# MPJSS

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# Impact of Gender Budgeting Practice on Women Empowerment:
# A Case Study of Madhya Pradesh

## Rojalin Behera* and Aditya Kumar Patra†

*Women are the world's largest 'excluded category'. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a shift of attention from the 'Women in Development' approach to the 'Gender and Development' perspective. The main plank of this proposition is the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary policy and programme. Madhya Pradesh introduced the 'Gender Budgeting' practice in 2007-08. This article examines the impact of gender budgeting practices on women's empowerment in Madhya Pradesh. Data reveals that the progress of the 'Gender Budgeting' system of the Government of Madhya Pradesh is in the right direction. The share of gender budget as a percentage of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), and Total Expenditure (TE) increases continuously over the study period. The Department of School Education heads the list of allocation under the gender budget, followed by Women and Child Development Department. By analysing data on the socio-economic-political performance of women at three different points of time, 2004-05 through 2019-20, it is observed a perceptible progress in the status of women occurred in Madhya Pradesh, which may safely be ascribed to the gender budgeting practice of Madhya Pradesh.*

*OURIIP Research Fellow, P.G. Department of Economics, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Baripada (Odisha). E-mail: rojalinbehera2015@gmail.com
† Professor, P.G. Department of Economics, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Baripada (Odisha). E-mail: akpatra2009@gmail.com

## Introduction

Men and women are two integral and indispensable units of society, yet, women are the world's largest 'excluded category'. The U.N. Report on Women observes: "The scales of world's equality are out of balance. The side marked 'women' is weighed down with responsibility, while the side marked 'men' rides high with power". The dominant patriarchal bias has denied women equality of status and opportunities in socio-economic and political spheres. But now it has been widely accepted that gender equality and women empowerment are essential to achieve human development and economic growth. Over time, this has received wide policy support.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a shift of attention from the 'Women in Development' approach to the 'Gender and Development' perspective. GAD discourse focuses on the long-term and transformative needs of women for the enhancement of their social status and capabilities. This gained momentum after the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995, which called for ensuring the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary policies and programmes (Sarraf, 2003). In the Indian scenario 'Tenth Five Year Plan' adopted the strategy of 'Empowering Women' as an agent of social change with the integration of gender perspective into its budgetary policy. Madhya Pradesh is one of the 'First Generation' states that introduced the Gender Budgeting System in 2007-08. 'Gender Budgeting' covers the process of planning, executing, monitoring and analysing the budget from a gender perspective. Gender Budget is not a separate budget for women; rather, it is a thorough analysis of the 'Government Budget' to establish its gender-specific impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments.

Against this backdrop, an attempt is made in this article to examine the impact of gender budgeting practices on women's empowerment in Madhya Pradesh. The specific objectives are: (1) to track the level, pattern and composition of allocation under Gender Budget; and (2) to investigate the impact of gender budgeting practice on socio-economic-political advancement of women.

The rest of the paper is arranged as follows: Section II deals with gender disparity in Madhya Pradesh; Section III gives a review of the past studies; Section IV describes the data source and methodology adopted; Section V narrates the gender budget at work in Madhya Pradesh; Section VI explains the outcome of gender budgeting exercise; and Section VII concludes the paper.

## Section II: Tracking Gender Disparity in Madhya Pradesh

Gender disparity is an important issue in Indian Society. We generally encounter a gender gap in the socio-economic-political fabric of our nation, be it State or National level. In this article, an attempt is made to examine the gender gap in Madhya Pradesh *vis-à-vis* the all India level. Table 1 details different socio-economic-political variables, viz., economic participation, education standard, health scenario and political participation of both the sexes at all India and Madhya Pradesh. It can be safely concluded from the inspection of the table that Madhya Pradesh performs badly as compared to all India standards in most of the fields.

The social indicator includes education, health and general awareness. Literacy rate, years of schooling and enrolment ratio are considered the yardstick of education standard. The female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate at all India level as well as in Madhya Pradesh, however, it is more pronounced in the case of Madhya Pradesh. Regarding the number of years of schooling, the percentage is higher in the case of males than that of females, both at state and all India levels. This is also reflected in the field of enrolment in higher education. The only exception is post graduation, where female surpasses male.

So far as health standard is considered Madhya Pradesh performs inferior as compared to the national level in general and female in particular. Here, we have examined Body Mass Index (BMI) below normal and persons aged 15-49 years who are anaemic for both genders. In each indicator, women suffered more than men.

With regard to social awareness, we have considered two variables: Married before the legal years of marriage and persons who have ever used the internet. In Madhya Pradesh females are in a better position for the former, but inferior to the latter.

In terms of the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Work Participation Rate (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR), the position of Madhya Pradesh is better than the all India level both for males and females. But, the performance of women is quite unsatisfactory, as they record around half of the percentage of males in LFPR and WPR. The LFPR by women is just 37.7 per cent, while that of men is 80.0 per cent, likewise, WPR is 37.2 and 77.1 per cent respectively. In the case of the Unemployment Rate, the situation is just the opposite. The unemployment rate among women in Madhya Pradesh is less than at the national level.

The political participation of women is far behind that of men. It is observed that in the latest Lok Sabha election out of a total of 29 seats from Madhya Pradesh 13.8 per cent are females and 86.2 per cent are male.

**Table 1**
**Gender Gap in Madhya Pradesh (Values in Percentage)**

| Indicator | Year | Madhya Pradesh | | India | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | x | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Labour Force Participation Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 2019-20 | 80.0 | 37.7 | 76.8 | 30.0 |
| Work Participation Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 2019-20 | 77.1 | 37.2 | 73.0 | 28.7 |
| Unemployment Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 2019-20 | 3.7 | 1.4 | 5.0 | 4.2 |
| Literacy Rate | 2011 | 78.73 | 59.24 | 82.14 | 65.46 |
| 10 or more years of schooling | 5th NFHS | 39.9 | 29.3 | 45.92 | 41.0 |
| Enrolment (Under Graduate) | 2019-20 | 53.11 | 46.89 | 50.8 | 49.2 |
| Enrolment (Post Graduate) | 2019-20 | 44.1 | 55.9 | 43.2 | 56.8 |
| Enrolment (Ph.D.) | 2019-20 | 55.2 | 44.8 | 55.0 | 45.0 |
| Elected Members of Loka Sabha | 17th | 86.2 | 13.8 | 85.1 | 14.9 |
| BMI below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m2) | 5th NFHS | 20.8 | 23.0 | 16.2 | 18.7 |
| Persons aged 15-49 years who are anaemic | 5th NFHS | 22.4 | 54.7 | 25.0 | 57.0 |
| Married before legal years of marriage | 5th NFHS | 30.1 | 23.1 | 17.7 | 23.3 |
| Persons who have ever used the internet | 5th NFHS | 55.7 | 26.9 | 57.1 | 33.3 |

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey 2019-20, AISHE Report 2019-20; NFHS 4th and 5th Round; 17th Lok Sabha

**Section III: Literature Survey**

Way back in 1984, Australia was the first country to start gender budgeting. In 1995, South Africa and the Philippines followed suit. In South African countries like Tanzanian and Ugandan non-governmental organisation (NGO) groups and governments worked together towards this end. Similar experiences can be seen in Latin America (Elson, 2004; Kapungu, 2008). Albania has a system of appointing gender equality employees in every line ministry who collect and analyse "data, particularly sex-disaggregated data," and conduct "gender analysis to inform local policy development" (Kristin, Xhelo, and Wittberger, 2012, p. 19). In Italy, Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) was started at the local government level, which was later moved upward. Ecuador has given GRB the highest possible level of legal recognition (Fundar, 2013). Maruzani et al (2012) made an analysis of GRB initiatives of Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Mozambique and Tanzania. Authors have cited success stories of gender budgeting initiatives in such African countries to show how gender budgeting can be used as a tool for

engendering macro-economic policies. Okwuanaso and Erhijakpor (2012) examined the way in which the government can use gender budgeting to address gender inequality, poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

In India Gender Budgeting was first introduced in the Union Budget of 2005-06. Subsequently, different State Governments and Union Territories of India have introduced Gender Budgeting. Researchers like, Mishra and Jhamb (2009), and Mishra and Sinha (2012) found that gender budgeting statements suffer from flaws in methodology and women are accorded low priority in government spending on development. However, the study by Jhamb and Mishra (2015) observed that there is a number of positive developments, such as changes in select planning and budgeting processes and the creation of gender budget cells. But, the restricted reach of GRB and stagnant or even declining allocations for the gender agenda are stumbling blocks. Several recent studies provide an overview and assessment of the success of gender budgeting efforts at the state level in India (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2012; Joshi, 2013; Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015). These studies indicated that state governments have implemented gender budgeting using a variety of approaches. Some of these approaches draw on a state policy for gender-related goals and include gender budget statements in the state budget. The result is not uniform for all the states. Stotsky and Zaman (2016) found that states that adopted gender budgeting have made progress on gender equality in primary school enrolment, though its implications for fiscal spending are ambiguous.

Madhya Pradesh introduced gender budgeting practice, published the first Gender Budget Statement in the fiscal year 2007-08 and continued with the latest edition for 2022-23. Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability has carried out a study on Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Union Government and four selected States, viz., Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The study highlights that "although there are a lot of good practices that the Madhya Pradesh example offers in terms of addressing gender concerns, however, significant stepping up in terms of priority for examining the specific gender-based disadvantages confronting women is necessary and recommended that the line departments are made aware of the policy proposals and align their activities accordingly" (CBGA, 2012). The research study made by Joshi (2013) for six states (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Odisha) of India concludes that gender budgeting practice is dominated by formalities rather than substantive in nature.

## Section IV: Data and Methodology

To examine the stated objectives, we have used the data collected from secondary sources, viz., Gender Budget Statement, Government of Madhya Pradesh (different years) and Economic Survey, Government of Madhya Pradesh (different years). The study area is Madhya Pradesh. We have purposively chosen Madhya Pradesh as the study area since this is one of the 'First Generation' states to adopt the Gender Budgeting System in 2007-08.

Simple statistical tools like average, percentage, and growth rate have been used to study and analyse the level, trend and composition of expenditure on women-centric programmes in Madhya Pradesh over time. To investigate the growth of total and component-wise spending under the Gender Budget we have calculated the Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) and Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) by using the formula as mentioned below:

$$AAGR = \left(\frac{1}{t}\right) * Ln\left(\frac{Value\ in\ the\ Terminal\ Year}{Value\ in\ the\ Initial\ Year}\right)$$

$$CAGR = \left(\frac{Value\ in\ the\ Terminal\ Year}{Value\ in\ the\ Initial\ Year}\right)^{\wedge \frac{1}{t}} - 1$$

Where, 't' represents Time Period.

## Section V: Gender Budget at Work in Madhya Pradesh

The Government of Madhya Pradesh presented its maiden Gender Budget Statement (GBS) at the State Legislature in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-08. Initially, the gender budget of Madhya Pradesh covered 13 departments, in the 2009-10 budget the scope of GBS increased to 23, recently in the Budget Statement 2021-22 the coverage was further extended to 28 departments. Madhya Pradesh GBS is split into two segments, Part-A and Part-B. 'Gender Specific' schemes are represented by Part A, which includes those with a 100 per cent allocation for women, while 'Gender Sensitive' schemes are described by Part B, which include those with at least 30 per cent or more allocation for women and girls in budgetary provision.

The budgetary provision for schemes under 100 per cent (Part-A), 30 per cent (Part-B) and the total amount of spending (by combining both Parts of the Gender Budget) and their respective Growth Rates (GR) from the year 2007-08 to 2022-23 of Madhya Pradesh Gender Budget are shown in Table 2. The table reflects that the total expenditure on women for both 100 and 30

per cent women-centric schemes is only Rs. 7971.62 crores in 2007-08, which increased continuously up to 2017-18, thereafter during the period 2018-19 it depicts a downturn, but again picks up to touch a high of Rs. 84511.72 crores in 2022-23. Data reveals that schemes under 30 per cent and more expenditure comprises lion's share in total gender budget allocation, however, the schemes covered by 'Gender Specific' is hovering around 5.0 per cent of the total gender budget. If we will examine the growth rate, it is found that the growth of expenditure on 30 per cent or more provisions for women is more consistent than the schemes running under 100 per cent women-specific programmes. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) and Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of expenditure recorded under Part-A are 0.19 and 38.04 and Part-B are 0.16 and 17.81 respectively during the period 2007-08 to 2022-23. An inspection of data it is found that COVID-19 had no significant impact on the allocation of the gender budget in an absolute sense, even though it slowed down during 2021-22 and reverts back on track with the restoration of normalcy.

**Table 2**
**Gender Budget of Madhya Pradesh (Rs. in Crore)**

| Year | Amount | | | Growth Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 100% | 30% | Total | 100% | 30% | Total |
| 2007-08 | 238.17 | 7733.45 | 7971.62 | | | |
| 2008-09 | 400.88 | 8535.94 | 8936.81 | 68.32 | 10.38 | 12.11 |
| 2009-10 | 728.29 | 10945.39 | 11673.68 | 81.67 | 28.23 | 30.62 |
| 2010-11 | 789.07 | 14411.58 | 15200.65 | 8.35 | 31.67 | 30.21 |
| 2011-12 | 1245.41 | 16291.36 | 17536.77 | 57.83 | 13.04 | 15.37 |
| 2012-13 | 733.48 | 18615.83 | 19349.31 | -41.11 | 14.27 | 10.34 |
| 2013-14 | 1613.31 | 20686.34 | 22299.65 | 119.95 | 11.12 | 15.25 |
| 2014-15 | 879.41 | 27157.16 | 28036.57 | -45.49 | 31.28 | 25.73 |
| 2015-16 | 2441.72 | 30454.64 | 32896.37 | 177.66 | 12.14 | 17.33 |
| 2016-17 | 1422.27 | 36328.17 | 37750.43 | -41.75 | 19.29 | 14.76 |
| 2017-18 | 2411.88 | 45689.86 | 48101.73 | 69.58 | 25.77 | 27.42 |
| 2018-19 | 3396.34 | 36574.21 | 39970.55 | 40.82 | -19.95 | -16.90 |
| 2019-20 | 1611.02 | 50571.92 | 52182.94 | -52.57 | 38.27 | 30.55 |
| 2020-21 | 3424.06 | 64217.26 | 67641.32 | 112.54 | 26.98 | 29.62 |
| 2021-22 | 2904.73 | 67562.47 | 70467.20 | -15.17 | 5.21 | 4.18 |
| 2022-23 | 3776.88 | 80734.84 | 84511.72 | 30.03 | 19.50 | 19.93 |
| CAGR | 20.23 % | 16.93 % | 17.05 % | | | |
| AAGR | 18.42 % | 15.64 % | 15.74 % | | | |

Source: Computed by the Authors
Notes: Women Specific (100%); Women Sensitive (30%);
AAGR: Average Annual Growth Rate; CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate

Above analysis is represented in Figure 1. It clearly depicted that allocations for Gender-Specific schemes (Part A) are quite insignificant and

Gender Sensitive schemes (Part B) are more dominant in the total gender budget of Madhya Pradesh over the entire period of analysis.

**Figure 1**
**Allocation under Gender Budget in Madhya Pradesh (Rs. in Crore)**
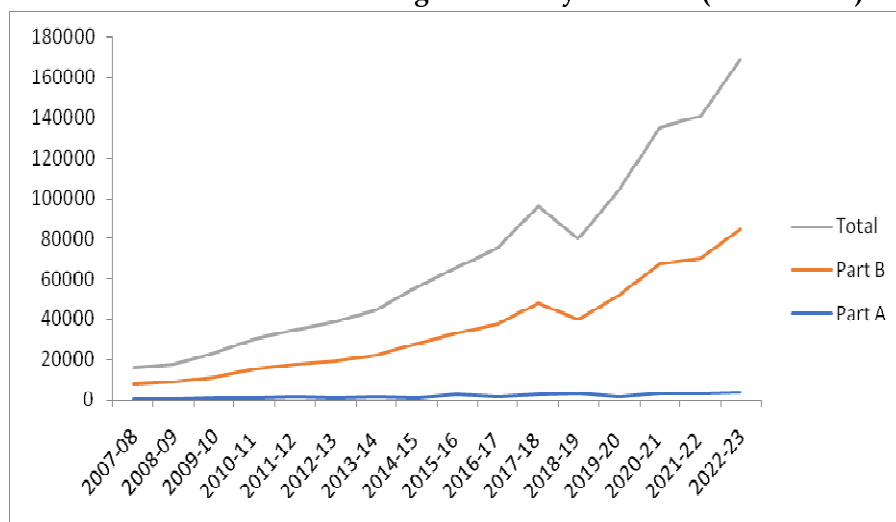


The table 3 details the top five departments and their percentage of the total expenditure incurred during Fiscal Year 2007 to 2022 of the Government of Madhya Pradesh on schemes that are dedicatedly run for women-specific issues, with their 100 per cent allocation going for the welfare of women. The expenditure of these five departments is around 89 per cent in 2007-08 which rose to 96 per cent in 2022-23. In the year 2007-08, the Department of School Education (2003) tops the list, followed by Women and Child Development (5002). Initially, the Department of School Education had 38.7 per cent of total expenditure, which is drastically reduced to 0.1 per cent in the year 2022-23, on the contrary, allocation under the Women and Child Development Department is expanding at a galloping rate, i.e., from 25.2 per cent to 72.3 per cent over the corresponding period. Allocations made by the Department of SC Development (5504) constitute the third position. The amount of expenditure of this department continuously declined from a high of 11.7 in 2007-08 to a low of 0.4 per cent in 2022-23. The allotment by the Departments of Health and Family Welfare (1704) and Social Justice (2602) indicated a fluctuating trend.

Other departments like ST Development (2506), Higher Education (3802) and OBC and Minorities Welfare (5401) are spending between 1.0 to

3.0 per cent. So far as all other departments are concerned, they have a meagre share in the 'Gender Specific' outlay.

**Table 3**
**Department-wise Percentage of Expenditure incurred for**
**100 Per cent of Gender Budget Schemes**

| Demand No. | 2007-08 AC | 2008-09 AC | 2009-10 AC | 2010-11 AC | 2011-12 AC | 2012-13 AC | 2013-14 AC | 2014-15 AC | 2015-16 AC | 2016-17 AC | 2017-18 AC | 2018-19 AC | 2019-20 AC | 2020-21 AC | 2021-22 RE | 2022-23 BE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2003 | 38.7 | 27.9 | 27.7 | 16.1 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 1.3 | 13.1 | 2.7 | 0.4 | 1.6 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| 5002 | 25.2 | 45.5 | 54.3 | 62.0 | 79.7 | 59.4 | 76.1 | 53.4 | 75.5 | 55.5 | 63.8 | 80.3 | 55.9 | 69.8 | 70.0 | 72.3 |
| 5504 | 11.7 | 8.3 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 3.2 | 6.0 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| 1704 | 5.0 | 3.2 | 0.8 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 3.7 | 1.4 | 3.8 | 2.3 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 12.4 | 11.9 | 11.4 |
| 2602 | 8.2 | 6.4 | 7.6 | 9.9 | 7.0 | 19.2 | 13.8 | 21.0 | 16.6 | 32.3 | 20.0 | 14.8 | 35.3 | 13.8 | 14.6 | 11.8 |
| 2506 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 3.0 | 8.5 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 3802 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 3.1 | 1.2 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 2.2 |
| 5401 | 3.4 | 1.9 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.5 |

Source: Computed by the Authors
Note: 2003-Departments of School Education, 5002-Departments of Women and Child Development, 5504-Departments of SC Development, 1704- Departments of Health and Family Welfare, 2602-Departments of Social Justice,2506-Departments of ST Development, 3802-Departments of Higher Education, 5401- Departments of OBC and Minorities Welfare.

The table 4 displays the percentage of expenditure by different departments under Part B of the gender budget, where the women component of the scheme is 30 per cent and more during the period 2007 to 2022. It can be verified from the table that, out of the top five departments, Health and Family Welfare (1704) and Women and Child Development (5002) are in fourth and fifth position respectively. Health and Family Welfare (1704) is spending around 10 per cent of the women-sensitive programme. However, the Women and Child Development (5002) department begins with 6.8 per cent in 2007-08 increased to 10.8 per cent in 2011-12 and thereafter depicts a fluctuating trend to end with 3.9 per cent in 2022-23. Department of School Education (2003) heads the list under Part B of the gender budget hovering around 33 per cent, followed by Rural Development (5802) with around 15 per cent soaring to 20 per cent towards the end and the Department of ST Development (2502) floating around 11 per cent. The share of expenditure of these five departments is around 76 per cent of the total allocation under Gender Sensitive Schemes.

Other departments like Panchayati Raj (2203), Higher Education (3802), Social Justice (2602), SC Development (5504) and OBC and Minorities Welfare (5401) are spending in an inconsistent manner, that too between 1.0

to 8.0 per cent. All other departments spend a negligible amount of allocations under Part B.

**Table 4**
**Department-wise No. of Schemes and Percentage of Expenditure incurred for 30 Per cent or more Gender Budget Schemes**

| Demand No. | 2007-08 AC | 2008-09 AC | 2009-10 AC | 2010-11 AC | 2011-12 AC | 2012-13 AC | 2013-14 AC | 2014-15 AC | 2015-16 AC | 2016-17 AC | 2017-18 AC | 2018-19 AC | 2019-20 AC | 2020-21 AC | 2021-22 RE | 2022-23 BE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2003 | 32.5 | 32.7 | 39.4 | 40.5 | 34.3 | 33.2 | 34.7 | 33.6 | 28.8 | 26.7 | 22.8 | 20.7 | 27.5 | 34.0 | 32.7 | 33.1 |
| 5802 | 14.8 | 15.8 | 10.6 | 9.6 | 9.6 | 8.6 | 7.5 | 18.3 | 13.8 | 20.6 | 23.1 | 23.4 | 16.0 | 16.3 | 16.2 | 19.4 |
| 2502 | 13.7 | 14.0 | 12.0 | 11.8 | 10.7 | 11.0 | 14.5 | 11.6 | 12.1 | 11.1 | 11.3 | 6.8 | 13.0 | 9.6 | 10.2 | 10.9 |
| 1704 | 9.2 | 9.6 | 7.7 | 10.2 | 8.9 | 8.0 | 8.8 | 10.7 | 11.3 | 9.1 | 9.3 | 9.7 | 9.9 | 8.6 | 9.2 | 8.7 |
| 5002 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 8.9 | 9.5 | 10.8 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 6.8 | 7.1 | 6.3 | 5.0 | 2.5 | 7.4 | 3.8 | 4.2 | 3.9 |
| 2203 | 0.9 | | | 3.3 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 0.2 | 5.1 | 6.6 | 6.0 | 8.6 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 4.6 | 4.0 |
| 2602 | 3.8 | 4.7 | 5.6 | 2.8 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.8 | 3.9 |
| 3802 | 4.8 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 4.2 | 4.0 |
| 5401 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.1 |
| 5504 | 3.2 | 3.6 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.7 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.6 |

Source: Computed by the Authors
Note: 2003-Departments of School Education, 5802- Rural Development, 2502-Departments of ST Development, 1704- Departments of Health and Family Welfare, 5002-Departments of Women and Child Development, 2203-Departments of Panchayati Raj, 2602- Departments of Social Justice, 3802-Departments of Higher Education, 5401- Departments of OBC and Minorities Welfare, 5504- Departments of SC Development.

The share of gender budget as a percentage of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), and total expenditure (TE) of Madhya Pradesh during the FY 2007-08 to 2022-23 is shown in Table 5. Gender budget as a percentage of GSDP and TE is at its highest in the year 2020-21, i.e., 7.37 and 34.45 respectively. Data reveals that both these indicators increase continuously from 2007-08 to 2020-21 with an exception of 2018-19. In 2021-22 the share of gender budget in GSDP declined to 6.80 and the total budget to 32.35, however, in 2022-23 both the indices pick up to reach their 2020-21 level. Figure 2 portrays the above explanation in a pictorial manner. Probably this marginal variation during the fiscal year 2021-22 may be on account of post COVID effect. Hence, we may conclude that COVID-19 has a trivial impact on the gender budgeting system of Madhya Pradesh, be it total expenditure, or percentage of GSDP.

**Table 5**
**Gender Budget as a Percentage of GSDP and**
**Total Expenditure of Madhya Pradesh**

| Year | Gender Budget as a Percentage of GSDP | Gender Budget as a Percentage of Total Expenditure |
|---|---|---|
| 2007-08 | 4.94 | 22.60 |
| 2008-09 | 4.53 | 22.31 |
| 2009-10 | 5.13 | 23.33 |
| 2010-11 | 5.77 | 25.31 |
| 2011-12 | 5.56 | 21.74 |
| 2012-13 | 5.08 | 23.17 |
| 2013-14 | 5.07 | 24.84 |
| 2014-15 | 5.84 | 25.10 |
| 2015-16 | 6.08 | 26.40 |
| 2016-17 | 5.81 | 24.09 |
| 2017-18 | 6.62 | 28.55 |
| 2018-19 | 4.91 | 21.53 |
| 2019-20 | 5.57 | 27.23 |
| 2020-21 | 7.37 | 34.45 |
| 2021-22 | 6.80 | 32.35 |
| 2022-23 | 7.34 | 34.12 |

Source: Computed by the Authors

**Figure 2**
**Gender Budget as the Percentage of GSDP and TE**
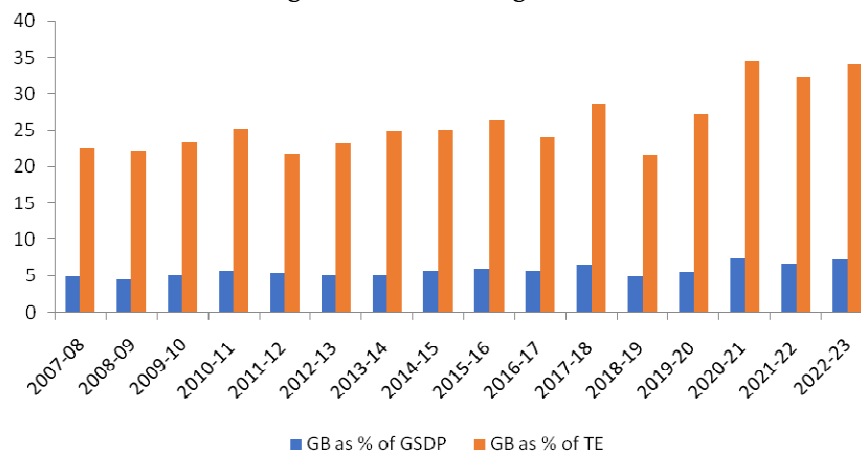


Source: Computed by the Authors

**Section VI: Outcome of Gender Budgeting Experience**

In this section, we have focused on the working of gender budgeting and its impact on women empowerment. The lack of disaggregated data creates hindrance to examining sectoral allocation under the gender budget

and its consequent outcome in the concerned field. On account of data constraints, we are not in a position to investigate one to one relationship between gender budget and women empowerment, however, the position of women can be judged from the economic status, political participation, health condition and education standard of women over the period. It is assumed that the allocation made under the gender budget helps women to improve their socio-economic-political status. In the present analysis, 2005-06 is taken as a benchmark year, 2013-14 is an intervening year and 2019-20 is the terminal year.

Table 6 shows different socio-economic and political variables for three different periods. In terms of LFPR and WPR, there is a fluctuating trend over the period but the result is encouraging. In the field of the unemployment rate, there is a significant decline from 5.1 per cent in 2004-05 to 1.4 per cent in 2019-20. The literacy rate among women increased from 50.29 per cent to 65.5 per cent. Data on 10 or more years of schooling increased from 23.2 per cent to 29.3 per cent. So far as health status is concerned, we have taken six variables, viz., women having BMI below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m2), women aged 15-49 years who are anaemic, mothers who had at least four antenatal care visits, mothers who received postnatal care within two days of delivery, institutional births and births attended by skilled health personnel, all these variables show a considerable improvement. Data reveals that the social status of women has increased over time. Participation of currently married women in household decision-making increased from a low of 29.4 in 2005-06 to a high of 86.0 in 2019-20. On the contrary, women married before the legal year of marriage and women affected by spousal violence declined from 57.3 to 23.1 and 45.7 to 28.1 respectively in the corresponding period. Further, women having a bank account and using mobile phones also increased. Political participation of women also improves though not remarkable.

The above analysis clearly depicts that Gender Budget helps to empower women in Madhya Pradesh.

**Table 6**
**Women Empowerment over Time (Value in Percentage)**

| Indicators | Year of Reference | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economic Status | 2004-05 | 2013-14 | 2019-20 |
| Labour Force Participation Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 36.6 | 34.7 | 37.7 |
| Work Participation Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 36.6 | 34.0 | 37.2 |

| Indicators | Year of Reference | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Economic Status** | **2004-05** | **2013-14** | **2019-20** |
| Unemployment Rate [15 years and above; US (PS+SS)] | 5.1 | 2.0 | 1.4 |
| **Educational Status** | **2001 Census** | **2011 Census/ NFHS 4** | *NFHS 75th Round* (2017-18)/ **NFHS 5** |
| Literacy Rate | 50.29 | 59.24 | 65.5 |
| 10 or more years of schooling | --- | 23.2 | 29.3 |
| **Political Participation** | **13th** | **15th** | **17th LS** |
| Elected Members of Loka Sabha | 7.5 | 20.7 | 13.8 |
| **Health Status** | **NFHS 3** | **NFHS 4** | **NFHS 5** |
| Women have BMI below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m2) | 40.1 | 28.4 | 23.0 |
| Women aged 15-49 years who are anaemic | 57.7 | 52.5 | 54.7 |
| Mothers who had at least 4 antenatal care visits | 40.2 | 35.7 | 57.5 |
| Mothers who received postnatal care within 2 days of delivery | 27.9 | 54.9 | 83.5 |
| Institutional births | 29.7 | 80.8 | 90.7 |
| Births attended by skilled health personnel | 37.1 | 78.0 | 89.3 |
| **Social Status** | **NFHS 3** | **NFHS 4** | **NFHS 5** |
| Married before legal years of marriage | 57.3 | 32.4 | 23.1 |
| Currently married women who usually participate in 3 household decisions | 29.4 | 82.8 | 86.0 |
| Women have a bank or savings account that they use | | 37.3 | 74.7 |
| Women have a mobile phone that they use | | 28.7 | 38.5 |
| Women affected by spousal violence | 45.7 | 33.0 | 28.1 |

Source: Employment and unemployment situation in India, NSS Report 61st Round, Periodic Labour force Survey 2019-20, Key indicators of employment and unemployment in India 2009-10 AISHE Report 2012-13 and 2019-20; NFHS 3rd, 4th and 5th Round.

## Section VII: Conclusion

In tune with UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, almost all countries followed gender mainstreaming and women empowerment in their policy formulation. As a sequel to this gender budgeting is considered an important instrument. Madhya Pradesh adopted gender budgeting practices in 2007-08 and continued to date. The progress of the 'Gender Budgeting' system of the Government of Madhya Pradesh is in the right direction. It is found that allocation for Gender-Specific schemes (Part A) is quite insignificant and Gender Sensitive schemes (Part B) are dominant in the gender budget of Madhya Pradesh over the entire period of analysis. Data reveals that COVID-19 had no significant impact on the allocation of the gender budget. It is observed that the share of gender budget as a percentage of GSDP and TE of Madhya Pradesh increases continuously from 2007-08 to 2020-21 with an exception of 2018-19, in 2021-22 there is a

marginal decline but reverts in 2022-23. Under Part A of the gender budget Women and Child Development department tops, whereas in Part B the Department of School Education leads the list of allocation. The unavailability of sex-disaggregated data compels us to abandon an outlay-outcome approach to explore the impact of gender budget on women's empowerment, however, by taking data on the socio-economic-political performance of women at three different points of time it is noticed that perceptible progress in the status of women occurred in Madhya Pradesh, which may safely be ascribed to the gender budgeting practice of Madhya Pradesh.

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# Is GDP a Good Measure of People's Well-Being? Evidence from BRICS Nations

## Neeraj Kumar* and P. Mahendra Varman†

*In Economics, income is always considered a significant factor that is needed to maximise the well-being of the people. This belief of economists that an increase in income increases the subjective well-being of the people is questioned by Easterlin in his seminal work which is also called as Easterlin Paradox. However, it is ambiguous if the paradox applies to all countries, especially developing countries. This study makes a modest attempt to examine if there exists an association between GDP per capita and subjective well-being in developing countries such as the BRICS nations, using descriptive statistics and graphical analysis. The study reveals that the correlation between GDP per capita and subjective well-being is very low and further in the case of India it is negative, indicating that the increase in income does not essentially lead to better subjective well-being. Hence, this study supports the Easterlin paradox. The study also exposes the reality that the increase in GDP per capita actually increases income inequality.*

## I    Introduction

The welfare of people is mainly decided by good economic and public policy. People's well-being and welfare is a broad notion that cannot

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*Research Scholar, Department of Econometrics, University of Madras, Chennai (TN).
E-mail: neerajsonline@gmail.com
†Assistant Professor, Department of Econometrics, University of Madras, Chennai (TN)
E-mail: eco_varman@hotmail.com

be only described by consumer preferences, utility, consumption, income, or GDP. GDP is often treated as an indicator to measure the well-being of the people. But GDP by definition has mainly described market products in the form of money units. It just represents the material well-being of the people. According to the report of a commission headed by Stiglitz et al. (2009), there is a need for a measurement system shift from emphasising the measurement of economic production to measuring people's well-being. They also mentioned that one has to look beyond GDP because there appears to be an increasing gap between the information contained in aggregate GDP data and what counts for common people's well-being. In their report, they further suggested three approaches to measure the quality of life of the people. Subjective well-being is one of the approaches to measuring the well-being of people. According to Frey and Stutzer (2010), self-reported subjective well-being is a better measure of overall social and economic welfare. The studies related to subjective well-being or happiness have grown tremendously in recent years.

Subjective well-being or life satisfaction is referred to as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life as a whole or how well one likes the life one lives in the prevailing economic and social condition of life. It measures the global assessment of all aspects of a person's life. Mc Gillivray and Clarke (2006, 2007) define subjective well-being as a multidimensional evaluation of life, including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and evaluations of emotions and moods. GDP just captures material well-being and it is one of the traditional measures of well-being and subjective well-being is multi-dimensional close to all the aspects of human welfare. Subjective well-being is encompassing evaluative and experienced elements. It further states that "good mental status, including various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the emotional reaction of people to their experiences.

According to OECD (2013), there are three key main dimensions of subjective well-being: (i) Evaluative subjective well-being or life satisfaction (ii) Eudaimonic subjective well-being, and (iii) Momentary subjective well-being. Further Diener (1984) has elaborated the subjective well-being in three aspects, viz., (i) life satisfaction i.e., person's overall judgment about their life at a particular period; (ii) the presence of positive feelings such as happiness and joy or positive energy; and (iii) presence of negative feelings such as feeling sad, depressed and angry. According to Diener, life satisfaction is a reflective evaluation of the assessment of one's life, for that, it is necessary to attempt to recollect and gauge the incidents that happened already.

## II    Earlier Studies on Subjective Well-Being

Initially, subjective well-being has been widely studied in the field of psychology, but it has gained importance in the field of economics after the seminal work of Easterlin in 1974. It is also known as the Easterlin paradox. The paradox is stated that with in-country there is a positive association between happiness and income. Higher-income people are happier than their lower counterparts but over the life cycle, the happiness remains constant or slightly decreases despite the substantial economic growth rate. However, income growth does not cause well-being to rise, for both higher and lower-income persons, because it generates equivalent growth in material aspiration. Subjective well-being varies directly with income and inversely with the material aspirations and income of others. The increase in income only increases the material aspiration of an individual, not happiness (Easterlin 1995 and 2001). Easterlin has opened the gate of happiness in the field of economics and it is still a debatable issue, whether an increase in income, increases the well-being of the people or not.

The study conducted by Satya Paul and Denial Guilbert (2013) in Australia, Shaimaa Hussien and Yashmin Heshmat (2008) in Egypt, Edsel Beja Jr (2013), and Nicole Fuentes and Mariano Rojas (2001) in Mexico, has witnessed the same pattern of relationship between subjective well-being and income, as discussed by the Easterlin. Andrew E. Clark and Claudia Senik (2011) in their cross-sectional study has shown that income is positively related to well-being but in the long run, the relationship is still debatable. They further asserted that growth changes the aspiration of the people. If both expectations and outcomes increase at the same rate, then individuals will not feel any happier. However, the study conducted by Richard Ball and Kateryna Chernova (2008) has shown that absolute income is positively and significantly correlated with happiness. The Change in relative income has much larger effects on happiness as compared to absolute income but the effect on the happiness of both absolute and relative incomes are small when compared to the effects of several non-pecuniary factors (personal relationship, employment, and health). Ed. Diener et al. (2013) have depicted that household income is positively related to the life satisfaction of people. He further stated that GDP's association with life evaluation was weaker than that for household income. After 1990, there has been a growing number of studies that have been addressing income effect on happiness in different countries in different periods (Stevenson and Wolfer, 2008; Helliwell and Barringtoin-Leigh, 2010; Frey and Stutzer, 2010; Andrew E. Clark and Claudia Senik, 2011). In the literature, subjective well-

being, life satisfaction and happiness have been used interchangeably. Despite having rapid economic growth, can we say that this growth actually indicates the true well-being of people? Is there any relationship between GDP and the subjective well-being of the people? Are we able to trickle down the effect of growth on all sections of the people? Does money buy happiness or well-being?

Based on the questions raised above, the present study makes a modest attempt to examine the relationship between GDP per capita and subjective well-being in the BRICS countries. BRICS is the association of five major emerging economies in the world. It includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. These five countries represent 41.2 per cent of the world population, nominal GDP of US $19.6 trillion, over a 16 per cent share of world trade, and 32 per cent of world GDP PPP. The growth potential of these economies is not less than any other developed country. For further comparison, the study includes two developed nations USA and Japan to examine whether the relationship between Subjective well-being and GDP in these two developed countries is the same as that of BRICS nations.

