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Theoretical and Conceptual Evolution of Unpaid Work: Review and Comments

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This study traces the evolution of the concept of 'unpaid work' and its theoretical evolution from the perspective of gender. Several dominant theoretical framework son feminist concerns have been discussed in an attempt to explain the reason for existence of the 'unpaid work'. The need for such theoretical analysis arises from both sociological and economic perspectives that bear consequences on women's lives and experiences. Building on these conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, this study will helps in building a strong literature base for further research and policy guidelines helping in the recognition, redistribution and reduction of women's unpaid work.

Keywords: Classification of 'Work', Categorisation of Unpaid Work, Theoretical Evolutions, Gender Issues and Unpaid Work

Introduction

For ages, women worked at home as unpaid workers and caretakers played an important role in designating the identity of being a good wife and mother. This role allocation has been strengthened over time by several stretches of colonisation and imperialism (Sayer, 2005). It was only with the

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advent of globalisation, that the assumptions regarding their primary role in the house have seen a change. But even with formal paid employment, women have not yet been ceased of their household duties thus compelling them to bear the 'second shift' (Pradeep and Adaina, 2019). It's a constant struggle for women to strike the optimal balance between paid and unpaid work. Thus, globalisation has brought about an 'incomplete gender revolution' (Lahiri-Dutt and Sil, 2014). These gender roles are not only stereotyped but also sticky in nature because of the imposed tag of maternal and caring instincts (Chopra et al., 2013).

Women's contribution to the economy is minuscule, despite comprising around half of the world population, as conventionally their work is highly underestimated and generally not included in the national income accounts. It was not until the 1960s and 70s that unpaid care work started finding a voice and raised interest in further research in this field. Studies like UNDP's 1995 Human Development Report (HDR), estimated the value of unpaid work to be about US$16 billion at the global level, of which US$11 billion represents the invisible contribution made by women (UNDP, 1995). Because of the raised awareness in this field, now there are not only numerous theories and models but also there are joint efforts of various organisations and academia to recognise, measure and include unpaid work in national income accounts using time use surveys.

In the present article, we delve into the concept of unpaid work from the perspective of women and provide a critical understanding of various theories on the evolution of unpaid work. The need for such theoretical analysis arises from both sociological and economic perspectives that bear consequences on women's lives and experiences. It could also help to gauge how societal norms have a bearing on economic consequences in the context of gender and household activities. Further, understanding the subject provides insight for scholars to undertake further studies on the aspect of unpaid care work to help in its recognition and valuation. The paper has been organised into three parts; the first part discusses the concept and classification of paid and unpaid work, the second part discusses several theories on unpaid work from the perspective of gender, and the third part provides concluding remarks.

Evolution of the definition of 'Work'

The definition and concepts of 'work' have remained debatable because of its changing definitions. As per conventional statistics, 'work' is defined to be a paid economic activity, linked to the market (Benería, 1999)

and the concept of being 'at work' is (and has always been) defined as a subset of 'employment' which is known to be done 'for pay or profit' (International Labour Organisation, 1955). All the unpaid non-marketed activities, largely performed by women within the households, are thus left outside the domain of the term 'work'. Such biased mainstream economic theories led to policies that reinforced the undervaluation of women's work, leading to negative consequences for women's socio-economic status (Neetha, 2017). Similar concept is 'work' and its nature of dualism in terms of 'economic' and 'non-economic work'. The former is associated with those activities which are typically associated with the market and involve the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Mondal et al., 2018). So, economic work mainly includes an output, resulting from the input, which has value that is marketable and earns a monetary return (also known as paid work). Whereas activities that are not performed for exchange in the market and are carried out within the household such as care work, fetching water or fuel wood, cooking and cleaning etc. for subsistence are considered to be 'non-economic' work (mostly unpaid) as they do not contribute to the national GDP and involve zero monetary transaction.

After decades of concerted efforts by several advocates of gender equity, now the document on System of National Accounts (SNA) is defined as the universally established standard set of recommendations on the way to compute and compile economic activities in accordance with stringent accounting conventions based on economic principles (United Nations, 2008) that consider unpaid work as a part of economic work. The 19th ICLS Resolution held in 2013, on 'Statistics on Work, Employment and Labour Under-utilisation' redefined work as 'any activity performed by persons of any age and sex to produce goods and services for use of others or own use except for non-delegable personal services' (ILO, 2013). With the above definition, it even includes now part-time work or unpaid work done on a farm, within a family enterprise or in any other economic activity which is done even solely for domestic consumption.

Classification of 'Work'

Work can be broadly categorised into paid and unpaid work. While 'paid work' mainly involves economic activity, 'unpaid work' may either be an economic activity or a non-economic activity (Hirway, 2015). As defined by ILO (2018), unpaid work is non-remunerative work which includes both direct and indirect care, important for sustaining the well-being, health and

maintenance of other individuals in a household or the community like household management, 'care' activities, voluntary work, production of self-consumption goods, a gathering of fuel, fodder, water, etc. and other services such as servicing and repairing the house and household durables, vehicles etc. These activities are not usually exchanged in the market and are not therefore included in national income statistics (Hirway, 2001). The father of national income, Simon Kuznets too kept unpaid work outside the ambit of national income, as he considered it to be 'housewives' production' and therefore, not a part of the economy.

The 'unpaid work' value can be imputed since these works can be outsourced and performed by a third person for payment. Whereas, personal welfare activities such as sleeping, eating or leisure cannot be delegated to be performed by others. Thus, the third-person criterion is a crucial dimension involved in the definition of unpaid work as offered by Reid's definition (1934) of 'housewives services'. She defines household production to include unpaid activities carried out by women for the households which could be outsourced to be performed by a third person for payment if there are improvements in household income or if women are able to alter their personal inclinations towards such work, thus delegating such activities to be an economic one. All services done for self-care like leisure activities are thus discounted and considered to be non-economic (Jany-Catrice and Méda, 2011).

Classification of Unpaid Work

Different scholars have differently classified unpaid work into categories - some have divided unpaid work as 'care' and as 'work' (Hirway, 2015) while others have put them into SNA, extended SNA and Non-SNA categories. But the most commonly used is the categorisation of unpaid work where it is divided among SNA and Non-SNA activities.

UN-SNA for the first time included subsistence work (production of goods for self-consumption) in 'economic activities' in 1993, and it was further revised in 2008. Since then, several classifications have been attempted aligned to the SNA classifications. However, according to the UNDP's classification (UNDP, 1995), a total of 154 activities have been grouped into a 9-fold classification and these 9 groups of major activities have been classified into three broad divisions as follows:

I. *SNA* (Productive and Economic Activities that are included under the production boundary of the 1993 UNSNA) I. Primary production activities II. Secondary activities III. Trade, business and services.

II. *Extended SNA Activities* (productive but non-economic activities which fall into the general production boundary of UNSNA) IV. Household maintenance, management and buying things for own households V. Caring for children, the sick, elderly and disabled of one's own household VI. Community services for other households.

III. *Non-SNA Activities* (non-productive activities which are not included in national accounts and which cannot be delegated to anybody else) VII. Learning VIII. Social and cultural activities, mass media etc. IX. Personal care and self-maintenance.

However, many authors have stated that the demarcation between unpaid SNA work and unpaid non-SNA care work appears to be fixed quite arbitrarily (Razavi, 2007). If we consider the example of developing countries, where there is less formal notion of jobs, there exists a merging of roles. For instance, women take care of their children while working on farms or carry children on their backs while fetching water or fuel wood. Thus, because of simultaneous engagement in care work and other forms of work by women, blurs the production boundaries and it becomes difficult to value the unpaid care work accurately.

Theoretical Evolutions of Unpaid Work

There is not enough evidence on the issues of gender and women's issues especially unpaid work among early economic thinkers such as classical economists. The focus was on materialistic and capitalist aspects of the economy in terms of market, profit and capital accumulation. Since production was meant for the market, the unpaid domestic services are not a part of production. It signifies only the consumption of the income earned. Edith Kuiper (2006) rightly stated about Adam Smith's engagement with feminist discourse that stereotypically supported the status quo of women's role in the economy and missed the opportunity to comment on the 'division of labour in the family' and 'the contribution of women's economic work'. Among neo-classicals as well, unpaid work was outside the purview of economics. Arthur Pigou and Alfred Marshall stated that women's activities within the household should not be incorporated into the national accounts. They treated unpaid labour, especially of married women as a form of leisure, despite women being a part of the study of labour supply. The reason given for this exclusion is that unpaid work is considered as non-market work (or to be more specific as a form of consumption) since it is the labour of dependents and not of the breadwinners. Another important aspect of neo-classical tradition is that utility functions are determined

exogenously without considering the social constructions behind these functions. Humans are assumed to be rational and self-interest maximising individuals and choice reveals consumer preference. Thus, when a woman chooses to remain at home and engage in household duties, then as per the neo-classical theory, it means that the household work maximises their utility as compared to doing paid market work. But this fails to consider why such preferences are formed by women. So, the neo-classical model of labour supply considers whether people are engaged in paid work outside the home or leisure. Thus, all forms of unpaid work mostly performed by women at home are treated as leisure.

Margaret Reid (1934)

The early 20th century preoccupied economists with several development initiatives thus largely ignoring women with the only exception - Margaret Reid's theory of third-party principle. She in her book, 'Economics of Household Production (1934)', expressed concern about the issue of exclusion of household work from national income accounts and thus suggested a method to estimate the value of home-based unpaid work by redefining 'housewife services'. As per Margaret Reid's theory of third-party principle, household production should include those unpaid activities performed by women, which could be outsourced to be performed by a third person in exchange for a monetary return. Thus, value for such outsourced unpaid activities can be imputed and included in national accounts. So, Reid's theory represented an important step forward in the conceptual history of unpaid work, by setting a standard of definition of otherwise unrecognised women's unpaid activities.

New Home Economics

Although, Reid in 1934 was an early pioneer in household production analysis but it was only in the 1960s that it was brought into the mainstream by the evolution of the New Home Economics or the New Household Economics (NHE). NHE mainly focused on the analysis of household production and how it affects the gender division of labour among men and women (Becker, 1991; Lloyd, 1975). Jacob Mincer was the first one to contend against the dichotomy between work and leisure. He stated that if time is not spent in the paid labour force, then it not only includes leisure but also comprises of time devoted to other household and care-related duties. Thus, labour-supply decisions are made in the context of family and depend on the three-way decision of women - that is how they

allocate their time between leisure, work at home and market work. Thus, the mincer not only recognised the role of home production but also imported microeconomic tools of analysis to model the home-based decision functions and his contribution marked a significant improvement over the previous works.

Gary Stanley Becker (1965, 1973, 1981)

Gary Becker (1965) provided a further advance by using constrained maximisation models. Becker's theories of time allocation (1965), the economics of marriage (1973) and the neoclassical model of the family (1981)form the building blocks for the neoclassical interpretations of the gender-based division of labour. Becker (1965) considered in his theory of time allocation that the family is just like 'a small factory' wherein the members of a household allocate their time accordingly between paid work, unpaid household work and leisure. Thus, households derived utility from 'commodities' produced by a combination of market goods and non-market time (Swiebel, 1999). Later, Becker and his followers made an attempt to analyse the gendered division of labour at home by using the economics of marriage and the comparative advantage model. Unpaid work is usually treated as a micro-level phenomenon, without any gender dimension but in the micro-economic model of Becker (1981) households try to maximise their total bundle of available goods and services produced in the market as well as at home (Becker, 1973). This is made possible by the division of labour among the family members wherein some specialise in the paid labour market and some in domestic labour, in accordance with their relative productivities in each of the sectors. To ascertain who will specialise in which sector and hence who will be an altruistic head of the household, criteria of biological sex are then introduced (Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2017). Since women biologically vary from men because of reproduction ability, it is more efficient for them to specialise in tasks that can be easily combined with childcare and nursing duties (Hewitson, 2003). Thus, women are known to have a comparative advantage in household work and thus specialise in it, while men have a comparative advantage in paid market work and thus specialise in it. If the utilities are reversed, that is, if the wife starts earning more than her husband, the husband will rather specialise in unpaid work (Amporfu et al., 2018). But traditionally this does not happen in general and men traditionally specialise in breadwinning paid market work while women specialise in household and care work. This specialisation not only raises the payoff, thus incentivising each member to specialise in one

sector only but also results in constant or increasing returns to scale in the household commodities production. This increases the overall output and maximises the family utility thus constituting primary economic benefits to both the partners and the institute of marriage.

Radical Feminism

The ideology and movement of radical feminism of the 1960s was the breeding ground for many ideas of feminism. Radical feminism is a perspective that appeals to there-ordering of society in a radical way so that male domination is eliminated in all social and economic spheres. Because of patriarchal gender relations, women are marginalised and viewed as the 'other' (Beauvoir, 1949). They asserted that patriarchy in the global society promotes domination and oppression of women by men and men as a class benefit from this systematic oppression of women. So, radical feminists seek to challenge and abolish this social evil of patriarchy and liberate everyone from an unjust society. They also urge that women's role in reproduction should not only be recognised but also be accommodated without any penalty in the workplace (Hanisch, 2015).

Betsy Warrior (1969)

Betsy Warrior's 1969 work, 'Housework: Slavery or a Labour of Love and The Source of Leisure Time' presented a logical perspective regarding the domestic labour performed by women that despite being unremunerated and not included in the GDP, the unpaid work done by women constitutes the foundation of all economic transactions and survival. According to Warrior, the basic foundation of the economy is built on various forms of women's labour; first; her reproductive labour, which produces a new labourer for the workforce (and the first commodity is mother's milk used to sustain every new labourer); secondly, women's domestic or household labour which maintains the necessary environment for development and maintenance of the labourer by cleaning, cooking, nurturing etc. Thus, without this fundamental labour of women, the economy would not evolve, survive and progress further.

Marxian Feminism

Marxian feminism (1970s) focused on conceptualising the domestic work of women and its relation to the capitalist mode of production to show how women are exploited through capitalism and the ownership of private property (Desai, 2014). They treated men and women as 'workers' thus

giving little opportunity to look at care work as a distinct activity. They argued that unpaid domestic labour majorly performed by women is labelled 'reproduction' and produces a 'surplus value' which is then transferred from the domestic to the capitalist sphere in the form of not only free maintenance of family and daily care of the paid workers (to enable them to resume work the next day) but also reproducing the next generation of workers to enter the labour force. Thus, unpaid labour is a 'requirement' of capitalism which keeps women oppressed. These theories led to a greater understanding of the power relations established between men and women due to paid and unpaid work (Gardiner, 1975; Molyneux, 1979; Deere, 1990).

The historical roots of the Marxian debate can be attributed to Engels's (1972) work titled 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' where it was concluded that women were equally empowered when communal forms of production and matrilineal family systems existed. The emergence of private property alienated people from their land and took up instead waged labour for the capitalists. This resulted in the dissolution of the joint family system causing the emergence of nuclear families instead wherein women were to confine themselves to their homes and take up domestic and caring responsibilities. Thus, such restraining of women promoted the control of men over women and resulted in the conventional setup of roles of males as breadwinners and of females as care. Thus, Marxist thinkers have been criticised for only focusing on the struggle against capitalism rather than attacking the evil of patriarchy. Marxists considered patriarchy merely as an outgrowth of the capitalist system.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism combines two - theories - Marxist feminism's investigation into the role of capitalism and radical feminism's theory of the role of gender and the patriarchy in the oppression of women. Socialist feminists rejected radical feminism's claim that patriarchy is the primary cause of the oppression of women and asserted that women are rather oppressed due to their financial dependence on males and this is because of the unequal distribution of wealth in the capitalist system (Barett and Mcintosh, 1982). Socialist feminists attempted to fight for women's liberation along with the demand for social and economic justice for all people. They sought to end male supremacy and other many forms of oppression that are communally reinforcing each other (Kennedy, 2008).

Feminist Economics

Feminist economists were not convinced with the Marxian paradigm as well as the NHE for not paying enough attention to intra-household gender and power relations. Feminist economics is defined as the study of economics with an emphasis on gender-inclusive economic and policy analysis. The mainstay goal of feminist economics is the enhancement of the well-being of all the members of society - children, women and men, at all levels (local, national, and transnational) of communities. Additionally, in feminist economics, another major aim is to investigate value-free, unpaid, non-market household jobs and care work that bear direct effects on women's lives and experiences. Feminist economists after examination of the early economic thinkers' interaction with gender and women's issues claim that conventional economics has been developed by European-descended middle and upper-middle-class men because of which there is the exclusion of real-life experiences of the world's diverse people, especially the suppression suffered by women and children (Strassmann and Polanyi, 1997). According to the feminist views, choices made by women reflect the constrictions imposed by social norms and the institutional environment (Gálvez-Muñoz et al., 2011) that disadvantage women by limiting their time and opportunities in the formal labour market. When the criticism of traditional economics in the 1970s and 80s for lack of gender equality agenda in its framework was going on, the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) was constituted in 1972. Subsequently, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) along with the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) in 1992 emerged which encouraged the rapid growth of the field of feminist economics. By the 1990s feminist economics became a well-established subfield of economics and since then there have been numerous scholars contributed to the field voluminously and significantly. Some of them are discussed as follows -

Ester Boserup (1970)

Boserup argued that both paid and unpaid women's contributions backed the national economies. Ester Boserup's (1970) work titled 'Women's Role in Economic Development' for the first time investigated the gendered effects of agricultural transformation, industrialisation and other structural changes on Third World women. It was emphasised that most of the development projects largely ignored women and most of the technologically advanced projects undermined women's economic

opportunities as only men were trained in the new technologies. Thus, most 'modern' projects although improved male opportunities and technological skills but inhibited women's access to both technology and employment (Parpart et al., 2000).

Marilyn Waring (1988)

Marilyn Waring's 1988 book, 'If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics' provided a systematic critique of the SNA and the ways in which women's unpaid work has been excluded from the productive sphere of the economy. Waring described that the exclusion of non-market activities from the design of the international standard of national accounts was the outcome of deliberate choice as unpaid work done by women has been made traditionally invisible for ages. Waring criticises the use of GDP as an economic measure and argues that ignorance of the valuation of women's work and nature results in such policy decisions that have adverse consequences for the world. Her work influenced the UN, academicians and government internationally. She is known to be one of the principal founders of the discipline of feminist economics.

Nancy Folbre (1994, 2003)

Nancy Folbre an American feminist economist, mainly focused on the economics of care, which she defined as 'work that involves connecting to other people' (Folbre, 2003) and can be paid or unpaid and is disproportionately performed by women since the social construction of femininity links femininity and care. According to Folbre, selfless caring is an 'intrinsically motivated' labour undertaken out of a sense of affection and responsibility without any expectations of monetary returns. It is not provisioned in the market but it is absolutely necessary for the well-being of society. She also criticised the conventional exclusion of non-market work by giving the following example - children are taken as public goods and stated that the non-market labour of parents contributes to the development of human capital which can be regarded as a public service. Thus, children can be considered to be a positive externality which is under-invested according to traditional economic analysis (Folbre, 1994).

Other Significant Theories and Models

Several theories have evolved over time to understand the characteristics and outcomes of the labour market. The Time Availability Theory proposes that husbands and wives divide household duties amongst

themselves after rationally calculating the total limited time available to them (Bianchi, 2000). Conceptualised this way, the time availability theory seems to be gender-neutral as it does not outrightly push women out of paid employment into the unpaid domain. It rather depends, on whether a male or female works the least number of hours in the paid labour force - people allocate time for paid work first before allocating for unpaid work, thus the high engagement of women in housework is caused by their low participation rate in the paid labour force and not vice versa.

In yet another model by Lundberg and Pollack (1993), the bargaining power of each spouse is determined by what activities they undertake, the activities according to their socially sanctioned and exogenously determined gender roles - husbands specialise in earning income and wives specialise in domestic labour (Hewitson, 2003). Also, the bargaining models involving the separate spheres approach like this, states that the division of labour in households among the couple is the result of negotiations based on the individual income of each partner that represents power distribution between them. Therefore, the partner with the higher contribution to household income has more bargaining power and is able to influence the division of house and care work in his/her interest. The theory of labour market segmentation argues that caste, race, gender and other social affiliations are the prominent outcomes of labour market participation and their outcomes (Reich et al., 1973). Labour market segmentation is further viewed in the context of dualism consisting of both formal and informal sectors.

Another model by Becker, the discrimination model based on his (1971) work titled 'The Economics of Discrimination' explains discrimination in the labour market by stating the idea that some employers do not want to hire members of some particular racial groups or women. This is also known as the 'employer taste' model thus predicts that discrimination exists because of employers' taste or preference against certain groups of workers and provides an explanation of wage discrimination because equally productive workers are paid different wages.

This study traces the evolution of the concept of 'unpaid work' and its theoretical evolution from the perspective of gender. Several dominant theoretical frameworks on feminist concerns have been discussed in an attempt to explain the reason for existence of the 'unpaid work'. The need for such theoretical analysis arises from both sociological and economic perspectives that bear consequences on women's lives and experiences.

Conclusion

In this study, attempts have been made to trace the evolution of the concept of unpaid work and its theoretical evolution from the perspective of gender. The issue of 'paid' and 'unpaid' work in the context of gender has also been explored adequately. It was largely seen that women's unpaid work was considered unproductive work since they were counted under the category of 'dependable' and thus their work was excluded from the national accounts. However, after decades of rigorous efforts by advocates of gender equity, unpaid household and care work is considered to be a part of economic work by most of countries around the world.

Several dominant and diverse theoretical frameworks, concepts and models on feminist concerns have been discussed in an attempt to explain the concept of unpaid work and its implications on gender equality. The theories elucidated broadly examine household production, gender division of labour, paid and unpaid work allocation, role of patriarchy etc., and converge in certain dimensions of gender issues and unpaid work. So, the need of the hour is to investigate this gender perspective of unpaid, non-market household jobs and care work that bear direct effects on women's lives and experiences. The present conceptual and theoretical analysis will help in a better understanding of the subject and provide insight to scholars to undertake further studies on the aspect of unpaid care work to help in its recognition and valuation.

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NDA's Peak and Opposition's Path: Analysing the 2024 Election Verdict in Assam

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In the 2024 General Election, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 11 of the 14 seats in India's northeastern state of Assam while the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) secured three seats. This is the first election in the state after the delimitation exercise of 2023 redrew constituency boundaries. Although the balance of seats won by the incumbent alliance and the opposition is largely similar to the previous election, the pattern of voting that produced the present verdict points out notable shifts. Using both aggregate and survey data, this paper would argue that the verdict constitutes a triumph for the NDA while also concealing underneath a story of its approaching saturation and a debacle for the opposition that however opened up the possibility of its resurgence in Assam.

Keywords: Elections, Assam, Coalition, Opposition, Dominance, Polarisation.

In the 2024 General Election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won nine seats in India's northeastern state of Assam. It had contested the election together with two other constituent parties of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Between them, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) each won one seat. Altogether, the NDA could

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therefore secure 11 of the 14 seats in the state. Its principal challenger, the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) won in three constituencies. All of these seats were secured by the Congress party.

The present paper argues that the verdict of the 2024 General Election in Assam constitutes a triumph for the NDA while also concealing underneath a story of its approaching saturation and a debacle for the opposition that however opened up the possibility of its resurgence in Assam. The ability to remain ahead of its principal challenger for the third successive general election is a 'triumph' for the NDA. But voting patterns have also revealed that the space for the NDA to further expand is also getting increasingly 'saturated'. On the other hand, finishing with just three seats once again is a 'debacle' for the opposition but certain shifts of support to the INDIA bloc contain the 'possibility' of paving the way for its resurgence in the days to come.

States are one of the most crucial sites of political competition in India. Over a decade ago, Yadav and Palshikar (2009) argued that political choices in a national election are derivative of the choices in the state political arena. Subsequent intellectual interventions (e.g., Chhiber, 2009) as well as the trajectory of national politics have however moderated the force of this line of thinking. In a more limited sense, it could nonetheless be held that states are important variables determining the shape of the overall mandate.

Coinciding with its resurgence nationally, the BJP had won seven of the 14 seats in Assam in the 2014 General Election. The party's vote share rose from 16.21 per cent in 2009 to 36.51 per cent. Up till then, it was BJP's best performance in the state in a national election. The Congress could win only three seats. Compared to the previous election, this was a loss of five seats. An outcome of this nature came out because of a sizeable shift of major social groups away from the Congress towards the BJP (Mahanta, 2014, p. 21). The ascendance of the latter simultaneously led to a counter-consolidation of Muslim voters towards the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF). This helped it win three seats, the party's best-ever performance. The election thereby set the stage for what Mahanta labelled as a 'new phase of polarised politics in Assam' (2014, p.19). Electoral competition in Assam in the next General Election played out largely along the contours set in 2014 with only a further 'sharpening of the trend towards polarisation' (Sharma and Tripathi, 2019, p. 25). The BJP managed to win nine of the 14 seats and its vote share remained intact. The latter once again had to settle with three seats but its vote share rose by 5.83 per cent. The present paper can aid in assessing the extent to which these trends have persisted.

Also, it is important to note that the recent election was the first one held in Assam after the delimitation of constituencies in 2023. The profile of most constituencies has altered in varying degrees due to the exercise. It thereby raised fears that the political weight of certain tribes and Muslims has been curtailed in the process (Sultana, 2023) Given this background, the 2024 General Election could be regarded as a 'critical election' for Assam, to very loosely use W.D. Burnham's (1970) formulation. Its outcome, after all, provides the first reflection of the emerging pattern of political competition in the state following delimitation.

For the analysis, voting records of the Election Commission of India and findings of the post-poll survey conducted by the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) have been used. In order to facilitate a longitudinal comparison of the alliances with the previous election, the composition of NDA and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) for 2019 have been categorised in terms of the parties that currently constitute the former and INDIA bloc.

Patterns of Voting

As stated in the beginning, the BJP won nine of the 11 seats it contested in this election. It could also secure its highest-ever vote share (37.43 per cent) in this election. The increase from 2019 was however of just 0.93 per cent (Table 1). More significant to note is that its vote share per seat contested fell by 3.16 per cent this time. The AGP won one of the two seats that it contested. While its overall vote share declined as a result of contesting fewer seats this time the vote share per seat of the AGP also fell by 1.04 per cent. Coming to UPPL, it won the one seat it contested and its vote share increased incrementally. Compared to the previous election, the NDA gained two additional seats and 2.06 per cent votes. Among the INDIA bloc parties, the Congress won three of the 13 seats it contested. The party's vote share however increased by 2 per cent and incrementally surpassed what the BJP could secure. Its' ally, Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), lost the only seat it contested and contributed marginally to take the vote share of the INDIA bloc to 39.51 per cent. Unaffiliated to either alliance, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) failed to win any of the four seats it contested and settled with 3.88 per cent votes. But the biggest slump this time has been experienced by the AIUDF. All three of its candidates lost and its vote share declined by 4.68 per cent. More concerning for the party is the fact that the slump in its support conforms to a linear pattern of decline. This has consequently fuelled speculations about a crisis for survival for the party.

Table 1
Party-wise Seat and Vote Share (2009-2024)

Year	NDA			INDIA		Others			
	BJP	AGP	UPPL	Congress	AJP	BPF	AIUDF	IND	Others
2024	9 (37.43)	1 (6.47)	1 (2.44)	3 (37.44)	0 (2.07)	0 (3.88)	0 (3.12)	0 (2.44)	0 (5.58)
2019	9 (36.5)	0 (8.23)	0 (1.74)	3 (35.44)	-	0 (2.48)	1 (7.80)	1 (4.83)	0 (1.99)
2014	7 (36.51)	0 (3.83)	-	3 (29.61)	-	0 (2.19)	3 (14.83)	1 (9.52)	0 (2.54)
2009	4 (16.21)	1 (14.60)	-	7 (34.89)	-	1 (5.41)	1 (16.10)	0 (7.59)	0 (5.2)

Note: The figures within parentheses denote vote share percentages. Others include all other parties that contested elections.
Source: Election Commission of India

In the lower Assam region, aided by a 10.57 per cent swing in its favour, the vote share of the INDIA bloc surpassed that of the NDA (Table 2). This was largely facilitated by its victory against the AIUDF in the Dhubri seat where the Congress candidate won by the second largest victory margin in India. Despite a much smaller gain made by the NDA (3.58 per cent), it however managed to win three seats here as its vote share was much more evenly distributed. In the Barak Valley, the INDIA bloc secured the highest vote share gain (14.13 per cent) in this election. This was however not enough to surpass the NDA and the latter could win both seats in the region with a comparatively smaller swing in its favour. The NDA on the other hand suffered a heavy loss of votes in central Assam. This was primarily due to its defeat in Nagaon where the Congress won by securing 50.89 per cent votes and a lead in five assembly segments. The Congress however lost in Diphu, the other seat in the region, finishing third place. The contrasting results consequently balanced out the seat and vote shares of the INDIA bloc and NDA in central Assam. Moving eastwards, the performance of both alliances in upper Assam was almost similar to the previous election. The region saw two high-profile victories with former chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal winning from Dibrugarh and senior Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi winning from Jorhat. In north Assam, the winning streak of NDA remained unabated. It won all the three seats in the region although with a small dip in the vote share. On the whole, the NDA managed to give tough competition to the opposition in most seats that it ended up winning. It did so by securing leads in 92 of the 126 assembly segments across the state. The BJP was ahead in 75 seats compared to 67 seats in 2019. The INDIA bloc won all the three seats quite comprehensively. It also put up a decent competition in some others although in both the ST reserved seats the Congress was relegated to the third place. As for leads, the Congress managed to be ahead in 31 segments this time compared to 25 in the previous election.

Table 2
Region-wise Vote Share

	NDA		INDIA		OTHERS	
	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share
Lower Assam	3 (1)	38.43 (3.58)	1 (1)	41.07 (10.57)	0 (2)	20.50 (-14.15)
Barak Valley	2 (2)	53.55 (5.16)	0 (0)	40.91 (14.13)	0 (0)	5.54 (-19.29)
Central Assam	1 (1)	40.81 (-11.50)	1 (1)	40.88 (-0.87)	0 (0)	18.31 (12.37)
Upper Assam	2 (2)	51.13 (0.28)	1 (1)	42.20 (-1.87)	0 (0)	6.67 (1.59)
North Assam	3 (3)	53.52 (-1.66)	0 (0)	32.84 (-3.95)	0 (0)	13.64 (5.61)

Note: Vote shares are in percentage. The figures within parentheses under the Seat columns denote the number of seats won in 2019. The figures within parentheses under the Vote share columns indicate positive or negative swings from the previous election.
Source: CSDS-Lokniti Data Unit

Forty-two per cent of men in the state voted for the INDIA bloc whereas another 47 per cent chose the NDA (Table 3). As for women voters, 37 per cent voted for the INDIA compared to 46 per cent that sided with NDA. Seen in terms of age, voting choices reveal even more marked variations. Young voters are found to have decisively sided with the INDIA bloc in the state. Among those up to 25 years, 47 per cent voted for the INDIA bloc and another 40 per cent chose the NDA (Table 4). Among those between 26 and 35 years, 51 per cent voted for the former while 36 per cent voted for the NDA. The latter was however the preferred choice for more senior voters. Among those between 46 and 55 years, 68 per cent voted for it while another 22 per cent chose the INDIA bloc. Among those who are 56 years and above, 48 per cent voted for the NDA while another 33 per cent chose the INDIA bloc.

Table 3
Vote Choice according to Gender

	Party voted for in 2024		
	INDIA	NDA	Others
Men	42 (+5)	47(+6)	11(-11)
Women	37(+3)	46(-1)	17(-2)

Note: All figures are in percentage. Figures within parentheses indicate changes from the 2019 General Election.

Table 4
Vote Choice according to Age

Age group	Party voted for in 2024		
	INDIA	NDA	Others
Up to 25 years	47 (+2)	40 (+3)	13 (-5)
26-35 years	51 (+18)	36 (-5)	13 (-14)
36-45 years	40 (+2)	45 (-2)	15 (0)
46-55 years	22 (-3)	68 (+19)	10 (-15)
56 years and above	33 (-3)	48 (-1)	19 (+4)

Note: All figures are in percentage. Figures within parentheses indicate changes from the 2019 General Election.

Voting patterns also reveal a very stark rural-urban divide. Thirty-eight per cent of those living in the rural areas of the state voted for the INDIA bloc while another 47 per cent opted for the NDA (Table 5). At the same time, the INDIA bloc secured the support of nearly half of the urban voters (48 per cent) aided by a substantial shift from the NDA. The poor also voted for the INDIA bloc (44 per cent) in higher numbers than the NDA (40 per cent). The NDA however got over half the votes of those belonging to the lower, middle and rich classes (Table 6).

Table 5
Vote Choice according to Locality

	Party voted for in 2024		
	INDIA	NDA	Others
Rural	38 (0)	47(+6)	16(-6)
Urban	48(+26)	44(-23)	8(-2)

Note: All figures are in percentage. Figures within parentheses indicate changes from the 2019 General Election.

Table 6
Vote Choice according to Class

	Party voted for in 2024		
	INDIA	NDA	Others
Poor	44 (+13)	40 (-5)	16 (-8)
Lower	31(-9)	54 (+11)	15 (-2)
Middle	39(-2)	51(+4)	11(-2)
Rich	36(-3)	54 (+13)	10 (-10)

Note: All figures are in percentage. Figures within parentheses indicate changes from the 2019 General Election.

Finally, the voting patterns of the various social groups would be considered. The NDA once again secured massive support of the Hindu Upper Castes with 76 per cent voting for its constituent parties. Twenty per cent of such voters opted for the INDIA bloc. Both of the alliances gained from a shift of Hindu Upper Caste votes from Others (Table 7). The strong support that the NDA enjoyed among the Hindu Other Backward Castes (OBC) was further reinforced this time due to a substantial shift of such voters from Others. The INDIA bloc gained additional support of the Dalits this time but the vast majority of them sided with the NDA. The latter also lost significant support of the Hindu Adivasis but still managed to get 66 per cent of the votes. Finally, Muslims overwhelmingly consolidated in favour of the INDIA bloc with 68 per cent voting for it.

Table 7
Caste Group and Vote Choice

	Party voted for in 2024		
	INDIA	NDA	Others
Hindu Upper Caste	20(+7)	76 (+2)	4 (-9)
Hindu OBCs	22 (+1)	71(+16)	7 (-17)
Hindu Dalits*	12(+5)	70 (-6)	18 (+1)
Hindu Adivasi	7 (-2)	66 (-11)	28 (+14)
Muslims	68 (-2)	14 (+7)	18 (-5)

Note: All figures are in percentage. Figures within parentheses indicate changes from the 2019 General Election.
*Figure should be treated with caution due to the lower representation of members of the community in the sample

What makes the verdict a 'triumph' for the NDA is that it signals the continuing political dominance of the alliance in Assam. The NDA achieved this due to its ability to retain the high levels of support among major segments of voters that it acquired in the previous election and reinforce it with some newer gains. The extent of new gains was however quite limited. When this is read along with the fact that the alliance has already made deep inroads into major sections of the electorate it suggests that NDA's capacity to further expand is heading towards 'saturation'. On the other end, the election was a 'debacle' for the opposition including the INDIA bloc as once again it had to settle with just three seats. The profile of the constituencies that it won as well as the vote share of the alliance as a whole and the Congress in particular however showed that there was more political meaning attached to the INDIA bloc's performance. The distribution of the INDIA bloc's vote share has shown that a higher proportion of it is concentrated in Muslim-dominated areas and was gained primarily at the cost of the AIUDF. This is why the surge in Congress' votes did not similarly translate into seat gains. But this shift also has a positive side. The solid consolidation of Muslim voters signals that the Congress for the time being has managed to overcome the threat of the AIUDF splitting the support of this community. The Muslim voters are critical to the success of the Congress in the state and this verdict suggests the restoration of this critical plank of the Congress' electoral base. The possibility for a resurgence has emerged because Muslim consolidation in the state has also been accompanied by a smaller shift of the majority community towards the INDIA bloc. To be sure, this shift has come much less from the NDA and more from the Others. But it has allowed the INDIA bloc to put its foot in the door of communities that had substantially shifted to the NDA over the last decade.

Making of the verdict

One of the reasons why people in Assam once again voted for the NDA in high numbers is because of their satisfaction with the performance of the central government. 15 per cent of voters in the state were fully satisfied with the work of the NDA government (Table 8). Nine of 10 such voters also voted for the NDA. Apart from them, there were another 51 per cent who were moderately satisfied with its performance. Among them, 53 per cent voted for the NDA this time. Although voters have somewhat different reasons for wanting the NDA government to continue in office, two reasons however stand out. The policies and welfare schemes of the government led 30 per cent of voters to consider giving another chance to the incumbent government. The appeal held by some of the overarching policies of the government, moderate successes in improving connectivity, tackling insurgency and developing public infrastructure and assistance provided under various welfare schemes are likely to have influenced these voters. For another 21 per cent, the NDA should continue in office because of the way it has governed the country. This group of voters have probably been attracted by the government's pitch about confronting corruption, of being decisive and efficient among other claims.

Table 8
Satisfaction with Central Government Performance and Vote Choice

Level of satisfaction	Overall	Vote choice in 2024 General Election		
		INDIA	NDA	Others
Fully satisfied	15	4	91	6
Somewhat satisfied	51	28	53	19
Somewhat dissatisfied	17	64	28	9
Fully dissatisfied	13	93	1	5

Note: All figures are in per cent.
Question asked: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre over the last five years?

About a quarter of voters were however dissatisfied with the performance of the central government. Among them, 17 per cent voters were moderately dissatisfied (Table 8). Sixty-four per cent of them voted for the INDIA bloc as opposed to 28 who still chose the NDA. Additionally, another 13 per cent were fully dissatisfied with the government among whom 93 per cent voted for the INDIA bloc this time. Many of the voters belonging to this group appear to have been aggrieved with the way the government addressed questions of livelihood. At the end of its second term, 53 per cent of voters in Assam were of the view that the economic condition of their household remained the same. Among them, 45 per cent voted for the INDIA bloc while another 40 per cent chose the NDA. Those who felt that their household condition worsened tended to vote for the INDIA bloc

in even higher proportions. As many as 63 per cent of voters did not want the NDA for another term due to the spiralling prices of essential commodities. This is probably why a section of women voters as well as the poor in Assam voted for it in this election. Another 16 per cent voters did not want the NDA to continue due to a sense that unemployment is increasing. The large shift of young voters to the INDIA bloc can thus be understood in this context.

At this point, it is important to discuss more about welfare schemes and in the process also resolve the following paradox. On one hand, such schemes were a major reason why many voters wanted the NDA government to continue in office. On the other hand, many voters in the state also complained about growing economic pressures. This then raises a question about the efficacy of these schemes. A look at the status of three major schemes and their relationship with voting behaviour provides an answer (Table 9). It appears that a smaller number of voters benefitted from these flagship schemes. The families of these non-beneficiaries have perhaps felt the burden of price rise, and joblessness much more acutely leading a significant number of them to vote for the opposition. But on the whole, the relationship between beneficiaries and party affiliation appears to be much weaker than is commonly presumed as a significant number of beneficiaries have also voted for the opposition and vice-versa.

Table 9
Welfare Scheme Beneficiaries and their Vote Choice

Schemes	Overall	Vote choice in 2024 General Election		
		INDIA	NDA	Others
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)				
Benefitted	44	39	47	13
Not benefitted	56	40	46	15
Pradhan Mantri AwasYojna (PMAY)				
Benefitted	25	34	50	16
Not benefitted	75	41	45	14
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY)				
Benefitted	29	43	46	11
Not benefitted	71	38	47	15

Note: All figures are in per cent.
Question asked: In the last five years, have you or someone from your family benefitted from the above government schemes?

The question of national leadership also appears to have influenced the way the people of Assam vote in this election. There were 10 per cent voters whose voting choice was strongly determined by whom they want to see as India's Prime Minister (PM) (Table 10). The bulk of them voted for the

NDA. On the other extreme, there were another 13 per cent for whom this question did not matter at all. More than half of such voters voted for the INDIA bloc. Most voters however stood somewhere in the middle and a higher proportion of such voters chose the NDA. The strong relationship between the importance accorded by voters to the leadership question and preference for the NDA seems to be determined largely by the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi among voters of Assam. While 35 per cent wanted Rahul Gandhi to be PM, the other 46 per cent wanted Modi.

Table 10
Importance of Prime Ministerial Preference and Vote Choice

Role of PM choice in voting decision	Overall	Vote choice in 2024 General Election		
		INDIA	NDA	Others
A great extent	10	32	61	7
Somewhat	26	32	45	23
Not much	16	39	48	13
Not at all	13	68	26	6

Note: All figures are in per cent.
Question asked: To what extent does your decision about which party or candidate to vote for depending on who you want to see as India's Prime Minister – to a great extent, somewhat not much or not at all?

It is this popularity of Narendra Modi along with the presence of strong state leaders that perhaps made the NDA, particularly the BJP complacent about candidate selection in Assam. While the NDA certainly fielded a few good candidates including Sonowal, many others could not really enthuse the voters on their own. In Guwahati, the BJP fielded a largely unknown figure, in Nagaon it fielded an unpopular Congress turncoat while the Lakhimpur candidate suffered from considerable anti-incumbency. But the party was most careless to renominate its highly unpopular parliamentarian from Jorhat who was no match for Gaurav Gogoi. On NDA's part, the assumption was naturally that people would vote along party lines and the role of candidates would therefore be minimal. This tactic played out for the better part as most people did vote along party lines and among them, 48 per cent opted for the NDA (Table 11). But the INDIA bloc's decision to nominate a number of prominent faces from key constituencies like Dhubri, Guwahati, Nagaon, Jorhat and Karimganj gave both the NDA and other parties a run for their money, irrespective of the final outcome in these seats. It ensured that the INDIA bloc got nearly half the votes (47 per cent) of those who decided their preference by choosing between candidates. Better candidate choice consequently helped the INDIA bloc to secure an edge over the NDA among voters who remained undecided till the time the

candidates were announced and they began to campaign. Thirty-five per cent of the INDIA bloc's voters belong to this group compared to 22 per cent of the voters of NDA (Table 12).

Table 11
Main Consideration while Voting

Primary Consideration for Deciding Vote Choice	Overall	Vote Choice in 2024 General Election		
		INDIA	NDA	Others
Party	74	39	48	13
Candidate	13	47	38	16

Note: All figures are in per cent.
Question asked: People have different considerations while deciding whom to vote for. In this election what mattered to you more -party or candidate?

Table 12
Vote Choice and Time when the Choice was Made

Vote choice	Time when decided whom to vote		
	Late deciders	Candidate selection to campaign period	Early deciders
INDIA	3	35	50
NDA	6	22	51
Others	4	21	63

Note: All figures are in per cent.
Question asked: When did you decide whom to vote for?

The NDA could also put up better competition because the three coalition partners made a relatively balanced contribution. While the BJP had a strike rate of about 80 per cent, the AGP besides winning a seat could also help the alliance in a number of pockets where it still retains a small base of support including Muslims. The UPPL on the other hand helped NDA secure the Kokrajhar seat. With regard to the INDIA bloc, the AJP was not only unsuccessful in the seat it contested but it is unlikely that it extended any worthwhile support to the Congress in other seats. The alliance also lost some votes as the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) fielded their own candidates in some seats as both parties remained outside the INDIA bloc in Assam. The inability to bring BPF into the INDIA bloc, partly due to the former's hesitation, also proved costly for both. Contesting together would have given tougher competition to the NDA in both Kokrajhar as well as Darrang Udalguri.

Finally, the role of communal polarisation in shaping the outcome of the recent election will be discussed. As discussed in the opening stages, the division of voting choices in the state along religious lines first gained prominence in 2014 and thereafter became even more marked. In the previous section, it was shown that the vast majority of Hindu voters once again consolidated behind the NDA in this election while Muslims

overwhelmingly supported the INDIA bloc. In this sense, the bulk of the voters of the state continue to be divided along religious lines and it would be wrong to claim that polarisation has weakened. It can however be argued that the patterns of voting in this election were more a product of the political alignments forged through communal impulses in the previous elections instead of being a fresh reaction to the polarising overtures of the present election. This is the reason that the level of support for the NDA in general and BJP, in particular, remained largely around where it was in 2019. As stated earlier, the high level of penetration among major social groups made it difficult for the NDA to press for additional support from them. The ability to achieve the same by exploiting communal anxieties became all the more difficult due to the way in which the INDIA bloc framed its electoral strategy. In other words, the decision of the Congress not to align with the AIUDF severely checked the NDA's ability to play the apprehensions of the majority community about the AIUDF against the former. This provided a small opening for material issues like inflation, unemployment etc., to acquire a little more salience for voters than had been the case in the previous few elections in the state. This is the small space through which a section of the opposition managed to put their foot in the door of social groups that had completely turned against them and induced a small shift in their favour. For there to be a resurgence of the opposition in Assam, it is from this space that it would have to march further inwards.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the verdict of the 2024 General Election symbolises triumph, saturation, debacle and possibility for NDA and the INDIA bloc respectively. What is certain is that politics in Assam is likely to become more competitive in the coming days compared to the last few years.

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Trends in Household Cooking Energy Consumption among Rural Social Groups in Bengal: An Analysis of NSSO Data (1999-2012)

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Caste in West Bengal presents complexity, with SCs at 23.51 per cent and STs at 5.8 per cent of the population, ranking third and ninth nationally. This study explores energy consumption trends among these groups in West Bengal, compared to India. Rural-urban disparities persist, with a notable rise in traditional fuel usage in West Bengal post-2012. While forward castes shift to cleaner fuels, SCs and STs predominantly rely on traditional sources, with LPG as a secondary option. Despite government initiatives, these disparities emphasise the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to clean energy for marginalised communities, aligning with sustainable development goals.

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Introduction

In India, poverty still exists primarily among the historically marginalised caste groups, even though there have been significant improvements in the income status of different segments of the population. Throughout India's history, caste identities have been a driving force behind social interactions and the perpetuation of inequality. Some groups of members of the caste system have suffered from extreme prejudice, marginalisation, and poverty due to their social exclusion. Between 2004 and 2012, India experienced significant economic growth. During this period, the poverty rates for forward and OBC castes decreased by almost 50 per cent, while the poverty rates for Dalits and Adivasi (SC/ST) decreased by just over 33 per cent (Thorat et al., 2017). The term 'Scheduled Castes (SC)' is used in constitutional terminology to refer to the Dalits, while "Scheduled Tribes (ST)" is used to denote the Adivasi, who are the indigenous people living in rural India. The term Other Backward Classes (OBC), remains a subject of controversy, as it officially encompasses individuals from lower castes who are considered economically and educationally disadvantaged. Higher caste hierarchies have more access to amenities and resources than members of other social groups. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe are the most marginalised communities in India and use firewood, dung cake, and agricultural wastes as traditional energy sources. Nevertheless, the increase in energy demand presents substantial obstacles concerning the exhaustion of resources and the preservation of environmental sustainability. The extraction and utilisation of fossil fuels, which have traditionally served as the foundation of energy systems, contribute to environmental degradation and climate change.

Energy Inequality in India

Energy inequality in India continues to be a significant concern, highlighting the unequal distribution of modern and dependable energy sources across different regions and socio-economic groups. Urban areas in India typically enjoy greater access to electricity and cleaner cooking fuels, whereas rural communities often contend with limited infrastructure and continue to rely on traditional biomass as their primary energy source. This divide creates a significant disparity in energy access, which can impede the quality of life for those living in rural areas. More than 65 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas, which account for about 45 per cent of the country's total energy consumption (Yawale et al., 2023). In addition, income levels are a significant factor, as lower-income households may face

difficulties in affording cleaner and more efficient energy solutions. According to Bianco et al., energy inequality has significant impacts on environmental sustainability, social justice, and energy access. They emphasise the importance of addressing energy inequality from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. According to Bianco, Proskuryakova, and Starodubtseva, the IEA has provided a definition of energy inequality, which refers to the disparities in accessing modern energy services such as electricity and clean cooking facilities among various populations and geographical regions (Bianco et al., 2021).

