on the available services after pandemic especially for maternal and healthcare services can not be ignored at the various levels facility level to the community level. At the time, the women frontline and community healthcare workers supported the healthcare system selflessly to deliver timely services and counseling sessions. The above mentioned three stories represent thousands of others as they who selflessly delivered their responsibilities and provided services in joining hand towards country efforts in ensuring healthcare, especially for women and girls during COVID-19, especially in rural areas where already lack of service availability and accessibility has remained concerned for the government for a long time.

Conclusion

The emerging pandemic COVID-19 triggered the caseload and fatality pushed the country into strict lockdown affected reproductive health services, especially for women, children, and girls other than access to family planning and abortion services adversely. This was propagated by increased fear of infection among health providers and patients as well resulted in access and utilisation of healthcare services, especially maternal and child health care services. This situation has led to a break in the progress that the country has gained through consistent effort in addressing mortality especially maternal, and child including newborn other than morbidity in the last two decades.

Therefore, at the time more MCH related infrastructure including services for institutional delivery to newborn care other than ANC and PNC at the facility and community level should be developed on a priority basis. To cater to the need for reproductive and MCH services in rural areas where a more poor and vulnerable population is living, recruitment of additional supporting health personnel and staff should be recruited on a priority basis. As pregnant women are more susceptible to infections, emphasis should be shifted to more home visits by community health workers, other than tele-counseling and consultation to ensure a timely treatment in the need (Muttreja, 2020).

The strategy should also be there for a couple to be aware of the repercussion of unsafe abortion even if wanted to terminate any pregnancy-either wanted or unwanted. Psychological counseling on risk aversion may also reduce the risk of maternal along with infant and child deaths. Moreover, in the rural and less accessible areas, locally available trained

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traditional birth attendants (TBAs) would be one option to conduct safe delivery and reduce the risk as well load on health facilities (Raushan, 2020).

Primary health facilities remain prepared to follow precautionary protocol in admission to diagnosis and treatment. To reduce fear and risk among pregnant women, assurance of safe delivery for mother and newborn will be a timely decision and the delivery ward should be distant from the COVID-19 ward. Finally, to maintain safe and timely service delivery; health information systems needed to be strengthened much soon from top to bottom level to push evidence-based decisions and strategies for disease surveillance and timely service delivery in the health facilities.

However, we can not avoid somehow the different scenarios on fertility scenario, family planning services utilisation, unintended pregnancy other than rendering reduced use of maternal and child health services in different regions with varied magnitude. Hence; public policy, medical and public health researchers would think wisely at the programme and policy intervention level to support government accordingly at a different level from national to local (Raushan, 2020). It will support in bringing back the pace to achieve already fixed goals and targets to achieve sustainable development. At the community level; ASHAs and Anganwadi workers would be a major catalyst in spreading awareness on services availability and its reach to every individual in villages and remotely settled hamlets. For their work, they can be appraised with monetary incentives for the next two to three years to overcome the challenges and provide timely services to every mother and child, bringing back MCH at the normal track to achieve the already fixed goal of sustainable development.

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Amalgamation of Regional Rural Banks in India: Policy Perspective

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The Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) were established in 1975 in wake of the failure of the cooperatives and commercial banks in fulfilling rural credit needs in India. The process of their amalgamation was initiated in 2005. From a policy perspective, the paper analyses the amalgamation of RRBs as a reform measure to address their huge organisational challenges and operational problems.

Establishment of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

As most of the population at the time of independence was comprised of villagers depending on agriculture and its allied activities for their livelihood, institutional rural credit emerged as a serious concern in view of the exploitation of villagers by money lenders. Initially, cooperatives were entrusted with this task, and later on, commercial banks were also supposed to provide banking facilities to the rural population.

Soon it was realised that the cooperatives failed to serve the purpose due to their non-banking behaviour and lack of professionalism. On the other hand, the commercial banks failed to appreciate the rural context due to their urban attitudes and work culture. This situation gave further impetus to provide institutional structures fully dedicated to rural credit.

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Amalgamation of Regional Rural Banks in India: Policy Perspective

In such circumstances, the Government constituted various committees and working groups to study and give recommendations for the development of banking infrastructure in the rural sector.

At last, the Government of India decided to provide a dedicated institutional setup only for rural financial requirements on the recommendations of the Narsimham Committee. The committee chalked out the scheme of establishing new rural banks namely the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs). The motive behind their creation was to inculcate the characteristics of cooperatives at the local level and nourish the same with the large resource base of commercial banks having local experience and acquaintance of rural problems.

Against this backdrop, the RRBs came into existence on October 2, 1975 (Ram, 2015). To begin with, the Government of India established five such RRBs. Initially, they were opened under an ordinance of the Parliament, and later on, the Regional Rural Banks Act was enacted in 1976. Over the years, the number of RRBs reached up to 196. The RRBs were established as a cost-effective financial institution to supplement public sector banks financing agriculture (Mohanti, Bajwa, and Sharma, 2011)

In due course of time, the RRBs which are often viewed as the small man's bank have taken deep roots and have become a sort of inseparable part of the rural credit structure (Lok Sabha, 2004). They have played a key role in rural institutional financing in terms of geographical coverage, clientele outreach, and business volume as also contributing to the development of the rural economy (Lok Sabha, 2004).

The Need for Reforms

However, the financial viability of the RRBs began to become a matter of concern since the 1980s, just five years after their existence (Misra, 2006).

This led to various financial reforms in the working of RRBs after their establishment. So far as deposit mobilisation and loan disbursement were concerned, their work was satisfactory but they began to run in losses as they were facing many problems. Their non-viability made the policymakers serious for their strengthening. Various suggestions for the merger and amalgamation of RRBs were given by various committees and working groups. Merger with their sponsor commercial banks was also suggested but it was rejected mainly due to its probable impact on the basic characteristics of RRBs like rural orientation, local feel, and culture.

The viability and profitability of RRBs were discussed many times at different fora but no concrete action was taken for a long time. Many studies felt consolidation of the RRBs necessary among other possible ways of their restructuring within the prevailing legal and organisational framework. Many experts submitted various ways to make the RRBs viable and

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profitable. In 1997, The Expert Group under the Chairmanship of N.K. Thingalaya suggested that weak RRBs might be merged with neighbouring RRBs.

The above opinion of Thingalaya Expert Group regarding the merger of RRBs with neighboring RRBs was re-examined and rejected by the Vyas Committee II. This committee was formally known as The Advisory Committee on Flow of Credit to Agriculture and Allied Activities under the Chairmanship of V.S. Vyas. The Committee urged for the rationale of a third channel for rural credit with a clear rural focus and regional orientation. It rejected various other proposed ways of restriction of RRBs. Likewise, it also denied the merger of RRBs with their sponsor banks. It forwarded a more logical solution and recommended a two-phased amalgamation of RRBs.

Amalgamation as a Reform Measure

In the two-phased amalgamation scheme devised by the above mentioned Vyas Committee, the RRBs working in a particular state and sponsored by similar sponsor banks would have to be amalgamated in the first phase. Likewise, the RRBs working in that state would have to be amalgamated again without taking into consideration of their sponsor banks to make the number of RRBs limited to one in an ordinary state and two or three RRBs in a larger state.

Giving a performance perspective to the process of amalgamation, the RRBs which earned profits consecutively for three years during 2000-01 till 2002-03 were categorised as the profit-making RRBs and the rest as loss-making RRBs (Misra, 2006). Aggregate accumulated loss of RRBs amounted to Rs. 2,725 crore during the year 2003-04 (Ishwara, 2011). A study on RRBs' viability concluded that RRBs incurred losses due to defects in their systems (NABARD, 1986). Therefore, improvement in their operational viability became the main objective of their amalgamation. It was also perceived that other benefits like the advantages of the economies of scale and reduction in transaction costs would also be achieved through their reconstruction. It was emphasised that the role of RRBs would be to supplement and not supplant other institutional agencies already existing in the field (Jariwala, and Noronha, 2014).

Implementation of the Scheme of Amalgamation

The amalgamation of RRBs was a lengthy process involving many issues related to sponsor banks, district coverage, and branch networks. For instance, six sponsor banks had sponsored only one RRB, 11 sponsor banks had sponsored two to four RRBs, three sponsor banks had sponsored up to 10 RRBs, eight sponsor banks had sponsored more than 10 RRBs, two of these sponsor banks had sponsored more than 20 RRBs. Likewise, 47 RRBs had been covering only one district each, 111 RRBs had been covering 2-3

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districts each, 29 RRBs had been covering four-five districts each, and nine RRBs had been covering six-nine districts each. Similarly was the scenario about the branch network. There were 72 RRBs that had up to 50 branches, 87 RRBs had between 51 and 100 branches, 21 RRBs had between 100 and 150 branches, and 46 RRBs had more than 150 branches (Misra, 2006).

Thus, the number of districts covered and branch network of RRBs were quite different from state to state in the country. Accordingly, the number of RRBs sponsored by commercial banks also differed from state to state. On the other hand, the operational efficiency and commercial viability of these banks had emerged as one of the most crucial factors in deciding about their desired role in emerging economic scenarios (Dhaliwal, 2010).

Analysing the number of RRBs in a state, their districts coverage, and the number of branches under their jurisdiction, the Reserve Bank of India examined various alternatives for strengthening of RRBs within the existing legal framework. The motive of their amalgamation was to overcome the deficiencies prevailing in RRBs and make them viable and profitable units (Reserve Bank of India, 2004). Following the recommendations of the Vyas Committee, the amalgamation of RRBs was restricted within the state of their operation. In a particular state, the process of amalgamation of RRBs was scheduled to take place in two phases (Yellaiah, Sudhakariah, and Venkates, 2014). I. Amalgamation of RRBs sponsored by the same sponsor banks, and II. Amalgamation of RRBs sponsored by different sponsor banks in the same state.

Beginning the rigorous task with definite goals and aims, the first phase of the amalgamation of RRBs, sponsor bank-wise at the state level, was initiated by the Government of India in September 2005 (Tankha, 2015). Prior to this, a notification was duly issued on 31 March 2005 to form nine amalgamated entities of RRBs. All the 196 RRBs were to be amalgamated. They were operating through 14,489 branches across 525 districts in 26 states of the country. By March 2010, amalgamated RRBs brought down their number from 196 to 82 (Joshi, 2013). This included 46 amalgamated RRBs and 36 standalone RRBs.

The second phase began in October 2012. Now, an amalgamation of RRBs across sponsor banks within a state was to be done. Full concentration was given to achieve the targeted number of RRBs in a state i.e., two or three RRBs in larger states and one RRB in other states. As a result, on completion of this phase of amalgamation on 31st March 2014, 56 RRBs were in existence operating through 19,082 branches in 642 districts in 26 states.

After completion of amalgamation in two phases, the states of Harayana, Nagaland, Mizoram, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh, and Puducherry have only one RRB in each state. There are two RRBs in the states of Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Orissa, Jammu, and

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Kashmir, Assam, Tamilnadu, and Maharashtra. Certain states like West Bengal, Karnataka, Bihar, Punjab, and Gujarat have three RRBs. Big states like Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh had seven and four RRBs respectively at the end of the process of amalgamation.

The number of amalgamated RRBs sponsored by a particular sponsor bank also varied from one to 18. State Bank of India had the highest number of 18 RRBs sponsored by any commercial bank. Punjab & Sind Bank, Union Bank of India, and Bank of India had sponsored six, five, and four RRBs respectively. Syndicate Bank, Bank of Baroda, Central Bank of India, and Indian Bank had sponsored three RRBs each. UCO Bank had sponsored two RRBs and Indian Overseas Bank, J&K Bank, Allahabad Bank, Canara Bank, Dena Bank, Andhra Bank, and Bank of Maharashtra sponsored one RRB each.