III      Data Source and Variables Used in the Study

This study uses data from the World Value Survey (WVS) and World Bank. WVS is one of the largest non-commercial academic social surveys. It has collected data from 120 countries in the world, which constitute 94.5 per cent of the world's population. WVS widely collected cross-section data related to the field of sociology, political science, international relation, economics, public health, demography, social psychology, people's value, beliefs, etc. WVS also collects data on subjective well-being and its related indicator. Till now the WVS has collected and released data of seven waves started from 1981 to 2021, conducted globally every five years. Being a part of the WVS association, the world WVS has started the survey in Brazil, India, Russia and China since the second wave (1990-1994), and in Japan, USA and South Africa it started from the first wave (1981-1984). The fourth wave (1995-1998) survey was not conducted in Brazil and Russia. The seventh wave (2017-2020) data of India and South Africa is yet to be released, the process is getting delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WVS collected data on three direct measures of subjective well-being including evaluative subjective well-being (life satisfaction), financial satisfaction, and momentary subjective well-being (happiness). The life satisfaction question asked in the form of "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Similarly, the question related to financial satisfaction is asked to the

respondent "How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? Both variables are measured on a scale of 1 to 10, on which 1 means you are "completely dissatisfied" and 10 means you are "completely satisfied". On the other hand, a happiness question was asked to the respondent in the form of "Taking all things together, would you say you are: very happy (=1), quite happy (=2), rather happy (=3), and not at all happy (=4)". Happiness is measured on 4 point scale. For the use of the paper, the happiness variable is further recoded in the form of "1=, not at all happy, 2= rather happy, 3= quite happy, and 4= very happy. In the literature, life satisfaction, happiness, and subjective well-being are used interchangeably. However, there is a significant difference between happiness and life satisfaction. Happiness is momentary, it is short-term in nature and depends upon the particular feeling person is attaining at a particular moment, on the other hand, life satisfaction is an assessment of one's life. It is the recollection of all the incidents that already happened and it is a long-term phenomenon. The happiness and financial satisfaction measures are also included in the preliminary analysis as a robustness check of the life satisfaction levels.

## IV    Descriptive Statistics of Variables and Empirical Analysis

### Table 1
### Mean Values of Life Satisfaction and
### Financial Satisfaction Variables across Countries

| Country Name | Wave 1 | | Wave 2 | | Wave 3 | | Wave 4 | | Wave 5 | | Wave 6 | | Wave 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | LS | FS | LS | FS | LS | FS | LS | FS | LS | FS | LS | FS | LS | FS |
| Brazil | - | - | 7.36 (2.41) | 5.50 (2.76) | 7.15 (2.68) | 5.48 (2.89) | - | - | 7.65 (2.11) | 5.87 (2.62) | 7.84 (2.20) | 6.21 (2.72) | 7.59 (2.31) | 6.09 (2.73) |
| Russia | - | - | 5.42 (2.38) | 5.05 (2.53) | 4.46 (2.52) | 3.32 (2.27) | - | - | 6.18 (2.43) | 4.75 (2.58) | 6.15 (2.20) | 4.89 (2.38) | 6.56 (2.06) | 5.58 (2.21) |
| India | - | - | 6.72 (2.28) | 6.38 (2.19) | 6.42 (2.67) | 6.08 (2.50) | 5.06 (2.13) | 4.84 (2.19) | 5.84 (2.37) | 5.26 (2.39) | 6.40 (2.25) | 5.86 (2.32) | - | - |
| China | - | - | 7.31 (2.08) | 6.15 (2.52) | 6.83 (2.41) | 6.12 (2.45) | 6.53 (2.46) | 5.65 (2.66) | 6.77 (2.39) | 5.95 (2.57) | 6.89 (1.99) | 6.25 (1.99) | 7.42 (2.04) | 6.51 (2.28) |
| South Africa | 6.80 (2.26) | 6.01 (2.55) | 6.74 (2.71) | 5.46 (3.03) | 6.08 (2.75) | 4.78 (2.98) | 6.31 (2.69) | 5.09 (2.83) | 7.20 (2.37) | 6.01 (2.75) | 6.67 (2.30) | 6.17 (2.41) | - | - |
| Japan | 6.67 (1.86) | 6.21 (2.04) | 6.59 (1.74) | 6.09 (2.08) | 6.63 (1.88) | 6.34 (2.02) | 6.51 (1.97) | 6.20 (2.09) | 7.03 (1.79) | 6.19 (2.07) | 6.97 (1.94) | 6.07 (2.25) | 6.81 (1.89) | 6.14 (2.22) |
| USA | 7.68 (1.93) | 6.59 (2.54) | 7.73 (1.84) | 6.87 (2.40) | 7.67 (2.01) | 6.56 (2.52) | 7.66 (1.82) | 6.53 (2.37) | 7.26 (1.77) | 5.98 (2.32) | 7.45 (1.85) | 6.31 (2.40) | 7.22 (1.91) | 6.09 (2.40) |

Sources: Author's calculation using WVS 1981-2021.
Notes:    (1) Figures in Parenthesis indicate Standard deviation.
         (2) - indicates data is not available for that period.
         (3) LS = Life Satisfaction, FS= Financial Satisfaction.

Table 1 depicts the average value of life satisfaction and financial satisfaction across the countries. The average life satisfaction (measured on a

10-point scale) of all the countries considered in this study is slightly fluctuating across time. The value lies between 5 and 8. Brazil which is an emerging economy is having the highest average life satisfaction as compared to developed nations like Russia and Japan throughout the period. The USA has witnessed a slight reduction in average life satisfaction from Wave 1 to Wave 7. On the other hand, the world's largest economies viz., India and China reported inconsistent movement in life satisfaction over the WVS waves. An almost similar pattern is noticed in the case of financial satisfaction (values range between 5 and 6.5) for all the countries in the study.

**Table 2**
**Mean Values of Happiness Scores Across Countries**

| Country Name | Wave 1 | Wave 2 | Wave 3 | Wave 4 | Wave 5 | Wave 6 | Wave 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brazil | - | 2.94 (0.71) | 3.03 (0.68) | - | 3.24 (0.63) | 3.25 (0.63) | 3.17 (0.61) |
| Russia | - | 2.54 (0.67) | 2.50 (0.73) | - | 2.76 (0.69) | 2.89 (0.67) | 2.98 (0.59) |
| India | - | 2.93 (0.78) | 3.06 (0.78) | 2.93 (0.79) | 3.01 (0.79) | 3.20 (0.72) | - |
| China | - | 2.94 (0.81) | 3.05 (0.66) | 2.86 (0.63) | 2.93 (0.74) | 3.01 (0.59) | 3.15 (0.63) |
| South Africa | 3.05 (0.76) | 2.97 (0.84) | 3.15 (0.86) | 3.21 (0.81) | 3.23 (0.88) | 3.13 (0.87) | - |
| Japan | 2.98 (0.60) | 2.99 (0.61) | 3.22 (0.63) | 3.17 (0.62) | 3.19 (0.63) | 3.21 (0.65) | 3.20 (0.62) |
| USA | 3.21 (0.62) | 3.27 (0.68) | 3.39 (0.62) | 3.30 (0.60) | 3.28 (0.59) | 3.26 (0.64) | 3.12 (0.64) |

Sources: Author's calculation using WVS 1981-2021.
Notes:    (1) Figures in Parenthesis indicate Standard deviation.
          (2) - indicates data is not available for that period.

Table 2 shows the average happiness value of the countries in the study over different WVS waves. We can observe that happiness scores are also having a pattern similar to that of life satisfaction and financial satisfaction discussed previously i.e., there is inconsistent movement in the values of happiness as well. The happiness value ranges from 2.5 to 3.5 for all the countries in the study. Hence from Table 1 and Table 2, we can conclude that the movement in life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness across the WVS waves is inconsistent and fluctuating.

Fig. 1 (a), (b) and (c) shows the percentage distribution of scores of life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness respectively. Fig. 1(a) depicts that the scores of life satisfaction are almost normally distributed for India, Japan, Russia, and South Africa. It means that in these four countries, almost half of the surveyed people reported their life satisfaction between 5-7 on a measure 10 point scale. However, in the case of Brazil, the USA, and China the percentage distribution is right-skewed, which means most of the people reported their life satisfaction between 7-10. Similarly, Fig.1 (b) shows that the scores of financial satisfaction are normally distributed for all the

countries except the USA. For the USA the financial score distribution is right-skewed, which means that in the USA most of the people reported a higher score for financial satisfaction ( between 7 and 10 on a 10-point scale). Fig. 1(c) shows the distribution of happiness scores over the WVS waves. It shows that the distribution is right skewed which means that most of the people in all the countries in the study have reported a higher level of happiness across waves.

**Fig. 1**
**Country-wise distribution of Life Satisfaction Scores, Financial Satisfaction Scores and Happiness Scores in Percentage**

Fig. 1 (c) Country-wise distribution of happiness scores in percentage
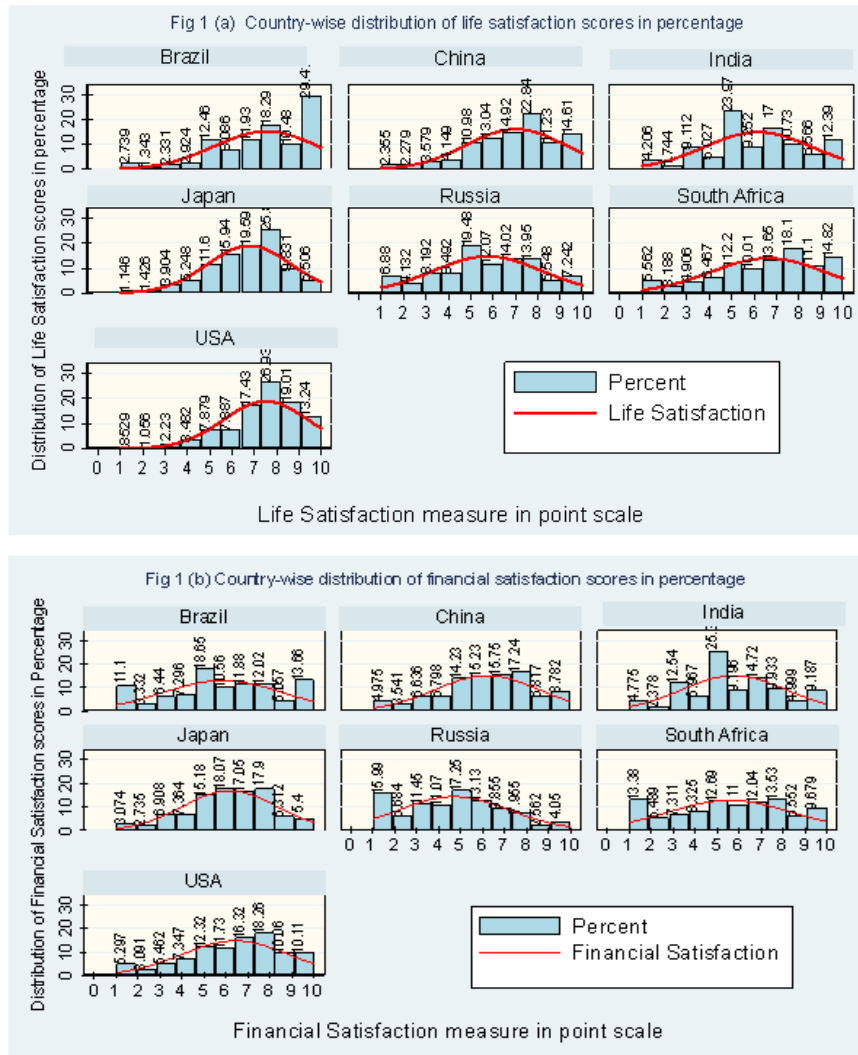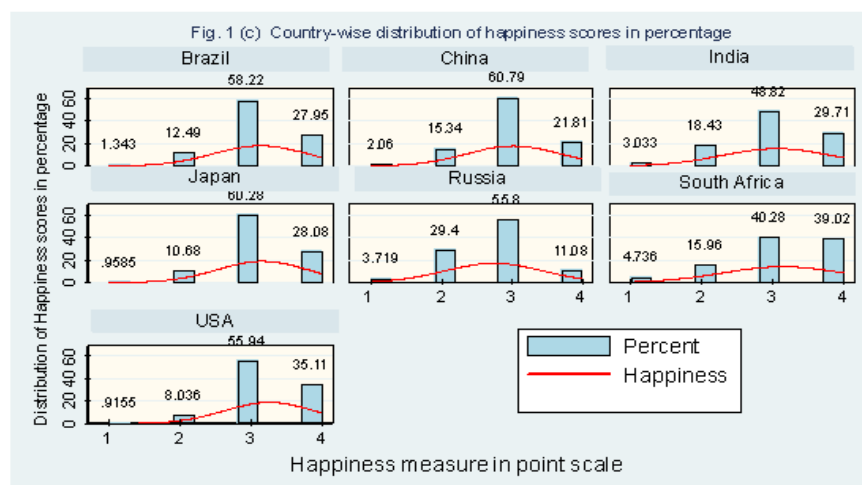
## V  Movement of GDP Per capita over the Study Period

The traditional economists believe that higher GDP leads to a higher level of well-being, as a greater number of needs are satisfied when a higher level of income is attained (Fuentes and Rojas, 2001). Does this notion hold? In order to test this we need to analyse the co-movement of GDP and life satisfaction. First, looking at the movement of GDP alone for the period 1981-2021 (during the 7 waves of WVS) in Figure 2, we can see that the log of per capita GDP over the years has been increasing for all the countries during the study period. USA and Japan which are the developed countries considered in this study have reported a higher per capita GDP when compared to the BRICS nations, with India having the lowest among them.

**Fig. 2**
**Trend in Per capita GDP (in $) of BRICS Nations, USA and Japan**
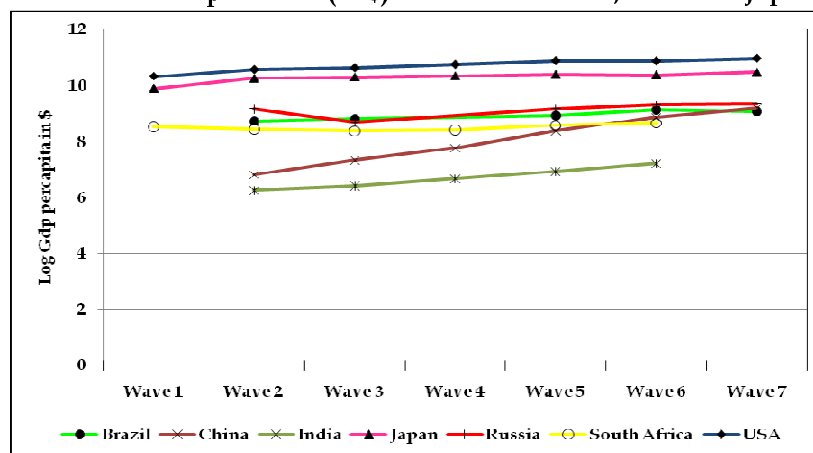
Though there is a lot of variation in the level of per capita GDP of various countries, it is noteworthy to say that for all the countries the per capita GDP is consistently increasing over the years. Hence, from Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1, we have understood that the movements in life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness are inconsistent movements over the study period for all the countries. However, GDP per capita is consistently increasing over the year for all the countries, which can be observed in Fig. 2.

## VI        Association of GDP Per Capita and Subjective Well-Being
### Table 3
### Correlation Matrix of Measures of Subjective Well-Being with GDP Per capita Income

|  | Variables | Life Satisfaction | Financial Satisfaction | Happiness | Log GDP per capita |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Brazil** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.34* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.37* | 0.23* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | 0.07* | 0.10* | 0.17* | 1 |
| **India** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.60* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.41* | 0.35* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | -0.03* | -0.07* | 0.12* | |
| **China** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.61* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.47* | 0.37* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | 0.05* | 0.06* | 0.08* | 1 |
| **Russia** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.49* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.50* | 0.34* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | 0.29* | 0.28* | 0.23* | 1 |
| **South Africa** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.59* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.49* | 0.40* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | 0.09* | 0.18* | 0.01*** | 1 |
| **Japan** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.63* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.56* | 0.38* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | 0.04* | -0.01 | 0.12* | 1 |
| **USA** | Life Satisfaction | 1 | | | |
| | Financial Satisfaction | 0.51* | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 0.52* | 0.32* | 1 | |
| | Log GDP per capita | -0.09* | -0.09* | -0.04* | 1 |

Source: Author's calculation using WVS
Notes: * Significant at 1 per cent level. ***Significant at 10 level

The relationship between GDP per capita and subjective well-being can be shown in a variety of ways. From Table 3 we can understand that

though life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness are different measures of subjective well-being, they are very much correlated with each other. But the main relationship of interest is the correlation between the different measures of subjective well-being (life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness) and log GDP per capita. Table 3 shows that GDP per capita is negatively correlated to life satisfaction and financial satisfaction in India (-0.03 and -0.07) and the USA (-0.09 and -0.09). Though GDP is increasing over the years for all the countries, overall life satisfaction and financial satisfaction are decreasing in USA and India. In the case of Brazil, China, Japan, Russia, and South Africa, the relationship between GDP and three measures of subjective well-being is very close to zero i.e., the relationship is negligible. We can conclude that over the period, income in the form of per capita GDP is increasing, but different measures of well-being viz., life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and happiness of the people have not increased much.

**Fig. 3(a)**
**Trend of GDP Per capita and Average Life Satisfaction Across the Time**
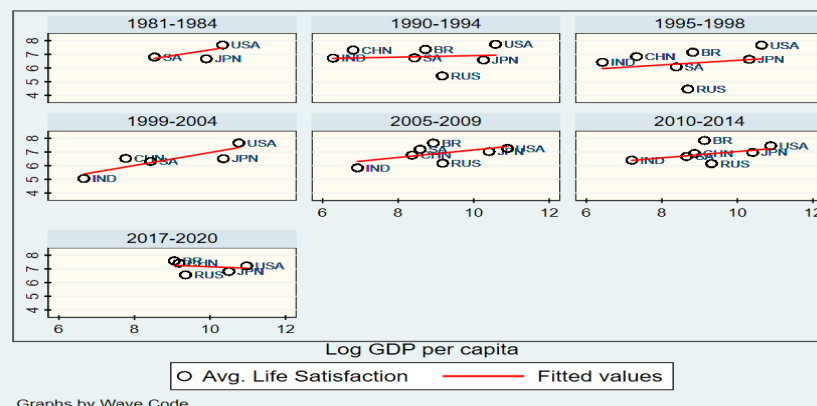


Note: 'BR'= Brazil, ' RUS'= Russia, 'IND'= India, 'CHN'= China, 'SA'= South Africa, 'JPN'= Japan, and 'USA'= United State of America.

Figure 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) depicts the relationship (in the form of a fitted line or trend line) of GDP per capita with average life satisfaction average financial satisfaction and average happiness respectively. It can be observed from Fig. 3(a) that the plot of log GDP per capita and average life satisfaction does not show any evidence of having an association between them. Accordingly, from 3(a) we can observe that the fitted line slopes positively between the first wave (1981-1994) to the third wave (1995-1998) of

WVS and the same are getting flattened over the first three wave periods indicating that as the income increases the life satisfaction is not increasing proportionately. Further, we can also observe that compared to developing countries like India, developed countries like the USA and Japan have higher income and also better life satisfaction. However, irrespective of the increasing economic status (Per Capita GDP) of the country, the level of life satisfaction of people of those countries seems to be almost constant.

**Fig. 3 (b)**
**Trend of GDP per capita and Average Financial Satisfaction Across the Time**
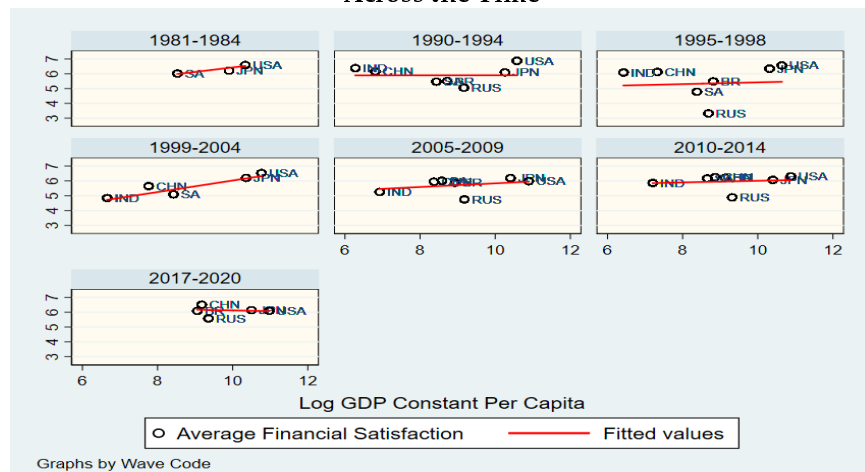


Note: 'BR'= Brazil, ' RUS'= Russia, 'IND'= India, 'CHN'= China, 'SA'= South Africa, 'JPN'= Japan, and 'USA'= United State of America.

**Fig. 3(c)**
**Trend of GDP per capita and Average Happiness Across the Time**
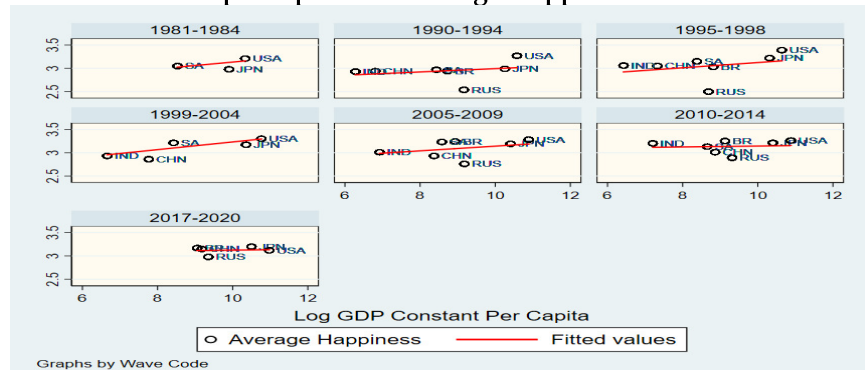


Note: 'BR'= Brazil, ' RUS'= Russia, 'IND'= India, 'CHN'= China, 'SA'= South Africa, 'JPN'= Japan, and 'USA'= United State of America.

Figures 3(b) and 3(c) show a similar fitted line pattern in the case of financial satisfaction and happiness respectively as witnessed in the relationship between life satisfaction and GDP given in Fig. 3(a). That is, both financial satisfaction and happiness are also not showing a consistent increase with the increase in the GDP per capita. Conversely, financial satisfaction and happiness are almost constant over the time period and can be seen from Fig. 3(b) and 3 (c) that the two actually show a slight decrease even when there is an increase in per capita GDP.

**Fig. 4**
**Movements in GDP per capita and Life Satisfaction**
**over the Period 2005-2019**
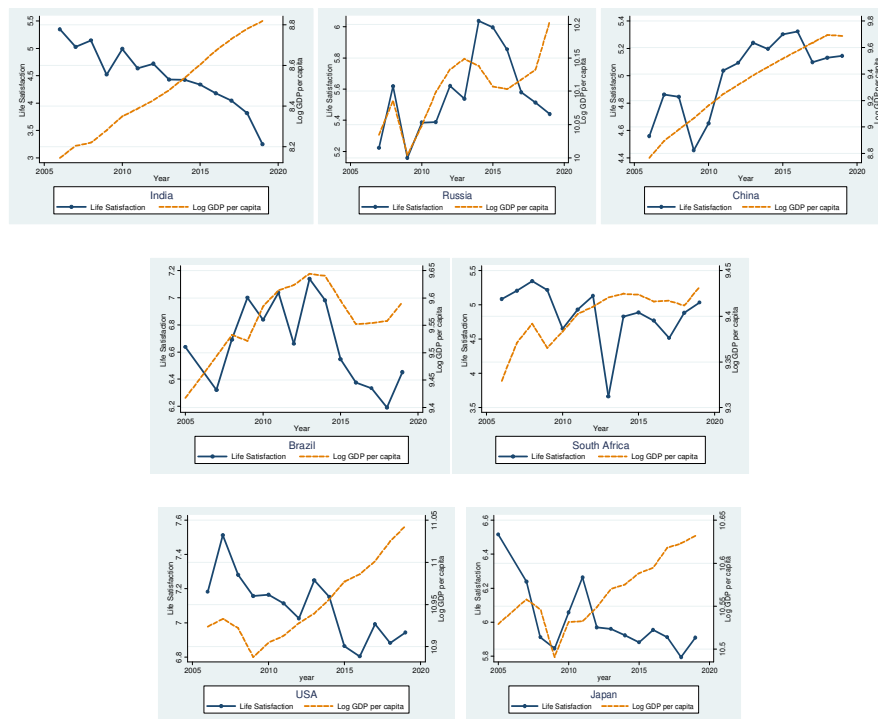


Data Source: Data taken from World's Happiness Report 2020, UN

To further validate our findings in the previous sections the relationship between log GDP per capita and average life satisfaction (2005-2019) using data collected from the world happiness report 2020. Fig. 4 gives us the trend of the relationship between GDP per capita and life satisfaction over the period 2005-2019 for all the countries considered in this study. We can observe that log GDP per capita has a consistent increase over the

periods for all the countries. On the other hand, the average life satisfaction does not show a uniform trend across countries. For instance, life satisfaction is decreasing drastically in USA and India from 2005 to 2019. But it is not exactly the same with respect to the other countries. The average life satisfaction for Russia, South Africa, Japan, and China is fluctuating during the same period. Hence we can come to the conclusion that overall there is not much evidence to say that an increase in income will lead to an increase in subjective well-being i.e., growth in GDP is not accompanied by the growth in life satisfaction of the people.

Graafland and Lous (2018) say that an increase in income leads to an increase in income disparity and it is one of the suspected elements that may absorb the benefits of economic expansion while negatively affecting well-being. This paper further makes an attempt to empirically validate the statement that an increase in income increases income inequality.

## VII    GDP Growth and Increase in Income Inequality

Any impact of economic growth will be pervasive if each section of society will get benefited from it. According to the World Inequality Report 2022, 52 per cent of global income goes into the pocket of the top 10 per cent of the richest people, while the poorest half of the population earns 8.5 per cent of it. With-in country income inequality has increased in most countries over the past two decades. As per the world inequality report South Africa, Brazil and India are some of the countries with a high level of income equality. Figure 5 (a) to 5(g) depicts the income inequality of BRICS countries followed by the USA and Japan respectively. Income inequality is measured by computing the share of income of the top 10 per cent and bottom 50 per cent of the population.

Accordingly, we can see that in South Africa the top 10 per cent of the population possess 60 per cent of the total income and the bottom 50 per cent of the population holds only 5.5 per cent of the total income. In the case of India and Brazil, the top 10 per cent of people hold around 58 per cent of total income, and the bottom 50 per cent hold around 12 per cent of total income. From Fig. 5(c) it is seen that income inequality in India has increased after 1985. In the case of China, the USA, Japan and Russia top 10 per cent hold 42-47 per cent of total income, while the bottom 50 per cent hold between 12-18 per cent of national income. We can further observe from Fig. 5 (a) to (g) that over the recent years, the gap between the top 10 per cent and bottom 50 per cent is certainly getting wider in all the countries considered in this study, which means that income is getting concentrated with the top

10 per cent of the people on the other hand bottom 50 per cent are striving to have a decent living.

**Fig. 5**
**Income Share Among Top 10 per cent and**
**Bottom 50 per cent of Population in Selected Countries**



Fig. 5(a) Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in Brazil, 2000-2021



Fig. 5 (b)Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in Russia, 1900-2021



Fig. 5 (c) Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in India, 1900-2021

Fig. 5 (d) Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in China, 1900-2021



Fig. 5 (e)Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in South Africa, 1900-2021



Fig. 5 (f) Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in the US, 1900-2021

Fig. 5 (g) Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in Japan, 1900-2021
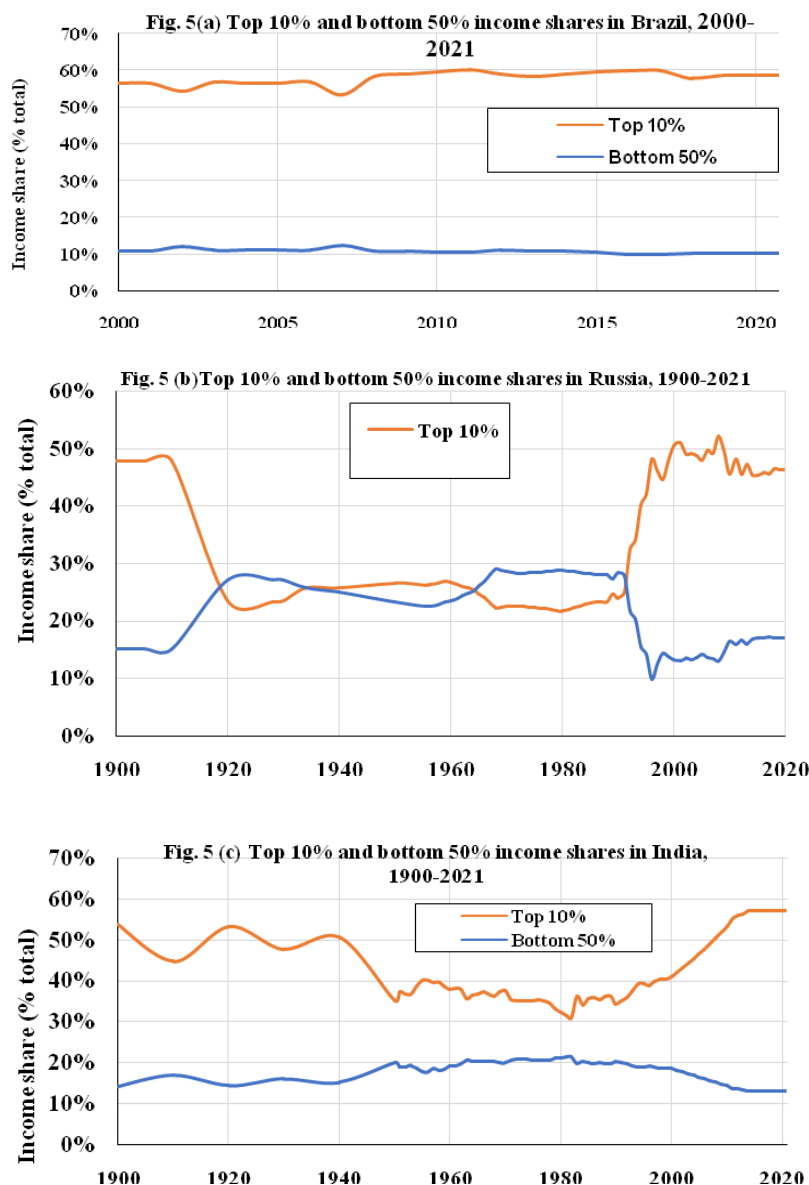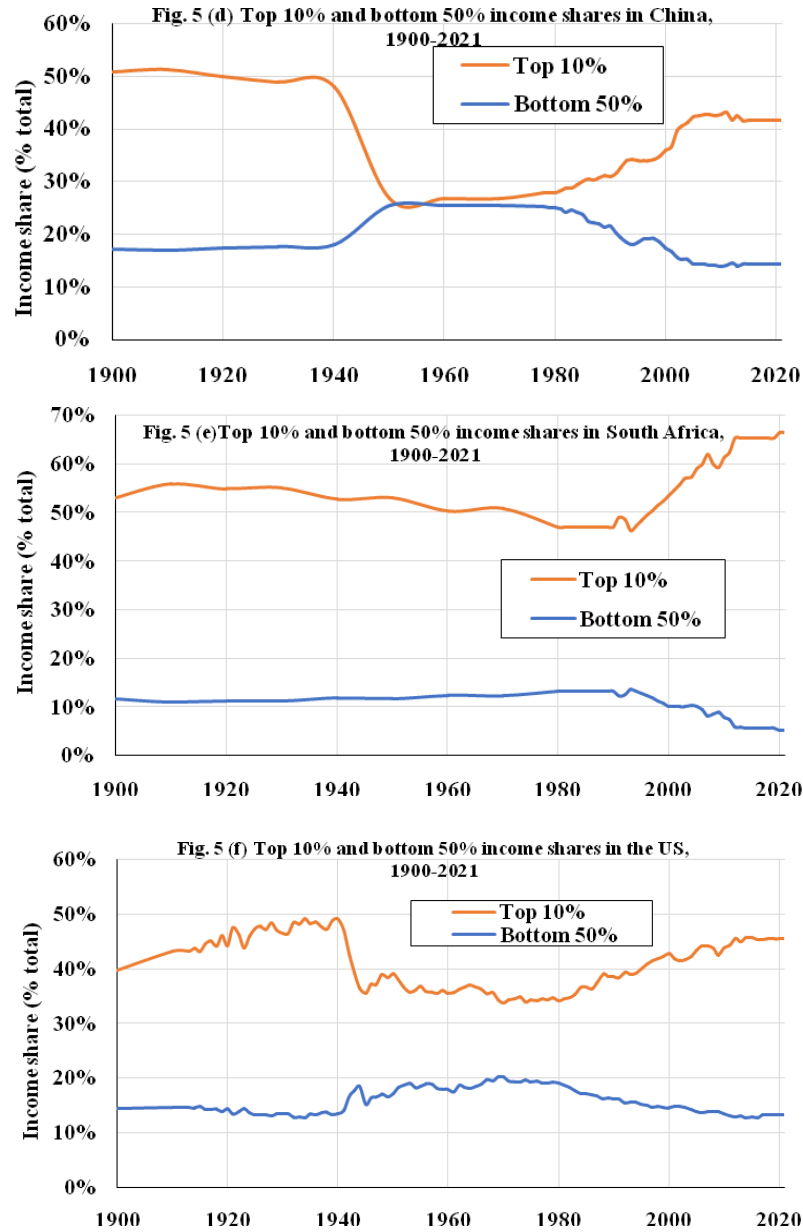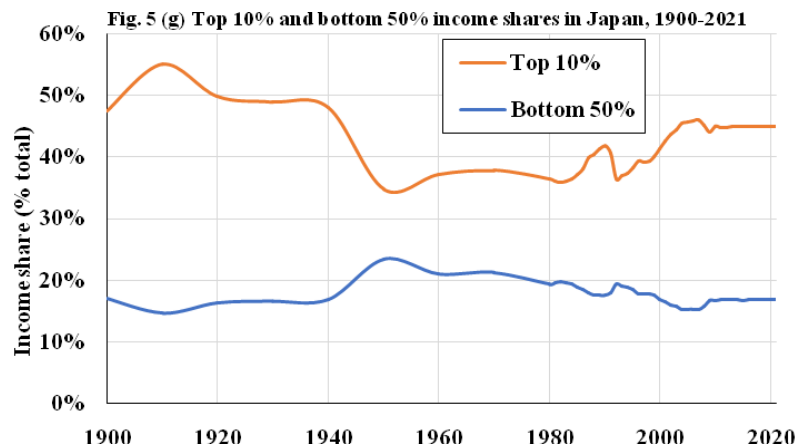
Source World inequality report 2022

## VIII    Conclusion

The Income-happiness relationship is still a debatable issue in the literature. There is no conclusive evidence that money improves the life satisfaction of people. The present paper makes a modest attempt to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and income (GDP per capita) in the context of BRICS countries, the USA and Japan. The study uses data from World Value Survey (WVS) and World Bank. Descriptive analysis and graphical representation are used to examine the association between GDP per capita and subjective well-being. It is observed that life satisfaction is negatively associated with GDP per capita in the case of India and the USA. In the case of other countries, the association between GDP per capita and life satisfaction is infinitesimal suggesting that there is a very weak relationship between income and life satisfaction. This study supports the Easterlin paradox that long-term trends in happiness and real GDP per capita are not significantly positively related. In fact, the study reveals that in the last two decades, there is a substantial increase in GDP per capita and the same has resulted in an increase in income inequality in most of the countries.

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# Development, Value and Border: A Theoretical Exploration

## Biswajit Mohanty*

*Complex negotiations among different social and political actors is the basis of border formation. The gradual embedding of the border in social consciousness produces and reproduces the border spatially and temporally. Borders do not move in void. They are mediated by the dominant value associated with them. Modernity, development, and border are coetaneous and co-extensive with each other. Modernity engendered development that, in turn, created the nation-state with borders. Colonialism is the movement of borders produced with the outflow of modernity and development from the dominant socio-economic formation in the West. Once established juridically, the border system differentiated and excluded individuals and communities internally. If coloniality is about acceptance and internalisation of the dominant value of the border and development, then postcoloniality is about resistance, subversion, and contestation of the dominant idea.*

## Introduction

A border is a historical concept and event that emerged at a critical juncture in European history. The discursive change in social science and the geopolitical undercurrents formed the context in which border as a concept evolved. Laine (2010; Laine, 2015), Brunnet-Jailey (2005), Anssi Paasi (2009),

*Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi, Delhi. E-mail: bmohanty@db.du.ac.in

Passi and Newman (1998) have extensively dealt with the conceptual history of borders. Despite their theorisation from respective disciplinary backgrounds, they have the following common understanding of the border as a concept and event.

First, the authors theorising borders oscillate between two axes of a strong nation-state fervently defending its border and a post-national order where borders have become insignificant or, at its extreme, redundant. Second, the essays have highlighted the fragmentary, multi-dimensionality, and complexity involved in border studies leading to an inconsistent theoretical framework or, according to Brunnet-Jailey, 'model' on the border. Third, the globalisation process and post-modern turn have radically changed the understanding of border as a fluid and porous entity whose meaning is contingent upon the moments of power relationship exacted on it that creates the condition of inclusion and exclusion, defines the 'other' and controls the mobility of citizens and non-citizens.

The conceptual history of borders deals comprehensively with its evolutionary processes. (Laine, 2015) in relation to the growth of the nation-state, its exploration into its coevality with development as an event that was a motor force for the growth of changing meaning and context for the evolution of the border has seldom been explored. Passi and Newman (1998) and Brunnet-Jailey (2005 and 2011) have dealt more with the contemporaneity of the border and development relationship, neglecting the historical relationship they have shared and the path they have traversed. With the research lacking a border theory, the authors have pointed out ways of theorising from their disciplinary perspectives: Brunnet-Jailey provides an agency-structure model, Paasi and Newman provided a spatiality model, and Paasi provides an all-pervasive border theory. The outcome, therefore, is glossing over the following questions salient to the border studies: How does the theoretical grid of borders, such as spatiality, territory, and sovereignty, engage with development-cognate conceptions of globalisation, capital, and labour flow? How can a border theory integrate permanency, the proliferation of borders, and the local histories and struggles in retaining their borders and identities?

The essay reconceptualises the border and attempts to relate it with development processes through the perspective of value. The reason for choosing the value theoretic framework is that value conceptually, ontologically, and epistemologically precedes border formation and bordering practices. Border's permanency, multiplication, and mechanism of penetration of development processes, it is argued, hinges upon the

reconceptualisation of border as value. Following O'Dowd's (2010) exhortation, the current essay brings back the history through value to understand the deeper connections between border, development and the essay has been organised into three sections. First, it provides an alternative conception of the border. The second section deals with the intersectionality of the border and development processes of the twentieth century world and locates their penetration in colonial and post-colonial societies. The third section examines the gradual divergence and contestation emerging in post-colonial countries against the dominant paradigm of border and development.