Energy inequality refers to the disparities in energy use and can be evaluated at the national or regional level, as well as among distinct groups of countries or regions. The disparity in electricity access, reliability, and affordability in India is intricate, with notable variations among different areas and socio-economic strata. In response to India's low electrification rate, the Indian government initiated the Rajiv Gandhi Rural Electrification Project in 2009. The primary objective of this scheme was to address the disparity in electrification among various social categories within rural communities and increase the overall electrification rate. Rural electrification initiatives primarily target marginalised and disadvantaged groups in rural areas. The Saubhagya Scheme, also known as the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, is primarily aimed at ensuring electricity access for all households, particularly those in economically disadvantaged rural areas identified by the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011. Currently, the Indian government has stated that 100 per cent of villages have been electrified under the SUBHGYA plan. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), also known as the Uwajjala plan, aims to offer access to clean cooking energy for women in Below Poverty Line (BPL) homes, regardless of their caste. However, its purpose is to tackle energy poverty and enhance the welfare of economically disadvantaged households. According to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) in 2022, it is expected that over 92.7 million households will receive LPG connections (Soni and Chatterjee, 2023). The PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana) programme has increased the number of beneficiaries since its inception in 2016. However, the frequency of LPG connection refilling remains low, particularly among the lowest-income groups. This is mainly due to the continued accessibility and affordability of traditional biomass as an alternative energy source.

Caste System in India

One of the earliest social structures in India is the caste system, which is primarily prevalent in Hindu cultures. India's centuries-old caste system is a social structure based on past Hindu scriptures that is arranged according to economic position and occupation. Higher caste 'Brahmins' were traditionally priests and intellectuals; 'Kshatriyas' were traditionally warriors and kings; 'Vaishyas' were associated with trade; and 'Shudras' were traditionally labourers and "untouchables." In the present context, the Indian Constitution of 1950 recognises the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as protected groups. It ensures that no form of discrimination or inequality is allowed against these communities, in order to protect their rights and dignity. The Indian Constitution prohibits the practice of 'untouchability', which has been historically used to marginalise members of Scheduled Castes (commonly known as Dalits). Members of this community are segregated from other groups in society because of persistent caste-based social stigma. Similarly, the indigenous communities in India recognised as Scheduled Tribes are commonly known as 'Adivasi' and 'Vanavasi'. In general, these groups of people live in forests and mountains that are apart from the rest of society. Apart from the general castes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, the Indian government has also categorised socially or educationally disadvantaged castes as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). In response, the government has introduced policies designed to provide financial support and opportunities to people from historically marginalised caste groups.

According to Article 366 (24) of the Indian Constitution, the term "Scheduled Castes" refers to specific castes, races, or tribes, or specific parts or groups within those castes, races, or tribes. These are considered Scheduled Castes under Article 341 of the Indian Constitution (Bodhi and Darokar, 2023). The term 'Tribes' refers to specific tribal communities or sub-groups within these communities that have been officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. Scheduled Castes (SCs) are determined based on their profound social, educational, and economic disadvantage caused by the practice of untouchability. Scheduled Tribes (STs) are classified based on the presence of primitive characteristics, unique cultural practices, geographical isolation, limited interaction with the wider society, and overall socio-economic disadvantage (Thorat et al., 2017). Based on the census of India, the population of India was around 1.21 billion, with 68.89 per cent residing in rural areas and 31.4 per cent in urban areas. The Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations account for around 16.5 per cent and 8.6 per cent of India's total population, respectively.

Materials and Methods

The paper presents an analysis of secondary level data pertaining to rural regions in West Bengal and India. The objective of this study was to examine the trends and patterns in the domestic energy consumption of Indian households from 1999-2000 to 2011-2012. This analysis utilises data from three consecutive rounds of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO): the 50th round conducted during 1993-94, the 55th round conducted during 1999-00, the 61st round conducted during 2004-05, and the 68th round conducted during 2011-12 and 76th round conducted during 2018-19. In order to analyse the pattern of population change, the research also incorporated Census data from earlier reports from the SC and ST development departments. Various books, journals, and census reports are also used as secondary sources. The information is utilised in the West Bengal region. The paper's novelty is based on its comparative analysis of the patterns in energy usage across various castes residing in rural areas of West Bengal and India.

Result and discussion

Trend of population change in West Bengal and India

India is experiencing a significant and dynamic shift in population distribution as a result of the ongoing process of urbanisation. Over the last few decades, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people residing in urban areas, highlighting the rapid expansion and growth of cities and towns. The urban transition is driven by factors such as the movement of people from rural to urban areas in pursuit of enhanced economic prospects, education, and a higher standard of living.

Table 1
Population Change in India and West Bengal

Year	Rural (Per cent)		Urban (Per cent)		Total population (In million)	
	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal
1991	74	72.52	26	27.48	844	68.08
2001	72.2	72.03	27.8	27.97	1,030	80.18
2011	68.86	68.11	31.14	31.89	1,210	91.28

Source: Census data of Government of India (1991, 2001, 2011)

West Bengal's slower rate of urbanisation can be attributed to demographic factors such as a higher rate of growth for the rural population and a lower rate of urban growth compared to the rest of India. West Bengal was facing a slow and unpredictable pace of urbanisation. Although there were fluctuations throughout this period, the rate rose in the 1970s and 1980s compared to the 1950s and 1960s. It began at 2.38 per cent in the 1950s and

decreased to 1.23 per cent in the 1960s. It subsequently rose to 6.95 per cent from 1971 to 1981, before declining to 3.48 per cent in 1981-1991. In 2001, the urbanisation rate of West Bengal was slightly higher than the national average of 27.80 per cent, while West Bengal stood at 27.97 per cent. The growth rate of urbanisation increased by 3.92 per cent in West Bengal comparatively higher than the national average of 3.34 per cent from the period of 2001 to 2011 (Table 1).

Table 2
Change in demography situation of India and West Bengal (In percentage)

Year	SC		ST	
	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal
1991	16.48	23.62	8.08	5.6
2001	16.23	23	8.2	5.5
2011	16.6	23.5	8.6	5.8

Source: Census data of Government of India (1991, 2001, 2011)

Table 2 shows the changing demographic patterns of West Bengal and India. The table indicates that 0.37 per cent and 0.5 per cent SC population increased for India and West Bengal respectively in overall India. Significantly it was found that in rural areas percentage of the SC population increased from 26.9 per cent to 27.5 per cent for West Bengal while the ST population was increased from 7.2 per cent to 7.8 per cent from the year 2001 to 2011. Compared to Rural India SC population has increased by 17.9 to 18.5 per cent and the ST population is 10.4 to 11.3 per cent, which is less than West Bengal.

Trends and Patterns of Energy Consumption in India

Ensuring the availability and affordability of energy is crucial for the progress and prosperity of a country. However, environmental degradation remains a significant challenge as a result of energy consumption patterns, specifically the burning of fossil fuels, and the subsequent release of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide especially from the rural areas of India. For this reason, ensuring energy security, energy equity, and environmental sustainability is necessary for sustainable development. The complex relationship between population growth and energy consumption is further highlighted by the ongoing trend of urbanisation in India.

Table 3 presents a comparison of the energy consumption patterns between rural and urban households in West Bengal and India. The findings revealed that in India, the percentage of rural households using LPG as their primary cooking fuel is 48.3 per cent, which is significantly lower in West Bengal, accounting for almost half of the country's average of 24 per cent.

According to the NSSO report (76th round) of 2018, it is evident that firewood and chips continue to be widely used as cooking energy sources in West Bengal, surpassing the national average of 44.5 per cent. In urban areas, households rely heavily on LPG for both West Bengal and India. As per the NSSO study, 86.6 per cent of urban families in India utilise LPG as their primary cooking fuel, with a slightly lower percentage observed in West Bengal. In rural areas of both West Bengal and India, dung cakes are commonly used as a substitute for firewood. While people in urban areas prefer to use LPG as their primary fuel since they have less access to alternative cooking fuels and maintain their quality of living.

Table 3
Cooking energy scenario of rural and urban areas (In percentage)

Cooking energy sources	West Bengal		India	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Firewood and chips	71	11.1	44.5	5.6
LPG	24.5	79.3	48.3	86.6
Cow dung cake	2.8	0.2	5.5	0.5
Others	1	6.5	1.1	3.2
No cooking Arrangement	0.7	2.8	0.6	4.1

Source: NSSO 76th round report (2018)

Trend of energy consumption pattern of rural areas of West Bengal and India

Rural households in developing countries have been facing challenges in meeting their daily energy needs for many years. Cooking energy usage patterns vary by geographical area. It is estimated by WHO that nearly 90 per cent of rural populations in developing countries still rely on solid fuel biomass, such as firewood, cow dung cake, and agricultural residues, for cooking. Cooking energy usage patterns vary by geographical area. Therefore, there are notable differences found in energy consumption patterns between rural and urban areas. According to India's energy consumption pattern, the household sector accounts for the third largest overall energy consumption sector in the country. Table 3 shows the percentages of various cooking energy sources used in rural West Bengal and India. According to the recent estimation of the NSSO report, there has been a gradual shift towards modern energy sources like LPG among rural people after 2011. However, in the state of West Bengal, rural households continue to rely significantly on traditional fuels due to the increase in LPG prices over time and the abundant availability of biomass in their nearby areas, which is much higher than the national average. While the average consumption of LPG in rural areas of West Bengal; as a cooking fuel is almost half of the national average. It is evident that the people in West

Bengal predominantly use traditional fuel as their primary cooking fuel, with LPG being considered as a secondary or alternative option.

Table 4
Trend of energy consumption pattern of rural areas of
West Bengal and India (In percentage)

Cooking Energy Source	1993-94		1999-00		2004-05		2010-11		2018-19	
	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India
Firewood and Chips	61.3	78.2	78.5	75.5	73.3	75	62.9	67.3	71	44.5
LPG	0.3	1.9	1.7	5.4	4.3	8.6	6.6	15	24.5	48.3
Dung cake	8.8	11.5	5.4	10.6	3.6	9.1	5.3	9.6	2.8	5.5
Others	28.5	7.7	14	7.3	17.5	5.6	24.5	6.9	1.0	1.1
No cooking Arrangement	1.1	0.7	0.4	1.2	1.3	1.7	0.7	1.2	0.7	0.6

Source: NSSO Reports (50th, 55th, 61st, 67th, 76th Rounds)

Urbanisation has led to a shift towards modern and alternative energy sources, such as kerosene and electricity, to maintain a quality of living. The availability of clean energy is one of the most crucial factors that contribute to the standard of living. Therefore, individuals have transitioned to utilising LPG as a means to maintain their quality of life while also reducing reliance on traditional fuel sources. Table 4 presents a comparison of the utilisation of cooking energy in the rural areas of West Bengal and India. India's energy consumption pattern has changed significantly from using traditional fuels to using modern fuels since 2010. Conversely, a similar pattern of shifting energy usage was observed in West Bengal. However, due to increased prices of LPG and socio-economic obstacles in the present day, people in West Bengal reverted to using their traditional fuel and turned to LPG as an alternative for cooking. Additionally, it was noted that the utilisation of LPG is steadily rising in both India and West Bengal. However, the utilisation of LPG in West Bengal remains below the national average. Additionally, the utilisation of dung cakes is a tendency that is decreasing in both West Bengal and India.

Trend of energy consumption pattern of different social groups of West Bengal and India

The data in Table 5 presents the cooking energy consumption patterns of various social groups in India and West Bengal from 1999-00 to 2011-12. It demonstrates that individuals from the ST and SC communities continue to rely more on firewood and chips as their primary sources of cooking energy compared to other groups. On the other hand, people from

the forward caste are more likely to adopt LPG than people from other social groups in West Bengal and India. Regarding the utilisation of dung cake, the forward caste of West Bengal and the Scheduled Caste from India, rely heavily on dung cake compared to other social groups. The disparities in energy consumption patterns between the state and the country among the social groups revealed that with the exception of the advanced caste, all social groups in West Bengal use less firewood than the national average. On the other hand, except for ST people, all other social categories in West Bengal have lesser access to LPG as a clean fuel than the national average. Except for the ST people of West Bengal, all other social groups use dung cake the most compared to India. Furthermore, these three primary cooking sources from West Bengal and India are gradually replacing other cooking sources.

Table 5
Cooking energy consumption patterns of social groups in
India and West Bengal (In percentage)

Cooking Energy Source	ST		SC		OBC		Others	
	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12
West Bengal								
firewood and chips	82.1	71.2	76.9	69.5	75.4	66.1	79.2	57.1
LPG	0.5	6.4	0.5	4	3.7	6.7	2.3	8.3
dung cake	3.3	4.5	5.4	4.3	3.7	4	5.9	6.3
Coal Cake	5.7	3.5	6.2	6	14.2	8.8	6.5	7
others	6.5	14.4	10.9	15.9	3	13.5	5.9	20.5
No cooking Arrangement	1.9	0	0.1	0.3	0	0.9	0.2	0.8
India								
firewood and chips	90.5	87	76.7	69.8	75.7	66.4	69.2	57
LPG	1.3	5.3	1.6	8.9	4.1	16	11.1	23.3
dung cake	1.8	1.4	12.9	12.2	12.8	11.2	9.5	8.3
Coal Cake	1.4	1.1	1.7	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.8	1.7
others	2.6	2.1	6.1	7.1	5.5	4.7	7.3	8.1
No cooking Arrangement	2.4	3.1	1	0.9	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.6

Source: NSSO report 50th and 67th round reports

Table 6 depicts the changing patterns of energy use in West Bengal and India from 1999-2000 to 2011-12. It is evident that in West Bengal, every social group relies more on firewood and chips as cooking energy sources compared to the rest of India. Firewood usage is declining at a faster rate among forward castes compared to other social groups such as SC, ST, and OBC. This trend is particularly prominent in West Bengal, where the decline is 22.1 per cent, surpassing the national average of 12.2 per cent. Meanwhile, the

importance of LPG as the main fuel has been emphasised for both West Bengal and India. However, the people of West Bengal lag behind the national average in terms of LPG usage across all social groups. Although cow dung cake is a significant energy source and is given priority in West Bengal, all other groups, except in SC, continue to use dung cake for cooking. It is evident that the people in West Bengal and India have gradually transitioned to using modern energy sources. Despite this, it is still common to find firewood and cow dung cake being used as primary fuel among all social groups.

Table 6
Trend of changing pattern of social groups in West Bengal and India

	ST		SC		OBC		Others	
	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India	West Bengal	India
Firewood and chips	-10.9	-3.5	-7.4	-6.9	-9.3	-9.3	-22.1	-12.2
LPG	+5.9	+4	+3.5	+7.3	+3	+11.9	+6	+12.2
Dung cake	+1.2	-0.4	-1.1	-0.7	+0.3	-1.6	+0.4	-1.2
Coal Cake	-2.2	-0.3	-0.2	-0.6	-5.4	-0.3	+0.5	-0.1
Others	+7.9	-0.5	+5	+1	+10.5	-0.8	+14.6	+0.8
No cooking Arrangement	-1.9	+0.7	+0.2	-0.1	+0.9	+0.1	+0.6	+0.5

Source: Author Calculation from NSSO report (In percentage); (-): Decrease, (+) Increase

Policy and Recommendations
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

Indian Government implemented several social inclusion programmes in 2016, including the "Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana" (PMUY), which seeks to provide clean cooking fuel to economically disadvantaged women in households, particularly in rural areas, using data from the SECC 2011. The programme seeks to improve the well-being of women and their families by reducing their reliance on traditional cooking fuels that are harmful to the environment and health, such as biomass (wood, crop residues), cow dung and kerosene. The PMUY scheme offers a range of significant features, including the provision of free LPG connections to eligible BPL women. This removes the initial financial barrier and also provides subsidies for cylinder refills, making LPG a more cost-effective option for long-term use as a cooking fuel. This is a significant achievement in the government's efforts to ensure access to clean cooking fuel for all and to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. India has achieved an impressive LPG usage rate of 99.8 per cent as of July 2023, with a total of 9.59 crores PMUY connections (Trivedi et al., 2024). The primary objectives of this initiative include eliminating indoor air pollution, reducing reliance on

gathering fuel for cooking, preserving forests, and promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

PMUY, Ujjwala 2.0

In 2022, an additional allocation was approved for 1.6 crore new LPG connections as part of the 'UjjwalaYojana 2.0'. The main objective of the UjjwalaYojana 2.0 is to offer free LPG gas connections to low-income families who did not meet the eligibility criteria during the initial stage of the PMUY programme. The main advantages of Ujjwala Yojana 2.0 involve offering access to LPG supply without any deposit, providing a complimentary cooker (hotplate) and giving extra financial aid of 1,600 for a PMUY connection. The programme strives to offer cleaner cooking fuel to low-income families, enhancing their health and overall well-being.

Direct Benefit Transfer for LPG (DBTL) also known as PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh)

In 2015, as part of an initiative to improve governance, the Direct Benefit Transfer for LPG (DBTL), also known as PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh), was introduced. PAHAL aims to rationalise subsidies in order to prevent any leakage of funds. The applicable subsidy is transferred directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries. According to MoPNG since April 1, 2023, over 290 million LPG consumers have been enrolled under the programme.

Give It Up

In 2015, the Government of India initiated the 'Give It Up' campaign, a significant effort to promote fair distribution of resources in the field of LPG subsidies. This campaign aimed to encourage affluent households to voluntarily give up their LPG subsidies, with the goal of redirecting these funds to help economically disadvantaged families. The main objective of the 'Give It Up' campaign was to address the disparity in access to clean cooking fuel among different socio-economic groups. This effort reduced the government's financial burden and supported sustainable and inclusive development. By redirecting funds from voluntarily surrendered LPG subsidies, more resources were allocated to the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). This strengthened the program's goal of providing free LPG connections to women in below-poverty-line households.

National Programme on Improved Cookstoves (NPIC)

The "Indian National Programme on Improved Chulhas" (NPIC) was a government initiative launched by the Ministry of New and

Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 1984 to promote improved cookstoves. It ran until 2003 and saw the distribution of approximately 35 million cookstoves. To further encourage clean cooking solutions, MNRE launched the National Biomass Cookstove Initiative (NBCI) in December 2009. The aim was to develop and deploy advanced cookstoves to provide clean and efficient energy to energy-deficient and economically disadvantaged households. NBCI focuses on affordable clean energy solutions to improve health and reduce emissions for the most vulnerable groups. Additionally, the Unnat Chulha Abhiyan programme, launched in June 2014, promotes improved biomass cookstoves to reduce fuel wood consumption and increase energy efficiency. Under the programme 36,940 family-type and 849 community-type, improved cookstoves have been distributed (Ranjan and Bhadra, 2019). These initiatives aim to reduce emissions, improve health, and offer sustainable cooking solutions to India's poorer communities.

Biogas Generation Programme

The Ministry has supported the National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMP) since 1981-82, promoting biogas plants that convert cattle dung and organic waste into energy. The by-product slurry serves as organic bio-manure, enhancing agricultural productivity and soil fertility. Biogas technology also helps reduce environmental impact by lowering Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, such as Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) and Methane. Since its inception, the NBMMP has overseen the installation of about 49.6 lakh household-sized biogas plants (Bagdi et al., 2022). To improve village sanitation and generate energy from animal and organic waste, the Indian Government launched the GOBARdhan programme in April 2018 as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen). This initiative aims to help rural communities manage livestock and organic waste efficiently. Additionally, the Ministry introduced the 'Biogas-based Distributed/Grid Power Generation Programme' (BGPG) in January 2006. This programme encourages small-scale power generation from biogas, leveraging animal waste, forestry by-products, rural industry waste (like agro/food processing), and kitchen waste. These initiatives contribute to cleaner energy, improved rural sanitation, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Conclusion

Access to clean energy is a key issue for marginalised groups in rural India, including West Bengal, where over 65 per cent of the population resides in rural areas. Urbanisation in West Bengal grew by 3.92 per cent, slightly higher than the national average of 3.34 per cent. The state's

population includes 23.5 per cent SC and 5.8 per cent ST, with these groups experiencing slower growth rates between 2001 and 2011. Energy consumption patterns differ between rural and urban areas. In rural West Bengal, 71 per cent of households use firewood and chips for cooking, compared to 44per cent in rural India. Urban areas in both regions favour cleaner fuels like LPG. While India shows a broader shift toward modern energy sources, West Bengal saw a rise in traditional fuel use after 2012 due to socio-economic factors, including LPG price hikes. This increase impacts SCs and STs, who rely more on traditional fuels, while forward castes are quickly adopting cleaner energy. The Government of India has launched programs like PMUY and others to promote clean energy and support marginalised communities. These efforts are crucial for improving health, environmental sustainability, and meeting sustainable development goals. However, ongoing challenges require continued focus on equitable energy access, especially in rural West Bengal.

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An Investigation into the Inter-District Disparity in India using Household Consumption Expenditure Data

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Existing studies on disparities in India were mostly limited to regional- and state-level analyses. Using the data from the 61st and 66th rounds of the National Sample Survey of India this paper examined the inter-district economic disparity in terms of monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) in India and bigger states during 2004-09. A set of three inequality measures, namely, Theil, Hoover and Gini indices, and the Lorenz curve were used to assess the economic disparity among the districts. Results showed that the districts of northern and eastern states of India were economically more backward. Disparity in MPCE continued to exist among the districts of India. The degree of inter-district disparity in MPCE was found to be higher in the economically better-off states (such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka), compared to the economically poorer states (such as Bihar and Rajasthan) of India.

Keywords: Inter-District Disparity, Inequality measures, Lorenz curve, Monthly Percapita Consumption Expenditure, Districts, India.

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Introduction

There has been growing concern about inter-regional or inter-state disparities in socio-economic development in India. A number of research studies demonstrated evidence of remarkable disparities in economic growth, per capita income, per capita consumption expenditure, poverty, literacy and other socio-economic indicators among the states and regions within different states of India (Ahluwalia; 2000; Kurian, 2000; Deaton and Dreze, 2002; Sundaram and Tendulkar, 2003; Bhanumurthy and Mitra, 2004; Bhattacharya and Sakthivel, 2004; Sen and Himanshu, 2004; Roy and Bhattacharjee, 2009; Roy and Haldar, 2010; Neogi, 2010). Some of these studies, however, provided evidence of widening disparity among the states of India (Ahluwalia, 2000; Kurian, 2000; Deaton and Dreze, 2002; Bhattacharya and Sakthivel, 2004). Besides, some studies have shown large inter-district disparities existing in some states of India (Diwakar, 2009; Suryanarayana, 2009; Dubey, 2009; Bhattacharya, 2009; Raychaudhuri and Haldar 2009). The level of inter-district disparity seems to be higher in economically better-off states compared to that in economically poorer states of India (Chaudhuri and Gupta, 2009).

Economic disparity across the regions within different states seems to create a major distinction in terms of socio-economic development between the states (Kurian, 2000). It has major implications for social and political instability in a federal system. It often leads to social unrest, which in turn creates adverse social outcomes (Roy and Haldar, 2010). Moreover, it may be perceived as unfair and hence hinder the emergence of consensus among different states on policy issues; have political consequences and affect the stability of a federal system of government (Nayyar, 2008). Poor economic conditions and inadequate development may cause social instability and increase the chance of political rebellion in any region (Neogi, 2010). However, compared to studies on state-level disparities, the studies on district-level disparities were inadequate. Most studies on disparity analysis in India were based on old sources of data and restricted to state-level analyses. This paper examined the inter-district economic disparity in India and bigger states with respect to monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) over time.

Data and Methods

The purpose of this paper was to examine the economic disparity among the districts (i.e. inter-district disparity in economic well-being) of India and bigger states with respect to MPCE (in rupee). The inter-district

disparity in MPCE in India was examined over two periods namely, 2004-05 and 2009-10. The MPCE at the district level for 2004-05 and 2009-10 was estimated using household consumption expenditure data from the 61st and 66th rounds of the National Sample Survey (NSS) collected during 2004-05 and 2009-10, respectively. In many population research and demographic surveys, consumption data is considered to be more reliable than income data. The National Sample Survey (NSS) collects data on important socio-economic aspects on a comprehensive basis for the whole country by using scientific sampling techniques. The various rounds of NSS provide information on housing conditions, health and health care services utilisation, fertility, mortality, family planning, disabled persons, education, occupation, employment and unemployment, consumer expenditure, manufacturing industries etc. In the 61st round of NSS, the districts were taken as strata for the selection of first-stage units (FSU). Both rural and urban parts of the districts were taken as sub-strata for selection of sample villages and urban blocks respectively. The consumption expenditure data were also collected in the 66th round of NSS (2009-10) following the same sampling technique as that of the 61st of NSS (2004-05). It may be mentioned that the 61st round of NSS was designed to provide data covering 593 districts but data from this round were available for 583 districts while the 66th round of NSS was designed to provide data covering 616 districts (with an additional 23 new districts) but data from this round were available for 610 districts from all 35 states of India. However, the analysis of this paper was restricted to a number of 605 districts (including 22 new districts in addition to the districts for which data were available in the NSS 61st round). The estimates for the new districts that were not present in the base period (2004-05) were adjusted by using the figures of their corresponding parent districts. The estimate for a district created from a single district is considered as the same as in its parent district while that for a district created from multiple districts is derived by taking the simple average of the figures of all its parent districts. The list of districts that were not present in the base period (i.e. 2004-05) but present in the current period (i.e. 2009-10) is given in the Appendix.

The MPCE at the district level for 2004-05 and 2009-10 was computed following schedule 1.0 of the NSS 61st round and schedule 1.0 (type 1) of the NSS 66th round, respectively. The household consumption expenditure data on all food and non-food items collected from 30-day, as well as 365-day recall periods (mixed recall period) were used to compute the MPCE at the district level. The total monthly household consumption

expenditure was divided by total household size to get the MPCE at the district level. In order to examine the disparity in MPCE at the district level over time, the district-level MPCE as of 2009-10 were adjusted by the wholesale price index based on all commodities at 2004-05 constant prices. The estimates of MPCE, as of 2009-10, were multiplied by the price-adjusted factor of 0.76687 (100/130.4).

The distribution analysis of the districts by levels of MPCE was carried out to assess the inter-district disparity in MPCE in India. In this case, the districts were classified into four categories using the minimum cut-off point below the mean value and the maximum cut-off point above the mean value in the district-level MPCE, as of 2004-05. The standard deviation in district-level MPCE was considered as an interval below and above the mean value to determine the minimum and maximum cut-off points. The MPCE, as of 2004-05, in all the districts were found to be distributed with a mean of 691 and a standard deviation of 254. The minimum and maximum cut-off points were estimated to be 437 and 945, respectively. Thus, the districts with MPCE of less than or equal to Rs. 437 were classified as the low category, with MPCE between Rs. 438 and Rs. 690 as the lower middle category, with MPCE between Rs. 691 and Rs. 944 as the higher middle category, and with MPCE of more than or equal to Rs. 945 as the high category of MPCE class. The same cut-off points were also applied in classifying the districts based on MPCE as of 2009-10.

In addition to the distribution analysis, three inequality measures, namely Theil index corresponding to zero (0) (TI-0), Hoover coefficient and Gini index (unweighted), and Lorenz curve were used to assess the degree of inter-district disparity in India and its bigger states. The description of the inequality measures is given below.

$$\text{Theil index (TI} - 0) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i \ln\left(\frac{\mu}{x_i}\right)$$

Where P_i is the population of the *i-th* district, μ is the MPCE at the national level; xix is the MPCE of the *i-th* district and n is the number of districts. The Theil index of zero (0) implies that if the per capita incomes of the state and the individual district are equal then the index value will be zero.

$$\text{Hoover coefficient (HC)} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| \frac{A_i y_i}{A_{tot} \bar{y}} - \frac{A_i}{A_{tot}} \right|$$

Where Ai is the population in the *i-th* district, A$_{tot}$ is the total population at the state level, y_i is the MPCE for the ith district, $\bar{y}$ is the MPCE at the national level.

$$\text{Gini index (unweighted)} = \frac{1}{2n^2\bar{y}}\sum_{i=1}^{n}\sum_{j=1}^{n}|y_i - y_j|$$

Where, y_i is MPCE at the national level, y_i is MPCE for the *i-th* district and *n* is the number of districts.

The value of these inequality measures ranges between 0 (zero) and 1 (one). The index with a value of 0 implies no inequality and with value of 1 implies perfect inequality.

Results
State-level Estimates and Growth of MPCE

Before moving towards the results on inter-district disparity in MPCE in India it is required to have a look at the variation in MPCE within and across the states. The state-level variation in MPCE would be helpful for comparing with the variation in corresponding district-level estimates. Table 1 presents the average MPCE and growth of average MPCE in bigger states of India for the periods 2004-05 and 2009-10. During 2004-09, the average MPCE has increased in all states of India except Nagaland. The increase in average MPCE was lowest in the state of Mizoram (7 per cent) and highest in the state of Pondicherry (80.4 per cent). The average MPCE for India has increased by 29 per cent; from Rs. 712 in 2004-05 to Rs. 918 in 2009-10. Out of 35 states, 16 states have shown growth in average MPCE higher than that at the national level. However, a large variation in average MPCE was found to exist at the state level in India. As of 2009-10, the average MPCE was lowest in the state of Bihar (Rs. 560), followed by Chhattisgarh (Rs. 620), Odisha (Rs. 631) and Jharkhand (Rs. 666) and highest in the state of Chandigarh (Rs. 2616), preceded by Delhi (Rs. 1824), Pondicherry (Rs. 1773) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Rs. 1744).

Table 1
Estimates and growth of average MPCE in Bigger states, India,
2004-05 and 2009-10

Bigger States	Estimated Average MPCE (Rs)		Growth in Average MPCE (in %)
	2004-05	2009-10	
Andhra Pradesh	729	1035	42.1
Assam	628	723	15.1
Bihar	471	560	18.9
Chhattisgarh	524	620	18.2
Delhi**	1395	1824	30.7
Gujarat	838	1065	27.0
Haryana	979	1226	25.2
Himachal Pradesh	891	1143	28.3
Jammu & Kashmir*	883	1033	17.0
Jharkhand	532	666	25.1
Karnataka	726	995	37.0
Kerala	1107	1453	31.3
Madhya Pradesh	562	751	33.6
Maharashtra@	851	1188	39.6
Odisha	472	631	33.7
Punjab	1034	1337	29.3
Rajasthan	675	895	32.5
Tamil Nadu	819	1045	27.7
Uttar Pradesh	606	743	22.6
West Bengal	718	833	15.9
All India	712	918	28.9

*Excluding four districts (Leh Ladakh, Kargil, Punch & Rajauri). **Excluding four districts (North, East, New Delhi & Central). @Excluding Mumbai.

The pattern of distribution of MPCE in districts of India

Figures 1 and 2 present the histograms depicting the distribution of average MPCE in districts of India for 2004-05 and 2009-10, respectively. The average MPCE was not uniformly distributed among the districts of India and its pattern of distribution in the districts remained almost similar over the periods. The mean value of district-level MPCE had increased from 691 in 2004-05 to 872 in 2009-10. Similarly, the standard deviation in district-level MPCE had increased from 254.5 in 2004-05 to 342.4 in 2009-10. The increase in the mean value of district-level MPCE implies that, on average, the economic condition of the districts has improved in India. However, the increase in the standard deviation of district-level MPCE, though, implies an increase in the level of disparity among the districts of India, the magnitude of the increase in disparity was negligible.

Figure 1: Histogram depicting the distribution of MPCE in districts of India, 2004-05

Figure 2: Histogram depicting the distribution of MPCE in districts of India, 2009-10
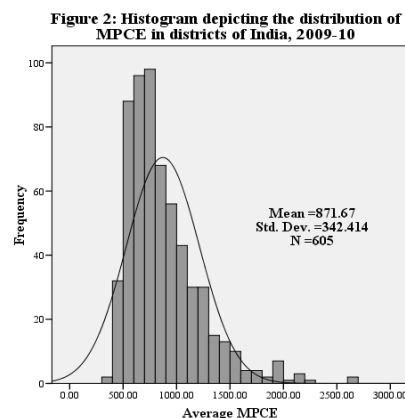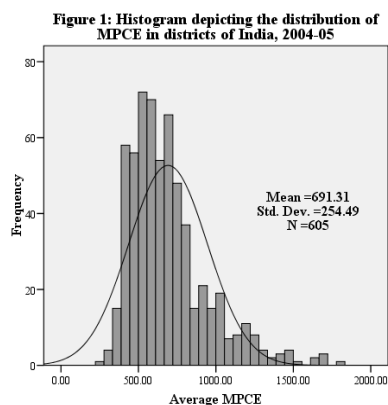
Distribution of districts by MPCE class

Table 2 presents the per cent distribution of districts and mean MPCE by MPCE class in India for 2004-05 and 2009-10. From Table 2 it was observed that the percentage of districts in the low MPCE class had declined from 11.7 per cent (N=71) in 2004-05 to 1.2 per cent (N=7) in 2009-10 and that in the lower middle MPCE class had declined from 48 per cent (N=291) in 2004-05 to 34 per cent (N=206) in 2009-10 at 2004-05 prices. On the other hand, the percentage of districts in the higher middle MPCE class had increased from 25.6 per cent (N=155) in 2004-05 to 33 per cent (N=200) in 2009-10 and that in the high MPCE class increased from 14.5 per cent (N=88) in 2004-05 to 31.7 per cent (N=192) in 2009-10. It was also noticed that, as of 2009-10, the distribution of districts remains almost similar in the lower middle, higher middle and high MPCE class categories. In general, this analysis shows that the districts of India were moving from a lower economic status to a higher economic status.

Table 2
Percent distribution of districts and mean MPCE by MPCE Class, India, 2004-04 and 2009-10

MPCE Class (Rs)	2004-05		2009-10	
	% of districts	Mean MPCE	% of districts	Mean MPCE
Low (≤ 437)	11.7 (71)	396	1.2 (7)	405
Lower middle (438 - 690)	48.1 (291)	565	34 (206)	585
Higher middle (691 - 944)	25.6 (155)	786	33.1 (200)	803
High (≥ 945)	14.5 (88)	1180	31.7 (192)	1268
All	100 (605)	691	100 (605)	872

Note: Figures in the parentheses are the number of districts.

The mean MPCE of the different MPCE classes clearly indicates that a remarkable variation in MPCE among the districts of different MPCE class categories continued to exist during 2004-2009.

District-level variation and change in MPCE

The district-level MPCE showed that nearly 90 per cent of districts (534 out of 605) have shown an increase in the level of average MPCE during 2004-09 at 2004-05 prices. The increase in average MPCE was maximum in the district of Hardwar of Uttaranchal (223.2 per cent), preceded by Meerut of Uttar Pradesh (161.6 per cent), Rangareddi of Andhra Pradesh (147.2 per cent) and Bid of Maharashtra (121.2 per cent) and minimum in the district of South-24 Parganas of West Bengal (0.1 per cent), followed by East Siang of Arunachal Pradesh (0.2 per cent), Dhamtari of Chhattisgarh and Gopalganj of Bihar (0.4 per cent in each) and Sirsa of Haryana (0.6 per cent). Though the level of average MPCE has increased in many districts, a large variation in average MPCE continues to exist in districts of India. The average MPCE, as of 2009-10, ranges from a lowest of Rs. 304 in the district of Malkangiri of Odisha, followed by Koraput and Nuapada of Odisha (Rs. 381 and Rs. 422, respectively) and Satna of Madhya Pradesh (Rs. 429) to a highest of Rs. 2616 in the district of Chandigarh, preceded by Hardwar of Uttaranchal (Rs. 2605), Mumbai Suburban of Maharashtra (Rs. 2270) and Thiruvananthapuram of Kerala (Rs. 2169). It was evident that more than 35 per cent of the districts (213 out of 605) had an average MPCE of less than or equal to Rs. 690, of which 80 per cent of districts (171 out of 213) were mainly from the states of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, 70 out of 605 districts had shown a decline in the level of MPCE of which the majority (54 out of 70) were from the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The decline in MPCE was maximum in the districts of Mewat of Haryana (34.5 per cent), followed by Gandhi Nagar of Gujarat (32.4 per cent), Doda of Jammu and Kashmir (30.5 per cent) and Satna of Madhya Pradesh (27.5 per cent) and minimum in the district of Mayurbhanj of Odisha (0.2 per cent), preceded by Rewa of Madhya Pradesh (0.6 per cent), Dharwad of Karnataka (0.7 per cent) and Gurgaon of Haryana (0.8 per cent). The level of MPCE, however, remained unchanged in one district namely, Champawat of Uttaranchal. The variation and change in MPCE at the district level are also evident from the mapping of districts based on MPCE (Figures 3 and 4).

Inter-District Disparity in India and Bigger States

Table 3 presents three inequality indices, namely, Theil index (TI-0), Hoover coefficient (HC) and Gini index (unweighted)) in India and bigger states for 2004-05 and 2009-10. All these indices were computed based on district-level MPCE for India and its bigger states to understand the extent of inter-district economic disparity in India and within the states. It was observed that the value of all three inequality indices had increased over time in India indicating the consistency in their agreement. The value of the Theil index has increased from 0.069 in 2004-05 to 0.088 in 2009-10 while that of HC has increased from 0.139 to 0.159 during the same period. The value of the Gini index has increased from 0.194 to 0.204 during the same period. Though all three indices increased during 2004-09, the change in their magnitude was very small, indicating that inter-district disparity in MPCE remained unchanged during the same period. There was also considerable agreement among the indices validating the measures of inter-district inequality in the bigger states of India. In 2009-10, the correlation coefficient of the Gini index and Hoover coefficient was 0.92 and that of the Theil index and Hoover coefficient is 0.69 while that of the Gini and Theil index is 0.52. The values were similar for 2004-05. The value of the Hoover coefficient and Gini index, as of 2004-05, was minimum in the state of Goa (0.0105 and 0.0106, respectively), preceded by Pondicherry (0.0211 and 0.0451, respectively). Among the major states, the states of Rajasthan and Bihar had lower values while that of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka had the higher value of Hoover coefficient and Gini index, as of 2004-05. This indicates that the degree of inter-district disparity was lower in the states of Rajasthan and Bihar but higher in the states of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Additionally, some smaller states such as Goa, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland had a lower value of the Hoover coefficient and Gini index than all major states of India. In general, it was found that the degree of inter-district disparity was relatively low in poor-performing and smaller states compared to economically better-off states of India.

Table 3
Inequality indices (Theil index (TI-0), Hoover coefficient (HC) and Gini index) of district level MPCE in Bigger states, India, 2004-05 and 2009-10.

Bigger States	2004-05			2009-10		
	TI-0	HC	Gini index	TI-0	HC	Gini index
Andhra Pradesh	0.0342	0.093	0.127	0.0451	0.1149	0.1522
Assam	0.0148	0.0669	0.0839	0.0276	0.1155	0.1529
Bihar	0.0136	0.0612	0.0771	0.0084	0.0633	0.0762
Chhattisgarh	0.0143	0.0849	0.1264	0.0012	0.0609	0.0798
Delhi**	0.2072	0.0953	0.1276	0.1827	0.1011	0.0961
Gujarat	0.0389	0.1262	0.1692	0.0406	0.1101	0.1317
Haryana	0.034	0.1059	0.1452	0.0185	0.0613	0.106
Himachal Pradesh	0.0111	0.0498	0.0909	0.0167	0.0851	0.1167
Jammu & Kashmir*	0.0135	0.0706	0.0995	0.0555	0.0913	0.1113
Jharkhand	0.0275	0.1091	0.1277	0.0251	0.1216	0.1289
Karnataka	0.0695	0.1653	0.1697	0.1269	0.1974	0.1733
Kerala	0.0358	0.0919	0.1301	0.0405	0.1087	0.1441
Madhya Pradesh	0.0314	0.1167	0.1458	0.0657	0.143	0.1757
Maharashtra@	0.0895	0.1617	0.155	0.0956	0.173	0.179
Odisha	0.017	0.0793	0.1178	0.0253	0.0972	0.1345
Punjab	0.0261	0.0838	0.1093	0.0206	0.0647	0.0862
Rajasthan	0.0069	0.0554	0.0761	0.0056	0.064	0.0841
Tamil Nadu	0.0512	0.1186	0.1361	0.0411	0.1256	0.1475
Uttar Pradesh	0.0318	0.0967	0.1272	0.0433	0.1029	0.1371
West Bengal	0.0355	0.1054	0.1569	0.0386	0.1081	0.1512
All India	0.0694	0.1393	0.1941	0.0879	0.1592	0.2036

*Excluding four districts (Leh Ladakh, Kargil, Punch & Rajauri). **Excluding four districts (North, East, New Delhi & Central). @Excluding Mumbai.

This pattern of inter-district disparity across the states remained similar in 2009-10. Moreover, it was evident that all three indices were of similar magnitude and the change in their magnitude during 2004-09 was small in all states of India except Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Uttaranchal.

For further investigation into the degree of and trends in inter-district disparity in India, the Lorenz curve has been drawn for 2004-05 and 2009-10 based on district-level MPCE (Figure 3). In this case, the cumulative proportion of MPCE is plotted (on the Y axis) against the cumulative proportion of districts ranked by MPCE class (on the X axis). It is noticed that there is a wide gap between the line of equity and the Lorenz curves for MPCE, indicating that a sharp gap in the distribution of MPCE among the districts of India was evident from 2004-05 and continued to exist in 2009-10. It is also observed that the Lorenz curve as of 2004-05 and that as of 2009-10 lie below the line of equity, indicating that the degree of economic inequality

was higher among economically better-off districts than among economically worse-off districts in India.

Furthermore, the Lorenz curve as of 2004-05 and that as of 2009-10 are found to coincide with each other. This indicates that the degree of inter-district disparity in India remained similar over time. This also supports the result explained by the inequality indices (Table 3).

Figure 5: Lorenz curve representing inter-district disparity in MPCE, India, 2004-05 and 2009-10
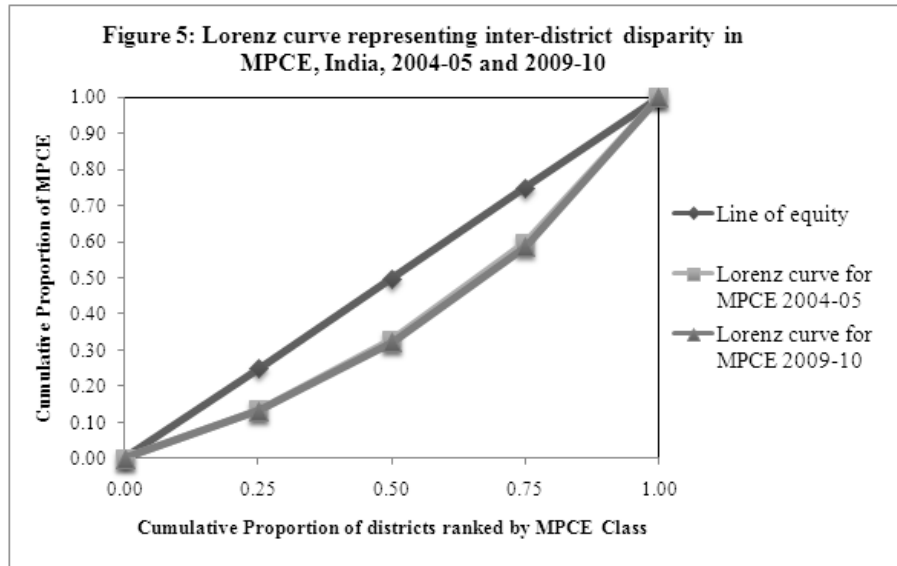
Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to assess the economic disparity among the districts of India and bigger states using MPCE. The disparities in MPCE among the districts were examined with the help of distribution analysis, a set of three inequality indices, namely, Theil index, Hoover coefficient, Gini index and Lorenz curve. The analysis showed that about 90 per cent of the selected districts (534 out of 605) in India have shown growth while 10 per cent of the districts have shown a decline in MPCE during 2004-09. A large variation in the level of MPCE was, however, found to exist among the selected districts. The level of MPCE, as of 2009-10, ranges from the lowest of Rs. 304 in the district of Malkangiri of Odisha to the highest of Rs. 2616 in the district of Chandigarh. This indicates a remarkable spatial disparity in MPCE among Indian districts. The key findings indicate that a major proportion of the districts (80 per cent) with low and lower middle MPCE class categories were mainly from the states of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. This

implies that the districts in those states were economically backward. An earlier study had also shown that the districts in those states had lower levels of living and higher levels of poverty compared to the districts of other regions in India (Chaudhuri and Gupta, 2009).

The degree of inter-disparity in MPCE remained similar during 2004-09 in India. The correlation coefficient of the Hoover coefficient and Gini index in the states, as of 2009-10, was found to be very strong (0.92). This implies that there is consistency in their agreement of measuring the degree of inter-district disparity within the states. According to these two indices, the degree of inter-district disparity in MPCE was found to be high in the economically better-off states (such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka) and low in the economically poorer states (such as Bihar and Rajasthan). This pattern of inter-district disparity in economic well-being is also consistent with that found in some other studies (Suryanarayana, 2009; Dubey; 2009).

Some researchers emphasised that regional disparity in socio-economic development is the major reason for increased social disturbances, communal conflicts and militant activities in some states of India (Kurian, 2000; Neogi, 2010). Thus, there is a need for strong political commitments to improve the socio-economic situation of the economically backward districts. The reduction in poverty, improvement in education and creation of new employment opportunities may help in improving the socio-economic situation of the economically backward districts in India.

Appendix
List of new districts that were not present in the 61st round of NSS (2004-05) but present in the 66th round of NSS (2009-10).

Name of New Districts Added in NSS 66th Round	States	Parent District(s)	No. of Districts Newly Added
1. SAS Nagar Mohali	Punjab	1. Rupnagar & Patiala	1
1. Mewat	Haryana	1. Gurgaon	1
1. Arwal	Bihar	1. Jehanabad	1
1. Anjaw, 2. Kurungkumey, 3. Lower Dibang Valley	Arunachal Pradesh	1. Lohit 2. Lower Subansiri 3. Dibang valley	3
1. Kiphire 2. Longleng 3. Peren	Nagaland	1. Tuensang 2. Tuensang 3. Kohima	3

Das

Name of New Districts Added in NSS 66th Round	States	Parent District(s)	No. of Districts Newly Added
1. Chirang 2. Baksa 3. Kamrup metro 4. Udalgiri	Assam	1. Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Barpeta 2. Barpeta, Kamrup and Nalbari 3. Kamrup 4. Darang and Sonitpur	4
1. Purba Medinipur	West Bengal	1. Paschim Medinipur (Medinipur)	1
1. Latehar 2. Simdega 3. Jamtara 4. Saraikela Khareswan	Jharkhand	1. Palamu 2. Gumla 3. Dumka 4. Paschim Singbhum	4
1. Ashoknagar 2. Annupur 3. Burhanpur	Madhya Pradesh	1. Guna 2. Shadole 3. East Nimar	3
1. Krishnagiri	Tamil Nadu	1. Dharmapuri	1

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Women Entrepreneurs and Anti-Discrimination Laws: Policy Perspectives in a Regional Context

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The study attempts to identify linkages between entrepreneurship, gender inequality and legal perspectives in a targeted regional manner. The study area is the Jhansi district of the comparatively underdeveloped Bundelkhand region. The study follows qualitative research methodology based on primary data collected through in-depth personal interviews of four selected women entrepreneurs. The sampling method being followed is judgement and snowball sampling. The research design of the study is exploratory and analytical. Detailed transcripts of the conducted interviews were written. Major problem issues were identified. Their relationship with gender discrimination instances were explored. Subjective experiences were especially highlighted and were viewed in context of existing laws and their practical implications. Study found that the women entrepreneurial challenges reflect broader societal attitudes and cultural norms that contribute to gender inequality. Study directs policy for ensuring effective support to solve the highlighted issues in a targeted manner.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Interview Method, Gender Inequality, Policy recommendations.

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Entrepreneurship, Gender Inequality and Law – Understanding the Linkages

The spirit of entrepreneurship among nationals of a country leads and contributes significantly to the growth process of a country. In this drive, there cannot be gender biases among men and women. The Government of India has taken several initiatives to increase the participation of women entrepreneurs and, thus, making them a partner to the growth and development process of the country. It also relates to the fulfilment of various Sustainable Development Goals directly and indirectly linked with women. The development of an inclusive society with a focus on reduction of various inequalities across gender, class and regions is the need of the hour.