Conclusion

The process of restructuring of RRBs through amalgamation has proved to be a milestone in the history of RRBs. It resulted in significant improvements in the working of RRBs as the institutions dedicated to rural credit in a developing country like India. In a way, the amalgamation was also aimed to achieve economies of scale by enabling the RRBs to maintain better managerial control over their activities. As a policy initiative, it was indeed a great reform measure that ensured the continuation of the RRBs. Now, when the Government of India has put on hold further amalgamation of RRBs and has directed to the sponsor banks that no fresh proposal of amalgamation of RRBs should be taken up, other reform measures for further strengthening of the RRBs like e-banking can be pursued.

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Rural Tourism and Income Generation in the Himalayas: A Case Study of Kullu

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The tourism industry has been growing at a rapid pace all across the globe. This industry has an immense potential of generating employment and earning a large amount of foreign exchange. With this enormous growth, the way people view travel has been also changing. This change has given birth to various types of tourism. Rural tourism is one of the few forms of a new category of tourism, which has enhanced capability to deliver a standard of living to rural people. This paper is an attempt to understand the impact and potential of rural tourism in a place like India. The focus is on Himachal Pradesh, as it is a state with 90 per cent of people living in the rural area. Apart from that, the travel and tourism industry contributes 6.6 per cent to the State's Gross Domestic Product.

In a country of expanding population, increasing unemployment, a declining currency, tourism presents one opportunity to turn the tide of unemployment through the generation of jobs and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Briedenhann, 2004). All across the globe, the tourism sector provides employment to about 50 million people. It is multi-faceted and cut across various conventional sectors in the economy. The growth of tourism in a region increases the land value and can lead to

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improvement in infrastructure. Apart from this, tourism development also encourages the people to preserve their culture, social heritage, and local dialects. Being a labour-intensive industry, it has the potential to generate employment and economically empowers the rural community. It also has the potential to improve the condition of women and marginalised communities significantly. The tourism industry also acts as a source of alternative income for an agrarian economy. For instance, even a small amount earned through tourism activity can be used to cover the school fee of their children.

The concept of rural tourism (Reichel et. al., 2000; George et. al., 2009; Dragulanescu and Maricica, 2012) is not new in India. It came up as an alternative to mass tourism and to support the rural economies of the larger agrarian region. Rural tourism is an amalgamation of rural society, its culture, and its beliefs. It has the potential to reduce the rural-urban migration as villagers will be able to find work in their native place. Rural tourism in India was recognised as a means to bring up the standard of living of rural people in 2002. Ministry of Rural Development identified various sites all across India that can be developed into tourism hubs (ITS, 2019). Ministry of Tourism had launched various rural tourism schemes in 2002 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in compliance with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) with the partnership of UNDP (Rustagi, 2019). This further promoted the mandate of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products by 2030 (RIS, 2016). Over a period of time, numerous rural circuits have gained popularity in the country. Kerala, Sikkim, Gujarat, Bihar, and Maharashtra have a successful developed unique model of involving local communities as major stakeholders in the development process. Govardhan Eco-Village in Maharashtra even won the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation (The Hindu, 2017).

In Himachal Pradesh, it was not until 2008, that the state government came up with a scheme to develop its own rural areas. The Homestay Scheme (HPHSS, 2008) was introduced with the aim to increase the inflow of tourists in rural areas and improve the economic condition of those places (Singh, 2019). However, only a few places have grown as famous tourist spots which have put a strain on its resources. The thrust of tourism policy has been on creating infrastructure only in urban areas. The unequal distribution of income and growth and over-exploitation of resources in these particular areas is a cause of major concern. However, the potential that this industry holds to change and develop a place cannot be ignored (Rustagi, 2019). It is time when the tourism industry in the state tries to diversify into the rural areas by promoting the culture and heritage of these rural locations. In order to do so, it is important to understand the impact of it on the local community. This will help planners and developers to identify the concern of stakeholders to propose appropriate policies.

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Understanding the perspective of both the stakeholders will avoid conflict and will prevent excessive commoditisation of culture and traditions. Therefore, the emphasis of this paper is on the employment generation and economic upliftment of the tourism sector and how that growth has impacted the locals. It highlights how tourism development in the region can contribute to the economic development of the people. The study also aims to contribute to the creation of better tourism policies in the future.

Review of Literature

Tourism has been the most researched topic in recent times and has been continuously redefining itself. The Tourism Society of England defines tourism as a temporary, short-term movement of people to a destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at each destination. In 1981 International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism defined it in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home environment (Geetanjali, 2010). Rural tourism on the other hand emerged as an alternative to break the monotony of daily life and to be one with nature. Lane (1994) defined rural tourism as a tourist activity of the rural area, it is pastoral in nature, atmosphere, and role; and echoes the multifaceted rural environment, culture, economy, and history. Gannon (1994) highlighted that rural tourism offers cultural and area-specific entertainment by the villagers and others to encourage income generation through tourists' arrival in their area. Dragulanescu and Maricica (2012) pointed out that tourism development can solve key issues in rural areas. It reduces rural-urban migration, increases local involvement, improves the living condition, creates potential individuals, protects and conserve the environment and create a condition to carry out economic activity. Ilbery et.al. (2007) said that the rural spaces should no longer be seen as purely associated with agriculture production but seen as locations for the stimulation of new socio-economic activities incorporating tourism, leisure, hospitality, food production and consumption, and e-commerce.

Holland (2003) highlighted the significance of the increase in the level of local participation through tourism promotion in rural areas. This can further increase their involvement in destination management. Jurowski (1996) said that tourism activity in the area if worked properly can even enhance ecological resources. The importance of rural tourism has increased manifold as it is encouraged by the demand of tourists to travel in unexplored areas. Shuchi (2012) said that tourism in India can fetch great awards in the rural sector if the state rural tourism helps in the exposure of the local and regional culture and historical heritage supports the movement of tourists in rural areas. Peaty (2010) analysed four different projects on community-based Homestay tourism in Indian Himalayas and found that in spite of different

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approaches, all the projects provided significant monetary and non-monetary benefits to the community, assisted in the protection and preservation of environment and culture, and enabled youth and female empowerment.

Rural Tourism in Kullu

According to the Census of India, 2011 Himachal Pradesh (HP) is a Himalayan state with the highest percentage of the rural population (90 per cent) in India (GoI, 2011). The Kullu valley of HP is situated in the heart of the Pir Panjal range of Western Himalayas and is divided into five major blocks: Manali, Kullu, Banjar, Anni, and Nirmand. With its snow-clad mountains, fast-flowing rivers, and breathtaking landscape, Kullu has been a stopping place for travelers, traders, migrants, and pilgrims for generations. From the colonial period, tourism has become an important instrument in the social and economic development of the mountain region (Giachino, 2020). Kulluvians initially were reluctant to accept the 'service sector' which gave people from the neighbouring states an opportunity to dominate the hospitality business in Kullu. An increasing number of tourists in 1992-95 led to a massive expansion of hotels and other facilities in and around the valley.

The total number of domestic tourists has increased over the last four to five years to 86 lakhs. Kullu is the number one destination in Himachal Pradesh with the highest number of tourist arrival every year (HT, 2019). The total number of domestic tourists that came to Himachal Pradesh is 86 million in the last five years and out of which 16 million visit Kullu valley. On the other hand, when we look at the arrival of foreign tourists out of 20 million tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh 5 million came to Kullu i.e. 25 of the foreign tourists are coming to the district (HT, 2019). This expansion was the result of the actual demand, speculated demand, and various subsidies provided by the state government.

Even after this precedent growth of tourism in Himachal Pradesh, the sector is confined to a few urban pockets. Tourism development in the Himalayas presents a paradox to planners as they must balance 'developmental' and 'ecological' considerations (Sood et.al., 2017). Policymakers' failure to understand the geographic and social uniqueness of mountainous regions and to involve their communities, often leaves efforts to create sustainable tourism products ineffective (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005). It has also led to the issue of regional imbalance in development and unequal economic growth. To address this issue state government tourism policy is now diversifying into rural regions to decongest the over-saturated tourism destinations. The concept of Homestay has gained momentum in the hills to increase the inflow of tourists in rural areas and improve the economic condition of those places. The main aim is to percolate the fruit of tourism to rural areas in order to be truly sustainable and responsible. Since the Homestay Scheme introduction in 2008, 327 Homestay have been

registered in Kullu with the State Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation (HT, 2019). Besides this, there are many unregistered Homestay within the district but official statistics on such Homestay are unavailable. In spite of receiving 1.68 million domestic tourists and 3 million foreign tourists in 2019 (ITS, 2019), rural communities of Kullu are not able to leverage the economic benefits from tourism. Manali being the most popular tourist destination in the valley attract mass tourists from all across the globe through various travel agencies based in metropolitan regions of India. Local people are only involved in small businesses like owning a guest house, cafeteria, selling handicrafts, or organising adventure tourism activities. The local community has been alienated from the crucial decisions regarding tourism expansion in their own area.

Objectives

Tourism development in an area that has the ability to increase the socio-economic status, sustain cultures, redistribute economic roles within the local community and promote a positive, ecologically, and culture-friendly image of a destination. In this context, the objective of the paper is: (i) to examine the economic impact of tourism in the hilly region, especially in Himalaya, and (ii) to understand the role of rural tourism to enhance economic upliftment of the people and community engagement in rural tourism in Kullu region of Himachal Pradesh.

Method and Materials

The present paper is based on primary data collected from a personal visit to the tourist location and interaction with different stakeholders. For this paper, two tourist destinations that are part of the Homestay Scheme have been selected purposively for data collection. From each rural destination, 80 participants were selected from each village. During the process, 40 people each were selected from Naggar and Manali, out of which half of the sample owned a Homestay. During data collection, an attempt was made to include the views of a cross-section of the community i.e. people of different gender, religion, occupation, and class. Keeping in view the nature of the study, Chi-Square Test has been performed to study the economic impact of tourism by comparing the monthly and seasonal income of local community and Homestay owners. The calculation is done by the following formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

f_o = the observed frequency (the observed counts in the cells)

f_e = the expected frequency if no relationship existed between the variables

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Results of the Study

Profile of Surveyed Households in Kullu

The surveyed households in this study consist of two categories of people, one who own a Homestay and another who does not own it in the study area. The difference of male to female percentage for the study was 80 per cent to 20 per cent as most of them were busy in their day-to-day chores. During interaction with Homestay owners, it was observed that women played a major role in day to day functioning of running a successful business. While the men of the household are involved in other occupations. The age difference is not significant among the young generation and older generation enrolled in the Homestay scheme. Thirty per cent of the Homestay owners were in the age group of 30 to 40 years and 27.5 per cent of them belonged to the age group of 50 to 60 years. When we look at the educational status of the respondents, only 15 per cent of them were illiterate and 70 per cent of the people who are part of the Homestay scheme were graduates.

In Himachal Pradesh, the majority of the population is Hindu. In upper parts of the state especially, Kullu the Buddhist population is also very high as it is in close proximity to Lahaul-Spiti. In the study 80.5 per cent of the respondents are Hindu followed by 15.5 per cent Buddhists and 5 per cent Sikh.