### Reconceptualising Border: Border as Value

The border contains nationalism, and nationalism has borders of collective memory, loss, sacrifice, commemoration, reparation, legitimation, sovereignty, citizenship, and community. Every collective social and political action undertaken within the border spaces is thus a border act. The border as a 'value container' carries intrinsic values that make it legitimate and acceptable to the citizens of a nation. The legalistic conception of nationality conferred upon the citizens carries value because it weakens the traditional bonding of ethnicity, class, and race within the territorial boundaries that the European states witnessed historically (Falk, 2002, p. 320). The nation-state is a juridically structured 'power container' of administrative setup and a 'value container'.

The proposition of the normative force of reason becomes an important tool for understanding action. Theorists state that actions follow 'big values' of friendship, justice, equality, liberty and other societal values. Kant (Kant, 1997), for instance, the absolute value of the 'categorical imperative' guides the principles of moral actions. Valid universal moral laws guide rational actors' actions that are bereft of desires and preferences (Kant, 1997, p. 39). Kant's 'categorical imperative' guides the principle of morality: valid universal laws guide people's desires, preferences and actions.

The incredulity of the postmodernists and globalisation theorists on the metaphysics of value and border flows from their conceptual stress on the categories of deconstruction, fluidity, rupture, fragmentation, contingency and, hybridity. In a comprehensive study, Newman and Passi (1998) have elucidated the impact of postmodern and global thinking on border studies. They have divided the gamut of available literature on postmodernism and globalisation into four categories with their supporting

arguments. They classify literature as (a) the vanishing of boundaries; (b) the socio-political identity production role of boundaries; (c) discourse and narratives on boundaries; and (d) boundary construction in spatial scales (Newman and Passi, 1998, p. 191).

What is important for the border studies is that the claim of the theorists has an embedded meaning (Wills, 2016). The subject is placed in a symbolic world where meaning-making is entangled in the web of political power relations - the subject's 'location' in 'the field' prompts them to interpret the events or symbols (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). The nested nature of value and valued relationships are continuously deconstructed and reconstructed as people get entangled in changeable moments of power relationships. The value is ruptured in the shifting field of politics. Instead of traditional homogeneity but structured values, the postmodern construction fragments values and valuable relations. Identities have become 'soft, fluid and endlessly open'. The subject's self-referentiality in representing reality moves alongside distrust over the universalising or totalising discourses on value (Harvey, 1989, p. 4-5). The complex and straightforward causal relation of value and action is replaced by what Foucault calls 'polymorphous correlation' (Foucault and Nazzaro, 1972, p. 232). The Nietzschean formulation of value theory is a theory of erasure of the 'metaphysical possibility of permanent, universal, absolute, objective… values' (Plotnitsky, 1988, p. 123). But as Fekete (1988, p. xvii) maintains, interpretation is value-dependent and is a value-producing machine.

The scalar and vector image of the border remains deep-seated in the polymorphic life of people. The meaning construction is a discursive activity located in people's experience engaged with the objectified world, the sign and signification of the symbolic interaction. People's daily engagement with the border produces an interminable and polymorphous meaning of it. The border can be a fence/wall/wires: a wall for the refugees, a fence for those labourers crossing the border daily, and wires for those citizens travelling on highways (Wills, 2016). Border multiplies and is traced multi-locally (Laine, 2016, p. 466). Technological innovation and its 'penetration' through borders and walls have been reasons for the euphoria of a borderless world: its presence evokes less approbation.

The globalisation process has vindicated the postmodernist exposition. The formation of the European Union and other regional economic zones for the free movement of capital and labour has rendered the border and bordered thinking redundant as the discussion veered around global civil society, global citizenship, global village, globality, global

justice, and regional cooperation. The collapse of the Berlin Wall substantially, symbolically, and politically declared the end of the border regimes.

The nation-state's anxiety to protect its sovereignty from outside interference and attempts to guard territory to preserve the nation and national identity from the cultural onslaught of global forces and battles fought to reclaim its legitimate territorial space from occupation have defied the anti-foundational theory. Brexit has contributed against the idea of the inescapability of withering away of the state's boundaries. The borders are bound to stay against the wishes of the globalists and at best be constructed, deconstructed, reconstructed, deterritorialised and reterritorialised spatially and temporally.

Historical pieces of evidence corroborate the fact that borders have been born out of professed values that remains conceptually before the idea and practice of border as an institution, or process, or method. The Westphalia treaty, where the 'foundational norms of equality of states, sovereign immunity and the doctrine of non-intervention' (Falk, 2002, p. 313) were laid out, was the precursor of the modern borders. Before the Westphalia treaty was signed, most polities were ruled by a clergyman, a feudal lord, or an emperor. After Westphalia, the Holy Roman Empire lost all its ecclesiastical power: the states like Spain and Germany gained political autonomy. A papal bull issued by Boniface VIII declared the Pope the highest authority over the temporal ruler. However, the Peace of Augsburg did not accept the Church's authority and designated the German Prince's right to follow their religion on the principle of cuius regio, eius religio (whose region, his religion). The Peace of Westphalia recognised Calvinism and allowed 'religion and ideology to be considered within the domestic jurisdiction' (Farr, 2005, p. 157). The contestation of values was reflected in the principle of Pope Innocent X's bull 'Zelo domus dei' which condemned the peace treaty for giving undue honour to Protestants and their territorial authority (Croxton, 1999).

From a cultural point of view, border meant peace: another value that began with the Westphalian treaty: 'negotiated settlement of differences' (Ghervas and Armitage, 2020, p. 1). The period between the Westphalia Treaty and the 1815 Vienna Congress to end wars in Europe shaped the cultural history of Europe. This historical epoch was grounded on a supreme cultural value of peace that informed the Enlightenment as a process and intellectual activity. Peace during this period did not complement war but as an adversary advocated a sense of reordering of society, espoused reason, a

protectorate of rights and prosperity: 'an ideal condition of a state' (Ghervas and Armitage, 2020, p. 2). As the ideals of enlightenment progressed, the conception of peace emerged as a central value with cultural manifestations, institutions, and norms to order European society that percolated from educated elites to political leaders to pervade the continent and mass public discourse. The value of peace shaped the negotiating processes of drawing and redrawing the European states' boundaries.

According to Farr (2005), the value of loyalty and national identity flourished during this time within the border. It was demonstrated in the propagation of nationalism and the cooperation between the wealthy and governing class. People connected through what Morgenthau called 'national systems of morality' and conceived it as universal moral. A new value of euro-centricity developed with its cultural concomitant of distinguishing a civilised 'we' from the barbarous 'them' that got formalised in the colonial expansion and rule. Also, the Westphalian system as a process extended itself to other parts of the globe that combined the 'logic of equality' with 'hegemonic actualities', that is 'logic of inequality' in political, economic, and social spheres (Falk, 2002, p. 313).

Colonialism begins with the imposition of values and institutions over and acceptance by the colonised subjects. The nation-state in the colonised countries remained 'spatial' and universal but never temporal. They were denied their history but assured of a future provided they are linked up with the universal 'History' (Seth, 1989, p. 615). The colonies became part of the extractive world system, a system that believed in the institution of the nation-state as capable of strengthening the capacity of decolonised people, ushering in economic and political development through nation-building (establishing homogenising and hegemonic system) and state-building (dominant institutions) project. The hegemony of the nation-state of Europe entered into colonised consciousness by a value system symbolically represented through development, security of the subjects against external aggression and scientific rationality as a way of thinking. Coloniality thus got defined as acceptance of the hegemony of border and developmental ideology among the colonised subjects.

The positive positionality of the border eradicating difference to unify the population into a homogenous category of nationals has been critiqued by postcolonial authors. The state in postcolonial societies has in many ways reinforced the caste, class, gender, ethnic and other social identities divide. It has so far been unsuccessful in eliminating the intercommunity and group differences. The boundaries that exist among

citizens may be hard or constructed by the political class to retain their values, but there is always a 'passageway', a liminal space where the possibility of opening up of it exists. The shared experiences go beyond differences for citizens to come together, irrespective of their community's affiliation, to enhance their capacities and demand for entitlement only within the boundary of the nation-state. The permissibility of boundary never terminates: the members of the 'other' communities contest the dominant value created by them. The challenge to the dominant value forces the state to redraw internal boundaries or impose borders or construct differences in its terms. The dominant values construct and engender power relations. The small values contest and through interconnection create passageways across boundaries to challenge the dominant values' bordering practices. Post-coloniality thus is about subversion and destabilising the dominance of and control through bordering and dominant value systems.

**Border and Development: Multiplicity of Border**

Development begins with dislocation. At the political and economic level, the emergent class formation and relation that accompanies the development processes dislocates the extant structural hierarchy and power relations as society gets steadily ingested into it; at the societal level, socially structured relation embedded in a community gives way to transformed individualistic human interactions within the community; the cultural, institutional domain witnesses a shift from the surviving value systems to another dominant system of symbolic interactions. Colonialism is a process of domination that begins with the initial advantage the industrialised countries had over the developed countries. The institutions and values that the colonial system brought into the colonies became an important factor in maintaining domination. The 'level of colonialism', defined as the magnitude of installation of the politico-economic and socio-cultural institutions in the colonies, determined the level of development of that colony (Lange, et al., 2006, p. 1414). There are studies that indicate that the core developed countries, through the establishment of political and economic institutions - the rule of law, new administrative principles, cash economy, the commodification of land, and a competitive market-promoted development in the colonised countries.

The colonial power and its adherents disavowed traditional culture and privileged European modernity and the way it unfolded in other regions of the world. The disparate paths to modernity or the 'pre-modern' culture paved the way for 'universal conformity to the historical path of industrial

modernity.' The cultural symbols of European modernity - the nation-state, market system and urban spaces - expanded beyond its border. The nation-state, the hegemonic concept, displaced all other concepts in the colonial era and ensconced in people's consciousness of the ASAFLA countries (Asia, Africa and Latin America). Most importantly, the nation-state became the storehouse of cultural values, equating it with the territorial conception of nationality. The national culture 'militated against the subtler meaning of the idea of culture' (Nandy, 2010, p. 297).

Colonialism begins with the imposition of values and institutions over and acceptance by the colonised subjects. The nation-state, the hegemonic concept, displaced all other concepts in the colonial era and ensconced in people's consciousness of the ASAFLA countries (Asia, Africa and Latin America). Though the state became a neutral arbiter among different ethnic, social and religious groups, it did not meet many expectations as they resisted the presence of the very institution. Others negotiated between the principles and practices of the nation-state. Most importantly, the nation-state became the storehouse of cultural values, equating it with the territorial conception of nationality. The national culture 'militated against the subtler meaning of the idea of culture' (Nandy, 2010, p. 297). The colonial master put the state structure alongside the native institutions and worked in collaboration with it that, in many instances, resisted the change in the native countries (For details, see Nandy, 2010; Seth, 1989). Ultimately, the nation-state established itself as a hegemonic state. The hegemony came from the fact that the state could persuade the local elites of its power in achieving economic success, the panacea for every ill - poverty, underdevelopment, social backwardness and cultural inferiority - and developing scientific temper. Contrary to the earlier understanding of civilisation as cultural values, the colonial masters changed the connotation of civilisation that equated it with the productive capacity of a nation (Nandy 2010; Seth, 1989). The argument quantified development and legitimised the American hegemonic idea that development is economic growth measured in the income level of individuals (Esteva, 2010, p. 7). The United Nations Development Programme, in its document, accepted the argument.

A counter tendency started in the year 1976 when UNESCO coined the concept of 'endogenous' development. According to Esteva (2010), the 1980s was described as 'the lost decade for development.' By 1985, 'post-development' was set to begin. The downfall of development was predicted

when the United Nations set the agenda of accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) (Sachs, 2019).

The border became porous, and the global culture and economy reached remote corners of the world. Development got deterritorialised (Sachs, 2019, p. xii). By the second decade of the 21st century, globalisation had dissolved the North-South divide. An important issue that remains unaddressed by border and development scholars is that when globalisation has the potential of uniting people on a global scale, why is it that it produced the counter-effect of the multiplicity of borders?

There can be two possible answers to it from two different perspectives. First, from the statist point of view, technological innovations, the new cultural domination, and communication networks have engendered opportunities, on the one hand, and produced 'globalisation of surveillance' through intrusive techniques of surveillance of public and private life. Securitised state's apprehension of the future has engendered multiple boundaries of surveillance for restrictive and selective movement of people through 'fortress thinking.' The 'affluence chauvinism' of the middle class wants to defend their affluence by restricting the poor from access to material goods and comfort in life (Sachs, 2019, p. xv). Surveillance in gated communities to surveillance in airports for selective entries manifests the proliferation of borders.

Second, the homogenising 'geopolitics of development' border (Sachs, 2019, p. xvi) generated multiple local borders on two fronts. At the socio-biological level, the global boundaries have been confronted with 'planetary boundaries' where boundaries are determined by human 'values of the control variable' that is fixed at a harmless distance from a hazardous level or its 'global threshold' (Rockstorm et al. 2009, p. 3). The planetary boundaries belonging to different biological spheres set the limit to the economic growth ideology.

On the popular front, the multiplicity of borders could be interpreted differently. When the statist view of the multiplicity of borders emphasised the multilocality of surveillance systems, from the popular perspective, multiplicity meant culturally defined borders of resistance with their value premises. When economic development could penetrate the national borders with state collaboration in the post-colonial societies with ease, it generated an abundant number of local cultural borders to resist it in varied spheres. The popular, local and locational bio-centric and humanistic grassroots movements came in direct confrontation with the singular, homogenising and expansive globalisation of developmental borders

epitomised in the global village perspective. They are the struggles in support of survival, conservation, and sustainability of the environment or, in short, the movement for the right to livelihood. The local borders of resistance multiplied through farmers' protests against the colonisation of land (the ongoing protest at the Singhu border near Delhi), anti-dam and anti-mining movements by tribes (Gandhamadan and Kalinganagar movements), fisher folks' movement against colonisation of water bodies by the Multinational Companies (Chilika Bachao movement), the peace movements (Chipko movement and Baliapal movement). For common citizens at the grassroots level, the 'ecologic border' (Mohanty, 2019) provided the conceptual and practical tool to resist global forces and culture, hegemonic development and border penetrating through the global village conception.

## Conclusion

The essay argues that border formation, an outcome of the structural arrangement of society and politics, accompanied the dominant value formation. Development and bordering on the products of modernity are co-evolutionary processes. Historical facts established that sovereign nation-states with legitimate authority to exercise power territorially materialized through complex negotiating processes to protect people's distinct values and value systems. Westphalia treaty, the culmination of the negotiation though ended the conflict of values but established a different set of dominant values called development. The ideology of economic development, an offshoot of modernity, created the condition of 'bordering' and de-bordering processes as the ideology penetrated globally through colonial conquest. Consolidation of values encounters contestation, formation, and replacement of value systems, changing the very conception of the border. As dominant values dispossessed people of their sources of livelihood, an alternative conception of border developed within the processes of contestation and resistance. The alternative conception of border challenged the dominant bordering processes and the value it professed.

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# WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) in Schools' in India and SDG Target 4.a: An Analysis of the Localising Process in Assam

## Poonam Kakoti Borah*, Vikas Tripathi† and Minakshi Koch‡

*WASH in Schools is one of the critical yardsticks of safe school infrastructure which facilitates quality education. The localising process is the milestone to scale up the delivery of WASH services to schools at the national and sub-national level and reach Target 4.a of SDG Goal 4. The Indian state of Assam has been delivering WASH services at schools vis-à-vis its commitment to safe school infrastructure that forms a vital part of its respective quality education vision to accomplish SDG Goal 4. This paper seeks to comprehend the localising efforts of Assam on WASH in schools considering it as the crucial indicator of Target 4.a. The analysis finds that though WASH in schools has become a far-reaching programme, it lacks an effective monitoring mechanism.*

*Assistant Professor, Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University, Guwahati (Assam)
E-mail: poonam.kborah@gmail.com
†Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati (Assam).
E-mail: 59.vikas@gmail.com
‡Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati (Assam).
E-mail: minakshikoch7@gmail.com

## Introduction

*"'Not having access' to water and sanitation is a polite euphemism for a form of deprivation that threatens life, destroys opportunity and human dignity.'*

(UNDP, 2006, 5)

Water and sanitation are equated with life and human dignity in the above phrase. It emphasises the importance of water and sanitation as a precondition for thriving life and human growth. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recognised the human right to water and sanitation in response to advances toward universal access (Resolution A/RES/64/292, United Nations General Assembly, 2010). The right to water and sanitation is directly related to the right to life, the right to health, and the right to education. Lack of proper Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (henceforth WASH) facilities in schools is detrimental to children's learning as it results in ill health, which can lead to absenteeism and dropout. Studies have acknowledged the role of WASH in children's school performance and overarching development (Cronk et al., 2015, McMichael, 2019). Given its significance, Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'- includes the availability of WASH facilities under its Target 4.a. Target 4.a aims to 'build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools' (The UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.) and 'Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools' is identified as a facility that not just affects children's life and health but also access to education. At the initial phase of 2030 Agenda, around 570 million children did not have access to basic drinking water in their schools; 620 million children lacked basic sanitation in their schools; 900 million lacked basic hygiene facilities in their schools in 2016 (WHO/UNICEF, 2018). This crisis in accessibility is disproportionately affecting different countries. India was among those countries that had limited WASH facilities in schools or less than 75 per cent coverage of basic drinking water service (69 per cent), basic sanitation service (73 per cent) and basic hygiene service (54 per cent) (WHO/UNICEF, 2018). India is committed to WASH in Schools and Target 4.a of SDG Goal 4 given the disproportionate share of the accessibility gap (The United Nations and NITI Aayog, 2018).

**Figure 1**
**Map of India with Schools (in percentage)**
**having access to Facilities under Target 4.a**
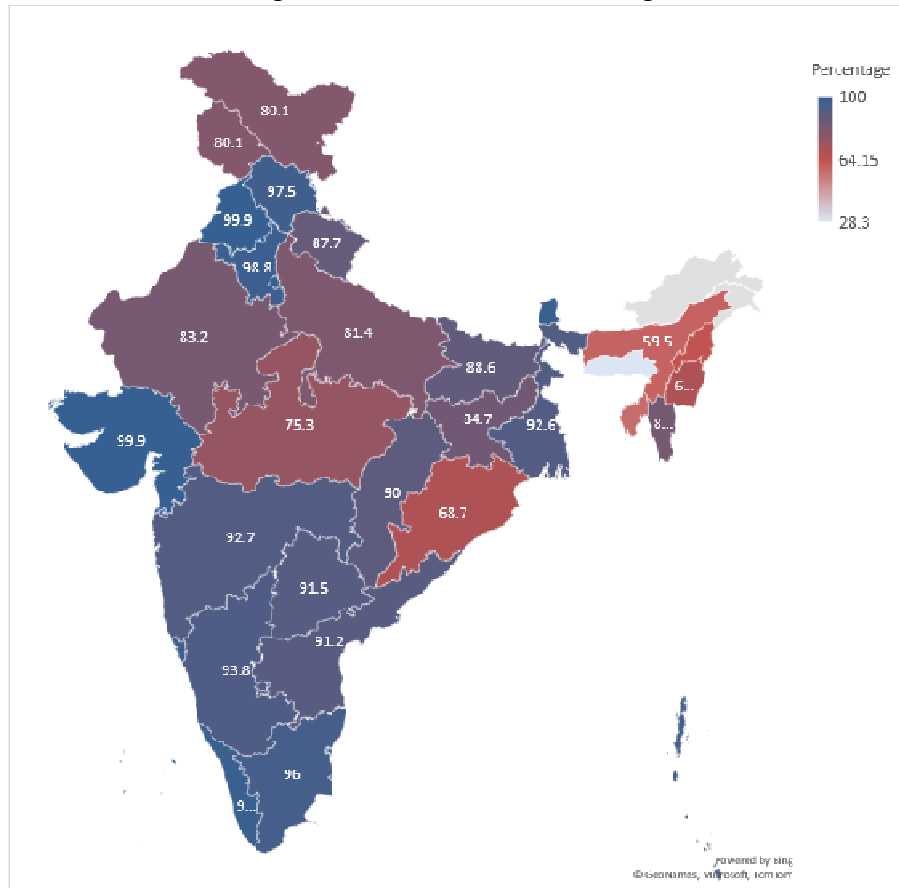


Source: Author's own. Based on data from UN and Niti Aayog, SDG INDIA Index and Dashboard 2020-21.

Similar to all the other states of the country, Assam is one of the Indian states that must also work towards meeting Target 4.a. With an index score of 43 out of 100, the state's performance on SDG Goal 4 is still in the aspirants category, and schools having access to WASH facilities (Target 4.a) stand at 59.51 per cent (The United Nations and NITI Aayog, 2021). A context-driven approach is an exigency to address this crisis and here is where the localising process comes into the picture. It is the cornerstone of achieving global goals. Although the SDGs are global, the national and sub-national governments are the primary forces behind the delivery of essential

services in their respective context. 'No one size fits all' is the main idea behind localising SDGs. Recognising national and sub-national contexts in the formulation of goals, targets and implementation strategies, as well as in the redefining of indicators for tracking progress and public awareness campaigns is known as 'localising' SDGs. Aligning (vision, targets, indicators, national/state development agenda, and responsible departments), sensitising, implementing and monitoring progress appear to be the key components that complete the SDG localising process. On the one hand, localisation is a top-down method to contribute to the local development policy framework, and on the other, it is a bottom-up way to contribute to the 2030 Agenda (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, 2016). Studies have highlighted the localisation imperative of SDG Goals to the 2030 Agenda (Oosterhof, 2018), the available course of actions to locate the SDGs in the Gram Panchayat Development Plans in India (Chakradhar and Pisupati, 2018) and challenges in the localisation of specific SDG Targets 3.6. 3.9 and 11.2 in small cities of India (Tiwari et al., 2021).

The 2030 Agenda would be significantly impacted by the abilities of the national governments in raising awareness, integrating sub-national context into the national approach, implementation and monitoring progress (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, 2016). The significance of the sub-national governments in the implementation phase is derived from the fact that it is the closest service provider to the target population. It is the main actor at intervention level and key mover. Besides that, it goes beyond SDG implementation to act as change agents and context-driven policymakers (United Cities and Local Governments, n.d.).

As far as WASH is concerned, it has already been established by scholars that manifold coordination among different levels of stakeholders leads to improved WASH facilities in schools (Chouhan et al., 2022; Agarwal and Saha, 2021). Thus, understanding of the localisation of WASH in Schools at the sub-national level in light of Target 4.a, in particular, would be extremely pertinent. As already mentioned, the presence of WASH knowledge among school students helps in preventing WASH-related diseases (Mushota et al., 2021), and thus there is a need to fund that helps in dissemination of WASH education in rural schools of India (Ejelonu et al., 2020). In this regard, the present paper is an attempt to analyse the localising process of WASH in Schools vis-à-vis 4.a of SDG Goal 4 in Assam. The paper is motivated by the question – Is Assam able to localise 'WASH in Schools'?

and uses seminal documents like 'Assam 2030: Our Dream and Our Commitment'[1], 'Assam Agenda 2030: Strategies and Actions for Achieving Sustainable Development'[2], 'National Indicator Framework (NIF) of India'[3] and 'State Indicator Framework (SIF) of Assam'[4] to identify the gaps in the localising process. Additionally, it uses active government dashboards of the WASH-related services which are used to collect data on the performance of the delivery of the concerned services.

The paper is broadly divided into four main sections. The first section provides a brief overview of SDG Goal 4, Target 4.a, and WASH in Schools. The second section highlights the commitment towards the same at the national level and at the sub-national level (that is, Assam). The third section presents an overview of the localising process of WASH in Schools at the national level followed by an analysis of the same at the sub-national level in Assam, in the fourth section.

## SDG Goal 4, Target 4.a and WASH in Schools

*"Education– in all its forms and at all levels – is not only an end in itself but is also one of the most powerful instruments we have for bringing about the changes required to achieve sustainable development."*

Koïchiro Matsuura (UNESCO's Director General, 1999-2009)

The above statement traces the significance of education for sustainable development. It is not just a choice but a priority (UNESCO, n.d.). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* seeks to foster the conditions necessary for everyone to reach their full potential in an atmosphere of equality and dignity. Quality education is a key enabling factor in this sense. Besides, it helps people increase their capacity to address issues related to sustainable development (The UN, 1992). In this context, it was one of the vital proposed goals in the proposal for SDGs and eventually SDG Goal 4 was incorporated to the 2030 Agenda along with certain targets and indicators. SDG Goal 4 is to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. It has 10 targets for this purpose to reach by 2030 and each target is followed by indicators to facilitate monitoring of progress (The UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

Target 4.a seeks to build an all-embracing school environment; to 'build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'. Seven indicators are included under it (4.a.1): the proportion of schools with access to power, the internet, computers,

infrastructure for students with disabilities, basic drinking water, single-sex sanitation, and handwashing facilities (WHO and UNICEF, 2018, p. 4). Building and promoting WASH facilities in schools is the focus of the final three indicators. A 'basic drinking water service'[5] means improved drinking water source; 'single-sex basic sanitation service'[6] means improved, usable and single-sex sanitation facilities; 'basic hygiene service'[7] means hand washing facilities with soap and water. As far as implementing and overseeing WASH in Schools in a variety of national and sub-national contexts is concerned, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are the key facilitators (UNICEF and WHO, 2016, p. 3). It appears that WASH services in schools are critical indicators of SDG Goal 4 at the global level.

WASH in Schools has recently been a topic of study, discussion, and analysis due to its importance in reaching the respective target and the goal of the 2030 Agenda. Such studies have underlined the significance of WASH facilities beyond household settings, especially in schools for better performance by the children (Cronk et al., 2015), effect of WASH interventions in schools to prevent diseases among children (Dreibelbis et al., 2014; McMichael, 2019), importance of financing (McGinnis et al., 2017) and monitoring and evaluation barriers in WASH programmes in schools (Deroo et al., 2015). Studies have also looked at WASH from a gender perspective, tracing a link between the availability of WASH facilities in schools and the performance of girls in schools (Agol and Harvey, 2018; Yaliwal et al., 2020; Pommells et. al 2018; Carrard et.al 2022), menstrual hygiene as a WASH imperative (Mahon and Fernandes, 2010; Sharma, 2021), challenges and facilitators to menstrual management in Indian schools (Sivakami et al., 2019; Sharma, 2021), and gaps in menstrual hygiene management in schools of India (Muralidharan, et al., 2015).

**Commitment to WASH and Target 4.a: Situating India and Assam's Efforts**

The Indian Prime Minister at the Sustainable Development Summit on September 25, 2015 in New York, stated that India is a nation dedicated to the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2019, p. 3). Given India's size and population, it's performance would undoubtedly affect the 2030 Agenda. The NITI Aayog (Nodal body) is the central coordinator in aligning the national development agenda, the ministries and their respective schemes with the SDGs and a facilitator in situating the development vision and agenda of the states with the 2030 Agenda (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2019, p. 15). Through India's Strategy for New India@75

and Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas: Collective Efforts Inclusive Growth, India has re-iterated its compliance (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2018, p. 3; NITI Aayog, 2019, p. 111). India's dedication to Goal 4 is demonstrated by its Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)[8] and the Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 which recognises the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2018, p. 53). The National Education Policy of 2020 seeks to create a supportive educational environment that aligns with Target 4.a (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2021, p. 98). A further sign of dedication to WASH in Schools is the Clean India-Clean School or Swachh Bharat-Swachh Vidyalaya (henceforth SBSV) campaign of 2015 (UNICEF India, n.d.).

Assam was one of the leading states to localise SDGs in its respective context (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2019, p. 10). It has developed a Single Synergised Initiative (SSI)[9] to align the SDGs into its development process and this is evident through the vision documents entitled Assam 2030: Our Dreams and Our Commitment and the subsequent Assam Agenda 2030 (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, n.d.; the UN and NITI Aayog, 2019, p. 17). Its main goal is to create a 'Xuroxhito Axom, Vikoxito Axom, and Xarbasreshtha Axom' translated to mean 'Secure Assam, Developed Assam, and Great Assam' (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, n.d.).

Assam, with its Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission, its vision of 'All Children in School and Learning with Quality Within and Outside of School' and a specific approach (divided into 4 separate missions)[10] are firmly dedicated to SDG Goal 4. This was asserted in the Conclave on SDG 4 as well, organised on 16th-17th June 2017, (Government of Assam, Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission, n.d.; Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, n.d.). Besides, the WASH programme is a crucial component of the education system in Assam. Its dedication is seen in programs like WASH in Schools, Daily Handwashing for an Ailment-free Life (DHaAL) and the Swachh Vidyalaya Award (Government of Assam, Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission, n.d.). Although there may not be an explicit commitment to Target 4.a but the SSA of Assam is implicitly committed to it but laying down inclusive education and a 'barrier-free environment' as its the major interventions areas (Government of Assam, Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission, n.d.). All of these align with the RTE Act, SBSV and inclusive education initiative at the national level. However, the achievement of the respective target is largely dependent on the localising process as it transforms commitment into action.

## Localising Wash in Schools: The National Scenario

The Government of India has recognised Target 4.a and indicator 4.a.1 as crucial components to achieving SDG Goal 4 at the national level. The National Indicator Framework (NIF) Version 3.0 includes the SDG indicator 4.a.1 and identifies the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Ministry of Education as the concerned stakeholder (Government of India, MoSPI, 2021, p. 14). The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the concerned programme mapped explicitly with Target 4.a (NITI Aayog, 2018. p. 18).

**Figure 2**
**All India performance of Government Schools under Indicator 4.a.1**
**(in percentage) for WASH specific concerns**
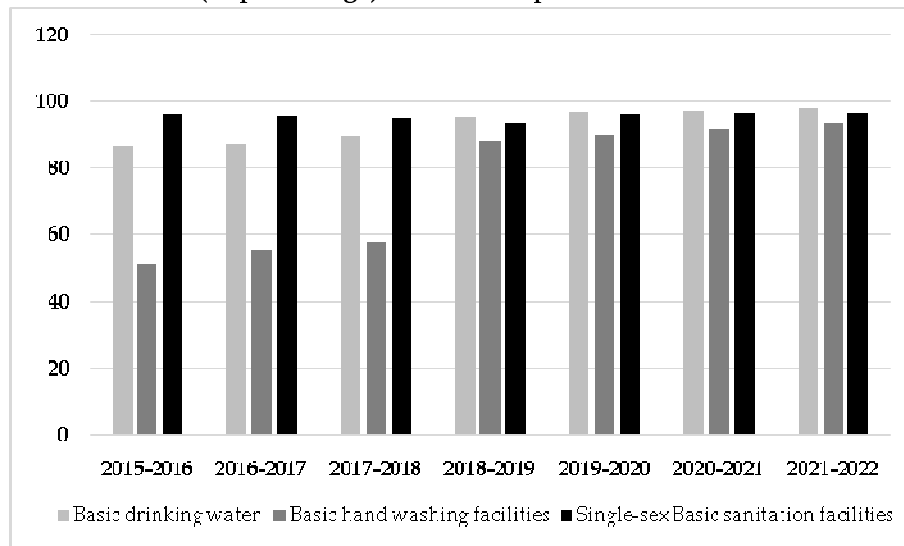


Source: Author's own. Based on data from *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India SGD Dasboard.*

One of the noteworthy awareness and action-generating initiatives on WASH in Schools at the national level is the time-bound '100 days special campaign to provide piped water supply in Anganwadi Centres, Ashramshalas and Schools 2020-2021' as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) under the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti in collaboration with UNICEF. The cornerstone strategy of the campaign is building partnerships with States and Union Territories (UTs), along with the respective districts and villages and their respective action plans. It has developed a collaborative institutional mechanism for capacity-

building, implementation, operation and management (OandM), monitoring and reporting; DDWS at the national level, State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM) under the Chief Secretary at the state level, District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) under the District Collector at the district level and Gram Panchayat in partnership with Paani Samiti, Village Water and Sanitation Committee at the village level (Government of India, Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2020). Subsequently, the number of schools and anganwadi centres with piped and tap water supply have increased from 48,772 in 2020 to 8.60 lakh in May 2022 and from 25,092 in 2020 to 8.89 lakh in May 2022 respectively (Government of India, Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2022a). However, as of 2022, 84.02 per cent of all schools and 79.96 per cent of all anganwadi centres have access to tap water (Government of India, Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2022b). Although it seems to be accelerating, there is still a considerable margin to bridge.

Furthermore, the Swachh Bharat-Swachh Vidyalaya (SBSV) national campaign under DSEL in collaboration with UNICEF is another notable initiative to deliver and encourage WASH services in schools of India. The SBSV campaign was launched in 2014 to make certain that all schools have the facility of single-sex usable toilets for boys and girls along with encouraging hygiene practices and behaviour among school children (Government of India, Ministry of Education, DSEL, n.d.).

The Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar (SVP), introduced in 2016 as a component of SBSV, is a performance and incentive-driven effort to recognise the schools that have excelled in sanitation and hygiene. One of the key parameters for SVP 2021–2022 is WASH. Based on how well they do in these areas, the schools are scored and rated. Subsequently, based on their ratings they can apply for the award which is distributed at three levels - district, state and national levels. The SVP Dashboard serves as the monitoring and reporting tool that tracks state-level participation progress of the schools in this award. The participation progress has somewhat increased from 6,15,151 in 2017-2018 to 9,59,233 in 2022 vis-à-vis 15,08,312 of the total number of schools in India (Government of India, Ministry of Education, DSEL, 2022a; 2022b).

When examining the overall performance of the states concerning SDG Goal 4, it appears that their contributions are disproportionate, ranging from Bihar, which had the lowest SDG India Index Score of 29 out of 100, to Kerala, which received the best score of 80. As was seen from the figure 1 (map of India with schools in percentage having access to facilities under Target 4.a) Goa and Gujarat do exceedingly well while states like Meghalaya

are far away from the target with only 28.39 per cent of its schools having access to essential facilities (The UN and NITI Aayog, 2021, p. 99).

WASH services to a sizable number of schools in the states are provided through missions and campaigns by responsible Ministries and Departments for fulling Target 4.a, due to the want of specific centrally sponsored WASH schemes. Components of these initiatives are positioned to raise awareness, initiate action, and monitor things, which collectively localise WASH in Schools. Nevertheless, a comprehensive analysis of the localising process is incomplete without considering the sub-national level.

### Localising WASH in Schools in Assam

Given the commitment and the vision of SDG Goal 4, the Department of Education, Government of Assam has been mapped as the key department in charge of localising it (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, n.d.). The Conclave on SDG Goal 4 held on June 16th and 17th of 2017 seemed to be the initial step towards localising. Target 4.a was one of the major areas of discussion in the Conclave (Government of Assam, Department of Education, 2017). It paved the way for the Strategy Paper and Action Plan (SPAP) of the concerned goal and the respective department to be included in the Assam Agenda 2030: Strategies and Actions for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, 2018, pp. 49-63).

The SPAP on SDG Goal 4 has identified the availability of clean drinking water and single-sex toilet as important intervention areas to support quality education and lower school dropout rates. (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, 2018, p. 55). In terms of implementation, providing WASH facilities in schools of Assam appears to be a significant initiative under the Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission in partnership with UNICEF (Figure 3). The state-level consultation on 'WASH in all Schools of Assam: Making it a Reality', held on 7th-8th September 2012, was one of the first initiatives (UNICEF and SSA, 2012). WASH exists as a programme in alignment with RTE, SBSV and SDG Goal 4.

**Figure 3**
**How Assam is delivering WASH in Schools?**
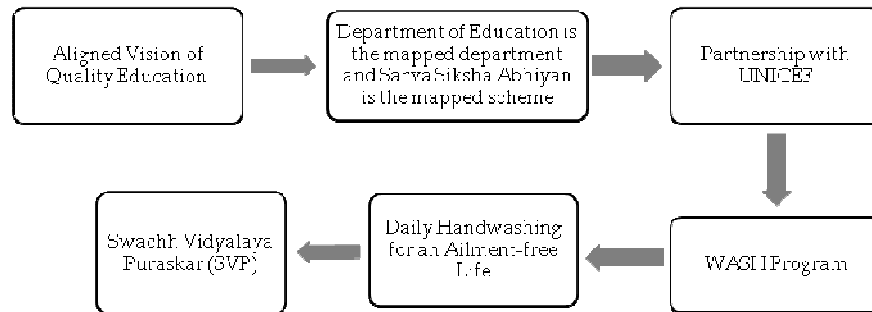


Source: Author's own. Based on data from Government of Assam, Elementary Education, Axom Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission

Daily Hand washing for an Ailment–free Life (DHaAL) and Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar (SVP) are important activities under the WASH Programme (Government of Assam, Elementary Education, n.d.). The DHaAL is being implemented through demonstrations of handwashing at schools before meals, capacity building of the participating parties and the incitement of awareness and action among the children. The state has augmented the model up to 26,800 elementary schools (Government of Assam, Elementary Education, n.d.).

The SVP, in alignment with SBSV, is a performance-driven incentive initiative that has been motivating children to adopt hygiene behaviour as well as developing and training the School Management Committee (SMC) members on Swachh Vidyalaya (Government of Assam, Elementary Education, n.d.). Although the schools must meet nine WASH-related parameters[11] in order to be eligible for the award, the state does not have a functioning SVP Dashboard to monitor the progress of school participation at the state-level SVP. The award was last given out in 2017 to 13 schools[12] that excelled in the requirements of hygiene and sanitation at the state level. Besides this, another six schools[13] were awarded with the national level SVP (Government of Assam, Elementary Education, n.d.). According to the national SVP Dashboard 21-22, 74.09 per cent of the total schools of Assam have registered for the national SVP (Government of India, Ministry of Education, DSEL, 2022b).

**Figure 4**
**Progress on delivery of WASH facilities in**
**Government and Provincialised Schools of Assam**
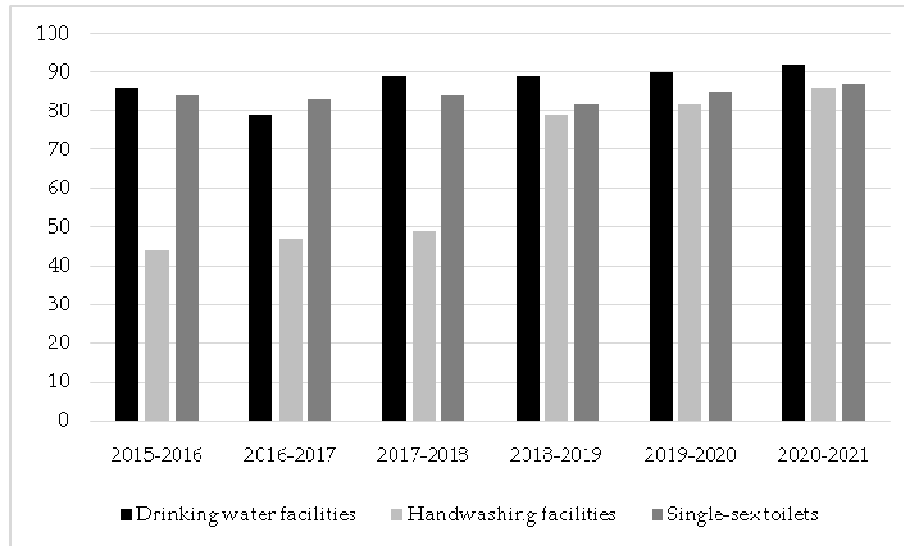


Source: Author's own. Based on data from Government of India, Ministry of Education, Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), School Education Dashboard.