Women entrepreneurship not only contributes to economic growth and various development indicators but also in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Brush and Cooper, 2012; Duflo, 2012; Sajjad, Kaleem, Chani, and Ahmed, 2020; Barrios, Prowse, and Vargas, 2020; Medupin, 2020). Gender equality separately is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The recent report on Women, Business and Law 2023 published by World Bank shows that 90 million women of working age have gained equality in the last decade 2011-21. Women, Business and Law (WBL) Index score for India is 74.4 out of 100, which is better than the regional average score for South Asia i.e., 63.7. However, Global Gender Gap Report 2023 shows severe gender disparity in 'economic participation and opportunity' indicator with 142nd position out of 149 countries. One of the reasons behind this contradiction can be that the data used in WBL report was based on the Mumbai city which is one of the most developed cities in India. So, there is a need to extend the research in a regional perspective.

A great deal of literature deals with the gender discrimination at workplace in India (Gupta and Bhatt, 2014; Sengupta and Das, 2014; Saxena, Deepti, Kannan, and Gupta, 2009; Rammohan, Goli, and Reddy, 2017). In addition to that many of the research has already been conducted specifically to address the challenges of women entrepreneurs related to finance, family support, work-life balance, self-confidence, cultural norms, attitude of society, networking etc. (Field, Jayachandran, and Pande, 2010; Agrawal and Lenka, 2016; Korreck, 2019; Kumar and Singh, 2021). However, very limited literature covers the gender-based issues faced by women entrepreneurs at regional level and the effectiveness of legal powers of women to address the issues. The current study aims to fulfil the gap in this regard.

Objectives, Study Area and Research Methodology

Objectives of the Study to understand the issues related to gender discrimination faced by women entrepreneurs in a regional perspective of a relatively backward area; to underline the prevailing legal protections and their effectiveness for women entrepreneurship; and to suggest anti gender-discriminatory policy implications for boosting women entrepreneurship.

Study Area

The data has been collected from Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh, India. Jhansi is the representative district of the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. The area is considered backward with respect to major development indicators. Unemployment and migration are major concerns in the region. Recently the region has received significant policy interests for making entrepreneurship as the growth engine of the region. The Govt. of Uttar Pradesh has also envisaged its industrial development under the ambitious Bundelkhand Development Authority Project. Entrepreneurial activities are thus encouraged vigorously. It is thus important to analyse women entrepreneurial activity and the legal measures available in this regard.

Methodology

Primary data collected through detailed interview approach from four women entrepreneurs forms the base of the study. Judgement and snowball samplingtechniques has been followed for selecting the respondents. Time period of data collection is from September 2023 to December 2023. Interview approach is one of the methods of qualitative research and it is used to explore and describe a certain phenomenon by the interpretation of data non-statistically. In-depth information about entrepreneurial journey can be found through interview approach (McNamara, 1999).

Secondary data of registered women entrepreneurs was collected from the Udhyog Bhavan for identifying women entrepreneurs of the region. However, that sample was not the true representative of the population as explorative study indicated that majority of women entrepreneurs are not registered. Therefore, snowball sampling method was used to conduct the study. Total nine interviews were conducted following the snowball sampling method. Each interview was conducted in a face-to-face manner lasted for 40 to 60 minutes with the audio recordings. Out of the nine interviews only four were selected for the analysis purpose on the basis of

three criteria followed by Yen, Wood, and Bastian, (2022). Firstly, the woman must have an established business which has existed for more than 42 months (Classification of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) for an established business). Secondly, a woman must employ at least two full-time workers and third, the business must be fully owned and managed by herself. Four women entrepreneurs (Mrs. P, Mrs. Q, Mrs. R and Mrs. S) were fulfilling the above criteria.

Tools and Techniques

Detailed transcripts of the conducted interviews were written. They were then comparatively analysed w.r.t demographic attributes, experience, field of operation and employment distribution pattern. Major problem issues were identified. Their relationship with gender discrimination instances were explored. Subjective experiences were especially highlighted. Finally; these are viewed in context of existing laws and their practical implications. Relevant policy implications were then suggested in this regard.

Data Analysis: Description of the Interviews

Detailed interviews with four women entrepreneurs form the base of the study (see Table 1).

Table 1
Distribution of Women Entrepreneurs as per Selected Attributes

Women Entrepreneurs Studied	Age	Experience and their Field	Employment Distribution (Present)
WE1- Mrs. P	34	Eleven years of experience in the field of architect and designing (Partnership with Husband)	Nineteen male and one female
WE2- Mrs. Q	42	Thirteen years of experience in the field of beauty and body care field	Four females and Zero males
WE3- Mrs. R	35	Four years of experience in the medical field	Three males and Four females
WE4- MRS. S	31	Four and half year of experience in the furniture manufacturing field (Partnership with Husband)	Six males and Four Females

WE1- MRS. P

Mrs. P is an architect and interior designer in Jhansi city for 11 years. Initially she started alone her business, after her marriage her husband also joined her business and scaled it up and now, they are business partner. She quoted "I suffer greatly while collecting the payment after work from male

clients. They think she is a female, what can she do… So, they usually delay payments."

WE2- MRS. Q

Mrs. Q currently holds the franchise of Vandana Luthra Curls and Curves (VLCC) where certification courses are delivered related to beauty and body care. Previously she worked in saloon as the manger for seven years and now shifted to certification courses in the body care field. She underlined that some people come here and think that a woman is sitting alone so what she can do so they try to get personal. It is not possible to keep my husband's photo always with me or to wear 'sindoor', 'bindi' always just to show that I am married; so sometimes they take you for granted. She further narrated that as a customer if I am treating you well and I am talking to you in a good manner this does not mean that I am ready; it's just you are misinterpreting things because of the ugly mindset you have.

She recalled an incident that once a man came into her office, he was drunk and was continuously glaring at her receptionist. The receptionist became conscious and frightenedly came to her and told her that the man is strangely looking at her… She came outside and the whole office was smelling alcoholic. At that time, she was eight months pregnant. She called her male staff (two-three hair dressers) and they picked him up with shoulders and dropped outside. Mrs. Q then warned him not to come again ever. These types of things happen and somehow, we have to take stand on our own.

She further mentioned another incident when she was sitting in the gallery, and a man passed by deliberately touching her …"I have seen many a times gents have this desire to touch woman …Since then I cancelled their appointments in my office and I banned their entry here". Further she concluded that she does not want to deliver her services to those who do not know how to respect someone, they are free to go anywhere else…

WE3- MRS. R

Mrs. R is ENT Doctor and currently running her own clinic and pharmacy in the city. She faces difficulty in finding skilled labour and dominance from the male staff. She quoted "Most of the staff has been hired from the market are male, because women do not work much in some type of businesses and if women are hired then they do not continue for long-term because some gets married and some have their family and child responsibilities". Further she elaborated that, male staff can be hired for the long time and for the longer duration (from morning to evening or night)

because there are no safety issues, they will not need washroom or any other facility; they will just need a space to work. But the problem with the male staff is that they do not respect the female staff and we can not say much to them, we can not scold them otherwise they answer back and argues. She concluded that males are not obedient to women...overall, they do not like female bosses. This is the reason that she prefers female staff but they do not stay for long-term so it's the challenge.

Mrs. R emphasises that when more women will come to businesses, they will hire more women staff because only women can understand problems of other women. She gave few examples in this regard. She underlined that normally no one wants women employees with baby because they have to feed their baby frequently. She further said that as she also has a baby so she can understand their problem. She feels that if more women staff will be hired, then women business owner will be able to work better and environment will be women friendly.

She particularly emphasised that there should be some support system for women entrepreneurs' post marriage and post-delivery situations.

WE4- MRS. S

Mrs. S was keenly interested in business since her childhood. Before marriage she used to help her father in his business. After her marriage in Jhansi, she thought to join her husband's business of furniture. She quoted "I used to come and sit whole day just to understand the work and business nuances." Further, she opened her separate furniture store and expanded her husband's work. Society's male dominating attitude was the biggest challenge for her. She quoted "Whenever I use to sit alone in my store, everybody keeps on poking me... do not you have any male member in your family; can I meet him? Do you have a husband? Can I talk to him?" Before finalising anything or any item people use to ask the same questions to her.

She narrated that customers after visiting her store always wishes to settle terms of the contract with her husband. Her husband however is very supportive and believes in her independent identity. She narrated this situation is more prevalent in businesses like manufacturing and value addition. Women are only acceptable as entrepreneurs in beauty business. There is thus a great gender divide in the choice of enterprise area. The entrepreneurial space is highly gendered.

She recalled specific instances in this regard. Once, there was a customer, he was a police officer. He entered in her store with his friend and commented on the absence of her husband from the premises. 'Customer

normally do not like to do business with women in manufacturing domain' she laments.

Discussion on Issues and prevailing Legal Protections
Part A: Listing of Applicable Acts/Law

Based on the interviews conducted and issues were identified. An attempt was then made to link an existing legal act/provision to address the concern. The list in this regard has been presented as under:

1.   Women entrepreneurs face challenges in collecting the payment after work.

        Applicable Act - Negotiable Instrument Act 1881

2.   Women entrepreneurs and their female employees face issues related to maternity, child care and safety.

        Applicable Act - The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. It states about the eligibility of paid leave up to 26 weeks to female employees who are expecting their first or second child.

        Important Case Covered: Air India Vs Nargesh Meerza case wherein the verdict was not to terminate any women employee on the basis of pregnancy

3.   Women entrepreneurs greatly face sexual harassment at their workplace by the customers. (Stated by R)

4.   Society's male dominated attitude hinders women entrepreneurial performance. (As stated by Mrs. S)

        Applicable Act in situation 3 and 4 - Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redress) Act of 2013

        Important Case Covered: Vishakha Vs. State of Rajasthan (Vishakha Guidelines)- Supreme court elaborated guidelines against sexual harassment of women at workplace.

        Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act 2013

Part B: Other Legal Protections for Women

1.   The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex [Article 15(1)].

2.   The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women [Article 15(3)].

3.   No citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex [Article 16(2)].

4.   Trafficking in human beings and forced labour are prohibited [Article 23(1)].

5.   The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood [Article 39(a)].

6.   The state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women [Article 39(d)].

7.   The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength [Article 39(e)].

8.   The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief [Article 42].

9.   It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51-A(e)]

Relevant Conclusions and Policy Implications

The narratives of the four women entrepreneurs - Mrs. P, Mrs. Q, Mrs. R, and Mrs. S shed light on several critical issues, from difficulties in payment collection and harassment to the struggle for respect and recognition in male-dominated industries. These challenges reflect broader societal attitudes and cultural norms that contribute to gender inequality in the workplace and entrepreneurship.

These findings underscore the need for anti-gender discriminatory policies that are not just focused on legal protections but also on changing societal attitudes and norms. Policies should aim at creating an ecosystem that supports women entrepreneurs through targeted, effective policy proposals that address both the systemic barriers and the specific needs of women in business.

The following policy proposals are designed to create a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, focusing on legal, financial, educational, and cultural dimensions. These proposals aim to not only facilitate the entry of women into the entrepreneurial space but also to ensure their sustainable growth and success.

Establish a Women Entrepreneurs' Development Fund

•   Objective: To create a dedicated fund that offers financial support through grants and low-interest loans to women-led startups and businesses.

•   Implementation Strategy: Simplify the application process to make it more user-friendly, ensuring that the fund is easily accessible to

encourage a higher number of applications from women entrepreneurs.

Launch a National Women Entrepreneurship Programme
- Objective: To introduce a comprehensive programme encompassing skill development, mentorship, and networking opportunities specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. This programme will also provide specialised training in crucial areas such as digital literacy, financial management, and market access strategies.
- Implementation Strategy: Develop partnerships with industry leaders, academic institutions, and other relevant organisations to deliver a curriculum that meets the current market demands and empowers women with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Mandate Entrepreneurial Education in Schools and Colleges
- Objective: To integrate entrepreneurship education into the national curriculum, with a special emphasis on encouraging young girls to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career path. Additionally, to promote STEM education for girls to address the gender disparity in high-growth sectors.
- Implementation Strategy: Collaborate with educational authorities to revise curricula, incorporating entrepreneurship and STEM education, and initiate programmes and competitions that foster an entrepreneurial mindset from a young age.

Create a Regional Database of Women Entrepreneurs
- Objective: To compile a comprehensive database that gathers and analyses data on women entrepreneurs, including insights into their challenges, needs, and achievements.
- Implementation Strategy: Utilise this data to inform policy decisions and customise support services for women across various industries and regions, ensuring that initiatives are data-driven and targeted effectively.

Promote Women Entrepreneurship through Public Awareness Campaigns
- Objective: To initiate national campaigns aimed at challenging prevailing stereotypes and showcasing the accomplishments of women entrepreneurs.

- Implementation Strategy: Forge partnerships with media outlets to highlight success stories of women-led businesses, thereby changing public perceptions and encouraging more women to embark on entrepreneurial ventures.

Foster International Partnerships for Women Entrepreneurs
- Objective: To establish bilateral and multilateral partnerships that open up opportunities for international trade, market access, and cross-border collaborations for women entrepreneurs.
- Implementation Strategy: Engage in international forums focused on women's economic empowerment, sharing best practices and learning from global experiences to enhance the support framework for women entrepreneurs.

Implementing these policies will require a coordinated effort across government departments, the private sector, educational institutions, and international organisations. This collaborative approach will ensure that women entrepreneurs receive the support they need to thrive in a competitive global marketplace, ultimately contributing to economic growth and gender equality.

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Telugu Labour Migration to Gulf Countries: Trends and Dynamics of Labour Emigration from Andhra and Telangana since the 1970s

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Labour migration phenomenon from India began on a substantial scale with the colonial era as a 'Surplus Cheap Labour' to overseas colonies of the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The growing demand for Indian manpower abroad is a sequel to India's 'New Economic Diplomacy' hence export of skilled and unskilled manpower was the prime policy of India's economic diplomacy with Gulf Countries. Poverty and chronic unemployment conditions were the root causes of migration to Gulf countries. Droughts, cyclones, crop diversifications, and political instability in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana deeply pushed the lower strata of the society into severe debt and poverty. This inevitably forced the people to leave their origin in search of employment in the Gulf countries. With the use of secondary and primary sources of data, the paper presents the trajectory and dynamics of Telugu labour migration across the Indian Ocean to Gulf Countries which became a phenomenon after the 1970s. The field study is an attempt to highlight the difficulties faced by workers and presents steps that can be taken to reduce their suffering.

Keywords: Telugu Labour, Emigration, Gulf Countries, poverty, unemployment.

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Introduction

Emigrations from the Indian sub-continent began significantly during the colonial era and continue. International migration generally involves the movement and relocation of individuals from low-income countries to high-income countries, often involving what can be termed as 'Surplus Cheap Labour'. Indian labour in the Gulf region accounts for 6 million or 50 per cent of Indian emigrants; most of them heading to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, and employed chiefly in the oil, natural gas, construction, financial, and trading sectors (Irudayarajan, 2017). Large-scale immigration of the workforce has become one of the most dynamic economic growth factors for Middle Eastern countries, one of the largest markets for Asian job seekers (Kapiszewski, 2006). The growing demand for Indian manpower abroad, both skilled and unskilled, is a sequel to India's 'New Economic Diplomacy' since the 1970s which has created a visible and lasting impact, especially in the Gulf countries. The remittances sent home by this labour force have become crucial in preventing our balance of payments from slipping into the deep red (Jha, 1988).

Background of the Study

International labour migration can be divided into three phases. First, the early slave trade migration between various countries. Second, the British Empire's indentured labour migration for their plantations in colonies such as Mauritius, South Africa, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Fiji and to Southeast Asian colonies like the Strait Settlements, Ceylon, and Burma (Tinker, 1974). Third, the emigration of Indian labour to the Middle East, specifically to the oil-exporting countries adjoining the Persian Gulf, began in the 1970s and peaked after the 1980s. The three phases can be further divided into six distinct patterns of labour emigration that can be identified in South Asia. The first four - 1) slave, 2) indentured, 3) kangany/ maistry, and 4) free passage - were a colonial phenomenon, whereas the other two - 5) brain drain and 6) labour migration to West Asia - were the result of the incongruities of post-colonial socio-economic development. The last two patterns of emigration have also had a significant impact on the global economy (Jain and Oommen, 2016).

The different patterns of labour migration from India are shown in the table 1.

Table 1
Patterns of Overall Labour Migration from India

Time-Period	Category of Emigration	Destination for Indian Emigrants
Pre-Colonial	Slave Trade	Overseas Countries of the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean, etc.
Colonial	Indentured	African Colonies, Surinam, Fiji, etc.
	Kangany and Maistry	Strait Settlements, Ceylon, and Burma
Post-Colonial	Professional Employment	USA, Europe, Australia, and the Gulf
	Kafala and Agent	West Asia and South East Asia

Source: The author compiled this table

With the above-mentioned background, the present paper attempts to present the trajectory and dynamics of Telugu labour emigration across the Indian Ocean to Gulf countries by highlighting the macro and micro factors that led to emigration. By using primary data, the socio-economic conditions of migrant workers from Andhra and Telangana, such as the dearth of employment opportunities, poor economic conditions, and natural disasters, are also examined. The findings and possible measures that can be undertaken to put forth ways to improve opportunities at home and reduce the difficulties experienced by these workers in the Gulf countries have been presented.

Primary and secondary sources of data have been used to write this paper. Primary data has been collected from 364 respondents from cyclone-affected districts of Andhra Pradesh and drought-prone districts of Telangana using a random sample questionnaire that comprised several questions to understand the socio-economic profiles and living and working conditions of the returned migrants from GCC countries. Secondary sources were accessed from books, articles, Census data, NSSO data, Annual Reports of the Ministry of External and Overseas Affairs, New Delhi, and the State Labour Ministries of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Telugu Labour Migration to the Gulf: Trajectory, Trends and Dynamics

Following the passing of the State Reorganisation Act of 1956, Andhra Pradesh was formed by combining Telangana, the eastern part of the former Hyderabad Princely State, and the former Andhra State. This was the first state of post-independence India which was created based on the 'linguistic principle'. Thus, Andhra Pradesh became a state of Telugu-speaking people in South India. Research on the Satavahanas by R.G. Bhandarkar and other scholars reveals that Andhra was widely ruled by members of the Satavahana dynasty from Coromandel to the Arabian Sea and that they had commercial exchanges with the Roman Empire (Keiko,

2010). The Indian subcontinent's long historical and cultural links with the Persian Gulf date back to ancient times when the Mediterranean ports were used by the Indian merchant community as key channels in long-standing maritime trade. It continued into the pre-colonial and colonial era. The skilled Indian migrant labour force played a significant role in running the colonial administration in the GCC region as they were preferred by the British rulers in the Persian Gulf (Seccombe and Lawless, 1986). The historical link between the Gulf and the Telangana region can be traced back to the Nizams of Hyderabad. Arabs from the Hadhramaut region began migrating to Hyderabad in the late eighteenth century. These immigrants, besides joining the Nizam's army, pursued a variety of careers, including money-lending, and trade (Sherman, 2011). In 1880, the Nizam's army recruited 1200 Arab military men and bodyguards hailing from the Hadhramaut region of Yemen, the majority of whom belonged to the Chaush community. In Hyderabad, the Nizam gave free land to the Hadhramis for constructing barracks and the name of the place came to be known as Barkas, which led to the emergence of an Arabian neighbourhood in the city. A large number of Hadhramis gathered at Barkas between 5 and 9 in the morning, where they frequently discussed jobs in the Gulf and Hyderabad's political climate. After the Nizam's period ended in 1956, many Hadhramis and Hyderabadis lost their jobs and most of them migrated to the Gulf countries in search of work. The only way out of poverty and unemployment seemed to be to move to the Gulf, where life appeared to be more promising (Mukherjee, 2017).

In the post-colonial period, particularly after the 1970s, the major destination of South Indian labour emigrants had shifted from Southeast Asia to the Middle East. The sharp rise in oil prices in the 1970s led to a significant increase in the income of the Gulf and West Asian nations that produce and export oil. The Telugu labour from Andhra Pradesh decisively shifted their destination of migration from South East Asia to South West Asian countries. In the post-1990s neo-liberal period, the emigration of the workforce to Gulf countries from Andhra Pradesh increased phenomenally. "A large number of people from Andhra Pradesh are thronging to Emirates to work as labourers in the booming construction industry" noted a local newspaper in Dubai (Adapa, 2008).

The 1970s saw the Gulf countries opening up to a 'petro-dollar' economy that essentially needed cheap labour which they could easily procure from Asia. On account of the prevailing economic crisis at the time, India was able to supply readily available 'surplus cheap labour' who were

willing to work for low wages in precarious and hazardous working conditions. In Kerala, where the majority of emigrants travel to the Gulf, the government established the Overseas Manpower Corporation (OMC) in November 1978. New Delhi and Chennai also established similar organisations. Only competent and skilled personnel are sent by the OMC in response to the requests and demands of international businesses who directly contact the OMC with regard to their labour needs (D'Sami, 2000). To check the infiltration of illegal immigrants to the Gulf and avoid such an unpleasant situation in the future, in 1982, the estimates committee of Lok Sabha asked the government to set up an 'Overseas Manpower Export Corporation'. To save Indian nationals intending to go abroad for employment from exploitation by private recruiting agencies, the Government of India passed the Emigration Act of 1983 (Jha, 1988). This act empowered the state governments to regulate labour migration from India. It covered the licensing and regulation of recruitment agencies, emigration procedures, the role of different bodies, etc. The Emigration Act of 1983 provided scope to states like Andhra Pradesh to set out their strategies concerning labour migration (Government of India, 1983). The Emigration Act is governed by the Ministry of Labour through eight offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POEs), one of which is located in Hyderabad city. Under this Act, only registered recruiting agents who have received a Registration Certificate (RC) from the Protector General of Emigrants are permitted to perform the business of hiring for overseas work. After the enactment of this act, Hyderabad city emerged as one of the major hubs of recruitment of labour from the districts of Andhra Pradesh to Gulf countries. Many private recruitment agencies and travel agencies were established in the Lakdikapul area of Hyderabad city. The channels of labour migration to Gulf countries involved both the formal and informal methods in Andhra Pradesh. The formal methods involved recruitment through private recruiting agencies and government agencies, on behalf of the employer organisation who in turn charged a commission for recruitment. The private recruiting agencies hired registered agents to go to interior villages of Andhra Pradesh to recruit labour. The Government of Andhra Pradesh established the Overseas Manpower Company Andhra Pradesh Ltd (OMCAP) under the Department of Employment and Training in March 2006, to help the aspiring unemployed youth get overseas jobs and to avoid getting cheated and exploited by unscrupulous private agents. It also established a Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) within its premises. In 2014, Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated into the two states of Andhra Pradesh and

Telangana. Immediately after its forming into a new state, Telangana established the Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Ltd (TOMCOM) which is an initiative of the Government of Telangana to facilitate the travel and rehabilitation of international migrant workers.

Table 2
Workers Granted Emigration Clearance by Andhra Pradesh as
Compared to All-India Figures, 1993-2014

Year	Andhra Pradesh	India	Year	Andhra Pradesh	India
1993	35,578	438,338	2004	72,580	474,960
1994	34,508	425,385	2005	48,498	548,853
1995	30,284	415,334	2006	97,680	676,912
1996	29,995	414,214	2007	105,044	809,453
1997	38,278	416,424	2008	97,530	848,601
1998	30,599	355,164	2009	69,233	610,272
1999	18,983	199,552	2010	72,220	641,356
2000	29,999	243,182	2011	71,589	626,565
2001	37,331	278,664	2012	92,803	747,401
2002	38,417	367,663	2013	103,049	816,655
2003	65,971	466,456	2014	89,845	805,005

Source: Annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India

From the year 2007-17, the trend of migration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to the GCC countries initially experienced an increasing trend but in the later years, a gradual decline was observed due to the deprived working and living conditions of the labour force. In the year 2013, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana had the highest migration which added up to 1,03,418 and dipped to 34,378 in 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Number of Emigrants Going to GCC Countries from
Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
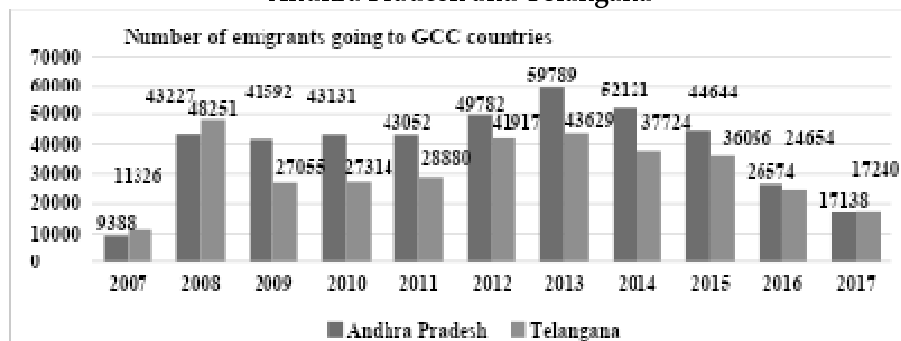
Source: Ministry of External Affairs

Gender Dimension

Several factors contribute to the migration from South Asian countries to the Gulf. These include poverty, lack of work, gender inequality, domestic violence, political instability, climate change, and environmental degradation. To understand migration, it is essential to examine it through the gender perspective as it is crucial for comprehending female migration. A common survival tactic used by many women, notably young women, to sustain themselves and their families, is migration (Mitra, 2015). Migrants find it more convenient to depend on old networks and information channels (even if they are international) than to explore or form new ones. Women workers, especially from Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, therefore find it easier to migrate to the Gulf, where networks are stronger (Potnuru, 2015). International migration is a common response to landlessness and chronic unemployment of the mostly underprivileged groups in the otherwise self-sustaining and agrarian-rich Godavari and adjoining districts of Andhra Pradesh. The e-Migrate portal of the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI, shows that East and West Godavari districts are listed among the top 25 districts in the country sending female (excluding nurses) emigrants to ECR countries continuously for a period of 10 years. This study therefore also includes a primary survey of women migrants to understand their reasons for migration, the process of financing and living conditions in the Gulf states.

Figure 2
Number of Females from East and West Godavari Districts who
Emigrated to ECR Notified GCC Countries, 2007 to 2017 (excluding Nurses)
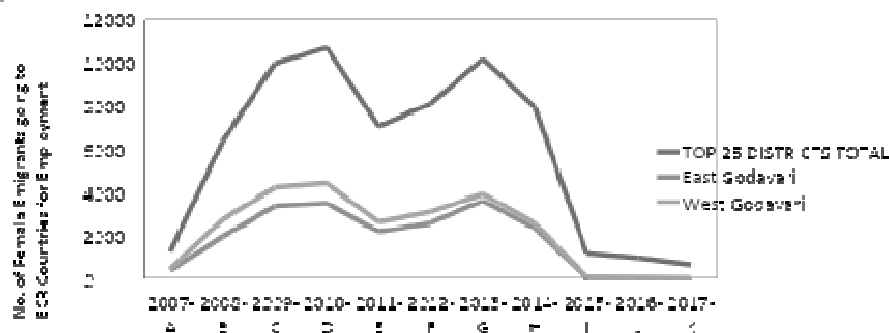
Source: www.emigrate.gov.in, Ministry of External Affairs, India

Macro Reasons to Migrate to Gulf Countries

Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was divided into three regions: Telangana, Rayalaseema, and Coastal Andhra. The following factors are seen as the reasons that prompted migration from Andhra Pradesh to Gulf countries:

Poverty and Unemployment

The percentage of causal labour in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh was the second-highest in the country. The poor people could ill afford to remain unemployed for long periods. A large number of them worked for low wages and under poor working conditions in agriculture and the informal sectors in Andhra Pradesh. The informal sector exposes the wage differentials and is said to act as the equilibrating mechanism in the neoclassical macro-model, determining the flow of labour within both domestic and global markets. People migrate from low-wage, labour-surplus regions to capital-rich, labour-scarce regions (Kamrava and Babar, 2012). A study conducted in 1972 on unemployment among rural labour households in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh found that they suffer from acute poverty and underemployment. The study measured poverty based on the following parameters: a) low wage rate; b) below the level of employment; c) large size family; and d) adverse worker-dependant ratio (Parthasarathy and Rao, 1973). Rising trends in chronic unemployment were seen in 1983, 1987-88, and 1989-90. Seasonal unemployment was a common phenomenon, with unemployment rates falling during good agricultural years, and rising in bad agricultural years. The rate of chronic unemployment in Andhra Pradesh in the 1970s was higher than the national level, but in the 1980s the situation was reversed. The highest rate of unemployment in Andhra Pradesh was among SCs and STs in both rural and urban areas. Another study on unemployment by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), Hyderabad, based on the comparative daily status of dry and irrigated zones, recorded a high rate of unemployment under both categories. As irrigated areas had a higher volume of cropping, they recorded higher wages and also recorded a larger number of migrants into these areas in peak seasons. Though the irrigated zones had a higher proportion of agricultural labour, the period of some of them remaining unemployed was quite high. Further, data showed that between 1983 and 1987-88, in both dry and irrigated zones, the rates of unemployment had risen. It was only for the non-poor in irrigated zones that rates of unemployment were found to be lower. Several factors led to this

decline in employment: poverty concentrated in dry regions; rapid decline in maintenance of plough cattle particularly in irrigated zones of Coastal Andhra; decline in the numbers of attached agricultural labour due to abolition of bonded labour in 1976; mechanisation of agriculture; and changes in the cropping pattern, from labour-intensive to value-added capital-intensive crops (Parthasarathy and Anand, 1995).

Around 91 per cent of the rural workers in Andhra Pradesh are illiterate or have been educated only up to the primary level. Overall, there is a problem of unemployment and underemployment of the masses including the educated (Dev and Mahajan, 2003). According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Andhra Pradesh, in 2014, the unemployment rate was 8.6 per cent in rural areas and 15.6 per cent in urban areas for the age group 15-29 years at the state level (based on the Usual Principal Status Approach).In Telangana, the unemployment rate in rural areas was 1.3 per cent and in urban areas, it was 6.9 per cent (Ministry of Labour and Employment, Telangana, 2014).

Droughts in Andhra Pradesh

All previous civilisations have primarily been based on agriculture and ecological sustainability. But in the modern world, rampant and unsustainable development has altered and adversely affected global agriculture and the environment. The present-day system differs from the old in the variety of tasks that agriculture, land, and other natural resources are required to carry out. These include providing for the profit needs of monopolistic businesses and financial speculators, as well as meeting global food needs, supplying raw materials, producing energy, freeing up labour, and many other related things. The other half of humanity is reduced to a reserve of unpaid or underpaid labour, comprising chiefly of women and children. In the 1960s the entire global system experienced a time of severe stress. It manifested in an agrarian crisis that saw a major exodus of the workforce to metropolitan areas, with a terminal debt catastrophe in the periphery. Agriculture's geographic coordinates have changed as a result of the effects of the recent phase of globalisation. Migration from rural areas to cities hasn't stopped, and the workforce that was driven away hasn't been replaced nor have they found employment in industrial jobs. A portion of this labour has sought safety in the growing service industries, but overall it has remained underemployed, unemployed, or insecurely employed. It has also continued to move frequently between cities and rural areas and, most dangerously, across international boundaries (Mayo et al., 2012).

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Historically, Andhra Pradesh's economy has been mostly driven by agriculture. Of the 23 districts in the state, the eight rain-shadow districts are the most severely hit by drought, with a yearly average rainfall that is below the state's normal - three in the Telangana region (Rangareddi, Nalgonda, and Mahbubnagar), four in the Rayalaseema region (Kurnool, Anantapur, Cuddapah, and Chittoor), and one in the Coastal Andhra region (Prakasam). Periods of chronic drought adversely impact livelihood and aggravate human suffering. The poorest and most severely drought-impacted districts demonstrated that, depending on a household's circumstances, responses could take a variety of forms - from changes in farming practices to relocation, to extreme cases of famine, loss of opportunity, and ill health. Among the eight drought-prone districts, Mahbubnagar in the Telangana region is the most vulnerable. According to a 2006 World Bank report on drought in Andhra Pradesh, Winrock International Research had found that forced and distressed migration of individuals or entire families to places outside their villages to look for work, such as construction labour, sending children to work as labourers, and working at lower wages to make some money had become inevitable due to droughts (World Bank, 2006). Another drought-prone district of Andhra Pradesh is Rayalaseema, which is also one of the backward regions that suffer from odd distribution of rainfall, low levels of groundwater, and deteriorated ecology, which are dangerous challenges for agriculture. In this region, the phenomenon of migration is a direct reaction to coping with natural disasters and rural poverty. Some poor people started migrating to Gulf countries like Kuwait, Qatar, and Dubai to work as domestic workers, skilled and unskilled labourers, etc (Pragathi and Anitha,2019). Similar issues were reported by a local newspaper Telangana Today, that due to ongoing droughts, a shortage of irrigable water, and the ensuing agricultural distress, people from the Telangana region were moving to the Gulf. People from the region were driven to look for work in Gulf countries due to poverty, unemployment, a lack of opportunity, and debt. There has been a significant influx of people from North Telangana, particularly from the districts of Karimnagar, Sircilla, Nizamabad, Adilabad, and Warangal, to Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Loss of employment during drought is the primary reason why people are being compelled to migrate to the Gulf countries. People from the inland drought-prone areas of North Telangana and Rayalaseema particularly resent the fact that their everyday condition of life is miserable and vulnerable due to droughts.

Cyclones in Andhra Pradesh

There is a direct link between cyclones and poverty because of the cumulative effect of the devastations caused by cyclones. Cyclones not only damage crops, it also take lives and destroy property. Andhra Pradesh has a long history of cyclones. One of the most devastating cyclones post-Independence was the cyclonic storm that struck the Krishna Delta in November 1977 which destroyed an area of two million acres and left 10,000 dead. In May 1979, a severe cyclone hit Nellore in the south of the State, leaving in its wake, 1000 dead and two million acres damaged. In October 1983 a cyclone devastated large areas of Godavari Delta damaging two million acres of crops and leaving 800 dead. In May 1990, a cyclone struck the Krishna Delta, leaving 900 dead and two million acres of crops damaged. The coastal regions of the Krishna and Godavari Deltas are among the richest areas of Andhra, as they produce half the rice in the state, but both are cyclone-prone (Winchester, 1992). A major cyclone called Hurricane 07B, which made its landfall in 1996 over the Godavari Delta of central Andhra Pradesh, caused untold devastation by taking lives and severely damaging housing and agricultural crops. This cyclone came at an inappropriate time when the paddy fields were ready for harvest. About 174,000 and 162,000 hectares of paddy were destroyed in East Godavari and West Godavari respectively due to submersion and flooding for four days in the southern part of the Delta. The storm tore apart the homes of numerous rural impoverished families living in substandard village houses with mud walls and thatched roofs, especially scheduled caste poor families, who do not have permanent houses and live in small huts. These cyclone-hit vulnerable communities from the Delta region were forced to migrate to various destinations for their livelihood as migrant labour (O'Hare, 2001).

Diversification of Crops and Emergence of Aquaculture

Diversification of subsistence crops into more profitable but higher-risk cash crops such as fruits, fish farming, cotton, sugarcane, and so on, requires more irrigation and better agricultural inputs. The increased costs are offset by reducing labour requirements, resulting in less work for those who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, particularly the landless labourers who are among the poorest in any agricultural society. Increased marginalisation of the poorest in the Andhra Pradesh coastal areas drove them from their native places to seek work elsewhere (Winchester, 1992).

Aquaculture, or fish farming, was one example of the diversification of crops, from a subsistence crop to cash crops, particularly in the district of

West Godavari of Andhra Pradesh. It was introduced in coastal Andhra in the early 1980s. It quickly gained momentum and attracted the attention of corporate companies who entered into this business by acquiring around 1,50,000 hectares of land and using it for aquatic purposes. This acquisition of land was done through the use of their high capital and political power. This swift conversion of lands for a different use hurt the lives of the marginalised communities who were primarily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Besides an increase in demand for land, this also led to a reduction in the number of working days on the farm, with a resultant increase in unemployment, leading to poverty. The Dalits depended on allied agricultural activities for other sources of income, but with this land conversion, their income further dipped. Intensive aquaculture also replaced the work of manual labour, forcing the Dalits to look elsewhere for work. This was another reason for the workers to migrate to the Gulf region to improve their economic condition (Kali, 2003).

Micro Reasons for Migration from Andhra to Gulf Countries

Frequent droughts in Telangana and Rayalaseema and regular cyclones in coastal Andhra are the major causes of chronic unemployment and poverty among the lower strata of society. Apart from these causes, our field survey revealed that acute poverty, reduction in household incomes, and severe debt issues were the reasons for migration to Gulf countries.

Table 3
Emigration Profile by Districts in Andhra Pradesh
Based on the NSS 64th Round 2007-08.

Andhra Districts	Per 1000 HH	Telangana Districts	Per 1000 HH
Cuddapah	81.8	Karimnagar	82.4
West Godavari	28.3	Hyderabad	64.8
Visakhapatnam	17.3	Nizamabad	47.9
East Godavari	12.7	Adilabad	29.9
Srikakulam	8.4	Rangareddy	13.5
Guntur	8.3	Medak	7.4
Chittoor	5.9	Warangal	4.1
Krishna	5.3	Khammam	2.0
Nellore	3.0	Mahabubnagar	1.3
Prakasam	1.5	Nalgonda	1.2
Kurnool	0.9		
Anantapur	0.7		
Vijayanagaram	0.0		

Source: Irudaya Rajan, S. (2014)

Table 4 shows the emigration from Andhra Pradesh to Gulf countries measured in terms of emigrants per 1000 households. The highest level of emigration from the Telangana districts was 82.4 per cent in Karimnagar, 64.8 per cent in Hyderabad, 47.9 per cent in Nizamabad, and 29.9 per cent in Adilabad. In the Andhra districts, the highest level of emigration was observed in Cuddapah (81.8 per cent) and West Godavari (28.3 per cent). At the same time, there was very little migration in Warangal (4.1 per cent), Khammam (2.0 per cent), Mahabubnagar (1.3 per cent), and Nalgonda (1.2 per cent) of Telangana district, and Nellore (3.0 per cent), Prakasam (1.5 per cent), Kurnool (0.9 per cent), and Anantapur (0.7 per cent) of Andhra districts. Vijayanagaram reported no emigrant households.

Socio-Economic Profile and Conditions of Telugu Labour Migrants to the GCC

The worst that the large transnational labour force in Gulf regions might be faced with are violent incidents of rape, murder, stabbings, confinement, deportation, physical abuse, extortions, confidence games, suicides, suspicious deaths, injuries at the workplace, and debilitating illness. Structural violence was prevalent in the system and the transnational labour force was controlled and kept in check in all Gulf States. Michelle Buckley conceptualised the 'bachelor' subjectivities as an array of gendered, ethno-nationals of low-wage South Asian workers who operate in the workplace as 'single', blue-collar migrants. These low-wage workers are not permitted to bring their spouses or children along with them, and even if they are allowed, their low salaries would not permit them to do so. The label of 'bachelor' is a popular term for both expatriate men and women in GCC who do not have their families with them. These low-wage 'single' workers live in overcrowded and poorly maintained labour camps and dormitory accommodations. The problem of non-payment of wages by employers and long working hours are the major issues faced by the workers in the Gulf. Also, during the process of migration, the workers experience instances of overcharging, fake documentation, non-fulfilment of promised jobs, emigrants being sent to another place for employment, and being forced to sign blank papers or documents in the Arabic language. In the destination country, these workers are prone to several other problems like promised salary not being paid, poor living and working conditions, threats to workers, and cases where even after the expiry of the contract the employer does not allow the worker to take up a new job. The workers take on several tasks or put in overtime hours in subpar conditions while living in congested

labour camps or so-called 'bachelor' homes in order to bring/send home more money. They are denied labour rights and social security benefits.

Table 4
Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Variables	Details	Percentage
State of Migration	Andhra Pradesh	54.4
	Telangana	45.6
Gender	Male	67.6
	Female	32.4
Age (in years)	15-19	10.44
	20-24	23.90
	25-29	22.53
	30-34	25.55
	35-39	13.74
	40-44	3.02
	45-49	0.82
Category	SC	47.8
	ST	17.3
	BC/OBC	32.2
	Other Caste	2.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017

It can be observed from Table 4 that out of the total number of respondents who migrated to the Gulf, 54.4 per cent hailed from Andhra Pradesh while 45.6 belonged to Telangana. A majority of the migrants were male, i.e. 67.6 per cent, while 32.4 per cent were females. More than one-fourth of the respondents (25.55 per cent) belonged to the age group between 30-34 years, followed by 23.9 per cent belonging to the younger age group 20-24 years, 22.53 per cent aged between 25-29 years, and 13.74 per cent aged between 35 and 39 years. The youngest age group (15-19 years) constituted 10.44 per cent of the sample size. This shows how the youth were shouldered with responsibilities at a tender age and also made them prone to exploitation at the workplace due to their naivety and immaturity. Only 3 per cent and 0.82 per cent of the respondents fell into the age category between 40 and 44 years and 45 and 49 years respectively. The category-wise classification shows that 47.8 per cent of the respondents belonged to the SC category, 17.3 belonged to the ST category, 32.2 per cent belonged to the BC community, and 2.7 per cent constituted the general category.

About 2.2 per cent of the respondents migrated to the Gulf with an aspiration for a better life, especially in economic terms and standard of living.

From Figure 3 it can be inferred that the respondents were directly or indirectly affected by the consequences of drought/cyclone, crop diversification and political conditions. Natural calamities led to excessive pressure on land and also on the families to remain self-sustainable. Due to these problems and unfavourable political conditions in their native state, they were inclined to migrate for a better life and economic alleviation. As the respondents had heard stories of people leading a comfortable life in Gulf countries, they were keen to explore the work and life there to abate their suffering.

Figure 3
Macro Reasons for Migration

Source: Field Survey, 2017
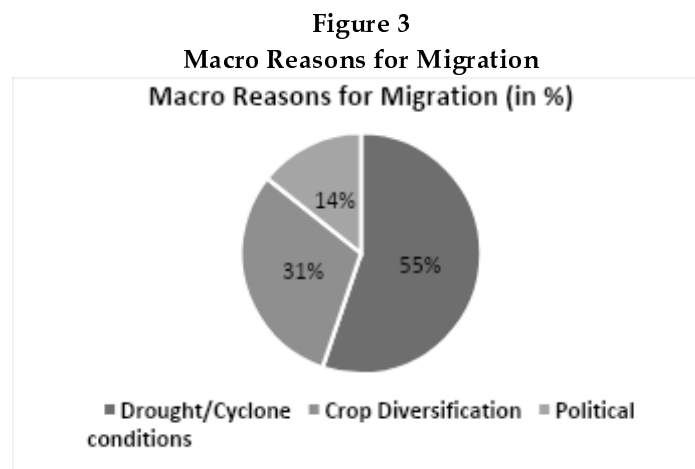
Figure 4
Micro Factors Prompting Migration
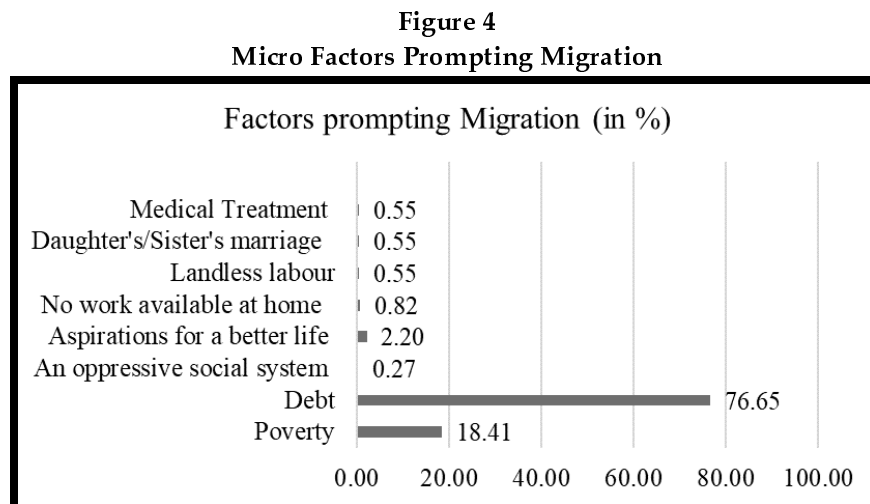
Source: Field Survey, 2017

As shown in Figure 4, the prime reason for the respondents migrating to the Gulf region was to pay off their loans and clear their debt burden (76.65 per cent). Poverty (18.41 per cent) was the next compelling reason which prompted the respondents to take up a job in the Gulf in order to improve their economic condition. Other reasons such as medical treatment (0.55 per cent) of members of the family, daughter/sister's marriage (0.55 per cent), landless labour (0.55 per cent), no work available at home (0.82 per cent), and oppressive social system (0.27 per cent) also prompted the respondents to migrate.

To migrate, individuals require the necessary finance. It was found that most of the migrants, i.e. 81.5 per cent, obtained loans from banks to finance their migration process, 22.8 per cent utilised their savings, 18.9 per cent approached money lenders, 7.4 per cent took help from friends and relatives and remaining depending on the employer, jewellery, or mortgaging of land (Table 5). Having a sponsor is a necessary requirement for a migrant to be able to find work in a particular location. As a result, the sponsor, who is typically a citizen of the host country, assumes responsibility for the sponsored migrant's employment in any Gulf nation and his/her return home at the conclusion of the employment period (AlShehabi, 2021). This system is known as the 'kafala sponsorship system'. Through these means, with the assistance of the sponsors, the respondents are able to avail of bank loans and other facilities.

Table 5
Financing the Migration Process

How did you finance the Migration Process?	
Bank Loan	297
Savings	83
Money Lender	69
Friends and Relatives	27
Employer	20
Mortgaging of Land	28
Jewelry/Household assets	10

Source: Field Survey, 2017

About 47.25 per cent of the Gulf migrants were located in labour camps, 5.49 per cent lived in a shared room with acquaintances, more than one-third of the respondents, i.e. 39.29 per cent, lived in the accommodation provided by the employer, 6.04 per cent were accommodated in the employer's residence, 1.1 per cent lived in a tent, and 0.82 per cent lived outdoors under a tree/in a forest (Table 6).

Table 6
Place of Location

Where were you located?	in %
Labour camp	47.25
A personal room with acquaintances	5.49
Accommodation provided by the employer	39.29
At Employer's residence	6.04
Tent	1.10
Under Tree/Forest	0.82

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7
Place of Residence

How does your residence look like?	Freq	%
A room with relevant basic amenities	288	79.12088
A highly congested room with no toilets	59	16.20879
A Luxurious Accommodation Facility	6	1.648352
An Outdoor Stay in a Tent	11	3.021978

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7 shows that out of 364 respondents who migrated to the Gulf, 79.12 per cent lived in a room that had basic amenities while 16.21 per cent of the respondents had to reside in a highly congested room with no toilet facility. A common washroom facility was accessible to them which was also used by 10 other people. Only 1.65 per cent were fortunate to get a relatively luxurious accommodation that offered comfort and congeniality. Around 3 per cent of the respondents lived in an outdoor set-up, in tents.

Table 8
Living Conditions of the Respondents

Explain the living conditions and environment	In %
Unhygienic	44.23
Hygienic	55.77

Source: Field Survey, 2017

As for the living conditions of the respondents, a majority of them said they lived in clean and hygienic conditions (55.77 per cent). The remaining 44.23 per cent of migrants complained of living in an unhygienic living atmosphere which impacted their health negatively (Table 8). They found the lack of cleanliness, insects, and overcrowded living as a major discomfort. Overcrowded living made it more difficult during the pandemic as social distancing was not possible and this risked the lives of the workers. The respondents mentioned that only well-paid migrant workers were able to afford expensive apartments, and that shared lodgings were to be found

only in unhygienic living areas and these were usually located in uninhibited buildings in the old quarters of the cities where eight to ten rooms would accommodate about 100 people (Thimothy and Sasikumar, 2012).

Table 9
Acquiring Skills in the Gulf

Did you acquire new skills during your stay in the Gulf?	In %
Yes	25.82
No	74.18

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Migration to the Gulf is one aspect and being able to stay on in the job is another. In order to survive, migrants need to acquire some skill training, though skills do not require any training. It was found that 74.18 per cent of the respondents did not have to learn a new skill, but 25.82 per cent had to undergo training to acquire a new skill (Table 9). Some of the skills learned by the respondents were cooking, steel fixing, pipe-fitting, packaging work, painting, glass-cutting work, carpentry work, driving, machine operation, photocopying, mechanic and electric work.