Table 1
Respondent Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile in
Surveyed Region, 2019 (%)

Profile of Respondents		Local Per cent (N)	Homestay Per cent (N)	Total Per cent (N)
Sex	Male	60 (24)	100 (40)	80 (64)
	Female	40 (16)	0 (0)	20 (16)
Age	30-40	27.5 (11)	30 (12)	28.7 (23)
	40-50	22.5 (9)	17.5 (7)	20 (16)
	50-60	17.5 (7)	27.5 (11)	22.5 (18)
	60 and above	32.5 (13)	25 (10)	29.25 (23)
Educational Qualification	Matriculation	3 (1)	20 (8)	11.5 (9)
	Intermediate	8 (3)	10 (4)	9 (7)
	Graduate	63 (25)	70 (28)	66.5 (53)
	Post Graduate	13 (5)	0 (0)	6.5 (5)
	Illiterate	15 (6)	0 (0)	7.5 (6)
Religion	Hindu	78 (31)	83 (33)	80.5 (64)
	Sikh	0 (0)	10 (4)	5 (4)
	Buddhist	23 (9)	8 (3)	15.5 (12)

Source: Calculated based on data collected through primary survey

Note: Figures presented in percentage and digit in parentheses depicts the number

Contribution of Tourism in Employment Generation in Kullu

Tourism has become an important tool for economic development all across the globe as it has the potential to create direct and indirect employment. In 2019, the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 330 million, which accounts for one in 10 jobs around the world (WTTC, 2019). In Himachal Pradesh, the tourism sector contributes 7 per cent to the state GDP. In 2019, the domestic tourist inflow in the state was 16.83 million and foreign tourist arrival was 3,83,000. According to TERI’s TSA (Tourism Satellite Account) report, it was estimated that the contribution of inbound tourists in Himachal Pradesh GDP is as high as 26 per cent. The specific contribution of foreign tourists is considered to be as high as 20 per cent (TSA, 2013). To increase employment and boost the tourism sector in the state, Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a loan of US \$95.16 million to the state for the development of tourist infrastructure (HT, 2020). A community-based tourism project was also started to increase the prospect of employment for locals in the industry. In the Kullu region, intensive efforts have been made to develop tourism and influence employment generation within the industry to the local youth and other marginalised section. In following tables attempt has been made to analyse different sector in which respondents work. The data has been collected for both their full-time as well as part-time occupation.

Table 2
Full Time and Part Time Occupation of Respondent in the Study Area

Particulars	Local Per cent (N)	Homestay Per cent (N)	Total Per cent (N)
Full-Time Occupation			
Working in tourism sector	25 (9)	45 (18)	35 (27)
Government Job	48 (19)	18 (7)	33 (26)
Agriculture	15 (6)	13 (5)	14 (11)
Business owner	0 (0)	25 (10)	12.5 (10)
Unemployed	13 (5)	0 (0)	6.5 (5)
Part-Time Occupation			
Working in the tourism sector	23 (3)	100 (34)	61.5 (37)
Agriculture	15 (10)	0 (0)	7.5 (10)

Source: Calculated based on data collected through primary survey

Note: Figures presented in percentage and digit in parentheses depicts the number

It is evident from the responses depicted in table 2 that a major chunk of people is employed in the tourism sector. 35 per cent of the total respondents work full time in the tourism industry while 61.5 per cent of them are involved in the tourism sector on a part-time basis. People who are working in the tourism sector either own a Homestay or are into other tourism services like adventure sports, taxi owners, and tourist guides.

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During the field visit, it was also observed that the opportunities generated from tourism in the area is just not limited to the local community. People from all across the country are migrating to the district in large numbers to benefit from the growth of tourism in the area.

Income Generation from Tourism in Kullu

The tourism sector has the potential to act as a great source of income generation. The positive linkages between tourism and economic development are well cited in different research papers. Empirical studies that investigate the impact of tourism on growth generally find a positive correlation between tourism receipts and the growth rate, especially for poor countries (Singh, 2016). The local cash income generated from tourism can vary from wages from formal employment, earning from selling goods and services, profits from locally owned business, casual labour, land rentals, etc. To understand the economic impact of tourism, the income of the local community and Homestay owners has been compared. Table 3 and Table 5 indicate the monthly and seasonal income of the respondents.

Table 3
Monthly Income of the Respondents in Study Area

Monthly Income	Local Per cent (N)	Homestay Per cent (N)	Total Per cent (N)
Less than 5000	6 (2)	0 (0)	3 (2)
5000-20,000	33 (12)	0 (0)	16 (12)
20,000-40,000	17 (6)	38 (15)	28 (21)
40,000-60,000	31 (11)	33 (13)	32 (24)
60,000 and above	14 (5)	30 (12)	22 (17)

Source: Calculated based on data collected through primary survey

Note: Figures presented in percentage and digit in parentheses depicts the number

Monthly Income

Table 3 represents that 33 per cent of Homestay owners earn between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 60,000 while 30 per cent of them earn more than Rs. 60,000 in a month. During interviews with full-time Homestay owners, it came to light that people who book Homestay, stay there for months rather than seasonal tourists who come to stay for a week or so. Thirty-one per cent of the people from the local community earns between Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 60,000 are government employees. Out of three major occupations in the state i.e. agriculture, government services, and tourism; it is quite evident from table 3 that the income of people involved in the tourism sector is highest followed by government services and agriculture. Table 4 represents the result of the chi-square test. The expected value in the result is .99 which depicts that the relationship between the two is quite significant.

Table 4
Result of Chi-Square Test for Monthly Income

Particulars	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.122	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	32.288	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.958	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	79		

Seasonal Income

Seasonal income represents the income that the respondents earn apart from their monthly income. It can be looked at as an additional income that they gain from different occupations that they are enrolled in. Most of the respondents are involved in the tourism sector or agriculture for their seasonal income.

Table 5 shows that 56 per cent of the respondents earn between Rs.10,000 and 50,000. The local community is involved in occupations like a taxi driver, trekking guide, cook, adventure sports, etc. Table 6 represents the result of the chi-square test for seasonal income. The expected value in the result is 3.95 which depicts that the relationship between the two is quite significant. This means that the occupation of the respondent has a significant impact on his income. It is evident from table 3 and table 5 that the households involved in the tourism sector are earning more.

Table 5
Seasonal Income of Respondent in Study Area

Seasonal Income (Rupees)	Local Percent (N)	Homestay Percent (N)	Total Percent (N)
10,000 and below	54 (7)	17 (6)	27 (13)
10,000-50,000	38 (5)	63 (22)	56 (27)
50,000- 1,00,000	8 (1)	20 (7)	17 (8)

Source: Calculated based on data collected through primary survey

Note: Figures presented in percentage and digit in parentheses depicts number

Table 6
Result of Chi-Square Test for Monthly Income

Particulars	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.499	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	32.265	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.828	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	79		

Discussion and Conclusion

It is an admitted fact that due to tourism development there is an overall increase in basic facilities of the host destination which at end of the day benefits the host community lifestyle as well as an image of the destination (Gupta and Singh, 2016). The study found a similar condition in Kullu where tourism plays an important role in the life of people living

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there. It is a hotspot for adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and rural tourism. Most of the people are directly or indirectly associated with the sector. However, Naggar and Manali attract a different set of tourists all through the season. People coming to Naggar are there to stay for a longer period of time taking a break from their monotonous life. On the other hand, tourists coming to Manali stay for a shorter period of time.

Tourism in the region is not just giving an opportunity to the local people. Migration makes important social and economic contributions to destination countries, culturally enriching their society, enhancing the tourism product, and providing labour for the travel, tourism, hospitality, and catering sectors (Kumar and Dinesh, 2018). The growth in international tourism and mobility has given rise to tourism-led migration (WTO, 2009). A lot of migrants from all over the country are coming to the region looking for employment opportunities. The local community of Kullu is involved in small businesses associated with tourism which has led to better income for local households. They are involved in activities like being a taxi driver, tourist guide, photographer or assist in adventure tourism. Tourism has become the main source of income in the region followed by government jobs and agriculture. People who do not get a government job rely mostly on tourism and agriculture for their income.

The study also reveals that more than half of the respondents who do not own a Homestay are unaware of any government training or awareness programme conducted in their region. The finding suggests that tourism has had a positive impact in the region as it gives new opportunities to the local community (Singh, 2019). Naggar is at the stage of involvement and apathy as it has a huge potential to attract more tourists given the scenic beauty of the region. It can learn a lot of things from how development took place in Manali. However, the economic gains of tourism development in Kullu cannot be ignored. The number of tourists in the area is increasing per season which is further creating demand for goods and services. The area has immense potential to tap the human resources of the region and encourage community-based tourism. It is also examined that tourism is not only complementary for the economic development but also it improves the quality of the internal environment, goods, transport, hotel, etc., it also provides largest employment opportunity to youths and also encourages cultural development. The tourism industry helps to maintain a good relationship between host and home countries' citizens.

Tourism has been an important source of income generation for many developing nations. Chaturvedi (2010) in his work posed that tourism is the largest sector in terms of generating employment. It helps to maintain a balance between the demand for and supply of human capital. In other words, the tourism industry has tremendous potential for employment generation to socio-economic development, especially for the less developed

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area and unexplored places. It plays a crucial role in the sustainable economic growth of the region. In the state, the Himachal Pradesh government has recognised the need and potential of the sector reflected in various concessions, new schemes, loan facilities, budget allocation to boost the sector (HHTP, 2019).

It is revealed from the analysis that tourism is an important feature for the overall development of the community and the localities. Consequences of the expansion of accommodation in the absence of an equal growth in demand lead to competitive behaviour of the hotel operators and their agents. Everything becomes negotiable and what people actually pay becomes highly variable and prices are driven by the immediate competitive situation, which can change day-to-day and season-to-season. The government is of the opinion that tourism development will generate new jobs, enhance community infrastructure (FICCI, 2019). This is completely true seeing how the tourism industry has contributed to the GDP and increased employment. However, the concentration of these activities at a few places can lead to problems like burdening of resources, unequal economic growth, and environmental degradation. The initiative taken by the Himachal Pradesh government to boost rural tourism through particular schemes like Homestay, 'Har Gaon ki Kahani' and 'Nai Raahe Nai Manzilen' are steps taken towards the inclusion of people and places avoided over the years (HPTP, 2019). It has become the first state in the country to link MGNREGA with tourism promotion activities (Kamlesh and Bagri, 2019). People will be roped in for the purpose of infrastructural development in local villages. Although, the villages identified for the same are very few.

Hence, the government needs to broaden its horizon and actively look for villages that can be developed under various forms. There is a need to understand the uniqueness of rural tourism and help the rural people be a part of this growth. A focus on discrete events and developments, using a quantitative methodology, illustrates the significant employment and other benefits that tourism activity can bring to a host locality. Moreover, results disaggregated by the industrial sector can inform the policy process and aid the development of sophisticated policy instruments, whilst providing an estimate of potential economic gains (Parlett et. al., 1995).

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Sanctity of Hindu Marriage and Significance of Rituals

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The philosophy of marriage differs in various points and contexts from society to society, community to community, nation to nation, and religion to religion, but no one can deny the fact that marriage plays its role in a society like an institution and it is not merely social channelisation of natural desires and motivations, but it creates a very strong link of social bondage, duties, and responsibilities. One of the most significant unwavering results of marriage is mutual support and the blame of maintenance of the common domestic settlement. Therefore, marriage as an institution has immense social and legal implications and a variety of commitments and obligations flow out of the marital relationship. In this parlance, it involves legal requirements of formality, publicity, and exclusivity in the form of certain norms for its solemnisation with intent to give its social as well as legal recognition. In every marriage, the procedures of solemnisation, properly known as rituals, is used by society. The rituals of the marriage are the very breathe and heart of the marriages as well as the entire institution, which gives stability to the marriages in the cover of religious force. The paper analyses the significance of the shastric and customary rituals in Hindu marriages.

Introduction

Family is the oldest social institution on this earth of which, marriage is the basis and almost certainly; the only building block. A family is a worldwide cluster, which exists in ethnic groups, rural areas as well as in

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the urban communities and amongst the followers of all the religions. The families which are an outcome of the marriage system provide the most durable, everlasting, and enduring relationship amongst the components of the families. It is formed with several members, reflects in joint as well as nuclear families, in which they live together. In this sense, one may say that family is an institution, and with the ignorable number of examples¹, marriage is the foundation of this institution. This socially recognised blending of man and woman has a manifold drive such as founding a domiciliary for personal, social, and spiritual purposes, the establishment of a stable relationship for the satisfaction of sensual greed, procreating, and providing care for the offspring. The concept of marriage has been born, govern, and regulated by the specific rules of *dharma* and in most cases, it remains the direct outcome of the religious rules. India has religions that have specific rituals and follows an explicit procedure for the solemnisation of marriage as per their religious beliefs. In some religions, there is strict observance of the rituals however, others are relaxed. Apart from their level of implementation, these rituals are too important and not merely formalities as they have, both social and legal implications. Not only this, even it is found in practice that in particular religion rituals differ from place to place and group to group.