As a result of the aforementioned initiatives, Assam has witnessed accelerating delivery of handwashing facilities in schools compared to delivery of drinking water and single-sex toilet facilities (Figure 4). The overall progress is likely to signify the increasing number of schools with relative WASH awareness (among the students, teachers and SMCs) inclusiveness and performance in Assam. It seems to be a significant component of the elementary school curriculum.

In terms of monitoring progress, the state is missing an explicit WASH indicator among the other aligned indicators for SDG Goal 4 monitoring. (Government of Assam, Transformation and Development, 2019, p. 12).[14] The Gunotsav Programme, an evaluation initiative of the Government of Assam in alignment with Goal 4, is meant to assess the quality of elementary and secondary education. School infrastructure evaluation, mapped along Target 4.a, is one of the significant areas for the overall school evaluation under the program. The availability of usable single-sex toilet facilities, hand washing stations, safe drinking water facilities is included as its indicators. However, the entire school infrastructure area along with its indicators is excluded from the metrics used for the final grading of the schools (Government of Assam, Education Department, 2022, p. 4 and 21).

The above discussion makes it evident that Assam has a shared vision of SDG Goal 4 and is committed to Target 4.a. The state sees WASH in schools as a crucial component of the elementary school curriculum. The Department of Elementary Education in partnership with UNICEF, through its specific WASH Programme, has drawn attention to the delivery of WASH services in schools. However, there appears a discrepancy in the alignment of WASH in schools with Target 4.a at the monitoring level. Although the state appears to be promising in the delivery of WASH services in schools; there is a sizeable gap in the monitoring of progress due to the lack of WASH indicators in the State Indicator Framework (SIF). As the concerned department is devoid of an active dashboard for the particular available WASH activities, the localisation of 'WASH in Schools' lacks an effective monitoring system in the state. Although the state is accelerating in terms of implementation, there is still a considerable gap to fill. Besides, the state is yet to make its SIF WASH inclusive and dovetail it with Target 4.a at the national and global level; the essential action that would complete the localising process of WASH in Schools.

## Conclusion

WASH in Schools is imperative for ensuring a student-friendly school environment and the overarching performance of the children in schools. Consequently, it is one of the linchpins to monitoring the progress of Target 4.a of SDG Goal 4. The Indian state of Assam is among the lead states to commit to SDG Goal 4 along with its targets and the localising process is set in motion to transform its commitment into action. The state of Assam had recognised the significance of WASH in Schools even prior to the SDG period but it is with the coming of Target 4.a of SDG Goal 4 that the delivery of WASH services in schools has got a clear purpose and impetus.

Subsequently, the initial localising efforts have been quite substantial as the state has dovetailed WASH in Schools with a responsible department and an umbrella scheme followed by sensitising the concerned stakeholders with campaigns and programmes in line with the national WASH initiatives. Although the initiatives seem to be somewhat far-reaching in the state, it has been lacking synchronised monitoring mechanisms which makes the localising process partial.

## End Notes

1. Government of Assam (2016). Assam 2030: Our Dream and Our Commitment. Vision and Strategic Architecture Document.
2. Government of Assam. Transformation and Development. (2018). Assam Agenda 2030:Strategies and Actions for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

3.      https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/NIF.pdf

4.      https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/Compilation_of_NE_SDG_Framework_Note_25_02_2020.pdf

5.      An improved drinking water service protects the water from contamination through piped and protected wells/springs/ tubewells, protected dug wells, rainwater catchment and packed/ delivered water.

6.      Improved sanitation facilities separate human excreta from human contact like flush/pour-flush toilets, composting toilets or pit latrines with slabs.

7.      Handwashing facilities are the sinks, water tanks with taps that facilitate washing hands with running water.

8.      SSA was launched in 2000 as a flagship program of the Government of India, in collaboration with State governments, to realise universal access to elementary education. It aims to create a student-friendly school environment with an improved infrastructure of drinking water and sanitation facilities in support of universal access.

9.      Single Synergised Initiative is the coordinated effort of all the Departments and the concerned stakeholders in partnership toward the implementation of the SDGs.

10.     The 4 Separate Missions are- Mission 1 is to reach the marginalised and the disadvantaged students, Mission 2 is to ensure quality education with equity and increased learning outcome, Mission 3 is to strengthen the institutions and Mission 4 is to ensure enabling policy environment.

11.     The requirements are Water Safety and Maintenance, hygiene practices, School Environment, protective and inclusive facility, community participation, toilet condition and usage, meal waste disposal, personal hygiene and awareness and child participation.

12.     The 13 schools are the Tengabari L.P. School (Darrang), Melamati Govt Jr Basic (Jorhat), Jnyandip MES (Golaghat), Khetri MES (Kamrup-Metro), Borjan ME (Golaghat), Bangara Pachanipara MVS (Kamrup-Rural), Tokowbill LPS (Dibrugarh), Kaldoba ME School (Dhubri), Batiporia MES (Golaghat), Surjodoi MES (Sonitpur), 45 NO. Bongaigaon Kendriya Nim (Bongaigaon), Basumati Hindi L.P.S. (Kamrup-Rural), Sri Sankardev LPS (Dibrugarh).

13.     The six schools are Basumati Hindi LPS (Kamrup-Metro), Borjan ME School (Golaghat), Kaldoba ME School (Dhubri), Sri Sankardev LPS (Dibrugarh), Swarupananda Vidyapith HES (Dibrugarh), Town Panigaon MES (Nagaon).

14.     Indicators on SDG Goal 4 as specified in Assam Indicator Framework are Net Enrolment Ratio at Upper Primary Level, Net Enrolment Ratio at Secondary Level, Net Enrolment Ratio at Higher Secondary Level, Net Enrolment Rate at pre-primary level, Dropout Rates at Primary Level, Dropout at Secondary Level and Ratio of Vocational Enrolment to Total Secondary Enrolment.

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# Changing Nature of West Bengal Politics: 2021 Assembly Election and Unreason

## Pratip Chattopadhyay*

*West Bengal faced a critical election in 2021 where the party in power, Trinamul Congress (TMC) behaved as an opposition by claiming support from all quarters of political forces including the left to resist the main opposition party in the state, BJP from coming to power. This is unusual yet interesting as it recreates a Lok Sabha voting milieu. Trinamul Congress in its strategic best implementing game theory tactics through its electoral slogan 'khela hobe' (game in offing), nationalist BJP focusing on renaissance tactics in its electoral counter slogan 'bikash hobe' (surety of development) and adventurous Left-led Sanyukta Morcha promoting a political struggle to instate 'janhitkar sorkar' (people-welfarist government), contextualised 2021 assembly election. Nevertheless, the reflective imagery of TMC and BJP as two sides of the same coin and Sanyukta Morcha's self-declaration as an alternative to both TMC-BJP dilutes a broader political-ideological battle between secularism and communalism into a battle of unreason, albeit cunningly in the state of West Bengal resulting in landslides win for TMC in midst of landslide allegations against TMC about corruption and scams.*

## Introduction

West Bengal assembly election 2021 in eight phases from 27th March to 29th April was a battle between the continuity of Trinamul Congress rule and change in favour of Bharatiya Janata Party which ended in TMC having a whipping 213 seats out of 294 and BJP gaining 74 seats and Left Front and

*Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Kalyani, Kalyani (West Bengal). E-mail: chatterjee23_pratip@yahoo.co.in

Congress getting no seats and a new party ISF bagging one seat as part of its alliance with Left Front and Congress. The context of this battle is ingrained in changing imagery of Trinamul Congress from an 'agency of *poriborton* (change)' in 2011 to a 'subject of *poriborton* (change)' in 2021. Interesting to note that on the eve of the 2021 assembly election, this changing imagery of TMC is politically articulated by both BJP and Left-Congress alliance on the basis of the 2019 Lok Sabha poll verdict translating into assembly constituencies meaning that the oppositions are ahead in 140 seats with TMC having a grip on 154 seats. BJP is eyeing to win this assembly poll in West Bengal to permanently shrug off the tag of a party of 'Hindi-belt' while the Left-Congress alliance tries to regain their acceptance against both BJP and TMC. Turncoats from TMC have broadened the length and breadth of the BJP state unit to the extent that almost 60% of BJP candidates in this election are former TMC people who were so long the face of public anti-incumbency and BJP criticisms. There was a widespread disenchantment among intellectuals and the public at large with Mamata Banerjee in the post-2011 period due to her different model of administering (spur-of-the-moment sensationalising decisions based) as against decent and disciplined *bhadrolokean* way of administering (planned ideologically rooted decisions) that the Left Front institutionalised during its three and half decades rule. So Mamata Banerjee-led TMC were almost written off in media and political circle during the 2016 assembly elections which were conducted under the strict gaze of the Election Commission of India and its deployed central forces, but the verdict proved otherwise giving TMC more seats than in 2011 (211 as against 184 out of 295 seats). For the next four years, TMC as a party went into disarray. In 2017, Mukul Roy, former Rajya Sabha MP and former Minister of Railways during UPA-II, second-in-command and the organisational mastermind of TMC joined BJP. In 2018 the local body (panchayat) elections were put into question in the High Court of Calcutta as out of a total of 58,692 posts for gram panchayat, zilla parishad and panchayat samiti, 20,159 had remained uncontested (34% of seats) where opposition candidates were not allowed to file nomination in the violence-marred electoral milieu. In 2019, relived by the order of the Supreme Court of India in August 2018 upholding the sanctity of panchayat elections, TMC claimed to win 42 out of 42 Lok Sabha seats but received a severe jolt by managing to win only 22 seats while BJP grabbed 18 seats and Indian National Congress getting two seats. In 2019 sitting MLA and former Mayor of Bidhannagar, Sabyasachi Dutta and former Mayor of Kolkata and former Minister of TMC government, Sovon Chatterjee joined BJP. Without any

organisation reshuffle, TMC brought in Prashant Kishor, the electoral strategic expert and his team (Indian Political Action Committee/I-PAC) to unearth the reasons for failure and chalk out strategies to embolden TMC's image ahead of the 2021 assembly elections. This move backfired and in 2020 a series of defections took place; the stunning of them was Suvendhu Adhikari, a frontal organisation leader of TMC, former Transport Minister of TMC government joining BJP with nine sitting MLAs, one sitting MP and several layers of organisational leaders from across the state in December 2020. The trend continued in 2021 when the Minister-in-charge for Irrigation & Waterways (2011-2018), and Tribal Affairs and Backwards Classes (2018-2019) and Forest and Environment (2019-21), Rajib Bandopadhyay joined BJP in January 2021 with another sitting MLA, Baishali Dalmia who interestingly accused TMC of being transformed into a vacuous structure. In February and March 2021, the cake on the ice of defection to BJP was the joining of Dinesh Trivedi, sitting TMC MP of Rajya Sabha and former Central Minister of Railways during UPA-II, and Mithun Chakraborty, the legendary film actor from Bengal who served as TMC MP in Rajya Sabha from 2014. The trend to join BJP from TMC continued thereafter as well, particularly after the declaration of the TMC candidate list in which 20 sitting MLAs were dropped. Interestingly to note that none of the defectors accused Mamata Banerjee, the party supremo and Chief Minister, for their exit but lack of working environment due to Prashant Kishor and I-PAC's high-handedness in party affairs in conjunction with Mamata's nephew, sitting MP Abhishek Bandopadhyay. So ahead of the 2021 assembly polls, we have a 'new TMC' comprising mostly of fresh young candidates from a social, political and cultural background with 'old leader' Mamata Banerjee. In a similar vein, we have a 'new BJP' comprising of turncoats from TMC who are given more recognition and attention than the old guards of the BJP state unit with a 'new leader' in party state unit President and sitting MP Dilip Ghosh who have transformed BJP from a 'party-in-name' to a 'party-in-fame' in the state, a contribution highlighted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an election rally on 20th March 2021 in Kharagpur constituency. To battle in a concerted manner simultaneously against both TMC and BJP, Left Front shedding their age-old ideological animosity with Indian National Congress (INC) has teamed up with them in a mature manner of seat adjustment than the 2016 experience and included a Muslim minority faction group Indian Secular Front (ISF) led by new generation minority leader Abbas Siddiqui who clamours for equal status rather than appeasement and sympathy (*toshon noy bhagidari chai*). The Left Front-INC-ISF combine named as *Sanyukta Morcha*

promises to be the 'new third player' in this election. Thus contextualising the assembly poll milieu in West Bengal, the paper in three sections tries to understand the reason behind the electoral campaign of TMC, BJP and *Sanyukta Morcha.* A concluding section argues that all arguments and promises to attract voters display a 'cunning of unreason' rather than a planned innovative roadmap for new political, social and economic progress in West Bengal.

**Trinamul Congress: From Remembering to Forgiveness**

Mamata Banerjee formed Trinamul Congress in 1998 to break the undercover nexus between the state unit of the Indian National Congress and Left Front[1] and to remain steadfastly committed to ousting the Left Front from power. In that effort Trinamul Congress kept on remembering the public about the party-governance of CPI(M) ruled Left Front, the harassment and brutal attacks meted out to Mamata Banerjee, the 26 days fast and Mamata Banerjee's stand in favour of the cause of farmers and farm-lands. This remembrance politics remained the mainstay of the electoral campaign of TMC creating a kind of emotional maze giving Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamul Congress a chance in 2011 to rule the state. From 2011 till 2019 TMC leader Mamata Banerjee continued to force the public to remember the miscreants of CPI(M)-led Left Front firstly for undercover conspiracies to destabilise her government and secondly to vote for BJP en mass to teach Trinamul Congress a lesson as reflected in 2019 Lok Sabha poll results[2]. However, a shift is noticeable in the 2021 poll campaign of Mamata Banerjee – seeking a vote with a footnote of forgiveness. In North Bengal and Junglemahal which simply deserted TMC in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls[3], Mamata Banerjee plainly states "What was our fault that you did not vote for us? We have done so many things for you but still....forgive us...there may be some miscommunications and gaps but do not vote for BJP as they will simply rob you off". Going by the Derridian logic[4], she mixes forgiveness with her usual tactics of remembering the unforgivable, the Left Front, which to her reading, halted the development of the state earlier and now helping BJP to rise to prominence to defeat TMC. In addition, an open display of accepting some fault lines in TMC governance (cut money, syndicate and corruption) by Mamata Banerjee herself (in an election rally speech on 25th March she states –"give me a slap if I do wrong") and also by senior leader and MP Sougoto Roy, is something new in the last one decade where brushing aside such allegations as baseless was the norm. Riding on party programmes structured by Prashant Kishor and his team, like '*Didi ke bolo*'

(tell your problem directly to didi/Mamata Banerjee by dialling a number), government programmes like '*Duayre sarkar*'(government at your doorstep), '*paray paray somadhan*'(neighbourhood settlement of disputes) and an electoral slogan like '*Bangla nijer meyeke chay*' (Bengal wants her own girl as against outside state-leaders of BJP), TMC is set to reverse the non-zero-sum game (prisoner's dilemma) that was in place with TMC leaders and workers shifting to BJP into a zero-sum game in this assembly election through its election manifesto named '*ongikar*' (commitment) for people-welfare, with the catch-line '*khela hobe, jeta hobe*' (the game is on and will be own).

**Bharatiya Janata Party: From Nationalism to Sub-National Renaissance**

In the electoral history of West Bengal, Bharatiya Janata Party for the first time is becoming a key player to put TMC and its supremo Mamata Banerjee into tough competition. The earlier generation of BJP leaders making a mark in the national scene from West Bengal including Tapan Sikdar and Satyabrata Mukhopadhyay (1999 Lok Sabha MPs and Minister of States) are hardly remembered by the present genre of national and state leaders of BJP. The earlier generation harped on nationalist Hindutva agenda which was a particular position but not in favour of opposition-free space as the present genre of leadership aspires. The new campaign strategy is to usher in sub-nationalism by reviving the idea of '*sonar bangla*' (the golden era of Bengal) for a new renaissance period free of the party-government of Left Front and the corrupted dynasty-government of Trinamul Congress. In its mission to wipe out TMC from the state with the slogan '*unishe half ekushe saaf*' (half in 2019 and total wipeout in 2021), the BJP election manifesto is presented as a *sankalpa patra* (document of oath) to provide free, transparent, just, fair and futuristic government with 'double-engine'(similar party ruling in centre and state) for inclusive development. Giving a choice between 'party of scams' (TMC) and 'party of schemes' (BJP), Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, urges the West Bengal electorate to vote for the later by bidding farewell to Mamata Banerjee's reign of terror. Putting five non-Bengali party leaders from outside the state as observers in five zones in which constituencies have been grouped by the party, declaration of party-candidates name for 294 constituencies from party-headquarter in New Delhi and inauguration of party-manifesto spelt out by Amit Shah himself at one level shows the eagerness of the central leadership to 'connect' with the hearts and minds of West Bengal electorate but at other level exposes the lack of confidence of the central leadership on their state counterparts. While the campaign is structured around the sub-national

renaissance idea based on the 'developmental' leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the dominance of the 'national' (central leadership) gives room for the opposition to treating it as an idea tailored by 'outsiders' (*bohiragoto*) having no connection with the cultural, social and political history of the state. In order to address that criticism, Prime Minister Modi in an election rally speech on 19th March referred to Pulwama and the surgical strikes incident to show that the security of the people in border states like Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal remains a concern of BJP. Home Minister Amit Shah declares implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act after coming to power to dignify the presence of migrants in the state. Intertwining ideas of nationalism (external security) and sub-national renaissance (internal security of livelihood), BJP promises to be the alternative to the perceived suffocating milieu of TMC rule for development and job (*bikash hobe, chakri hobe*) and declares '*Mamatar khela sesh hobe*'(end of the game for Mamata) with an important electoral slogan '*aar noy onnay*' (no more injustice).

**Sanyukta Morcha: From *Janogon* (People) to *Janohit* (People-Welfare)**

Left Front which ruled uninterruptedly for three and a half decades have been written off from the electoral map in the 2019 Lok Sabha verdict in the state when no Left candidate could win and the vote percentage(6.3%) dropped by 16.6% in comparison to 2014 election. In order to better their electoral image and revive organisationally, Left Front started doing the unthinkable from 2014 onwards, firstly by forging broader left unity with CPI (ML-L) and SUCI-C, the two bitter critics of Left Front government throughout and secondly by going for politically aligned seat-adjustment with their ideological opponent Indian National Congress. Getting not much benefit from either of these alliances, the Left Front surfaces a new alliance, *Sanyukta Morcha* for 2021 assembly polls by matured seat adjustment with Indian National Congress and Indian Secular Front (ISF). The entry of ISF into the Left-Congress alliance has checked the initial exuberance of AIMMM to contest in full throttle in this poll backed by its success in Bihar polls. The chief cleric of ISF, Abbas Siddiqui, a post-graduate in theology, has presented secular imagery of candidature in 36 seats with Hindus, Adivasis and Dalits more than Muslims only, clamours for the job and the not dedicated monthly sum of money (*bhata*) and campaigns to vote for the left who stopped BJP's entry for 34 years and not for TMC who helped BJP's inroad in the state. Although the left did not require an ISF certificate to prove its secular credentials but it surely dithers TMC anti-incumbency

Muslim votes, which constitute 27% of the electorate, from going to BJP. The campaign slogan of Left, contesting in 166 seats presenting a new generation of leadership with 40% youth candidates below 40 years, *fearte haal ebare laal* (to bring stability in governance this time go for Red) is an effort to strike a chord with the unemployed youth and disgruntled working class in the post-Covid period. Indian National Congress contesting in 92 seat campaigns in favour of a revival of late Bidhan Chandra Roy's chief-minister-ship days of reconstruction of Bengal with the slogan '*aar noy bhul, aar noy phul*'(no mistake this time, no flower this time (TMC's twin flower symbol and BJP's lotus flower symbol). The reflexive imagery between TMC and BJP, hyphenated by 'would-be BJP' and 'would be TMC' gives leverage to *Sanyukta Morcha* to present itself as a genuine alternative to both TMC and BJP to attract a good percentage of votes which singularly both left and Congress lost in the state in post-2011 period. The centrepiece of *Sanyukta Morcha's* call is to shift attention to the welfare of people (*janahit*) rather than simply fooling people (*janogan*) for a particular community-oriented welfare (BJP) or a particular family-oriented welfare (TMC).

**Between Reason and Unreason: Politics of Promise**

Going by the manifesto presented by all the political parties involved in the assembly election in West Bengal one cannot but find plenty of promises and counter-promises to woo voters. TMC presenting first promises of Student Credit Cards up to a limit of Rs.10 lakhs to enable them to pursue higher education, the creation of 5 lakh jobs a year by creating 1000 MSMEs a year, a monthly basic income guarantee of Rs. 500 to 1.6 crore families, and Rs. 1000 to the female heads of families of SC, STs, besides and Rs. 10000 as annual aid to farmers. BJP presented a second promise of one job per family, implantation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme and industrialisation at a fast pace. It also talks of bringing in the nationalist content in school education curriculum, instruction in Bengali from 1st to 10th standard, free education to women from KG to PG to attract women voters, and transfer of Rs. 18000 annually to the accounts of eligible farmers under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana. Indian National Congress presented third assured monthly support of Rs. 5,700 to 20% of the most economically backward families and promised Rs. 5,000 a month as interim relief to families of migrant workers till they get employment. Left Front in their manifesto also promised that tests for recruitment of teachers at primary, secondary and higher secondary schools will be regularised. The

100-day employment programme will be extended from rural to urban areas. Work and wages will be increased to 150 days.

The rationality of the manifesto lies in the roadmap for planned inclusive development and good governance policies and infrastructural betterment positions with a tinge of political oath to preserve the sanctity, direction and ethos of Indian civilisation and Constitution. Bypassing this broad rationality, political parties, particularly BJP and TMC are in a race to woo SC and ST (23.51%) communities, the Matua community (Namashudra 17.4%) female voters (49%). Translating an accident into a purposive effort to hurt her[5], Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee is displaying her hair-fractured left ankle in the recent poll campaigns on 'wheel-chair' as a symbol of her mental strength to fight all odds resting her hopes on active legs of thousands of female voters (49% of the total electorate) of the state who would be the carriers of development and good governance in days to come.

Seemingly unnerved by the organisational loss suffered in villages following TMC heavyweight Mukul Roy and Suvendhu Adhikari's exit, Mamata Banerjee is going for a defensive political posture by declaring herself to act as the "goalkeeper" and not "striker" in the game against BJP and appeals to the electorate to push out BJP from the electoral landscape of the state. Her desperateness was accused in a leaked telephone conversation on the first phase of polling day (27th March) pleading to a turncoat TMC going to BJP, Prabir Pal to look after TMC candidates in the East Midnapore district and to come back to TMC. Even after a decade-long rule of declared 110% fulfilment of the promise of good governance and development, the ruling party (TMC) and its leadership are in a mode of seeking forgiveness, asking for votes by promising more jobs and monetary benefits revealing cunningness of otherwise unreasoned emotional political talk. The main contender from the opposition, BJP, which is sure of the lack of popularity of TMC leadership in the state also replicates the TMC manifesto and extends monetary and social benefit measures revealing unreason about their claim of a political milieu in which breakdown of TMC rule is a natural process in 2021. The leaked telephone conversation between Mukul Roy and Dinesh Bajoria on the first phase of polling day to pressurise State Election Commission to alter the 'requirements' of being a booth agent shows BJP's desperateness to flex institutional muscles to come to power. By indicating the implementation of CAA, BJP actually eyes the votes in South 24 Parganas, Nadia, Maldah, North and South Dinajpur and Coochbehar districts where Hindus coming from Bangladesh following partition in 1947

and 1971 are a majority. *Sanyukta Morcha* constituents trying to win back their lost ground in the electoral milieu also enters this rat race of promising monetary benefits rather than alternate policy positions on agriculture, industrialisation and governance. So 'unreason'(emotion or material benefits) rather than 'reason'(actually achievable roadmap for development) is reflected in party manifestos and the cue of '*asol poriborton*'(actual change) of celebrating a united front of 'secular' forces against 'communal-tinged' BJP, remain sandwiched in the game of electoral politics where, as the political philosopher John Dunn argues, lies a "choice between two profoundly unenviable alternatives, which at the same time appears to exclude the possibility of any other option"(Dunn, 2000:5). The presence of third alternate *Sanjukta Morcha* could have been meaningful if it could balance between the force of secularism (TMC) and communalism (BJP). On the contrary, *Sanyukta Morcha* constituents narrowly focus on the West Bengal election missing the broader national scenario which is an aggressive effort of the BJP to create a 'BJP system' of BJP government at the Centre and States. In order to keep the federal structure and pluralist ethos intact, the Bihar model of united front tactics must be followed in all the state assembly elections. While in Assam such a model has been architected by Indian National Congress, in West Bengal battling out both TMC and BJP may prove a wrong strategy for *Sanyukta Morcha* led by Left Front and Congress. However, even in this 'sameness' milieu that particular 'unreason' will win which is cunning enough to urge the electorate to learn to replace "disappointment with dismay, a perspective of eager anticipation by one of chastened retrospection"(Dunn, 2000:x). The cunningness of BJP's 'unreason' of trying to win gets exposed when some declared candidates themselves withdraw from some constituencies[6] reflecting the disconnect between party workers at various levels. The cunningness of *Sanyukta Morcha* gets exposed when their newly added 'secular' group ISF reportedly goes for an undercover alliance with AIMM, resisting which was ISF's agenda. Trinamul Congress and its leader, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's self-declaration as 'actual' candidate in all 294 constituencies ("do not look for candidates, it's my vote and vote for me") forces the electorate to remember her commitment against party rule of Left Front at state-level and unilateral-rule of BJP at the national level, as a personification of ordinary masses, scores a slight edge over opponents in cunningness in the manner in which she transformed the BJP slogan of 'Jai Sri Ram' into historically correct 'Jai Siya Ram'[7], and to manoeuvre unreason of materiality (promises) into the rationality of ordinary or the mundane[8] in the broader discourse of electoral politics.

## Conclusion: Limits of Unreason

While the electoral verdict of the 2021 assembly elections reflected the win of unreason or in other words, win of emotion, empathy and sympathy over and above treachery, cultural intrusion (BJP) and lack of clear political strategy (*Sanjukta Morcha*), the post-2021 period is showing the limits of such unreason of the public as the state government is under scanner by High Court-monitored CBI-ED investigation for law and order problem, corruption on disbursement of PM Awas yojana and scam on educational and cattle smuggling putting front rank TMC party leaders and MLAs and cabinet ministers behind bars. The public seems disgruntled yet disillusioned because the context and actors remain the same with a similar strategy as in the pre-2021 period. BJP still very much relies on central leadership for the strategic direction and Left Front again goes back to BJP-TMC two sides of the same coin theory and Congress remains satisfied by formulating marches as part of *Bharat Jodo Yatra* in the state. The unreason of the TMC supremo Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is now being translated into cover-up strategies like introducing a new party programme of '*Didir Duut*'(representatives of Didi ala Mamata at the doorsteps) to listen to grievances of the public as a safety valve mechanism to get some dissensions tackled thereby before the ensuing local body elections in 2023. The violence marred local body elections in mid 2023 showcased decisive victory for TMC with BJP being a distant second but with a drop in its vote percentage as compared to the 2021 assembly election based local level vote percentage and Left Font and Congress sensing pride in increased vote percentage although seat wise they remain in third position. The limitation of unreason seems to be tackled by illumination of the political strategy of bowing before the public for errors (*didr duut* programme) and trying to gain sympathy for the non-availability of excepted central funds. The opposition is trying to be rational and logical in its criticism but with no emotional appealing tactics like that of the fast of 26 days in the Singur site by the then opposition leader Mamata Banerjee or formulating a *durniti-birodhi yatra* (march to end corruption). Hence even with limits of unreason West Bengal politics seems to be on the cusp of indecisiveness (for TMC it's a choice between going alone or siding with Left and Congress as part of INDIA or to be soft to RSS and harsh to BJP to rupture BJP from within; for electorate it's to vote for whom and for opposition parties to be cheerful of vote percentages or actual seats won) for some time to come (including 2024 Lok Sabha elections) unless a change in context or actor happens socially and politically having electoral significance.

## Endnotes

1. For details see Mamata Banerjee (2012): *My Unforgettable Memories*, Roli Books, New Delhi, where Mamata Banerjee states - "I had never imagined one day I would see such a cosy arrangement between the Left and Right. I realised the Left-Right 'joint' method will not suit me. And thus began the fight for my ideas", p. 80.

2. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls while the TMC vote percentage slightly improved by 3.48% than 2014 making it 13.3%, BJP witnessed a massive 16.6% upsurge in 2014 making it to 40.7% which mostly came from the loss of Left vote percentage of 16.6% than in 2014 making Left Front score its lowest 6.3% in electoral history.

3. The seven Lok Sabha constituencies in North Bengal are Coochbehar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Raiganj, Balurghat, Maldah Uttor while five Junglemahal Lok Sabha constituencies are Jhargram, Medinipur, Purulia, Bankura, Bishnupur

4. For details see Jacques Derrida (2001): *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London where Derrida writes "forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive; there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable" (p.32).

5. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was injured during her campaign trail at Nandigram constituency where she is contesting on 10th March 2021.

6. In Chowrongee constituency in Central Kolkata, the name of Sikha Mitra, wife of the late President of the Indian National Congress state unit Soumen Mitra, appeared in the first list of BJP candidates and Sikha Mitra strongly refused to be the candidate as she declared she has and will never have any connection with BJP. Similar was the case in the Cossipore-Belgachia constituency in North Kolkata, where the name of Torun Saha, husband of TMC councillor Mala Saha was declared and Mr. Saha declared that without consent his name was floated.

7. While 'Jai Sri Ram' is a religiously motivational chant, the historical and mythological correct secular gender-neutral utterance is 'Jai Siya Ram' where Lord Ram and Lord Sita are remembered together.

8. In an electoral speech on 28th March 2021 in Chandipur constituency, Mamata Banerjee declares "ora (BJP) sudhu bhabche akai aksho hobe…seta hote parena…amar sathe aksho sotangsho manush ache tai ami aksho ak…ami apnaer opor chere dichhi sob kichu," (they are boasting of being all in all by themselves, that cannot be…I've 100 per cent people with me so I am 101…someone leading you all…so I leave it upto you to decide while voting).

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John Dunn (2000): *Cunning of Unreason: Making Sense of Politics*, Harper Collins, New York.

# Objectification and Psychological Well-Being across Gender: A Study on Urban Indian Adults

## Anika Yadav* and Suruchi Bhatia†

*Objectification refers to reducing a human to a mere object and placing all focus on the body, without acknowledging the mind or personality. When people start indulging in treating themselves as objects, it is known as self-objectification. In recent years, people, irrespective of their gender, are inundated with fixed standards of body and beauty through the profound prevalence of media. The present study is mixed-method research and was conducted with the objective to explore self-objectification and psychological well-being among urban adults (N=150) using quantitative (Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale and Ryff's PWB Scale) and qualitative (semi-structured interview) measures. Data were analysed using SPSS and significant results were reported. Qualitative analysis (thematic analysis) revealed that interviewees were more focused on their physical appearance, rather than on their feelings. They were fine with making changes to their bodies to look more attractive to others, even at the expense of discomfort.*

## 1.     Introduction

The human body makes up the basis of the distinction between the sexes. The determinants of differentiation are not just biological but also

*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi, Delhi.
E-mail: anika.yadav169@gmail.com
†Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Shyama Prasad Mukherji College for Women, University of Delhi, Delhi.

include social and cultural aspects. In doing so, one type of body or sex (usually, male) is often regarded as superior to others, thus devaluing the other sexes. This positioning of sexes has to do little with the biological aspect, and more with the socialisation and power status of men, women and other sexes in society. While doing so, people often end up objectifying the other sex.

### 1.1 Objectification

Objectification refers to degrading a human being to a mere entity or object and evaluating an individual based on her/his physical appearance without giving any consideration to the talents, qualities, or values they possess. In the process of objectification, there are two people involved- one who objectifies, i.e., the *objectifier*, and the other who is subjected to objectification, i.e., the *objectified*. When the same person becomes the 'objectifier' as well as the 'objectified', it is referred to as 'Self-Objectification'. In such a scenario, the person considers one's own self as an object of gratification and treats his/herself as a commodity. American Philosopher Martha Craven Nussbaum (1995), defines objectification as "...treating one thing as another... as an object, what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being". Explaining further, she describes seven notions that are central to the idea of treating as an object.

- *Instrumentality*: The objectifier considers the objectified as a tool to serve her/his purpose.
- *Denial of Autonomy*: The objectified is treated as something that lacks self-determination and autonomy.
- *Inertness*: The objectified is considered as inactive and deprived of agency.
- *Fungibility*: The objectified is treated by the objectifier as being interchangeable with things of the same or different types.
- *Violability*: The objectifier regards the objectified as not possessing any boundaries, and as something that can be violated.
- *Ownership*: No self-ownership of the objectified, owned by others, and can be s/he can be bought or sold by others.
- *Denial of Subjectivity*: Not taking into consideration the feeling and experiences of the objectified.

Past research has highlighted that self-objectification is more common in women as compared to men (Oehlhof et al., 2009; Moradi and Huang, 2008; Weltzin et al., 2005), but in recent times, men too are becoming increasingly prone to it, whereby they indulge in constant body monitoring.

A study by Dwivedi et al. (2021) reported that 77% scored moderately high on objectification. Along similar lines, it has been observed that there has been an increase in body image concerns in men (Johnson et al., 2007) and an increase in steroid intake, excessively high exercise and desire for muscularity (Parent and Moradi, 2011; Daniel and Bridges, 2010), all of which can be related to self-objectifying behaviour. Reasons for self-objectification in women could be attributed to the prejudiced behaviour against them that puts them in a position where they are expected to always look and behave in a certain way and fulfil the criteria of feminine standards set by society. The results of a project by Dove point out that only 4% of women worldwide consider themselves beautiful, and 72% of girls experience immense pressure to look beautiful. In yet other surveys, it was found that 20-40% of men were not happy about the way they look, about their physical appearance, their weight and muscle tone, etc. For instance, in a study by Frederick et al. (2007), it was observed that around 45%-90% of men desired for increased body muscularity. Hence, it can be said that the huge gender differences that prevailed earlier regarding objectification and self-objectification in men and women have started to shrink with time.

### 1.2 Well-Being

Well-being is *"a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life"* as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA). It can be categorised into subjective well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being.

- Subjective well-being includes "having high positive emotions, high life satisfaction, and low negative emotions".
- Psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Keyes, 1995) focuses on positive functioning and can be understood through its six components:

  i. *Autonomy*: It caters to the level of independence and self-regulation a person exhibits in terms of behaviour, and whether one performs as per social pressures or by the set personal standards.

  ii. *Environmental Mastery*: It is the ability to manage situations and choose opportunities that enhance the efficiency of the individual. It also encompasses the competency of a person to create or choose environments that fit her/his needs and principles.

  iii. *Personal Growth*: Openness to growth and new experiences and working towards expanding horizons comes under personal growth.

Acknowledging the changes and improvement in the self are also a part of this domain.

iv. *Positive Relations*: This aspect revolves around having relationships with others that are warm and affectionate, and understanding how an interpersonal relationship works.

v. *Purpose in Life*: It refers to having a direction and meaning in life, certain goals and objectives that give purpose to one's life.

vi. *Self-Acceptance*: This facet of well-being talks about recognising and accepting all the factors, whether good or bad, that make up a person's self. Self-acceptance also means having a positive outlook towards one's past.

- Social well-being as explained by Keyes (1998) is well-being from the perspective of public and social criteria. It has five dimensions: *social acceptance, social actualisation, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration.*

Yet another categorisation of well-being divides it into 'eudaimonic' and 'hedonic' well-being, which include happiness, life satisfaction, meaning and accomplishment. It has been observed that these two aspects experience a decrease when people are involved in self-objectification (Breines et al., 2008). Koval et al. (2019) also reported heightened negative emotions as a result of self-objectification. Past literature has established links between self-objectification and various aspects of a person's life that are direct or indirect indicators of well-being. For example, self-esteem and positive affect are negatively affected by self-objectification (Adams et al., 2017; Breines et al., 2008), whereas it marks an increase in body shame, appearance anxiety, body surveillance, disgust, guilt, depression, eating disorders, meaningful interpersonal relationships, etc. (Roberts and Gettman, 2004; Sinclair and Myers, 2004; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997).

India is a country with a stronghold of patriarchal culture. Patriarchy emphasises the behaviour and appearance of men and women, whereby they are expected to maintain a masculine/muscular and feminine/graceful appearance respectively. It then follows that women and men in Indian society are more identified and associated with their bodies. For example, the very image of an ideal man is that of a warrior. Instances from Indian mythology as well informed about the propagated male body image. Lord Ram, the epitome of an ideal man, is usually portrayed in images and movies as having a well-groomed muscular body. This might send out a message to the masses about how a man should look.

### 1.3    *The Present Study*

So far, objectification was mostly understood with regard to women, but recently it has been observed that images of men objectification are also gaining prevalence. Men too are exposed to unrealistic standards of body and beauty. Therefore, it becomes imperative to study whether men are influenced by these traps of physical perfection in the present times. In addition to these, objectification has been known to have detrimental psychological outcomes.

### *Objectives*

Following were the objectives of the present study: To study the gender differences in self-objectification among Indian adults. To study the gender differences in psychological well-being among Indian adults. To understand the relationship between self-objectification and psychological well-being among Indian adults. To explore self-objectification among Indian adults.

### *Hypotheses*

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses were developed for the present study: H1 There will be a significant gender difference in Self-Objectification among Indian adults. H2. There will be a significant gender difference in Psychological Well-Being among Indian adults. H3. There will be a significant relationship between sub-dimensions of self-objectification and psychological well-being among Indian adults.

Keeping these thoughts in mind, the current research study was carried out to understand self-objectification in both men and women and to evaluate its impact on their psychological well-being.

### 2.    Method
### 2.1    *Research Design*

The current study is an ex-post-facto research as the variables under study, i.e., Self-objectification, and Psychological Well-Being, are already established in the sample and there was no manipulation of variables at the researchers' end. This study attempts to explore the current trends in the said variables among the participants and establish a relationship between them if it exists. Thus, it is exploratory and correlational in nature. Furthermore, a mixed-methods approach was adopted for the collection and analysis of data.