Female Data

Out of the 118 female respondents, and from Table 10, it can be inferred that more than half of the female respondents who migrated to the Gulf (50.9 per cent) were within the age bracket of 30-34 years, followed by 16.9 per cent between the ages 35-39 years, 11.9 per cent in the age group of 20-24 years. The age group of 15-19 years had only 6.8 per cent women, while the older age groups such as 40-44 and 45-49 had extremely low per centages.

Table 10
Percentage of Female Respondents as per Age Group

Age	In %
15-19	6.8
20-24	11.9
25-29	7.6
30-34	50.9
35-39	16.9
40-44	2.6
45-49	3.3

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The choice of international migration is a deliberate decision to improve one's economic and social well-being (Potnuru, 2015). The same was observed in our field survey where the respondents moved to the Gulf for lucrative job opportunities to pay off their debts (75.4 per cent) and also to help themselves get out of the clutches of poverty (20.3 per cent). Medical treatment (4.2 per cent) was the other reason that made them go abroad (Table 11).

Table 11
Factors Prompting Migration

Factors	In %
Poverty	20.3
Debt	75.4
Medical Treatment	4.2

Source: Field Survey, 2017

It can be observed that in the case of Gulf migration, the social network theory is evidently applicable and clearly visible. Over 60 per cent of the female migrants found room for themselves through their social networks. About 19.6 per cent of the respondents were accommodated at the residence of their employer, 14.4 per cent stayed in a small congested room with toilets, and 5.9 per cent were forced to stay in labour camps/tents (Table 12).

Table 12
Location at Destination State

Where were you located?	In %
A personal room with acquaintances	60.1
At the employer's residence	19.6
An outdoor stay (labour camp/tent)	5.9
A highly congested room with toilets	14.4

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The female respondents were forced to approach money lenders (54.2 per cent) to finance their migration process as the bank loan process needed the help of the male members of the family who were not willingly extending their support. Just over 11 per cent of female respondents were able to procure a bank loan with the help of their friends. Only 6.7 per cent used their savings or proceeds from the sale of their jewellery to finance their migration process. About 15.2 per cent of the respondents were happy to receive full support and cooperation from their friends while 12.7 per cent of

the respondents gave due credit to their former employers for extending financial support (Table 13).

Table 13
Source of Financing the Migration Process

How did you finance the migration process?	In %
Bank Loan	11.01
Savings/Sale of Jewellery	6.7
Money Lender	54.2
Friends and Relatives	15.2
Employer	12.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017

A little over half of the female respondents, i.e. 51 per cent of them, lived in unhygienic conditions. Lack of cleanliness, insects, and overcrowding were their major concerns. These poor living conditions impacted their health negatively. The limited number of toilets and their unhygienic conditions made them prone to urinary tract infections. When there is a compromised living situation, it often keeps the mind disturbed too. Thus, the degraded hygienic conditions also affected their mental well-being. Only 49 per cent of female respondents lived in clean and hygienic conditions (Table 14).

Table 14
Living Condition of the Female Respondent

Explain the living conditions and environment	In %
Unhygienic	51
Hygienic	49

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Summary and Suggestions

After India's Independence, the country opened up for manpower export to the Middle East in the year 1983 before the beginning of the neo-liberalisation era. The Indo-Gulf labour migration phenomenon can be conceptualised majorly as rural to urban, i.e. from agricultural rural regions of India to non-agricultural urban regions of Gulf countries. Poverty and chronic unemployment at home compelled the surplus labour to look for job opportunities and higher wages and this motivated them to go overseas for work. Our manpower companies are tying up with the GCC's private sponsored companies, but our bilateral agreements should insist on establishing manpower companies across the Gulf countries. Unfortunately, our country's migrant labour's sweat and the oil of Gulf countries are

helping the Gulf nations grow richer and making them a global economic power. The South Asian countries should go for a strong 'New Economic Diplomacy' through bilateral agreements for the benefit of the country's labour. India's External Affairs Ministry should create a separate social security measures programme for those migrating to Gulf countries. The welfare of our country's migrant labour and taking appropriate social security measures must be our main priority and not the remittances.

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India's Evolving Position in Indo-Pacific:
A Decade of Engagement in the Indo-Pacific
through the Prism of Quad

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In the ever-evolving landscape of international relations, India has gained its importance as a pivotal player, casting its strategic gaze across the Indo-Pacific and orchestrating a transformative decade of engagement within the Quad framework. In the last 10 years, India has strategically established itself as an essential contributor in the Indo-Pacific by actively engaging in the Quad with the US, Japan, and Australia. Balancing its traditional non-alignment policy with a pragmatic alliance with democracies, India focuses on shared concerns like maritime security, economic cooperation, and regional stability. This paper is going to highlight India's sophisticated foreign policy, reflecting its adept navigation of complex geopolitical dynamics. By aligning its interests with its Quad partners, India has significantly influenced the region's stability and development, underscoring its allegiance to an open, inclusive, and free Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: India, Quad, Indo-Pacific region, Geopolitics.

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Introduction

The postulation of the Indo-Pacific has gained significant prominence in contemporary world, highlighting the region's increasing strategic and economic importance from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean (Zhu, 2014). This area has become a hotspot for geopolitical contestation, among major powers like the United States, China, India, and Japan vying for influence and attempting to shape regional dynamics.

India's role in this evolving landscape is particularly noteworthy. The country has actively engaged in the Indo-Pacific by means of different multilateral initiatives, most notably the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) (Das, 2023). The Quad, which includes the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, has become a crucial platform for these nations to coordinate efforts in addressing regional challenges, ranging from maritime security to promoting a rules-based order (Medcalf, 2018).

Over the past decade, India's participation in the Quad has been a significant component of its broader strategy to assert its presence and sway in the Indo-Pacific. India has aimed to leverage its strategic location and growing economic and military capabilities to counter China's increasing assertiveness in the region (Bouchard and Crumplin, 2010). As the Indo-Pacific becomes a primary theater of strategic competition, India's engagement in the Quad has been instrumental in shaping the region's geopolitical dynamics (Das, 2023). A significant shift has occurred in the field of international relations as India has become a key factor in navigating the complex seas of the Indo-Pacific area. India is leading the way in this diplomatic transformation with its active participation in the Quad framework, which includes the US, Japan, Australia, and India. The goal of this study is to provide light on the complex course that India's foreign policy, particularly in the Quad, has taken during the last 10 years. India's approach to the Quad combines pragmatism and the country's long-standing policy of non-alignment, underscoring a strategic alliance with like-minded governments and a commitment to creating an open, inclusive, and free Indo-Pacific.

India's entry into the Quad marks a dramatic move from its long-standing non-aligned position against the backdrop of a rapidly changing global political scene. The move is indicative of India's foreign policy being refocused to address modern issues, with a particular emphasis on regional stability, economic cooperation, and maritime security. As a strategic alliance, the Quad offers a forum for discussing common issues and a plan of action for group efforts. The objective of this research study is to analyse the

factors that have shaped India's changing position in the Quad by exploring security needs, economic requirements, and broader geopolitical factors. By examining the alignment of interests and potential conflicts with its counterparts, it aims to disentangle the complexities of India's diplomatic maneuvers inside the Quad. The investigation goes beyond the complexities of diplomacy to include a range of influences on India's foreign policy, from historical legacies to current geopolitical forces.

In order to present a thorough picture of the consequential influence that India has had on the larger dimensions of the Indo-Pacific region, the article carefully navigates through the historical setting, the Quad framework, and India's diplomatic activities. By doing this, it hopes to advance knowledge of India's place in the Quad and how it affects geopolitics both locally and globally. As it navigates the always changing terrain of international relations, this research highlights the intricacy and subtlety of India's foreign policy.

Evolution of India's Foreign Policy: From Non-Alignment to Quad Participation

The notion of non-alignment, which was embraced as a strategic attitude during the Cold War, has long served as the foundation of India's foreign policy. The goal of this policy, which was started by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was to keep a safe distance from the two superpower blocs, the US and the USSR. Non-alignment, which has its roots in the principles of sovereignty, independence, and non-interference, has grown to be a crucial component of India's diplomatic character. The principles of non-alignment, which were established during the Cold War, have served as the historical basis for the dynamic evolution of India's foreign policy. Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, led the non-alignment movement, which sought to keep a healthy gap between the US and Soviet powerhouse blocs. Non-alignment, which upholds the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, came to characterise India's diplomatic strategy.

India's non-alignment strategy adjusted to changing circumstances while maintaining the fundamentals of independence and diplomatic autonomy as post-Cold War global dynamics changed. The country pursued a variety of foreign engagements, forming alliances without overtly aligning itself with any one group. Amidst shifting global paradigms, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, India faced new challenges. The assertiveness of China, coupled with concerns over maritime security and territorial claims,

prompted a reevaluation of India's historical foreign policy. Critical moments, such as China's expanding influence in the South China Sea, played a significant role in shaping India's strategic considerations. India's decision to join the Quad was a dramatic shift from its long-standing non-alignment policy. It represented a change in approach to new geopolitical concerns, indicating a more proactive and pragmatist approach to interaction with like-minded nations. The Quad offered a cooperative forum for resolving common issues in the Indo-Pacific region, in line with India's changing security requirements and economic objectives.

The Quad Evolution: From Inception to Quad 2.0

The Quad rose to popularity in two distinct stages. Quad 1.0 originated in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when the United States, Japan, Australia, and India formed the "Tsunami Core Group". This collaborative effort sought to organise emergency responses and give humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the terrible natural disaster (Mohan and Govella, 2022). The experience of working together during this crisis established the groundwork for the Quad's first creation and partnership, marking the start of its journey as a strategic dialogue among these countries. However, the Quad's nascent stage faced challenges, including concerns over China's perception and a perceived lack of cohesion among its members. Following its establishment, the Quad went on hiatus, with member nations taking a more cautious approach. During this time, priorities were rebalanced, with a greater emphasis on bilateral partnerships rather than the multilateral Quad framework. Concerns over potential destabilisation of the regional balance contributed to the reassessment.

The Quad experienced resurgence around 2017, marked by a shift in geopolitical dynamics and a shared recognition of the need for a collective response to emerging challenges. This revival saw a more assertive Quad, characterised by increased diplomatic engagements, joint military exercises, and a broadening scope beyond maritime security to include economic cooperation and regional stability. The Quad's first ministerial-level summit in Manila in 2017 marked a major turning point. The Quad countries' foreign ministers had discussions on common interests and worries, indicating a more structured and coordinated approach to regional cooperation. In this series 2019 was a significant year for the Quad as India, in a historic step, made it clear that it supported it during the '2+2' talks with the US. This move was a clear confirmation of India's commitment to the Quad framework and a break from earlier hesitations (Pant, 2021).

However, the pivotal moment for Quad 2.0 unfolded in 2020 with the Quad Leaders Summit, representing the first-ever summit at the leadership level. This historic occasion raised the Quad's profile and demonstrated leaders' shared commitment to addressing regional issues and promoting an open and free Indo-Pacific. Quad 2.0 showcased its adaptability and strategic depth by expanding its agenda beyond security concerns (Pant, 2021). This broadened approach encompassed economic cooperation, vaccine diplomacy, and critical technologies. The diversification reflected the Quad's nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of challenges in the Indo-Pacific, positioning the coalition as a dynamic force in addressing and navigating the evolving geopolitical landscape of the region.

Reinvented Quad symbolises a developing alliance that looks beyond early maritime security concerns to address a wide range of regional issues. The Quad states have renewed their commitment to promoting Indo-Pacific stability, economic growth, and democratic principles. As India, the United States, Japan, and Australia continue to play active roles in this expanding framework, the Quad's journey demonstrates its durability and agility in traversing complex geopolitical situations. Quad 2.0 demonstrates the coalition's strategic relevance in defining the Indo-Pacific's future.

Quad Dynamics: A Formation Tactical Coalition for Indo-Pacific Stability

The Quad, which includes the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, has grown as a dynamic and influential strategic alliance with a shared vision for the Indo-Pacific region (Zhu, 2014). This section delves into the multifaceted dimensions of the Quad framework, exploring its objectives, goals, and the collaborative efforts of its member nations. The Quad, short for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, signifies a convergence of democratic states committed to supporting an open, inclusive, and free Indo-Pacific. The Quad was formed in response to common concerns about regional security, economic cooperation, and stability. It acts as a forum for diplomatic debate and coordinated action. The Quad's major objectives address a wide range of key concerns. These include preserving maritime security, boosting economic integration, and contributing to overall Indo-Pacific stability. The Quad's collaborative character allows its members to pool resources and skills, resulting in a collective response to developing challenges.

Maintaining a secure and open maritime sector is a key pillar of the Quad's structure, which includes resolving issues such as freedom of navigation, territorial conflicts, and the protection of international

waterways. The Quad nations are actively involved in joint exercises and cooperation efforts to promote maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Some important military exercises are going to be mentioned here. These military exercises aim to deepen collaboration, establish confidence, and improve interoperability among Quad members in addressing common security issues in the Indo-Pacific area.

Military Exercise	Quad Members	Aim
Malabar Exercise	India, United States, Japan, Australia	Enhancing interoperability, maritime security, and mutual understanding in the Indo-Pacific.
Exercise Pitch Black	United States, Australia	Focused on air combat training, enhancing joint operational capabilities, and regional security.
Exercise Kakadu	India, United States, Australia	Maritime Exercise aimed at enhancing cooperation in maritime domain, including anti-submarine warfare and piracy.
Red Flag Exercise	United States, Australia	Joint aerial combat training to improve tactical skills, operational readiness, and inoperability.
Malabar Exercise Trilaterals	India, United States, Japan	Trilateral maritime exercises focused on enhancing naval capabilities, interoperability, and regional security.
Exercise Shinyuu Maitri	India, United States, Japan	Amphibious military drills aimed at enhancing interoperability and mutual understanding among participating nations.
Exercise Talisman Sabre	United States, Australia	Biennial joint military exercise focusing on crisis-action planning and contingency response

Note: This table is created by the authors.

Recognising the importance of economic development in ensuring regional stability, the Quad encourages economic cooperation and connectivity, that includes infrastructure development, trade linkages, and measures aimed at strengthening Indo-Pacific economies. The Quad's economic dimension demonstrates a comprehensive approach to meeting the region's different demands. Beyond specific security and economic objectives, the Quad seeks to contribute to the broader stability of the Indo-Pacific, this involves diplomatic engagement, conflict prevention, and addressing the root causes of instability. The Quad nations collaboratively navigate complex geopolitical dynamics to foster a region characterised by peace and cooperation.

Beyond specific security and economic objectives, the Quad strives to contribute to the Indo-Pacific region's overall stability. This includes diplomatic involvement, conflict resolution, and addressing the underlying causes of instability. The Quad states work together to handle challenging geopolitical circumstances and build an area of peace and cooperation. As a

member of the Quad, India provides a distinct geopolitical viewpoint, economic might, and dedication to democratic principles (Pant, 2022). India's membership broadens the Quad's diversity and boosts the coalition's ability to tackle a variety of difficulties. India's strategic alignment with its Quad counterparts demonstrates a shared commitment to defining the Indo-Pacific's future.

The Quad's architecture emphasises synergies among its members, harnessing each nation's capabilities to address common challenges. Regular talks, cooperative military exercises, and diplomatic engagements develop a collaborative atmosphere, laying a strong foundation for dealing with the Indo-Pacific's complicated geopolitical situation. Understanding the dynamics of the Quad framework is critical to understanding India's strategic decisions and diplomatic endeavours within this coalition. As this part progresses, it sheds light on coordinated efforts to promote Indo-Pacific peace, security, and prosperity, emphasising the Quad's role in shaping regional geopolitics.

Driving Forces behind India's Position

India's rising profile as part of Quad can be explained by the changes in geopolitical, economic, and strategic realms, which have influenced India's foreign policy over the recent years. A new set of geopolitical circumstances including increasing China's fear, and changes in the global environment has given India a great chance to surpass its regional competitor and strengthen its dominance in South Asia (Pardesi, 2021). The goal of India to become a world superpower has been in the offing and the Quad as a formation has provided that necessary stage (Wei, 2022). India's strategic orientation within the Quad is influenced by a number of significant driving variables, demonstrating its comprehensive understanding of regional dynamics. India's participation in the Quad is significantly driven by security imperatives, economic considerations, overarching geopolitical strategies, and impacts of global and regional events.

- India is compelled to participate actively in the alliance due to the changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, which is marked by non-traditional threats and maritime difficulties. Through the Quad, common security issues may be addressed, freedom of navigation is guaranteed, and regional stability is strengthened (Bose and Chaudhury, 2024).

- An important component in determining India's quad attitude is the economy. The Quad framework places a strong emphasis on supply chain diversification, technological cooperation, and economic resilience. India actively engages in programmes that support its economic interests and advance the development of the area because it understands the need of economic cooperation for maintaining regional stability (Chanda and Gopalan, 2009).

- Furthermore, the Quad's expanding agenda beyond traditional security issues, such as climate change, critical and emerging technologies, and infrastructure development, aligns with India's broader strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. As the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve, the Quad's role in shaping the regional order is poised to become increasingly central and influential, leveraging the collective strengths and shared interests of its member states (Das, 2023).

India's participation in the Quad is consistent with its overarching geopolitical objectives. The Quad provides a platform for India to forge partnerships with other democratic nations as it looks to increase its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The alliance plays a crucial role in supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific and helping India achieve strategic autonomy while defending democratic values (Muraviev et al., 2021).

The impact of regional and international events is likewise felt by India's quadrant approach. Geopolitical realignments and changes in the balance of power can affect India's strategic calculations inside the Quad. The country's flexibility and proactive approach in negotiating the challenging geopolitical landscape are highlighted by its capacity to adjust to changing conditions.

Conclusion

This work highlights India's diplomatic moves and strategic shift to encapsulate the country's developing posture. India's membership in the Quad, which includes the US, Japan, and Australia, demonstrates its dedication to promoting an open, inclusive, and free Indo-Pacific region (Muraviev et al., 2021). A pragmatic alignment towards like-minded democracies is combined with the nation's historical non-alignment policy to meet common concerns, such as maritime security, economic cooperation, and regional stability, in a comprehensive strategy.

The Indo-Pacific concept has gained traction as a means of responding to China's activities in the region, including its assertive claims

in the South China Sea and its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which has raised concerns among Western and regional powers about Beijing's growing influence (Manantan, 2019). However, the Indo-Pacific is not a monolithic construct, and different countries within the region have varying perspectives and priorities. For example, while the United States and its allies view the Indo-Pacific as a way to counter China, India maintains a more non-aligned stance, and Japan is more interested in rules-based order that restricts unilateral actions by any regional player, including the United States (Medcalf, 2014).

Charting a course through the intricate realm of international relations, India's role within the Quad epitomises a sophisticated foreign policy tailored to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics and nuances of India's engagement, scrutinising the alignment of interests and divergences with its Quad counterparts. An exploration of the driving forces behind India's evolving position encompasses a spectrum from security imperatives and economic necessities to overarching geopolitical factors. Against the backdrop of a dynamically shifting global political landscape, this work provides a comprehensive view of India's decade-long expedition within the Quad and its consequential influence on the Indo-Pacific region's broader contours.

The Indo-Pacific region's boundaries are being dynamically shaped by India's position within the Quad (Das, 2023). The Indo-Pacific region relies substantially on India's participation in the Quad. As a vital member of this strategic coalition, India actively promotes maritime security, economic resilience, and regional stability. The Quad's commitment to an open, inclusive, and free Indo-Pacific is consistent with India's vision for the region, demonstrating the coalition's collective significance (Quad Joint Leaders' Statement, 2022). This study offers insightful information about the country's diplomatic strategies, the factors that shape its strategic stance, and the resulting effects on regional dynamics. India's active involvement in the Quad assures a strong and collaborative approach to handling the diverse opportunities and challenges within the Indo-Pacific region as it continues to develop.

Looking ahead, potential future developments within the Quad framework could include deeper economic collaborations, enhanced security partnerships, and increased institutionalisation. India's shifting position in the Quad indicates a continuous commitment to handling the Indo-Pacific's complicated geopolitical situation. Regional and global events will

undoubtedly play a critical part in determining the Quad's destiny, necessitating agility and adaptability from its member countries.

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Bribe Trafficking in Haryana:
Causes and Possible Solutions

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Bride trafficking is a very old vice in society. It is considered a crime against humankind because it not only violates the rights of the victims but their self-respect and freedom are also put in danger. Bride trafficking is so much deep-rooted in society that it is challenging to figure out the number of women who are in this trap. Poverty, female infanticide, illiteracy, dowry, desire for a male child, and no division of land are some of the major factors responsible for bride trafficking. Against this background, the authors in this paper highlight the meaning of bride trafficking and examine its reasons and possible solutions to arrest this problem in our society. In order to understand this problem in totality, authors interacted with the purchased brides of the adopted villages of B P S Women's University, the first state women's university in North India. In addition to this, focused group discussions were also conducted with the Sarpanches and other main stakeholders of the villages to find out the possible solutions to curb this problem in our society.

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Introduction

Bride buying in India is performed through forced arranged marriage. It is a form of human trafficking and a social crisis where women are sold and purchased like animals in the patriarchal society. Brides are usually called 'paro' or 'molki' in common parlance. In the majority of the cases, parents sell their daughters to human traffickers who carry and sell them to well-off families. Bribes by and large belong to poor areas and they are as young as ten years old. Under bride trafficking, girls and women are purchased and sold in the name of marriage. The majority of the girls and women are lured by the mediator to give them a better life in the form of marriage and later they are subjugated to sexual, verbal abuse, hard labour and live a life according to men who purchased them without their consent. Poverty, illiteracy, traditions and religious practices, desire for cheap labour, etc. are some of the significant reasons, responsible for the enhancement of the number of trafficked brides in Haryana state. Bride trafficking is nothing but a type of mandatory slavery for women.

Bride trafficking is just one part of human trafficking and the statistics which are depicted are generally covered under human trafficking. According to Child Rights and You (CRY), a non-government organisation that works for the welfare and safety of children it is a matter of grave concern where cases of missing girls, and kidnappings have been increasing. Data published by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), highlights the number of missing/kidnapped/trafficked girls is a "deeper societal issue". According to the NCRB report, India published in 2022 a total of 2,250 cases of human trafficking were registered and 6,036 victims were identified, of which 2,878 were children, including 1,059 girls. This report further explains that 1,190 girls were rescued from trafficking in the same year.

With the increase in bride trafficking, there are high chance that women in large numbers are sold and purchased in the country. Gender-biased sex elimination is one of the major challenges which is growing in leaps and bounds and has become a matter of concern in India and Haryana in particular.

Prevalence of the Problem

Bribe buying is cutting across borders. Due to the low sex ratio, countries like China and South Korea have a scarcity of marriageable women, because of which girls are purchased and kidnapped from other countries. Research shows that Koreans are importing ethnic Koreans from northern China and reaching out to the Philippines for wives (Dasgupta and

Li 1999]. Other literature from China highlights the 'long distance' marriages where poor women are migrating to more prosperous areas through marriage (Fan and Huang 1998).

As far as India is concerned, purchasing brides is an ancient tradition in numerous regions of India. The practice of bride-purchasing is prevalent in Indian states like Haryana, Jharkhand, and Punjab. According to CNN-IBN, women in some regions of India are in a dismal state, they are purchased, sold, trafficked, raped, and forced into marriage without their permission. Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, and West Bengal are the major states where bribes are purchased. The cost of purchasing a bride, referred to as 'paros' in Jharkhand, ranges from 4,000 to 30,000 Indian rupees. Normally, the parents of the brides receive an average payment of 500 to 1,000 Indian rupees.

Inclination towards male child and female infanticide has resulted in the decline of the sex ratio resulting in an additional of unmarried men in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Western Uttar Pradesh. Purchasing women from deprived sections of society from diverse regions has been in practice in order to continue family heredity.

Situation of Bride Buying in Haryana

Haryana despite being one of the richest states of India and having the second highest per capita income in the country, is infamous for the worst girl-child ratio. There is no doubt that Haryana is an economically affluent state but socially it is recognised for a patriarchal society where women are considered weak. Haryana has had one of the lowest sex ratios in the country in the past as it had 833 girls for 1,000 boys at birth, which is why, it is a destination state for the purchased bribes in India and forced marriages take place with the women purchased from other states.

The literature revealed that the preference of sons in the families is one of the major reasons for the low status of women in India. Women are generally considered inferior and a burden on the family. While sons are regarded as valuable not only for taking care of old age but also for continuing the heredity, and inherited property. Despite many schemes and programmes implemented by both the Centre and State Governments for improvement in the status of women in terms of better education, employment, increase in labour force participation and many others, preference for a son has not declined yet. There are some customary ceremonies which can only be performed by a son and our traditional hymn and prayers also reinforce the idea of having a son.

Field realities in Haryana show that incidences of bribe-buying marriages are found almost in every caste. The majority of the marriages are between Haryanvi men and Assamese, Bihari and Kerela women. Some of the women have been living in the villages of Haryana for more than 20 years while some are married in the last five to 10 years. After interacting with the Sarpanch and other important stakeholders of the adopted villages, it was gathered from the field that the trend of across-region marriages is not limited to lower castes but is happening in all the caste and income levels in these north-western states. After going through the secondary data, it was found that the sale of girls is found more in the Haryana and Punjab states.

A Jind-based Selfie-With-Daughter Foundation conducted a survey in 2019 revealing that there are 130,000 molki brides in Haryana. Out of them, 1470 brides "looted and scooted from their in-laws' house with valuables and expensive items", points that there is a criminal gangs involved in this practice. Female feticide and acute poverty are the main reasons resulting into bride trafficking in the states like Haryana.

Objectives

To understand the concept of bride trafficking and its history in society. To understand the reasons for bride buying in Haryana. To provide possible suggestions to stop this practice in our society.

Methodology

Focused group discussions with the purchased bribes, Sarpanches and other important stakeholders of the two adopted villages of BPS Women's University were conducted in order to understand the reasons for bribe buying in Haryana and ways to arrest this problem. The paper has also used written-based secondary material. This contains a study of related legislations, initiatives of government and non-government organisations in order to understand the gravity of the problem. This paper is distributed in four sections. The first section delves into the concept and history of bribe buying in India. Reasons for bribe buying are mentioned in the second section and the third section focuses on the suggestions to arrest this problem followed by a conclusion.

Meaning and Origin of Bride Trafficking in India

Bride-buying marriage is considered as a contemporary form of slavery where the bride is purchased and sold for the sake of money. Their destiny is in the hands of those who purchase and sell them. The purchased

bribes are not only obtained as a wife but are also used as agricultural labourers, sex slaves and domestic workers. In most cases, they live pathetic lives where they not only face prejudice but are also compelled to tolerate all kinds of abuses. Their identity is lost and not treated with dignity as they are called derogatory words.

Bride buying refers to the cultural tradition of offering compensation in exchange for acquiring a bride. The payment might be directed to either the bride's father, her family, or an independent representative. It also refers in India to the practice of coerced arranged weddings facilitated by human trafficking. Within this context, brides are usually known as "paro" (meaning from the far side) or "molki" (referring to one who has a price). The parents of the brides sell them to human traffickers, who then transport and sell them to affluent states of North India. Women and their parents are lured by the mediator to get a better standard of living and higher wages in the richer places. Later, they are sold at the cost of their physical appearance, health, maturity, good looks and virginity. The prices vary from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 40,000 rupees.

Shafiq Ur Rahman, working towards uprooting bride trafficking in India's northern belt and is also the founder of the non-governmental organisation Empower People organisation, whose work was recognised by the international community through the conferring of the prestigious Grinnell Prize by the Grinnell College in 2019, argued that bride purchase has been an extensive tradition in the northern Indian regions. The price of these brides, who are frequently referred to as "Paros" or "Molki," varies according to their age, beauty, and whether or not they have been sold before. It can range from Rs. 4000 to Rs. 65,000. Buying these brides gives the guys the impression that they will have complete control over them and no accountability to anyone. In addition to satisfying their physical and sexual cravings, these ladies toil away as labourers in their fields. They lose the respect and dignity that is rightfully accorded to a wife.

According to Punjabi author Kirpal Kazak, the practice of selling brides derived in Jharkhand following the advent of the Rajputs. Research studies revealed that the practice of trafficking women as brides reduced with the Green Revolution in India. There has been an increase in literacy and an improvement in the male-female ratio since 1911. Earlier, this custom of bride-purchasing was confined to economically disadvantaged sections of the society and only one son used to enter into matrimony because of the financial limitation and to avoid the division of hereditary land assets. But

now, this practice of purchasing women for marriage is prevalent irrespective of caste and class.

Reasons for Bribe Buying

Poverty, land possession, joblessness, physical deformities, low sex ratio, alcoholism, the death of the first wife, the absence of a sister for exchange, and no parents are some of the major causes for bride buying in Haryana. Following are the reasons for bribe buying -

Poverty

Poverty is an important factor in promoting bribe trafficking and is also instrumental in growing illegal businesses all over the World. Poverty takes place both in demand and supply of trafficked brides. A large number of women are being sold by their parents or other people who have power over them, if poverty is on the supply side. On the other hand, if poverty is on the demand side, then there will be purchasers who are not married as per the marriage rituals and purchase bribes from outside resulting in the increase of trafficking among women. Some families are forcing their daughters to get married without their permission. Young girls and women are lured to provide a good quality of life by 'agents' who later sell them to families that need a spouse.

Purchasing and bringing women is not a simple task. Young women and girls are lured to give them a good life and are brought from various states of India by local people who are called Dallas (specialists). Under this process, women are purchased from distant places in India at a minimal cost ranging from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 2 Lakhs. Blanchet (2003) has asserted that young ladies and their families have no clue that they are sold for marriage. There are many instances where young ladies have been hijacked and later sold to men belonging to another state. There are situations where ladies are stolen, later sold and are not kept in touch with their families (Blanchet, 2003).

There is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra, which works in the trafficking area and found that around 192 women out of 318 lived in poverty before being sold for marriage in Haryana. It means that around 65.1 per cent of women belonging to poor areas are trafficked. This is a clear indication that poverty is one of the main reasons for Bride Trafficking.

Female Feticide and Declining Sex-Ratio

According to the 2001 Indian Census data, there has been a decline in the sex ratio (number of females per 1000 males) in the north Indian states. In low sex-ratio areas, men are not able to find appropriate partners for marriage. It is very disturbing and unfortunate that in some rural areas, girls are not allowed to be born and decide on the termination of female fetuses. This has resulted in an extremely unfair gender ratio in Haryana where bride trafficking is common. The disturbing sex ratio in Haryana indicates that female feticide is prevalent both in rural and urban areas where educated people are also involved in the terrible female foeticide crime. Due to the lower sex-ratio, people from Haryana purchase bribes from other states in the same way as they purchase animals and property. Female foeticide increases the number of trafficked brides. With the development of science and technology, prenatal diagnostic techniques are being used, resulting in an increase in cases of female foeticide. Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra, an NGO revealed that in the areas where a high number of ultrasound clinics are available, there are lower girl child sex-ratio. There is an agreement that technology is responsible for the removal of girl children before birth. The sex ratios in the neighbourhood of 800 for Haryana and Punjab mean that there are only four women available for every five men. Simply, this means that one of every five men will not have a local girl to marry. Female foeticide is widespread in northern India where society is controlled by men. Women or girls are always dominated and not given opportunities for their development.

Availability of Cheap labour

The availability of cheap labour is another important factor in promoting bride trafficking in Haryana. Haryana is emerging as an industrial centre and it ranks third among Indian States in terms of per capita. There is no doubt not only men but the majority of the female population in Haryana is still involved in agriculture work. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), released by the Labour Bureau in October 2023, there has been a significant increase in women's labour participation which was 23.3 per cent in 2017-18 and rose to 37.30 per cent in 2022-23. These statistics show that women play an important role in the agricultural field and there is a societal trend that women are more productive than men. Due to the demand for women in agriculture escalates the need to purchase brides from other states. As there is a declining sex ratio in Haryana, elderly women are not able to work in the fields, so people

find a good option to purchase bribes from outside and force them to work in the field. Research conducted in this area reveals that there has been an increase in the number of agencies and individuals who are involved in bribe trafficking, purchasing bribes to get labour at cheap prices. Purchased bribes are treated like forced or bonded labourers in the field.

Demand of Dowry

Dowry is one of the most important social evils in India, in which a huge amount of money is paid to the groom and his family by the bride's family at the time of the marriage. In some cases, the bride's father uses his whole life savings on his daughter's marriage. Due to the scarcity of girls, marriages are taking place between the families of West Bengal and in states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. Research studies revealed that in states where there is a good sex ratio, still families are ready to send their daughters for marriage to far-flung areas because they cannot afford to give huge dowry in marriage. Examples of dowry-related harassment and cruelty continue to remain on the high side which can be seen from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which states that every day 20 women die because of dowry-related harassment. These figures clearly show that dowry harassment, dowry demand and dowry death are the main reasons for female feticide in India. In addition to this, an increasing number of rape cases, sexual abuse of girls etc. are threats to parents and in fear to give birth to a girl child. Dowry's problem is so scary that in families where a girl child is born, her parents start saving money for her marriage. People associate daughters with financial burdens on the shoulders of their fathers and brothers. Field realities explain that purchasing of bribe is a better and more convenient option than spending money on a marriage ceremony and dowry. A purchased bribe called Paro and Molki can be brought in less than Rs. 1 lakh whereas a huge amount is spent on marriage ceremonies. These financial concerns also force families to buy trafficked brides in Haryana.

No Land Division

Land is the most important asset in marriage. The number of landless agricultural workers has gradually increased in India. There were 106.7 million landless agricultural labourers according to the 2001 Census, which was increased to 144.3 million in 2011. The majority of the landless workers, because of their poor economic condition, marry off their daughters in the far-flung areas in Haryana and do not care about the aftermath effect of marriage. Due to the stagnant size of the land, there are a number of claimants keeps on

increasing after each generation. Lack of work and educational opportunities has worsened the situation, resulting in non-acceptance of families having less land for marriage. The system of trafficked brides keeps the balance of land ownership for future generations. This practice keeps a single bride available for many brothers, resulting in the division of land in fewer children as compared to the situation where all brothers will marry different girls and deliver many children. This way, polyandry keeps the less children, resulting in no major division of property. There are few families in rural areas who are left with small land and they do not want to split it further, which escalates the demand for trafficked brides. No noble family will marry their daughters for polyandry marriage in Indian societies.

Unemployment

After conducting focused group discussions with sarpanches, old aged people and other important stakeholders of the village of the adopted villages of BPS Women's University, it was found that unemployment is the major reason for bribe trafficking. They opined that in the case of a family, where there is no employed boy, who will marry him? Because of unemployment, girls from Bihar, Bengal Odisha and deprived states are brought for marriage in Haryana. There is no demand of dowry and neither the employment nor the character of the boy is asked in such marriages where girls are purchased from other states.

Lack of Police support

In addition to this, there are factors associated with the corruption of police officers and other law enforcement officers for the promotion of bride trafficking to a large level. Research studies conducted in this field revealed that there is no support system available for the purchased bribe and sometimes they are harassed by police. There are cases where women have gone to the police station to complain about the trafficking and bad behaviour of their husbands and their families, but no action is taken and purchased bribes are sent back to their families saying that it is their personal and family matter. The indifferent attitude of the police had made the problem of bride trafficking more miserable. According to Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi, who works for the development of trafficked girls "Bride Trafficking is an unusual network where police rarely receive complaints about trafficked brides and if they receive complaints, they do not muster the courage to speak about individual rights violation that they face on daily basis." He further mentions that marital rape and Bride Trafficking are the same evils in our society which are growing and needs to be addressed.

Lenient Laws

Despite many laws to protect the victims of trafficking, there is no separate law specifically for bride trafficking which defines its meaning and elements. This data indicates that bribe trafficking is a money-making business and it has been widespread in India for many years and the situation is shocking. The Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) 1986 is the single unique law related to the human trafficking subject in India. However, the ITPA does not deal with bride trafficking in India. Section 366 of the Indian Penal Code is one of the most important sections which can be of some help in helping the bribe trafficking, which deals with the provisions of kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to compel her to marry. But, ironically, this provision is generally used to punish couples who have eloped for the purpose of marriage or living together.

Though there are many laws related to human trafficking, there is no law regarding bribe trafficking both at international and national levels. Due to the lack of strictness of any law related to bribe trafficking, people sell and buy bribes from other states without any fear because of which, victims of bride trafficking are not treated as sufferers and taken for granted.

Suggestions to Stop this Practice

Bride trafficking is a complex problem and there is no magic formula that will reduce the increasing number of bribe trafficking. It requires the contribution of different stakeholders like legislation, government, NGOs, civil society, and community-based organisations and Panchayats to solve this problem. Following are the major suggestions that can be implemented to reduce bride trafficking.

There is a need to protect the dignity and rights of the purchased bribes. The stigma of 'molki' attached to them needs to be erased. According to Dr. Santosh Dahiya, National President of Akhil Bhartiya Mahila Shakti Manch and Khap head of the State Women Wing, Haryana "We have been carrying out an aggressive campaign for the past few years to give women who are brought in or purchased from outside the same respect and dignity as any other local woman". NGOs can be roped in providing support and justice to the purchased bribes.

Panchayati Raj Institutions can play a vital role in creating awareness about bribes and human trafficking. Gram Sabha is the platform where awareness needs to be created about human trafficking and Sarpnach should ensure that if any bribe is purchased from outside, she should get the same status of bribe as received in other families.

There is an urgent need to create awareness against female foeticide, which is one of the main reasons for bribe trafficking in Haryana. Both central and state governments have been taking many steps such as the 'Beti-Bachao, Beti-Padao' initiative for preventing female foeticide, improving the child sex-ratio, and women's education and changing the mindset of the people towards female feticide.

Purchased bribes can be encouraged to become the part of Self-Help Group for their economic development. Financial support can be provided to purchase bribes for, those who are living separately from their husband to start their small micro-enterprise which will be helpful in making them self-sufficient. This will facilitate them in taking care of their children who face violence from their husbands and in-laws and have no option but to go back to their parents and report to the police because of their indifferent attitude towards purchased bribes.

During the fieldwork, it was observed that the majority of the purchased bribes were illiterate or less educated. It is in this context that there is a need to provide them with vocational training such as stitching, tailoring, arts and crafts etc. that will be instrumental in earning their living for themselves and their children.

Conclusion

Bride trafficking is one of the long-established deep history in India. With the latest technology and globalisation, this problem is coming in a big way and it is a matter of concern both at national and international level. It can be concluded that the declining sex ratio is the most important reason because which brides are purchased and brought from other states in Haryana. Purchased bribes are stigmatised and face problems related to different culture, language and eating habits. They are not given the status of bribe as given to their counterpart in the family. This problem can be arrested by tough laws and sensitising the people regarding stopping female feticide, accountable for the prevalence of bribe trafficking.

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President's Ordinance Making Power and Parliamentary Democracy in India: A Study of Executive Overreach Since 2014

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Indian Parliament is known as the epicentre of constitutional democratic order in the country. The Indian Parliament has been criticised because of the conflict between the legislature and executive raising questions on the very notion of checks and balances in the Indian Constitution. In India, the legislature, executive and judiciary are interconnected which sometimes leads to overreach by one organ over the powers of other organs. Since the foundation of parliamentary democracy in India, there have been various cases of executive overreach in the functions of the legislature. 'The President's ordinance-making power' is a powerful tool in the hand of the executive that was assigned to deal with circumstances that require immediate action when the legislature is not in a situation to take action. Over time, it has been seen that the power is used by the executive to bypass the legislative procedures and processes. This research paper analyses the abuse of ordinance-making power by various governments with its main focus on the issue of executive overreach since 2014. The BJP-led government, from time to time, is blamed for heavily misusing the ordinance-making power and for neglecting legislative processes. The paper also analyses the multi-dimensional impact of the misuse of the ordinance-making power on the democratic structure in India. This research paper is a

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blend of both descriptive and analytical research with a hybrid design of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The paper is based mainly on secondary sources, including government reports, legislation, judicial proceedings, journal articles, books, etc.

Introduction

After nearly 200 years of British rule, India entered the democratic world as a sovereign nation in 1947. The founding fathers of the nation chose a revolutionary path by adopting the parliamentary form of democracy making India the 'world's largest democratic country ". It was a general assumption at that time that democratic institutions could not survive in a country like India where there was economic underdevelopment, cultural and religious diversity, yet India performed extremely well in maintaining its democratic institutions (Bajpai, 2015). The Indian Constitution laid the foundation for the functioning of democratic institutions in India. The Constitution contains a detailed description of the distribution of power to avoid confusion and conflict between different organs of government. As P. Sakthivel (2008) notes, "The constitution established a structural power relationship based on the system of distribution of powers between the Union and the States and of separation of powers between the three organs of the state."

The executive and legislature in parliamentary government, work in close proximity where the executive is answerable to the legislature and stays in power till it enjoys confidence in the legislature (Ghosh et al., 2022). Though the Constitution provides a detailed description of the distribution of power between the three organs that is legislature, executive, and judiciary, still it does not promote strict separation like the American Constitution. Highlighting the distinctive feature of separation of power in parliamentary government, K.T Shah (1948) notes, "The Parliamentary government has a sort of link between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. The Presidential tries to keep no such link and has complete separation of powers between the three principal organs of the State, each embodying the sovereignty of the people in the different aspects of a State's activities."

Commenting on the provision of separation of power in the Indian Constitution, Justice Y.V. Chandrachud in the landmark case 'Indira Nehru Gandhi vs Raj Narian' stated - "That in the Indian Constitution, there is separation of powers in a broad sense only. A rigid separation of powers as under the American Constitution or the Australian Constitution does not apply to India."

The reason for not opting for a strict separation of power was to provide ample scope for the three organs to cooperate and work together. On the contrary, since the adoption of the constitution, the relationship between these organs is plagued by frequent conflicts most of which are related to infringement of one organ's power by other organs. Though the issue of the overreach of power is not limited to any one organ, the focus of this paper is on the executive overreach of legislative power during the Bhartiya Janta Party's government since 2014. The paper is divided into four sections, first section focuses on the constitutional provisions related to separation of power in India. The second section presents a historical background of the executive overreach of legislative power in India. The third section presents an analysis of executive infringement of legislative power under the BJP-led NDA government. The fourth section focuses on explaining how the overreach has impacted the efficiency of parliament in India.

Contextualising Separation of Powers in the Indian Constitution

The philosophical origin of the concept of 'Separation of Powers' can be traced back to Aristotle where he gave the idea of constitutional government. He divided the functions of government into three different categories - deliberative, official, and judicial. Though the notion of separation of power evolved over time, the concept in a fully developed form was found in 'Spirit of Laws' written by Montesquieu in 1899 (Glassman, 2016). Highlighting the need for separation of powers, Montesquieu (1899) states -

"When the legislative and executive power are united in the same person, or the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty, because apprehensions may arise, lest the monarch or Senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner. Again, there is no liberty, if the judiciary power is not separated from the legislative and executive. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control, for the judge would then be the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression."

The concept of separation of powers given by Montesquieu was general in nature and most of the democratic countries the concept was implemented based on the unique features of their political system. The American constitution for instance establishes a strict separation of power between the Congress, President and the Judiciary. The American Constitution provides means of checks and balances to every organ so that they can prevent encroachment over their distinct powers (Strauss, 2019).

The British Constitution does not talk about separation of power and more emphasis is on accountability principle rather than separation. The Prime Minister and the council of ministers are responsible to the legislature and the citizens. In 2005, through the Constitutional Reform Act, the Supreme Court was established as the highest court of appeal to ensure some functional separation (Nazir et al., 2017). In the Indian constitution, there is no mention of strict separation of power between the three organs of government like the American constitution but still, there are many articles that lay the ground for separation of power in India. These articles are Article 50- This article falls under the 'Directive principles of state policy' and it entails that the state should ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive. Article 53 and 154- As per these articles, the executive power of the union and state is vested in the President and the governor respectively. Article 361- These articles prevent the President and Governor from court proceedings for the exercise of their powers and functions. Article 121 and 211- They prohibit the central and state legislatures from discussing the conduct of the judges of the Supreme Court and High Court in the legislature except in cases of impeachment.

Though these articles talk about separation of power, the Constitution abstains itself from applying it in strict terms. With the evolution of the Indian political system and several judicial pronouncements, separation of power became an essential part of the political system in India. Highlighting the significance of separation of powers, the Supreme Court in 'I.C. Golaknath vs. the State of Punjab' (1967) stated -

"The Constitution brings into existence different constitutional entities, namely, the Union, the States and the Union Territories. It creates three major instruments of power, namely, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. It demarcates their jurisdiction minutely and expects them to exercise their respective powers without overstepping their limits. They should function within the spheres allotted to them."

The rationale behind not opting for strict separation was to provide space for cooperation between the executive, legislature and judiciary. But with developments in the political system, it became a bone of contention among the three organs and the instances of functional overlapping and overreach came into the limelight.

President's Ordinance-Making Power: A Case of Executive Overreach

Article 123 of the Indian Constitution grants ordinance-making power to the President which entails that the President can legislate on subjects on

which the legislature can make laws. The power was assigned to the President to deal with extraordinary circumstances and issues which require immediate action. The power can be used by the President when both houses of the legislature or either house is not in session. As per the Constitution, a bill can become law when it is ratified by both houses that is Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The Governors of states are also assigned the ordinance-making power through Article 213. The predecessor to the President's ordinance-making power was Sections 42 and 43 of the Government of India Act, 1935 which empowered the Governor-General to legislate when the central legislature is not in session or at any time on specific subjects (Garg, 2022). The provisions were not adopted as it is in the Constitution but with certain changes like the President cannot pass an ordinance anytime, there are specific conditions in which ordinance power can be used. The President's ordinance-making power got mixed reviews in the constituent assembly where some of the members were skeptical about the misuse of the power by the executive. Explaining the need to assign the President ordinance-making power, Dr. B R Ambedkar stated that the power to promulgate ordinances is necessary to deal with an unforeseen emergency that requires immediate action. Considering a hypothetical situation that demands quick action, in that situation the legislature cannot be summoned immediately which makes this ordinance power a necessary one (Singh, 2017).

Over the years, the President's ordinance-making power has been reformed by various judicial pronouncements. In 'R.C. Cooper vs. Union of India (1970)', the court scrutinised the constitutional validity of the 'Banking Companies (Acquisition of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1969' and proclaimed that the President's decision to issue an ordinance can be challenged in court on the ground that 'immediate action' was not required and the power is used to bypass the legislative process. In 'A.K. Roy vs. Union of India (1982)', the court examined the constitutional validity of the 'National Security Ordinance, 1980'. The court proclaimed that the President's ordinance-making power is not immune from the purview of judicial review. The 'D.C. Wadhwa vs. State of Bihar (1987)', was quite significant regarding ordinances because in this case, the issue of re-promulgation of ordinances came in front of the court which finds no mention in the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court believed that using ordinance should not be made a usual practice otherwise the court would have to strike down the re-promulgated ordinances. Regarding the issues of misuse of the ordinance-making power, Justice P.N. Bhagwati in the Wadhwa case (1987) stated - "The power to make an ordinance is to meet an extraordinary situation and

it should not be made to meet the political ends of an individual. Though it is contrary to the democratic norm for an executive to make a law but this power is given to the President to meet emergencies so it should be limited at some point in time."

Though there is a provision of judicial check over the use of ordinance-making power by the President, still instances of misuse of the power by the executive have been frequent and constant. This has raised questions on the constitutional provisions related to separations of power and how the loopholes in the provision led to misuse of the power by the executive to intervene in the legislature's domain.