In India, apart from the Special Marriage Act, 1954 the marital affairs of a Hindu are administered principally either through Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 or by customs. Due to this, there is no uniform concept and model of marriage, though, one thing is common in India, it has outlined the holy and essential purposes of marriage in which everyone is duty-bound to get married.

It would be relevant to mention here that, as per the Hindu mythology, male and female, are incomplete, and they will be complete only and only after the solemnisation of marriage. This is the reason why Hindu marriage is considered as a socio-sacred onus for certain purposes, viz., to conduct spiritual worship, to procreate offspring, and no doubt for physical satisfaction. Therefore, Hindu marriage is momentous not only for corporeal pleasure but also for societal purposes, which is the prime object of marriage among Hindus. Even if one will try to analyse the second purpose of the marriage, he would find that the procreation of children is also having its purpose for the continuance of this society as well as to perform various rituals required by the religious textbooks.

Thus, Hindu marriage is considered as a socially and legally approved relationship and a shared obligation to every member of the society, which defines and sanctioned by custom and particular norms of the personal laws. The explanation of this bond embraces not only the guiding principle for behaviour concerning sexuality but again having elements of religious objects. Though the forms and nature of a marriage may be

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changed as per its own beliefs of the different groups, as far as the purpose of marriage and its conceptual measurement is concerned it is almost similar and required as compulsion by every group of Hindus (Patel et al., 2020). This significance attached to marriage pronounced by the Hindu religion may be seen in the datum that a very little fraction of males or females who keep on single. Regarding this Committee on the Status of Women in India has indicated that only 0.5 per cent of women remain unmarried in India and they remain unmarried by their own choice.² The rituals performed while solemnising the marriage are too important which gives the Hindu marriage a social colour.

Against this background, this paper discusses and examines the various rituals concerning Hindu marriages. The paper begins by focusing on the development of marriage in society and followed by the definition of marriage. In the conclusion, it discusses the legal requirement of these rituals and the impact of the violation of the rituals in marriages.

Journey of Marriage

The institution of marriage has been grown with civilisation and there is a trustworthy correlation between marriage and the evolution of mankind. The historical documentation on the development of the human class indicated that there are at least three major phases of development.³ Amongst these major stages, the agriculture revolutions were the greatest confrontation on the human way of living, states of living, cultures, and socio-economic conditions of the family (Weatherford, 1994). The range of writings on the development of society reveals that in the early stages, the human condition and way of life were akin to and not better than animal status (Sadie, 1960).

At the first stages when the human civilisation was proceeding and humans starting their life, those human beings were unknown to the social life and its benefits. This era was commonly identified as old-stone age, which was initiated about two million years back. In this stage of development, people used to live in forests and caves in their small groups. It is needless to say that institution of marriage has not existed at that time and the then members of the society were using to intermingle with any available female to procreate. Therefore, the physical relationship between males and females was entirely unregulated. It was not the story of one or two years but with the passage of ages, people learned to hunt animals by using stone weapons. This development was the direct outcome of the circumstances of the society as during hunting they were facing tremendous danger towards their lives. So, to achieve adequate safety, utilise natural resources, and also knowledge sharing they started to live together. In those days marriage was in the form of Pair-Bonding (Schacht & Kramer, 2019) which was started almost last period of the stone ages to have some control

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on unregulated sensual greed. Hence, one can conclude that it was the first stage of civilisation in which the people started living in a large number of groups, wherein the marriage was not in its proper form, though it was in its nascent stage. With the agricultural revolution, domestic use of some animals also occurred which presented the tribal culture and its community group a new connotation. This state also allowed the itinerants to reinforce their fiscal base, raise in magnitude, and further change their ethos and way of lifespan. Even after so many developments, there was no regulation of sex relations. It is a belief that after the passing of about 10,000 years or more, the successor of the caveman gradually learned to till the land and agricultural activities; however, no one claims the real-time, place, and process by which the inspiration of plantation and agriculture commenced.⁴

This second phase of societal development had essentially changed the thinking, planning, and entire setup of the society. During this stage, people started to plow up the crops and learned to collect the crops for their future use. It brought about new thinking of the control, possession, and ownership of the properties which embodied a wide-ranging transformation in the social and artistic material of life (Weatherford, 1994). Undoubtedly, at that time agriculture was steadily gratifying a method of life, everlasting human settlements started to appear and society commenced to shape their households and make a path in disseminated hamlets. Certainly, thinking about possessions and ownership also led to its effect on personal relations. The advent of agriculture activities which requires personal help in the cultivation of crops has given birth to personal feelings and emotions and probably it invites some sort of sex regulation in society. Therefore, with the development of agriculture as a source of food for members of society, the concept of possession and ownership has also emerged. This process encourages the male to grab hold of the feeling of knowing their offspring.

This stayed apparent that unless sexuality will regulate fatherhood could not be determined and from this point, in time the society moved to the personal sex relation concept and it becomes a reason for establishing the institution of marriage in this era. Almost certainly the institution of marriage was begun with group marriages practice in a tribal community and sensual association outside the tribe community was no exception. However, with the passage of time sex circle begins to become shorter than earlier by barring from the sensual intercourse inside the nearer kindred such as mother and child and also the brother and sister. This course of segregation as a necessity has sustained so that even remoter relatives were excluded and after that, they reached a stage when they confined the sexual activity within couple only. Finally, it gives birth to an institution, called marriage. During the later centuries, various religions were established and in most of the societies, the concept of marriage was based on religion which

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was the reason why 'monogamy' in the west and 'polygamy' in the east become reputable.

It depicts from the above-mentioned discussion that, to determine the paternity of children, to secure possessions on properties, regulate sexual behaviour, and to establish a long-run personal and family relationship; the agriculture society had dropped the seeds of the institution of marriage in which its prolific environment of the society started to develop. Undoubtedly, it has not happened through one blow and the process was unsurprisingly unhurried and lingering. The institution of marriage was the wonderful creation of society, which provides firmness not only to personal relations but also to the entire civilisation. It was with approval and communally indorsed blending of male and female that harmonies position to that union as husband and wife and lawfulness to their offspring. Their status also comprises a number of rights and obligations to them who entered into the said matrimony.

Understanding the Marriage

The word marriage derives from the Latin word *Mariatere* and the French word *Marier*, which means 'having marital status'. Similarly, the word matrimony originates from the French word '*Matemoine*'. This word was initiated about 1300 AD and the eventual outcome was the Latin word '*Matrimonium*' which trusts the two concepts, 'mater' meaning mother and the suffix- '*monium*' signifying action, state, or condition.

As indicated above that the institution of marriage was the direct outcome of civilisation which continues and remains a part of civilised society even today. Though sexual behaviour is the most essential part of the institution of marriage, without which it will be meaningless, it is also true that sexual gratification is not only the purpose of marriage. Marriage is a set of social and enriching apparatus to assure the continuation of the family and society. Therefore, marriage can be defined by two senses, in its biological meaning it is a means and source of reproduction and for the continuance of the society, and on the other hand, in its sociological outline it is a socially, ethically, and legitimately recognised blending of man and woman to procreate offspring along with to perform some social and spiritual duties accordance with the law and social norms of the concerned societies. This social aspect of the marriage compel to remark that institution of marriage is not the only union of male and female for cohabiting each other and having sexual behaviour but it constructs a stable and regulated behavioural society, in which two individuals represent distinct families and interchange their customs, perception, ethics, experiences, and way of life to the next cohort of humankind. In the context of Hindu marriage, it is the union of only two individuals, therefore, polygamy may be a form of marriage but it is not an appreciable form of marriage amongst Hindus

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either socially or legally. In a famous case, the court of appeal took declared that polygamous marriages could not be recognised for any purpose. Even if there was a possibility of converting a polygamous marriage into a monogamous marriage the potentially polygamous marriage remained a polygamous union and cannot thus be recognised. The English courts did not even recognise those marriages where the personal laws permitted only monogamous marriage but allowed concubines holding them to be polygamous. See *Lee v. Lau*, (1964).

It appears that marriage is a union of two individuals of the opposite sex for which they or their guardian agree to marry each other and this agreement is intended to procreate children mainly and to establish a family which is also in cover of some social, legal, and spiritual duties and rights.

Solemnisation of Marriage and Rituals

In beginning, it was said in this study that the institution of marriage is socially recognised, and therefore, mere living together or accepting each other as a spouse would not be sufficient for the foundation of a marriage or social recognition. It requires some specific declarations and religious promise, vow by the parties to the marriage or in case of a minor, by their guardians in front of the society. Quite for this reason and only after solemnisation, marriages are considered socially approved.

In its literal sense solemnisation of marriage is a way by which a marriage vow constitutes a firm and thoughtful affair. Generally, it is a representational ritual process prearranged by the tradition or community norm of society. The holiness of this institution emerges from the customary and religious ceremony and the steadiness of the marital pledge between the parties of the marriage is power-driven by reliance and mutual confidence. In most cases, the legal requirement of the rituals depends upon the nature of the marriage, as to whether it is treated as a sacrament or contract. It is clear that the rituals followed during the solemnisation of marriages are not universal and vary not only from religion to religion but also amongst the same religion. It may vary from one place to another and one group to another in the same religion. Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss the requirements of the ceremonial rituals of Hindu marriage.

Solemnisation of Hindu Marriage

From the very beginning, Hindu marriage has been treated as a sacrament, and it is solemnised by observing the religious rituals along with customary ceremonies. The ceremonies may be categorised under two categories, (i) *shastric* marriage ceremony and (ii) customary marriage ceremony. This *shastric* marriage ceremony has been taken from the concept of different kinds of marriages which were prevalent during the Vedic era. The Manusmriti describes eight kinds of marriages and apart from the other

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seven forms of the marriages⁵, the *shastric* ceremonies and rituals have been considerably taken from Brahma Vivah, where the bride's father or guardian offers a male who is well versed in the Vedas and he is a man of good conduct and gives his daughter under the marital bond to him after flooring his daughter with jewelry, garments, and money.

Under the Hindu Law, matrimonial ceremonies are mostly the outcome of the traditional Hindu law taken from religious and spiritual texts of Hindus. Apart from this, some customary ceremonies are also in practice by the different groups of Hindus. To understand various ceremonies performed under Hindu marriages, it is necessary to discuss both types of marriage ceremonies.

Shastric Marriage Ceremony

Most commonly a Hindu marriage starts with the selection of a suitable and competent bridegroom by the father or elder member of the bride's family. After the formal meetings, the process of marriage starts with the negotiation amongst both the family, followed by offering the *sagun* money, clothes, and jewelry. In some groups of Hindus before marriage, a ritual of *tilak* ceremony is also performed in which the relatives of the bride's family reach the bridegroom house in the form of a mini *barat* and formally accepts the groom while reciting the *vedic* hymns. In this process, they offer fruits, money, and clothes to the groom. On the day of marriage the bridegroom, his family members, relatives, and other friends reach the bride's house in the form of a *barat*. The rituals initiated from *dwar-pooja*, and other rituals are performed during the solemnisation of marriage on the wedding day.