*2.2*     *Tools*

To tap into the construct of self-objectification, the Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale (SOBBS) developed by Lindner and Tantleff-Dunn (2017) was used. It is a 5-point Likert scale and has a total of 14 statements. It taps two aspects of self-objectification - 'Observer's Perspective' and 'Body as Self'- having seven statements each. The scale has good test-retest reliability, as well as good convergent and discriminant validity.

The Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale, 42 items version by Carol D. Ryff was used to study the psychological well-being of the participants. The scale is multi-faceted and comprises of six sub-scales: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance.

*2.3*     *Sample*

The sample for the current study consisted of 150 adults (75 females, 75 males). The inclusion criteria for the study were 18-30 years of age, general English proficiency, and a stable internet connection. Purposive sampling and Snowball sampling techniques were used for data collection.

*2.4*     *Procedure*

The participants were approached, and their informed consent was obtained. Those who gave their consent, only their responses were included in the study. The responses were then scored, and data were analysed using SPSS. Statistical measures like the independent t-test and Pearson's correlation were applied. Based on the obtained results, inferences were drawn.

To explore the contributing agents and manifestation/expression of self-objectification, a few participants who scored high on self-objectification were selected randomly and were requested to be part of an interview later. Their answers were examined and further analysed to develop a deeper understanding of the issue of self-objectification and the context in which they occur.

**3.**     **Results**

The obtained data were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis and the results were interpreted in the light of the hypotheses. The results are as follows:

**Table 1.1**
**t-test Results Comparing Females and Males on Self- Objectification.**

| Dimensions of Self-Objectification | Gender | | | | t ratio | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Females | | Males | | | |
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| Observer's Perspective | 19.585 | 5.969 | 18.685 | 8.663 | 0.716 | 0.475 |
| Body as Self | 14.100 | 5.313 | 14.714 | 8.106 | -0.530 | 0.597 |
| Total Self-Objectification | 33.685 | 9.544 | 33.400 | 15.696 | 0.130 | 0.897 |

Note: *- p<0.05, **- p<0.01
(Source: The authors)

Table 1.1 shows that there exists no significant difference (*observer's perspective p=0.475, body as self p=0.597, total self-objectification p=0.897*) between females and males in the dimensions of self-objectification. Therefore, hypothesis H1 "*There will be a significant gender difference in Self-Objectification among Indian adults*" was rejected in the current study.

**Table 1.2**
**t-test results comparing females and males on Psychological Well-Being**

| Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being | Gender | | | | t ratio | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Females | | Males | | | |
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| Autonomy | 27.057 | 5.288 | 29.714 | 5.127 | -3.018** | 0.003 |
| Environmental Mastery | 26.728 | 4.471 | 27.000 | 3.737 | -0.390 | 0.697 |
| Personal Growth | 30.157 | 4.512 | 30.400 | 4.281 | -0.327 | 0.744 |
| Positive Relations | 30.828 | 6.580 | 30.171 | 5.659 | 0.633 | 0.527 |
| Purpose in Life | 30.971 | 5.735 | 29.685 | 6.477 | 1.243 | 0.216 |
| Self-Acceptance | 28.785 | 6.419 | 28.857 | 6.176 | -0.067 | 0.947 |

Note: *- p<0.05, **- p<0.01
(Source: The authors)

Table 1.2 shows that out of the six dimensions of Psychological Well-Being studied here, one dimension, i.e., Autonomy, showed significant gender differences (t= 3.018, p= 0.003). Male participants were found to have a higher mean than the female participants in the dimension of Autonomy (Males M= 29.714, SD= 5.127; Females M= 27.057, SD= 5.288) as can be seen in Table 1.2. Therefore, hypothesis H2 "*There will be a significant gender difference in Psychological Well-Being among young adults*" was partially accepted in the present study.

**Table 2**
**Inter-correlation matrix between dimensions of**
**Psychological Well-Being and Self-Objectification.**

| Psychological Well-Being | Self-Objectification | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Observer's Perspective | Body as Self | Total Self-Objectification |
| Autonomy | -0.335** | -0.311** | -0.356** |
| Environmental Mastery | -0.005 | 0.003 | 0.000 |
| Personal Growth | -0.143 | -0.346** | -0.265** |
| Positive Relations | -0.121 | -0.209* | -0.180* |
| Purpose in Life | -0.342** | -0.378** | -0.396** |
| Self-Acceptance | -0.210* | -0.132 | -0.190* |

Note: *- $p<0.05$, **- $p<0.01$
(Source: The authors)

Table 2 shows that various sub-dimensions of Psychological Well-Being significantly correlate with the total as well as the two dimensions of Self-Objectification.

Observer's Perspective dimension relates negatively and significantly with Autonomy $r_{(150)}$= (-0.335, $p<0.01$), Purpose In Life $r_{(150)}$= (-0.342, $p<0.01$), and Self-Acceptance $r_{(150)}$= (-0.210, $p<0.05$).

Body As Self dimension relates negatively and significantly with Autonomy $r_{(150)}$= (-0.311, $p<0.01$), Personal Growth $r_{(150)}$= (-0.346, $p<0.01$), Positive Relations $r_{(150)}$= (-0.209, $p<0.05$), and Purpose In Life $r_{(150)}$= (-0.378, $p<0.05$).

Total Self-Objectification relates negatively and significantly with Autonomy $r_{(150)}$= (-0.356, $p<0.01$), Personal Growth $r_{(150)}$= (-0.265, $p<0.01$), Positive Relations $r_{(150)}$= (-0.180, $p<0.05$), Purpose In Life $r_{(150)}$= (-0.396, $p<0.01$), and Self-Acceptance $p_{(150)}$= (-0.190, $p<0.05$).

Therefore, hypothesis H3 "*There will be a significant relationship between sub-dimensions of self-objectification and psychological well-being among Indian adults*" was accepted in the present study.

## 4.    Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim to understand psychological well-being and self-objectification among adults in the Northern part of India. The results are discussed in the following section.

### 4.1    *Gender Difference in Self-Objectification*

The results revealed that females and males do not differ significantly in the sub-dimensions of self-objectification, as well as in total self-objectification. Though the previous studies conclude that women go through self-objectification more as compared to men (Oehlhof et al., 2009), it

has also been observed that in recent times men, especially young adults, are becoming more and more aware of their bodies and are increasingly concerned about their physical appearance (Moradi and Huang, 2008; Weltzin et al., 2005). This could be further backed up by the recent observations in cosmetic surgery which are done with the sole purpose of enhancing one's beauty and looks. Earlier it was mostly women who underwent cosmetic surgery, but lately, there has been a surge in men's aesthetic surgery too. A global report by the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) stated that, in the time period between 1997 and 2013, there has been an increase of about 273% in the number of males opting for cosmetic procedures (Sachdev and Britto, 2014). In India too, there has been a relative increase of about 14.6 times in males seeking this surgery in the last decade (Rajan et al., 2021).

In today's world, the media has set unreasonable standards for both males and females which has resulted in the development of an objectified concept of one's self and of body consciousness (Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2015; Manago et al., 2015). Previous studies have observed that the use of Facebook and magazines correlates positively with self-objectification among women and men (Fardouly et al., 2015; Hanna et al., 2017). Similar results concerning men were observed in the study by Fox and Rooney (2015) who found that men who objectify themselves spend more time on social networking sites. Hence, it could be said that both men and women are subjected to objectification and commodification indiscriminately and the media plays a major role in it. This stands true in the present research as well, as men and women showed on significant differences in self-objectification.

## 4.2 *Gender Difference in Psychological Well-Being*

Statistical analysis of data revealed that only the dimension of autonomy in psychological well-being showed a significant difference between males and females, with men having a higher mean value than women. Similar results have been reported in previous studies where men scored higher on the autonomy dimension of psychological well-being (Matud et al., 2019; Maroof and Khan, 2016; Perez, 2012). This could be attributed to the process of socialisation, wherein men enjoy higher levels of independence and control over their lives as compared to women. The roles defined for women are more rigid in nature and women are expected to act in accordance with them. On the other hand, though there are societal roles set for males too, men often have the liberty to behave as they prefer. They

can make choices as per their wishes, while women face the restrictions imposed upon them directly or indirectly by social norms when it comes to making decisions for themselves. This discrimination is shaped not only by socio-cultural forces but is also rooted in the typical setting of the Indian family. One of the prominent ways in which these gender-specific expectations are introduced at the family level is through the allotment of work to girls and boys based on sexual division (Gore, 1977). Women are barred into invisibility and have insufficient decision-making power, all of which makes them behave in ways that are self-limiting (Sivakumar and Manimekalai, 2021).

### 4.3    *Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Self-Objectification*

The results of the present study show a significant negative relationship between almost all the dimensions of Self-Objectification and Psychological Well-Being. When individuals involve in self-objectifying behaviour, it tends to hamper their affective states, by increasing their negative emotions and decreasing the positive effects (Koval et al., 2019; Breines et al., 2008). It also aids in the development of anxiety, shame, and guilt, and hinders interpersonal relationships (Roberts and Gettman, 2004; Sinclair and Myers, 2004; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Treating one's self as an object could also diminish the experiences of happiness, life satisfaction, and accomplishments, which are all predictors of well-being. Existing literature also points in this direction where objectification has been found to have negative effects on the well-being of individuals (Mishra, 2020; Winn and Cornelius, 2020; Cheng et al., 2021). In the present study, autonomy and purpose in life were negatively correlated with observer's perspective, body as self, as well as the total self-objectification. Personal growth and positive relations were found to be negatively correlated with body as self and total self-objectification. Self-acceptance showed a negative correlation with observer's perspective and total self-objectification. environmental mastery did not show any relationship with self-objectification. Therefore, it could be said that self-objectification decreases the overall well-being of an individual.

### 4.4    *Qualitative Analysis*

To develop a deeper understanding of self-objectification, its expression and contributing factors in Indian adults, randomly selected participants (N=50; those who scored high on self-objectification) were interviewed and it was found that irrespective of gender, participants

diminished their 'self' to just their bodies and were highly concerned about how they looked to others.

Certain themes were identified from the participants' responses. One theme that emerged was '*Body Focused Perceptions*'. When asked to tell about themselves, almost all the participants majorly focused on their physical features, like - "*I am tall, a little too much for girls*", "*I love my hair and feel happy when people appreciate them*", "*I have a perfect body, something that I really admire*", "*I liked dressing up earlier, but now I do not dress up much as I have put on weight and do not look beautiful like I used to*", etc. They also expressed that they prefer being appreciated for how they look than how they perform, and constantly try to achieve the standards that are portrayed in society. This emphasis on physical appearance could be attributed to high exposure to shows that are objectifying in nature. Similar results were reported in a study conducted by Aubrey (2006), where both men and women who watched television shows that were sexually objectified, exhibited an increase in their body appearance-focused self-descriptions; whereas in the context of body surveillance, a strong effect of media was observed only in male participants. At times, women even endure pain in their daily lives to enhance their appearance (Wolf, 2002). They often tend to compare themselves to celebrities. As per The National Eating Disorders Association, this unhealthy comparison gives way to an unhealthy mindset which in turn leads to harmful eating patterns (Coyle, 2020).

Another theme that was identified was '*Preoccupation with Appearance Ideals*'. For instance, when asked about their views on a perfect man/woman, their descriptions mainly referred to a fair complexion, no body hair, being well-groomed; having curves (neither too thin nor fat), beautiful hair, toned body for women; and tall stature, muscular chiselled body, having a beard for men. In continuation to these responses, they were enquired about the basis on which they formed these opinions. '*Social Media*' and '*Entertainment Media*' were the two agents that surfaced from the responses of the participants. Responses pertaining to these themes are - "*The photos of influencers on Instagram are so perfect, they look so perfect, unlike me...(laughs)*", "*I know that in real life these actors and actresses are not how they look in movies, but still I feel a little jealous of them. And I feel angry also because then we too are expected to meet those standards*".

These responses reveal that media is one of the primary contributing factors in promoting objectification. Be it on social media or in the entertainment industry (movies, songs, advertisements), the prevalence of objectification in various forms can be witnessed (Gor, 2018; Davis, 2018;

Sen, 2019). A direct connection between time spent on social networking sites and self-objectification, dissatisfaction with body weight and the desire to be thin (Fardouly et al., 2015; Slater and Tiggerman, 2015; Tiggerman and Miller 2010) has been established in past studies. It was also observed that female Facebook users were more concerned about their body image as compared to female non-users (Tiggerman and Slater, 2013). The same could be said about Instagram: there exists a direct relationship between Instagram use and body surveillance and self-objectification among women (Feltman and Szymanski 2018; Fardouly et al., 2018). A study done by the Dove Self-Esteem project reports that 65-69% of females think that advertisements and media set beauty standards that are unrealistic and cannot be achieved. Therefore, based on the past literature and the results of the present study, media can be considered as a major contributor to objectification.

These results could be attributed to the objectifying environment that both women and men are part of which makes them prone to internalising appearance ideals set by society. Both genders feel the pressure to adhere to unrealistic social standards of physical beauty. Over time, this pressure has grown stronger because of commercial influences through mass media. This pressure leads to unhealthy behaviours and preoccupation with appearance, which compromises their ability to be efficient and accept themselves just the way they are.

## Conclusion

The current study was undertaken to understand self-objectification and psychological well-being across Indian males and females. It was observed that women and men do not differ in self-objectification. In psychological well-being, the gender difference was only present in the dimension of autonomy. It could be said that in the present times, males and females, both are subjected to objectifying environments via the media, which in turn hampers their psychological well-being. On one hand, where women are stuck with shaping their bodies perfectly, men too are getting messages of physical perfection. It was also observed that there is a negative correlation between all the dimensions of self-objectification and psychological well-being, except environmental mastery. When the data was studied qualitatively, it was observed that self-objectification expresses itself through body monitoring, descriptions of self, and behaviour that are preoccupied with appearance ideals. Media emerged as a major contributing factor in self-objectification.

Future studies can consider participants from different age groups, regions as well as cultures which will make the findings more efficient and generalised. They can also explore additional factors (other than media) that contribute to self-objectification and could also tap into shared and unique experiences of different genders in the context of self-objectification.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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# Making Bottom-Up Governance Work: Revival of Panchayati Raj, Inherent Problems in its Working and the Latest Innovative Initiatives of Local Governance in Kashmir[*]

**Aijaz Ashraf Wani[†], Imran Ahmad Khan[‡] and Syed Jaasirah Syedain[§]**

*Despite a long history of panchayati raj in J and K, these institutions have largely remained dysfunctional. The situation further worsened after the 1990s when the region got into the grip of violence. Despite the revival of the electoral process and the successful holding of the Panchayat election in 2011 the functioning of these institutions could not improve much improvement. After reading down of Article 370, the Union Territory administration has taken some innovative initiatives to strengthen local governance structures and bring about people's participation. Taking recourse to in-depth fieldwork, this paper aims at analysing the inherent problems in the functioning of local governance institutions in Kashmir and also examines the positive impact and prospects of the recent initiatives.*

## Introduction

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) were introduced in India with the primary aim of establishing inclusive governance and promoting decision-making and participation among all its citizens. The 73rd and 74th Amendment acts created the Constitutional provision which could enable increased development along with ensuring social justice and citizen's interest. While these Constitutional Amendment Acts at the national level institutionalised elected bodies from village to district level, providing for women reservation in PRIs at all levels, including in the chairpersonships of these bodies. The adoption of these amendments in the fullest sense has been an incremental process in J and K, with directly elected district-level bodies being brought in as late as 2020. Women's reservation for the posts of village panch was enforced in 1996 and began to be implemented in 2011. Reservation in the posts of sarpanch was brought in 2014. This paper aims at examining the working of PRIs in J and K after their 'revival' in 2011 and argues that despite a long history and elaborate legal and institutional framework real grassroots governance in J and K is still a distant dream. It further argues that the recent initiatives taken by the administration, after Article 370 was read down, if implemented properly can go a long way in reinforcing local governance through inclusiveness and participation.

## Methodology

This study, as part of the major research project funded by ICSSR New Delhi under its IMPRESS scheme, was carried out from 2019 to 2020. Intensive fieldwork was done in 11 panchayats of five districts of Kashmir Valley, although other panchayats/districts were not completely avoided. Using purposive sampling, a list of panchayat members was drawn for the purpose of the study. Long interviews, participant observation, case studies and focus group discussions were used for analysis in the research paper. Cross-sections of people in Kashmir Valley were interviewed by applying similar qualitative tools in order to have an in-depth understanding of the local governance phenomenon in Kashmir. For various reasons, most of the panchayat members/officials as well as common people preferred to remain anonymous, and the researchers respected the choice of the respondents.

## J and K Panchayat Elections - 2001

The J and K Panchayati Raj Act of 1989 was hailed as the progressive legislation that could go a long way in redeeming the non-functional local governance system in J and K. However, it remained dysfunctional, because

of the eruption of violence and the consequent ceasing of the democratic process in J and K. Democracy remained suspended, political parties became inactive, the Panchayati Raj Institutions were practically closed down as it was feared that they might be controlled by militants to run a parallel government. With the relative improvement in the security environment in the mid-1990s, the Government of India tried to capitalise and accordingly conducted Parliamentary elections in May 1996 and subsequently election for State Legislative Assembly in September 1996. The election resulted in the victory of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC). The new government made the Panchayat rules for the 1989 Act in 1996 and decided to reactivate the grassroots democracy and conducted the Panchayat elections in 2001. Though, the response to this election was very enthusiastic in Jammu and Ladakh regions, where the voter turnout was over 70%, but in the Kashmir region the elections appeared to be merely a paper exercise. The majority of Panch and Sarpanch constituencies remained vacant because no contestant came forward (Waza, 2014, p. 79). Although after the elections, powers were delegated to the Panchayats, however, they remained mere paper edicts as they were neither provided finance and functionaries nor integrated with the administration as Block Development Councils and District Planning and Development Boards were not established. Even though the term of these Panchayats formed after the 2001 elections ended in 2006, no fresh elections were held despite repeated promises made by the government. As a result, the institution of grassroots democracy remained an unrealised dream (ibid).

**J and K Panchayat Elections - 2011**

In 2008, elections for state legislative assembly were held resulting in the formation of a coalition government between the J and K National Conference and the Indian National Congress. Although the new government committed itself to the conduct of Panchayat elections, but elections got delayed because the years 2008 and 2010 witnessed unprecedented civil protests and the whole administration was paralysed. As the situation improved by the end of 2010, the process to conduct Panchayat elections gained momentum (Waza, 2018, p. 143).

The elections were held in 16 phases throughout the state from 13 April 2011 and concluded on June 30, 2011 (Wani, 2011). There was a massive response to elections in all three regions of the state. The overall voter turnout was 77.71 per cent. Finally, 4082 Sarpanches and 28,253 Panches were elected in the state (Government of J and K, 2011).

**Table 1**
**Details of 2011 Panchayat Elections**

| Name of the District | Total Number of Panchayats | Number of Sarpanches Elected | Number of Sarpanch Vacancies | Total Number of Panch Constituencies | Number of anches Elected | Number of Panch Vacancies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kupwara | 356 | 355 | 1 | 2716 | 2694 | 22 |
| Bandipora | 114 | 114 | 0 | 869 | 865 | 4 |
| Baramulla | 365 | 350 | 15 | 2906 | 2352 | 554 |
| Srinagar | 10 | s10 | 0 | 79 | 78 | 1 |
| Budgam | 283 | 282 | 1 | 2155 | 2108 | 47 |
| Ganderbal | 103 | 103 | 0 | 744 | 719 | 25 |
| Anantnag | 297 | 296 | 1 | 2054 | 2037 | 17 |
| Kulgam | 159 | 158 | 1 | 1060 | 1040 | 20 |
| Pulwama | 186 | 166 | 20 | 1350 | 841 | 509 |
| Shopian | 103 | 103 | 0 | 763 | 620 | 143 |
| Leh | 93 | 93 | 0 | 604 | 588 | 16 |
| Kargil | 95 | 95 | 0 | 659 | 656 | 3 |
| Jammu | 296 | 295 | 1 | 2160 | 2153 | 7 |
| Kathua | 244 | 244 | 0 | 1644 | 1642 | 2 |
| Udhampur | 204 | 204 | 0 | 1544 | 1543 | 1 |
| Doda | 231 | 231 | 0 | 1424 | 1420 | 3 |
| Kishtwar | 134 | 134 | 0 | 838 | 836 | 2 |
| Poonch | 189 | 189 | 0 | 1540 | 1537 | 3 |
| Ramban | 124 | 124 | 0 | 832 | 831 | 1 |
| Reasi | 147 | 146 | 1 | 1014 | 992 | 22 |
| Rajouri | 295 | 289 | 6 | 2026 | 1972 | 54 |
| Samba | 100 | 100 | 0 | 726 | 724 | 2 |
| J and K Total | 4128 | 4081 | 47 | 29,707 | 28,248 | 1458 |

Source: Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2011, Srinagar

The significance of the 2011 Panchayat elections can be gauged not only by the fact that around 80 per cent of the electorate exercised their right to vote, which of course is an impressive turnout, but also from the fact that this was the first election for all Panchayat constituencies since 1977-78. The then Chief Minister of J and K Mr. Omar Abdullah stated, on April 13, 2011, *"This is the first real Panchayat election in the State in last 33 years, the last one in 2001 was only on papers… half the seats remained empty that time…"* (Singh, 2011). These elections gave hope for the restoration of the democratic process at the grassroots level and for bringing people into the democratic process by making them an integral part of the decision-making process and delivery mechanism.

After successfully conducting the Panchayat elections, the state government delegated the functions of 14 departments to the 3-tier Panchayati Raj System. However, it may be highlighted that only the base tier, i.e. halqa Panchayats, was constituted. The remaining two tires were not constituted, depriving the Panchayat representative of a rightful claim to be part of the decision-making and planning process.

**Democratic Decentralisation and Panchayat Elections-2018: A New Beginning**

In June 2018 the coalition government of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) formed in 2015 collapsed under its own weight. With the collapse of an elected government and imposition of the Governor's rule, the erstwhile state was left without any elected tier of government. The panchayats at the grassroots level constituted after the panchayat elections of 2011 were dissolved in July 2016 but fresh elections were not conducted. The power of panchayats was reverted to district and block-level headquarters/officers. This stalled the civic/democratic space that had started opening and taking root.

Towards the end of September 2018, the stage had been set for the conduct of municipal and panchayat elections. The then governor of J and K Mr. Satya Pal Malik carried forward the process and decided to go ahead with the elections. Admitting that holding elections was a risk but had to be taken as a run-up to the 2019 general elections, he went ahead despite reluctance shown by the political parties. The process started with elections to 79 municipalities in four phases from 8 to 17 October 2018.

The elections to local bodies were held in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement at the ramparts of Red Fort on 72nd Independence Day that the wheels of democracy will be set in motion in Jammu and Kashmir to give the opportunity to the people to take development in the villages. Prime Minister said, "A system in which villagers will be able to look after their villages will help village headmen to take their villages on the path of development. That is why we are moving forward in the direction of holding panchayat elections and to city council (Municipalities) in the state" (Government of India, 2018).

In the municipal election-2018, the state-level voter turnout was 35.1 per cent. However, if we disaggregate the voter turnout across the three regions there are significant variations. The elections witnessed enthusiasm in Jammu (70-80 per cent) and Ladakh (55.2 per cent in Kargil & 78 per cent in Leh) regions both in terms of participation and contestation. However, in Kashmir, it failed to evoke any positive response as there was a general withdrawal by people from the electoral process and voter turnout remained at 4.27 per cent. This was precisely due to the rise in violence since 2016 and also due to the fact that two main political parties National Conference (JKNC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) boycotted the election. Further, the boycott calls from the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and

militants who threatened people with dire consequences in case they participated in elections also impacted the participation.

Finally, the panchayat elections were held in nine phases from 17 November to 11 December 2018. Although elections were held on a non-party basis, however, both JKNC and PDP continued their boycott policy (citing unnecessary fiddling with Article 35-A which grants special rights to permanent residents of the state). But in a real sense, it was a gloomy picture on the ground that forced the two regional parties to stick to their boycott strategy.

### People's Participation

The panchayat elections in 2018 turned out to be a farcical exercise in the Kashmir region. It was disowned by people both in terms of contestation and participation. While in several cases candidates filed their nominations on the last day of filing nomination after being assured of an 'unopposed win' (Interview, 2020). Omar Abdullah former Chief Minister of the state said, "We stayed away from panchayat and urban local body elections but then its results were for everyone to see. Nobody knows who are their councillors and ward members. The candidates filed their nomination papers in police camps, votes were cast there and election officers declared them winners there only, few candidates came from Delhi, some from Jammu and others from Udhampur… So a sarpanch who does not stay with people, how would you expect him to work for the people"? (Gul, 2019)

There is no doubt that north and central Kashmir is relatively peaceful, however, still elections failed to evoke much response. Why is it so? There are different factors responsible for it. Firstly, the previous experience of people with Panchayat Raj Institutions acted as an impediment to motivating people to join the fray. Throughout their existence, the elected representatives were at loggerheads with the government over the empowerment issue as the cabinet order that transferred powers to panchayat remained a paper edict with no follow-up action on part of the government (Rising Kashmir, 2018). Secondly, the continuous killings of militants and civilians in encounters put societal pressure on those who had made up their minds to contest and forced them to have a second thought. Thirdly, there is no doubt that boycotts by two mainstream political parties had a negative impact on elections, but during the previous elections of 2011, a good percentage of candidates contested and got elected on a non-party basis. Therefore, it was more due to the fragile security situation and less because of a boycott by political parties that forced people to stay away.

**Table 2**
**Phase-wise and Region-wise Turnout in Panchayat Elections-2018**

| S. No. | Phase | Jammu Division | Kashmir Division | Ladakh* | Kashmir Valley | Overall turnout in the State |
|--------|-------|----------------|------------------|---------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Phase-1 | 79.4% | 65.5% | 65.2% | 64.4% | 74.1% |
| 2 | Phase-II | 80.4% | 52.2% | 66.4% | 44.2% | 71.1% |
| 3 | Phase-III | 83.0% | 55.7% | 70.09% | 42.2% | 75.2% |
| 4 | Phase-IV | 82.4% | 32.3% | - | 32.3% | 71.3% |
| 5 | Phase-V | 85.2% | 33.7% | - | 33.7% | 71.1% |
| 6 | Phase-VI | 84.6% | 17.3% | - | 17.3% | 76.09% |
| 7 | Phase-VII | 84.8% | 30.3% | - | 30.3% | 75.3% |
| 8 | Phase-VIII | 85.1% | 49.6% | - | 49.6% | 79.9% |
| 9 | Phase-IX | - | 38.8% | - | 38.8% | 38.8% |
|  | **All Phases** | **83.5%** | **44.4%** | **67.23%** | **41.3%** | **74.0%** |

Source: Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2018
*Administratively Ladakh was a part of the Kashmir region prior to August 5, 2019. Kashmir Valley refers to the ten districts of Kashmir excluding Ladakh.

**Jammu and Kashmir Block Development Council Elections – 2019**

In an attempt to renew the political process that went into backburner following the invalidation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, the State Administrative Council (SAC), headed by former Governor Mr. Satya Pal Malik, made possible the conduct of elections to chairpersons of intermediate panchayats - called Block Development Councils (BDCs) in Jammu and Kashmir on October 23, 2019. The election came due after panchayat elections were held in November-December 2018. This was the first electoral drill in the State post nullification of Article 370 and 35-A by the Central Government, which ended the special status of the state and bifurcated it into two Union-territories (UTs) *viz.,* UT of Jammu and Kashmir and UT of Ladakh (Waza, 2019).

The decision to hold these elections was criticised given its timing and fragile ground situation in the Kashmir region. The political leadership of major political parties was put behind the bars including three former Chief Ministers of the State. The main opposition party at the centre, the Indian National Congress and two principal mainstream regional parties of the state; the National Conference and People's Democratic Party, boycotted elections on the grounds of the ongoing freaky situation in the state and detention of their leadership and party persons (The Wire, 2019).

The BJP, on its part, blamed the Congress party for encouraging the agenda of Pakistan and the Hurriyat Conference in Kashmir and pressed the Election Commission of India to nullify the registration of the party. Defending the decision of the Central Government, BJP cherished that holding the election was necessary to strengthen grassroots democracy and

authorise people to usher in a new era of participatory and inclusive governance. Besides, holding the election is essential for the establishment of a 3-tier panchayat system in the state to execute development initiatives and poverty alleviation programmes in an explicit and accountable manner with popular participation central to it (Greater Kashmir, 2019).

In a surprising move, the BDC elections were held on the party basis while panchayat elections were on non-party basis in 2018. Being boycotted by major political parties, it was a direct contest between BJP v/s independent candidates. Overall 197 out of 284 panchayats blocks were won by independents throughout the two regions of J and K UT while BJP won just 70 seats. However, some of the candidates having loyalty to Congress, JKNC, PDP and People's Conference also participated in elections as independent candidates on non-party symbols (The Wire, 2019a).

### Jammu and Kashmir District Development Council Elections – 2020

In October 2020, the Central Government in a significant move amended the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act 1989 in order to bring it in conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 of the Indian Constitution. It introduced a new structural framework in the panchayat system of J and K i.e., District Development Councils (DDCs) and District Planning Committees (DPCs) which replaced District Planning and Development Boards.

The elections to elect the first-ever district panchayats called DDCs in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir were held from November 28 to December 19, 2020 in eight phases. By-elections to constitute the vacant village panchayats were also held. The DDC elections were held on party basis. It generated a very keen interest in the UT and at the national level as well. What injected further substance into the electoral exercise was the decision by parties of the Gupkar Alliance to fight and participate in the elections collectively under the banner of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD)[1].

The decision by PAGD to contest the elections threw a challenge to BJP. The PAGD was also under pressure as its participation was construed as acceptance of the new reality (read the August 5, 2019 decision). The alliance, however, sold its participation as a 'referendum' against the abrogation of Article 370. Further, it urged people to vote for PAGD candidates as it was important to keep BJP and Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (that was alleged the B-Team of BJP) at bay and deny them space. Above all, it offered an opportunity to mainstream politics under the umbrella of PAGD to make

their voices heard and test their strength amidst the questions being raised on their role and relevance in BJP's '*Naya Kashmir*' phraseology.

The first-ever DDC elections saw 2178 candidates in the fray, including 450 women. Overall voter turnout remained at 51.42 per cent. There was a significant variation in polling percentage in two regions of the Union Territory. While the Jammu region saw 68 per cent polling, the Kashmir region witnessed 34 per cent—far better compared to the last panchayat elections of 2018. The alliance of PAGD won 110 seats while BJP won 75 seats across the UT of J and K. Union Home Minister Amit Shah while applauding the people of Jammu and Kashmir for "*such a great turnout*" in DDC elections praised the efforts of security forces and local administration for successfully conducting these multi-phased elections; as this will further boost the morale and trust of people of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in democracy. "I heartily thank our sisters and brothers of J and K for voting BJP as the single largest party in the DDC elections. BJP under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi will continue to work relentlessly towards the prosperity and development of J and K region" (Times of India, 2020).

**Table 3**
**Phase-Wise Turnout – DDC Elections - 2020**

| S. No. | Phase | No. of DDC Constituencies | Total Electors | | G. Total | Votes Polled | | G. Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Male | Female | | Male | Female | | |
| 1 | I | 43 | 367072 | 333770 | 700842 | 193329 | 169276 | 362605 | 51.74 |
| 2 | II | 43 | 406012 | 370196 | 776208 | 201792 | 175609 | 377401 | 48.62 |
| 3 | III | 33 | 385317 | 352115 | 737432 | 199572 | 173155 | 372727 | 50.54 |
| 4 | IV | 34 | 381978 | 345958 | 727936 | 195206 | 169321 | 364527 | 50.08 |
| 5 | V | 37 | 432103 | 393134 | 825237 | 225628 | 196883 | 422511 | 51.20 |
| 6 | VI | 31 | 390593 | 358037 | 748630 | 207223 | 178383 | 385606 | 51.51 |
| 7 | VII | 31 | 359187 | 327928 | 687115 | 210414 | 182700 | 393114 | 57.21 |
| 8 | VIII | 28 | 327470 | 303588 | 631058 | 169271 | 152423 | 321694 | 50.98 |
| | TOTAL | 280 | 3049732 | 2784726 | 5834458 | 1602435 | 1397750 | 3000185 | 51.42 |

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2020, Government of India

Amending the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act 1989 in order to shape it with conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 (for creating a three-tier local governance structure), holding BDC and DDC elections are significant steps that can go long way to create a vibrant panchayat system in J and K. It has a three-tier panchayat system in place first time in its history. It is imperative to allow the panchayats to operate within the functional domain in decision-making as envisaged in Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act, 1989. The process albeit nascent has started and

it will take time as transformation cannot happen overnight. But it casts a responsibility on the administration (and future governments) as well as on the central government to create a conducive environment for all three tiers of panchayat institutions to function as people's panchayats and to become foundations of good governance.

**'Back to Village' programme**

The 'Back to Village' (B2V) programme was aimed to deliver equitable development in rural areas with the involvement of the people and government officials. The initiative also hoped to galvanise panchayats in Kashmir and streamline development efforts in rural areas through community participation.

The daily routine of an individual experiencing in a region is not cut into portions in the manner the Government exercises are inclined to be. The methodology at the village level, thus, has to be planned, contacting all parts of village life. Such a methodology must be made, not through an assortment of departmental authorities, but rather through Panchayats (Government of J and K, 2019, p. 4).

The Phase-I of B2V was an introductory and interactive programme to comprehend individuals' complaints and requests. While Phase II focused on the devolution of powers to panchayats and attempted to see how these panchayats are working and what are the complaints and requests. Phase III was planned on the organisation for complaint redressal (Greater Kashmir, 2020).

*The 'Back to Village' programme is among the best innovative initiatives of the J and K government as it provides a platform for us (elected panches and sarpanches) to put forth our demands, at the local level for various development works, before the higher officials directly, says a Village Sarpanch of Kupwara district. The same observation was recorded in many other villages of different districts of Kashmir Valley. A lady Sarpanch of Shopian district said, 'Through the B2V programme, we are somewhat being empowered to take decisions at panchayat level otherwise it was only on papers'.*

**'My Town My Pride' Programme**

On the lines of the B2V programme, the UT administration kickstarted the 'My Town My Pride' programme in all towns of J and K on October 19, 2020. The programme was announced as a part of public outreach initiative to benefit the urban population of J and K. The main objectives of the programme were strengthening grassroots democracy,

public outreach in towns and service delivery at doorsteps (The Hindu, 2020). The programme continues for two days in all towns of J and K at different designated places nearest to the town population. *While participating in the proceedings of the programme at Sher-i-Kashmir Park Srinagar, hosted by Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC); the UT administration had designated different stalls of different departments for the quick and on-spot delivery system. Sports kits were distributed among various teams and youth were made aware of different scholarships for education provided by J and K social welfare department and the Central Government. On-spot financial assistance was provided to eligible youths to set up some business ventures. For monitoring the proceedings, the then Chief Secretary of J and K (B.V.R. Subrahmanyam) visited the spot and had a thorough appraisal of all the services provided in the camp.*

*On the spot, a grievance redressal system was set up, and the visiting officers of the Secretary level to the Government were designated to listen to the grievances of the local population and solve the problem in the shortest possible time. A team of officers visited some areas and schools on the same day to give on spot directions for development works and up-gradation of schools and medical dispensaries established in the respective areas. A follow-up meeting was held, post-camp, in which all heads of departments participated with Chief Secretary in the Chair, to expedite tasks taken in the proceedings of the 'MY TOWN MY PRIDE' programme.*

The same process was held across all the towns of Jammu and Kashmir, only to bridge the gap between the local population and administration, and have service delivery at the doorsteps of the urban populace.

However, these initiatives still confer a centralised system of governance as opposed to the decentralisation of power hoped to be achieved through PRIs. Unless there is financial and administrative emancipation of local bodies, such initiative will eventually only erode the confidence in local representatives.

### Rural Local Governance in Practice: Voices from Ground

The Panchayati Raj Institutions, though created to empower the people at the grassroots level is often marred by the lack of devolution of powers, finances and human resource that could help these representatives with their work. They are mostly unaware of their rights, responsibilities, and the mandate of the chair they hold and end up being puppets in the hands of bureaucrats and political parties, said a Panchayat Secretary in district Shopian. Information is the key to people's participation and with that being unavailable for them; these institutions and their representatives are trapped in the cycle of appeasing the *babus* or MLAs for even their rights.

*"We ourselves do not know what schemes are available, what will we tell the public? We have had no training. We are asked to give plans but we see changes are made in them at the executive level,"* says a panch in Argam, Bandipora. The Block Development Officer (BDO) and other officials hardly pay heed to their concerns and problems, their plan not being approved on time, was a common complaint across the districts.

Another challenge is the dominance of party politics which has had a paradoxical effect on these institutions. On one hand, being associated with a party gives them some resources which they can use to woo the electorate and if the party is in power at the state/UT level, then the local demands and needs are also better addressed. However, it also takes away the space that these institutions are supposed to create, one, for these local people to gain autonomy and agency in decision-making. Party politics at this level takes the 'SELF' away from these local self-governing institutions.

Now, with the introduction of DDC and BDC elections through a contest between the parties, the party politics has further deepened. In a village of Shopian, the party had supported a woman sarpanch (reserved seat) whose husband was a worker of that party. The husband conducted the works of panchayat and even when a panch was called who was of a different party and he only looked at this *Panch-Pati* for answering any question. These representatives, however, hesitate to talk about their party affiliation. Party support helps them gain resources to travel, communicate and make promises for a better tomorrow. This, however also creates conflict. Members of the minority party are often side-lined. Thus, the absence of political literacy and lack of efforts on part of the administration to train, educate or build a culture of trust within these institutions has resulted in these members being proxies of those in power above in the system.

Poverty and hope of some gains are why some people have participated in these institutions. With hardly any education and awareness many of these members do not have any idea about their roles and responsibilities. This is why a young scholar referred to them as MGNREGA Panchayats because their information and knowledge do not go beyond this scheme.

During the year 2021 post-DDC elections, it has been seen that local government is being talked about thoroughly. The conduct of the DDC elections was seen as a victory for these institutions. However, what is often overlooked in these celebrations, is the number of people elected unopposed. When asked about it, they shared that since many people were hesitant they thought that they can be benefitted from this. *"I came thinking this*

*remuneration will help me in my finances and I would also work hard but even I am left dejected by this system*, says a panch from a village in Bandipora. This can change if these institutions work properly and people see the difference they make to their lives in terms of facilitating service delivery.