Executive Overreach from 1952 to 2014

President's ordinance-making power is one of the major tools in the hands of the executive to intervene in the legislature's function. As per 'Article 123 of the Indian Constitution', the President has some legislative powers but they cannot be exercised without the advice of the cabinet. If not used properly, the power can be used by the cabinet to bypass legislative processes and procedures. According to Sharma (2020), some of the issues related to promulgation of ordinances are- 1. The ordinance is issued just after the session is adjourned, 2. The ordinance is issued just before the parliamentary session starts, 3. If the ordinance is not laid in the parliament and allowed to lapse without any discussion and 4. Re-promulgation of ordinances as the Constitution does not contain any provision regarding re-promulgating ordinances. There is no symmetry in the number of ordinances issued since the formation of the first Lok Sabha in 1952.
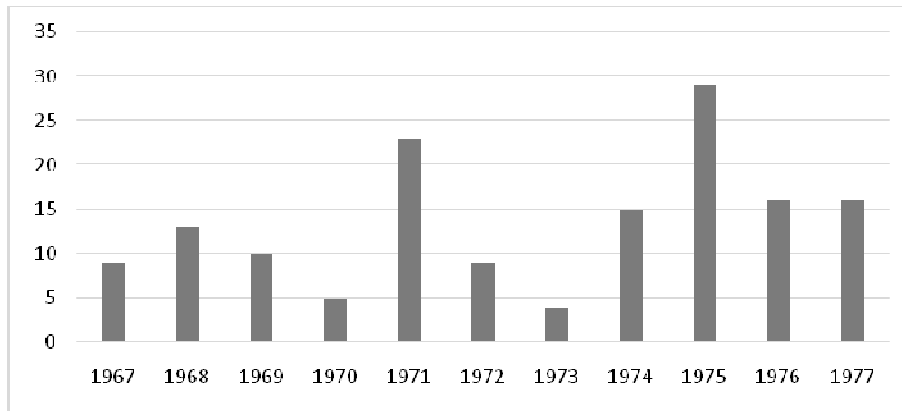
Figure 1
Number of ordinances issued from 1952 to 1966
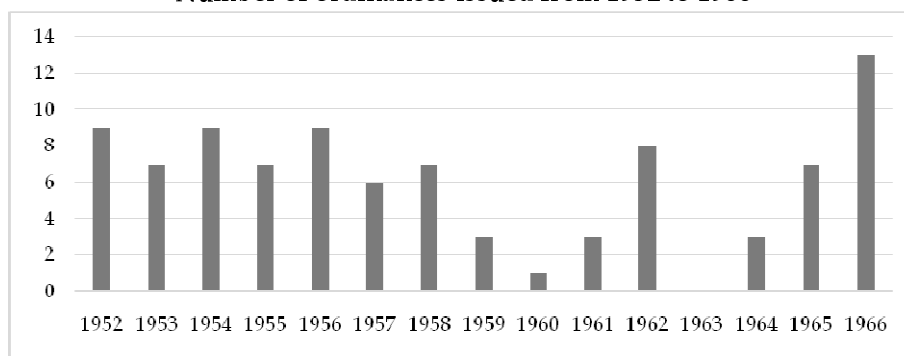
Source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Annual Report, 2022-23

From 1952 to 1966, the Indian political landscape was largely dominated by the Indian National Congress because it enjoyed widespread popularity and support among people leading to its one-sided domination in the Parliament still the instances of use of ordinances were very high. As shown in Figure 1 over a period of 15 years, 92 ordinances were issued with an average of almost seven ordinances per year. The Nehru cabinet set the tone for successive governments to misuse the ordinance-making power (Dam, 2014).
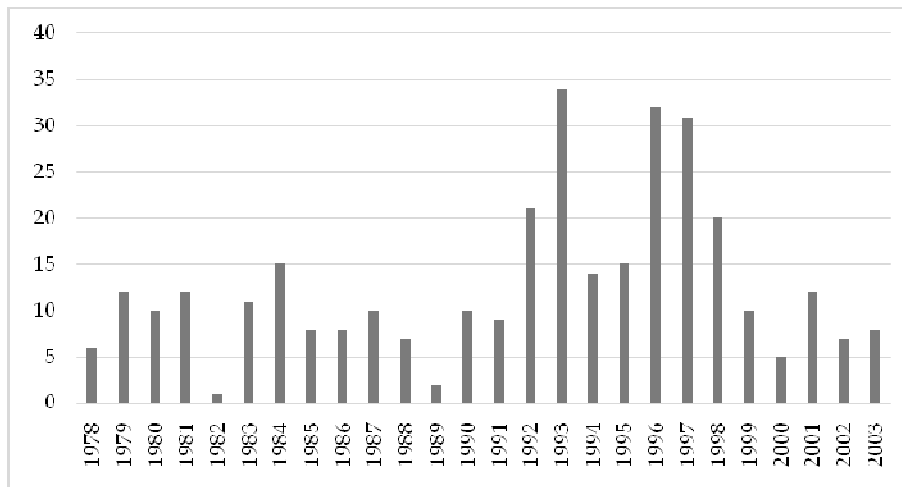
Figure 2
Number of ordinances issued from 1967 to 1977

Source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Annual Report 2022-23

As shown in Figure 2 during the tenure of Indira Gandhi from 1967 to 1977, the number of ordinances passed was 149 with an average of 15 ordinances per year. Some of the debated ordinances also came during this period for example the 'Banking Companies (Acquisitions and Transfers of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1969' which was promulgated just a day before the commencement of the session of parliament, the ordinance also led to the resignation of the then Finance Minister Morarji Desai because he showed dissent toward the ordinance (Sharma, 2020). Even after Indira Gandhi formed a majority government after the 1971 elections, the dependence on ordinances was very high. Bypassing the legislative procedure was a common problem from 1971 to 1977 and that's why the period is labelled as highly autocratic in practice.

Figure 3
Number of ordinances issued from 1978 to 2003

The period from 1978 to 2003 also saw a very high number of ordinances being promulgated. As many as 176 ordinances were promulgated in a span of eight years (1991-1998) averaging 22 ordinances every year. During this period, several significant changes took place in the Indian political system out of which the onset of the coalition era was most significant. Most of the governments did not have the required majority in the parliament, so to escape the legislative process they went for ordinances, which was the main reason for the rise in the number of ordinances during this period (Kopparam, 2023).

Figure 4
Number of ordinances issued from 2004 to 2013
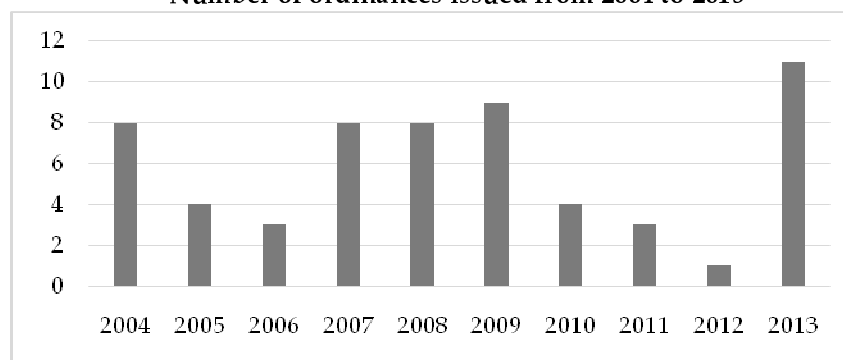
The period from 2004 to 2013 as shown in Figure 4, witnessed a significant decline in the number of ordinances promulgated yearly. During the span of nine years, 59 ordinances were promulgated averaging approximately seven ordinances every year. This period witnessed a stable coalition government led by the Indian National Congress which can be one of the reasons for less dependence on ordinances.

BJP-led NDA Government and the Issue of Executive Overreach since 2014

The 2014 general election in India significantly changed India's political dynamics. After a long period of coalition government, a single party won a full majority in the Lok Sabha (Schakel et al., 2019). Though the BJP made a coalition government, it still had a majority even without its coalition partner. There is a general tendency for the number of ordinances promulgated in a majority government to be less than in a coalition government except for the period when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. However, the data shows that the number of ordinances promulgated since 2014 is no less than the earlier period.
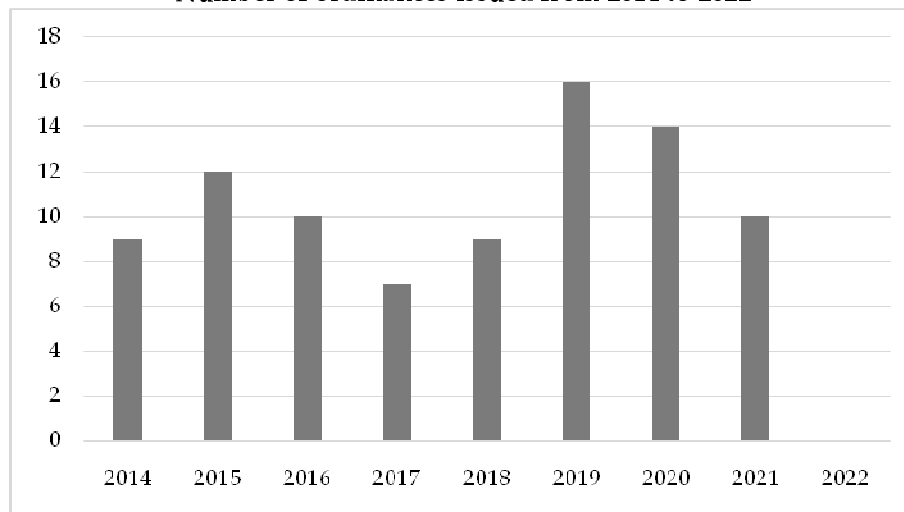
Figure 5
Number of ordinances issued from 2014 to 2022

Source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Annual Report 2022-23

As per Figure 5, the number of ordinances promulgated from 2014 to 2022 is 87, averaging nearly 10 ordinances yearly. Comparing it with the average of past years, the number of ordinances passed yearly since 2014 shows no shocking difference. Though the number of ordinances passed

since 2014 does not show much difference, it does not mean that the power has not been misused by the executive.

Since 2014, the issue of re-promulgation of ordinances has come up many times. In 2014, the President issued an ordinance 'Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Ordinance' which was re-promulgated twice in April and May 2015. Highlighting the issue of re-promulgation of ordinances, a seven-judge bench in 'Krishna Kumar Singh vs. the State of Bihar' proclaimed that 're-promulgation of ordinances is a fraud to the constitution'. Even after the judgment, the re-promulgation of ordinances has been a constant phenomenon in the Indian political system. In 2018, the President promulgated the 'Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance' which was re-promulgated in 2019. Again in 2020, 'the Commission for Air Quality Management Ordinance' was issued by the President which was re-promulgated in 2021 before becoming an act. Though the re-promulgation of ordinances is not mentioned in the constitution, it has still been done frequently by the executive.

Apart from the re-promulgation of ordinances, some of the ordinances passed during this period have been criticised for advancing political ends. Referring to the 'Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014' Yadav (2018) states - "Within a fortnight of taking charge in May 2014, the cabinet recommended an ordinance to amend the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act to facilitate the appointment of ex-TRAI chief Nripendra Mishra as principal secretary to the Prime Minister (an ordinance that was purely meant to address the whims of the premier and was of no consequence for the citizens at large).'

The President in 2018 promulgated the 'Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance', as per the ordinance 'the court could grant death penalty for raping children under 12 years of age'. The ordinance was highly criticised in India and it was argued that the ordinance was passed to reduce the backlash faced by the BJP government following the Kathua and Unnao rape cases (Yadav, 2018). Again, the issue of using ordinances for some political gain came when the President promulgated the 'Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance' in 2018. When it was introduced in the Parliament as a bill, it got stuck in Rajya Sabha, so the ordinance was re-promulgated again in 2019 and it was argued that the ordinance was used to attract Muslim votes in the 2019 general elections (Sharma, 2020). The executive has introduced various ordinances that were debatable in nature and highly criticised by the opposition and general public, for example-

'Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020'. The ordinance was criticised by the political parties and witnessed one of the largest farmers' protests in India. In 2023, the executive promulgated the 'Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance' which removed services from the legislative competence of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. The ordinance was also challenged in the Supreme Court.

The BJP-led NDA government is not different from the earlier governments when it comes to the cases of misuse of the ordinance-making power. Legislative powers to the President are given by the Constitution to deal with unforeseen situations, they should not be used for a self-serving agenda (Yadav, 2018).

Analysing the Impact of Executive Overreach on Parliamentary Democracy in India

As discussed earlier, the main motive behind granting the ordinance-making power to the President was to enable the executive to deal with emergencies when the legislature is not in a position to take action. Originally, the power was granted as an extraordinary measure not to be used as an alternative to the established law-making process. Since the onset of democratic institutions in India, the power to promulgate ordinances has been regularly misused by the executive irrespective of who is in power. The Constitution contains provisions related to the separation of power between the executive, legislature and judiciary, but the separation is not rigid in India and provides scope for the overreach of functions by one organ over other organs and the power to promulgate ordinances is part of that overreach. The frequent overreach of legislative powers by the executive directly affects the functioning of parliamentary institutions in India. Highlighting the impact of ordinance-making power on the democratic structure in India, K T Shah (1949) argued in the Constituent Assembly that "However we may clothe it, however, it may be necessary, however much it may be justified, it is the negation of rule of law.' The assembly members were aware of the fact that the power can be misused by the executive but they still proceeded with the provisions. Frequent abuse of the ordinance-making power not only impacts the parliament but also various other aspects related to the foundation of the democratic structure in India. These are as follows-

(i)   As envisaged by the Constitution, the legislature is authorised to make laws for the country. Since 1951, there have been several

instances where the power to promulgate an ordinance is used to bypass the procedure and discussion in the legislature. The same problem was witnessed with the onset of the coalition era in India in the 1990s where the executive issued ordinances at an unprecedented rate mostly to bypass the ordinary law-making process because they lacked the required majority in the legislature. This leads to a conflict-prone relationship between legislature and executive. Frequent use of ordinances abstains the legislature from exercising its core responsibility which is law-making creating hurdles in its effective functioning.

(ii)   'Re-promulgation of ordinances' is another mechanism the executive uses that finds no mention in the Constitution. Re-promulgation has been condemned by the judiciary as a fraud to the Constitution. The case of re-promulgation became prominent since the 1990s and many instances of re-promulgation of ordinances have been seen since 2014. Re-promulgation limits the legislature from discussing the ordinance because the executive allows the ordinance to lapse without referring to the legislature and again reissue the ordinance.

(iii)   Frequent abuse of ordinance-making power directly affects people's trust in democratic institutions in India. There have been several instances where people have protested against the arbitrary nature of ordinances. One such protest happened when the 'Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020' was issued by the President leading to a large-scale protest by farmers from different regions. These arbitrary ordinances erode people's trust in democratic institutions.

(iv)   The continuous abuse of ordinance-making power along with several other factors has contributed to a global decline in India's image as an effective democracy. As per the Economic Intelligence Unit's 'Democracy Index', India has slipped from the 27th position in 2014 to the 46th position in 2022 (Tripathi, 2023). Moreover, India has been relegated to 'Elective Autocracy' by the 'V-Dem Project of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden'. While these reports are based on multi-dimensional analysis, frequent bypassing of legislative processes and procedures has significantly contributed to low ratings of democratic institutions in India.

There are various dimensions related to the President's ordinance-making power which affects the power distribution between the executive and legislature. If misused, the ordinance-making power has serious

implications for the very foundation of the parliamentary democracy of India. Too much reliance on ordinances raises questions about the effectiveness and credibility of legislative procedures and processes.

Conclusion

'Separation of powers' is one of the key features of the Indian Constitution which lays the foundation of the relationship between the executive, judiciary and legislature. The Indian Constitution which has a vision of providing space for cooperation between the three organs does not provide a strict separation. The President's ordinance-making power is one of the elements through which the executive can take up some legislative functions to deal with situations that require immediate action when the legislature is not in a position to do that. The provision was highly debated in the constituent assembly and labelled as an extraordinary power in the hands of the executive, which can be manipulated and misused easily. Since 1952, the power has been constantly misused by the executive to breach the constitutional separation of power. The power to issue ordinances has been used several times to bypass legislative processes and procedures and promote political and personal ends. One issue that gained attention was of repromulgation of ordinances that became a normal norm since the 1990s. The Constitution does not contain any provision related to the repromulgation of ordinances and it has been dubbed serval times by the judiciary as an unconstitutional practice. Even after several judicial pronouncements condemning repromulgation, it has been constantly used by governments. Since 2014, there are several ordinances that have been repromulgated by the executive abstaining the legislature from discussing the ordinances which is a constitutional provision. The Modi cabinet has been criticised constantly for preferring legislation through ordinances rather than going for the established legislative process. It has been argued that since 2014, the ordinance-making power has been used more than the earlier government but the data shows that the average number of ordinances passed since 2014 has been as much as it was during earlier governments. The average number of ordinances passed yearly was highest during the 1990s when Indian politics was entering the coalition era. Though the number of ordinances promulgated since 2014 by the BJP-led NDA government has been at par with its earlier counterparts, it does not mean that the power has not been misused by the executive. There is a serious need to reform the provisions related to ordinances so that the cases of misuse can be minimised and the executive can be made more responsible

and accountable to the legislature. Relying too much on ordinances raises questions about the effectiveness and credibility of the legislature and parliamentary democracy in India at large. These reforms are necessary to maintain the 'balance of power between the executive and legislature'. Though the power to promulgate ordinances is important to deal with extraordinary situations, it should not be used to override the established legislative process of rule-making.

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Transforming Governance: Unleashing the Impact of E-Governance on Delivery of Public Service in Jaipur District

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This paper studies the impact of e-governance on public service delivery and customer satisfaction. Contrary to the global trend of decreasing levels of urban populations, India and other underdeveloped and overpopulated countries have experienced increasing levels of urban populations. Consequently, demand for services increases, especially among the vulnerable population. Accordingly, local governments are concerned about delivering superior quality and timely services to the citizens. The digital age has dramatically changed how governments interact with citizens, businesses, and institutions. One of the most critical reforms in public administration currently is electronic governance (e-governance), an all-encompassing concept that employs Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve government processes, services, and citizen participation. The guiding principle of e-governance is to deliver SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsible, and Transparent) governance to the citizens. Almost 48 per cent of India's population does not have internet access (680 million), preventing them from participating in the digital economy. The digital divide between rural and urban areas exists because

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of gender, geography, age, and income. This research focuses on the Jaipur district of Rajasthan to explore the complex terrain of e-governance and its role in public service delivery. The present study is based on the primary sources of data collection, including surveys and questionnaires. The paper evaluates whether e-governance activities result in better service accessibility, increased citizen satisfaction, less bureaucracy, and improved responsiveness and transparency of the government. This current study also assesses some of the difficulties and disparities involved in e-governance: issues of digital literacy, citizen data safety, infrastructure restraints, and administrative impediments.

Introduction

Traditional methods and procedures governing a large and populous country such as India have become highly complex and inefficient. As a result, a new paradigm shift called "Electronic Governance" has evolved. E-governance is using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the government's capacity to respond to public needs, deliver public services, and disseminate information in a cost-effective and timely manner (Raj, 2022). The integration of information and communication technology in government affairs seeks to advance the framework of 'SMART' governance that is Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent governance (Beniwal, 2017). E-governance can be classified into four interaction models- Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Government (G2G), Government to Businessmen (G2B), and Government to Employee (G2E) (Kumar, 2017).

As defined by the Council of Europe "E-Governance is the use of electronic technologies in three domains of public action: interactions between public authorities and society, operation of public authorities throughout the democratic process, and provision of public services to citizens."[1] However, e-governance was a lifesaver during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as it ensured the continuity of delivering essential services such as health, education, and public administration to the citizens.[2]

India's national and state governments have implemented several digital governance projects from time to time (E-Governance Initiatives in India, 2016). For instance, the Digital India programme[3] was launched in 2015 to transform India into a knowledge-based society empowered by technology. Additionally Online Tax Filing System, Digital Land Management System, Kisan Call Centres (Behera et al., 2015), National

Scholarship Portal, NARI Portal, Digi Locker, E-Mitra (Rajasthan), Lokvani Project (Uttar Pradesh), Gyandoot (Madhya Pradesh), and so on are some of the digital initiatives. Information communication and technology facilitates information sharing with citizens, businesses, and other government departments, thereby enhancing transparency and accessibility in governance (Gajendra Sharma, 2012). This ensures that vital data and resources are easily accessible to those who need them. Secondly, it plays a pivotal role in ensuring more timely and efficient public service delivery. By automating processes, enabling online services, and reducing bureaucratic hurdles, government agencies can provide quicker and more efficient services to the public (Rama Krushna Das, 2013). In sum, ICT empowers government entities to improve public services, reduce costs, enhance internal operations, and streamline administrative functions, contributing to more efficient and effective governance (Addink, 2019). India's demographic dividend highlights the need for digital technologies to promote inclusive growth. Digital empowerment through 'maximum governance, minimum government' is not a mere slogan. This leads to participative governance, a key element of responsive democracy.

Review of Literature

In their book Governance in Developing Asia: Public Service Delivery and Empowerment (Anil B. Deolalikar, 2015), stressed that effective governance and citizen's empowerment in developing Asia could have significant implications in service delivery. There is an immediate connection between governance and developmental outcomes such as economic growth and indices of living.

Zsuzsanna Tomor, Stan Geertman, et al. (2019) Smart Governance for Sustainable Cities: Findings from a Systematic Literature Review, assessed government organisation, citizens' role in decision making, and use of information technology as pillars of smart government. This study postulates that further empirical studies are required to examine how smart governance relates to sustainability outcomes.

Vepkhvia Grigalashvili (2022), in his article E-government and E-governance: Various or Multifarious Concept, highlighted that e-governance is a bigger topic that deals with the entire spectrum of the relationships and networks inside the government about the use and implementation of Information Communication and Technology. To successfully adopt e-government services for the general public, government organisations must develop and implement multiple steps.

The Objective of the Study

To examine the e-governance initiative implemented in Rajasthan, with particular emphasis on its effectiveness in enhancing the efficiency and accessibility of public service delivery. To assess the implications of the e-governance initiative on the delivery of public services in the district of Jaipur, Rajasthan. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic impact of e-governance on the residents of Jaipur district. To systematically investigate the key challenges and barriers encountered while implementing e-governance projects in the Jaipur district.

Research Methodology

The principal aim of this study is to perform a thorough assessment of the effects of e-governance on the recipients, while methodically pinpointing the major obstacles that hinder its effective execution. The study is primarily based on primary data collected through a structured survey administered within the Jaipur district. A sample of 140 respondents was randomly selected from the district. In order to ensure that the experiences and opinions of the respondents were adequately captured, the survey was performed through face-to-face structured interviews. The data was examined using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programme.

The study uses secondary data sources in addition to primary data to corroborate the conclusions and offer contextual information. Secondary data, including relevant literature, articles, reports, and policy documents, was thoroughly reviewed to ensure a comprehensive understanding. This mixed-methods approach enhances the reliability of the research, ensuring that the analysis is based on both empirical evidence and existing scholarly work.

E-Governance Initiatives in Rajasthan

These e-governance initiatives in Rajasthan aim to leverage technology to transform governance processes, enhance citizen engagement, and promote inclusive development across the state. These initiatives are as follows:

• *E-Mitra:* In 2002, the State Government envisioned a unified platform for service delivery. At present, it provides the public with over 600 services in a comprehensive service basket. There are 80,000 e-Mitra kiosks in Rajasthan, divided across 20,000 urban and 60,000 rural locations. On e-Mitra, you can get application-based services for government exams,

enrollment in the Rajasthan government scheme, bona fide, death, birth certificates, and so on. In addition, the e-Mitra platform offers services related to the financial, banking, and insurance sectors, the agriculture sector, legal advice and documentation aid, education (including digital education), travel, and telecommunication (e-Mitra, 2024).

Table 1
E-Mitra Kiosk in Jaipur District

District	Total Kiosk	Operational Kiosk	No. of Transactions	Transaction Amount (Rs.)	Average Transaction
Internet	0	0	941049	55,03,53,242.64	0
Jaipur	7558	612	4248	1,40,074.00	7
Total	7558	612	945297	55,04,93,316.64	1544.60

Source: Department of Information Technology and Communication, Government of Rajasthan

• **Jan Suchna Portal:** Launched in September 2019. Currently, this portal contains information about 339 schemes, and 116 departments of the Rajasthan government. This is the first such initiative in the entire nation. The portal's content is categorised by region, making it possible for common people living in each Panchayat or Municipal Ward to acquire details about local public institutions and themselves.[4]

• **Jan Aadhar e-Wallet:** The Rajasthan government offers its citizens two ways to receive monetary rewards from the government for public schemes: either in a bank account or through the Jan Aadhaar e-Wallet. Non-cash benefits, such as scooty and mobile vouchers, can also be received by the beneficiary using the Jan Aadhaar e-Wallet.

• **Raj Kisan Sathi[5]:** This cutting-edge digital platform serves the needs of farmers and agribusiness by providing information, licenses, and subsidies to enable Ease of Doing Farming (EoDF). It is a one-stop shop for anything related to agriculture, horticulture, marketing, state seed corporations, etc. This is an end-to-end internet system that is faceless, and paperless. The e-Government Roadmap of Rajasthan and Modern Governance's pillars of transparency, citizen-centricity, social inclusion, and ease of service delivery form the foundation of this project.

• **e-Panjiyan:** It is the official portal of the Inspector-General of Registration and Stamps (IGRS) of the Rajasthan government, which oversees the property transactions in the State. As per the Rajasthan Registration Act 1955, every property transaction should be registered on the E-Panjiyan Rajasthan which holds the digital records of property transfers and registrations. (e-Panjiyan, 2024)

Here is a list of services one can avail from this portal -

- Determination of property value
- Fees and rebates for various property-related document generation
- Tracking application, document, or CRN status
- Details related to land dispute
- Guidelines and specifications related to drafting a report based on the sale deed on the E-registration software

Impact of E-Governance on Public Service Delivery

The Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) was established in 1994, and it is governed under the Rajasthan Municipality Act of 1959. The Department of Local Self Government, Rajasthan bifurcated Jaipur into Jaipur Municipal Corporation-Greater and Jaipur Municipal Corporation-Heritage, with 150 and 100 wards, respectively. Jaipur Municipal Corporation offers 13 online services to the public. These services include the following- trade license and renewal, online building plan approval system, fire NOC, sewer connection, signage license, mobile tower approval, urban development tax (UD tax), property ID creation, 90 (land conversion), mutation/name transfer, lease deed (patta), subdivision/reconstitution and lease money deposit.

Awareness of E-Governance Initiative

The objective of an awareness campaign is multifaceted, aiming to educate, inspire behavioural change, and advocate meaningful action. Through disseminating information and fostering understanding, these campaigns seek to empower individuals, communities, and societies about the e-governance initiative of service delivery.

Table 2
Awareness of the E-Governance Initiatives

| Does the state government run awareness campaigns for the E-Governance Initiatives in Rajasthan?	Responses from Beneficiaries	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	68	48.11
No	42	30.11
Can not say	30	21.77
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

Table 2 shows the response of the beneficiaries regarding whether the Government of Rajasthan had conducted an awareness campaign about the e-governance initiatives. About 48 per cent of the respondents reported

that the state government has conducted awareness campaigns about e-governance initiatives. However, an ample number of respondents disagreed with this statement.

Information Accessibility

The pie chart below depicts the perception of the respondents regarding the accessibility of information related to the government schemes with the launch of the e-governance initiative.

Chart 1
Information Accessibility
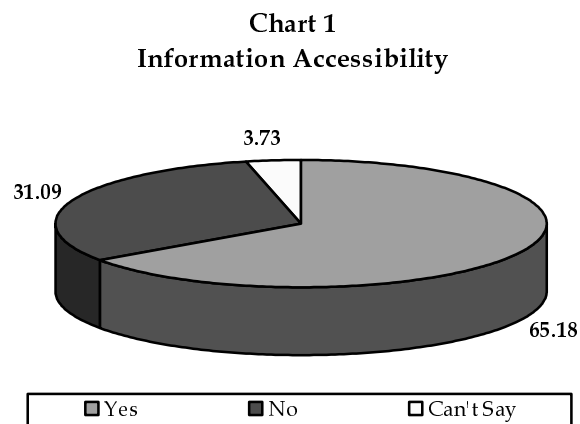
Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

The majority of the respondents (65.18 per cent) feel that information about government schemes is easily available to the public with the launch of e-governance. At the same time, 31.09 per cent of respondents said that the information is not easily available.

Mode of Obtaining Services

Public services in India can be accessed through a variety of methods, which can differ based on the country, region, or the specific service in question. Common means for obtaining public services in India include in-person visits, utilising online portals, and mobile applications, reaching out to helplines or call centres like the doorstep delivery model, and seeking assistance from third-party service centers such as Common Service Centers.

Chart 2
Mode of Obtaining Services

18.5   1.5

53.5

26.5

☐ Online   ■ Physical Visits   ☐ Agents   ☐ Other
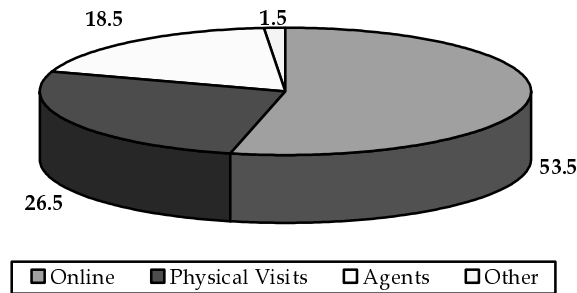
Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

Pie Chart 2 illustrates how citizens obtain public services. According to the chart, the largest proportion of recipients, constituting 53.5 per cent, accessed public services through online channels, which encompass services provided via Common Service Centers and the online portal. Meanwhile, 26.5 per cent of beneficiaries opted for in-person visits to receive services, and in this process, agents played an active role in service delivery. Approximately 18.5 per cent of recipients chose to utilise services through agents.

E-Governance Facilitates Easy Access to Public Services

The introduction of electronic governance ensures easy access to public services for the citizens. The table below assesses the response of beneficiaries regarding access to public services after the implementation of e-governance in public services.

Chart 3
Accessibility to Public Services
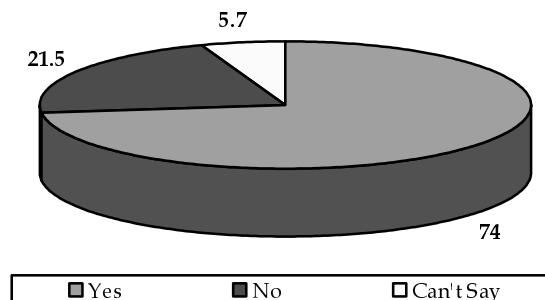
5.7

21.5

74

☐ Yes   ■ No   ☐ Can't Say

Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

Most of the survey participants (74 per cent) expressed that e-governance has made it easier for citizens to access public services. Additionally, roughly 21.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that it has not contributed to easier access to public services.

Reduction of Corruption due to Digital Services

E-governance, which incorporates digital technologies into government processes, eliminates the necessity for face-to-face communication, which has historically served as a haven for corruption. Additionally, by documenting service requests in real-time and giving citizens a platform to report malpractices, e-governance promotes accountability. The digitalisation of data and transactions also facilitates greater audits and surveillance, making it more difficult for corrupt practices to escape undiscovered.

Chart 4
Impact of E-Governance Services on
Reduction of Corruption in Service Delivery
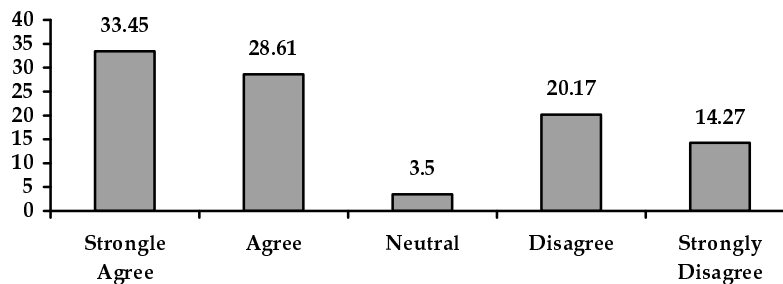
Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

Corruption Reduction: 33.45 per cent of survey participants strongly agree that e-governance reduces corruption, highlighting its transparency and accountability. 3.5 per cent are neutral, indicating mixed perceptions. 20.17 per cent disagree and 14.27 per cent strongly disagree, suggesting skepticism or unobserved benefits, emphasising the need for further trust-building and effectiveness demonstrations.

Problems Faced by Officials in Service Delivery

Officials in public service delivery often encounter numerous challenges that hinder their ability to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. These challenges may include bureaucratic red tape and

inefficiencies within government agencies, limited resources and funding constraints, inadequate infrastructure and technology, and issues related to accountability and transparency. Additionally, political interference, pressure, corruption, and lack of proper training and capacity-building opportunities can further exacerbate these problems. Moreover, rapidly changing societal needs and expectations, coupled with complex regulatory frameworks, can create hurdles for officials striving to meet the evolving demands of the public. Chart 5 shows the officials' response regarding the problems faced while delivering public service to the citizens.

Chart 5
Problems faced by officials in the public service delivery
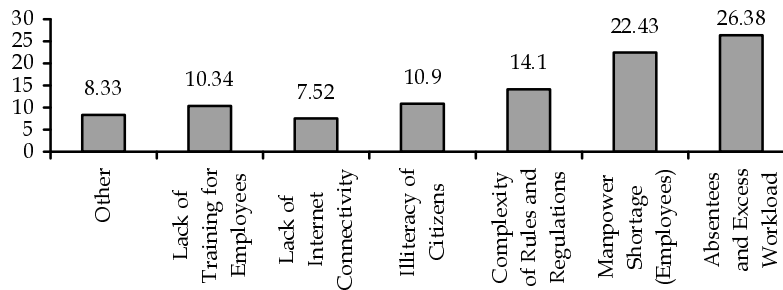
Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

The graph provides data on a range of factors contributing to challenges in the context of implementing e-governance in the district of Jaipur.

• *Absenteeism and Excess Workload (26.38 per cent):* This indicates that a significant challenge in implementing e-governance is related to employee absenteeism and excessive workloads. These issues can lead to delays in service delivery and impact the efficiency of government operations.

• *Manpower Shortage (Employees) (22.43 per cent):* The shortage of skilled employees can hinder the effective implementation of e-governance initiatives. Insufficient staff can limit the ability to manage and maintain digital systems and services.

• *Illiteracy of Citizens (10.9 per cent):* The fact that a segment of the population is illiterate poses a challenge for digital governance, as this could restrict access to and usage of online services. Efforts to improve digital literacy are essential to address this issue.

Impact of E-Governance on Quality of Public Services

By encouraging greater transparency, enabling citizens to trace their requests, and lowering the possibility of errors or manipulation, e-governance enhances the quality of services provided. Additionally, improved data management is made possible by e-governance platforms. This allows governments to make data-driven decisions that optimise resource allocation and customise services to fit the demands of the population.

Chart 6
Impact of E-Governance on Quality of Public Services
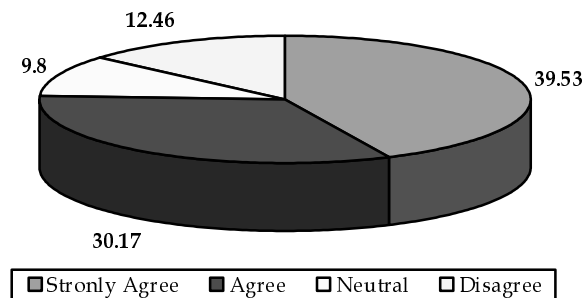
Source: Field Survey (2023-24)

The above pie chart shows that 39.53 per cent of participants strongly agree and 30.17 per cent agree that e-governance has improved service quality, highlighting its positive impact. 9.8 per cent are neutral, indicating mixed views. 12.46 per cent disagree, suggesting some dissatisfaction. No one strongly disagrees, reflecting a consensus on the beneficial effects of e-governance on service quality.

Challenges of E-Governance

E-Government Development Index, 2022: The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) conducts a survey every two years. This index gauges how well a nation uses ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) to provide public services. It focuses on the advancement of e-governance in countries measured in three main dimensions: accessibility to online services, infrastructure for communications, and human capacity. India ranked 105 out of 193 countries. Even Sri Lanka is one step ahead of India in the South Asian region. (UN E-Government Survey, 2022)

The challenges associated with electronic governance in India are:

- *Infrastructural Barriers:* Despite the Internet's phenomenal expansion since the early 1990s, India still lacks a stable communications infrastructure with enough capacity for an Internet connection. The required updating of hardware and software is challenging because of rising prices.

- *Lack of Coordinated Government Initiatives:* A bureaucratic administrative structure that India inherited has demonstrably shown to be ineffective when dealing with 1.4 billion people. Red-tapism exposes an extremely slow, ineffective, extremely complex, and inaccessible system of functioning. The transition to e-governance will be difficult, though, because it will require changing bureaucrats' mindsets, teaching them about the necessity of change, and providing them with training on how to utilise the technology efficiently.

- *Privacy and Security:* The security and confidentiality of a person's personal information offered in exchange for government services is a significant hurdle to the deployment of digital governance. Effective steps must be taken to safeguard people's sensitive personal data while digital governance projects are implemented (Bhattacharjee, 2024). Recent years have seen a steady rise in the number of cyber attacks worldwide, which has compelled policymakers to create cyber security policies and procedures that adhere to international standards.

- *Social Challenges:* The majority of e-governance applications are available in English. However, India is home to people of all religions, cultures, and languages. This calls into question the necessity of creating user-friendly e-government applications. According to the Network Rediness Index 2022, India ranked 61stout of 131 economies in terms of e-readiness, indicating limited use of ICTs.

- *Digital Divide:* Despite an increase in awareness over the last decade, there is still a significant disparity in accessibility and technological capability between urban and rural communities. In India 680 million of Indians, or 47.6 per cent population lack internet connectivity, making it the top ranking country of the unconnected population in the world (Internet Use in 2024, 2024).

- *Cost:* Cost is a major hurdle to implementing e-governance in developing countries like India, where many people live below the poverty line.

Installation, functional, and evolutionary maintenance tasks are very expensive. These expenses must be modest in order to achieve a favourable cost-benefit ratio.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Information Technology (IT) is widely accepted to speed up and transform the development process, especially in developing countries. The swift advancement of communication technology, particularly the internet, has allowed governments all over the world to quicken the push for e-governance in remote locations, thus assisting marginalised populations. The major challenge for national and state governments is to successfully deploy the projects due to constraints like lack of adequate ICT infrastructure, privacy, cyber threats, and network bandwidth issues (Shah, 2007). According to the studies, the government has implemented various e-governance projects to serve the public with more efficient and cost-effective information and services. Digitisation has improved citizens' access to services, leading to successful project implementation and increased efficiency of service delivery.

Governments need to embrace change and develop an inventive culture in which people and organisations may experiment, learn, and grow in order to flourish in the digital age. The public sector's culture must adapt, with an emphasis on improving user-centred approaches and outcomes while also providing government people with greater freedom and efficiency.

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Assessing the Influence of OBCs in the Politics of Madhya Pradesh: A Holistic Perspective

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Other Backward Castes (OBCs) constitute the numerical majority in terms of population in Madhya Pradesh. Despite that, their representation and participation in state politics and public services are lacking. Christophe Jaffrelot has argued that OBCs of Madhya Pradesh have been very late to plebeianiseas compared to their counterparts in other North Indian states. The 2019 State reservation bill that increased OBC reservation from 14 to 27 per cent has taken a step forward in social inclusion. This reservation bill fits into the previous paradigm of supply-side initiatives that were taken for the political mobilisation of OBCs. Contrary to previous initiatives for OBC inclusion, this initiative has aroused greater community interest and mobilisation from OBCs. OBCs responded to the counter-mobilising tendencies of upper castes and simultaneously demanded a greater share in state politics. Further, the state has continuously seen an OBC chief minister barring a brief term for Kamalnath in 2018. Despite constituting a large portion of the state population plebianisation of Madhya Pradesh politics is slow and moulded in Sanskritisation logic and there is no radical approach from the two principal parties. This paper focuses on the role of OBCs in state politics, the reasons for the lack of proper representation, and how there is successive plebianisation of state politics with the inclusion of OBCs in leadership and participatory roles.

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In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress-led state government passed legislation extending the OBC reservation from 14 per cent to 27 per cent on 5th July 2019. This step increased the reservation from 60 per cent to 73 per cent, which was much beyond the constitutionally mandated limit of 50 per cent as specified by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case in 1992 (Choudhary S., 2019). The reservation bill received unanimous support from both principal parties and signifies the arrival of the OBCs in the centre stage of Madhya Pradesh politics (Ghatwai M., 2019). The OBCs now demand access to power in both political and social aspects. After the law's passing, OBCs vigorously confronted the mobilisation of upper castes against the increased reservation by counter-mobilising themselves (Sarkar S., 2021). In comparison previously, OBCs were not very assertive and aggressive regarding their rights and claims as most of the time upper castes ruled. OBCs in Madhya Pradesh have been less politicised and less mobilised based on caste. Christophe Jaffrelot has pointed out that, compared with other North Indian counterparts, OBCs in Madhya Pradesh have been very late to plebeianise themselves and improvetheir positions in the echelons of power. He further argued that the old social order of upper caste dominance showed strong resilience in Madhya Pradesh (Jaffrelot C., 2008, p. 103).

However, with initiatives like increased OBC reservation and the persistence of the OBC chief minister for many years, the situation has seen visible change. The OBCs are now responding to and defending the supply side initiatives and recognising their importance to the success of any political force of the state. This penchant for greater leadership and representative position was clearly visible during the 2021 mayoral elections. In this election the ruling BJP lost many seats due to the simmering anger of OBC voters about the lack of proper representation (Sarkar S., 2022). Along with this, the state government have to leave 13 per cent of seats aside in government services recruitment pending the resolution of the OBC bill and it is fighting for the implementation of extended reservation in the Supreme Court.

OBC: Who are they and their Positions in Indian Society

The OBC, which stands for Other Backward Classes category, is crucial as it constitutes almost 42 per cent of the country's population, and occupies the central position behind political coalitions that make up the

winning combination for elections. The OBCs occupy a middle position in the Indian caste hierarchy as they are above Dalits and below upper castes, but throughout history, they have occupied subaltern positions in the realm of power. Occupationally, they work as field workers and artisans and in some states, they are landed peasants (Jaffrelot C., 2000).

The OBCs got reservations through the implementation of the recommendation of the Mandal Commission by the V.P. Singh-led government in 1990. The transformation of the term 'OBC' and the movements surrounding it is significant. Yogendra Yadav has argued that the term has evolved from being merely a careless bureaucratic label to a vibrant, subjectively experienced political community demanding rights and political representation (Sen R., 2012).

Satish Deshpande has argued that OBCs have played a central role in the victory of coalitions and the OBC politics have caused the deepening of Indian democracy. If any ruling government has survived, it is because of the OBCs, who have played the decisive role in the contemporary period. OBCs constitute 42 per cent of the India's population and they are central to any coalition that wants to be in power (Deshpande, 2021). On the other hand, Ajay Gudavarthy has called OBCs the key to the success and future of Indian democracy. He feels that OBCs have found their aspirations fulfilled under the umbrella of Hindutva. He argues that the role of OBCs is pivotal in having any form of coalition to challenge the hegemony of the BJP RSS and this symbolises the central importance of OBCs (Gudavarthy, 2019).

History of the Role of OBC in Madhya Pradesh Politics

Madhya Pradesh has been state-dominated by upper-caste politics despite having OBCs constituting 50.25 per cent almost half the total population of the state (Gupta D., 2009). Since independence, the upper caste has played a preponderant role in the politics of Madhya Pradesh. Myron Weiner has called the dominance of upper castes and the conspicuous absence of intermediate castes in the power structure the issue of an open elite system (Weiner, M. 1989). The path for greater inclusion and participation of lower castes in state politics has been mainly through socialist movement and farmer politics but socialist movement in the state was dominated by the upper castes. Furthermore, the proponents of farmer politics as done by Jats in UP were lacking in Madhya Pradesh due to the absence of a dominant middle caste (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 435).

Compared with the states like Bihar and UP, the penchant for fair power share in Madhya Pradesh was very less. Mahajan Commission did

not arouse similar political and social mobilisation as Mungerilal and C.L. Sathi Commission in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively. OBCs in Madhya Pradesh faced lesser exploitation as compared to their other North Indian counterparts due to the Ryotwari System of land revenue which enabled direct contact with the government and lack of an intermediary system (Gupta S., 2005). Culturally OBCs of Madhya Pradesh were moulded in the logic of Sanskritisation which argued for adaptation of upper caste practices to enhance their societal position. Further, the upper castes in Madhya Pradesh constituted around 13 per cent of the population compared with 2-3 per cent in South India which enabled their greater mobilisation. The princely states and Zamindar network also heavily contributed to maintaining the hegemony of upper castes. Further due to the prevalence of caste hierarchy in Brahmanical form and the contentment of vast public with it hindered plebianisation (Jaffrelot C., 2008, p. 107-111).

OBC Politics in a Few Decades after Independence

During the early decades of independence, the Congress party co-opted princely states and village notables without much focus on intermediary castes. It depended on coalitions of extremes which included upper castes, SCs and ST for its electoral success. Due to this, its focus was less on OBC representation and inclusion (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 428). However, given the numerical dominance of OBCs later on, it grabbed the strategy to include lower castes in its coalition to checkmate the opposition. The Congress government, under the leadership of Arjun Singh, appointed the Ramji Mahajan Commission in the 1980s to delve into the issue of backward classes. This commission argued for a 35 per cent reservation to OBC, but political pressure from upper castes led to the non-implementation of the commission's recommendations. Shaibal Gupta argued that supply-side initiative preceded demand and the safety valve approach was adopted (Gupta S., 2005).

The representation of OBC MLAs started changing in the 1990s, except during the 1990 election, when parties tried to woo voters with increased tickets to the lower castes in the form of social engineering. In 1993, there was a seven per cent increase in MLAs from backward classes as compared to the 1980s, considered a substantial increase. However, the composition of lower castes in government was relatively lower and changed very slowly. Digvijay Singh's government included many lower-caste MLAs as ministers. However, the composition of lower castes remained almost the same as that of SCs, which is 15 per cent, despite having

a higher share of the population (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 435). Congress tried to enable land reforms that led to many OBC castes that were dominant losing lands to the Dalits and tribals and thereby led to an increased disenchantment of the lower castes against the Congress-led regime. Deepika Gupta argued that Congress's inclusion of OBC in its politics was a faulty strategy as it tried to court both Dalits and OBC. This strategy backfired, as OBCs were the losers of the land distribution policy to Dalits. Also, most of the OBCs belonged to the farming community, and their needs regarding agriculture, especially the supply of electricity for irrigation and other state support, were not met. Moreover, the rise of the BSP in the Chambal region and Vindhya Pradesh, with OBCs like Kachhis and Patels becoming the fulcrum of its electoral policy, further dented the prospects of Congress (Gupta D., 2009).

The caste equation and lack of a dominant caste hindered OBC politics because there was a lack of proper regional cohesion among backward classes and fragmentation among the lower castes. Except for the Ahirs (Yadavs), none of the castes accounted for more than 5 per cent of the population. Even Ahirs were situated in large numbers in only two regions: Vindhya Pradesh and Mahakoshal. Similarly, Kurmis made up 4.7 per cent of Vindhya Pradesh, and Lodh made up 4 per cent of the Mahakoshal region. This situation signified that the lack of proper concentration of the dominant OBC caste that could act as a leader for the backwards was missing (Gupta S., 2005, p. 5095).

The lower castes often competed among themselves in the realm of power and, thereby, were unable to assert themselves in a good fashion in the political arena. Also, there was a lack of proper cultural and social cohesion between castes, and every caste focused on self-emancipation. The community groupings were mostly formed based on caste affiliations like Kushwaha Mahasabha, Kurmi Mahasabha, and Yadav Mahasabha, and they mostly catered to their groupings without proper coordination with others. Christophe Jaffrelot has pointed out that the Kurmis of Hoshangabad mobilised themselves for a greater share in ticket distribution in 1993. While Sahu Samaj mobilised itself separately for the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 436-437).

In recent years, various initiatives have been taken by the political leadership in the state to improve OBC representation in the state. Firstly, Digvijay Singh implemented the recommendations of the Mandal Commission by passing a law in the state assembly in December 1993. Later on, he introduced reservations for OBCs in local bodies like panchayats and

municipal corporations. Despite these initiatives, not much attempt was made by Congress to transform the social profile of MLAs and MPs in Madhya Pradesh (Jaffrelot, C., 2003, p. 442). The principal opposition party, the BJP had much better representation of lower castes in the 1990s in terms of MLAs as compared to Congress. The BJP had 40 per cent lower-caste MLAs, while Congress had only 32.5 per cent representation of OBCs. Furthermore, the BJP countered the Congress's attempt to enact reservation in public and government bodies by giving OBCs CM posts and greater representation in the party.