While conducting the rituals of Hindu marriage the first ceremony is *sankalpa*. Under this ritual, the bride and the bridegroom proclaimed in the presence of the people their own names and *gotras*, with the proclamation that parties to the marriage are willingly prepared for the wedding. The second ritual *homa* is also an important ritual of the Hindu Marriages, which denotes the submission in the blessed fire of marriage. The *homa* is symbolic of the richness and successes of the marriage. In this process, the fried grains dipped in ghee are offered to fire by both the parties with a prayer to divinity wishing to bless them with offspring and affluence. These rituals symbolise the sanctifier of marriage as the *sanskar*. The *homa* is followed by a holy *yagna* by offerings in the name of earth, sky, and heavenly divinities with chanting of hymns by the parties to the marriage and the priest. The *kanyadan* is also the most significant ritual of Hindu marriage. In this ritual father offers the hand of his daughter in the hand of the groom in front of the holy fire and the presence of an assembly of relatives and friends. The father or guardian of the bride gives her away to the groom by making a promise on his side that he would never misbehave with her in the attainment of

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piousness, prosperity, and wishes. The same pledge is repeated three times and the groom also confirms his own pledge three times. The above practice has been practiced by Hindus for a time immemorial and the above particular ceremony was compulsory for the marriages organised following the *brahma* form of marriage. In the ritual of *panigrahana*, the groom takes the right hand of the bride by promises that 'I, in the name of almighty accept her hand for the sake of all happiness that she may live to adulthood with me' and by this declaration, he also own the duty of looking after the bride after marriage.

In the *mangaladharana* ritual, the bridegroom ties the *mangal sutra* rounds the neck of the bride. It is viewed as a symbol of the prolonged co-existence of the bride and bridegroom for lifetime. However, this ritual is not universal and it is observed, depending on local customs. Finally, the *saptapadi* is the most important ritual of Hindu marriage is organised. In this ritual, the bride and groom go seven steps together in front of a sacred fire.⁶ The above sacraments have added to the holiness of the Hindu marriage and have been an integral part of Hindu marriages which gives the marriages not only social status but also a ritual sanctity and divine colour.

Customary Marriage Ceremonies

Shastric marriage ceremonies and customary marriage ceremonies are not totally different from each other. In most cases, the customary marriage ceremony is outcome of local customs of a particular group of Hindus. However, the performance of some *shastric* ceremonies is still in practice in Hindu Marriage. It may be accepted that there are differences in the observance of marriage rites up to a convinced level among different groups among Hindus according to their local customs.

It is relevant to note here that, sub-section (1) of section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 states that Hindu marriage may be observed in accordance with customary rituals and ceremonies of both parties. The manifestation of usual rites and formalities means such *shastric* ceremonies which are customarily followed by a particular group of the society. It will be also necessary to mention here that the ceremony in question must be followed from primeval periods, that the affiliates of the caste or community recognised such rituals as mandatory. Referring to Rabindra Nath Dutta v. State of W.B. (1969), it means that the custom to be held as reputable must be incessant and consistently observed for a long time and should have attained the strength of law. See the case of Venkata Laxmi K. v. Parothanarayana, (1969). The division between these two types of ceremonies may also be understood as ceremonies which are prescribed by the *shastras* are the *shastric* marriage ceremonies and the ceremonies which are in practice by the different groups of Hindus are called customary marriages ceremonies. However, it should be noted that the performance of all the above *shastric*

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ceremonies is not essential for the legitimacy of the marriage under the law. This fact is reflected in judgements of *Patal Sundari v. Asidharini*, (70 C.W.N 28); *Kastoori v. Chiranji Lal*, (1960) and *Rabindra v. Protiva*, (1970).

It is also important to note that a marital bond can be sanctified in any of the above customs permitted by a specific segment of society. It would be very problematic to universalise certain laws that can be applied uniformly to all units of society. Even among Hindus, there are many sub-divisions, and the marriage rituals followed by these sub-divisions differ from each other. It means that it is not conceivable to have a universal and unimpeachable practice for all communities of Hindus. In this parlance, traditional customs become important for a specific group that has been followed by them. It is needless to say that under the Indian legal organisation, even the Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains come under the definition of Hindu but for them, it is not essential to follow any universal Hindu customs. However, a marriage conducted by these religious groups is indeed being administered by Hindu Marriage Act of 1955.

This is the reason, why the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 is not rigid regarding the observance of the rituals for the solemnisation of the marriage. It says that a Hindu marriage may be sanctified by observing the customary rituals. There are many examples in which while solemnising the marriages parties to the marriage go with their own way of custom and thereby they deviate from either *shastric* marriage ceremonies or even the legal requirement provided under the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. To illustrate, in the *Arya Samaj* marriage ceremonies, the groom and bride step only four rounds of steps around the sacred fire in place of seven steps. As per the *Arya Samaj*, taking seven rounds of steps around sacred fire and *saptapadi* both are different things. For details, the judgment of *Ram Awadh v. Krishna Nand Lal* (1981) can be referred.

Similarly, in Sikhs groups who are also Hindus, there is the practice of *Anand Karaj* as a marriage ceremony by the narration of four chants namely, '*lavans*' as the bridegroom and also followed by the bride who walks around the divine *Guru Granth Sahib* amidst the reciting of hymns.

The above differences have also been the subject matter of dispute before the judiciary. As in the case of *Deivani Achhi v. Chidambaram Chettiar* (1954), the high court of Madras was of the opinion that *Kanyadana*, *Panigrahana*, and *Saptapadi* are the essential ceremonies and they are necessary for the performance and legitimacy of a Hindu marriage. However, by taking a different view Andhra Pradesh High Court in the case of *Shanta Devi v. Ram Lal Aggarwal* (1998) held that *kanyadan* is not an indispensable ceremony in the performance of the binding marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

However, any irregular ceremony is not valid for all. The customary marriage observance may not include any of the *shastric* rituals. A marriage

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may be performed entirely with a non-religious ceremony or a modest observance. For instance, *homa* ritual is not obligatory or even popular between *shudras*. Similarly, the ritual of seven steps (*saptapadi*) is essential in an Arya Samaj marriage, but with lesser number of steps. Likewise, *kanyadan* is not important in the marriage, called as *gandharva vivah*. The covering of vermilion by the groom on the forehead of the bride is the indispensable ceremony among Santhals. Similarly, tying of *vadu-veeta-thali* into the neck of the bride amongst Nayahans in South India is a unique ritual for them. See Dhurma Manjhi v. Emperor, (1943); Baby (Smt) v. Jayant Mahadeo, (1981), Tirumalai v. Ethirajamah, (1946).

In the *karewa* form of marriage, a widow may have a contract marriage with her brother-in-law, which needs no religious ceremony in this marriage the groom simply covers the bride with a piece of cloth and accept her as a wife. See Sohan Singh v. Kabla Singh (1928). However, it is important to note that if the same widow wants to marry any other person then customary marriage formalities are required otherwise the marital affiliation cannot come into existence (Garja Singh v. Surjit Kaur, (1991). If a woman during her lifetime of her husband contracted a second marriage in *Karewa* form, then the same is in contrast to precedence and it cannot be supported. See Parkash Chander v. Parmeshwari, (1987).

It will not be out of the mark to mention here that in general, the required rituals are performed by a *brahmin* priest in the front of the holy fire and are chanting of the vedic-mantras, as Hindu marriage is a sacrament. The Hindu marriage is said to be sufficient only on the recital of the blessed rituals accompanied by the holy formulae. However, the Act of 1955 does not prescribe any definite form of marriage and simply affords a ceremonial formality in the form of a marriage ceremony under its provisions.⁷ This state of law creates a sacramental element of marriage. However, it still gives sufficient room for dissimilarities according to tradition and usage but not by impulses of marrying parties. It means the marriage amongst Hindus may be sanctified in harmony with the customary rituals of both parties to the marriage. Nonetheless, it should be noted very carefully, that if such rites and rituals are including the rites of *saptapadi*, then the marriage shall be complete and binding only when the seventh step is taken.

Therefore, as per Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 completing the seven steps is a necessary condition of Hindu marriage, without which marriage cannot be constituted with the parties and in the eye of the law, the marriage shall be void, whether or not parties of the marriage are living together as husband and wife, however, even that if parties can safely be proved that due their belief and a long practice of custom they are not in favour to have that Saptapadi, then the same marriage may be valid. See Nagalingam v. Sivagami (2001).

Sanctity of Hindu Marriage and Significance of Rituals

In this regard, it will be relevant to refer to the question regarding the rationality of Section 7-A which was inserted by Tamil Nādu Amendment Act of 1967.⁸ In the case of *Asuvathaman v. Union of India* (2015). An objection was raised that the above section which permits a different way of solemnisation of marriage is against the Hindu philosophy and Hinduism itself. The petitioner also contended that the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 was enacted after proper research and thinking and therefore giving relaxation to the observance of rituals and ceremony would be ultra-vires to Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 and also it would be a violation of Article 14 and hence would be unconstitutional. While dismissing the petition, honourable Chief Justice S.K. Kaul and Justice T.S. Sivagananam, held that for the solemnisation of *Suyamariyathai* marriages priest is not compulsory and this marriage can be sanctified in the presence of relations, groups, or other persons. The honorable court further observed that Section 7-A related to the *Suyamariyathai* form of marriage which have been in commonness for over half a century and thus the doubted provision cannot be declared invalid on the ground of insight as it is the prerogative of the parties to enter into matrimony as according to the requisites of Section 7 or Section 7-A of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that the observance of *saptapadi* is an essential requirement of Hindu marriage and without which the marriage would be meaningless and it would be void in the eye of law. However, to this end, it will be necessary that *saptapadi* has been in practice amongst both the parties to the marriage, and if any one of them has a different practice regarding the solemnisation of the marriage he or she goes with the same and that marriage would be valid if it was solemnised accordance with the rituals in practice.

It is also interesting to note that if it will be proved that the observance of *saptapadi* is strictly not necessary in any community then it would not be possible also to take the negative benefit of Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 to escape from the liability after committing the offense of bigamy under 494 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. In the case of *Nagalingam v. Sivagami* (2001) the petitioner who was accused of bigamy contended that *saptapadi* which is an important ritual and significant part of the Hindu marriage was not performed in his second marriage and therefore was no valid marriage in accordance with the Hindu rituals.

The Supreme Court has taken a good move in that regard and while deciding the issues has referred the Section 7-A of the Act of 1955. The main drive of this section is that any marriage on which this section is applicable can be solemnised without the presence of any priest. Hence, the contention was rejected and the marriage was treated as valid marriage and therefore he was not permitted to take the negative benefit of the requirement of Section 7

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of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 which requires the observance of *saptapadi* for a valid marriage.

It is clear from the above discussion that since Hindu marriage is considered as the sacrament it creates an indissoluble union, a tie that once tied cannot be untied between parties to the marriage. See Nagalingam v. Sivagami (2001). To this end, Hindu marriage is regarded as a sacrament and undying union, and only in exceptional cases untie of this union was allowed by Hindu religious texts. Hindus took the notion of the indissolubility of marriage a step further and lay down that even death did not put the marriage as under void. In this swing, it is required that Hindu marriages must be solemnised with the strict observance of the rituals and if it will be commenced without the observance of Section 7 of the Act, the same will be void. However, this rule is not universally applicable to all Hindu marriages and if it will be proved that in a particular community or the group of Hindus the observance of the *saptapadi* is not necessary then the marriage will be solemnised as per their own tradition.

In regard to the effect of non-observance of rituals, it appears from the statutory provisions and judicial decisions that marriage may be solemnised as per the traditions of a particular community of Hindus. To illustrate, if a particular group of the Hindus, has the practice of exchange of marriage garlands, while another may require a divine *homa* for the same. Similarly, in some of the groups that can be performed only by covering a piece of cloth on bride and groom, the Hindu Marriage Act gives proper respect to all these practices and the marriages may be solemnised as per their own ways. After the presentation of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, any specific ceremony is no longer mandatory for a binding Hindu Marriage in the eyes of law, barring that it should not be part of the customary practice and if it is so the same marriage will not be a valid marriage in the eye of law.

Concluding Observation

The study in this paper began with a note that marriage is the foundation of the institution of family and it is a social bonding prevalent in every section of the society whether rural or urban or backward or advanced. In every religion, there are certain rules and methods of solemnisation of marriages which are properly known as ceremonies or rituals. Concerning the Hindu marriage, which is treated as a sacrament, these rituals may be in the form of *shastric* or customary marriage ceremonies.