Then, opposition to the government structures, and the continued armed insurgency challenging Indian rule in Kashmir remains one of the biggest hurdles in the effective implementation of PRIs in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the valley. Kashmir has around 20,000 elected members of village panchayats, 137 elected block council members, and nearly 140 elected district council members. But due to the threats from militant groups, a majority of them are being kept in secure accommodations at various locations in Jammu and Srinagar, leaving them not only unable to perform their duties as elected representatives but also stripping them of any credibility within their own communities. It also clouds information and as the sarpanch of a village in Shopian remarked, *"We are unable to carry on all the works because turmoil disrupts the system"*. Most of the representatives have to live under security cover due to threats to their lives, which hampers our work.

Thus, the decades-old political turmoil clouds the voices of common people and the response of those in power has not exactly been one to create or strengthen this trust deficit. The 'state' as locals see it, does fulfil the orders required, like conducting elections (not on time) or providing security to the ones contesting. However, the political will required to create an environment where people are informed about the need and role of such institutions or creating a platform where these local voices are valued, asked about or acknowledged does not exist. This is what conflict does then; it divests institutions of the role they were accorded, the purpose they were meant to fulfil. Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson brilliantly explain in their work, "Why Nations Fail", that it is only through "Inclusive Institutions" which create virtuous cycles of innovation, and economic expansion by involving people from different strata that prosper.

Sensitised institutions alone can become inclusive. By ignoring the elephant in the room, the perpetual political conflict and its repercussions, people who would have been able to contribute better stay away from such institutions. *"I would have contested elections but my family does not want me to take the risk of losing my life,"* says a young educated and politically informed man. The conflict then keeps *"good people"* away as the Sarpanch of a village in the Ganderbal district says.

Another challenge is of *Panch-Pati* system. Political mobilization is still a recent phenomenon and though reservation ensures a seat for these women, the powers continue to be exercised by *Panch-Patis*. Of all the women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions of the five districts we interviewed, (three sarpanches, eight panches and one BDC Chairperson) not one had contested an unreserved seat. All except the BDC Chairperson were in their homes during the interview and each one was accompanied by a male member of the family throughout the interview including the BDC Chairperson, who was in her office. *"I was asked by my father-in-law to stand for the election. I was elected unopposed. This was a reserved seat and due to the fragile political situation post-2019, nobody wanted to contest elections. My father-in-law has been a panch for many years and so he handles all my work. My stamp is with him only"*, says a woman Sarpanch in a remote village of Budgam district. It is the same story with all the other women panches we interviewed. All of them have received support from their families as they said but the caveat in the story is that this support is extended only because their male relatives want to exercise the power of their position through them. *"Had the seat been unreserved, I would have been the Panch"*, says the husband of a panch in the Shopian district.

Except few, all these women had contested for the first time. In two villages where they had female Sarpanch, most of the panches were unsatisfied with their performance. Women often do not have autonomy or freedom in their family affairs. So the question then is, will they effectively use this public space provided to them under PRIs through the one-third reservation of seats for them in these local bodies? While in some areas of the country, we do see women's participation leading to women's issues being taken up, here, these women representatives hardly had any information about the laws, or schemes available for women's upliftment nor did we see any initiative being taken up specifically for women empowerment.

*"I went to meet the concerned government officials many times for different works, while they assure me of quick action, nothing ever happens later. I think they give me lip service and ignore everything I say because I am a woman"*, says a BDC Chairperson of a Block in Ganderbal. She was surprised to know that government officials are supposed to meet her for queries and not the other way round. The *bureaucratic/babu* culture is also pervasive in some areas especially when these elected representatives hardly know of the position they are at. Elected women members depend quite often on male members for guidance and clarification. The grassroots governance process could become more inclusive and fruitful if the 'official-elected representative interaction process', particularly with women representatives, is taken as a

mutual learning and cooperative process, rather than turning it into a channel of imposing opinions and inclining these women representatives' decision making in their favour. Thus, in both theoretical and practical discourse the evidence repeatedly suggests that in the grand narratives of decentralisation and integration, the representation of women or its lack thereof did not constitute a major concern.

## Conclusion

What can be deduced from the voices of the field is that the Panchayat Raj Institutions in Kashmir have largely remained trapped in the chains of turmoil and the participation is not really to uphold the mandate of such institutions rather it becomes another turf for conflicting narratives and corruption. In the entire village Panchayats we visited, the Gram Sabha was said to be conducted twice or thrice a year and with meagre participation from women. Fear and lack of information that people are restricted by are then even used by some people of influence to steer their decisions for their personal gains. In all the villages, though, members of Panchayats told us that villagers do come to them and ask for different benefits but such concerns are voiced privately. We all need some form of governance. This is why when Gandhi envisaged local governments as the centre through which power will flow in concentric circles; he was envisioning a state with the least interference from the government. The village was to be the productive arena where people were self-sufficient and Swaraj (self-ruled). However, the institution that is reflected in the voices above is far from it, reduced to a puppet for personal and political ambitions. A ray of hope is provided by the recent initiatives taken by the administration of the Union Territory. These initiatives if carried forward properly and implemented sincerely can change the local governance situation and most importantly public perception towards PRIs.

## End Note

1.      It was on October 20, 2020 that six state political parties (comprising National Conference, People's Democratic Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist), People's Conference, Awami National Conference and Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement came together and formed People Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) in line with its August 4, 2019 declaration and vowed to fight for restoration of Articles 370 & 35-A under democratic framework. On October 24, 2020 Farooq Abdullah of National Conference was elected as the Chairperson, PDP President Mehbooba Mufti as vice Chairperson, CPI (M) leader Mohd Yousuf Tarigami was elected as Convener and Sajad Gani Lone of People's Conference was elected as spokesperson of the PAGD. The alliance adopted the flag of the erstwhile State as its symbol and declared that PAGD was not anti-national but anti–BJP.

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# The Basic Structure Doctrine, Democracy and Administration

## Giriraj Singh Chauhan*

*The making of India's Constitution by the constituent assembly was a preparatory point for establishing a parliamentary democratic system. It had certain basic features which were not explicitly mentioned by the founding fathers but they existed very much within the four corners of the Constitution. Supreme Court in its landmark Judgment known as Kesavananda Bharti Judgment laid out the basic features doctrine and certain basic features of the Constitution which were unamendable. This paper deals with the emergence of the basic structure doctrine, its evolution and shows how it is a guiding light for maintaining and enhancing democracy and also shows how it is important for administration and administrators while dealing with policies.*

## Introduction

The Indian Constitution was framed by its Constituent Assembly after a lot of toil and hard work. The assembly 'a microcosm in action' prepared a representative constitution and the outcome of the aspirations of millions and gave us a democratic republic (Austin, 2006). It gave us a body politic which was sovereign and democratic, had certain essential features

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*Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Mohan Lal Sukhadia University Udaipur (Raj.). E-mail: giriraj_india@yahoo.com

and essentially contained a philosophy of the constitution and a vision for the country. It contained features like equality, fraternity, justice, liberty secularism, the dignity of the individuals, unity and integrity and so on (Bakshi, 2018). In the life of the Indian democratic nation, there have been many institutions, and many people, who have helped in nurturing the democracy and its administration. While talking about the Indian Constitution Granville Austin (2006) "identified three features: the spirit of democracy, pursuit of a social revolution, and the preservation of the unity and integrity of the country coming together to form a seamless web which animates the Indian constitution". The Election Commission, the Judiciary, the Parliament, the Executive, the elected leaders, civil society organisations, and millions of people from different walks of life have made this nation. The founding fathers gave us a Constitution, to realise the dream of a free nation. The framers of the Constitution wanted the Constitution to be a living document which could be altered as per the needs, demands and aspirations of the time, yet they wanted some basic tenets to remain forever. So, they created a Constitution which had a blend of flexibility and rigidity. In the evolution of the Constitution and democracy, certain judicial pronouncements had far-reaching impacts. The Kesavananda Bharati is the one case which had a lasting impact on the nation, its polity, its administration, its democracy and its Constitution.

**The Basic Structure Doctrine: Its Emergence and Evolution**

Basic means forming an essential foundation or starting point or fundamental to something (Dictionary 2020). The basic structure doctrine emerged out of the Kesavananda Bharati case (Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala, 1973) wherein the Supreme Court ruled that Parliament has the power to amend the constitution but it cannot amend the basic structure of the Constitution. Kashyap (2005) mentions that in the Kesavananda case which was decided by a slender majority of 7:6, the Supreme Court laid out the elements of basic structure. No clear-cut definition of basic structure was given. Only the elements were mentioned. Justice S. M Sikri the then Chief Justice tried to tabulate the components or features of basic structure. He mentioned the following: (i) Supremacy of the Constitution; (ii) Republican or democratic form of government; (iii) Secular Character of the Constitution; (iv) Separation of Powers; and (v) Federal character of the Constitution.

Justice K.S. Hegde and Justice S.N. Mukherjea also part of the bench in the Kesavananda case mentioned the following: (i) Sovereignty and

integrity of India; and (ii) The democratic character of our polity and individual freedom.

They also believed that the Parliament had no power to do away with the mandate which was related to building the welfare state and an egalitarian society.

Justice Hans Raj Khanna also part of the bench observed that Parliament did not have the power to change the democratic government into a dictatorship or hereditary monarchy. He further mentioned that it also did not have permission to abolish the Lok Sabha (the lower house or house of people) or Rajya Sabha (the upper house or house of elders). He also reiterated the fact that the secular character of the state was also not amendable.

It is interesting to note that even before Parliament could formally insert the word 'Secular' into our Constitution through the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976, the Supreme Court found it to be part of the basic structure. Though the original Constitution did not have any mention of the word 'Secular' anywhere in the Constitution of 1950.

It is true that the basic structure doctrine was first propounded by Supreme Court in the Kesavananda case but it has some historical roots. In the Sajjan Singh vs State of Rajasthan case (Sajjan Singh vs State of Rajasthan 1954) there is an initial reference to basic features and their permanency. It was observed that the Constitution "formulated a solemn and dignified preamble which appears to be an epitome of the basic features of the Constitution. Can it not be said that these are indicia of the intention of the Constituent Assembly to give permanency to the basic features of the Constitution" (Chauhan, 2018).

The most prominent individual related to the genesis of the basic structure doctrine was German Professor Dieter Conrad. He was very much influenced by the amendments of the Constitution during the Weimer regime in Germany (Mody, 2013). Professor Conrad was Head of the Law Department, South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Noorani (2001), while pointing out his contribution observes "sadly, little acknowledgement in India of that debt we owe" to Professor Conrad in terms of the doctrine of basic structure. His contribution to the doctrine of basic structure is in several respects. First, he was able to mention that in the German Constitution there existed some basic features of the German Constitution and therefore he was able to propound this doctrine. Secondly, this doctrine of Professor Conrad influenced Indian lawyers and judges on different occasions. Thirdly, he was responsible for the mass spread of the

basic structure doctrine into different parts of the world and for propagating the principle of implied limitation - the limited power of parliament to amend the constitution- across different sections.

As mentioned, in the German Constitution, the doctrine of the basic structure is enshrined in Articles 1 to 19 of the German Constitution. The articles not only establish a parliamentary democracy but delineates a broader philosophy of life which is based on respect for human dignity, the right to life and physical integrity, equality before the law, rights to personal honour and privacy, and occupational freedom. The essence of basic rights could, under no circumstances, be affected (Chauhan, 2018).

Article 20 of the German Constitution has the following provisions: "(1) The Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic and social federal state. (2) All state authority emanates from the people. It is exercised by the people through elections and voting and by specific organs of the legislature, the executive power, and the judiciary. (3) Legislation is subject to the constitutional order; the executive and the judiciary are bound by law and justice. (4) All Germans have the right to resist any person seeking to abolish this constitutional order, should no other remedy be possible" (German Constitution, 2019).

Article 79 of the German Constitution lays down the procedure to amend the basic law by supplementing a particular provision or expressly amending the same. However, amendments to the basic law affecting the principles laid down in Articles 1 and 20 or affecting the division of federation i.e., participation of Centre and State in the legislative process are inadmissible.

Chauhan (2018) observes "The provisions under the German Constitution deal with rights, which are not mere values, rather they are justiciable and capable of interpretation. Thus, those values impose a positive duty on the state to ensure their attainment as far as possible. The state must facilitate the rights, liberties and freedom of the individuals".

After the Kesavananda Bharti case, the Supreme Court of India in different cases has expanded the scope of the basic structure of the constitution.

In Mrs. Indira Gandhi vs Raj Narain case (Indira Nehru Gandhi vs Shri Raj Narain, 1975) the Supreme Court held the following as part of the basic Structure: I. India is a sovereign democratic republic. II. Equality of status and opportunity shall be secured for all its citizens. III. The state shall have no religion of its own and all persons shall be equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. IV. The nation shall be governed by a government of laws, not of

men. V. Free and fair elections as an essential postulate of democracy and therefore democracy is also part of the basic structure.

The court held that the pillars of our constitutional philosophy would therefore be the pillars of the basic structure of the constitution (Chauhan, 2018).

In, the Minerva Mills Case (Minerva Mills Ltd. and Others vs Union of India, 1980), the court opined that basic structure was the basis of the constitution and if damaged, then the Constitution would lose its identity and would become a different Constitution. The Supreme Court also said that fundamental rights were the most important and unique in the life of civilized societies and they are transcendental, inalienable and primordial. According to Supreme Court, fundamental rights were the most important element of basic structure.

In the famous S R Bommai case (S.R. Bommai vs Union of India, 1994) the court held that secularism was the most important element of the basic structure.

Further in the M. Nagraj Case (M. Nagraj and Others vs Union of India and Others, 2006), the Supreme Court observed that secularism, reasonableness, and social justice are overarching principles which lay out linking factors for principles of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21. These principles cannot be amended and they stand at the top of the hierarchy of constitutional values. These rights need to be respected and cannot be taken away by anyone. In the same case, the Court also observed that the dignity and freedom of the individual is the basic foundation on which the basic structure is built. While mentioning that the fundamental rights and directive principles are the most important parts of the basic structure, as pointed out by Chauhan (2018) the court observed "They constitute the ark of the Constitution... To destroy the guarantees given by Part III in order purportedly to achieve the goals of Part IV is plainly to subvert the Constitution by destroying its basic structure."

The court further in the I.R. Coelho (dead) by L.R.s vs State of Tamil Nadu popularly known as the 9th Schedule Case, said "the framers of the Constitution have built a wall around the fundamental rights, which has to remain forever, limiting the ability of the majority to intrude upon them. That wall is a part of basic structure." Articles 14, 19 and 21 represent the fundamental values and form the basis of rule of law, which is a basic feature of the Constitution. The court also mentioned that the federal character was also part of the basic structure. In the same case, the Court also observed that the dignity and freedom of the individual is the basic

foundation on which the basic structure is built. The court in this case laid down the concrete criteria for the basic structure principle (Chauhan, 2018).

Further, in the year 2016 in Supreme Court advocates on Record Association vs Union of India Case the court considered the supremacy of the Constitution, the republican and democratic form of government, the federal character of the distribution of powers, secularism, separation of powers between the Legislatures, Executive and the Judiciary, and independence of the Judiciary as elements of the basic structure (Chauhan, 2018).

The Court observed that political parties and multi-party systems are an inherent part of the basic structure of the Constitution in Kuldip Nayar vs Union of India and others case in 2006. In Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu Case, the Court said that political parties were an important part of our democratic system (Chauhan, 2018).

### Elements or Tenets of the Basic Structure Doctrine

Thus, from the above discussion, the following can be summarised as part of the basic structure of the Constitution: (I) Supremacy of the Constitution in India. As opposed to the supremacy of any organ of the state. In the United Kingdom, the Parliament is supreme. (II) The Preamble of the Constitution - Supreme Court has observed that the preamble is not only a part of the Constitution but forms part of the basic structure. (III) Sovereign Democratic and Republican Nature of the Indian political system. (IV) Secular Character of the Constitution - Reiterated by Supreme Court in different cases. (V) Separation of Powers - Between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. (VI) Federal character of the Constitution, and Unity and Integrity of the Nation. (VII) Welfare State- Which ensures Socio-Economic Justice and aims to establish an egalitarian society. (VII) The Power of Judicial Review. (VIII) Freedom and dignity of the Individual. (IX) Parliamentary System and Democracy. (X) Rule of Law - Everyone is equal before the law and no one can be punished except for a provision in the law. (XI) Harmony and balance between Fundamental Rights and Directive principles together with the preamble are the three most important pillars of basic structure as envisaged by Supreme Court in different cases. "In delineating the basic structure of the Constitution, most judges relied upon the Preamble, the fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy" (Mody, 2013). (XII) The Equality of all Citizens. (XIII) Free and Fair Elections. (XIV) An Independent Judiciary, Powers of Supreme Court and High Courts under Articles 32, 136, 141, 142, 226 and 227. (XV) Limited power of the parliament to amend the constitution, effective access to justice.

(XVI) Principle of Reasonableness. (XVIII) Political Parties and Multiparty System.

**Basic Structure and Democracy**

The Constitution created a parliamentary democracy and while talking about the resilience and continuity of democracy it is observed that "Few states created after the end of European Empire have been able to maintain democratic routines; and India's own past, as well as contingencies of its unity, prepared it very poorly for democracy. Huge, impoverished, crowded with cultural and religious distinctions with a hierarchical social order almost deliberately designed to resist the idea of political equality; India had little prospective reason to expect it could operate as a democracy. Yet…India continues to have parliaments and courts of law, political parties and a free press, and elections for which hundreds of millions of voters turn out, as a result of which governments fall and are formed. Democracy is a type of government, a political regime of laws and institutions. But its imaginative potency rests in its promise to bring alien and powerful machines like the state under the control of the human will, to enable a community of political equals before the constitutional law to make their own history…the democratic idea has penetrated the Indian political imagination" (Khilnani, 2004).

And has yielded many positive outcomes. If one looks at the basic idea of basic structure one finds that though it is a judicial innovation yet it has profound implications for Indian democracy. The elements of the basic structure as envisaged by the Supreme Court of India in the Kesavananda Bharti Case and subsequent other cases it seems that they have become the bedrock of democracy in India also. Through the canons of the basic structure doctrine, Indian democracy can be preserved, protected, bolstered and enriched. "Indian democracy has evolved an institutional structure on the basis of the principles and prescriptions laid down in the Constitution" (Pannikar 2011) and basic structure has helped in it. There is a separation of power and checks and balances in the Indian political system. The basic structure helps in maintaining checks and balances. One would assume that there are no real or imaginary threats to Indian democracy. But to be doubly sure the basic structure and adhering to its elements help in securing democracy and show the path to the executive and legislature to work on the basic ideals of the Constitution. Democracy has been greatly benefited from elections and elected leaders. In the case of India, the Indian democracy has truly become an electoral democracy due to the following elements:

1. A competitive, multiparty political system. 2. Universal adult suffrage. 3. Regularly contested elections conducted on the basis of secret ballots, reasonable ballot security and the absence of massive voter fraud. 4. Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and generally open campaigning (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2007).

Though as an electoral democracy, Indian achievements are many and praiseworthy, yet, India needs to move ahead from the electoral democracy to a greater, deep-rooted people's real democracy and adhering to the tenets of basic structure can help in realising that dream.

While assessing the state of democracies of the world Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) have presented a very interesting analysis. In their seminal work 'How Democracies Die' they mention that in earlier times during the cold war era and in different countries "democracy dissolved in spectacular fashion, through military power and coercion...but there is another way to break a democracy. It is less dramatic but equally destructive. Democracies may die at the hands not of generals but of elected leaders-presidents or prime ministers who subvert the very process that brought them to power. Democratic backsliding today begins at the ballot box... Elected autocrats maintain a veneer of democracy while eviscerating its substance". Giving examples of different countries Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) warn everyone interested in believing in the idea of democracy that one should be cautious enough to preserve and nurture democracy. And certainly, the basic structure can be a guiding light for everyone who is at the helm of affairs to act democratically whenever they are in trouble or perplexed, must adhere to the elements of basic structure because it is the values and philosophy of the Constitution and also perhaps the democratic vision which was imagined by founding fathers of our Constitution. It is just like Gandhi's talisman for those who are at the helm of governance that must keep basic structure in mind in any challenging and adversarial time.

While observing the importance of the basic structure doctrine Datar (2013) says "The basic structure doctrine, as future events showed, saved Indian democracy and Kesavananda Bharati will always occupy a hallowed place in our constitutional history...thanks to Kesavananda Bharati, Palkhiwala and the seven judges who were in the majority, India continues to be the world's largest democracy. The souls of Nehru, Ambedkar and Patel and all founding fathers of our Constitution can really rest in peace." The Kesavananda case not only in our constitutional history would occupy a

central place, as Datar (2013) mentioned, but also in the history of India as a nation.

While arguing about the importance and legitimacy of the basic structure doctrine Krishnaswamy (2011) remarks that the "basic structure review is an independent and distinct type of constitutional judicial review which applies to all forms of state action to ensure that such action does not 'damage or destroy' basic features of the Constitution" and "that the basic structure doctrine like any other constitutional law doctrine possesses a sound constitutional basis - by which we mean that the doctrine rests on a sound and justifiable interpretation of the Constitution and is legally, morally and sociologically legitimate."

L.M. Singhvi also speaking about the importance of a democratic system remarked "The basic structure doctrine postulated in Kesavananda has been credited with protecting the Indian state from collapsing like many of its South Asian counterparts, whether through totalitarian rule, military coups or other extra-constitutional means" (Mody, 2013).

Critics of the doctrine have called it undemocratic since unelected judges can strike down a constitutional amendment. At the same time, its proponents have hailed the concept as a safety valve against majoritarianism and authoritarianism (Indian Express, 2020). And "to preserve democracy it should live on" (Mody, 2013).

**Basic Structure and Administration**

The executive part or the permanent executive also known as the administration has a bearing on the essential ingredients or elements of the basic structure of its functioning. One of the important elements of the basic structure is the preamble. It not only lay down a path for the executive and judiciary but also for the administration. While discussing the preamble as part of the basic structure, Arora and Goyal (2013) point out that the preamble of the Indian Constitution provides a framework of ideals and values for the Indian administration also. Since the responsibility of enforcing the Constitution is that of the government, it is expected of the administrative system, which is an integral component of the executive branch of government to facilitate the application of the ideals of liberty, equality, justice, socialism and secularism in the governance of the country. Not only need the government laws and politics reflect these interrelated ideals, but the functioning of the administrative system, including the attitudinal orientations and behaviour of administrators, should manifest these ideals and values. In an ideal-typical situation, the nature and

performance of the administrative system would be judged in the context of the values forming its context. Arora and Goyal (2013) give a clarion call to administrators or the permanent executive to remain faithful to the ideals of the Constitution and not lose sight of these values while performing their duty. They need to be nonpartisan in their approach. And not only, the preamble but the fundamental rights, the directive principles of state policy and the other elements of the basic structure are the tenets to which administrators should adhere while governing the country.

## Conclusion

Every Constitution, democracy and overall life of a nation evolves in many ways. The basic structure doctrine which came out of judicial creativity had an enduring impact on the Constitution, democracy and on the governance of the country. The percept of the basic structure needs to be remembered for making a sound and vibrant democracy, by those who are at the helm of the affairs. The administrators need to remember that in tumultuous times, in tranquil times, in not-so-turbulent times, they need to remember only one book and that book is the constitution of the country. Adhering to the tenets of the Constitution and the basic structure would not only help in better policy implementation but in better policymaking. There is no denying the fact that there is a troubled spot in many places but amicably resolving them through keeping the basic structure in mind, is what the need of the hour is. And that is how the Constitution evolves, democracy evolves and above all, nations evolve and strive for the betterment of their citizens.

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# Gender Bias to Domestic Violence: A Qualitative Study of Women Panchayat Functionaries in Uttar Pradesh

**Madhu Bala***, **Divya Sharma† and Gyana Ranjan Panda‡**

*Domestic Violence (DV) is a serious problem in rural areas where patriarchal norms are more pronounced as compared to urban areas. It was expected that women's reservation in local government bodies would bring down the violence against women drastically. The paper studies the situation of DV in Rural Uttar Pradesh, the role of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayats and suggest a framework for EWRs to use. The study with the help of both primary and secondary data found out that there is still a long way to go as the reality is far from satisfactory.*

## Introduction

India is a patriarchal society where power equations regarding command over resources, status and lifestyles are highly skewed towards men. Domestic Violence (DV) is one of the manifestations of patriarchy.

*Feminist Activist and Former Head, Programme, Jagori Women's Resource Centre, New Delhi.
†Research Scholar, Department of Public Policy, Law and Governance, Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer (Raj.).
‡Assistant Professor, Department of Public Policy, Law and Governance, and Department of Society-Technology Interface, Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer (Raj.).
E-mail: gyana_pplg@curaj.ac.in

Terms like DV, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are generally used interchangeably. Factors causing DV are hierarchal gender relations, low educational and economic status of women, consumption of alcohol, preference for a male child over a female child, dowry, income level of household, etc (Heise et al, 1994; Begum et al, 2015; Choudhary et al, 2019; Kaur and Garg, 2009). Khatoon et al (2021), and Bancroft et al (2011) have highlighted the negative implications of DV on the life and liberty of women, unwanted pregnancies (Stephenson et al., 2008), high mortality and morbidity among women (Nigam, 2022), pregnancy-related mishaps. Women victims of sexual violence tend to develop mental disorders (Rai and Rai, 2019). These incidents are highly under-reported because of low awareness, financial independence among women, fear of retaliation, victim blaming and complex bureaucratic procedures (Seth, 2021 and Sarkar, 2010) and concerns about the future. It is highly accepted (Sarkar, 2010), (International Center for Research on Women, 2002), and normalised (Dasgupta, 2019), (Begum et al, 2015) leading to the continuation of a "cycle of domestic violence" in society.

Violence against women in any form and domestic violence *per se* is an offence that can be tried under either criminal law (Section 498A of the IPC, 1983) or civil law (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005). The PWDVA (2005) includes "physical, sexual, verbal, emotional abuse or intention to coerce her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for dowry or any other property/valuable security" ...[and] "also have the effect of threatening her or any person related to her". NFHS-5 (2019-21) shows that 29.3% of ever-married women have experienced spousal violence at some point in their lives.

The prevalence of GBV is more in rural areas as compared to urban areas because of more pronounced gender-based norms (George, et al., 2016), (Sarkar, 2010). The results of NFHS-5 show more prevalence of violence against ever-married women of age group 18-49 years and pregnant women in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Similarly, younger women of the age group (18-29 years) face more sexual violence in rural areas (1.6%) as compared to urban areas (1.1%). Women in rural areas have less financial autonomy, decision-making power at the household level, and education rendering them with low bargaining capacity in society. Alcoholic husbands, male ego, incompatibility with in-laws, and poor economic conditions are closely related to the occurrence of DV in rural areas (Dhar, 2014).

The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Act (1993) is a landmark legislation as it provided initially 1/3 reservation for women in local government. Reservation policies are very significant to facilitate the political empowerment of women by taking women-friendly decisions and investing in their priority areas (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). The objective of this paper is to highlight the severity of the problem of DV in the rural setting of the state of Uttar Pradesh, the impact of women reservation on the problem of DV by giving a case study of Rural Uttar Pradesh and suggest a framework for EWRs to use to mitigate DV.

## Methodology

The study relies on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data came from a literature review of research papers, books, laws, surveys and census. The literature reviewed here includes peer-reviewed and generic literature, books, reports, different national and international websites, newspaper reports, etc. For primary data, a field study was conducted in 25 gram panchayats of UP. It covered 25 panchayat areas selected through simple random samplings of more than 350 participants from various districts such as Husanpur, Shrawasti, Kamalpur, Shivnagar, Beniganj, Sikri, Lokyapur, Chaupan, etc. Different activities were employed during the four days workshop to enable free interaction with them. Participants were women belonging to the age of 15 to 60 years considering their productive and reproductive age groups. The group included Women Panchayat Pradhans, Ward Members, Aanganwadi Workers, ASHA, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Women NGO Members. Women were taken from all castes but the majority of them were from OBCs and general, just in the two panchayats, there were more SC women. Except for the last two panchayats in Hardoi, we did not have a single Muslim participant, though in their community there are a lot of Muslim families. Group also had women from the same family like the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, mothers and daughters, thus many were showing hesitation while speaking.

The study employs qualitative methods of data collection. The mode of collection of data is considered as a workshop model where the intervention delivery tool is focus group discussion (FGD) in order to draw insights on the premise that strengthening panchayat institutions at the ground level would act as a deterrent for DV. FGDs helped in gaining insight into women's lives, say in family decision-making and incidences of violence by a partner, family members and outsiders. Separate FGDs were conducted for married and unmarried women. Participant observation was
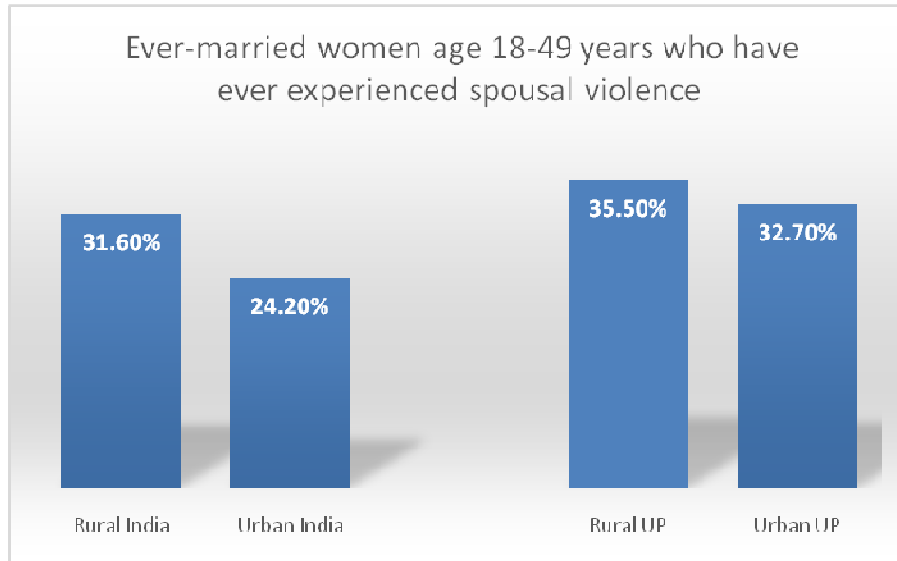
also used by the researchers while the researcher talked to women in informal settings. Open and deliberate discussions among the participants helped in sensitising themselves and women panchayat workers on the supply side measures pushed by the Union and State Government to deal with DV without disturbing their family ties as a family system in Indian society is of paramount importance. Two surveys through semi-structured questionnaires were also administered in local languages among married and unmarried women separately to pen down their experiences of DV and future expectations.

**The Case Study of Uttar Pradesh**

Uttar Pradesh is the most populated state in India and does not fare well on the majority of welfare indicators related to women. The situation is even worse in rural UP. Results of a survey study on adolescents' samples show that between 2015 and 19, the violence incidences against girls and women have increased from 23.3% to 51% while sexual violence increased from 30% to 48% (Press Trust of India, 2020). During Covid induced lockdown, the National Commission for Women recorded the majority of complaints (53%) of DV from UP (Jadhav, 2020). According to data from the emergency response system of state police, the cases of DV in UP constituted approximately 1.24 lakhs in just four months (957 every day) out of which 43% were against women (children and old people are also prone to domestic violence) (Rai P., 2017). Jaleel Ahmad et al (2015) found out that more than 1/3 of married women in rural UP are exposed to more than one form of violence, and it was more among non-Hindu families, SC/ST communities, and people with low education and standard of living.

Many EWRs are found to perform only the ceremonial role in Panchayats and Municipalities (Mishra, 2016) with a low understanding of the rules about the working of Panchayats (Shivani Srivastava, 2000). The level of illiteracy was more (28%) in the rural background as compared to urban areas (8%) (Mishra, 2016). Many EWRs were not aware of the basic terms like no-confidence motion, budgeting, and quorum of Gram Sabha (Mishra, 2016). The policy of rotation of the reserved seats also hinders the development of leadership skills among women panchayat leaders as by the time they learn the functioning of institutions, their terms expire (Sinha, 2018).

**Chart 1: Showing Rural and Urban Area Comparison in terms of Spousal Violence experienced by women of 18 to 49 years age group both at India and State level of Uttar Pradesh.**



Ever-married women age 18-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence

- Rural India: 31.60%
- Urban India: 24.20%
- Rural UP: 35.50%
- Urban UP: 32.70%

Data Source: NFHS-5

**Chart 2: Showing the Rural and Urban Area comparison in terms of violence during pregnancy experienced by women of 18-49 years age group both at the National and State level of Uttar Pradesh.**



Ever-married women (18-49 yrs) who have experienced physical violence during any pregnancy

- Rural India: 3.40%
- Urban India: 2.50%
- Rural UP: 3.80%
- Urban UP: 3.10%
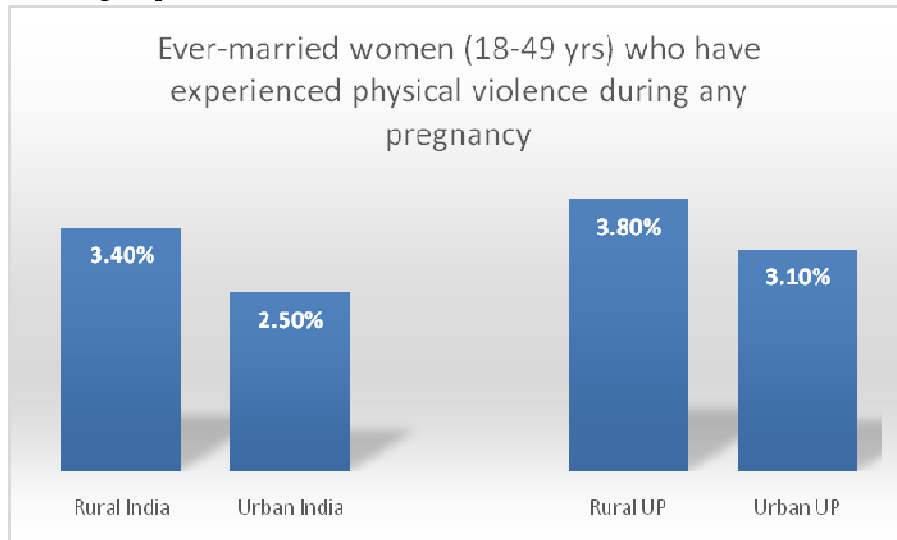
Data Source: NFHS-5

**Chart 3: Showing Rural and Urban area comparison in terms of Sexual Violence experienced by women by the age of 18 years both at the National and State levels of Uttar Pradesh.**
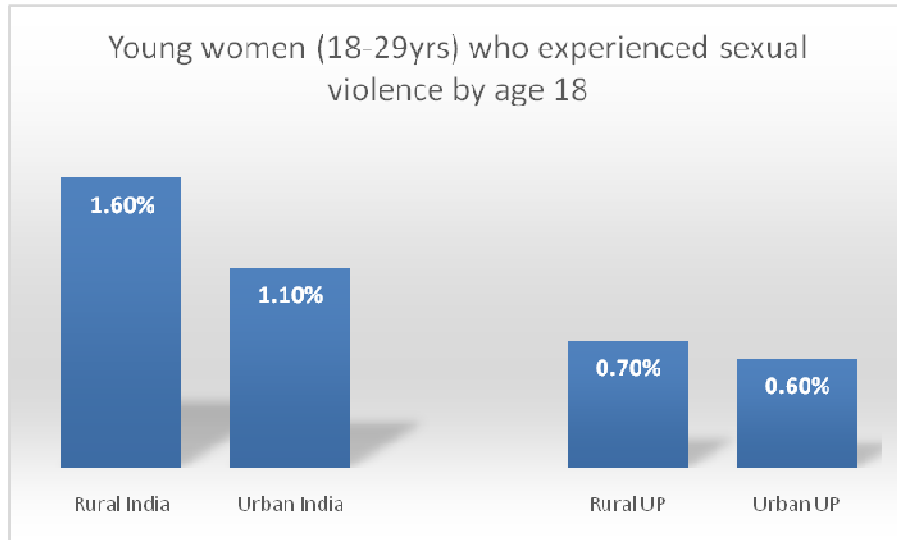


Data Source: NFHS-5

## Qualitative Results

DV pervades all aspects of social life in UP as all the participants have faced some form of DV. There is inter and intra community difference in the prevalence of DV. Discrimination based on gender is widespread. Girls are taught cooking, cleaning and behave shyly while boys are sent to schools, and sports and asked to act tough. A man who performs household chores is considered weak and dominated by his wife. Parents prefer local schools while boys are sent to English medium schools situated in urban localities. Sending girls outside the village for higher education is still uncommon for girls. Even progressive women are reluctant to send their young girls outside villages for work or further studies because of safety concerns.

The researchers, based on their findings in the field, have classified DV into four categories. The first and most common type of DV is physical violence, wherein women/girls are intimidated by physical force sometimes causing permanent impairment to the person. The second type of DV is sexual violence which takes place in intimate settings. Failure to carry out sexual duties or unfaithfulness is a commonly accepted justification for men's violence. This is more common in households where men are literate and affluent. The third type of DV is psychological or emotional abuse

includes acts such as ridiculing, humiliating, and insulting women or their parents. Then comes economic violence where women are prevented from attaining economic independence, resource acquisition, or exploiting their economic resources. Furthermore, more than 70% of participants are deprived of intellectual pursuit even though they have shown their ingenuity to fulfil dual responsibilities as "caregiver" and "intellect seeker".

Some anecdotes have a tale to tell and become a reference point in the study. Munadevi, from Husanpur Panchayat, is an Aanganwadi Sahayika who wakes up first in the house, cooks for everyone, leave for work, gets back home and cooks again, completes the household chores to make ends meet and give her kids a good upbringing. Suman Yadav an Anganwadi teacher in Sikri, is an active lady in her village participating in meetings and standing up for rights when needed. Her dream is to complete her PGT. Gayatri Devi from Sarawasti is the eldest of four daughters, has completed her BA and a course in ITO, and has worked for various movements for the betterment of women in the village like sanitary pad distribution. She is a struggling young woman, utilising every opportunity at hand to help her father like a son. Richa Tripathi, Hausdi Husanpur, a bright girl who dropped her dream to join the navy in absence of any institution nearby, is now planning to do MSc or BEd, instead of giving up on her future. Puja Devi, Shivanagar, a mother of two, does stitching and is an independent lady who is confident that she can take care of her kids and herself in times of distress. Rimpy Singh, Shivanagar, went against her father and prioritised her education over marriage.