A stronger inclusion policy by the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh in 2019 increased OBC reservations from 14 to 27 per cent. The reservation bill was passed unanimously and reflected the arrival of the backward classes, both electorally and politically. After supply-side interventions by the government, OBC groups like BAMCEF and OBC Mahasabha campaigned vigorously to protect the interests of lower castes and organised protests and demonstrations against government policy (Sarkar S., 2022).

Reservation: Representation and Assertion of OBCs in Madhya Pradesh

The increase in reservations is the culmination of the earlier policy of Congress, which, when confronted with the increased OBCisation of the BJP, was unable to provide proper leadership and representation to the OBC. During the tenure of Arjun Singh, the Congress tried to include OBCs in its electoral calculus by appointing the Ramji Mahajan Commission and it recommended 35 per cent reservation. However, due to the hegemony of upper castes, only two minor recommendations were implemented and that too were stayed by the high court (Jaffrelot C., 2003). Similarly, in 2003, when Digvijay Singh faced the challenge of the leadership of Uma Bharati, an OBC leader of the BJP, he promised to increase the reservation for OBC to 27 per cent. However, this move was considered too little and too late by the OBCs and Congress lost elections in 2003 (Gupta D., 2009, p. 32).

Later on, despite the appointment of OBC CM Uma Bharati and later succession by both OBC chief ministers, the issue of greater reservation to the OBC was left on the back burner. It was felt that OBCs would be content with leadership positions in the state (Times of India, 2005). However, this policy proved inadequate for the masses who gathered a penchant for greater representation. The Congress, after winning the 2018 elections, enhanced OBC reservations to 27 per cent from 14 per cent in 2019 to include backward classes in its electoral strategy.

The 2019 moment in Madhya Pradesh politics signifies the moment of Mandalisation and improved social inclusion for OBCs. Considering their numerical dominance in electoral politics, OBC castes were given an extra 13 per cent reservation. Moreover, the concerns of the community regarding cultural and social recognition are increasingly recognised. OBCs of Madhya Pradesh are increasingly asking for their stake to be recognised in the governmental and political scheme of things. Groupings like OBC Mahasabha have continued to demand a greater share in the reservation and caste census to demarcate equitable shares for OBC in the government (ABP Live, 2023). However, the feasibility of these groupings is rather limited, as OBC Mahasabha promised to support Congress in the 2023 Assembly elections, and Congress lost those elections very badly.

OBCs of Madhya Pradesh have now started demanding better privileges and share in the state benefits in terms of candidature during elections, positions in political parties, plum positions in bureaucracy based on their share in the population, and ability to influence electoral outcomes.

After the results of the local body polls were declared, independent observers noted that OBCs had emerged as a distinct socio-political group in terms of voting. The ruling party, the BJP, lost many mayoral posts in the state due to a swing of OBC votes in favour of the opposition. The OBC Mahasabha grouping also contested the local body elections in the state, and its performance in the polls destroyed the prospects of candidates from the principal parties of the state, the BJP and the Congress (Sarkar S., 2021).

The efficacy of the group as a pressure group is quite good, as it was able to exert pressure on the government through protests and demonstrations. However, its efficacy as the political party for fighting elections and supporting political parties in elections is quite dubious, as, despite OBC Mahasabha extending support to the Congress Party during the 2023 State Assembly elections, it lost elections very badly.

The Attitude of the BJP and Congress towards the OBCs

Congress in the initial decades adopted a coalition of extremes strategy that included upper castes, SCs and STs and this left out OBCs. However, some disparate initiatives were taken by the Congress like the appointment of the Ramji Mahajan Commission for backward classes. However, these initiatives were too little too late. BJP, on the other hand, tried to increase the membership of OBCs in terms of ticket distribution and announcement of OBC candidates as CM face increased the purchase of BJP among OBC voters and thereby caused irreversible plebianisation of

Madhya Pradesh political circles (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 449-450). However, the representation did not similarly bring increased assertions for the lower castes, as they were moulded in the logic of Sanskritisation and acceptance of the hegemony of the upper castes.

Even in the BJP, the party that was the first to include a large number of OBCs in its leadership and party positions, the confrontationist vocabulary was avoided and the idea of harmony was adopted. More focus was on the inclusion and harmony of disparate castes based on Hindutva ideology. The BJP focused more on its strategy of criticising the development model of the Congress government led by Digvijay Singh and Hindu identity than on ethnic tensions of caste (Gupta S., 2005, p. 5097).

Congress in recent years have tried to shift from previous coalitions of extreme strategy and tried to court OBCs with slogans like 'Jitni Aabadi Utna Haq'. Further Congress when in power extended OBC reservation from 14 to 27 per cent. BJP on the other hand was the first party in the state to include OBCs in its electoral calculus as it appointed OBC leaders as Chief Ministers (Jaffrelot C., 2003, p. 480). The Congress attitude was of more talk and less action as, despite OBC constituting more than 50 per cent of the state population, only 62 tickets were allotted to OBC candidates by Congress in the 2023 assembly elections (Ranjan, 2023). In terms of ticket distribution, the BJP fared better as it allocated 69 tickets to OBCs, constituting 30 per cent of total candidates.

The lack of reciprocation of the aggressive stance of proper representation and participation of marginalised classes represents the elite hold of Congress at the organisational levels. The state leadership comprised the duo of Kamalnath and Digvijay Singh, both belonging to the upper castes and were unable to resist the hold of the upper castes in the ticket distribution and party organisational structure. On the other hand, the BJP, the principal ruling party of the state, has provided four OBC chief ministers since it ascended to power in Madhya Pradesh organisationally, its structure works on the harmony and coordination between forward and backward castes and lacks an aggressive stance on the implementation of policies to enhance the representation of backward classes.

In terms of strategy, the BJP fared better as it constituted coalitions of OBCs and the upper castes under the Hindutva umbrella. It has upper caste party president V.D. Sharma of the state BJP unit and OBC Mohan Yadav as the Chief Minister. However, it has provided an even more prominent role for OBCs, as Rakesh Singh and Nand Kumar Singh Chauhan,

both OBCs, preceded the present president. This participation of OBCs in the sharing of power in the state signifies the OBCisation of the BJP.

Congress lags in comparison to the BJP in social inclusion, as the State High Command in the Congress party constituted earlier of Kamalnath as the PCC president and Digvijay Singh as the senior most leaders of the party. Before that, Jyotiraditya Scindia also constituted the prominent leader of high command in the state. All three leaders belonged to the upper castes. This reflects that, despite the rhetoric of plebiscite and inclusion of OBC within the power structure of the party, the process of plebianisation has been relatively slow and tardy, and thereby Congress is not able to implement the social inclusion agenda of the central leadership. Its principal leaders, like Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, talk about the underrepresentation of OBCs in the state power structure but are not able to implement the same at the ground level in terms of state Congress committees. After being battered in the 2023 Assembly elections, Congress leadership has tried to change course. Congress has appointed Jitu Patwari, an OBC, and Umang Singhar, a tribal, as the leaders of the opposition in the state assembly to strike the caste balance in the state assembly.

Moreover, the ideas regarding caste census and the rhetoric of 'Jitni Aabadi Utna Haq' were not pursued aggressively by the party cadres of Congress. It pointed to the disconnect between the agenda of the leadership and the workers at the ground level. The principal reason behind this was the hold of upper castes over the cadres of Congress. The upper castes feel that the caste census will scuttle their dominance in the political body of the state. This leads to lackluster campaigning and mobilisation based on caste censuses and increased reservations for OBCs.

Role of Pressure Groups in OBC Mobilisation

In terms of pressure groups and demands for better implementation of rights, an OBC grouping named OBC Mahasabha held protests and demonstrations in front of the CM house on June 2, 2023, and presented a slew of demands to the CM. It demanded a 52 per cent reservation for the backward classes in government services. Along with this demand, the reservation of 125 seats for OBC in the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly was put forward. However, the main point of demand that received the most media attention was an argument for removing transgender people from the OBC reservation list that was added earlier. This phenomenon revealed the idea of misplaced priorities and not focusing on positive media attention for the issue. Also, the OBC groupings feel more coherent and effective when

they are organised along individual caste lines and are often unable to present coherent streams of demands.

In June 2021, OBC Mahasabha hit the streets, demanding that 27 per cent of the reservation passed by the state assembly be implemented in MBBS admission. The trigger point for this was the state high court intervention to pause the implementation. The High Court stated that the previous policy of 14 per cent reservation should be followed until the court decides on the constitutionality of 27 per cent reservation to the OBC. This led to outrage among OBC groups as their demands for immediate implementation of the said bill were ignored (Sarkar S., 2021). In 2022, OBC body Pichhda Varg Mahasabha called for a state-wide bandh for three days after the Supreme Court disallowed a quota extension of 27 per cent for OBCs in the local body polls until the triple test for determination of backwardness is ascertained (The Print, 2022).

The state government despite adverse court judgement and stay on the reservation bill declared that it will use all means possible to implement the extended reservation of OBCs. It devised an idea of a provisional list so that claims of the OBC community to the services of the state are fulfilled. The government's sensitivity towards OBC community claims in politics and public services reveals the weight of the community in electoral and political terms. OBC voters of the state constitute a decisive factor that could change the results of any election. Previous CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan after the completion of local body elections stated that if someone asks me what was the biggest and most heartwarming work of my tenure "I would say that we were able to conduct elections with reservations for OBCs" (Mishra S.K., 2022).

Moreover, most of the OBC pressure groups are disparate and focus mainly on their caste-specific issues, like Kushwaha Mahasabha, Kurmi Mahasabha, and Yadav Mahasabha. Even when they unite for a common cause, there is a lack of coherency and coordination for the common cause. The presence of a common face is mostly visible on social media and not on the ground. The pressure groups are more efficient only when they are organised along individual caste lines. This leads to a lack of unity within OBC castes for a common cause.

Further, there is no radical element in OBC politics and due to the radical demands and vigorous ideas regarding OBC representation are ignored by principal decision-makers of parties. The lack of exclusive regional parties representing the interests of OBCs like the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar has limited the options

for OBCs of the state. The OBCs in Madhya Pradesh are more inclined towards non-confrontational vocabulary and adopt the idea of cooperation with upper castes to advance their agendas. There is also a lack of genuine OBC leadership in the state that is not dependent on the upper caste for its survival. For instance, in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, we could witness the vocabulary of forward versus backward but in Madhya Pradesh this is lacking and the strategy adopted is to catch all party systems. This system points to the idea of accommodation and compromise rather than a radical approach towards the inclusion of OBCs in politics.

Despite various issues with the unity of OBCs and the challenges of upper caste domination, the plebianisation of Madhya Pradesh politics is irreversible now. OBCs have become more mobilised and more assertive in asking for their share of the power. However, the process of including OBCs has been marked by ups and downs, but the long-term trend is the greater inclusion and assertion of OBCs in the state politics and public services of Madhya Pradesh.

Conclusion

The passing of the law by the Madhya Pradesh state assembly signifies the arrival of OBCs in the state political scene. OBCs of the state have become more assertive and aware of their rights and representation in the power structure. The supply-side initiatives of the state leaders regarding reservation and access to power corridors are more vigorously protected by OBC pressure groups and community leadership. The two principal parties of the state have especially emphasised the OBC's role in state politics by arguing for increased representation in government services and local politics. Furthermore, the importance of OBCs in state politics could be gauged from the fact that after 2003 barring Kamalnath all the Chief Ministers of the state have been OBCs. However, issues of lack of unity and internal tussles within OBCs remain, and that could scuttle the potential plebianisation of Madhya Pradesh politics and society. Additionally, the observers of Madhya Pradesh politics should keenly watch the assertions of OBCs regarding greater share in the echelons of power and potential counter-reactions by upper castes, STs, and SCs against these claims. The results of these interactions will shape the future of state politics in Madhya Pradesh.

The OBCs will determine the trajectory of state politics due to their population and political parties' willingness to court them in order to expand their voter base. The OBCs through various caste groupings have responded

positively to social inclusion initiatives by the government and the process of plebianisation is further continuing in the state.

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Understanding Millet Consumption in India: A Comprehensive Review of Consumption Patterns, Influencing Factors and Consumer Preferences

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The review synthesises recent literature on millet consumption trends, influencing factors, and consumer preferences in India. Studies indicate a decline in millet consumption among higher-income households, driven by rising incomes, urbanisation, and government policies favouring rice and wheat. However, millet remains vital for food security, particularly for low-income households, highlighting consumption disparities. Influencing factors encompass socio-economic and cultural aspects, with price dynamics, accessibility, nutritional value, and cultural significance playing significant roles. Consumer preferences are diverse, driven by nutritional benefits, cultural significance, taste preferences, health recommendations, and lifestyle choices, particularly among urban middle-class consumers. Understanding these trends is crucial for promoting millets as sustainable food sources.

Keywords: Millet/s, India, Food Security, Consumption Pattern, Public Distribution System, Demographic Factors, Socio-economic Factors, Consumer Preferences.

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Introduction

Wheat and rice are among the most popular grains in the world, but millets are the healthiest of grains. These 'Nutri-cereals', have been an integral part of India's agricultural landscape and dietary heritage for centuries. Historically, millets served as staple foods for diverse communities nationwide, providing abundant sustenance and nutrition. They are climate-resilient cereal crops and are primarily farmed in marginal areas. These encompass various groups of small-seeded grasses and each variety brings its unique nutritional profile, culinary versatility, and agroecological adaptability, contributing to the rich biodiversity of India's agricultural landscape. According to the World Food Programme, millets are an integral part of the diet of approximately 1.2 billion individuals worldwide (APEDA).

Africa produces the highest amount of millets globally, followed by Asia. India produces the highest amount of millets or nutri-cereals accounting for 43.0 per cent global market share in 2021. It has witnessed a surge in millet production in recent years. Millet production in India increased by almost 24 per cent from 2015-16 (14.52 million tonnes) to 2020-21 (17.96 million tonnes) (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2022). Major millets produced in the nation include Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), and Finger Millet (Ragi) among others. Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, etc. are some of the major millet-producing states in India (APEDA).

Despite their nutritional richness and resilience to adverse environmental conditions and their significant role in India's culinary tradition and agricultural history, millets witnessed a decline in cultivation and consumption in the 1960s, primarily due to shifts in dietary preferences, agricultural policies favouring rice and wheat, and changing lifestyles (Rao et al. 2010, Nagaraj et al. 2013, Sreekala et al. 2023, Chaudhary et al. 2023). However, in recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in millets, driven by growing awareness of their health benefits, environmental sustainability, and cultural significance.

This comprehensive review aims to synthesise existing literature and provide a comprehensive understanding of millet consumption in India, highlighting the trends, patterns, and factors that shape millet consumption in the country. The review also aims to inform policy interventions, market interventions, and advocacy efforts promoting millets' revival as an integral component of India's food and nutrition security agenda.The first section of this review delves into the trends and patterns of millet production and

consumption in India, exploring their historical significance and current status. The second section analyses factors impacting millet consumption in India, drawing insights from broader cereal consumption literature. The final section explores evolving consumer preferences and perceptions toward millets in India.

Trends in Millet Production and Consumption in India

Millet production and consumption in India have significantly transformed over the past few decades. The evolution of modern agricultural practices and food systems has profoundly impacted millet cultivation. The trajectory of millet production and consumption reveals a complex interplay between traditional practices and modern agricultural advancements, with notable variations across different millets such as pearl millet, sorghum, finger millet, and small millets.

Historical Trends

Millet production in India steadily declined from 1950-60 (Gowri et al., 2020). However, between 1947 and 1965, pearl millet and sorghum production saw significant growth due to efforts to improve agricultural productivity, with increases in both cultivation area and yield (Pray and Nagarajan, 2009). Finger millet, primarily grown in southern India and Uttarakhand, initially declined after independence but later experienced a brief resurgence (Chaudhary et al., 2023). The Green Revolution of the mid-1960s had a mixed impact on millets. Despite a primary focus on wheat and rice, sorghum and pearl millet production rose from 1960-61 to 1979-80, despite a decline in cultivation area (Gowri et al., 2020). Sorghum benefited from improved practices and resilient varieties, while pearl millet faced challenges due to downy mildew outbreaks in the 1970s and 1980s (Pray and Nagarajan, 2009). Finger millet and small millets saw a steady decline in cultivation area since the 1970s, despite some productivity improvements (Sreekala et al., 2023). Post-1986, millet cultivation, particularly sorghum, declined further due to droughts and crop shifts, though sorghum productivity modestly increased, and pearl millet production rose due to better breeding techniques (Pray and Nagarajan, 2009; Sreekala et al., 2023).

Millet consumption in India was initially high, with millets serving as staple foods for rural populations, providing essential nutrition (Rao et al., 2010; Nagaraj et al., 2013). However, the Green Revolution marked a turning point in Indian dietary patterns, as the increased availability of high-yielding wheat and rice varieties led to a gradual decline in millet consumption.

Cereal consumption, including coarse grains like millets, began to decrease, particularly after the mid-1970s (Chand, 2007). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, per capita millet consumption had noticeably decreased (Chand and Kumar, 2002). After 1986, the decline in millet consumption became more pronounced, with sorghum seeing a 31 per cent decline in per capita consumption from 1987-88 to 1993-94, and a further 40 per cent drop between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 (Rao et al., 2010). While rural areas consistently showed higher per capita consumption of sorghum compared to urban areas, the percentage decline was steeper in rural regions. A similar trend was observed with pearl millet, though the decline was less severe than that of sorghum (Basavaraj et al., 2010; Gali and Rao, 2012). This decline in millet consumption was driven by rising incomes, urbanisation, the widespread availability of subsidised rice and wheat through the Public Distribution System (PDS), consumer shifts towards convenience foods, and the longer cooking time required for millets (Basavaraj et al., 2010; Rao et al., 2010; Gali and Rao, 2012; Nagaraj et al., 2013).

Current Trends

In the early 21st century, millet production in India faced persistent challenges. Overall, as noted by Michaelraj and Shanmugam (2013), the harvested area and consumption of millet in India gradually decreased from 2005 to 2008. Starting in 2009, the area harvested began to increase, but it witnessed a decline again in 2011. The millet cultivation area, particularly pearl millet and sorghum, continued to shrink. Between 2000-01 and 2016-17, pearl millet cultivation decreased by 24 per cent, yet production rose by 45 per cent and productivity surged by 89 per cent, attributed to improved varieties and farming practices (Das et al., 2019). Similarly, sorghum saw a 44 per cent decline in cultivation area from 1972-73 to 2004-05, but only an 11 per cent reduction in production due to productivity gains (Rao et al., 2010). Sreekala et al. (2023) confirmed these trends, noting a 64 per cent drop in sorghum cultivation area from 1970-71 to 2018-19, resulting in a 44 per cent decline in production despite a 51 per cent productivity increase, linked to fluctuating productivity and high input costs (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Finger millet showed declining cultivation area trends from 1980-89 to 2010-19, with a 22 per cent decrease in cultivation area and 13 per cent in productivity, resulting in a 49 per cent production decline (Das et al., 2019). Although this millet crop has grown over the last few years, the absence of farmer-friendly procurement policies has not helped the crop (Sreekala et al. 2023). Small millets' cultivation and production also continuously declined from the 1970s

to 2010-19, with minimal productivity improvements failing to offset cultivation losses, influenced by rice and wheat availability, dietary perceptions, and social factors (Anbukkani et al., 2017; Chaudhary et al., 2023; Sreekala et al., 2023).

Trends in cereal consumption, including rice, wheat, and coarse cereals (such as maize and millets), have shown a significant decline. At a disaggregated level, coarse cereals have experienced a sharper drop in consumption compared to rice and wheat from 1973-74 to 2004-05 (Chand, 2007). The decline is closely tied to rising income levels, with rice and wheat consumption increasing while coarse cereals, seen as inferior goods, have decreased (Chand and Kumar, 2002). By 2000, millet consumption had dropped significantly, with per capita millet consumption falling from 32.9 kg per person per year in 1962 to much lower levels, particularly in urban India by 2010 (Kane-Potaka et al., 2021). Sreekala et al. (2023) also observed a decline in millet consumption in both urban and rural households from 1977-78 to 2011-12, with rural households consuming more than their urban counterparts. Factors such as urbanisation, changing dietary preferences, and the easy availability of rice and wheat through the Public Distribution System (PDS) contributed to this decline. As urban populations and incomes grew, consumers shifted towards faster-cooking staples like rice and wheat over traditional millets, which require longer cooking times (Nagaraj et al., 2013).

Consumption of all millet varieties followed this downward trend. Sorghum consumption decreased by 68 per cent in rural areas and 70 per cent in urban areas from 1972-73 to 2004-05, while pearl millet consumption fell by 59 per cent in rural areas and 67 per cent in urban areas over the same period (Rao et al., 2010; Basavaraj et al., 2010). Sorghum and pearl millets are primarily consumed by middle- and low-income households in both rural and urban areas, but their consumption was lowest among higher-income consumers. Despite this, pearl millet remains an important dietary component for poor households in both areas. There are regional variations in sorghum consumption, with states like Maharashtra and Karnataka maintaining higher sorghum consumption compared to others like Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where cheaper staples have led to increased substitution. Socio-economic factors, including rising incomes and perceptions of social status, have also contributed to the shift in sorghum and pearl millet utilisation, with an increasing portion being used for industrial purposes like animal feed, alcohol production, and food processing. Government policies supporting these industrial uses have also played a role, highlighting the potential for market expansion beyond

traditional food consumption (Basavaraj et al., 2010; Rao et al., 2010; Nagaraj et al., 2013).

Finger millet and small millets showed an even steeper decline in consumption. According to Sreekala et al. (2023), small millets experienced the largest reduction, with a 97.62 per cent decrease in per capita consumption from 1977-78 to 2011-12. Sorghum consumption decreased by 88.41 per cent, finger millet by 83.33 per cent, and pearl millet by 68.67 per cent. Urban households followed a similar trend, with sorghum consumption dropping by 82.44 per cent, pearl millet by 64.86 per cent, and finger millet by 59.44 per cent. The rate of decline was generally higher in rural areas. A study by Chaudhary et al. (2023) found that rural consumption of small millets fell to 0.02 kg per capita per month, while finger millet saw a 50 per cent decrease from 2000-01 to 2011-12. However, urban households exhibited more diverse consumption patterns for finger millet over the same period.

The decline in millet consumption was largely due to the increased availability of rice and wheat through government schemes like the PDS, which reduced demand for millets. Urbanisation, modernisation, and shifting dietary preferences have also led to millets being replaced by quicker-cooking processed foods and refined grains. The longer cooking times of millets, a lack of value-added products, and poor storage and marketing infrastructure have further discouraged their consumption. Moreover, lower profitability for farmers and inadequate research and development have made millets less competitive compared to major crops like rice, wheat, and maize (Basavaraj et al., 2010; Rao et al., 2010; Nagaraj et al., 2013; Anbukkani et al., 2017; Sreekala et al., 2023; Chaudhary et al., 2023).

In recent years, global millet consumption has experienced a resurgence. Data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) shows that worldwide millet production increased by 14 per cent between 2013 and 2018. This growth highlights millets' growing popularity as a valuable food source, particularly in developing countries where they provide essential nutrition. Millet production in India rose by nearly 24 per cent from 2015-16 to 2020-21 (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2022). Despite declining per capita consumption in India, rising awareness of millets' health benefits has led to a renewed interest in these grains (Kane-Potaka et al., 2021). Factors such as increased health consciousness, demand for gluten-free alternatives, and recognition of millets as climate-resilient crops have contributed to their growing popularity. As global consumers seek healthier and more sustainable food options, millets are poised to play an increasingly important role in global food systems.

Factors Affecting Millet Consumption

Analysing the factors influencing the consumption of food grains and cereals is beneficial when examining the factors affecting millet consumption due to the interconnected nature of these dietary choices. The factors that drive the demand for millets such as demographic factors, household income, price sensitivity, taste preferences, and nutritional awareness are often intertwined with those influencing the consumption of cereals and food grains. Moreover, the nutritional profile of millets compared to other cereals underscores the importance of considering factors affecting overall cereal consumption when analysing millet demand. Changes in consumer preferences, government policies, and market dynamics impact the overall consumption of cereals, which in turn can influence the demand for millets. Therefore, this section provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature focusing on the factors driving the demand for cereals and foodgrains and the ones that could potentially impact millet consumption trends.

Income levels have long been a key factor in cereal consumption in India. Chand and Kumar (2002) identified the importance of coarse cereals in ensuring food security, especially for low-income households in certain states. Their analysis of data from the National Sample Survey revealed a positive correlation between income and total cereal consumption, largely driven by rice and wheat. However, as income increased, the consumption of coarse cereals, seen as inferior goods, decreased (Murthy, 2000). This trend was confirmed by Mittal (2007), who demonstrated using the QUAIDS model that higher incomes lead to reduced cereal consumption, with a shift toward high-value commodities. This aligns with Engel's law, which suggests that as income rises, the proportion of income spent on staple foods decreases. Income elasticities of demand for food are significantly higher among lower-income households. Across all income groups, cereals have the lowest income elasticity at 0.19, indicating that as incomes rise, demand for non-cereal food items will increase at a faster pace. This difference in elasticities is important for understanding dietary shifts as incomes grow. A significant link has been found between monthly income and millet purchases, with wealthier households more likely to consume millets. However, Umanath et al. (2018) found that per capita income did not significantly influence millet consumption, indicating price had a stronger impact. Higher education levels and larger household sizes were also associated with reduced millet consumption, further illustrating the complex relationship between socioeconomic factors and diet.

The pricing of agricultural products plays a significant role in shaping consumer choices. Studies show that cereal and coarse cereal consumption has a negative relationship with price (Murthy, 2000). Using the QUAIDS model, calculated price and income elasticities for various food items like rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals, milk, vegetables, and fruits. They found that all own-price elasticities were negative, although cereals had lower price elasticities than higher-value commodities. In times of food price inflation, affording a balanced diet becomes more challenging. Umanath et al. (2018) supported these findings, showing that rising millet prices reduce household consumption. For example, a Rs. 10 per kg price increase in finger millet can reduce the likelihood of its consumption by about 7 per cent. Similarly, a Rs. 10 per kg increase in the price of pearl millet and maize can reduce consumption probability by around 2 per cent. As prices rise, the amount of millet consumed also drops, with a Rs. 10 per kg increase in finger millet potentially leading to a reduction of 11 kg in annual consumption among current consumers. Higher millet prices similarly reduce overall consumption, with households scaling back both the likelihood and the quantity of millets consumed. As food price inflation rises, the demand for coarse cereals for human consumption is expected to increase due to the higher total net effect for these cereals compared to rice and wheat. Despite the negative income effect, coarse cereals may see a stronger demand due to their relative affordability, changing dietary preferences, and health consciousness.

Regional disparities in cereal consumption reflect varying agricultural practices and cultural preferences. George et al. (2021) found that regional variations within Kerala make some millet varieties more popular due to local traditions and health perceptions. Urban and rural households also show differences in cereal consumption. Studies by Durgad et al. (2021) and Vahini et al. (2023) revealed that urban households tend to consume more millet per capita than rural households, likely due to greater health awareness and better access to millet products. Conversely, rural households, despite having local access to millets, consume them less often, as they rely more on millets as traditional staples. This disparity can be attributed to price sensitivity and varying levels of health awareness. In urban areas like Bengaluru, millets have shifted from being seen as a staple for lower-income households to a healthy food preferred by the new middle class (Erler et al., 2022), showing how urbanisation and lifestyle changes have altered perceptions of millets.

The price of related goods, such as rice and wheat, also plays a role in influencing millet consumption through the substitution effect. The share of cereal consumption in total food expenditure has been declining as non-food items become relatively cheaper, leading consumers to shift their spending away from food (Mittal, 2007). Coarse cereals often serve as substitutes for rice and wheat, depending on cultural preferences, dietary habits, and availability. The degree of substitutability between coarse cereals and fine cereals like rice and wheat varies with factors such as taste preferences and market supply (Murthy, 2000). The price elasticity of demand for millets influences how much consumers shift toward millets when rice and wheat prices rise. Chand and Kumar (2002) noted that policies like subsidised distribution of rice and wheat through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and technological improvements have made these grains more accessible, leading to a decline in coarse cereal consumption. Promoting millet consumption requires addressing these policy biases. Initiatives such as including millets in the PDS, developing value-added millet products, and raising awareness can help improve millet consumption and nutritional outcomes.

Various factors like income, price, regional preferences, and policies interact to influence millet consumption. To effectively promote millet consumption and ensure food security, it's important to address barriers such as price sensitivity, policy biases, and low consumer awareness. Policymakers and stakeholders can contribute to reviving millets and integrating them into mainstream diets by creating supportive policies and improving infrastructure for millet production and distribution. Addressing the factors that limit millet consumption can help increase demand, improve nutrition, and ensure food security in both urban and rural areas.

Table 1
List of Variables Affecting the Consumption of Cereals and Coarse Cereals as Presented in Various Literature

Variable List	Expected Effect on Consumption Expenditure	Reasons for effect	References
HH Size	Positive or negative	Negative for poor HHs because of the availability of cheaper substitutes. Positive for rich HHs.	Mittal, 2007; Umanath et al., 2018
Gender of the HH Head	Potential Influence	Traditional roles and decision-making power	Umanath et al., 2018
Age of the HH Head	Positive	Generational differences and health concerns	Umanath et al., 2018

Variable List	Expected Effect on Consumption Expenditure	Reasons for effect	References
Age	Negative/Positive	Different age groups have varying nutritional needs and preferences	Dhevika and Saradha, 2018;
Gender	Potential influence	Cultural norms and dietary habits	Abdullahi et al., 2011; George et al., 2021
Marital Status	Potential influence	Shared meals and dietary preferences	Barratry and Rajapushpam, 2018;
Education Level	Positive; Negative	Knowledge and awareness about nutrition, healthier food choices, and health consciousness; Millets are considered inferior goods.	Dhevika and Saradha, 2018; Umanath et al., 2018
Price	Negative	Budget constraint	Murthy, 2000; Umanath et al., 2018; Durgad et al., 2021;
Income	Positive or Negative	Affordability, Purchasing Power; Millets are treated as inferior goods.	Murthy, 2000; Chand & Kumar, 2002; Umanath et al., 2018
Taste and Food Preferences	Potential influence	Taste and preferences and willingness to try different food commodities	Chand & Kumar, 2002; Mittal, 2007; Durgad et al., 2021;
Habit of Eating Food Away from Home	Positive or Negative	Availability and affordability	Umanath et al., 2018
Self- Production	Positive	Accessibility and affordability	Umanath et al., 2018
Availability of Other Substitutes	Negative	Availability of affordable substitutes	Murthy, 2000; Chand & Kumar, 2002; Mittal, 2007;

Consumer Preferences towards Millets

Understanding consumer preference for millets is essential for their successful integration into modern food systems. These are influenced by demographic, social, psychological, and cultural factors. Demographics such as age, gender, and education play a significant role. Higher education is linked to greater awareness of millet's nutritional benefits, leading to increased consumption (Kalaisekvi et al., 2017). Amarapurkar and Banakar (2017) noted that millet consumers often have lower educational backgrounds, yet awareness campaigns can reach diverse groups effectively. In Kerala, younger, educated individuals consume more millets, while women often purchase them for health reasons (Erler et al., 2022). However, in Karnataka, foxtail millet is consumed primarily by middle-aged males from nuclear families (Amarapurkar and Banakar, 2017). Age is positively correlated with millet consumption due to traditional preferences and health

awareness (Umanath, 2018). Older generations, who grew up eating millets, are more familiar with their taste and health benefits, such as aiding digestion and providing fibre, minerals, and antioxidants.

Health awareness plays a significant role in millet consumption. Millets are rich in dietary fibre, vitamins, and proteins, and are gluten-free with a low glycemic index, making them suitable for preventing chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Consumers who prioritise health are increasingly choosing millets for their nutritional benefits and sustainability (George et al., 2021; Mohan et al., 2021; Reddy and Patel, 2023). Millet's nutritional value was the primary reason for its purchase, and urban consumers were willing to pay higher prices for health benefits (Durgad et al., 2021). Health issues and weight loss goals are also driving millet adoption (Kane-Potaka et al., 2021). Additionally, the rise in non-communicable diseases and COVID-19 has heightened awareness and consumption of millets (Devi et al., 2023). Social media and educational campaigns have been critical in spreading information, but a large portion of the population remains unaware, suggesting the need for further educational efforts.

Cultural practices also shape millet consumption. Cultural significance, including seasonal consumption during festivals, influences purchasing patterns. In Kerala, younger individuals with higher education and greater health awareness were more likely to consume millets (George et al., 2021). Marketing strategies and personal recommendations, such as from doctors, relatives, and friends, significantly influence consumer behaviour towards millet products (Amarapurkar and Banakar, 2017). Additionally, Kane-Potaka et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of appealing millet products and spreading nutritional knowledge to increase market accessibility and consumer adoption.

Conclusion

The research papers discussed in this review collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of the production, consumption, and utilisation patterns of millets in India, with a particular focus on sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, and other minor millet varieties. These studies shed light on various aspects such as historical trends, socioeconomic factors, regional disparities, consumer preferences, and policy implications. Across the studies, a consistent trend emerges indicating a decline in millet consumption, attributed to factors such as rising incomes, urbanisation, and government policies favouring other cereals like rice and wheat. This decline is particularly evident in urban areas, while some regional variations persist.

Furthermore, the research paper highlights the shifting dynamics in millet cultivation, with fluctuations in production and yields over time. Despite challenges such as declining cultivation areas and profitability concerns for farmers, there is potential for value addition and market expansion, especially in alternative uses such as animal feed, alcohol production, and food processing. Consumer preferences and awareness play a crucial role in shaping millet consumption patterns, with factors like taste, price, health perceptions, and cultural attitudes influencing household dietary choices. There is a need for targeted interventions to promote millet consumption, including awareness campaigns, nutritional education, and product diversification, particularly among health-conscious consumers. Additionally, the studies underscore the importance of policy interventions to support millet cultivation, improve market access, and address regional disparities in production and consumption. Strategic measures such as subsidies, procurement policies, and market development initiatives could help incentivise millet cultivation and enhance its contribution to food security and nutrition.

However, despite these insights, there exists a literature gap regarding the efficacy of interventions to promote millet production and consumption. While numerous studies have highlighted the nutritional benefits and economic advantages of millets, there is a dearth of comprehensive evaluations on the effectiveness of specific awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and policy measures in increasing millet uptake across diverse demographic segments. Furthermore, there is a need for further investigation into the role of cultural perceptions, marketing strategies, and collaborations within the food industry in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours toward millets. Bridging this gap would offer valuable insights for policymakers, public health advocates, and industry stakeholders striving to foster millet consumption as a sustainable and healthy dietary choice.

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India's Domestic Migrants and their Vulnerability to COVID-19: The Lack of Visibility of Female Migrants

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The COVID-19 epidemic severely impacted India's social and economic fabric, particularly affecting the marginalised and migrating communities. This crisis might potentially be one of the most significant migration crises India has ever had. It is estimated that almost 400 million workers were unable to purchase essential needs. This article focuses on the challenges faced by domestic female migrants in India during the first and subsequent waves of the coronavirus epidemic. The research is based on a secondary data source as it utilises literature and newspaper searches to examine the underlying variables that contribute to the significant movement of internal migrants. Government migration surveys tend to follow female mobility solely within the declared purpose of marriage, keeping a large

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amount of female labour migration hidden and making female migrants invisible. Despite the fact that female migrants face more severe challenges while migrating, subsequent to migration, the pandemic lockdown and the anticipated economic consequences of the pandemic, their experiences have received inadequate attention. Thus, this study particularly focuses on female migrants and the ongoing neglect of gender as a significant aspect of migration during the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of India

Introduction

A nationwide lockdown was imposed on 25th March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The announcement of the nationwide lockdown provided the whole country with just four hours' notice to prepare for the next 21 days. India has around 600 million internal migrants, the majority of whom are workers who are not able to access the official workforce. In other circumstances, they could decide to explore from impoverished areas to urban centers, sometimes choosing to settle permanently in the metropolis. The imposition of the shutdown placed them in a state of despair, devoid of financial resources, unable to meet their rent or sustenance needs due to unemployment. In the first stages of the lockdown, they resorted to strenuous efforts to return to their hometowns, relying on familial connections to endure. They walked to far-off communities' tiny children slung over rolling sacks and the elderly borne on their shoulders. While several individuals succumbed to heat-related ailments and accidents, a few incidents captured the nation's interest.

Although previous academic studies have overlooked gender as a factor in migration, this study highlights how internal migrants' precarious existence on the periphery of society persisted during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. The research aims to draw attention to internal migrants and emphasise their lack of visibility on several fronts, particularly the disregard given to female refugees during the epidemic. It highlights how gender is still an overlooked aspect of the conversation around migration and how women are marginalised (Agnihotri and Hans, 2021; Banerjee, 2022).

It was the media coverage that made the effects of the lockdown on migrants more visible, little was done to improve their long-term condition and there was little coverage of the lockdown's effects on female migrants. A 15 years old girl from a slum in Delhi embarked on a 1,200 km journey from Delhi to Bihar in 10 days carrying her crippled father seated on the back of

her bicycle. This story stands out as one of the few Indian narratives of the pandemic that showcases the bravery of a little girl child.

Background

The word 'migrant' encompasses a diverse range of persons, including immigrants, emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and those who move inside their own nation, frequently for work purposes. In the latter scenario, migration often occurs between rural regions, between metropolitan areas, or from rural to urban areas. This group of individuals is just as varied as the one we first discussed. Internally migrating individuals originate from many origins, each with distinct prospects awaiting them. The most marginalised individuals, commonly known as 'migrant workers', originate from rural regions and migrate in search of economic and social advancement. They secure employment in both organised and unorganised sectors, with the latter being particularly characterised by low wages and harsh working conditions. This unseen, although certainly not inconsequential, segment of the workforce was facing severe difficulties as the whole nation remained at home due to a pandemic— with the exception of them.

Migration Patterns and Mobility

Prior to analysing the reasons behind the sequence of events, it is crucial to comprehend the historical trends of migration in India, the methods used to quantify it and the modifications it has undergone. The Census conducted decennially and the migration surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Office every five years establish two distinct definitions for internal migration: an individual existence in a location different from their birthplace or an individual existence in a location different from their usual place of residence (UPR). The number of migrants identified would vary depending on whether the Place of Birth definition, the UPR definition, or both are used. Furthermore, another fundamental measure is the duration an individual has been absent from their birthplace or UPR. Considering this, migration may be categorised as permanent, semi-permanent (sometimes referred to as long-term circular), seasonal, or circular migration. The latter two phenomena often happen for a brief duration; therefore, whether these people meet the criteria of being migrants depends on their current place of residence during the survey. Furthermore, the distinction between a family that has fully migrated to a new location

and one that has merely experienced the departure of one or more persons also has an impact (Indian Council of Social Science Research, 2011).

Trends of Internal Migration in India, 1971–2011 (%)

Source: Registrar General of India (2011)
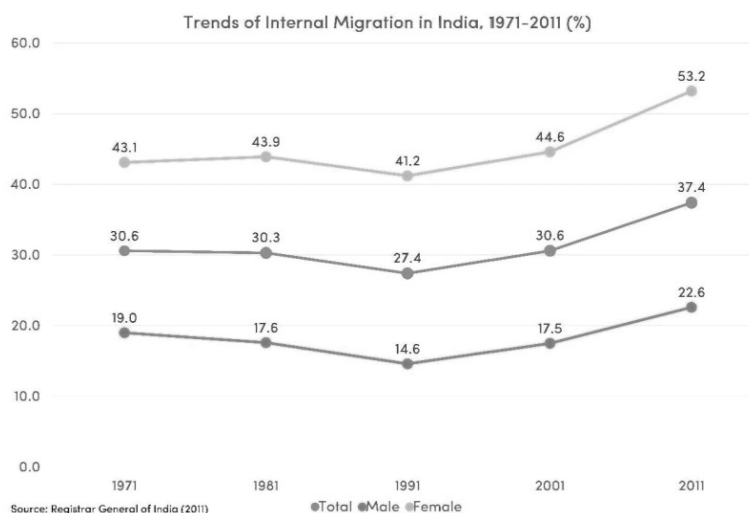
Migrants are categorised based on the kind of movement they engage in: intra-district, inter-district, or interstate migration. Data on migration between urban and rural areas, between urban and rural areas and between rural and urban areas are also included for each group. Both polls require respondents to self-report their motivations for moving.

The main factor driving male migration is employment, whereas marriage primarily motivates women. However, it is worth mentioning that many women, although moving owing to marriage, frequently quickly engage in work after migrating (Rajan and Sumeetha, 2020). Migration is fundamentally driven by urbanisation. The migration to urban regions has seen a significant rise, particularly among males residing in rural areas, due to the rapid growth of informal and unregulated employment sectors in cities. Simultaneously, the increasing cost of living has marginalised migrant labour. Furthermore, the financial support these migrants provide to their families in their home countries via money transfers continues to be minimal (Chandrasekhar and Sharma, 2015).

The invisibility of labour migrants from rural areas operating in metropolitan and peri-urban settings was further intensified during the pandemic since they were the ones who experienced the most significant consequences of the lockdown measures (Bandyopadhyay, 2020). There is a marginalisation of women in migration discourse as it continues to disregard gender as a significant aspect of the discussion on migration.[1] The study of

Kundu (2018), Banerjee (2022), Agnihotri and Hans (2021) and Muzumdar et al. (2013) are expanded upon in this work, which also improves our understanding of gendered migration in the pandemic setting.

Narratives of Internal Migrants: Experiences and Problems

The circumstances finally compelled the national and state administrations to act. Starting on May 1, dedicated trains were arranged to facilitate the transportation of these refugees. As of May 12th, 66 trains had departed from Maharashtra, a state in western India, carrying around 73,212 people. Within 10 days, the number of shramik (labour) special trains increased to 2,600, transporting millions of passengers to their respective final states of destination. Most of these trains were destined for two states, Bihar and UP, illustrating the migration pathways. Simultaneously, state transport vehicles enabled the transportation of migrants between different districts, shuttling them to and from boundaries between states and remote communities. Occasionally, these busses would come to a stop outside of towns. Some individuals were unwelcoming and unsympathetic towards these travelers, expressing concerns that people coming back from areas heavily affected by the illness, such as Mumbai, may potentially spread the sickness to the countryside. The distressing images showed groups of migrant labourers being forced to crouch down while being sprayed with sodium hypochlorite as a means of sanitising them (Deshpande, 2020). Several migrants availed themselves of trucks for rides to reach the border between Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and proceeded towards their native states. The images showed 50 and even 70, migrants crowded together on a single vehicle. Many truck drivers extorted exorbitant amounts of money from passengers by falsely offering to transport them to their home states. However, they would ultimately abandon the passengers at state borders, which were still far from their hometowns. Additional narratives and visuals emphasised the plight of migrants who lack financial resources, face challenges in obtaining food, experience hunger-related fatalities, as well as enduring humiliation at the hands of law enforcement. However, there were limited visual representations depicting female migrants and there was little discussion about the severity of their circumstances. It was also not widely acknowledged that about half of the individuals involved in the mass movement were females and kids (Hans et al., 2021). Even at a distance, the scenario heightened worries and served as the motivation to carry out this investigation.

India lacks detailed information on the overall number of internal migrants and their locations of origin and destination, despite the practice being common for many years without official statistics being accessible. The intricate migration trends have impeded study and statistical analysis. In addition, several aspects of this phenomenon lack formal structure, making it difficult to monitor migrants accurately. This lack of tracking leads to the paucity of migrant worker-related literature. However, the epidemic has brought attention to these individuals. Due to the long-lasting economic consequences of the pandemic, it is projected that more migrants will be leaving their home countries in pursuit of work to better their families' financial circumstances. In addition, with the transition of employment trends towards remote work and the growing influence of technology advancements in both enterprises and personal life, significant portions of the workforce, such as domestic workers and nannies, may become obsolete. As a result, migrants are expected to face more severe conditions in the decade after the pandemic. The epidemic is expected to cause India's economy, which already shrank during the demonetisation era as attempts were made to incorporate the unorganised sector into the official and organised sectors, to shrink much more. The country's official and informal economies are predicted to be significantly impacted by this decline (Bandyopadhyay, 2020). In addition, the significant influx of Indian and South Asian labourers to Middle Eastern nations is anticipated to diminish (Jamil and Dutta, 2021). Considering the many factors and little research on internal migrants, this study aims to address the needs and concerns of this vulnerable population, particularly female migrants. Doing so takes a tiny but significant step toward the correct path.

Thematic Analysis of Problems

The COVID-19 pandemic has recently brought attention to internal migration, which has been a longstanding reality (Upadhya, 2013). Globally, the number of domestic migrants is over four times higher than foreign migrants, with a significant increase observed in developing nations (UNDP, 2009). Internal migration in India rose from 314 million to 454 million between 2001 and 2011. Current estimates suggest around 600 million internal migrants in India, constituting approximately 50 per cent of the population living away from their birthplaces (Rajan and Sumeetha, 2020). Uttar Pradesh and Bihar contribute the most migrants, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal. States like Kerala, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra are the primary destinations for migrants (Sen, 2022).

Developmental policies in India, such as initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission, encouraged rapid internal migration. The focus on urban development and limited access to formal jobs has facilitated easier urbanisation and expanded opportunities in the informal labour market. Moreover, migration is influenced by laws and politics within a particular state. As a result, when migrants migrate for employment, they not only face challenges due to varying state regulations on pay, working conditions, identification papers, labour unions and money sent back to their home countries, but they are also disregarded and unseen in policy discussions at both at the state and federal levels.

The Complexities of Cyclical Migration

Internal migration is a means of subsistence for those who are economically disadvantaged. The incidence of migration is astonishing because of the many variances in terms of seasonal patterns, geographical areas, industries, social castes and intergenerational manifestations. This leads to the creation of insufficient classifications and inconsistent labels. Consequently, choosing an appropriate approach for investigating internal migration is challenging. Migrants are generally classified as either permanent or long-term, or temporary or short-term. However, a significant trend in internal migration is people from rural areas who reside in cities or peri-urban areas for extended periods, without establishing a strong presence.

Breman (2013) discusses the cyclic nature of their mobility pattern, characterised by frequent visits to their homes in their original places and subsequent return to their working life. Additional internal migrants are only engaged in temporary employment at their destinations, regularly and repeatedly travelling between their original and destination regions. India has a significant number of circular migrants, both short-term and long-term. Originally, the majority of cyclical movement was linked to periodic activities (Breman, 2013). Circular migration refers to the repeated movement of individuals, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, between different locations for the purpose of seeking work[2]. Scholars like Breman (2013) Deshingar and Sen (2022) suggest that, although circular migration plays a crucial role in the Indian economy and is expanding, it is difficult to obtain precise numbers. According to Srivastav (2018), in 2018, an estimated 58 million individuals engaged in short-term circular migration, with 44 million migrating to metropolitan regions and 28 million engaging in long-term circular migration.

The only factor driving seasonal cyclical migration is the necessity for employment. The majority of seasonal migrants work in construction, mining, plantations, quarries, brick kilns, agriculture and seafood processing. It is often noticed that many urban circular migrants operate as casual labourers, head-loaders, rickshaw pullers, or hawkers in the unorganised manufacturing, construction, services, or transportation sectors. Though seasonal migration is often linked to the agricultural sector, it's crucial to remember that, in the modern era, little over 20 per cent of circular migrants work in the sector (Srivastava, 2020a). Seasonal migration has both advantages and disadvantages. Destinations have advantages from using an inexpensive, temporary labour force, notably in the fields of agriculture and construction. These are industries that the local worker frequently shows little interest in since they involve demanding physical labour for low compensation. Remittances provide significant benefits to places of origin. The problems include the inability to generate positive monetary returns and continuing livelihoods that are below the level of subsistence, so creating a harmful cycle.

Insights on the Migratory Patterns of Women

Various scholars recognise the gender characteristic of migration (Hoang, 2011, Kofman and Raghuram, 2022). In the early migration literature in India, there is abundant discussion on the gender aspect of migration since, women are generally seen as secondary participants or dependent followers in the movement led largely by males (Mazumdar, 2013). The primary reason often mentioned for female migration is marriage, which may be primarily attributed to the combined factors of marriage and reliance on the primary earner (Shanthi, 2006; Roy Chowdhury and Upadhya, 2020; Singh et al., 2015). However, a few newer data sources provide limited insights into female migration.