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 which is the landmark legislation on marriage that respects the customs of the specific sects of the Hindus and consequently provides that the recital of customary ceremony prevalent on the side of both the party is enough for the validity of the marriage. From the

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explicit provision of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the intention of legislatures is very much clear that reliance on customary marriage ceremonies cannot be taken to mean that *shastric* ceremonies have been ignored by the parties. Even the *saptapadi* which is the most important ritual of the Hindu marriage may not be performed if there is any other ceremony in practice amongst any party to the marriage. To sum up the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has tried to strike a balance as by giving it religious colour to the marriage it requires that marriages must be solemnised by observing the rituals and on the other hand it did not prescribe any particular ceremony and provides that marriages may be solemnised as per the rituals of the parties involved in the marriage.

Endnotes

1. Like as, living relationship, gay marriage and lesbian marriage.
2. See, the report of the committee on the status of women, namely, *Towards-Equality* 1974-75.
3. The first, pre-agricultural-Stage, or the hunting-stage; second the agricultural-stage, and the third Industrial-Stage.
4. The hunting and gathering age were started almost certainly thirty thousand years ago and remain in existence without disruption till the expansion of cultivation some twenty thousand years later.
5. In a *Daiva-Vivah* offspring is dressed with Jewellery and knick-knacks and presented before a priest, who duly solemnises at a ritual of sacrifice during the course of the performance of this rite, on the other hands in a *Rishi- Vivah* , the father or guardian gives away the offspring after receiving a cow and a bull from the bridegroom. Further, in a *Prajapati-Vivah* father of a girl child gives away his daughter after sanctification of the couple with the text may both of you perform together your duties. However, in *Ashur-Vivah*, the bridegroom obtains the newlywed after bequeathing capital to her kinsmen. Again, the *Gandharva-Vivah* is form of self-intended blending of a maiden and her lover, which ascends from desire and sensual interaction for its purpose. Furthermore, the *Rakshasa-Vivah* which is concealed form of marriage the bride is by force taken from her home and forcefully marry with her. Lastly, in *Paisacha-Vivah*, the bridegroom armies himself on a female in her sleeping state or drunken state or is mentally unbalanced or handicapped and marry with her.
6. The seven steps of *Saptapadi* include, the first step for sap, second step for juice, third for wealth, fourth for comfort, fifth for cattle, sixth for seasons and seventh for unity.
7. See, section 5 and 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
8. See, section 7-A of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

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Brexit, Goans, and Migration to the United Kingdom

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Nationalism features very prominently in several nations across Europe's political spectrum. In fact, Brexit became possible because of nationalists who resented globalisation. The paper underscores the impacts of the new migration policy, especially on the most disadvantaged sections of society in the COVID-19 scenario. In this context, it provides an overview of Goan migration to the United Kingdom (UK) and draws attention to Goans rushing to England before the Portuguese passport route hit the roadblock. It also argues that the UK's objective of reducing migrants has adversely affected Goans who were seeking better economic opportunities in the UK.

Introduction

The political climate in Europe today is of inter-governmentalism wherein national capitals tend to favour decisions done by themselves rather than by Brussels (Grant, 2020). Not only anti-European feelings but political parties attacking the European Union (EU) and rooting for the sovereignty of the nation are on the rise in Europe (O'Reilly et al., 2016). In the UK, the roots of Euroscepticism may be traced to the post-imperial nostalgia for the loss of the Empire (O'Reilly et al., 2016, pp. 811-812). In many other European countries, there has been this disenchantment with the EU bordering on complete opposition to it and this is not exclusive to the UK (O'Reilly et al., 2016, p. 811). The European plan of integrating all the nations and holding them together in the federation of nations is under serious

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threat due to the populist nationalism rampant in many countries (O'Reilly et al., 2016, p. 846). In fact, the UK may be the avantgarde of what is supposed to be happening in the rest of Europe (O'Reilly et al., 2016, p. 848).

The Causes and Implications of Brexit

Britain's entry into the European federation of nations was on 1 January 1973, when it joined the European Economic Community. Portmanteau Brexit happened after the 23rd June 2016 referendum in which 72.2 per cent of the eligible voters turned out to vote and from these voters, 51.9 per cent as against 48.1 per cent voted to leave the EU. Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? - was the question to which the voters responded at the referendum.

The British public's concern about immigration coupled with the intent to stem the rising tide of UKIP (United Kingdom's Independence Party) prompted David Cameron, the then Prime Minister to call for the landmark referendum in June 2016. A report by Pew Research Centre stated that the highest number of unauthorised immigrants was found in Germany and the United Kingdom, amounting to almost half of Europe's total immigrants (Bruns, 2020). According to the Office of National Statistics (Cohen and Hinchin, 2016), the net migration into the UK for the year ending March 2016 was 3,27,000 out of which 1,80,000 were EU nationals, 1,90,000 were non-EU and the remaining 43,000 were British citizens who had left the UK. Studies in the UK made efforts to show that the migrant influx from EU countries was at the cost of the welfare system in the country (O'Reilly et al., 2016). The Brexit campaigners used the rising discontent among the Britishers of the migration question wherein they clubbed together both the intra EU and non-EU migration (O'Reilly et al., 2016). According to IPSOS (Market and Opinion Research International), a total of 44 per cent of the UK population considered that one of the important issues which the UK voters had to decide about was that of immigration, and for several years, the rise in the numbers of immigration was increasingly linked to the country's membership of the EU (Boswell, 2016).

Brexiters prioritised the interests of the Britishers vis-à-vis those of the immigrants. They also expressed resentment for accepting immigrants without any limits (Norman, 2020). To Pertti Shonen, an important factor that contributed to the victory of the Brexiters was the fear that migrants were coming into the UK in great numbers (Ahonen, 2019). O'Reilly and others also underlined that reason for Brexit was linked to. Apart from the above, the desire to gain back control motivated the Brexiters (O'Reilly et al., 2016). Gaining back control from Brussels was seen to be at the root of everything wrong with the country (O'Reilly et al., 2016). On the one hand, the nationalists of the UK argued against the EU as they foisted on the UK

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'rules, norms and people' which were other than British. On the other hand, the UK globalist libertarians lamented Brussels' interference with free markets. The campaign was animated by an aggressive appeal to the 'UK nostalgia for empire and insular nationalism', taking 'back control' and regaining UK 'sovereignty' and making all things possible again' (Ferretti, 2020, p. 140). Before the referendum, the pro-leave campaigners, Eurosceptic Tories, the tabloid newspapers, the Daily Mail, and the Sun, manipulated, exaggerated the numbers of immigrants stoking fears of 'mass immigration' from the EU. The 'invisible', 'European citizens', 'free movers', were made 'visible', 'immigrants' and a 'problem' that had to be solved by the UK by "Brexiting" and thus gaining total control and sovereignty of the UK (King, 2020, p. 853). The people were 'duped, lied', manipulated, and brow-beaten by the insidious rhetoric of fear about immigration, including an 'invasion' of 80 million Turks about to join the EU (King, 2020, p. 860). The politicians and the media failed to recognise and acknowledge the immense economic contribution to the UK by the EU migrants through their skills at different levels ranging from 'university research, finance and business, and the National Health Service, to lower-skilled jobs in the construction industry, hotels and restaurants, and agricultural work' (King, 2020, p. 853).

It is contended by some that they saw Brexit coming but, on the whole, when Brexit really happened, people were shocked (O'Reilly et al., 2016). So flabbergasting was its impact that the word itself has acted as a model, a source word or an inspiration and generated neologisms in English like Spexit to mean the possibility of Spain leaving EU, Brentry denoting retrospectively the entry of Britain into the European Economic Community in 1973, or Retireland, describing the hypothetical scenario of Ireland leaving the EU (Lalić-Krstin and Nadežda, 2018).

Russel King referred to the referendum as a 'wicked event' that opened a Pandora's box with unintended consequences. He termed it 'wicked' as it was a problem that was 'difficult or impossible to solve because of its complex inter-dependencies, inherent contradictions and shifting nature' (King, 2020, p. 855). In Brexit's case, what the new relationship between UK and EU should be and had to be debated for a long time. The result of the referendum was 'a collective act of national self-harm' (King, 2020, p. 853). Nicholas Boyle described it very aptly, stating that Brexit was 'a collective English mental breakdown, English people living on the dreams of Empire never learned to see others as equals (...). The question Brexit raised was 'not one of economics or politics, but of national psychology' (Boyle, 2018).

The results showed the nations as well as the various sections of the population of the UK to be sharply divided on the subject of the referendum. High correlations were found between higher levels of education and the vote 'Remain', and between older age and the vote 'Leave' (King, 2020). At

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the 2016 referendum, people of Britain belonging to different regions, generations, levels of education voted differently. While Scotland voted Remain, Northern Ireland was divided, and England and Wales voted Leave. Older voters voted Leave, while 73 per cent of those in the age group of 18 to 24 years voted Remain. The university-educated voted Remain and others who had left school earlier voted Leave. It was a motley coalition of citizens who voted for leave (O'Reilly et al., 2016). Psephologists averred that working-class voters who voted for Leave were 'older, socially conservative, nativists with very different attitudes' from the 'younger, educated, socially liberal, big-city cosmopolitans' who voted for Remain (O'Reilly et al., 2016, p. 816). For the leave voters, sovereignty determined their choice in that they thought that decisions relating to the UK ought to be taken in the UK and that Leave would make possible a better control over immigration and the borders. The Leave voters convinced themselves that multiculturalism, globalisation, and immigration were forces that could adversely affect Britain (O'Reilly et al., 2016).

The fear of the large-scale incoming migrants was an important factor contributing to the victory of the Brexiteers (Ahonen, 2019). Brexit manifested the xenophobia of British citizens (Ahonen, 2019). However, though one of the reasons for Brexit was to reduce immigration to the UK, the prognosis that Brexit will lead to a significant reduction in immigration to the UK was premature. Immigration from the EU had fallen after Brexit as per late summer 2018 statistics but immigration from outside the EU had risen considerably (Ahonen, 2019). The history of Europe has been a history of migration and it will continue, notwithstanding the obstacles, as it has happened in the past centuries. Given the global megatrends of population growth coupled with glaring inequality as well as political instability, an increase in migration is a foregone conclusion (Ahonen, 2019).

Brexit, Migration, COVID-19 and the UK Society

Brexit was a decisive shift into the unknown with confusion and uncertainty prevailing concerning its latent functions, that is, its unintended and unforeseen consequences, and future relations of the UK with the EU and the rest of the world (Hepburn, 2020). Eva Hepburn stated that the increasing uncertainty around Brexit was responsible for slower economic growth in the UK and the disproportionate numbers of low-income groups being affected (Hepburn, 2020). Several impacts were already visible in the post-Brexit situations. Skills shortages were already observed in the UK. Not only the number of EU migrants to the UK had declined to a six-year low, the EU8 (Central and Eastern European nationals) also were leaving the UK, adversely affecting sectors like social care, thereby depriving the disadvantaged people like the disabled, aged, people with chronic illnesses and others. Some other sectors like agriculture, hospitality, and construction

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wherein many EU nationals are employed, were also facing hardships and damaging consequences (Hepburn, 2020).

The EU nationals are uncertain about their position with regard to the possibility of continuing to live and work in the UK, despite the provision of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), as the applications of several EU nationals have met with rejections or have been offered less secure and temporary pre-settled status (Gentleman, 2019). There are also fears that some vulnerable individuals like those with cognitive impairments, may lose their residence in the UK due to their being ignorant of the need to apply to the EUSS (Home Affairs Committee, 2019). The Mental Health Foundation has stated that Brexit-related stress disproportionately affects the equalities groups, including people who are migrants, due to the discrimination and other structural barriers they are likely to face in the Brexit processes.