Apart from direct factors of DV like alcoholism, and lower socio-economic status, there are some indirect factors related to culture and tradition contributing to DV. Taboos related to menstruation are justified on religious grounds where women are not allowed to enter the kitchen, religious places, touch religious things, or sleep in the same cot as their husbands etc. They are not given mineral-rich food, causing anaemia and malnutrition among them. There is a great preference for a male child in UP. Men resort to remarriage for having a son. They keep increasing the family size till a boy is born. Using contraceptives is also considered a women's responsibility. About 40% have also got vasectomies done. Veil System practised in Muslim and non-Muslim women, restricts the full participation of women in social and economic activities. Early marriage is still practised even after banning through law because of the preference for a young and virgin bride. Love marriages are looked down upon and in many cases also become the reason for violence against young and married girls. Dowry is

also a reason for the emotional and physical torture of women. Most unpaid work both in households or farms is given to women without any income of their own or acknowledgement. Working women get no relief from daily household responsibilities and end up working for more than 14 hours a day. Women have no control over their own financial resources which they managed to save for their children's education, marriage or house. Some cases came up where the husbands took away the hard-earned money of women and spent it on alcohol.

Many young and educated girls left professional pursuits either under the pressure of their in-laws or not finding any jobs nearby. Sumanlata, who completed her BA and passed police exams, was refused by her in-laws to join the service as she would travel at odd hours. Yasmin Banu, being from a conservative Muslim family had to drop her career after her post-graduation. The same is the case with Vibha Kumari Maurya. Women were least aware of political issues, working of panchayats, meetings of the gram sabha, names of ward members, and different government-run schemes. Some confused PM with CM. Panchayat is considered a men's domain. Women are not encouraged to participate and are discouraged when they are loud with their opinions. Few exceptional women who are affiliated with local NGOs and community organisations are aware of their rights and interested in local politics. It is also observed that most educated families are shifting towards family planning, institutional delivery, and gender equality.

**Working of EWR in Villages of Uttar Pradesh**

Out of the eight panchayats we visited, five of them had well-maintained PLC, with walls giving out all details, rooms with good ventilation, toilets with running water, and the building being used for activities when needed. One is still under construction, one was built on the same land as the pradhan's house, and one was really small, and not spacious enough for multiple events to take place. The best PLC was the one at Kamalpur, where each and every detail regarding panchayat or village was mentioned on walls and posters. Even after getting constitutional recognition, EWRs in rural UP are not taken seriously because of their humble backgrounds, inability to understand the working of panchayats and preoccupation with household responsibilities. In the panchayats chosen, there are only four panchayats with women Pradhan namely Kamalpur, Sikri, Shivanagar and Husanpur. The majority of women are just the proxy of their husbands who accompany them in public dealings and do most of the official

work while EWRs just sign the papers. Family male members generally take a decision for her to contest elections and her political ideology. Capable women are not participating or winning because of a lack of funds and votes.

In Kamalpur, Ritu Devi was a bit more active as compared to other pradhans. She takes part in meetings and tries to learn the functioning of panchayats and the process of passing yojanas. In Sikri and Shivanagar, it was a total disappointment as none of the ward members attended the meeting and lady pradhans were not seen anywhere. Most of the women were not even aware that their Pradhan was a female and always thought of her husband as the one. In Chaupan, Lokyapur and Beniganj, the pradhans were active throughout the workshop and we also conducted a one-on-one interaction with the women and the Pradhan so as to address the problems faced by them directly. In Husanpur as well the Pradhan came from Lucknow to have a word with us. The most disappointing was Shrawasti and Sikri where the Pradhan never came forward. Married women are preferred over unmarried ones as a leader of the panchayat because of the common assumption that unmarried women have no long-term interest in the village development as they would leave after marriage.

Representatives from ST and SC are highly influenced by leaders from their caste who help them during elections in return for future favours from the elected representatives. In some cases, the Pradhans would be of a different caste or religion thus leaving out an entire community's growth in the fear of votes from his people in future. Women Pradhans complained that officials' treatment and knowledge sharing with them depended upon their castes.

EWRs are also bound by societal rules and norms which restrict their interaction with men and attending late-night meetings. *Pardah* is exercised by women of all castes and religions which is a hurdle in their mobility and official work. As a result, most of the decisions are taken in their absence.

There are some success stories of women leaders as well. The presence of women leaders has made other community women more vocal about their needs, they feel free to put up questions in Gram Sabha meetings or meet women representatives personally with their problems. Ritu Devi of Kamalpur is such an example. Training received from local NGOs has made an impact on the level of political awareness of women leaders.

### Discussion

From the above findings, it is clear that the problem of DV is more serious in rural areas of the county and state of UP. Women become victims

of different forms of violence - emotional, physical, sexual, and economic. Evil practices such as dowry, menstruation-related taboos, early marriage, and gender discrimination contribute to violence against women. Low socio-economic status, low level of education, the burden of reproductive roles, involvement in unpaid labour, and financial dependency are some factors rendering rural women with low bargaining power in society. They are not aware of their own rights, methods to seek redressal of their grievances, and different government welfare schemes. More representation of women may lead to more women-friendly decisions such as more reporting of crimes against women (Iyer et al, 2012), reduction in gender gap aspirations in parents and adolescents (Beaman et al, 2012), increase in the entrepreneurial endeavours among women (Ghani et al 2014), increase in institutional birth and reduction in child mortality (Kumar and Prakash, 2017). Representation of women in local government has led to women becoming more vocal in Gram Sabha meetings and the emergence of various women self-help groups (SHGs) in the endeavour to manage basic services at the community level (Mohanty, 2021).

Shobha Devi from Bihar who became village *Mukhiya* fought against alcohol gangs and advocated for women's literacy and entrepreneurship (Agarwal, 2015). EWRs in Bihar started a community campaign to reduce GBO which will improve their overall well-being (Ranjan, 2020). Role of a woman headed Dhauj Gram Panchayat from Haryana, Soda Gram Panchayat from Rajasthan, Dhani Miya Khan from Haryana, Dhanakpura Gram Panchayat from Odisha, Khetri Gram Panchayat of Assam, Namkhana Gram Panchayat from West Bengal are worth mentioning in their efforts for women education, improving sex ratio, protection from domestic violence, increasing institutional delivery, drinking water, sanitation etc (Sinha, 2018). However, affirmative action for women is not sufficient for their meaningful participation in politics until they are well-educated (Agarwal, 2015) as education and reservation reinforce each other. They are still considered the proxy of a male member of their families. Their understanding of the working of panchayats is far less than their male counterparts. That's why there is a need for adequate and periodical training and education of these EWRs to make them conscious of their political clout, working of Panchayati Raj Institutions, ground problems, the effective exercise of their positions, the critical role they can play in grievance redressal and service delivery for the most deprived sections of society including women, children and old people so that they can become instrumental for strengthening grassroots governance system and making it more inclusive. They can serve as first-line

service delivery providers as far as women's health, hygiene, security, safety, and nutritional needs are concerned because of their greater understanding of fellow women's concerns.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The situation is mixed as far as the political empowerment of women is concerned. After the initial resistance from a patriarchal society, women have shown their political calibre and prudence. They have proved wrong all the inhibitions about their inherent intellectual incapacity to deal with administrative and political work. But the mere reservation and occupation of more seats in panchayats by women do not bring the necessary change in the direction of DV. It requires concerted efforts on the part of not only the government but also social activists, lawmakers, academicians, and the general public to create gender equality.

The study has suggested a framework for EWRs of panchayats to reduce DV as shown in the figure below.

**Chart 4: Framework to Reduce Domestic Violence by EWRs in Panchayats**



Chart 4 shows the framework for EWRs at panchayat level to deal with DV. The framework explains that EWRs can leverage their critical position in the village governance system for the reduction of DV against them. They can use their social capital in dealing with Gram Sabha, NGOs and SHGs, village-level institutions (educational and medical) and workers

(ASHA, ANMs, Village Guards), and functionaries at a higher level (block and district level). NGOs can be roped in for providing training to EWRs and other village-level workers to help them execute their duties effectively, conduct surveys on women-specific issues, arrange for legal literacy camps for women, facilitate the formation of women self-help groups, undertake gender sensitisation programmes in villages.

Gram Sabha can be instrumental in establishing social accountability of DV perpetrators through the formation of vigilance committees. Proper rapport of EWRs with district and block-level officers will help them avail financial, personnel and technical resources and arrange training and informative workshops for village-level functionaries. EWRs can form a proper channel for institutions systematically address the problem of DV. For example, students who come to school and patients visiting the village health centres should become the first point of identification of incidences of DV. Depending on the gravity of the problem adequate steps should be taken like counselling from experts, taking legal actions against the repeated and rehabilitation if required in shelter homes.

Medical and para-medical staff should be properly sensitised to treat women victims. ANMs and ASHA workers can play a significant role in the whole process from identification to follow-up. Awareness about gender equality and women's rights should be instilled in boys and girls from a very early age in order to bring about a change in the mindset of the future generation. Legal literacy camps should be conducted on a regular basis at the local community level.

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# Union Territory and Political Parties Demand on Delhi Statehood

## V.K. Sridhar*

*The Status of Delhi among the Union Territories is different by virtue of its being the capital of India apart from being a Union Territory which led to the direct supervision of the Central Government where the executive head is designated as Lt. Governor. It is not a full-fledged State where certain institutions like Delhi Police, Delhi Development Authority, and Municipal Corporation of Delhi fall directly under the Centre's jurisdiction. The political parties' demand for statehood over the years has demonstrated that most of the problems faced by the common man are due to the lack of accountability of the administration to the people. The demand for statehood is one of the oldest demands of the political parties in their respective manifesto, goes beyond the actionable promises for it also contains the elements of propaganda and ideological preference when they are in opposition but have opposed it whenever they have been in power. Delhi was declared as a National Capital Territory in 1991 by a way of a Constitutional amendment, which made it as the seat of the Central Government, as there cannot be two authorities due to the national capital. The paper analyses the demand for statehood by political parties: Bharitya Janta Party, Indian National Congress, and Aam Admi Party with respect to their claims regarding Delhi statehood through election manifesto and why the demand for statehood missing from the 2020 Delhi assembly elections.*

*Assistant Professor in Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi, Delhi. E-mail: vksridhar19@gmail.com.

**Sridhar**

## Introduction

The city of Delhi being the capital occupies an important place as the British Government after the 1857 mutiny shifted the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 and it was renamed as New Delhi in 1927. The city is divided between old Delhi with old architecture constructed by the rulers during their tenure with narrow lanes and New Delhi with broad roads as planned by Sir Edwin Lutyens from the 1920s to 1940s (Kumar, 2013; 1). The Constituent Assembly was also divided on the status of Delhi with Rati Ram Deshbandhu Gupta a lawyer representing Delhi suggesting "that suitable constitutional changes to be brought about in the administrative systems of the Chief Commissioners provinces so as to accord with the changed conditions in the country and to give them their due place in the democratic Constitution of Free India."

The Constituent Assembly thought that elective representative government should be introduced with limited powers (Krishna, 2018).

The first legislative came into force in 1952 led by Congress Chief Minister Chaudhary Brahm Prakash raised the issue of *Maha Delhi* (greater Delhi) as conceived by him till 1967 and did not hesitate in taking on the Congress high command which led to the replacement of Prakash by Gurmukh Nihal Singh in 1955 (Anderson and Shridhar D. Damale 1987; 202). The Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Congress have been the major contenders for power for the Municipal Corporation, Metropolitan Council and for the dominance of Lok Sabha Seats from Delhi ever since Independence. The Jan Sangh opposed the idea as it would lead to a dilution of its support base in Delhi as well as in Punjab. The experiences of the first elected State Government came to an absurd end due to the demand for State Reorganisation Commission (SRC). It was constituted to examine the reorganisation of the Indian Union, considering "the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation and the bearing of all important and relevant factors therein." (Shah, 2016).

The SRC did not favour full statehood in the case of Delhi, based on the experience of the USA, UK, and France where the federal governments maintained significant control so it also recommended the same for India. The Statehood is opposed to the plea that dual control of the capital by two Governments cannot function properly and at certain times they may appear to be crossing and neutralising each other's efforts. Furthermore, the SRC recommendation led to the introduction of a Municipal Corporation as an Advisory Council to fulfil the needs of the people at the territorial level. The Delhi Municipal Corporation covers almost the entire of Delhi (excluding

NDMC, Delhi Cantonment Board and some areas of Red Fort) under the Municipal Corporation Act, 1957. It could not look after the vastly diverse needs and requirements of various areas where the economic development and growth of the population of each area were largely different from the other. In 1966, the dissatisfaction with the Municipal Corporation led to its replacement by Delhi Metropolitan Council with 56 elected members as constituted under the Act, which is essentially an advisory body and the resolutions passed did not have any influence in changing the system (Kumar, 1991: 63-71).

**Party Politics and Demand for Statehood**

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh was a cadre-based party that came into existence on 21 October 1951 with Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh backing helped the party to grow from the first Lok Sabha elections in 1951-52 where it won three seats and in the 1957 General Elections it won four seats and in the 1962 party increased its tally to 14 seats and became the opposition party to the Congress (K. Raman Pillai, 1966). In Delhi, the social base of the Jan Sangh office bearers were Punjabi refugees after the tragic partition of India (Jaffrelot, 2010; 281-304). It was organisationally divided into four zones at the national level and the northern zone was looked after by Bal Raj Modhak when the capital city was flooded with Punjabi refugees.

The Jan Sangh did well in the Municipal elections of 1954 and 1958 and passed a resolution for full statehood as it was necessary to promote the all-round development of the territory. The major criticism against Bharitya Jana Sangh was that it was dominated by "Punjabi refugee" and "local Bania" in the elections whereas there was no opportunity for those who are outside the Punjabi-Bania alliance (Puri, 1980; 46-52). The internal rifts between Bhartiya Jana Sangh were due to the interference by R.S.S. in local matters of the party when President of Delhi Jan Sangh leader Vaid Guru Dutt resigned from the party membership. In the other cases of expulsion of Balraj Madhok, M.L. Sondhi also alleged interference by R.S.S. in the affairs of the Jana Sangh and he wanted R.S.S. and Jana Sangh to be completely independent of each other. In spite of these cases it did not weaken the party as the leaders of the Jana Sangh have admitted that there are similarities between the R.S.S. and the Jana Sangh Constitutions where the President is a symbolic leader while the real power is with the secretary where the working committee of Mandals, Districts, States and All India Working Committee was more than of elected members (Geeta Puri, 1980). This led to far-reaching consequences for it allowed the R.S.S. to plant its men in the

organisation at various levels. The intellectual orientation of the Jana Sangh and R.S.S. as inseparable due to spiritual and organisationally strengthened the Jana Sangh to give it a disciplined and unified cadre that not only helped Jana Sangh in its organisational expansion but also provided well-oiled machinery for electoral purposes. The other leaders who dominated the political scene were Kedar Nath Sahani, Balraj Khanna, Lal Hansraj Gupta, Shiv Narain Sarsonia, Kalka Das and Charti Lal Goel all were among the stalwarts who dominated the political scenario and later Vijay Malhotra, Madan Lal Khurana, Daljit Tandon kept the Jan Sangh high in Delhi and went on to occupy positions of power in both Houses of Parliament (Sheshadri Chari, 2020).

The link between the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and R.S.S. is based on ideology and world views while other parties are based on leader-centric parties (Palshikar, 2017; 12-13). The factionalism in the Congress party is different as it is not cadre-based and it amalgamates local leaders driven not by ideology but driven for power. The Congress split in 1969 led to intervention in the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee when Radha Raman was made the in-charge of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee. It was not acceptable to Chaudhary Brahm Prakash supporters leading to the opposing the official congress nominees. The AICC intervention in supporting the dissidents did not have any organised group with little popularity weakened the organisational strength of the Delhi Congress which Prakash had built a strong base of electorate among the middle-class "locals" *biradaries* a traditional network of support related to land-owning communities which helped in controlling the organisation and nomination procedures so that most of the candidates come from their group (Saini and Walter Anderson, 1971; 1084-1100).

The Congress leadership in the Delhi Metropolitan Council demanded full-fledged statehood and Deputy Chairman Jag Parvesh Chandra stressed that decentralisation is essential to address problems of the different areas of Delhi (Kumar, 1991; 92). The intense factionalism and mutual bickering led to Congress losing the elections in 1977 and the country-wide anti-Congress trend developed by the emergency. The Janata Party also passed the resolution in the Metropolitan Council for statehood and after the Janata Party split in the 1980s led to the Bhartiya Janata Party.

The appointment of H.K.L. Bhagat as President of the Delhi Pradesh Congress led to the revival of the party and help to get the majority of seats in the 1980 Parliamentary elections and 1983 Delhi Metropolitan Council elections. The Congress Metropolitan Councilor Mirza Sadiq Ali calls for bi-

partisan support for the issue of statehood. The major criticism against Delhi Metropolitan Council was that multiplicity of organisations each asserting its autonomy without any regard for the other to achieve planned and systematic development. In addition, during this time, Congress Metropolitan Council Member Shiv Charan Gupta also met the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to consider the demand for State Assembly. This led to a formation of a high-powered committee and suggest a new administrative setup for the Union Territory. The Committee introduced substantial changes with the Council of Ministers to supplement the legislative assembly and an elected Chief Minister. The relationship between the Lt. Governor and the Government of Delhi is placed on the relationship of "aid and advice" in the Constitutional sense where the dominance of the Union Government acts as a guardian has left little or no powers (Sahoo, 2015).

### 1993 Assembly Elections

The elections were reintroduced in the 1993 Assembly Elections in which BJP under the leadership of Madan Lal Khurana used the issue of statehood to garner votes and argued that unified authority to solve its problems effectively like law and order is the main problem in Delhi and wanted to have police under the State Control (Baweja, 1993). While Congress was engulfed with factionalism led by H.K.L. Bhagat and the dissidence led by R.K. Dhawan, Jagdish Tytler was openly campaigning against the Bhagat-Sajjan Kumar as land grabbers and members of the local mafia.

In 1996, Madan Lal Khurana figured in the Jain Hawala Diary Case which led to his resignation and was succeeded by Sahib Singh Verma, a *Jat* from the periphery of Delhi. After getting a clean chit in the Hawala case Khurana started efforts to get back the post of Chief Minister as was promised by the party. The appointment of Sahib Singh Verma by BJP had its own interest of expanding its social base in outer Delhi which used to be very weak till then had fielded upper castes candidates. The intense factionalism between Khurana and Sahib Singh Verma supporters was not keen on the return of Madan Lal Khurana as it would make him powerful was not digestible to R.S.S. The situation led to a compromise in which Sushma Swaraj (a Brahmin) as a Chief Minister candidate just before the elections and domination of local issues like the soaring price of onions led to the election defeat of BJP in the 1998 Assembly elections (Jaffrelot, 2010).

The Shiela Dixit Government was able to consolidate its position and under her tenure, there was a harmonious relationship in governance despite the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Centre. The organisational change in the Congress party also helped her as Sonia Gandhi became the President and appointed Shiela Dixit as the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee President (Vohra, 2019). In her three tenures from 1998 to 2013 she never discussed Delhi statehood in the public domain despite the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Congress at the Centre. The Congress was not supportive of the idea of full statehood because it wanted the Centre to retain control.

There was dissidence against Shiela Dixit from various quarters within the party led by Jagdish Tytler, Subhash Chopra and Sajjan Kumar who wanted to get rid of her with Ambika Soni but the intervention of Sonia Gandhi led to the replacement of Kamal Nath with Ahmed Patel as the general secretary in charge of Delhi which led to silencing the dissidence within the Congress party. The tacit support of central leadership to Shiela Dixit helped her to consolidate popularity with skilful image construction and sustained developmental work like Delhi Metro, roads, infrastructure led to showcase the facilities for the middle class, migrant electorates, slum dwellers, and Muslims which led these people to rally behind the Congress party (Kumar, 2013). The BJP in order to come back to power presented the Delhi statehood Bill in Parliament by Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani, with maximum autonomy for the full statehood in the Parliament before it was referred to a Standing Committee on Home Affairs headed by Pranab Mukherjee could not move forward as it died a premature death as Congress under UPA led by Manmohan Singh came back to power in 2003 Assembly elections. The BJP has been supportive of statehood for Delhi when they were in opposition and continued for the same in the 2013 Goa National Executive meeting of the party.

The politics on anti-corruption led by Anna Hazare demanded the passage of the Jan Lokpal Bill to check corruption in legislature, executive and judiciary (Hassan, 2018; 74-124). The emergence of the Aam Admi Party (AAP) tried to break the political parties' vote banks characterised by caste-class and interest-based affiliations to protect the common man's interest by fighting against corruption. The discontent of the Aam Aadmi (Common Man) that is constructed on the majority follows a pragmatic approach that it can conveniently attack any party on the day or align with anybody to discard them later. The campaign also helped AAP to dismantle Shiela Dixit Government on charges of corruption related to Commonwealth Games and

it also gave BJP a big boast to dismantle the UPA II led by Manmohan Singh's Government 2G allocations at the Centre. India Against Corruption movement also got strength from the tactical support of Rashtriya Swam Sevak Sangh (RSS) helped to raise the tempo of changing the corrupt UPA II government.

**Aam Aadmi Party's Fight for Statehood**

In the 2013 Delhi Assembly Election, the AAP Government did not last long as Arvind Kejriwal resigned from his post for not being able to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill. In the 2015 Assembly Elections, the AAP winning 67 of the 70 seats led to the elevation of Arvind Kejriwal as the undisputed leader without any dissent or criticism in the party and turn towards personality-centred politics as some of its members Yogender Yadav, Prasanth Bhushan, Anand Kumar, Ajit Jha and other activists were expelled from the AAP.

The BJPs Chief Minister candidate Harshvardhan promised statehood if it comes to power in the Delhi Assembly with a Delhi-centric vision/manifesto and its subsequent consolidation of political power after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections across India has shunned the idea of statehood. The victory of the BJP election campaign with catchy words like *achche din* (good times) about the policy paralysis of the UPA II Government on the charges of corruption and scandals to mobilise the varied sections of the population. The BJP attacked Kejriwal by calling him a '*naxalwadi*' (a left extremist) and *Bhagoda* (runaway) which helped Kejriwal favour by projecting him as the underdog fighting for the common man (Tiwary, 2015). In the 2015 elections, Kiran Bedi was chosen as a chief ministerial candidate by the BJP from Krishna Nagar in East Delhi vacated by Harshvardan who was contesting elections since 1993. The AAP candidate S.K. Bagga an advocate and social worker framed the campaign as an "insider" vs "outsider" contest and defeated Kiran Bedi with 2,200 votes. The launching of Kiran Bedi as the chief ministerial candidate who was earlier associated with the Anna Hazare movement joined the BJP just before the campaigns began was silently questioned by Rashtriya Swayan Sevak Sangh in '*Panchjanya*' magazine with the title '*Akankshaon ki Udaan*' (fight of aspirations) and *Vaade, Sawaal, Kejriwal* (promises, questions, Kejriwal).

After passing the Bill the Anti-Corruption Branch under the AAP Government in 2015 were 30 arrests made which led to tension and the Centre's forceful takeover of the ACB led to only five arrests have been made in the last three years which has been increasingly used to impose BJP political will and encroaches upon the right such as those made by the Delhi

Government for full statehood. The AAP also promised full-statehood and argued that Delhi does not have the right to elect a full-fledged government with its vote, whereas, in other states, their elected government has full freedom to provide schools, colleges, and universities. The State legislative cannot make laws relating to Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for land and housing issues where the Delhi Government does not have any say in it. But the fact that close to the 2/3rd of the people reside in slums and unauthorised colonies shows the colossal failure of the DDA which has led to unplanned growth and resulted in poor access to amenities for the majority of the residents (Prakash, 2018). In the same manner, the Delhi Police and Municipal Corporation is directly under the control of the Central Government and is not accountable to the people of Delhi, but the demand for control over the Police with the demand for full statehood. The three agencies fall directly under the Centre's jurisdiction where they must take permission from the Centre for each of their works.

The other areas of concern in case the statehood is given, law and order, police and control over officials and decision making would come under the preview of the elected Government and LG will be replaced by Governor. There would be no ambiguity regarding the control of powers between the Centre and State Governments and the responsibility of the state to its citizens will lead to more accountability for its people. In order to address these issues AAP passed a bill in 2016, which makes National Capital Territory by bifurcating New Delhi Area and the rest of the areas will transition to a full state.

The AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal questioned, Shakuntala Gamlin, the Chief Secretary appointed by Lieutenant Governor and insisted that he should be consulted before appointing. The tussle led to the sit-in-demonstration at the LG office by Kejriwal and his cabinet colleagues alleging that the bureaucracy in Delhi does not cooperate with the Delhi State Government. The Anshu Prakash Chief Secretary was manhandled by AAP workers led to serious criticism from the IAS Officer Association which approached the LG for action against the AAP. The BJP criticised AAP's forceful tactics against LG, instead, it wants the deadlock to continue and use it as an election shield (Yadav, 2018). The statehood demand was an excuse for not carrying out developmental work and alleged that AAP's confrontation with the Centre is constructed to portray as pro-decentralisation and could not do much work because his hands are tied within the administration. The APP Government challenged the notification in the Delhi High Court regarding the core of administrative autonomy vis-

à-vis the Lieutenant Governor. The difference of opinion regarding the control could not resolve and was referred to a larger bench of the Supreme Court to decide whether the Delhi Government or LG should have jurisdiction over 'Services' in Delhi. The case was referred to the Supreme Court where the Solicitor General argues *"If you treat a union territory as a state, then the Constitution must provide it or say so. Unless there is a specific mention, you cannot read state into it, it will result in inevitable chaos."* The Supreme Court criticised and said that the partisan interests and differences must have a sound rationale and that the Lieutenant Governor should not mechanically refer to every decision. The judgment is not clear under what circumstances and under which this power can be exercised and only states that the phrase "any other matter" should be read as "every matter" (Saikumar, 2015).

The demand for statehood once again featured in the election manifesto of the AAP in the run-up to the 2019 Parliamentary elections was not able to convince the voters of Delhi that full statehood would help to address their grievances. It did not have any impact with the BJP winning all seven seats and returning to the Centre for the second term on the issue of nationalism and national security. The consolidation of the BJP after winning the 2019 Loksabha elections based on Hindu nationalism or Hindutva, reflected in the Hindu-Muslim divide is at the heart of its quest for a Hindu Rashtra or State. The bills on *Triple Talaq*, abrogation of Article 370 and 35A (Special Autonomy Status for Jammu and Kashmir), the settlement of the Ayodhya dispute in favour of the Hindu party and the Citizen Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) reflect the hegemony of the majoritarian democracy. The AAP realising the danger supported BJP in repealing Article 370 and 35A to Jammu and Kashmir and welcomed the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya because it did not want to gamble on public sentiments as it overlapped with the BJP in Delhi (Pisharoty, 2019). In the 2020 Assembly elections the BJP campaign centred on Shaheen Bagh, a Muslim-dominated area in south Delhi for polarisation of Hindu votes and tried to turn the election into an anti-Muslim Vote and on the other hand, the AAP maintained a distance from the campaign in which political discourse is reduced to two extreme opposing viewpoints. The Kejriwal AAP and Narendra Modi BJP offer personality cult, and populist schemes but the hard edge to BJPs communalism is being mastered and the biggest fear about the AAP welfare politics proving an alternative to majoritarian politics without the ideological difference. The AAP party without being anti-Muslim, on the other hand, maintains silence towards the

shaheen bagh protests as a pragmatic approach but fails to act as a principled opponent with ideological convenience and distancing itself from the contentious politics of contemporary India.

## Conclusion

The political parties have supported statehood demands in their respective election manifesto which people perceive such documents as a ritualised exercise. The fact of the matter remains that the election manifesto goes beyond the actionable promises for it also contains the elements of propaganda and ideological preference of political parties when they are in opposition but have opposed it whenever they have been in power. The demand for statehood by political parties is a legitimate demand but the constitutional status and unequal distribution of power between the Centre and State has affected the democratic rights and aspiration of the citizens of Delhi.

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# Transition of Children from Pre-school to Primary: Policy, Factors, Challenges and Recommendations

## Amandeep Kaur* and Veenu Wadhwa†

*During an entire lifetime, a person goes through various stages and faces challenges that come with them. Likewise, approximately one-third of the initial years are occupied by primarily attaining education to live successfully in later years. As in life, any individual climb various levels in attaining education, and each level requires an intermediate step of the transition. Focussing on the most sudden yet powerful transition that every child must make is from pre-primary to primary school which is reported to be stressful for children. There is additional research to support the idea that this transition to grade one of school will greatly impact the future of the child almost concerning all major developmental domains. Hence, an attempt is made to examine the literature available for the context and tried to highlight the importance of transition in early years along with challenges incurred and recommendations. This paper aims to find out the most important factors playing a major role during the transition of children from pre-school to primary school. The factors have been observed and analysed from three verticals: the role of the teacher, school, and parent.*

*Research Scholar, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi.
E-mail: email.amankaur@gmail.com
†Professor, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi.
E-mail: veenu.wadhwa@ihe.du.ac

**Introduction**

India has one of the largest education systems in the world after China, UDISE+ report of 2019-20 records more than 1.5 million schools having 260 children enrolled in them. Though the country has various schemes and provisions for providing education in the early years, yet the results can only be seen in an increase in enrolments which is 100.13% at the elementary level as per the Ministry of Education (MoE) but the quality of the service delivery programme is persistently an area of concern. Several data sources such as the National Achievement Survey (NAS 2021) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2022) have shown that there is a prevalent learning crisis in India. The learning crisis also manifests itself at a young age. By the third grade, more than half of the students are unable to read straightforward text or perform basic math at the level required. The most fundamental reading and math abilities are lacking in more than 70% of third-grade students (ASER 2018).

When it comes to early childhood education, among various challenges, the most daunting is frequent transitions happening within a short span of time. Transition is a word as easy to say but encompasses an entirely difficult process. In simple words, the transition is a change from one state/condition to other. It is just like an interface where various radical changes occur in a short period. In social science, the term holds relevance for all age groups. During the early years, each child needs some kind of scaffolding or may be simply a nudge during each transition stage to seamlessly crossover to the other side. The young mind should be prepared well to launch into the mainstream and be able to navigate through it.

One of the major changes proposed by the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is in the academic structure. Instead of the ten plus two systems now, with the inclusion of pre-school years in mainstream education, the child will enter the system at the age of 3 years instead of 5 or 6 years. Hence the foundational stage will comprise of 3 years to 8 years of compulsory and free education. It clearly depicts that school readiness has been given special attention and building of a strong foundation in terms of quality as well as avoiding any kind of gaps in the existing system are prioritised. With 2030 as the target year, it is mentioned that each child should be school ready when they enter grade one. Going through various school readiness models and policy level documents 'transition' and 'accomplishing competencies' are two major indicators for school readiness with three kinds of readiness involved i.e., "children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children, and families' and communities' readiness for

school" (NECCEF 2013, UNICEF 2012, Amod, Z. and Heafield, D., 2013, Rubello Britto. P. & Limlingan. M.C. 2012).

Without the basic skills, the benefits of education in later years are lost. Research documents that foundational learning i.e. reading comprehension and basic numerical operations by Class 3, forms the basis of all future learning. In order to improve overall student learning outcomes in India and create a successful and inclusive educational system, it is therefore imperative that all children receive a foundational education. This can be only possible when children get accurate prerequisites to acquire desired skills during pre-school years. To achieve the aforesaid, the learning loss should be minimal during the transfer from pre-school to primary.

Hence, it is the responsibility of educators, policymakers, and experts to provide a conducive environment, infrastructure, and capacity-building opportunities to facilitate a smoother transition from pre-school to primary with minimal loss.

**Suggestive Measures for Smoother Transition in NEP 2020**

It is recommended that the system must undergo significant reforms that bring the greatest levels of quality, equity, and integrity into every aspect of the system, right from the inception years to graduate programmes, in order to close the gap between the existing state of learning outcomes and what is necessary. According to the policy, the current 10+2 school structure will be replaced with a 5+3+3+4 pedagogical and curriculum restructure that will serve students aged 3 to 18. One of the components is to maintain coordination of the curricula at all levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education.

Henceforth, it is suggested that Anganwadi/pre-school shall be fully integrated into school complexes/clusters. To ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary schools, children must take tours that are packed with activities and get to know the teachers and kids there. It is also encouraged that students and their parents should be invited to activities of the school programme in order to acquaint them with the system. With the current scenario, there are four types of settings where a child starts getting an education the first time out of the home. These are (a) stand-alone Anganwadies; (b) Anganwadies co-located with primary schools; (c) pre-primary schools/sections existing with primary schools; and (d) stand-alone pre-schools. All of which would hire staff members or educators who have received specialised training in the ECCE curriculum and pedagogy.

**Factors accounting for a smooth transition:**
*Role of School*

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) developed the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework (NECCEF, 2013) which promotes the need for the development of focused and more targeted school readiness in order to facilitate children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary education. A significant financial commitment is required for a strong, energetic public education system. Powell (2010) discusses "ready schools" as institutions that subscribe to the idea that all children will learn, regardless of the fact that children may be at different learning levels at a given point in time. Ready schools hold that no one solution is best for everyone. He gives the discussion of readiness a new perspective by arguing that schools should be prepared to meet children's needs rather than assuming that children will be ready for school.

*Balvatikas* (pre-school centres) should have adequate physical facilities, teaching-learning materials, toys and games with qualified teachers who are able to execute the programme effectively. Each classroom should be housed in a properly ventilated, child-friendly, well-built structure with a rich learning environment. There should be ample indoor and outdoor space for indoor and outdoor play and an enriched learning environment.

The pre-primary and primary school curriculum should place a greater emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as on reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking. With the launch of the "National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage" (NCFFS) 2022 and the "National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy" (NIPUN) Bharat guidelines 2021, the focus will be shifted from content-based education to skill-based education to enhance the critical thinking, problem solving and creativity among students. This is planned to be achieved through various types of approaches such as toy and play-based learning, experiential learning, design thinking and other participatory models. A shift from conventional to competency-based education is advocated and teaching resources are being designed accordingly. A strong yet flexible system of continuous formative assessment must be used to track student progress and ensure that each student is learning. Public and school libraries play a significant role to cultivate a habit of reading on their own throughout different stages. Digital infrastructure must also be established. Since quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) is not available to all children, many children already

fall behind in the first few weeks of Grade 1. Thus, an interim 3-month play-based "school preparation module" named "*Vidya Pravesh*", created by the National Council of Educational Research and Training NCERT, is a comprehensive document to ensure that all youngsters are prepared for school.

The focus should be on both verticals of the problem i.e. children who have never attended a pre-primary education and those who have not received quality education to prevent further children from dropping out. To ensure quality education for both, it is a pre-requisite to provide standard infrastructure facilities so that all children irrespective of their background can reach successfully to the next stage of the education continuum.

Also, Aganwadies and pre-schools will implement the ECCE curricular framework designed by NCERT to bridge the gaps between pre-school and primary and facilitate the transition effortlessly (NIPUN Bharat guidelines, 2021). To make sure that all children attend a quality programme and get the desired benefit, government schools must undergo a revamping ensuring the upgradation of the facilities existing, providing pre-primary sections where they are not present and a safe environment so that a complete faith has resorted in the education system.

*Role of Teacher*

The teacher plays a vital role in the life of a child as well as is the backbone of any educational system. NEP 2020 at many places suggest that it is the job of a teacher which should be valued and highly dignified as well as paid well to ensure well-deserved respect from society. A teacher has the power to shape the mind of the young generation and hence their well-being and professional training should be taken care with priority. This will ensure highly motivated, academically strong and top graduates to join the workforce.

Since teachers connect with the child as well as parents and are the agents of information dissemination, it is vital to have coordination among the pre-primary and primary teachers. One of the efficient ways to do so is by planning and conducting training programmes, school events, and meetings together for pre-primary and primary educators. Needless to say, a gradual progression and integration of teaching strategies is a must to avoid any kind of confusion for the children (NIPUN Bharat guidelines, 2021).

Only a well-trained and qualified teacher can meet the needs of the above task mentioned. Hence, as suggested by the background paper for the teachers' fest titled "ECCE: Foundations of Learning" by NCERT in 2006,

current employees and teachers in pre-primary centres will undergo systematic training as per the framework designed by NCERT to ensure minimum quality standards. For *Anganwadi* teaching staff with a senior secondary or higher educational background, a 6-month certificate course in early childhood education will be made available; for those with lower educational backgrounds, a 1-year diploma programme covering early literacy, numeracy, and other relevant ECCE themes will be made available. These courses can be availed online and can be completed while continuing regular teaching to raise the qualifications.

Also, the teacher-pupil ratio is another important variable when it comes to early years. Sadly, in reality, the country still has schools and centres which are managed by only one teacher with a large number of enrolments. Increasing the recruitment at places with higher number population density and decreased rates of literacy may prove to be beneficial. The recommended teacher-student ratio of 30:1 should be maintained and extra provisions for challenging scenarios based on demographical situations. Employing local teachers or those who are conversant with the local language will receive special consideration. Teachers should get ongoing professional development as well as training, encouragement, and support to help them teach basic literacy and numeracy skills along with age-appropriate developmental tasks and behaviours.

Apart from the above teacher disposition, motivation, preparation, performance and attendance are other factors which directly impact the quality of the service delivery programme and student outcomes. An encouraging and supporting teacher will serve as a source of motivation for children to continue their quest to learn and help to find joy in attending school after completing pre-school education.

*Role of Parents*

One of the best predictors of academic performance during the elementary years and beyond is supportive parenting and a stimulating home environment. Based on the literature review Dhingra and Yadav (2021) have identified seven major factors for the readiness which include genetics, environment, emotional maturity, socio-economic status, cultural and social context, and policy perspectives. In the paper, the authors have clearly vouched for the fact that school readiness highly depends on enriched overall experiences and the quality of pre-school education attended in formative years. As quoted by several other researchers socio-economic

status of the parents has a major impact yet they found mother's education can play a vital role in minimising the impact.

A few strategies to promote parent involvement are establishing a mutually respectful and trusting relationship with the teacher, and taking part in events organised for parents, and family members who should be welcomed at the centre. Children's work can be routinely sent home so that parents and other relatives can see what their child is learning in class. Keeping in touch with parents by frequently using a variety of methods to notify them of their child's progress and forthcoming school activities and expressing any worries regarding a child's growth and talking about how to best accommodate a child's special requirements jointly may help to prevent any kind of learning delays.

## Challenges

One of the most challenging, confusing, and perplexing periods in a child's life is the transition from early childhood education to the first year of school. As simple and certain as the concept sounds, ensuring readiness is not always possible. Although different stakeholders may have different definitions of readiness, all stakeholders (family, school, and society) share equal responsibility for fostering readiness in children. In particular Sujata Missal (2012) conducted a survey on school readiness among pre-schoolers from *Balwadies* and *Aganwadies* who sought to examine pre-schoolers' preparation for school and determine the proportion of kids who fell into each level in her survey. It was discovered that 43% of the kids were not prepared for school, furthermore, it says that 20% of people were in danger and 23% were vulnerable.