In recent years, females have been more often migrating independently (Singh et al., 2015), primarily for professional and educational objectives. Mazumdar (2013), Roy Chowdhury and Upadhya (2020), Shanthi (2006) and others consider that female migrants are drawn to areas with greater work prospects in textile units, export sectors and electronic assembly. They further state that along with domestic and call center employment, married and other post-migration urban female migrants diversify into new careers in retail, cosmetology and teaching. Nevertheless, independent female migrants are not tracked in macro-studies.

The 2001 census reflects that 71 per cent of the 309 million internal migrants were women. There were 454 million internal migrants in 2011. In all these censuses, the predominant migratory flow is from rural areas to other rural areas with a significant number of female migrants. Marriage is the prominent factor behind the relocation of these females. Among male migrants, 79 per cent relocated inside the same state they were counted in, while 21 per cent migrated between other states. In contrast, among female migrants, 90 per cent moved within the same state, while just 10 per cent went between different states. Within the migration flow from rural to urban areas, men constitute the majority, representing 47 per cent of all movers. By contrast, 36 per cent of female migrants moved between rural regions, indicating a significant shift in female mobility. As discussed by Rajan and Sumeetha, 2020, in the intercensal period, 32 per cent of migrants relocated for jobs, indicating that employment is the primary motivator for interstate migration. Furthermore, research indicates that 88 per cent of women's jobs in India are classified as informal (Mitra and Sinha, 2021). As such, it is essential to give this group's research on the topic of migration a top priority.

Gendered Pattern in Migration

Although women made up 70 per cent of internal migrants in 2011, according to census data (Kundu, 2018; Mahapatro, 2020), the motivations for their travels were quite different from those of men. Among those aged 20-34, 38.5 per cent of males attributed their migration to labour or employment, but just 2.7 per cent of women reported the same reason (Mahapatro, 2020). Conversely, when marriage is mentioned as the reason for migration, the percentages are inverted, with just 3.1 per cent of males naming marriage as the motivation compared to 71.2 per cent of women. The divergent figures indicate a recurring trend in which males travel in search of jobs, with their spouses joining them. Employment is not the primary motivation for the migration of women (Kundu, 2018, Francis and Dubey, 2019). Although Indian society is generally accepting of women relocating from their local homes to different locations, they exhibit resistance when the motive is unrelated to marriage. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in female migration (Kundu, 2018). Indian women are now doing much more domestic travel compared to previous years, motivated by many factors. The proportion of female migration increased from 38.2 per cent since the 49th NSS study in 1993 to 45.6 per cent, according to the NSS data 2008 (Kundu, 2018). A few micro-studies provide data in addition to the NSS and census, which are the two primary sources of macro-data. Centre for Women's

Development Studies CWDS surveyed 16,156 families between 2009 and 2016 (Mazumdar, 2013). To find gendered patterns of the labour movement, this focused migration research coupled individual primary surveys with independent household surveys and a comprehensive fieldwork technique. According to the CWDS study, a third of labour mobility is accounted for by short-term migration—a far higher rate than that recorded by the NSS. The study highlighted the transient nature of migration as something frequent. Furthermore, Mazumdar (2013) noted that a significant portion of migrants are temporary residents in rural regions, which called into question the urbanisation paradigm found in most migration theories.

CWDS research made it possible to compare certain village homes with and without migrants. Indicative of the importance of migration in the villages, the survey found that 56 per cent of the families contained economic migrants. The fact that women migrants made up 39 per cent of the 7,288 labour migrants in the comprehensive village household surveys from the 2013 research is another intriguing discovery. This percentage is greater than the 10 per cent derived from the NSS survey conducted in 2007 and 2008. Mazumdar et al. (2013) report that the CWDS study's authors noticed that a large percentage of labour migration by women is still hidden in official migration surveys, which often only track women's travel for the stated purpose of marriage. This adds to the idea that migrant women are invisible.

Reason for Migration, 2007-08 (per cent of Female Migrants)

	Work	Marriage	Education
Andhra Pradesh (United)	5.72	51.06	<1
Arunachal Pradesh	3.16	40.39	<1
Assam	6.57	47.14	<1
Bihar	4.11	49.28	<1
Karnataka	5	41.6	<1
Kerala	9.17	36.76	<1
Chhattisgarh	8.93	57.7	<1
Uttar Pradesh	4.04	49.51	<1
Goa	5.09	53.38	<1
Gujarat	2.99	50.94	<1
Haryana	2.15	68.76	<1
Himachal Pradesh	3.32	53.18	<1
Jammu and Kashmir	3.32	35.88	<1
Jharkhand	4.09	70.06	<1
West Bengal	4.48	63	<1
Madhya Pradesh	4.12	65.44	<1
Maharashtra	3.67	52.9	<1
Manipur	12.36	23.22	<1
Meghalaya	4.87	50.25	<1
Mizoram	4.15	12.91	<1

	Work	Marriage	Education
Nagaland	4.82	37.24	<1
Orissa	6.11	57.76	<1
Punjab	3.15	59.99	<1
Rajasthan	2.86	60.14	<1
Sikkim	4.29	56.55	<1
Tamil Nadu	7.23	44.42	<1
Tripura	2.84	54.53	<1
Uttarakhand	3.07	55.75	<1
Delhi	3.98	45.94	<1

Source-NSSO (2007-2008)

Pandemic and Female Migration

Disasters, be they natural or man-made also have deep but different impacts on migrants. Disasters can not only cause migration streams, but they also have differential effects on gender (Banerjee, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic led to a vast and massive migration in India. According to Rukmani (2020), following the March 2020 closure, four out of every 10 working women lost their employment in two months, totaling more than 17 million women. The majority of male migrants in the first wave of the epidemic went back to their homes or places of origin; however, others went back to their destination because they could not find employment there. The dynamics of development are altered by reverse migration, which also resets the migratory equations for women and sets the economy back by around 15 years (Deshpande, 2020; Rajan et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is projected that the post-COVID global economic crisis will worsen gender disparities in employment and cause a feminisation of job losses (Rajan et al., 2020). Women will thus probably experience two effects (Agnihotri and Hans, 2021).

Additional Gender Disparities, Effects and Migration-Related Factors

Men and women migrate at different ages. It has been identified in the studies of Francis and Dubey (2019) and Mazumdar (2013) that male migrants identify contractors as the source of harassment they experience at their destinations, but more than half of the female victims describe their direct supervisor or major employer as the harasser. Sexual harassment at work is far more widespread and severe for female migrants, but it is also underreported and little studied. According to Mazumdar (2013), only around 25 per cent of male migrants bring their minor children with them, which further exacerbates the gender disparities in migration and places an extra burden on migrant women. Most female migrant workers travel with their children (57 per cent).

Women who migrate for paid domestic employment, especially from rural to urban areas, do so across all caste, tribe and community boundaries, in contrast to stereotypes about female migration based on gender or caste distinctions (Mazumdar et al., 2013). The main gender-specific aspect of migration to metropolitan areas is the prevalence of women in paid household employment. Although the number of domestic workers has grown, these jobs are characterised by low pay, poor negotiation circumstances, informality and the lack of contracts (Agnihotri and Hans, 2021). COVID-19 made millions of Indian women who worked as domestic servants jobless. During the pandemic, live-in or part-time domestic workers who moved to different households for employment were effectively excluded (Agnihotri and Hans, 2021; Sen, 2022). Most cases of sexual harassment and abuse also take place at home. In a recent research of 120 female domestic workers in Lucknow, none reported suffering violence at home, even though migrant domestic workers reported greater levels of abuse (Khanna and Agarwal, 2020). This further contributed to the challenges faced by female migrants being invisible.

Key Discussion

This study focused on internal female migration and examined the literature on factors that support and hinder their migration within the country, including neoliberal policies, unfavourable structural and environmental conditions in rural areas, a sizeable unorganised labour market and a dearth of pertinent national and local policies protecting migrants. Additionally, it confirms what was already known: the Census and NSS have not been able to identify circular migrants due to the migratory character of travel and the weak classification of migration parameters like caste and poverty (Sen, 2022).

Additionally, since existing data sets only follow female migrants after marriage, they only trace them very little. Despite these obstacles, women make up a significant portion of internal migration movements and are increasingly migrating independently for employment and academic purposes. There are not many other studies that track female migrants in general and independent female migrants in particular, other than the CWDS study. This study highlights how internal migrants' precarious existence on the periphery of society, even during the initial wave of the COVID-19 epidemic and lockdowns, continued.

Although the repercussions of the lockout on grantees were made more widely known thanks to media attention, not much was done to

ameliorate their long-term situation overall. Furthermore, almost little was written about how the lockdown affected female refugees. The fact that migrants are often left out of policy, academic research and mainstream media means that their viewpoints are not included in the narratives, which is why such a scenario continues.

In several research studies, a comprehensive literature analysis on internal migration before the pandemic found recurring elements. A comprehensive literature search on India's internal migration during the pandemic was not conducted, even though specific research on migrants was available. But even these pieces failed to provide enough attention to how the epidemic affects internal migrants on a gender basis. Gender will continue to be the overlooked aspect of migration if this imbalance persists and women will not be included in the limited policy measures intended to support migrants, let alone have their rights recognised. If the lack of comprehensive and consistent data on migrants hinders the development of policies and laws, then the distribution of welfare programmes - whether for food, credit, finance, unemployment insurance, or other benefits - is rendered impossible by the absence of identity documents.

Compared to typical recessions, which have disproportionately impacted men's employment, the economic and labour slowdown caused by the pandemic is expected to have a more significant and long-lasting effect on women's employment. According to Mitra and Sinha (2021) during the first wave, the people most negatively affected were urban migrant workers in the informal labour sector. When migrant mothers are forced to support their children and take care of their extended household back home while trying to find or keep informal employment, their situation becomes even direr if working mothers are burdened with increased childcare responsibilities as a result of educational institutions and daycare centres closing due to viral variants. It is anticipated that following COVID-19, a greater percentage of women—especially migrant women—will lose their jobs. It is highlighted by Agnihotri and Hans, 2021; Banerjee, 2022 that these women will also likely experience greater pay gaps, unequal employment opportunities, a greater burden of unpaid care labour and an increased risk of domestic abuse.

Conclusion

To sum up, the epidemic has shown not just the vast number of internal migrants in India, but also the complex reality of their life beyond mere statistics. Moreover, it has shown the general ignorance of academics,

public servants and the media about India's working class, particularly with regard to migrant labour. As maintained by Srivastava (2020), circular migrants, who make up a significant share of the unofficial economy outside of the agricultural sector, are the category of migrants most negatively affected. As correctly highlighted by Bandopadhyay (2020) due to their unstable lifestyle, any setback—such as demonetisation or an interruption caused by the epidemic quickly deprives them and their families of their means of livelihood. Agnihotri and Hans (2021 and Banerjee (2022) have pointed out that female migrants have extra difficulties and disruptions since they are the marginalised victims of the underlying structural, social and economic circumstances that are also left under-recognised and invisible.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

End Note

1.   Agnihotriand Hans, 2021; Banerjee, 2022
2.   Deshingar and Start (2003), Sen (2022) and Thachil (2017)

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The Politics of Heritage in Varanasi: The Case of Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor Project[1]

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The paper looks at the various contestations around the definition of heritage in Varanasi to suggest ways in which democratic methods of governing sacred heritage can be achieved. It highlights three specific discourses around heritage by analysing the case of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor Project. The first is the vision of the development of heritage by the state which advocates private investment to decongest the areas around the temple to give it a 'world-class' look and develop it into a corridor in order to harness its full pilgrimage tourist potential. The second one looks at both voices of resistance and support by civil society. The third one addresses some of the anxieties of the minority groups. The conclusion consists of a critical analysis of the project and possibilities for further research.

Keywords: Heritage, Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor Project, State, Public-Private Investment, Civil Society.

Shri Narendra Modi, the leader of BJP who was soon to be the Prime Minister of India gave a glimpse of his aspirations regarding Varanasi to secure its place as a spiritual capital in the whole world[2] when he came out of the collectorate after filing the nomination form for Lok Sabha elections

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from Varanasi on 24 April, 2014[3]. His address to some extent forebodes the changes that were going to happen in the 'sacred geography'[4] of Kashi[5]. Before contesting the national election for the post of Prime Minister, Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat for three consecutive terms which he had attained a reputation for being an able and efficient administrator who had the credit of inventing the 'Gujarat model of development'[6]. His experiences from Gujarat could prove to be useful to achieve the same in Varanasi. Highlighting a crucial project of urban transformation, the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project[7] undertaken in his stewardship as the Chief Minister of Gujarat in his address, Modi proudly urged the people of India to look at the monumental change that can be brought in an urban space. From a river floodplain that was inhabited by low-income residents and had informal markets, the Sabarmati riverfront was transformed into a highly modernist utopia with concrete embankments and a clean, orderly design. The address promised that an even bigger transformation could happen in his 'beloved Kashi'[8] that would be lauded by the world if he wins the election and is given a chance to serve the holy city.

The words of the soon-to-be Prime Minister were an indication that Varanasi would undergo 'development' that would turn it into a 'world-class spiritual capital.' Modi did win the elections and thus began a new journey of heritage development for the city of Varanasi. The first step towards the realisation of this vision was signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014 with another city that is Kyoto known for the preservation of its ancient heritage along boasting a world-class infrastructure (Bhattacharjee, 2015). The dream and aspiration therefore were to make Kashi into Kyoto. A number of new projects unfolded in Varanasi after it became the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Modi. These include four and six-lane highways, skywalks, ropeways, upgraded waste, water and sewage management facilities and a convention centre[9] named Rudrakshato makes the city a cultural hub. The grandest of them all, however, has been the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor which sparked a fierce contestation about the definition of heritage among the state and the various stakeholders of the city. The corridor thus becomes a generative site to explore the politics of discourses around heritage, the socio-spatial transformation of the built environments that they envisage and the way in which heritage becomes a tool of spatial ordering for the state.

The paper is a preliminary exploration of the heterogeneity in three major sources of discourses around heritage preservation in the case of Varanasi at large and Kashi Vishwanath Temple in particular. (i) The

discourses of the state; (ii) The discourses emerging from civil society and communities who got displaced; and (iii) The discourses by minorities.

In order to bring out these contestations in definitions of heritage discourse analysis of policy documents, media reportage of both Hindi and English language including newspapers like Indian Express, The Hindu, The Mint, Amar Ujala, Varanasi edition, magazines like The Wire, Videos of interviews conducted by NDTV, Documents and Videos uploaded on social media platforms are undertaken. This is also substantiated by a qualitative pilot study conducted at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in the month of April 2023.

The plan of the paper is as follows. The first section outlines the vision of heritage preservation in the Master Plans of Varanasi and traces the major shifts in that. It also states the recent history of the management of the Temple and its preservation and then describes the plan of the new temple corridor. The second section evaluates the different reactions to the new corridor by civil society actors and residents of the place comprising both those who got displaced and those who did not. The third section specifically brings out the view point of the members of the minority community of Muslims to comprehend their understanding of the new heritage development that is taking place around the corridor. The heterogeneous discourses point towards the way in which the definition of heritage is a contested one. This contestation happens due to the different meanings that the state and varied sections of society attribute to heritage. The paper aims to trace the politics behind these contestations and offer some preliminary suggestions for achieving democratic governance of heritage which is a public good.

Section 1: Privatisation of Heritage: State, Market and Temple

In 1982 the Varanasi Development Authority (formed in 1974) evaluated the earlier plans for the city and created a Master Plan with a perspective from 1991-2011 (Singh, 2015). In the Varanasi Development Plan, the strategies for the protection of urban heritage by means of heritage zoning were introduced for the first time. The city was divided into five heritage zones. The Riverfront ghats and temples were in Zone One (ibid). The idea was to maintain and preserve the ancient glory of Varanasi and to identify the required facilities, infrastructure and heritage complexes. The state had the responsibility of undertaking heritage development. In the 1980s the approach of the state was clearly to disallow any changes in the old city area.

There is a shift in the approach of the state from the next master plan 2011-2031 onwards that was prepared by the Varanasi Development Authority. It was recognised that the authority was unable to execute the priority projects and private investors were encouraged to invest in the conservation and maintenance of heritage (Singh, 2016). This emphasis on involving private actors could also be seen from 2005 onwards in the Heritage Development Plan under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission under United Progressive Alliance one and two. It got a further boost in the schemes pertaining to heritage development under the National Democratic Alliance titled HRIDAY (Heritage Infrastructure Development Augmentation Yojana), Swadesh Darshan that included the creation of different circuits of pilgrimage tourism for the devotees of lord Shiva, Vishnu and Buddha, and PRASAD (Pilgrim Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive in 2015. According to Rana PB Singh (2015), the biggest problem with the City Development Plan proposed under the new master plan was that it was prepared by a private consultancy in Delhi called Feedback Turnkey Engineers Pvt. which had no detailed idea about the lived heritage of Varanasi and was solely focused on commercial profiteering.

Zooming in on the specific history of Kashi Vishwanath Temple, it was run by a local family till 1983 when the UP Department of Religious Affairs took charge by forming the Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust (KVTT) after declaring the erstwhile management as inadequate and corrupt (Lazzaretti, 2021). Ever since then, there have been contestations over properties, temples, and open spaces between the Trust and the priests of the area who have been serving the main temple and a number of others in the vicinity for several generations. From 2007 to 2010 the Trust bought two minor temples close to the Vishwanath Temple and tried to renovate them (Mishra, 2022, p. 619). This was opposed by some native residents who did not think that the Trust would preserve the authentic history and ritual customs of the same. In 2014, Shatrudra Prakash, a senior politician from the Samajwadi Party wrote a letter to Prime Minister Modi requesting him to take the control of Kashi Vishwanath Temple away from the Trust regulated by the state government and declare it a national heritage so that it could be governed by Archeological Society of India (Fareed, 2014). In 2015, local intellectuals, lawyers, litterateurs, farmers, and students under the leadership of Prakash took out a procession for the same cause. They alleged that the administration of the Trust was corrupt and the temple was deteriorating by the day.

In 2017, the BJP won in Uttar Pradesh government under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath. A favourable government at the state level set up an opportune context for the biggest change in the history of Vishwanath Temple. The Prime Minister expressed his discomfort to the public with the congestion, crowds, dirt and stray animals who come in the path of pilgrims who after taking a bath in the Ganges move towards the temple for darshan (Sabarwal, 2021). Thus emerged the idea of redeveloping the area around the temple into a big corridor that could connect the temple directly to the ghats so that the pilgrims could fill water from the Ganges and directly visit the temple like in ancient times.

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple was built on its current site by Ahilyabai Holkar in 1780. Over time, dense urban development took place around the temple and it is 'interwoven amid narrow winding streets and an array of shrines and temples' (HCP, n.d). At the time of laying the foundation stone of the corridor, the PM said that after Ahilyabai no one cared for Baba for 250 years. History has chosen him to perform the great task of redeveloping the temple (Srivastava, 2019). In 2018, Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board was constituted to undertake the redevelopment. The design firm that was chosen for this project was HCP, the same firm that designed the Sabarmati Riverfront Project that was mentioned by the PM in the address that we discussed at the beginning of the paper and also the Grand Central Vista Project. Bimal Patel, who is the head of HCP designs looks at the area in which the temple was situated as dense and unorganised that needed to be cleared for a grand-scale redevelopment to take place. The area, according to the description published on the website of HCP[10], was marked by a lack of infrastructure and amenities which obstruct the mobility of both tourists and locals. The redevelopment of the temple along with three ghats Lalita, Jalasen and Manikarnika were to be undertaken by HCP. According to them, this is a vital 'urban insert in a dense city, heeding the safety and security of locals and tourists alike (HCP, n.d.)'.

The total cost of the Vishwanath Corridor Project is Rs. 800 crore. The 400-meter-long corridor connects the ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva to the banks of the Ganges river. The foundation stone for the project was laid on 8 March 2019 and the first phase of the project was inaugurated on December 13, 2021 (Sabarwal, 2021). The first phase was constructed at a cost of Rs. 323 crores and 23 buildings were inaugurated. They provided various facilities to the pilgrims including Yatri Suvidha Kendras, Tourist Facilitation Centres, Mumukshu Bhavan, Bhogshala, City Museum, Vedic

Kendra, Viewing Gallery, and Food Court among others. Earlier the area of the temple was 3000 square feet but now it is 5 lakh square feet. This meant that 50000 to 75000 devotees including senior citizens and the disabled could be accommodated in the temple at one time (ibid). The project entailed the acquisition and demolition of roughly 300 properties around the temple. The rehabilitation of around 1400 shops, tenants and homeowners was done in a relatively peaceful manner (Verma, 2021). The official version claims that no heritage was destroyed during the development of the project. During the demolition of old properties 40 new temples were rediscovered. These temples have been restored and beautified without any change in their original structure. The Prime Minister claimed during the inauguration of the temple that it is not just a grand temple but a 'symbol of our spiritual soul...and India's antiquity and tradition' (Gautam, 2021).

Section 2: Discourses of Civil Society and Majority Community

This section discusses the views regarding the heritage of some of the residents and priests of the area in and around the Kashi Vishwanath Temple Complex. For the most part, it is bringing out the voices of the 'boundary within' (Lazzaretti, 2021) the Hindu fold who did not think that building a grand temple doing justice to the heritage of the city. It also discusses the stand of an association named Dharohar Bachao Samiti (Save Heritage Association) which resisted the project.

Rajendra Tiwari was born in 1962 in a family of mahants who lived in the neighbourhood close to the temple and were in charge of looking after the Vishwanath Temple. He was also groomed to be a mahant. In 1983 however, the Congress government passed the UP Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act. The act created Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust to administer the temple. Their family hoped that the courts would intervene to restore their right to perform religious duties in the temple but that has not happened. Tiwari claims 'We have served Lord Vishwanath for generations and the house they destroyed was as old as Kashi Vishwanath temple itself. It was not just my home it was my temple too. I feel I have been rooted out and discarded[11].' In fact, when the lockdown was announced by PM Modi the first thought that came to the mind of Rajendra Tiwari was that of divine retribution. 'They ran a bulldozer over the heart of Vishwanath...The effects of that are there for the whole world to see[12].' He believes that the state has not just cleared the congestion to make a pathway but has destroyed a way of life. Families who have lived for several generations in the area have been moved to the outskirts of the city. Since the government both at the state and

national levels hailed from BJP which claims itself to be a protector of Hindu dharma, he takes a jibe at its leaders and says, 'Ye dharmadhikari nahi hai, dharm vyapari hai'[13] (They do not serve religion; they trade in religion).

For a long time, Tiwari was in denial about the execution of the project. He thought that at the most they would construct a resort for industrialists. But eventually, he realised with great disappointment that the project was actually getting materialised and it was going to change the character of the place forever. 'Kyoto is an ancient city where everything - house, walls, lanes - has been preserved...You came here saying that you would make Kashi Kyoto, but now you are making Kashi Singapore. No one will come to see that.[14]'

A similar sentiment is echoed by RSS ideologue K N Govindacharya who said in an interview, 'My house where I used to live as a kid has been broken down, the place where we used to hold the shakha has also been broken down. As Venice is a city of canals, Varanasi is a city of alleys. People will not come to Kashi to see skyscrapers. Varanasi has its own identity[15].'

Vishwambhar Nath Mishra who teaches students at IIT, BHU and is the mahant of the Sankat Mochan temple in the evening remarks, 'One cannot be certain what came over the government, but in one swoop they erased everything-buildings, traditions, values... The social fabric of the city has been eroded. For those who have lost their homes, I can only imagine an identity crisis. They enjoyed a certain recognition in this neighbourhood, and you have simply uprooted their lives. Heritage cannot be confined to a place, it must include people[16].

Similarly, Rajendra Tiwari in a report claims, 'To those who come to Banaras, I ask -do you come here looking for a theme park or a temple? What they are creating is a Chowpatty by the Ganga...This place is now becoming a religious mall, a place for entertainment, not introspection... Banaras was always a city of sadhana-meditation. They have reduced it to a city of sadhan -means.' [17] According to Tiwari, his ancestral home had historic importance. Tiwari's father was close to Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya. During the independence struggle once Lal Bahadur Shastri came to seek refuge in their house when the British issued an arrest warrant against them. Tiwari had two photographs of his father: one in which he is standing next to Lal Bahadur Shastri and in another he is standing next to Lord Mountbatten.[18] It is this heritage that has forever been lost with the demolition of his and a number of other houses in the vicinity.

In order to protest against the plans of the redevelopment various members of civil society organised themselves into a movement called Save

Heritage Movement or Dharohar Bachao Andolan. One of the important figures in the movement was Swami Avimukteshawaranand Saraswati. He wrote several letters to Chief Minister Yogi to draw attention to his demands. He expresses his anger at the way in which ancient temples, idols of gods and goddesses, and shivlings (Shiv's sign) were broken and thereby insulted in order to make way for the new construction. He is very clear that development cannot happen by changing the fundamental nature of a thing, person or place. To his mind, the government is doing precisely all that. He asks a very fundamental political question. How is it that the party which worked towards building a temple in Ayodhya is itself demolishing so many temples? He demanded among other things an immediate cessation of the construction of the temple complex.

Krishna Kumar Sharma, a man in his late 50s claimed that the charge of people's encroachment on temples is bogus. "Maybe the people were preserving these temples within their homes. Pujas were conducted every day…".[19] Even when people were happy with the compensation they lamented the loss of the place where several generations lived their lives. The displacement was interpreted as 'a direct attack on Hindu dharma[20]. While the reaction of a priest of one of the 40 temples which was restored was not as radical, he also lamented at the current situation claiming that 'lots of temples have been destroyed to undertake this construction. Pilgrims from South India often come here after having read the Skanda Purana and they try to find the temples mentioned in the Puranas in the city. Now that so many temples have been destroyed, they will be highly disappointed.[21]

The heritage of Banaras is not just limited to history but also incorporates myths and stories around it. In the stories of Banaras often Shiv is the main protagonist. According to Tiwari, mythic narratives are as important in Kashi as historical facts. "When Brahma and Vishnu were quarrelling about who amongst them is supreme, it was in Kashi that Shiva settled the debate by first appearing as a shaft of light that penetrated the edges of the cosmos".[22] Tiwari said, "No jyotirlinga is as complete as the one here ".[23] Tiwari claims that Kashi is beyond history. "You will find evidence of Kashi in every yuga and even when the cycle of four yugas has passed, Kashi will survive the hour of final destruction because the city sits on the top of Shiva's trident."[24] The source of these tales was cited to be Kashi Khanda in Skanda Purana. The text claimed that Kashi is not just sacred but is timeless. These stories are known and told by those who have lived in the alleys of Banaras for several generations. The displacement of people would lead to the slow disappearance of the tales associated with Kashi. Also, the

mall-like development of the temple sits uneasily with these mythic explanations of Kashi.

Another prominent theme among some of the respondents was the loss of livelihood of those who were displaced. A librarian of a prominent publication house in the vicinity of the temple who belonged to the Yadav caste and is a resident of the same area said that no amount of compensation is good enough to take away someone's livelihood. He specifically talked about Shringar Gali where he had seen several generations of women in his family going to shop for artificial jewellery and cosmetics and similar articles of adornment. One-time compensation cannot be equated to a loss of regular income and clientele that has been built over generations.[25]

A contrary view was presented by a mother-daughter duo who were born in the area next to the temple. The daughter, Rupal (name changed) was 20 years old and was pursuing an undergraduate from Allahabad and her mother was in her mid-40s.[26] Both mother and daughter often come to the temple in the evenings to sit by the river Ganges. They were highly appreciative of the work done by Prime Minister Modi. They said that the area in which the temple was located was extremely congested. People living in the nearby area now have a space to go for recreation. The complex has become a serene place to spend time in the evenings. When asked about the loss of residence and livelihood caused to several people, they promptly responded that everyone has got fair compensation. According to them the displaced got enough money to start their business somewhere else. We got a similar narrative of appreciation of the grand and spacious temple from a number of tourists both from metropolitan cities and also belonging to the city.

Section 3: The Discourses among the Minority Community

S M Yasin the joint secretary of the Anjuman Intizamia Masjid (the AIM), the custodians of the Gyanvapi mosque that is adjacent to the temple while being clear that his community is not against the development does admit that they are following the events with fear, anxiety and tension. Two incidents though small became immediate reasons for worry. One of the nights in October 2018 a section of the wall that separates the mosque from the temple was broken (Ashok, 2018). The Muslim community gathered immediately to protest and the District Magistrate instantly ordered to restore the wall. It is Yasin's belief that 'they' wanted to test the level of anger of the Muslims. If they had not shown immediate reaction then this could have continued to raze parts of the mosque. The second instance

happened when some men tried to dig in a statue of Nandi (the bull who serves as a vehicle of Shiva) but were caught 'red-handed' as they were doing this in the afternoon. It is believed that stone images of a seated Nandi face the main shrine. The presence of a statue of Nandi can be used to prove that a Shivling was there in the mosque too and the mosque was actually built over a Shiv temple.

A social activist Ishteyaque Ahmad highlights how religion is being used selectively to promote only Hindu heritage. He argues that the mosque is also a heritage property that was built in the 1600s and its preservation is also the responsibility of the state. "This is one of those rare cities in which we do not get a feeling that someone is a Hindu or Muslim. The corridor is a good project if the pilgrim's experience is enhanced. But if you are highlighting its heritage value for visitors, why not consider sprucing up the mosque as well?"[27]

On October 31, the AIM and Jitendra Vyas of the Ved Vyas Peeth also went together to the Supreme Court to file a petition to stay the demolition of the temple-mosque complex till the time the security concerns of the mosque are addressed properly by the state. The petition was rejected on 30 November (Ashok, 2018).

There are some who believe that the building of the complex is not just about the redevelopment of heritage but has more sinister motives. The Gyanvapi mosque was earlier hidden in the urban morphology of the place and the intricate alleys made sure that a big congregation around the mosque was difficult. The new complex makes possible a congregation of lakhs of kar sevaks (volunteers) if required and has exposed the mosque to an attack like the one that had happened to Babri masjid in Ayodhya (Kumar, 2019).

Conclusion

The study of the construction of Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor as a model of heritage development has highlighted the way in which heritage governance is primarily state-centred in India that has not been able to take into account the multiple meanings and values that diverse communities attach to them. The approach of the state shifts as per the priorities of the ruling dispensation. The participation of communities in conserving heritage is still very limited. It has demonstrated how heritage is used as a spatial strategy by the state for reordering urban spaces and promotion of world-class aesthetics with Public Private Partnership as the preferred mode. Thus, one of the ways in which KVTT can be understood is

within the larger narrative of the predominance of neoliberal world-class aesthetics in Indian cities under which a number of beautification drives have been carried through. More often than not the already existing urban morphology be it informal settlements, markets, dense urban mohallas with mixed land uses and close interactions with neighbours are classified as dirty, unclean, unsafe, and unhygienic that deserve to be demolished to give way to clean, sanitised, safe, orderly, grand, monumental urban built environment. This has been extensively theorised in the case of Delhi in which the settlements of the poor are demolished as part of city beautification drives and make way for world-class structures.

Heritage has become a tool for the creation of such world-class spaces. Akshardham Temple Complex in East Delhi of the Swaminarayan sect which is both a temple and a theme park is a case in point. The Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project mentioned by PM Modi which is quoted at the beginning of the paper is also another such example. These developments find a lot of support from the aspiring 'new middle classes' (Fernandes, 2006). The new Kashi Vishwanath Temple is appreciated by this class who can buy a ticket for "sugam darshan" and easily visit the lord along with having a theme-park experience with family. Prime Minister Modi with his CEO-like statesmanship (Jaffrelot, 2014) that can be seen in all the major projects that are being executed under his auspices in a 'time-bound', 'efficient', tech-savvy way is certainly fulfilling the wishes of the aspiring 'new India' with 'world-class spaces' and the 'new middle class'. Heritage projects, in this case, become a signifier of the administrative and political efficiency of the PM and symbolic of his religious and Hindu nationalist credentials.

The transformation of congested urban spaces into a monumental one acquires special importance in the case of sacred temple towns like Varanasi in the context of the development of religious corridors all across India for the promotion of pilgrimage tourism by the current political dispensation. The state has invested in schemes like Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD to develop religious corridors so that they boost the tourist and local economy. Ever since the inauguration of the temple corridor, the footfall of tourists in Varanasi reached seven crores which is more than popular destinations like Goa. The biggest justification for the creation of grand temple corridors is to balance heritage development while harnessing its commercial potential to the fullest. While there are high hopes that these corridors will bring about economic development and lead to job creation,

further research is to be done to understand the extent to which local stakeholders benefit from these developments.

The resistance to this model of heritage development forces us to think of certain questions. What constitutes the true heritage of a city? Who are its rightful custodians? How to democratise the right to heritage? Much like the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) can we have discourses about the right to the heritage of the city? This may not be a thin right to visit and consume heritage-scape created by the state. Rather it may be a radical right to define and actively participate in preserving and maintaining heritage. Instead of one grand temple that could only be built by clearing several houses, and shops, displacing people, lives, relations, neighbourhoods and traditions, the state could invest in the preservation of heritage that conserves the existing built morphologies. Ensuring cleanliness and sanitation may not necessarily lead to large-scale demolition and reconstruction. Participatory ways of heritage protection could ensure the same with minimum dislocation. Also, the heritage of all the communities could be preserved to do justice to the history of the place. Preservation of shared histories and heritages can go a long way in addressing the concerns of security of minority communities. Are alternative visions possible?

End Note

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2. Since Kashi is already known internationally for its spiritualism, it can be inferred that Modi had newer unprecedented plans to elevate the status of Kashi in the world.

3. The other prominent contestants from this high-profile constituency was Arvind Kejriwal, the leader of Aam Admi Party and Ajai Rai, a local Member of Legislative Assembly from Congress.

4. This is how renowned historian Diana Eck, India: A Sacred Geography (New York, Harmony Books, 2012) calls India in which Varanasi is one of the important pilgrimage sites.

5. Varanasi is referred to by various names such as Banaras, Benaras and the most ancient one being Kashi.

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Exploring Investigative Journalism's Challenges: A Meta-Analytic Review

Shweta Sharma* and Parul Mishra†

Investigative journalism serves as a critical pillar in the democratic process, holding power to account and uncovering hidden truths. However, this essential function faces numerous challenges that can impede its effectiveness and sustainability. This meta-analytic review synthesises existing research to identify and analyse the key obstacles confronted by investigative journalists worldwide. Drawing from a comprehensive corpus of studies, the review examines financial constraints, legal risks, technological impacts, political pressures, and ethical dilemmas. The findings reveal that financial instability, exacerbated by the decline of traditional media revenue, significantly hampers the depth and frequency of investigative reporting. Legal challenges, including threats of litigation and censorship, further restrict journalistic freedom. Technological advancements, while offering new tools for investigation. Political interference and ethical concerns around bias and accuracy also emerge as significant barriers. This review underscores the need for robust support mechanisms, legal protections, and ethical guidelines to sustain investigative journalism's vital role in society. Future research directions and policy implications are discussed to enhance the resilience and impact of investigative journalism in the face of these multifaceted challenges.

Keywords: Investigative journalism, legal risks, technological impact, political pressure, ethical dilemmas, media sustainability, digital security, misinformation, journalistic freedom.

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Introduction

Investigative journalism stands as a cornerstone of democratic societies, playing an indispensable role in uncovering corruption, exposing injustices, and holding powerful entities accountable. By delving beyond surface-level reporting, investigative journalists provide in-depth analysis and uncover hidden facets of significant issues, thereby fostering informed public discourse and facilitating systemic change. Despite its crucial importance, investigative journalism faces an array of formidable challenges that threaten its practice and sustainability.

The landscape of journalism has undergone dramatic transformations in recent decades. The advent of digital media and the decline of traditional revenue models have precipitated financial instability, placing investigative journalism under considerable strain. Media organisations, grappling with reduced budgets, often deprioritise resource-intensive investigative projects in favour of more immediate, revenue-generating content. This financial precariousness limits the capacity of journalists to undertake extensive investigations, thereby diminishing the breadth and depth of their reporting.

Legal risks further compound the challenges facing investigative journalists. The threat of litigation, defamation suits, and censorship acts as a significant deterrent, potentially stifling critical investigations. In many parts of the world, journalists operate under repressive legal frameworks that curtail press freedom, exposing them to harassment, imprisonment, or even violence. These legal constraints not only endanger journalists but also impede the flow of crucial information to the public.

Technological advancements present a double-edged sword for investigative journalism. While digital tools and data analytics have revolutionised investigative techniques, enhancing the ability to uncover complex stories, they also introduce new vulnerabilities. Cybersecurity threats, digital surveillance, and the proliferation of misinformation challenge journalists' ability to protect their sources, maintain data integrity, and ensure the accuracy of their reporting.

Political pressures and ethical dilemmas further exacerbate the difficulties faced by investigative journalists. Governments and powerful interest groups often exert influence to suppress unfavourable coverage, compromising journalistic independence. Moreover, journalists must navigate ethical challenges related to bias, accuracy, and the potential consequences of their reporting, balancing the imperative to inform the public with the need to uphold professional standards.

This meta-analytic review aims to systematically examine the myriad challenges confronting investigative journalism. By synthesising findings from a diverse array of studies, this review seeks to illuminate the multifaceted nature of these obstacles and provide a comprehensive understanding of their implications. Through this analysis, the paper will underscore the necessity for robust support structures, enhanced legal protections, and stringent ethical guidelines to fortify the practice of investigative journalism. Ultimately, the review aspires to inform policy discussions and foster initiatives that bolster the resilience and impact of investigative journalism in safeguarding democratic values and promoting accountability.

Research Objectives

To systematically identify and categorise the primary challenges faced by investigative journalists, including financial constraints, legal risks, technological impacts, political pressures, and ethical dilemmas. To suggest potential support mechanisms, legal protections, and ethical guidelines that could enhance the resilience and effectiveness of investigative journalism.

Research Methodology

This study employs the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach to systematically review and synthesise relevant literature on the challenges confronting investigative journalism. The study selection process involved screening titles and abstracts of articles from databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, with inclusion criteria focusing on empirical studies, theoretical papers, and reviews published in the last 15 years and written in English. A total of 250 studies were selected based on their direct relevance to the identified challenges, including financial constraints, legal risks, technological impacts, political pressures, and ethical dilemmas. Data was extracted using a standardised form, capturing study characteristics and key findings. Thematic synthesis was employed to categorise challenges and identify common themes while proposing support mechanisms, legal protections, and ethical guidelines. The PRISMA flow diagram was utilised to document the study selection process. This methodology ensures a comprehensive and transparent analysis of the challenges faced by investigative journalism and facilitates the formulation of effective strategies to address them.

Research Database and Article Selection

This study conducted a systematic review of the literature using multiple databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, to identify relevant articles addressing the challenges encountered by investigative journalism. The search strategy involved the combination of keywords such as 'investigative journalism', 'challenges', 'financial constraints', 'legal risks', 'technological impacts', 'political pressures', and 'ethical dilemmas'.

Initially, a total of 250 records were identified through the database search. After removing duplicates and screening based on title and abstract, 120 records were assessed for eligibility. The inclusion criteria focused on empirical studies, theoretical papers, and reviews published within the last 15 years and written in English. This resulted in the selection of 22 full-text articles for further review.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram

Record Identified N-250

Duplicates Removed N-130

Record Screened N-120

Records Assessed for Eligibility N-50

Full-Text Articles Included N-22
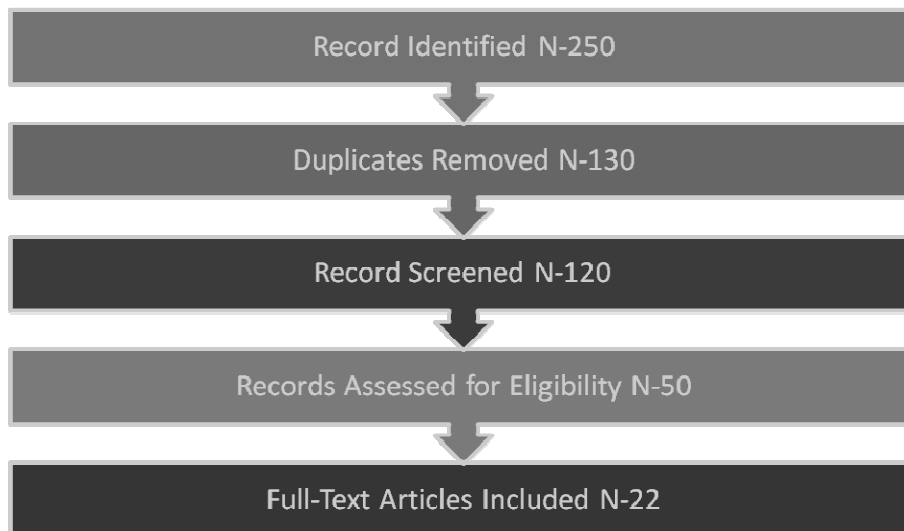
Literature Review

Summary of Literature Review

Sr. No.	Author	Year	Location	Objective	Research Technique	Findings and Suggestions
1.	Kim, et al.	2016	South Korea	Investigate challenges faced by freelance journalists	Focus Group	Freelance journalists face precarious working conditions and lack institutional support, highlighting the need for collective advocacy.
2	Jones	2017	UK	Analyse political pressures on journalism	Content Analysis	Political interference compromises journalistic independence, necessitating measures to safeguard press freedom.
3	Wang, et al.	2017	China	Investigate media ownership and its impact	Content Analysis	The concentration of media ownership limits the diversity of voices and hampers investigative journalism's ability to hold power accountable.
4	Ali, et al.	2017	Pakistan	Examine gender disparities in investigative journalism	Interviews	Women journalists in Pakistan face discrimination and harassment, necessitating gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms.
5	Park, et al.	2017	South Korea	Assess the impact of media consolidation.	Survey	Media consolidation in South Korea limits the diversity of voices and hinders investigative journalism's ability to hold power to account.
6	Kaur, et al.	2018	Australia	Explore the role of non-profit organisations in supporting investigative journalism.	Content Analysis	Non-profit organisations play a crucial role in funding and advocating for investigative journalism, but they face challenges in sustainability.
7	Lee, et al.	2018	Singapore	Assess the influence of government regulation	Survey	Government regulation in Singapore constrains investigative journalism, requiring advocacy for greater press freedom and transparency.

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Sr. No.	Author	Year	Location	Objective	Research Technique	Findings and Suggestions
8	Nguyen, et al.	2018	Vietnam	Examine censorship and self-censorship in journalism	Survey	Journalists in Vietnam self-censor to avoid government reprisal, compromising the depth and accuracy of investigative reporting.
9	Patel	2018	India	Examine legal risks for journalists	Case Study	Journalists in India face legal threats, including defamation suits and censorship, hindering investigative reporting.
10	Chen, et al.	2019	China	Investigate technological impacts on journalism	Interview	Digital tools enhance investigative capabilities but also raise concerns about data security and misinformation.
11	Wong, et al.	2019	Malaysia	Analyse the effectiveness of whistleblower protection laws	Case Study	Whistleblower protection laws in Malaysia are insufficient, undermining efforts to expose corruption and misconduct.
12	Martinez, et al.	2019	Mexico	Examine challenges faced by investigative journalists in conflict zones	Interviews	Journalists in conflict zones navigate risks to report on critical issues, requiring specialised training and support for their safety.
13	O'Connor, et al.	2019	Ireland	Examine the role of whistleblowers in investigative journalism	Case Study	Whistleblowers play a crucial role in exposing wrongdoing, but they face risks and need legal protections to come forward safely.
14	Rahman	2019	Bangladesh	Assess the impact of digitalisation on investigative journalism	Document Analysis	Digital platforms offer new avenues for investigation but also pose challenges in verifying information and protecting sources.
15	Smith, et al.	2020	USA	Explore financial challenges in journalism	Survey	Decline in traditional media revenue negatively impacts investigative journalism. Recommendations include diversifying revenue sources.

Sr. No.	Author	Year	Location	Objective	Research Technique	Findings and Suggestions
16	Lopez, et al.	2020	Mexico	Explore safety concerns for investigative journalists	Interviews	Journalists in Mexico face threats, violence, and intimidation, necessitating improved safety protocols and legal protections.
17	Gonzalez, et al.	2020	Spain	Investigate the impact of social media on journalism	Focus Group	Social media platforms facilitate information dissemination but also challenge traditional journalistic norms and credibility.
18	Lim, et al.	2020	Singapore	Investigate censorship and media manipulation	Case Study	Government censorship and media manipulation in Singapore undermine press freedom and public trust, necessitating transparency and accountability.
19	Silva, et al.	2021	Portugal	Investigate the use of data journalism techniques	Content Analysis	Data journalism enhances investigative capabilities by uncovering patterns and trends, but journalists require training and resources.
20	Garcia, et al.	2021	Brazil	Address ethical dilemmas in journalism	Ethnography	Ethical considerations, such as accuracy and bias, are crucial for maintaining credibility and public trust in investigative journalism.
21	Kim, et al.	2022	South Korea	Investigate the impact of emerging digital platforms on investigative journalism.	Focus Group	Digital platforms offer new opportunities for investigation but also pose challenges related to audience engagement and monetisation.
22	Nguyen, et al.	2023	Vietnam	Examine the role of social media in shaping investigative journalism practices.	Survey	Social media platforms facilitate information dissemination but raise concerns about credibility and misinformation control mechanisms.

Findings

The literature review reveals several consistent findings regarding the challenges faced by investigative journalism:

Financial Constraints: Investigative journalism is significantly impacted by financial constraints, stemming from the decline of traditional media revenue models. Limited resources often result in reduced capacity for in-depth investigations and hinder the sustainability of investigative reporting.

Legal Risks: Journalists encounter various legal risks, including threats of litigation, defamation suits, and censorship, particularly in regions with restrictive legal frameworks. These risks pose significant barriers to journalistic freedom and can deter reporters from pursuing critical investigative work.

Technological Impacts: While digital tools offer new opportunities for investigation, they also introduce challenges such as cybersecurity threats and the spread of misinformation. Journalists must navigate these complexities to protect their sources, maintain data integrity, and ensure the accuracy of their reporting.

Political Pressures: Political interference and pressure from powerful entities compromise journalistic independence and integrity. Journalists face threats, harassment, and intimidation, particularly when reporting on sensitive political issues or exposing corruption.

Ethical Dilemmas: Ethical considerations, including accuracy, bias, and the potential consequences of reporting, are paramount in investigative journalism. Upholding professional standards and maintaining public trust are essential amidst ethical challenges.

Safety Concerns: Investigative journalists often face safety concerns, including threats, violence, and intimidation, especially when reporting on topics such as organised crime, corruption, or human rights abuses. Enhanced safety protocols and legal protections are necessary to safeguard journalists in hostile environments.

Gender Disparities: Women journalists encounter gender-based discrimination and harassment, which can inhibit their ability to pursue investigative work. Gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms are needed to address these disparities and promote inclusivity in the field.

Role of Whistleblowers: Whistleblowers play a crucial role in exposing wrongdoing and corruption, but they face risks and require legal protection to come forward safely. Effective whistleblower protection laws are essential for fostering transparency and accountability.

Media Ownership and Consolidation: Concentration of media ownership limits diversity of voices and hampers investigative journalism's ability to hold power accountable. Efforts to mitigate media consolidation and promote media pluralism are vital for a vibrant investigative media landscape.

Support Mechanisms: Non-profit organisations play a crucial role in funding and advocating for investigative journalism, but they face challenges in sustainability. Continued support and investment in non-profit initiatives are necessary to bolster the resilience of investigative reporting.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the challenges confronting investigative journalism and highlight the importance of addressing these issues to uphold press freedom, promote accountability, and safeguard democratic principles.

Discussion

The literature review highlights the challenges facing investigative journalism globally, emphasising the need for a comprehensive approach to uphold press freedom, promote accountability, and foster informed public discourse. The decline of traditional media revenue models poses a significant threat to investigative journalism's sustainability, necessitating diversification of revenue sources, exploring alternative funding models, and increased investment in investigative reporting. Rigid legal protections are crucial for safeguarding journalists' independence and press freedom, including strengthening legal frameworks against defamation suits, censorship, and harassment. Advocating for decriminalisation of defamation and enacting whistleblower protection laws can create a conducive environment for investigative journalism.