Further, the Yellowhammer Report acknowledged the fragile situation of the social care market which could bring about the failure of social care because of the need to adapt to the rising staff and supply costs (Hepburn, 2020). The UK Department of Health report (Hepburn, 2020) submitted to the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee indicated that women might have to give up their well-paying jobs to work in the informal sector. In the absence of the EU care workers also face difficulty in migrating to the UK post-Brexit and due to the new immigration system.

Immigration numbers were also affected by COVID-19 and it is a challenge for the government to make sure that the new immigration system will work in the post-Brexit UK. Brexit triggered the labour mobility crisis and the COVID-19 scenario brought it into sharper relief by doubling the adverse effects on the UK economy (Alberti et al., 2020). During this Corona virus pandemic, certain jobs came to be categorised as essential. For instance, healthcare work, transport, provision of food, and necessary goods - these are the very jobs that were over-represented by migrants from other countries to the UK (Alberti et al., 2020).

A huge chunk of National Health Service (NHS) workers in the UK are migrant workers in 2018, 12 per cent of the 1.9 million-strong healthcare workforce in the UK were non-UK nationals' (Office for National Statistics, 2019), according to another agency, Skills for Care (2020), one in six of the 8,40,000 care workers in England were non-UK nationals (Alberti et al., 2020, p. 15). Thus, the huge outflow of EU workers since the referendum affected the social care activities in the UK during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed shortages of key products of food supplies, delayed supply chains, and urgent requests for labour in the UK. The agricultural sector reported a shortage of 80,000 workers as per one survey, despite the fact that 10,000 people had signed up to work on the 'Feed the Nation' campaign (Farming UK Team, 2020).

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The Corona virus brought about drastic changes in the world. Sylvester opined that it would be unbelievable to think that it would not bring any changes in the migration policy. A suggestion was made that the migration system should reconsider the categorisation of care workers as low-skilled and on the contrary create a fast-track visa regime for them (Sylvester, 2020). The COVID-19 called for a rethink of the post-Brexit migration regulation. The pandemic showed the value of the migrants, the occupations they were involved in, and 'the inevitable interconnectedness of our lives, mobilities, care and survival in a world that cannot travel back from globalisation' (Alberti et al., 2020, p. 18).

The UK underwent a period of turbulence during which three Prime Ministers tried and successfully exited from the EU. Brexit or the UK exiting the EU happened after the Queen granted her royal assent to the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. The vote to Leave has been seen by some as an expression of frustration by a population desiring an old way of life (Coffey, 2020). Others believe that the rise of nationalism coupled with the reaction against elitism and immigration were responsible for the Leave vote (Coffey, 2020). Though the Brexiteers won, they had not done so with a great margin. In fact, post-Brexit the government struggled for almost four years since the referendum to come to some consensus on how to move forward. The UK government, after the transition or implementation period of 11 months left the European Union. Reports have concluded that there will be a reduction in economic growth and a fall in GDP and in turn, the effects will affect the equalities groups and the poorest households as there will be job losses and a rise in the cost of living (Coffey, 2020) with the end of the free movement, and the hardest hit would be the sectors that relied on the EU workforce.

The present Prime Minister, Mr. Boris Johnson, has introduced the Australian-style points-based immigration system, which he had promised the British people. It has also replaced the current tier system bringing both the EU and the non-EU migrants under the same regulatory framework for migration. The new immigration system has brought in several checks and controls on migration compared to the free movement hitherto enjoyed by the EU citizens. For instance, migrants are not eligible to gain entry into the UK and work in low-skill jobs which do not require skills even equivalent to at least A levels, and pay an amount less than 25,600 pounds per annum. The EU citizens who want to migrate to the UK are now required to follow the new immigration rules and apply for a visa. In UK's post-Brexit immigration landscape, the need for immigration permission is a must for those who would want to live, work and study in the UK.

According to Gabriella Alberti and others, the employer and business advocacy associations and organisations are critical of the proposed points-based immigration system. They argued that the intent of the new

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immigration system to attract the 'brightest and the best' as outdated ones and did not reflect the needs of the labour market in the UK nor the strategies employers employ due to competition in the market. They also warned of the acute labour shortage some sectors would experience with the introduction of a new immigration system (Alberti et al., 2020). This implies that the UK has faced a shortage of labour, such as delivery drivers, home-care assistants, hospital porters, and cleaners, who have been so essential during the Corona virus pandemic (Child, 2020).

The Remain groups had suggested that the UK citizens in the EU could face retaliatory measures after Brexit. According to them, the EU immigrants have contributed to the UK economy in terms of the welfare state, augmenting the GDP and filling important shortages in the labour market, especially the type of jobs which the UK nationals do not take up either because of inadequate skills, improper conditions or low wages. Reduction of the EU immigrants would lead to labour shortages, especially in sectors like 'manufacturing, food processing, cleaning, food preparation, hospitality and health' (Boswell, 2016, p. 2). Some skilled occupations, such as teaching professionals, nurses, and midwives, with high economic value and those that have been heavily reliant on long-term EEA migrant labour may find the adjustment to labour market changes difficult (Home Office, 2018).

The UK migration, which had reached about 3,33,000 in 2016 (Portes, 2020), has experienced a sharp fall in the migration numbers for the last four years. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the net migration of EU citizens arriving for work has fallen from 1,90,000 in June 2016 to 79,000 in 2020. There has been a significant decline in immigration due to the slow growth of employment in the UK and a simultaneous decrease in unemployment in some major source countries like Poland which was facing labour shortages.

Further, the media approach to immigration had changed after the referendum in that there was fewer media coverage on adverse impacts of immigration and more on the positive aspects of immigration showing that reductions in immigration may be potentially damaging to, for instance, health care matters. Immigration was no longer the 'dominant discursive trope' which it was during the Brexit campaign (King, 2020, p. 859).

Goan Migration Pre and Post Brexit

It is in the context of Brexit and change in migration policy that migration from Goa is discussed as the changes in the UK have tremendously disrupted and overturned the ambitious plans of many would-be migrants from the state. Dennis Kurzon's statement, at the end of his book 'Where East looks West', that the Goans or Konkani speakers, 'though they may be in the east - in South Asia - they have been looking

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west for centuries, and still do!' aptly describes the Goans' innate proclivity towards migration (Kurzon 2004, p. 147).

Goa is a tiny state on the south-western coast of the subcontinent of India with a significant number of migrants abroad. India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with India having the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.5 million), followed by Mexico and China (11.8 million and 10.7 million respectively) (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2020). As far as the international remittances are concerned, the top three remittance recipients were India (USD 78.6 billion), China (USD 67.4 billion), and Mexico (USD 35.7 billion) (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2020). In fact, the two Asian population giants, India and China, have the largest absolute numbers of migrants living abroad and in the UK alone some of the largest migrant populations have been from India, Poland, and Pakistan (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2020).

After the 1961 liberation of Goa, an Act of the Indian Parliament accorded Goans Indian citizenship. However, they did not ask to surrender their Portuguese citizenship. In 1975, diplomatic relations with India which had ceased in 1961 reopened, and Goa was accorded special status under the Portuguese Nationality Law by which those born in Goa could retain their Portuguese nationality. Based on this liberal policy there emerged a new migratory phenomenon wherein Goans reclaiming their Portuguese nationality migrated to Europe. Anyone who could prove that he/she has a parent or grandparent who was born in Portuguese Goa before 1961 could acquire the Portuguese nationality.

In recent times, Goans have been using the Portuguese passport to gain access to the European, especially, British job market (Chanda and Ghosh, 2012). Portuguese citizenship acquired much greater importance when Portugal joined the European Union in 1986. All Portuguese citizens, including Indians who were born before 1961 and their descendants up to the third generation benefitted from Portuguese citizenship and joined the larger European job market. Benefiting from the Portuguese nationality law that allows Goans to recover their Portuguese nationality, even if they did not speak or know Portuguese, much less skilled, less educated Goans migrated to Europe and especially to the United Kingdom.

In the UK of today, Goans are working in many and varied professional fields, 'from hairdresser to university professor, information technology specialist and financial genius in the city of London (Frenz, 1999, p. 199). According to Selma Carvalho (2016), the motivation to migrate was primarily the economic opportunities available there. Goans are certainly not refugees seeking asylum in countries abroad, but better educational opportunities, a better standard of life, a cleaner environment are the other reasons compelling Goans to migrate. Selma also vouches for Goans being

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phenomenally successful and seamlessly assimilated into western society (D' Cruz, 2019).

Goans are increasingly visible in Swindon, Reading, Leicester, Wembley, Hounslow, Southall, and other boroughs areas in the UK. Nando and others wrote about young men who had migrated to Swindon in the past. These men, first-generation migrants maintaining a close relationship with other Goans, had come from Goa, a state with Portuguese heritage, and therefore with the help of the Portuguese passport they were entitled to live there (Nando et al., 2015, pp. 74-76). Swindon became a home away from home to thousands of Goans. Escott Swindon even elected a Goan Imtiyaz Sheikh as its borough councilor in May 2018 (Monteiro, 2018). He was not the only councilor of Indian origin to be elected in the UK. London, Leicester, Birmingham, and Manchester also had Indian-origin councilors elected in the local elections for boroughs.

Goans migrating to the UK meant that villages in Goa had emptied as the menfolk had migrated to the UK in large numbers and often were engaged in the type of work which they had left for non-Goans to do in Goa. The unavailability of jobs, bribery, and corruption in matters of employment had led to frustration, ennui, and despondency among Goans in Goa and had pushed Goans to the UK (Pant, 2018).

Post-Brexit, similar to all Europeans, the Goans also being EU citizens, cannot any longer enjoy free movement into UK territory. The new immigration policy is based on the work permit system as a means to attract the brightest and the best. In the UK there is a point assigned for specific skills, qualifications, salaries, and to what is called shortage occupations; visas being awarded based on sufficient points gained. Until Brexit, Goans enjoyed the rights and privileges of being EU citizens. With the introduction of a new immigration policy, the migration of Goans is also determined by the points gained and there will be no opportunity, for instance, to bring their family members along with them to the UK. Goans, like other Indians, are quite attached to their families and any contractual employment that would keep them away from their families for a longer duration would be unbearable for them.

Another issue with the immigration policy is that of the occupations eligible for a work permit. Swedish model, for instance, is one in which any occupation is eligible for a work permit, but this is considered unusual by international standards (Sumption, 2020). Generally, the criteria for eligibility for work permit systems in high-income countries is restricted by occupations, with policies being more liberal to skilled jobs, as there is evidence that migration of these skilled migrants is potentially economically beneficial for host countries (Sumption, 2020). Now, in the UK migration is limited only to certain occupations and highly skilled labour. Many low-skilled, unskilled, and unemployed who were in the process of obtaining the

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Portuguese passport or had already obtained one, have ended up disillusioned and disheartened due to new policies.

Work permit systems are the necessary steps towards permanent status and citizenship in many countries. Skilled workers are offered permanent residence almost immediately in some countries like Canada (Sumption, 2020). There are other countries wherein temporary visas are given to migrants which are renewable and which in a few years lead to permanent residence. In the UK the skilled worker visa will last for five years unless it is extended at the end of that period. There are also other countries where the workers, after the expiry of their work permit programmes have to go home and are not allowed to apply for permanent residence or settlement. This is true for low-skilled workers who are usually provided visas strictly with a temporary work permit and are restricted from bringing along their family members with them (Sumption, 2020). In this way, offering a temporary work permit, which may be justified often in horticulture and hospitality as the demand for labour itself may be temporary, and not allowing family unification, the government can reduce the costs of providing for the schooling of the children of low skilled labour. Temporary migration is not without drawbacks, employers cannot retain their employees who over a period of time end up gaining experience and building up skills required for increased productivity in the firm. The employers lose as they have to make with new recruits and the temporary workers also suffer, with limited rights, they are more vulnerable to exploitation (Sumption, 2020).