Rao et al. (2021) highlighted various challenges and thereby opportunities they bring to pre-school educational space. Meeting the needs of pre-school-aged children is made more difficult by the diversity of the geographic terrain, ECCE programme types, socio-demographic makeup of the children served, and state policies. High-quality pre-school teacher recruitment and retention are difficult tasks to accomplish. Although a system for service delivery monitoring exists, the standard of pre-school education in the centres is not routinely observed (NIPCCD, 2012), therefore, the creation of a robust regulatory framework is required to guarantee the quality of ECCE programmes across the nation (Krishnakumar, 2016). India has many child-friendly laws and policies. They have not been fully implemented, though. The allocation of duties and resources between the Union National and State Governments is one of many potential causes of

insufficient ECCE policy implementation. There are significant differences between states in the supply and demand for publicly funded ECCE due to the autonomy of states in how they use the funds allocated for children. The development and implementation of policies that support learning and child development are negatively impacted by this division. The dearth of reliable information from national-level studies on the subject with a niche focus on ECCE, delivering precise and in-depth statistics pertaining to ECCE availability and quality, is yet another challenge that calls for high-quality wide-spread research.

"The GER for Grades 6-8 was 90.9%, showing that a considerable fraction of enrolled students drops out after fifth grade. 3.22 crore children in the age bracket of 6-17 years are not enrolled in school, according to the NSSO's 75th round household survey conducted in 2017-18" (Kaur, S. 2021). By 2030, it is desired to have a 100% gross enrolment ratio from pre-school through the secondary level. Hence, it is essential to give a strong head start to establish a strong foundation to prevent dropout at later stages. This would help to provide high-quality access to school while also enhancing learning outcomes.

## Recommendations for Smoother Transition

Various research suggests that school readiness programmes have been proven to be effective and children are better prepared for grade I compared to those who do not attend any such programmes (Magnuson et al. 2004, Devi, Sharda M. and Devi, Uma L. 2011). Likewise, in three Indian states, the quality of centre-based early childhood services has been assessed using the Early Childhood Education Quality Assessment Scale (ECEQAS) (Kaul et al., 2017). The quality measures used were "infrastructure, organisation of classroom, language and reasoning experiences, literacy and numeracy; creative activities; self-help skills; fine and gross motor activities; social development; and teacher attitude". The study collected data from different types of pre-primary setups ranging from public to private and autonomous bodies and found a connection between pre-school quality and kids' readiness for school (Kaul, 2019).

Yeboah (2002) articulates that policies and programmes designed for early and primary years must be in synchronisation and must complement each other to promote a smoother and more successful transition between the two stages. For facilitation of the implementation of these policies, the location of pre-schools and *Anganwadies* can be collocated thus making a larger scope to connect the two programmes (Kaushal, S., 2021, NIPUN

Bharat guidelines 2021). A joint letter has been issued by MoE and MoWCD to co-locate *Aganwadi* centres in 2017. For ongoing support to integrate pre-primary and primary together, a dedicated joint task group should be constituted by various concerned Ministries rather than working in different groups.

**DIKSHA**

Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) is an online platform managed by NCERT which is a national resource for various verticals of education. Anyone can access content on foundational literacy and numeracy free of cost and regional resources can also be found for the same. This technological support will help teachers as well as parents to narrow the gaps or any kind of barriers in implementation by having provisions of guidance.

However, "any discussions regarding school readiness will be guided by three basic factors: the diversity of children's early life experiences as well as inequity in experiences; the wide variation in young children's development and learning; and the degree to which school expectations of children entering kindergarten are reasonable, appropriate, and supportive of individual differences" (NAEYC, 1995). Academics, educators, policy-makers, and researchers may be interested in this area to examine the effective linkage of programmes, the goals that these programmes are achieving, the degree to which they are successful in fostering continued skills, the modifications that need to be made to such programmes, what else needs to be done in order to accomplish the desired goal.

**Conclusion**

The importance of a successful transition from pre-school to school cannot be overemphasised. According to Bhise and Sonawat (2016) a child's preparedness for school is influenced by a variety of factors, including "cognitive readiness, early language development, print awareness, social-economic position, maternal education, pre-school experiences, curriculum planning, and teaching experiences". Families and children are deemed to be ready when they acquire the necessary prerequisites and capabilities necessary to facilitate seamless progression from home to the first ECE centre and then to mainstream school (NECCEF, 2013).

The discovery and classification of features that contribute to an accurate, precise, and functional notion of transition as well as successful programme designing are two areas where there are still many gaps on the

grassroots level. Similarly Chandra (2017) suggests that despite several initiatives by India, there are still gaps in pre-primary education, the lack of national standards defining school preparation on a national level, need-based preparedness programmes, and suitable evaluation methods and tools. In order to meet a child's needs throughout a transition, these gaps must be filled. Parents, schools, instructors, and policy-makers need to give this stage more thought and importance.

Thus, with the launch of NIPUN Bharat guidelines 2021 and NCFFS 2022, now the focus has shifted towards holistic developments which include social and emotional readiness as compared to the conventional approaches. Additionally, the pre-primary and primary education systems must be redesigned, reorganised, and directed to deliver competency-based education with grade-level outcomes across the nation.

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# Happiness across Political Regimes: The Role of Religiousness and Political Orientation in the Context of Other Values, Attitudes and Demographics

**Suraj Sharma***

*Using empirical research, the current study attempted to investigate the relationship between political orientation, religiosity, and political acts in determining happiness, taking into consideration social distinctions based on democratic norms and ethics. The findings revealed that increased happiness is not a universal phenomenon when it comes to conservatism and religiosity. Except in full democracies, the positive association between happiness and conservatism was found to be weak, while religiosity scores were found to be weak in determining happiness in full democracies. Except for full democracies, political involvement scores were strongly and inversely associated with happiness. Individual happiness is universally dictated by good health, enhanced life satisfaction, societal trust, and membership in organisations; yet, when it comes to conservatism, religiosity, and political involvement, the link is constrained by the nation's governing structure.*

*Department of Economics, S.M. (P.G.) College, Chandausi, M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly (U.P.) E-mail: drsurajsharma@yahoo.com

## 1. Introduction

Individual happiness levels are influenced by political ideology, political involvement, and religiosity. Is political orientation a moderator in the association between political involvement and religiosity and happiness? Is there any role for differences in democratic values in determining the above-mentioned relationship between regimes? In the past, scholars, notably psychologists, attempted to predict individual happiness levels through intriguing personal behavioural and attitudinal studies, but recently, the scope of happiness research has expanded to include multidisciplinary techniques, particularly economics. Increased economic activity's ultimate goal is to improve the welfare of every individual, which is closely linked to happiness or well-being (De Vos 2012; Diener 2000; Diener and Seligman 2004; Dorn, Fischer, Kirchgässner and Sousa-Poza 2007; Frey and Stutzer 2002), and make it an essential part of public policy. The study of happiness is all the more necessary because economic progress and happiness are symbiotic.

Starting from a general statement that 'religious persons report higher levels of happiness or subjective well-being (SWB),' earlier studies have found a positive association between religiosity and happiness (Abdel-Khalek and Lester 2017; Abdel-Khalek 2011; Francis and Lester 1997; Maltby, Lewis and Day 1999; Poloma and Pendleton 1990; Steger and Frazier 2005) is based on the idea that religious belief, attitude or actions lead to increased social support (supportive social network), meaning and purpose in life (French and Joseph 1999; Hicks and King 2008), coping behaviour, mechanism and strategies to deal with stress (Horning, Davis, Stirrat and Cornwell 2011; Pullen, Modrcin-Talbott, West and Muenchen 1999), and a greater sense of conscientiousness (Hayes and Joseph 2003). Soydemir, Bastida and Gonzalez (2004) opined that religious people are less likely to report health problems and are happy than non-religious people. Moreover, religious service attendance increases happiness odds, having an inflexion point after which it rose at a decreasing pace.

The level or degree of correlation between religiosity and happiness varies by society, and it is discovered that social variances in religiosity levels are more important than individual religiosity levels in explaining happiness levels (Eichhorn 2012). Helliwell (2003) also stated that one's well-being is influenced by both personal attributes and the society in which one resides. Societal relationships and social capital, such as societal trustworthiness and societal trust in government institutions, civic involvement, and religious and community affiliations, are all linked to

happiness (Helliwell and Putnam 2004). However, Bomhoff and Siah (2019) claimed that while religious people are generally happier than non-religious people, religion at the national level has little effect on happiness.

Numerous studies have established a positive relationship between conservatism (right-wing orientation) and happiness or SWB (Brooks 2008; Napier and Jost 2008; Van Hiel and Brebels 2011; Schlenker Chambers and Le 2012). This favourable relationship between conservatism and happiness is found to be extremely substantial for older populations (Van Hiel and De Clercq 2009; Cornelis, Van Hiel, Roets and Kossowska 2009; Van Hiel and Brebels 2011). Here, authoritarianism acts as a buffer against negative life experiences for elderly individuals, particularly mental discomfort (Van Hiel and De Clercq 2009). Individual and personal attitudes and behaviours such as control, responsibility, optimism, religiosity, ethics, and justice were found to account for the happiness gap between conservatives and liberals (Schlenker, Chambers and Le 2012).

When it comes to the interaction of political orientation and religiosity, Brint and Abrutyn (2010) observed that the relationship between religiosity (specifically evangelicals) and political conservatism is governed by adherence to traditional moral standards, as well as acceptable societal and familial relationships.

In view of the fact that there are societal disparities based on democratic principles, ethics, culture, societal relationship, social capital, and so on, the current study attempts to investigate the relationship between political orientation, political involvement, religion, and happiness. The sample must be split up into different regimes in order to provide crucial investigative tools that take into account social disparities in democratic norms and ethics. This is particularly essential because a state can only directly affect happiness levels through the quality of governance it offers to its citizens, which depends in part on economic growth, which has recently been endorsed by "politics of happiness" (Brülde and Bykvist 2010), as well as on public expectations of and societal trust in governments and governing structures (Duncan 2010; Owen, Videras, and Willemsen 2008).

## 2.    Data and Methods

I used the most recent wave (wave 6) of the WVS, which took place between 2010 and 2014. It covered 60 countries[1] around the world with over 86,000 individuals. Inglehart et al. (2014)[2] specified and discussed the data as well as their representative sampling approach in detail.[3]

**2.1** **Variables**

The variables employed in this study were highly distinct in nature and type from one another. For this study, the measurements were recoded, and appropriate methodologies were applied based on the nature of the variables of interest.

*2.1.1* *Criterion Variable*

As a criterion variable, the happiness scale was used. The variable was recoded on a four-point scale (1 = 'Not at all happy' to 4 = 'Very happy'). For community cross-sectional surveys, measuring happiness by a single item was proven to be valid and socially trustworthy (Abdel-Khalek 2006).

*2.1.2* *Predictor variables*

**Political Conservatism -** The political conservatism in the WVS was measured as self-positioning on a 10-point political scale from 1 = 'Left' to 10 = 'Right.'

**Political Involvements -** The measure of political involvement was constructed using five relevant measures of political activism. The first measure was asked as 'how important politics is in your life...?', and it was originally coded on a 4-point scale. I recoded it by combining categories 'Very important' and 'Rather important' and assigned it a numerical value of '1' and combining 'not very important' and 'Not at all important' and assigned it as '0.' The survey asked about the other four measures as 'whether you have done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances...' The measures have been coded as 'have done,' 'might do' and 'never do.' The measures were recoded by combining categories 'have done' and 'might do' and assigning them a numerical value of '1' and 'never do' was assigned '0.' The actions which are considered to construct a single measure of political involvement were identified as 'signing a petition,' 'joining in boycotts,' 'attending peaceful demonstrations,' and 'joining strikes.' Scores on these five measures were first standardised and then averaged together to create political involvements index.[4]

**Religiosity -** The religiosity index was created using five relevant measures from WVS. The first measure was asked as 'How important religion is in your life...?', and it was originally coded on a 4-point scale and I recoded it by combining categories 'Very important' and 'Rather important' and assigned it a value of '1' and combining 'not very important' and 'Not at

all important' and assigned it as '0.' The second measure was asked as 'How often do you attend religious services...?' and recoded on a 7-point scale from 1 = 'Never' to 7 = 'More than once a week.' The third measure was asked as 'How often do you pray...?' and recoded on an 8-point scale from 1 = 'Never' to 8 = 'Several times a day.' The fourth measure was originally coded on a 3-point scale and I recoded it as 1 = 'A religious person' and 0 = 'both not a religious person and an atheist.' The fifth measure was asked as 'Do you believe in God?' and it was coded as 1 = 'yes' and 0 = 'No.' The measures were standardised and then averaged together to create a religiosity index.[5]

**Societal Trust -** Four relevant indicators based on confidence in various national organisations were used to build the societal trust index. The variables were measured by asking questions such as 'I am going to name a number of organisations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them...?' The responses were recoded on a 4-point scale as 1 = 'none at all' to 4 = 'A great deal.' I considered four pillars of democracy or governance that are considered very important as far as people's participation is concerned. These were the press, the courts (judiciary), the central government (executive) and the Parliament (legislature). The scores were then standardised and averaged to create a societal trust index.[6]

**Membership in Organisations -** Individuals' membership status in voluntary organisations was used to generate a membership in organisations measure. The index was created using eight major organisations' responses to questions on membership in related organisations. The variables were measured by asking questions such as 'Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organisations. For each organisation, could you tell me whether you are...?' The responses were coded on a 3-point scale as 2 = 'an active member,' 1 = 'an inactive member,' and 0 = 'not a member.' I considered membership to organisations related to religious activities, sports and recreation, art, music or education, labour unions, political party, the environment, humanity and charity, and self-help and mutual aid groups. The scores were then standardised and averaged to create a membership in the organisations' index.[7]

**Other Explanatory Variables -** Demographic measures of age (continuous), dummies of sex (1 = 'female'), marital status (1 = 'married' included married and living together as married), and the number of children (from 1-8) were included as controls. Human capital measures of educational attainment (1 = 'no formal education' to 8 = 'university level

with degree'), self-reported health (1 = 'poor', 4 = 'very good'), including self-positioned (relative) income levels (1 = 'lowest income group', 10 = 'highest income group'), employment status (1 = 'unemployed', 0 = 'otherwise'), self-reported satisfaction level with own life (1 = 'completely dissatisfied', 10 = 'completely satisfied') and freedom of choice and control over own life (FCCOL) (1 = 'no choice at all', 10 = 'a great deal') were used as other predictor variables for happiness scores. When different effects of the regime are to be seen, FCCOL is a very important predictor. It is all more necessary to examine every political regime separately because studies had indicated that individuals, in economies that are politically and economically challenged or in transitions, tend to experience lower SWB (Inglehart 1988; Loubser and Steenekamp 2012) and the relationship between well-being and happiness with political and personal freedom and the feeling of having choice and control over one's life is very stable (Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel 2008; Veenhoven 2008).

The regimes were defined as authoritarian regime, hybrid regime, flawed democracies and full democracies using Democracy Index 2016.[8] The groupings are as follows; a total of 17 countries came under authoritarian regime namely Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrein, Armenia, Belarus, China, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Uzbekistan and Yemen, 12 countries were found in hybrid regime namely Ecuador, Georgia, Palestine, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine, 23 countries were found to be flawed democracies namely Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, Columbia, Cyprus, Estonia, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, and United States of America, and only eight countries were found to be full democracies namely Australia, Chile, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay.

## 3.    Empirical Analysis and Results

I used a multiple ordinal logistic regression to study how political orientation, political involvements, religiosity, societal trust in public institutions, and membership in organisations affect happiness levels. Political inclination, political involvements, religiosity, societal trust in public institutions, and membership in organisations were all predictor variables. As controls, demographic measures such as age, sex, marital status, and the number of children were used. Other predictor variables for happiness scores were educational attainment, health status, relative income

levels, employment status, satisfaction with one's own life, and FCCOL. The sample size was reduced to 46,413 in this study due to non-response, refusals, and filtering.

**Table 1**
**Ordinal Logistic Estimates for Happiness Scores and**
**Percentage Change in Odds (Pooled)**

| Variable | $\beta$ | Odds | % | %StdX |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | - 0.01*** (0.000) | 0.995 | - 0.5 | - 8.2 |
| Female | 0.04* (0.019) | 1.038 | 3.8 | 1.9 |
| Married | 0.26*** (0.022) | 1.296 | 29.6 | 13.4 |
| Number of children | 0.03*** (0.007) | 1.033 | 3.3 | 5.8 |
| Income level | 0.02*** (0.005) | 1.016 | 1.6 | 3.5 |
| Unemployed | - 0.16*** (0.035) | 0.851 | - 14.9 | - 4.8 |
| Education | - 0.02*** (0.004) | 0.980 | - 2.0 | - 4.6 |
| Health status | 0.79*** (0.015) | 2.203 | 120.3 | 93.0 |
| Satisfaction with life | 0.35*** (0.006) | 1.422 | 42.2 | 118.9 |
| Freedom and control | 0.05*** (0.005) | 1.046 | 4.6 | 10.3 |
| Political conservatism | 0.01* (0.004) | 1.009 | 0.9 | 2.1 |
| Political involvement | - 0.12*** (0.014) | 0.885 | - 11.5 | - 8.3 |
| Religiosity | 0.16*** (0.012) | 1.177 | 17.7 | 12.9 |
| Societal trust | 0.14*** (0.014) | 1.153 | 15.3 | 11.1 |
| Membership in organisations | 0.19*** (0.016) | 1.206 | 20.6 | 13.6 |
| Wald χ² (15) = 11583.72 ($p$< 0.001) | | Pseudo R² = 0.1572 | | |

Note: Figures in parentheses are heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors.
N = 46413 and *$p$<0.05, **$p$<0.01, ***$p$<0.001, % = percent change in odds for unit increase in $X_i$
%StdX = per cent change in odds for SD increase in $X_i$

Table 1 shows the results of the ordinal logistic regression analysis. The entire model fit was statistically significant (Wald χ² (15)11583.72, $p$<0.001), with predictors accounting for more than 15 per cent of the variation in the criterion variable. The estimates revealed a positive relationship between happiness and political conservatism (right-wing political orientation), religiosity, public institution, societal trust, and active or passive participation in various social organisations.

Political activism, such as agitation, boycotts, strikes, peaceful demonstrations, and other forms of political involvement is inversely connected with happiness. Unlike Bixter (2015), there was no significant connection between political orientation and political involvement and religiosity.[9] It can be observed that having more FCCOL has a favourable impact on happiness, which is a good thing in democratic settings. Furthermore, among the other life dimensions, health conditions and satisfaction with life were revealed to be the most important predictors of happiness (Angelini, Bertoni and Corazzini 2017).

Table 1 also shows the results of the percentage change in odds of happiness scores. This is obvious in the fact that a unit increase in political conservatism and religiosity scores improved the odds of happiness by 0.9 per cent and 17.7 per cent, respectively. However, a unit increase in political involvement scores decreased the odds of happiness by 11.5 per cent. For each unit increase in them, societal trust and membership in organisations increased the odds of happiness by 15.3 per cent and 20.6 per cent, respectively.

**Table 2**
**Marginal Effects (dy/dx) for Different Categories of**
**Happiness Scores (Pooled)**

| Variable | Not at all happy | Not very happy | Rather happy | Very happy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0.000045 | 0.000381 | 0.000704 | - 0.001130 |
| Female | - 0.000327 | - 0.002743 | - 0.005070 | 0.008140 |
| Married | - 0.002339 | - 0.019480 | - 0.03376 | 0.055575 |
| Number of children | - 0.000286 | - 0.002405 | - 0.004447 | 0.007138 |
| Income level | - 0.000142 | - 0.001188 | - 0.002197 | 0.00353 |
| Unemployed | 0.001494 | 0.012386 | 0.020206 | - 0.03409 |
| Education | 0.000177 | 0.001485 | 0.002745 | - 0.004406 |
| Health status | - 0.006882 | - 0.057798 | - 0.106879 | 0.171558 |
| Satisfaction with life | - 0.003067 | - 0.025753 | - 0.047623 | 0.076442 |
| Freedom and control | - 0.000395 | - 0.003316 | - 0.006132 | 0.009843 |
| Political conservatism | - 0.000077 | - 0.000646 | - 0.001194 | 0.001917 |
| Political involvement | 0.001064 | 0.008932 | 0.016517 | - 0.02651 |
| Religiosity | - 0.001422 | - 0.011941 | - 0.022080 | 0.035443 |
| Societal trust | - 0.00124 | - 0.010414 | - 0.019257 | 0.030911 |
| Membership in organisations | - 0.001629 | - 0.013677 | - 0.025292 | 0.040598 |

Note: dy/dx is for discrete change of dummy variable for different outcomes of happiness scores.

The marginal effects in table 2 reveal that as political orientation shifts to the right or conservatism, the predicted probabilities for ordinal happiness scores increase from not at all happy to very happy. To put it another way, politically conservative people are more likely to fall into the 'very happy' category. Increased religiosity, societal trust, and membership in organisations lead to higher happiness scores. A person's likelihood of being very happy increases by 3.5 per cent, 3.1 per cent, and 4.1 per cent for each unit increase in religiosity, societal trust, and membership in organisations scores, respectively. However, marginal impacts of political involvement on happiness scores revealed that a person is 2.7 per cent less likely to have a 'very happy' outcome for every unit increase in political involvement scores.

I conducted independent ordinal logistic regressions for different regimes to see how political orientation, political involvement, and religiosity affect happiness, including societal trust and membership in organisations, in authoritarian, hybrid, flawed democracies, and full democracies.[10] Table 3 shows the results, with each column representing a single logistic regression for different regimes.

**Table 3**
**Ordinal Logistic Estimates for Happiness Scores and Percentage Change in Odds (Different Regimes)**

| Variables | Authoritarian Regime | | Hybrid Regime | | Flawed Democracies | | Full Democracies | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\beta_A$ | % | $\beta_H$ | % | $\beta_{FL}$ | % | $\beta_F$ | % |
| Age | -0.01*** | -0.7 | 0.004** | 0.4 | -0.01*** | -0.9 | -0.01** | -0.6 |
| | (0.00) | (0.99) | (0.00) | (1.01) | (0.00) | (0.99) | (0.00) | (0.99) |
| Female | 0.10* | 10.6 | 0.17*** | 18.2 | -0.03 | -2.6 | 0.04 | 3.8 |
| | (0.05) | (1.11) | (0.04) | (1.18) | (0.03) | (0.97) | (0.06) | (1.04) |
| Married | 0.40*** | 49.2 | 0.19*** | 21.1 | 0.22*** | 24.3 | 0.38*** | 45.7 |
| | (0.05) | (1.49) | (0.05) | (1.21) | (0.03) | (1.24) | (0.06) | (1.46) |
| Number of children | 0.04* | 3.8 | 0.004 | 0.4 | 0.05*** | 4.7 | 0.05 | 5.4 |
| | (0.02) | (1.04) | (0.01) | (1.01) | (0.01) | (1.05) | (0.03) | (1.05) |
| Income level | -0.01 | -0.6 | -0.00 | -0.0 | 0.03*** | 3.2 | 0.04** | 3.6 |
| | (0.01) | (0.99) | (0.01) | (0.99) | (0.01) | (1.03) | (0.02) | (1.04) |
| Unemployed | 0.01 | 0.7 | 0.03 | 2.9 | -0.30*** | -26.2 | -0.40*** | -33.0 |
| | (0.07) | (1.01) | (0.07) | (1.03) | (0.05) | (0.74) | (0.14) | (0.67) |
| Education | -0.01 | -1.2 | 0.01 | 1.2 | -0.05*** | -4.4 | 0.01 | 0.9 |
| | (0.01) | (0.99) | (0.01) | (1.01) | (0.01) | (0.96) | (0.01) | (1.01) |
| Health status | 0.79*** | 121.2 | 1.02*** | 176.6 | 0.70*** | 100.8 | 0.63*** | 87.8 |
| | (0.04) | (2.21) | (0.03) | (2.77) | (0.02) | (2.01) | (0.05) | (1.88) |
| Satisfaction with life | 0.32*** | 38.3 | 0.32*** | 38.0 | 0.33*** | 39.1 | 0.72*** | 105.6 |
| | (0.01) | (1.38) | (0.01) | (1.38) | (0.01) | (1.39) | (0.03) | (2.06) |
| Freedom and control | 0.03** | 3.1 | 0.07*** | 7.2 | 0.04*** | 4.2 | 0.03 | 3.3 |
| | (0.01) | (1.03) | (0.01) | (1.07) | (0.01) | (1.04) | (0.02) | (1.03) |
| Political conservatism | 0.01 | 1.0 | 0.01 | 0.5 | 0.01 | 0.7 | 0.04** | 4.2 |
| | (0.01) | (1.01) | (0.01) | (1.01) | (0.01) | (1.01) | (0.01) | (1.04) |
| Political involvement | -0.11** | -10.2 | -0.09** | -8.9 | -0.15*** | -14.0 | 0.01 | 0.9 |
| | (0.04) | (0.90) | (0.03) | (0.91) | (0.02) | (0.86) | (0.05) | (1.01) |
| Religiosity | 0.19*** | 20.7 | 0.13*** | 13.6 | 0.21*** | 23.7 | -0.02 | -1.8 |
| | (0.04) | (1.21) | (0.04) | (1.14) | (0.02) | (1.24) | (0.04) | (0.98) |
| Societal trust | 0.11*** | 11.0 | 0.16*** | 17.1 | 0.13*** | 13.6 | 0.15** | 15.9 |
| | (0.03) | (1.11) | (0.03) | (1.17) | (0.02) | (1.14) | (0.05) | (1.16) |
| Membership in organisations | 0.01 | 0.9 | 0.28*** | 32.0 | 0.15*** | 16.6 | 0.25*** | 28.2 |
| | (0.04) | (1.01) | (0.04) | (1.32) | (0.02) | (1.17) | (0.06) | (1.28) |
| Wald $\chi^2$ (15) | 1899.36*** | | 3247.35*** | | 4862.06*** | | 1748.10*** | |
| Pseudo $R$ Sq. | 0.1446 | | 0.1800 | | 0.1428 | | 0.2385 | |
| $N_i$ | 8137 | | 10876 | | 20889 | | 6511 | |

Note: Figures in parentheses are heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors in $\beta_i$ columns and odds in % columns. N = 46413 and * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

The overall model fit was statistically significant for each regime and predictors explained more than 14.0 per cent variation in the criterion variable (happiness) for each regime. A positive relationship between happiness and political conservatism is evident; however, except for full democracies, coefficients were not statistically significant (a unit increase in political conservatism scores, increased the odds of happiness scores by 4.2 per cent for full democracies). Except for full democracies, inferences can be formed that enhanced happiness with political conservatism is not a universal phenomenon and that the positive association between happiness and conservatism is quite modest in every other regime.

For authoritarian, hybrid, and flawed democracies, the negative and significant signs of political involvement proved the negative association of happiness with increased political involvement; however, the same association was found positive but insignificant for full democracies (unit increase in political involvements scores, decreased the odds of happiness scores for authoritarian, hybrid and flawed democracies by 10.2 per cent, 8.9 per cent, and 14.0 per cent, respectively). It may be deduced that full democracies manage and handle political acts better than their counterpart regimes, which is why, unlike their counterparts, political involvements have no negative impact on happiness levels in full democracies.[11]

Conversely, every regime except full democracies has a positive and significant association of happiness with religiosity (unit increases in religiosity scores increased the odds of happiness scores for authoritarian, hybrid, and flawed democracies by 20.7 per cent, 13.6 per cent, and 23.7 per cent, respectively), the sign of religiosity in full democracies was negative but statistically insignificant, suggesting a relatively weaker link between religiosity and higher happiness in these societies.[12]

Moreover, a positive and significant association of happiness with societal trust (unit increase in societal trust scores, increased the odds of happiness scores for authoritarian, hybrid and flawed, full democracies by 11.0 per cent, 17.1 per cent, 13.6 per cent and 15.9 per cent respectively) and membership in organisations (unit increase in membership in organisations scores, increased the odds of happiness scores for hybrid, flawed and full democracies by 32.0 per cent, 16.6 per cent, 28.2 per cent respectively) scores were found for every regime except for authoritarian regime with membership in organisations.

The positive and significant signs of the coefficients for FCCOL for different regimes show that these attributes were found to be more important for less democratic countries with fewer democratic practices (e.g.,

a unit increase in freedom and control scores, increased the odds of happiness scores for authoritarian, hybrid, and flawed democracies by 3.1 per cent, 7.2 per cent, 4.2 per cent respectively) and it did not affect happiness levels in countries that already practising complete democracy and have high moral and ethical standards (e.g., full democracies), and for these countries, income, employment, and social involvement were more important than religiosity.

## 4.    Conclusion and Discussion

It has been demonstrated that, contrary to a widespread belief that conservative and religious people are happy, this association is indeed not ubiquitous. The relevance and direction of the relationship between happiness, religiosity, and political orientation are influenced by the nation's governing structure, which is based on democratic norms and ethics. For example, the association between conservatism and happiness has been proven to be relatively weak and statistically negligible for all regimes except genuine democracies. In contrast, while political conservatism usually seems to be correlated with happiness, a deeper examination reveals that this study only significantly validates this relationship in democratic nations. In regards to religiosity, it often increases happiness but does not do so in the happiest countries, which are democratic ones. This shows that practising democracy to its full extent is already an asset in predicting happiness, as evidenced by the negative and significant coefficients of political involvement in predicting happiness for authoritarian, hybrid, and flawed democracies, but a positive and insignificant coefficient for full democracies.

The notion is supported by the positive and significant coefficients of FCCOL for all other regimes, except for full democracies. One would believe that FCCOL has different meanings in free and oppressive cultures because they are both taken for granted in democracies that practise them. All unfree societies showed a negative correlation between political involvement and happiness, which makes sense given that political frustration is most likely what drives political involvement in these societies. Having an interest in politics in an unfree society must only increase suffering, and taking overt political action is risky and almost certainly ineffective. The societal trust argues that, regardless of the regime, since we are social animals, trust in society plays a significant role in predicting happiness. The right-wing inclination may be a coping technique for people in free democratic nations, much as it appears that religiosity is for those in unfree societies.

Some results of this study were expected and obvious, such as relationships of happiness to life satisfaction, health, income, age, married, with children, and not being unemployed (especially in democratic, free market societies), nevertheless, the relationship between religiosity, political orientation, and their interplay is limited by the nation's governing structure.

However, some results were not at the centre of interest of this study yet brought interesting or even surprising results. Firstly, it is very important here to mention why does education correlate so negatively with happiness in authoritarian and flawed democracies? The conceivable response is that receiving more education alters people's mindsets so they are less prone to adopt authoritarian preferences and attitudes (Carnevale et al. 2020). Second, while the overall trend toward greater female satisfaction may not come as a surprise, it is noteworthy that women under hybrid and authoritarian regimes in particular seemed content and joyful. Although the causes may differ over time and space, women in more conservative societies are often less likely to report discrimination than their compatriots in more liberal regions. The dual burden of responsibilities at home and work increases strain on women, which actually lowers overall well-being. This is due to advancements in women's financial power and higher labour participation (Petherick 2016).

### End Notes

1. Political orientation data were not available for China, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, and Singapore as a result these countries were not included in the analysis.

2. Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Me-drano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (Eds.). 2014. World Values Survey: Round Six - Country-Pooled Datafile Version: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp. Madrid: JD Systems Institute.

3. The data set and questionnaires are available at http://www.worldvalues-survey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp.

4. The reliability of political involvement index was found high (Cronbach's α = 0.76).

5. Cronbach's α = 0.83 (for religiosity index).

6. Cronbach's α = 0.79 (for societal trust index).

7. Cronbach's α = 0.80 (for membership in organisations index).

8. Democracy Index had been developed by Economist Intelligence Unit in 2006. The 2016 index was based on weighted average of 60 indicators which were subsets of five parameters: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture. Scores based on these indicators classify countries in four different regimes; Full, Flawed, Hybrid and Authoritarian.

9. The interaction between political conservatism and political involvement (political conservatism*political involvement) and political conservatism and religiosity

(political conservatism*religiosity) were found statistically insignificant and the interaction coefficients were -0.005 (p = 0.342) and -0.006 (p = 0.244) respectively.

10.  The findings should be interpreted in accordance with ANOVA analysis for political involvement, religiosity, societal trust, and organisational membership among various regimes (see appendix). The mean scores of the aforementioned variables differ statistically significantly between the four different levels of regimes, as can be seen. Pairwise comparisons of means revealed that, with the exception of full vs. hybrid and full vs. flawed democracies for societal trust scores, every regime significantly differed from the other in terms of political involvement, religiosity, societal trust, and membership in organisations scores.

11.  It is evident from ANOVA results that political activism is significantly higher for flawed and full democracies compared to authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Full democracies have highest political activism and even then, the scores of political involvements did not significantly decrease the odds of happiness, unlike other regimes like flawed democracies and authoritarian regimes.

12.  The mean scores for religiosity were found to be the minimum for full democracies.

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**Appendix**

**Table 4**
**Analysis of variance (different regimes)**

| Regime | Political involvement | Religiosity | Societal trust | Membership in organisations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Mean* | *Mean* | *Mean* | *Mean* |
| Authoritarian | -0.21 (0.66) | 0.09 (0.65) | 0.09 (0.82) | -0.10 (0.56) |
| Hybrid | -0.12 (0.69) | 0.30 (0.52) | -0.07 (0.74) | -0.06 (0.62) |
| Flawed Democracy | 0.10 (0.70) | 0.15 (0.70) | -0.06 (0.75) | 0.19 (0.73) |
| Full Democracy | 0.40 (0.67) | -0.66 (0.86) | -0.02 (0.62) | 0.05 (0.52) |
| F-value | 1486.55*** | 3306.68*** | 125.13*** | 738.84*** |

Note: Figures in parentheses are corresponding standard deviations. Negative mean is the result of standardisation of variables and * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

**Sharma**

**Table 5**
**Pairwise comparison of means with equal variances (Tukey post hoc test)**

| Over: Regime | | | Number of comparisons (using contrasts): 6 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regime | Political involvement | Religiosity | Societal trust | Membership in organisations |
| Hybrid vs Authoritarian | 0.07*** (0.008) | 0.34*** (0.008) | -0.26*** (0.008) | 0.09*** (0.007) |
| Flawed vs Authoritarian | 0.31*** (0.007) | 0.13*** (0.007) | -0.23*** (0.007) | 0.31*** (0.005) |
| Full vs Authoritarian | 0.58*** (0.009) | -0.58*** (0.009) | -0.23*** (0.009) | 0.21*** (0.007) |
| Flawed vs Hybrid | 0.23*** (0.007) | -0.21*** (0.008) | 0.03*** (0.008) | 0.23*** (0.006) |
| Full vs Hybrid | 0.50*** (0.009) | -0.92*** (0.010) | 0.03 (0.010) | 0.12*** (0.008) |
| Full vs Flawed | 0.27*** (0.008) | -0.71*** (0.009) | -0.01 (0.009) | -0.10*** (0.007) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are corresponding standard errors and $^{*}$ $p<0.05$, $^{**}$ $p<0.01$, $^{***}$ $p<0.001$

*Book Review*

# Eunuchs in Politics or Politics in Eunuchs?

## Ayub Khan

## Nirmal Kumar*

I have been interested in writings on alternative sexuality for some time. The book under review came to my notice recently and I was impressed by the rigorous research that went into it and immediately wanted to bring it before a larger readership.

The study of the political behaviour of different sections of society is the need of the hour. But both political scientists and sociologists apply discipline-centred yardsticks and methodologies that obfuscate the expected outcomes. The linearity of the application of methodologies is a major handicap in the study of the political outlook and behaviour of various social groups. Political behaviour patterns in developing countries so marred by biases of caste and religion/regional/linguistic and other loyalties. These are difficult to read and decode as people deftly mask them with social intellectual lineages.

The book under review is an intelligent attempt to transcend the discipline-centred boundaries to foray into new territories, some of which are so new that it appears to have blunted the boundaries. It's a very structured study of a social group that lived in denial. The muted social

*Professor, Department of History, Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi, Delhi.
E-mail: nkumar@svc.ac.in

ignominy that blinded the academic exercises on the social and political behaviour of the blurred social groups was dealt with in this book by impressive data collection and analysis.

Khan, it appears, has vast years of research experience in the area and has combined many academic rigours to build up an academic debate. This time his focus was on the political outlook of a muted community which till recently was devoid of voting rights. The community of eunuchs is numerically very tiny, devoid of sexual identity, walking barefoot between social and sexual acceptance today, but they were powerful in historical times. They held huge power and even founded a dynasty in Jaunpur (Sharqis) and that gave us one of the most magnificent styles of architecture. They even became sultans of Delhi albeit for a short duration and were in charge of *harems* during the Mughal period as *haramsara*. But after the Mughal's patronage dwindled and many became dancers for auspicious occasions. The political power runs linear to the patronage one derives from the state and that was no longer available to them.

Khan has beautifully shown the political rise of the eunuchs from obscurity and indignity to political offices and power. With tables and data and a good sample size, he has been able to suggest the exponential rise of the eunuchs especially in Madhya Pradesh where many from this community won elections to municipal councils and even higher representative bodies. It could be due to the failure of men and women to deliver that made people turn to eunuchs to represent them.

It is very important to note that the progressive and proactive step by the Election Commission of India in enfrenching the eunuchs that gave the community moral and political courage and legal sanction to participate in the political arena. After all, as the Election Commission argued, citizenship is decided for individuals and can not be denied on the basis of sexual orientation. The community as Khan says was thus empowered.

The book divided into nine chapters discusses the whole gamut of political participation by the eunuchs. Starting from the literature review to the political and social activities of the eunuchs, the book is able to present the problem in the most academic manner.

It holds the hand of the reader to gently open the doors of a dark alley. It takes us to lanes forgotten by us. We are amused by the presence of eunuchs at celebrations and read with vicarious pleasure the rise of eunuchs in the political arena. The book exposes us to the most meticulous study of the political rise of the community. It should be read carefully and we must stay educated on the political life of a hidden community. The political sagacity of a nation and the state depends on how the small communities are represented and empowered. As the book shows it should not be dependent on gender or the denial of gender. The discourse that society builds should then be inclusive. Only mature nation takes note of forgotten or tiny

communities. The author tries to suggest that the political participation of eunuchs was a result of the state's proactive move and arose not because of the political aspiration of the community. Normally the people struggle to get political rights and legitimacy. Here the Election Commission enfranchising the community by a fiat generated political aspirations among the eunuchs. The hitherto disenfranchised community then thought of political participation.

We have to thank the author for the book. The beautiful and succinct cartoons by noted cartoonist Irfan has added to the visuality of the book. It certainly introduced us to the visuality of the subject of the book.

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