There are some low-skilled jobs, for instance, in the agricultural sector, hospitality and social care in the UK (Migration Advisory Committee, 2014) which pay less and the work conditions are poor. The employers in such cases prefer to employ migrant labour as against local workers as employing the latter means paying higher wages. Otherwise, they have to rely more on technology, but this means an increase in costs and one loses in the competitive market. The horticultural industry opts for migrant labour during the peak period. The requirement for labour increases and if it is not provided for by low-wage migrant labour some agricultural production and the industry dependent on them may be badly affected. Migrant workers do difficult social care work for lower pay rates which enable care providers to reach out to a greater number of vulnerable people. It also saves taxpayers money as it is the local authority that funds social care. In this context, the UK will need to continue allowing migrant workers to fill the demand for local labour. Requirement for migrant labour has also been felt and has been brought into sharper relief during the current pandemic in sectors such as social care, agriculture, and horticulture. Goans, especially, the low-skilled, unskilled, and the unemployed would not hesitate to migrate and work in

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these sectors. They know well that pounds earned will make a difference in their lives.

Like the seasonal worker route, there is also the 'Seasonal Workers Pilot' route which enables the recruitment of a limited number of workers for jobs in the horticultural sector. Despite the new migration policy, whether the government will attempt to reduce the migration of low-skilled migrants required in these sectors will depend on, finding realistic alternatives that are feasible. The government may prioritise the labour-intensive horticulture and allow migration to supply the demands for low-cost social care and may adapt its migration policy to allow low-skilled migrant workers to support a low-wage industry.

Goans, whether they are skilled or lowly skilled will be governed by the new immigration policy. Presently Goan EU citizens who are already in the UK will be able to apply for permanent residence but after Brexit, the quantum of Goan migration to the UK will depend on the new immigration policy, organised on the principle of the government's commitment to reduce migration.

Conclusion

Goans have had a long history of migration to various parts of the world. Thousands of Goans have already integrated themselves into UK society. They have become more and more like the English without losing their identity as Goans. "Goanness" or Goan identity itself is being shaped and reshaped through migration. By uprooting and re-territorialising themselves in the UK, Goans have been contributing to the 'constitutive element of Goanness' that is being 'decisively shaped by outside forces' and 'changed by all the far-flung places they have come to call home' (Festino et al., 2018, p. 14). Goan loyalty to Goa and UK is comparable to an individual's relationship with his family of orientation and family of procreation: 'loyalty to second does not require subtracting it from the first' (Martin and Aleinikoff, 2002. p. 81).

It was assumed that immigration had detrimental effects in the UK and that the rights and interests of the citizens of the UK were jeopardised because of the free movement available for EU citizens in the UK. The introduction of exclusionary immigration policies has been thought to be necessary and morally permitted to protect and further the interests of the residents and citizens of the UK (Beltran, 2020). However, evidence suggests that the effect of immigration could be both harmful as well as beneficial. Immigration may end up lowering the wages of unskilled local workers; at the same time, it is contended that it can create more jobs and also increase wages (Beltran, 2020). The priority assumption in which the locals are preferred to the migrants and their interests determine the immigration policies is questionable at least in liberal democracies.

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Brexit's ripples have reached far beyond the United Kingdom's borders. It has adversely affected the Goans in the UK, their families back home in Goa. It has also affected the other potential Goan migrants who have the ambition of migrating to the UK with the help of the Portuguese passport. Nevertheless, Goans made great efforts to be in the UK before. The Portuguese passport route hit a roadblock and the free movement between EU and UK citizens came to an end due to Brexit. Now due to the end of the free movement of EU citizens in the UK, there will be a number of difficulties. On the one hand, the government will have to deal with the application for permanent residence received from EU citizens already in the UK, and on the other hand, the new work permit system or immigration policy will generate its own complexities (Beltran, 2020).

The positive contribution of the EU citizens, Goans, and other migrants to the UK economy has been overlooked and experts do say that the UK economy will not be able to cope up and keep pace with the requirements of the economy and society without the migrant workforce. It is to be noted that the reproduction of international migration continues unabated and will continue as the UK is grappling with the shortages in the supply of labour in different sectors of the economy like social care, agriculture, hospitality, and construction. Brexit created uncertainties and apprehension among the Goan migrants or prospective migrants. There was an upsurge in the number of people who opted for the Portuguese passport and which did help them take off to the UK before 31 December 2020 in time to make an application to the European Union Settlement Scheme. The other Goans, who could not make it by the deadline, will have to find other ways to migrate and settle in the post-Brexit UK.

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Book Review

**Social Inclusion of Marginalised in India:
State Policies and Challenges**

Yatindra Singh Sisodia and Tapas Kumar Dalapati (Eds)

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Birendra Suna*

The edited book under review is an outcome of proceedings of National Seminar on 'Efficacy of Government Programmes on Socio-Economic and Political Inclusion of SC/ST/OBC and Economically Backward Sections' organised at M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain. This edited volume has five thematic sections and 17 research papers on various facets of social inclusion related to marginalised sections of India.

The first sub-theme of the book discusses important perspectives on social exclusion and inclusion processes in India and comprises of two chapters. Aalok Ranjan Chaurasia in his chapter on 'Regional Residence, Social Class and Gender Inequalities in Child Mortality in Madhya Pradesh' analyses the inequality in child mortality across mutually exclusive population sub-groups (2001) and mutually exclusive population sub-groups as they existed in (2011). The analysis reveals that the inequality in child mortality across mutually exclusive population sub-groups in the state remains quite pervasive and it appears to have increased between 2001 and

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2011. In the second chapter 'The Non-Implementation of PESA Provisions in Madhya Pradesh', Rahul Banerjee highlighted constraints of implementation of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) in tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh. Banerjee highlighted that the tribal people are quite capable of using development funds appropriately without the help of the panchayat bureaucracy as per provision PESA.

The second sub-theme of the volume is based on social inclusion policies on health and nutrition and has three chapters. In his chapter 'Delivery of Nutritional and Health Services through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in Madhya Pradesh' G.C. Pal analyses, how far delivery of nutritional and healthcare services through ICDS has been inclusive in nature? He also highlighted the delivery of nutritional and healthcare services which was found discriminatory in Madhya Pradesh. The second chapter is on 'Mid Day Meal Scheme Contributing in Achieving Goal of Primary Education for Children of Disadvantaged Groups: A Ground-Level Reality Check in Rajasthan? '. In this chapter, Deepak Kumar Yogi stresses the importance of the Mid Day Meal Scheme for achieving the goal of universalisation of elementary education in Rajasthan. He emphasised that nutrition support provided in schools through Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDM) has improved the nutrition level on one hand and improved the academic performance of students on the other. The third chapter is on 'Gynecological Health of Poor Urban Women in Indore'. In this chapter, Subhadra Khaperde highlights the gynecological health of poor urban women in the Indore city of Madhya Pradesh. Her study unfolds that significant numbers of poor women have serious gynecological problems requiring care and repeated medication.

In this edited book, the third sub-theme is related to livelihood and social exclusion of the marginalised. This section includes four chapters related to livelihood-based social exclusion. In the chapter 'Incidence and Correlates of Chronic Poverty in Central Tribal Belt of India', D.C. Sah confirmed that Madhya Pradesh has a high percentage of poverty as compared to other states. According to him, factors that can draw households into the poverty trap are distress migration, depletion of assets, population pressure, unpaid debt, etc. The second paper of this part is written by Neeta Tapan. In the chapter 'Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment: A Study of Caste Dynamics', she emphasised women empowerment among marginalised sections through participation in self-help groups (SHGs). She concluded that women of Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Class communities were benefitted the most through the micro finance system as compared to Scheduled Tribes and general category women. The third chapter of this sub-section is authored by Minaketa Behera on 'Impact of Livelihood Generation Programme of Micro Project on PVTGs in Orissa'. The socio-economic profile of Particularly Vulnerable

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Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha revealed that literacy level, health status, access to infrastructural and basic amenities are very poor in Odisha. The author highlighted missing baseline data, inadequate staff for micro-projects, non-acknowledging of indigenous knowledge for social inclusion of tribal. The fourth chapter of this section is authored by Brajaraja Mishra. In his paper 'Efficiency of Agricultural Development Programmes in the Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh', Brajaraja analyses the efficacy of implementation of the coffee project in tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. He highlighted that the lack of land title, remoteness, poor service delivery system, lack of technical and extension services, no crop insurance facility, and lack of marketing facilities are major constraints for the scheme.

There are three chapters in the sub-theme related to educational social exclusion and inclusion. The first chapter is authored by Sanjay Kumar on 'Assessing Elementary Education in Odisha: How inclusive is it?'. The author identifies that there is a problem of high rates of non-enrolment, dropout, low level of educational achievement in elementary education in Odisha. In the second chapter 'Trend, Pattern and Academic Performance in Higher Education: Focus on Schedule Tribe Student in Odisha' Anjali Dash found that in spite of many ongoing schemes in higher education, the enrolment rate of ST students is very less as compared to other social categories in the state of Odisha. The third chapter of this sub-theme is related to 'Scheduled Caste Students in Higher Education and the National Fellowship: Educational Inclusion, Socio-economic and Political Mobility'. In this chapter, Dhaneshwar Bhoi highlighted constraints faced by marginalised section students in higher education and social exclusion faced by its structural elements.

In this edited volume, the last sub-theme is related to political inclusion policies for the marginalised sections in India. The theme has three chapters related to the political representation of Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). In the first chapter, Jitendra Wasnik analyses 'Political Representation of SCs in Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra'. In this chapter, he presented a very grim picture of the political representation SCs in the panchayati raj system in Maharashtra. He highlighted that SCs representatives are kept as dummy representatives and the real political power usurped by dominant caste people in the panchayati raj system. The second chapter entitled 'A critical review of the efficacy of Government Programmes on the Socio-Economic and Political Inclusion of Katkari Tribes in Maharashtra' is authored by Supriya David. She critically analyses the available government schemes for Katkari, the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Maharashtra. The third chapter of the section is related to 'Bharias and Their Economic Development: A Retrospect to Efficacy of State Interventions'. In this chapter, Sunil Kumar Yadav reveals that the main source of livelihood Bharias is a collection of non-timber forest produced

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(NTFP) without any minimum support price backup by the government. He underlined that scheme like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme has very limited scope for fulfilling the livelihood needs of the Bhabha people forcing them to migrate for their livelihood. The last chapter of this section is related to '73rd Constitutional Amendment and Political Inclusion of tribes in central India'. In this chapter, Neelu Rawat elucidated the dismal condition of tribes in grassroots level politics in the Scheduled Areas of Madhya Pradesh. She posits that tribal's participation in elections is like routine work, without having any opinion to assert. She concluded that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act gradually played an important role in tribal political inclusion and made the concept of local self-governance a reality in a limited sense, yet political accountability among tribal is still a dream in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Discussion in this volume put forward the ground realities of social exclusion and inclusion processes pertaining to livelihood, health, education, and political participation of marginal sections of Indian society. It is discerned that for social inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups, efforts need to be undertaken to ensure an environment that is conducive for these groups to exercise their rights freely, enjoy their privileges and be able to lead a life with confidence and dignity. The finding of this volume amply suggests that there is a need for : (i) assessment the ground reality before the formulation of the schemes for the marginalised; (ii) knowledge of real aspirations of the stakeholders before designing the implementation procedure for the schemes; (iii) encouraging active participation of the stakeholders both in the planning and implementation level; (iv) grassroots level awareness generation among the stakeholders; and finally (vi) the social inclusion processes should have active participation from civil society who knows the nerves of the marginalised group.

The book is an embodiment of macro-level perspectives on socially inclusive policies and micro-level realities of social inclusion processes at the grassroots level. Hence, the book is a must-read document for researchers, policymakers, practitioners interested in social development of marginalised sections in India.

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(Deshpande, 1998, p. 151); (Bhattacharya & Jairath, 2012, pp. 50-66); (Massey et al., 1993) [for three or more authors]; (Anonymous, 1998); (Gupta, 2020; Sharma, 2018)

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