Embracing technological advancements while mitigating associated risks is essential, with training and resources on digital security measures, fact-checking techniques, and data analysis skills. Countering political interference requires collective action from journalists, media organisations, civil society, and international bodies. Maintaining ethical standards is vital for the credibility and trustworthiness of investigative journalism, with media organisations prioritising accuracy, fairness, and transparency.

The safety of investigative journalists is paramount, especially in conflict zones or regions with high levels of violence and intimidation. Comprehensive safety training, emergency response mechanisms, and legal protections for journalists facing threats are essential measures. Addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusivity within investigative journalism

is crucial for fostering diverse perspectives and amplifying marginalised voices. Policymakers should enact legislation protecting whistleblowers from retaliation and ensuring their confidentiality and safety. Promoting media pluralism and diversity of ownership is also essential for a robust investigative media landscape.

Conclusion

Investigative journalism stands as a cornerstone of democratic societies, playing a pivotal role in uncovering truth, exposing wrongdoing, and holding power to account. However, the findings from the literature review highlight a myriad of challenges that threaten the practice and sustainability of investigative journalism worldwide. From financial constraints and legal risks to technological impacts and political pressures, journalists navigate a complex landscape fraught with obstacles that undermine their ability to fulfil their critical role in society.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves concerted efforts from journalists, media organisations, policymakers, civil society, and the public. Strengthening legal protections, diversifying revenue sources, embracing technological advancements, and upholding ethical standards are essential steps to safeguarding investigative journalism's integrity and impact. Moreover, ensuring the safety and inclusivity of journalists, promoting media pluralism, and protecting whistleblowers are crucial for fostering a vibrant and resilient investigative media landscape.

Despite the formidable challenges, there are reasons for optimism. The dedication and resilience of journalists, coupled with the support of advocacy groups, non-profit organisations, and concerned citizens, offer hope for the future of investigative journalism. By working together to overcome barriers, advocate for press freedom, and champion transparency and accountability, we can uphold the values of democracy and ensure that investigative journalism continues to serve as a vital watchdog, uncovering truth and promoting justice for generations to come.

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Digital Banking Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: A Review

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Digital banking service quality has motivated voluminous research studies from various countries around the world, focusing on its features, scope, dimensions and relationships with various aspects including customer satisfaction, customer retention, post-purchase behaviour and customer loyalty. This paper sums up the literature as well as the research studies and presents an exhaustive review of the latest developments in the research and literature on digital banking service quality and customer satisfaction. It presents a systematic review of the latest research articles published on digital banking service quality and customer satisfaction around the world. This paper reviews the latest developments in the research and literature on digital banking service quality and customer satisfaction. This paper also aims to identify gaps in the existing literature on digital banking service quality and customer satisfaction in the Indian context.

Keywords: Digital banking service quality and customer satisfaction.

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Digital Banking Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: A Review

Introduction

The Indian banking sector has experienced numerous changes and challenges since its inception. Over the last 30 years, the banking sector has undergone a historic transition. The robust improvement in the internet and e-commerce has led to a prodigious inclination of the banking sector towards digitisation across the globe (Li et al., 2021). The next phase of development in banking will deliver more automated, virtually invisible and incredibly convenient transactions while still providing ameliorated benefits (Marous, 2014) and such a transitiontends to augment further (Zouari and Abdelhedi, 2021). It would be reasonable to conclude that the banking sector is moving towards a digital era (Doshi, 2021).

In the contemporary digital age, deeper integration of digital platforms in banking services is called keeping in view thedynamic nature of market changes and customer needs which has considerably impacted the bank-customer relationship and has led to a dynamic transition in the mode of delivery of services by banks (Sreejesh et al., 2016) and multiplied the expectations of customers vis-a-vis service quality. Developing enduring relationships with customers has emerged as a key tactic. Being the contact point for retail customers, the retail segment ofthe banking industryneeds to keep track of the fast-changing and dynamic preferences of their customers to keep them satisfied and nurture customer relationships. The substantial impact of customer satisfaction on retention, loyalty and post-purchase behaviour has been widely recognised (Hong and Wang, 2009).

The technological advancement in the field of e-commerce has led to the emergence of new features and challenges for banks vis-a-vis digital banking services including those related to trust, security, privacy, convenience and acceptance (Vivi and Novita, 2017; Jahan and Khan 2018). Such challenges pose an opportunity for banks to meet customers' needs and expectations and to keep track of customer satisfaction (Deraz and Iddris, 2019).

Objectives of the Study

To sum up and present an exhaustive review of the latest developments in the research and literature on digital banking service quality. To identify gaps in the existing literature on customer satisfaction vis-a-vis digital banking service quality in the Indian context.

Literature Review

Gautam and Sah (2023) tested the association and influence of online services on the satisfaction and loyalty of bank customers in Nepal. The study also endeavoured to explorethe mediating role of satisfaction towards loyalty. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data through stratified random sampling. The study employed the E-S-QUAL model and adopted a quantitative research approach. The study discovered website efficiency and online customer service as the most substantial determinants of online banking service quality. User-friendliness security and privacy form the second line. Further, online banking services have been found to have a considerable impact on customer satisfaction. It also found online banking services directly affect customer loyaltywhile satisfaction acts as a mediator in this relationship.

To gauge the impact of customer experience and service quality vis-a-vis electronic banking on the degree of satisfaction among clients, Bashir et al., (2023) collected a sample of 315 electronic banking customersin Bangladesh and employed covariance-based structural equation modelling for data analysis. The study found satisfaction level of customers vis-a-vis electronic bankingissignificantly and favourably influenced by service quality and customer experience. The study recommends banks improve e-banking service quality by strengtheningits efficacy, efficiency and security to foster customer satisfaction.

Using a sample of 300 e-banking customers, Tran et al., (2023) assessed the influence of service quality on e-customer satisfaction and that of e-customer satisfaction on e-customer loyalty in Vietnam. The study applied descriptive statistics and subjected the data to CFA. The results manifested that e-banking service quality and e-satisfaction, as well as e-satisfaction and e-loyalty, have a positive association.

Mwiya et al., (2022) conducted an inquiry to highlight the influence of online service quality onthe satisfaction of customers in the Zambian retail banking context amid the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The study employed correlation and multiple regression models to examine primary data gathered from 314 bank customers. The study employed the E-SERVQUAL model and found website attributes, security, privacy, efficiency, responsiveness, fulfilment and reliability as significant factors.

Malnaad et al., (2022) made an effort to explore the nexus between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty vis-a-vis the e-banking landscape in Malaysia. An online survey was conducted to collect data from 376 customers of different banks and the SERVQUAL model was

engaged for the study. The research found quality of e-banking services and a critical factor which drives the overall quality of service, customer satisfaction as well as loyalty of customers. The study suggests banks plan effective usage of corporate resources and develop appropriate e-marketing strategies to augment client loyalty.

To evaluate the impact of efficiency and reliability on customer satisfaction and customer retention in India, Khan and Alhumoudi (2022) collected primary data from 287 Internet banking users by adoptingstratified random sampling. The research findings indicate that customer satisfaction and customer retention are substantially influenced by efficiency, reliability and service quality. Additionally, it demonstrates the mediating role of customer satisfaction while establishing the association of efficiency, reliability and service quality with customer retention.

Al-Araj et al., (2022) studied the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and investigated how it affects Jordanian banks' customer satisfaction levels in terms of service quality. Data were collected from 270 Jordanian banking customers using a questionnaire. The study found the statistical relevance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to service quality as well as customer satisfaction. The study suggests banks keep an eye on the preferences and requirements of customers and make judicious use of virtual and human assets.

In their study, Sewaka et al., (2022) aimed to analyse the rapportof service quality with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and that of customer satisfaction with customer loyalty. Non-probability sampling technique i.e. judgment sampling has been used to collect data from 175 e-banking users in the Tangerang region of Indonesia. The study found a positive and substantial association among all the tested variables.

Zouari and Abdelhedi (2021) employed an extended SERVQUAL model on a sample of 145 Tunisian Islamic bank customers to examine the impact of digitalisation, as a service quality dimension, on customer satisfaction. The study concluded that Tunisian Islamic Banks must persevere in bringing their customer service into the digital era as customers not only focus on compliance.

Omofowa et al., (2021) collected data from 302 respondents in Nigeria and analysed them statistically. The study concluded that e-banking service quality dimensions, jointly and positively, influence customer satisfaction.

With respect to digital banking services Kaur et al., (2021) employed Structural Equation Modelling on data collected through a structured survey from a sample of 222 (122 Males and 100 Females) North Indian banking

customers to comprehend the degree to which risk factors affect the satisfaction of customers. Results manifested the contentment of customers with the digital services offered by banks in Northern India with reliability being the strongest risk factor.

To examine the level of customer satisfaction vis-a-vis digital banking services in India, Lakshmi and Kavitha (2020) collected data from a sample of 500 customers. The study concluded that customers use digital banking as a mode of payment and for the sake of convenience, speed, safety and round-the-clock availability.Among all the factors customers are more inclined towards digital banking services due to theirconvenient usage as a mode of payment.

Madavan and Vethirajan (2020) examined customer satisfaction vis-a-vis e-banking services offered by public and private sector banks in Puducherry, India. Statistical tools like t-test, ANOVA, correlation, mean and standard deviation have been used on the sample data of 478 customers collected using non-probability sampling techniques, particularly purposive sampling technique. The results confirmed a higher level of satisfaction among customers of private sector banks.

Sharma et al., (2020) discovered a considerablelevel of association betweendimensions of electronic banking service quality and customer satisfaction. Using the interview method, primary data were collected from 504 respondents. The study found that customer satisfaction is significantly affected by tangibility, credibility, communication, security and responsiveness.

To explore the nexus of service quality dimensions with satisfaction level and loyalty of customers vis-a-vis Internet banking, Raza et al., (2020) employed a quantitative research approach and collected primary data from 500 Pakistani bank customers. The authors applied PLS-SEM to the collected data and found customer satisfaction to befavourably and substantially influenced by all the factors of service quality with respect to Internet banking. It also confirmed a positive association between satisfaction level and loyalty among customers.

In their research, Hadid et al., (2020) employed a quantitative research approach and collected data from 384 sample respondents. Based on data analysis using PLS-SEM, the authors established the positive influence of reliability, responsiveness,tangibilityand assurance on customer satisfaction vis-a-vis digital banking services offered by Malaysian commercial banks.

Using a sample size of 410 respondents, Pooya et al., (2020) endeavoured to gauge the changes in customer satisfaction due to technology readiness on the part of customersand the quality of electronic banking services offered by private banks in Iran. Through the quality of self-service perceived by customers, the study found a substantial and positive impact of technology readiness on customer satisfaction.

Khatoon et al., (2020) collected data from 235 respondents (employees and customers) and employed correlation and regression analysis. It found purchasing intentions of customers are significantly influenced by various service quality determinants which include efficiency, communication, reliability, responsiveness, security and privacy. It also confirmed a partial impact of customer satisfaction as a mediator.

Omodele and Onyeiwu (2019) collected primary data from 93 respondents in Nigeria. After analysing the data statistically, it was found that electronic banking service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

With an aim to study customer satisfaction vis-a-vis online banking in India, Banu et al., (2019) tested the mediated model by employing hierarchical regression. The results highlighted the role of perceived usefulness in partially mediating the relationship between various independent variables and customer satisfaction.

To comprehend the association between the service quality of e-banking and customer satisfaction, Amin et al., (2018) used a structured questionnaire and interview method to collect data from a sample of 398 respondents in Nigeria. The results highlighted a substantial correlation between service quality of e-banking and customer satisfaction. It also found e-banking as a significant driver of service quality.

Hammoud et al., (2018) endeavoured to test the nexusbetween the service quality of electronic banking andthe satisfaction level of customers in Lebanon. The data were statistically analysed using a structural equation model. All the determinants of e-banking service quality were found substantial with reliability being the most significant.

Hamid et al., (2018) collected data from 200 Internet banking users in Sudan and subjected the data to statistical analysis. The authors discovered an empirical nexus service quality of Internet banking and customer satisfaction in Sudan.

On the sample data collected from 120 Nairobian bank customers, Margaret and Kinyuru (2018) applied descriptive statistics and a linear regression model. The study concluded that customers are the main assets of

the bank and must be treated well to sustain a profitable relationship and maintain a stake in the digital services market.

In her research, Prabhu (2018) highlighted security fears and lack of knowledge as the prime constraints for the low popularity of electronic banking services among customers in India.

Rajagopalan and Vigneshwari (2018) attempted to study customer satisfaction vis-à-vis online banking services offered by nationalised banks in India. Percentage analysis and Chi-square test were employed on sample data collected from 350 online banking users and it was concluded that customers prefer online banking services due to convenience and flexibility. Lack of awareness and security reasons are the main deterrents for less popularity of e-banking services among customers. Banks should ease out the complicated formalities and procedures for the usage of their online banking users.

Rajan and Saranya (2018) advocate that level of approachability, adaptableness, price and efficiency are the factors which influence customer satisfaction vis-a-vis digital banking. The study recommends banks topay attention towards strengthening their service delivery systems and work to reduce failed transactions incidents. Further, the study thrusts banks to carry out customer satisfaction surveys.

To investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction towards Internet banking in Malacca, Ling et al., (2016) collected data from 200 randomly selected working adults through a structured questionnaire. The collected data were then subject to analysis using various statistical methods such as descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and multiple linear regression analysis. The results discovered content and architectureof the website, accessibility and swiftness are the most vital aspectsof Internet banking influencing the degree of satisfaction among customers.

To verify the effect of the dimensions of electronic banking service on customer satisfaction, Toor et al., (2016) applied five service quality dimensions; reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy, derived from the SERVQUAL model, ondata collected from 264 electronic banking users of Pakistan using a pre-tested questionnaire. It highlighted a noticeable connection betweenall the dimensions of customer satisfaction and found reliability, responsiveness and assurance as the prime determinants.

To ascertain how online customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by the service quality of banking via the Internet, Amin (2016) adopted a convenience sampling approach to collect sample data from 40

branches of 10 commercial banks located in four different cities of Malaysia through a structured questionnaire with 52 per cent response rate. The study employed CFA and squared multiple correlations. It confirmed a noticeable connection between service quality, e-customer satisfaction and e-customer loyalty.

Theoretical Framework

One of the objectives of this research is to review the theoretical advancements and developments in research and literature that assessservice quality and customer contentment aspects of digital banking. Of the 30 articles this study analysed, 22 employed a clear theoretical framework to assess customer satisfaction with respect to service quality vis-a-vis digital banking services. The other 8 articles expressed no distinct theories in their study.

Table 1 shows that 11 studies used SERVQUAL, E-SERVQUAL, E-S-QUAL or Modified SERVQUAL as the theoretical framework. One article used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (DTPB). SERVQUAL Model has been widely used (Tsoukatos and Rand, 2006) in original and in its modified and extended forms to evaluate Internet banking service quality.

Table 1
Theoretical Frameworks Used

Authors	Model	Dimensions
Gautam and Sah (2023)	E-S-QUAL	User-friendliness, E-customer service, Website efficiency, Site of the organization, Security and Privacy
Bashir et. al., (2023) Al-Araj et. al., (2022) Kaur et. al., (2021) Hadid et. al., (2020) Omodele and Onyeiwu (2019) Toor et. al., (2016)	SERVQUAL	Responsiveness, Tangible, Assurance,Reliability and Empathy
Tran et. al., (2023)	-----	Efficiency, Reliability, Security and Communication
Mwiya et. al., (2022)	E-SERVQUAL	Security, Efficiency, Responsiveness, Website Attributes, Privacy, Fulfilment and Reliability
Malnaad et. al., (2022)	Modified SERVQUAL	Security, Responsiveness, Accessibility, Information and Website Design
Zouari and Abdelhedi (2021)	Extended SERVQUAL	Tangibility, Responsiveness, Digitization and Compliance, Reliability, Empathy and Assurance

Authors	Model	Dimensions
Omofowa et. al., (2021)	-----	Innovation, Technology competence, Reliability and Tangibility
Madavan and Vethirajan (2020)	-----	Physical Aspects, Efficiency, Reliability, Complaints Handling, Responsiveness and Security and Privacy
Sharma et. al., (2020)	-----	Credibility, Understanding, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Security, Competence, Communication, Access, Reliability
Raza et. al., (2020)	Modified E-SERVQUAL	Personal Need,Site Organization, User Friendliness,Reliability, Responsiveness and Efficiency
Khatoon et. al., (2020) Hammoud et. al., (2018)	-----	Efficiency, Reliability, Security and Privacy & Responsiveness and Communication
Banu et. al., (2019)	TAM DTPB	Security, Attitude, Adoption intention,Awareness, Knowledge of the Internet, Cost and time savings, Self-efficacy, Ease of use and Trust
Hamid et. al., (2018)	-----	Access, Communication, Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Reliability, Tangibility, Security, Responsiveness and Understanding
Rajan & Saranya (2018)	-----	Speed of transaction, Accessibility, Adaptability, Affordability, Efficiency, Ease and convenient banking, Accuracy and Reliability
Ling et. al., (2016)	-----	Service Quality, Web design and Content, Security and Privacy, Convenience and Speed
Amin (2016)	-----	Site organization, Efficiency of website,User friendliness and Personal need

Conclusion

This paper conducts an extensive review of the latest literature and empirical studies on Internet banking service quality, its features, scope, dimensions and its relationship with various aspects including customer satisfaction, customer retention, post-purchase behaviour and customer loyalty. The review found that several studies have been conducted encompassing different aspects of Internet banking in different regions of the world. However, it needs further research to add new insights into the area of study.

Issues such as IT governance and third-party assurance, customer tendency to switch, green e-banking and cloud computing present ample scope for further research (Deraz and Iddris, 2019). The diffusion of innovations, like online banking, requires investigation and re-evaluation to further enhance customer satisfaction (Banu et al., (2019). Infrastructure differences call for research in countries with diverselevels of internet proliferation (Malnaad et al., 2022).

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Several studies were found conducted outside India on the themes related to the Internet Banking Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction which include Gautam and Sah (2023), Bashir et al., (2023), Tran et al., (2023), Mwiya et al., (2022), Malnaad et al., (2022), Al-Araj et al., (2022), Sewaka et al., (2022), Zouari and Abdelhedi (2021), Omofowa et al., (2021), Hadid et al., (2020), Pooya et al., (2020), Khatoon et al., (2020), Omodele and Onyeiwu (2019), Amin et al., (2018), Hammoud et al., (2018), Hamid et al., (2018), Margaret and Kinyuru (2018), Ling et al., (2016), Toor et al., (2016) and Amin (2016). Very few studies were found in the Indian context which include Khan and Alhumoudi (2022), Kaur et al., (2021), Madavan and Vethirajan (2020), Sharma et al., (2020), Banu et al., (2019), Vigneshwari and Rajagopalan (2018) and Rajan and Saranya (2018). More such studies need to be conducted in the Indian context.

Inthe recent past, very few comparative studies (Madavan andVethirajan, 2020 and Banu et al., 2019) have been found conducted between public and private banks in India with reference to Digital Bank Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction. More such studies need to be conducted in the Indian context to plug in the gap.

Halim et al., (2023) suggested broadening the sampling segments to get a more acceptable stance and viewpoint.

Gautam and Sah (2023) employed five measures of e-banking service quality i.e. User-friendliness, E-customer service, Website efficiency, Site of the organisation, Security and Privacy, Halim et al., (2023) adopted three measures i.e. reliability, security and perceived usefulness, Bashir et al., (2023) and Kaur et al., (2021) evaluated internet banking service quality based on responsiveness, reliability, tangibility, empathy and assurance only. Other dimensionslike ease of use, information reliability and speed of transaction can be investigated in future studies (Hamid et al., 2018). Other aspects of service quality pertaining to Internet banking such as interactivity and website services ability be studied (Amin, 2016). Al-Araj et al. (2022) are of the view that the association betweencommunication and technological advancements with quality of service be investigated. Sinaga and Suroso (2023) recommend focusing on identifying the most impactful and specific elements of e-service quality and exploring ways to optimise these elements for maximum benefit.

Malnaad et al., (2022), Sewaka et al., (2022), Amin, (2016), Bashir et al., (2023), Tam and Thuy (2023), Alkhaibari et al., (2023) and Singh (2019) suggest using scientific sampling technique, substantial sample size (Das and

Ravi, 2021) and a larger area of study to achieve proper and generalised findings.

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Digital Media in the Context of Indian Knowledge Systems: Preserving Traditional Communication in a Technological Age

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A detailed and careful study of digital media maintained in its original or existing stage to encourage customary Indian knowledge structure and conversation rehearsal in the age of web-based. Industrial science promotes digital platforms and media which can be linked with cultural heritage. The Investigation was done by the students of the primary section of the schoolhouse of Delhi region to assemble the perception of the digital media impression or traditional knowledge conversation. The imputation is to make traditional knowledge furnish a wide plan of action for cultural expression and heritage preservation. The research highlighted the need for a stable approach for uncooperative consideration, involvement of the community, and transformation of technology to ensure the exact representation of indigenous knowledge. The detailed and careful study concludes the offer of digital media. Providing the opportunities for the conservation of India's traditional knowledge system. Through supervising strategies, it is important to address the challenges for the Indian traditional knowledge system.

Keywords: Digital Media, Traditional Knowledge Systems, Cultural Heritage, Technology Integration, Preservation.

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Introduction

Digital media's popularity in contemporary life has significantly changed traditional communication techniques, raising concerns regarding its potential to preserve the cultural traditions contained in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Ancient practices, languages, and knowledge bases are a component of IKS, which has its roots in oral traditions, community-based learning, and interpersonal communication mechanisms. These systems are important for India's cultural identity, providing insights into health, philosophy, art, and governance (Tripathi and Bharadwaj, 2020). However, in a time driven by technology, the rapid adoption of digital media provides both benefits and difficulties for safeguarding cultural customs. Digital media bridges accessibility barriers and encourages cultural exchange by providing an opportunity for the upholding and distribution of traditional knowledge to a global audience (Sundar, 2021). Traditional art forms, rituals, and practices are rapidly being recreated and shared through social media platforms, mobile applications, and virtual reality tools. Initiatives like transforming ancient manuscripts and using artificial intelligence for language preservation show how technology can assist in conserving history.

However, the experiential and community-centric nature of traditional practices can lose their authenticity in digital formats, thus an over-reliance on digital media might compromise the core of IKS. The challenge is to create a balance between cultural preservation and the adoption of technology (Gupta and Roy, 2019). Culturally sensitive techniques for developing and maintaining digital data are also essential due to the prevalence of worldwide digital narratives that carry the risk of eliminating indigenous knowledge. This study examines how digital media can be utilised to keep traditional communication established in IKS while minimising the risks related to technological disruptions. This research aims to develop ways for using digital media that maintain the value of IKS in a quickly evolving digital world by critically analysing current practices and case studies.

Review of Literature

Digital technologies came into the limelight because of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It helped in safeguarding the local or indigenous languages. One such process Ajani Y.A. et al. (2024) explored mainly focusing on Africa's multifaceted linguistic heritage. Their work emphasises the use of would be digitally capable media tools which include mobile apps

and most modern AI-based platforms for digitally saving the fast-diminishing languages. By putting together these digital technologies in the field of educational and diverse cultural framework, the authors intend to propose these indigenous languages more sustainable and handier in this digital age. However, it also born out that there are challenges such as there may be situations where one has resources to reach these techniques and on the other hand one has none in other words resource limitations for many risk it's marginalisation. This digitalisation of numerous languages ensures for survival of linguistic diversity in the globalised world. Saxena, M.K. et al. (2024) has highlighted the role of IC Technologies in preserving India's rich traditional knowledge till documented in the form of manuscripts and books. If all this traditional work is digitalised then it can be safeguarded from deterioration and ready for use globally. It can be then preserved in digital archives and various other preserving platforms and be used across the world for promoting cultural dialogue in an integrated way. Saxena's article emphasises the use of ICTs in creating dynamic and integrated knowledge to preserve India's intellectual legacy for global appreciation.

Singh, B. et al. (2024) also throw some light on the role of digital preservation of India's indigenous cultural heritage. It is based on a mixed methods approach and interviews with cultural practitioners, community leaders and digital heritage experts as well as surveys for on-hand community perceptions. It also underscores the wide possibilities in enhancing accessibility, documentation and onward transmission of cultural practices. However, the challenges as discussed are also there but the importance of social togetherness, ethical considerations and capacity building is impressed upon.

The impediment of vanishing heritage by the flux of time can be removed by digital preservation and integration of technology and a foolproof system of documentation. This also revisits the need for an approach to cultural heritage information systems in the Indian context addressing its scope challenges and tech feasibility. G.K. TK (2022) stressed the incredible contribution including the advanced conservation strategies grounded upon digital tools toward establishing a strong CHIS. This paper probes current frameworks-including metadata standards, ontology frameworks, and classification schemes to elucidate the gaps and opportunities for the implementation of an exhaustive system. The findings express an urgent feeling for a unified and national-level CHIS, which should manage, update, and visualise cultural heritage across interactive multimedia documentation. The authors insist that virtually recreating

heritage will enhance access and sustainable preservation of heritage conservation through such a system.

Digital preservation of cultural histories and artefacts in underserved Indigenous spaces has become one of the biggest growing areas of study in contemporary times. Dutta, U. (2019) elucidated upon this in co-creating Sangrakha, a digital humanities app that was aimed to enable the under-represented populations of rural eastern India to achieve documentation and preservation of their culturally important stories. The study brought to light the tensions faced by communities with disparate dichotomies of literacy, sometimes with little or no understanding of English or mainstream Indic-linguistic languages, and with little to no prior exposure to digital instruments. This research combines visual and sensory methodologies in a community-driven participatory approach, using multimedia components like images, audio, and video to make the application more user-friendly and culturally sensitive. Sangraksha fosters inclusion and sustains itself by centring on intercultural design and locality-based solutions. This project will not only create a welcoming digital space but also encourage further socio-embedded technological innovations tailored to the needs of the Global South.

Kolay S. (2016) spoke about the power of the new media in virtual heritage for documenting, promoting, and flourishing Indian traditional art and craft, which are struggling with obscurity and, thereby, economic sustenance. This is mostly through game design and animation, allowing narrative art forms to opt for a precarious visual.

The methodologies used in ethnographic surveys had to do with documenting the socio-cultural heritage, concentrating on methods, materials, and features of traditional art. Through a user-driven perspective on the investigation of new media possibilities and constraints, this research argues for the responsible transformation of tangible art forms into virtual paradigms to ensure their longevity and propagation. In this context, Thomas, P.N. (2010) makes a critique of the digitisation of traditional knowledge in the framework of India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL). It is a study about the intersection between TKDL and the digital medium, which is nice to see, but also discusses the more complex notion of the power/digital divide. The study raises serious questions about traditional knowledge's relationship with the dominant intellectual property regimes and the evolving status of reinvented traditions. In its critique of the politics underpinning the digitalisation of traditional knowledge, the article ultimately defends the capabilities of digital platforms with the preservation,

clarification, and fortification of traditional and Indigenous cultures (Corwin, J., 2016).

Objectives

To analyse the role of digital media in preserving and promoting traditional Indian knowledge systems and communication practices in the digital era and to examine the challenges and opportunities in integrating technological advancements with traditional communication methods to ensure their sustainability and relevance in contemporary society.

Methodology

Examining how digital media could assist in the promotion and preservation of traditional Indian knowledge systems is the objective of this work. A primary survey performed in the Delhi region is used in this quantitative study design. Through their work with both traditional knowledge and modern media outlets, those who respond are students.

Using a descriptive research design, the study attempts to define and understand students' opinions, awareness, and utilisation of digital media with regard to traditional Indian knowledge systems. Understanding how students perceive digital media's role in preserving cultural heritage and if they find it to be a helpful instrument for learning and communication is the objective.

Students in the Delhi region with varied educational backgrounds constitute the study's target audience. To ensure a range and representatives, 200 students were selected for the sample using simple random sampling. Universities, colleges, and other educational facilities were utilised to select the respondents. The sample, composed of students with various amounts of exposure to digital media and traditional Indian knowledge, is usual in the student population.

To gather information, a structured questionnaire was developed. Both closed-ended and Likert scale questions are provided in the survey to assess respondents' opinions on the importance of digital media to the survival of traditional Indian knowledge systems. The questions centre on topics such as knowledge of traditional knowledge systems (like Ayurveda, Yoga, and Vedas), familiarity with and use of digital media platforms (like social media, online platforms, and educational apps), views about how effectively digital media maintains traditional knowledge and obstacles to combining digital media with traditional methods of storytelling. Both offline and online delivery of the questionnaire were employed to ensure

maximum participation and to account for the different levels of technological access.

Statistical tools have been employed for the analysis of survey data. In order to summarise the responses, descriptive statistics like frequency distribution, mean, and percentage analysis were employed. The link between students' demographic traits (e.g., age, education level) and the views of digital media in preserving traditional knowledge was assessed as well using inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests.

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables and Survey Responses

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables and Survey Responses

Variable	Category		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-20 years		60	30
	21-23 years		120	60
	24-25 years		20	10
Gender	Male		100	50
	Female		100	50
Academic Discipline	Technical (e.g., Engineering)		120	60
	Humanities		80	40
Digital Media Usage (Q1)		Yes	180	90
		No	20	10
Preservation through Digital Media (Q2)		Agree	170	85
		Disagree	30	15
Authenticity Concern (Q3)		Yes	100	50
		No	100	50
Promotion of Traditional Art Forms (Q4)		Agree	160	80
		Disagree	40	20

60 per cent of respondents are between 21 and 23 years. The average age of the participants is 21.5 years, with a relatively low standard deviation (1.8), indicating that most students are in their early twenties, a typical age range for university students in Delhi. The gender distribution is balanced, with 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female respondents. This ensures the results are gender-neutral and represent diverse perspectives on the role of digital media in preserving traditional knowledge. 60 per cent of respondents are from technical fields (e.g., engineering), while 40 per cent are from humanities. This shows that students with technical backgrounds may have more exposure to and familiarity with digital tools, which could influence their perceptions of digital media's role in preserving traditional knowledge.

An overwhelming majority (90 per cent) of students use digital media regularly, showing a high level of engagement with technology. This suggests a strong potential for using digital platforms to promote and preserve traditional knowledge systems, as the students are already familiar with digital technologies. 85 per cent of students believe digital media helps preserve traditional knowledge systems, indicating a broad consensus that digital technologies can aid in safeguarding and promoting India's rich cultural heritage. There is a 50-50 split regarding concerns over the authenticity of traditional knowledge when digitised. This reflects a significant concern among students about the potential distortion or misinterpretation of traditional knowledge when it is moved into digital formats. A significant majority (80 per cent) believe digital media offers opportunities to promote traditional Indian art forms, indicating that students view digital platforms as valuable tools for increasing global exposure and awareness of traditional art, music, dance, and other cultural expressions.

Empirical Analysis

H1: Digital media plays a significant role in preserving and promoting traditional Indian knowledge systems and communication practices.

H2: There are significant challenges and opportunities in integrating technological advancements with traditional communication methods to ensure their sustainability and relevance in contemporary society.

Table 2
Chi-Square Test Results

Variable	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Role of Digital Media in Knowledge Preservation (Q2)	Agree (170)/ Disagree (30)	150/50	4.6	1	0.03
Authenticity Concern (Q3)	Yes (100)/ No (100)	100/100	0	1	0.98
Promotion of Traditional Art Forms (Q4)	Agree (160)/ Disagree (40)	150/50	5.2	1	0.02

The Chi-Square test result shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between students' perceptions and the role of digital media in preserving traditional knowledge (X^2 = 4.6, p = 0.03 < 0.05). This supports H1, indicating that digital media plays a significant role in preserving and promoting traditional knowledge systems. 85 per cent of

students agreed that digital media helps preserve traditional knowledge systems, further corroborating this finding. The Chi-Square test for the promotion of traditional art forms shows a significant result (X^2 = 5.2, p = 0.02 < 0.05). This suggests that digital media is seen as an effective tool for promoting traditional art forms, thus reinforcing the positive impact of digital tools in preserving cultural heritage.

The Chi-Square result for the authenticity concern is not significant (X^2 = 0.0, p = 0.98 > 0.05), meaning there is no statistical evidence that students significantly differ in their opinions about the authenticity of digitised traditional knowledge. This highlights that while students are concerned about the preservation of authenticity, it is not a dominant issue when integrated with technology. Thus, results do not support H2, indicating that there are no significant challenges and opportunities in integrating technological advancements with traditional communication methods to ensure their sustainability and relevance in contemporary society.

Discussion

The statistical study showed certain important trends in understanding the function of digital media in maintaining and developing traditional Indian knowledge systems and communication practices. First, it is clear that digital media is usually regarded as a helpful tool for traditional knowledge preservation and transmission. Respondents generally accepted the potential of digital technologies for enhancing access to cultural heritage, indicating that digital platforms can bridge gaps in traditional communication strategies and provide new avenues for knowledge transmission. This shows an increasing acceptance among the younger population, especially students, of the application of digital media in traditional knowledge preservation.

In addition, students highlighted the power of digital media to promote diverse forms of traditional art, culture, and legacy. The extensive application of social media platforms, online courses, and virtual shows has enabled more people to engage with and understand India's unique heritage of culture. This trend is consistent with the increasing focus on online communication, making traditional cultural expressions more accessible and relevant to younger, tech-savvy audiences.

Still, there are challenges to integrating digital media with traditional communication techniques. The reliability of digital material is one of the main issues. A considerable amount of concern was raised over

the possible distortion or loss of authenticity when traditional knowledge is converted to digital media, even if many students did not see this as an important challenge. This highlights the importance of carefully considering how digitisation is conducted in order to protect the integrity of the original knowledge while making it accessible through current technologies.

Furthermore, there were different opinions on the possible risks of digital media, such as cultural appropriation or disinformation of indigenous knowledge. These problems emphasise how important it is to follow ethical rules while involving the community in the digitalisation process in order to protect marginalised people's cultural narratives and intellectual property.

Therefore, it is essential to address the concerns of authenticity, representation, and ethical considerations even if the introduction of digital media offers significant prospects for the preservation and advancement of traditional Indian knowledge systems. The outcomes show that a balanced approach is required for the preservation of cultural heritage in the future. Although technology can increase accessibility and awareness, traditional techniques and community involvement must remain essential to safeguarding the authenticity and richness of India's indigenous knowledge systems.

Conclusion

In the digital era, this study highlights the essential part that digital media plays in preserving and developing traditional Indian knowledge systems and communication practices. The results highlight how digital platforms may better connect traditional communication channels, improve accessibility to cultural heritage, and motivate younger, tech-savvy audiences to appreciate India's rich heritage of culture. Numerous advantages are presented by the integration of digital media, but there are also drawbacks likewise, including questions about the veracity of digital material, cultural appropriation, and the distortion of indigenous knowledge. To guarantee that their cultural narratives are precisely and respectfully portrayed, these issues require a careful, moral approach to digitisation, with involvement from residents. In order to ensure the sustainability and applicability of India's indigenous knowledge systems in the modern world, the research ultimately suggests that a balanced strategy that combines the benefits of contemporary technology and traditional preservation techniques is needed.

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Book Review

A Brief History of the Present: Muslims in New India
Hilal Ahmed

Pratip Chattopadhyay*

Indian society, both in 'old' and 'new' form, remains an example of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and plural democratic society to the rest of the world notwithstanding some irritancies in its internal domain. The present book under review draws our attention to one aspect of such irritancies, which surfaced prominently in the 'new' India of the post-2014 period in a BJP dominant party system-changing socio-cultural and political approach towards the Muslim community and self-perception of that community to respond to that reality. The author clarifies that it's not his own religiosity that prompts him to write the book but recent happenings in a society where "anti-Muslim discourse reached a violent level" (p. xi) rooted in strategic approach of central government triggered the attempt "to discuss this process and outcomes" (p. xv) through a "meaningful academic intervention" (p. xix). Relying on official documents, published materials,

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speeches of religious leaders, observations on the website of religious and political organisations, and survey data of CSDS-Lokniti, the author tries to understand the changing nature of Indian democracy, the idea of Hindutva and Muslim perceptions and anxieties related to Hindutva idea. The book begins with an introduction that clarifies the objectives, research questions, and methodologies involved and then spreads the theme and problem of the book in eight chapters before the author in the concluding chapter charts out a course for the correct line of Muslim/minority politics enmeshed in wider struggle for equality, justice and liberty in Indian democratic society.

The first two chapters on 'Muslismness and Intellectual Politics' and 'What is New in New India?' explore the theoretical thematic of the book - the contours of intellectual (both Muslim and Hindu) engagement with everyday lived experience of the Muslims and the "contestation of socialism, secularism, inclusion and Hindutva driven nationalism" to craft a doctrine of New India (p. 31) - that acts as s constrain on the perception of India as a multi-religious and plural country. Informing the reader about (i) the emergence of the Muslim middle class employing Hindi for mass religious mobilisation on the basis of field experiences in Delhi; and (ii) the dilemmas of a Muslim researcher to study post-partition realities of non-Hindu societies in India following works of Imtiaz Ahmad, Mushirul Hasan and Syed Ali and Irena Akbar, the author conclude the first chapter with a call for "argumentative openness" (p. 16) in analysing socio-economic and political-cultural milieu to enable readers with autonomy to gather meaning from the genre of research works of which the book is an example. Drawing on interpretations of the Niti Ayog document titled 'Strategy for New India@75' and ICHR volume 'India: The Mother of Democracy', the author argues that "there is a need to understand the nature of this political narrative" (p. 27) as it produces a "charitable state" model (p. 32) where social justice is redefined as a development-oriented inclusive concept in place of identity-based exclusive concept to generate enthusiasm about double-engine government for "recognition, infrastructure and individual-centric benefits (p. 35). With this new theme of Muslim researchers and Indian democracy, the author in the next six chapters embarks to uncover the practical problems associated with Muslim engagement in this new direction of Indian democracy.

In place of the historical objectivity of the 1990s, the author finds in the call of 'Amrit Kaal' and restructuring of the annexe building of the National Archives of India "a new imagination of India's past that not merely rejects the secular version of Indian history, but also offers a

completely different meaning of historical evidence and sources" (p.48) based on myth-based politics of nationalism. In the midst of an attempt to dismantle the scientific past of India and a "Hindutva reading of Constitution" (p. 53) leading to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the author tries to find 'Muslim historical', an alternative imagination of Muslim past in India, in the "highly diversified Islamic faith system practised by Muslims in today's India" (p. 51) that creates a 'living Muslim heritage/archive' which can be the basis of "refashioning a constructive imagination of Muslim presence in India's past, present and future" (p. 54). Going beyond the "intellectual laziness" (p. 43) of liberal Hindu and non-Hindu intellectuals and non-BJP political parties in India "who take refuge in the age-old idea of composite nationalism to show the divisiveness of Hindutva politics" (p. 55-56), the author unearths Hindutva problematic narrativisation method of Muslim heritage in the latter's 'civilisation' (destruction of Hindu temples to establish civilisational supremacy of Islam - Gyanbapi case); 'class' (Muslims as ruling elite and Hindus as subaltern in medieval times - monolithic imagery of Aurangzeb); and 'Sufi tradition as Indianisised Islam' (Hindu religious groups like RSS has an ambiguous attitude to it - the approach to Sai Baba). Such narrativisation takes place mostly due to an attempt to link Muslim heritage with the foreign origin of Islam and the role of Muslim rulers in 'medieval' Indian history and the author claims that "post-colonial Muslim identity originated in India as a rejection of European-style political system based on one nation-one religion-one culture" (p. 73) thesis and instead Muslim cultural inclusive heritage must act as a signpost of India as a democratic republic.

Disregarding such a culture of accommodation and inclusiveness as an eternal truth or a Muslim-Satya, influenced by the spread of global terrorism through some Islamic terrorist outfits, the author talks at length in chapter five about the emergence of global Islamophobia and a localised Muslim politicophobia that has unnerved political, cultural and academic approach to the Muslim community. India not being an exception, in its post-2014 'new' form, triplicates the latter through fear of (i) making of an Indian Taliban outfit (ii) active political engagement of Muslims and (iii) the emergence of a politically active Muslim consciousness. The author finds three serious falls out of such a milieu of religious discrimination - (i) violent anti-Muslim Hindutva politics dominate north-Indian politics (ii) in central, and west India anti-Muslim discourse has been normalised and accepted by Muslims (iii) failure of Hindutva politics to terrorise general Muslim minds in India (p. 81-82). Through survey findings, the author establishes that

"Muslim religiosity is facing an internal crisis" (p. 89) and is trying to "explore new moral and ethical standards within Islam" (p. 91) to survive in the 'new' Indian democracy. The inner tension about religious pathways has a spillover effect in the intellectual Muslim circle as well, which according to the author finds expression in a contestation between "liberal Muslims versus the right kind of Muslims" (p. 98). However, out of this contestation, the author sees the possibility of the emergence of a positive "space of democratic deliberations, discussions, criticisms and even self-criticisms" (p. 101) that can help the Muslim community find a balanced position on political questions between places across the globe where they are majority like Turkey and where they are minority like in India.

BJP has, according to the author, professionally and strategically tried to manage the Muslim community taking help of their internal tensions and caste hierarchy ("Asharf-Ajlaf-Arzal framework") [p.109] through their Pasmanda political discourse that highlights the poor plight of Pasmnada Muslims but rejects SC status to them (p. 111). Trying to fix their political position among 'committed voters', 'party sympathisers' and 'floating voters', BJP, the author feels has orchestrated the Pasmanda Muslim discourse ahead of the 2024 national election "to demonstrate an inclusive character of the party, at least, symbolically" (p. 112) as was the case before 2017 Madhya Pradesh assembly election when alpsankhyak coinage was used to describe Muslims and club them with pichra varg. Based on CSDS-Lokniti survey data, the author testifies that while in 'new' India Hindu voting consolidation has happened around the Hindutva political logic of BJP, Muslim general and Muslim OBCs demonstrate regional variations in envisaging elections as a survival strategy or following any party line reflecting a fact that "Muslim self-perception is a complicated phenomenon" (p. 126). Chapter eight hints at the nature of Muslim political participation with special reference to their electoral behaviour as indicated in CSDS-Lokniti data sets wherein the author innovatively distinguishes between "participation as interaction" in the form of protests like Shahinbaag anti-CAA protest wherein "Muslimness is an inseparable part of their Indian identity" (p. 131) and "participation as instrumental action" wherein perceptions about public service delivery emerge and Muslims perceive that "everyday life-issues are more important than adhering to any imaginary anti-BJPism" (p. 147).

As readers come to the concluding section they must be waiting for how the author settles the practical problematic of placing diversified Muslim historical, religious, social, cultural and political positions in the

theoretical theme of the post-2014 'new India' with few objective-oriented intellectual enterprises. The author true to his introductory remark that "there is no ready-to-use recipe for the future" (p. xvii) bypasses any conclusive remark about positioning the Muslim community in the 'present' of Indian democracy but in lieu of a conclusion makes five claims about linkage of Muslim/minority situation and Indian polity. Placing his faith on (i) reassessment of basic principles of Indian Constitution as enshrined in the Preamble - social justice, secularism, federalism; (ii) internal crisis of BJP by putting too much emphasis on Narendra Modi's leadership, disregard to autonomy of established institutions, marginalisation of intellectuals inside the party and ignoring the role of professional politicians who have joined in the rosy time but have no surety to stay with BJP once it is out of power; (iii) anti-Muslim violence and contemporary religiosity exposes the hollowness of Hindutva politics not to have moral courage to question emerging dogmatic nature and public presence of Muslim religious symbols in fear of disturbing their electoral equation; (iv) Muslims and the enthusiasm of political society is enmeshed in the success of Bharat Jodo Yatra of Indian National Congress that goes beyond the Muslim/minority issue and make a broader conceptualisation o minority in Dalits, farmers and all oppressed grassroots section of society pushing political society and public intellectuals to take a principled position in arena of mainstream politics; (v) the way out for such a principled position is to embrace swadharma idea of Yogendra Yadav that links democracy, diversity and development as templates for political-moral principled struggle against anti-Muslimism in tandem with struggle for wider social justice and economic equality.

In a nutshell, the author successfully drives home the core argument of the book - it is high time to go beyond the binary lens of Hindu-Muslim, majority-minority, Hindu assertiveness -Muslim victimhood while reading the stories of minority appeasement, democratic backsliding, electoral autocracy and Hindutva politics of India at present as it will only provide information, contested claims and anti-politics but not the solution which lies in a "radically revised template of progressive politics - one which allows individuals…to critique economic injustice and social inequalities while adhering to (my) conception of liberative Islam" (p. 171).

In this well-arranged volume, the last line of the first paragraph on p.43 could have been better phrased as "BJP is transforming India into a 'Hindu Pakistan'" instead of "BJP is transforming India into a 'Hindu Pakistan' " as printed. Also, the corresponding note to this line on p.204

unnecessarily puts Hindu Pakistan in bold font as it is already indented in the single bracket on p. 43.

After a thorough reading, the reader can be a bit perturbed to see that the book is all about the subtitle 'Muslims in New India' and the philosophical nuances in the wordings of the title 'Brief History of the Present' remain unattended in the pages of the text except three lines on "political time" in p. 38 as well as in the bibliography section in which even if Foucault's works are cited but not Archaeology of Knowledge (1968) where genealogy idea is discussed leave alone recent publications on the theme like History and the Present by Partha Chatterjee and Anjan Ghosh (2006) and History of the Present: The Contemporary and its Culture by David Roberts (2021). While detailing an analysis of the subtitle, the author could have put a chapter on New India and Muslim Economics in which the variations in economic conditions internally within Muslim communities, both in terms of caste and gender hierarchies could have surfaced as variables to correlate their position on social and political issues in new India in addition to the role of Muslim corporate in funding political forces.

Overall as the blurb by Ashutosh Varshney mentions on the cover page, this book is an "enlightening analysis on various facets of Muslim life in New India" and is going to be a must-read for academicians, researchers, scholars, policy planners and even politicians in the post-2024 election milieu where all political and civil society forces are re-evaluating their strategy to be up to the expectations of silent voters who remain the bedrock of Indian democracy. As India marches towards being Viksit Bharat it is important to have a Viksit Samaj, a society with an elevated attitude and mentality on seeing beyond the brief history of the present where it is essential to match Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas, Sabka Biswas with Sabka Saath, Sabka Pratirodh, Sabka Nyay, Sabka Swadharma. The present book under review offers a guideline for it taking the case study of the lived experience of the Muslim community.

Book Review

Türkiye's Foreign Policy under APK: Implications and Challenges for India
Md. Muddassir Quamar

Aishwarya Upreti*

The book, 'Türkiye's Foreign Policy Under the APK: Implications and Challenges for India', comes about at a time when India- Türkiye relations are at an all-time low. Amid Turkey's criticism of the India-Middle East- Europe Corridor and growing political tensions between the two countries[1], the book is a great read for anyone looking to understand Türkiye and its recent foreign policy. It not only explains Türkiye's foreign policy but gives an insight into how Türkiyeas a nation-state came to be, giving a background on the evolution of its foreign policy. Additionally, the book also dives into Türkiye's regional foreign policy and how it impacts India.

The book is divided into six chapters, prefacing the history of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of Modern Türkiye under Kemal Ataturk, when Türkiye's foreign policy tilted towards the West and moved to the twenty-first century and its reliance more on its immediate neighbours. Author highlights 'Strategic Depth' and 'zero problem' with neighbours and the 'Blue Homeland' doctrine as the core part of Türkiye's foreign policy.

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'Zero problem with neighbours' may well be traced back to Kemal Ataturk's 'Peace at home, peace in the world' slogan, underling his foreign policy. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's right-wing government, however, two more elements have been added to Turkish foreign policy: Pan-Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism. These elements conflict with Türkiye's laklik or laicite (derived from the French) policy of secularism, keeping the public sphere away from religion. As the author points out, it also conflicts with Türkiye and Erdoğan's long-time goal of being a part of the European Union.

After the Introduction, in Chapter Two,' Glorious Past: Ottoman and Kemalist Consciousness', the author throws light on the origin of Neo Ottomanism and Islamism, giving us an idea as to why Erdoğan's APK (Adaletve Kalkınma Partisi) or Justice and Development Party have adopted them. The Ottoman Empire reminds Türkiye of its strong and glorious past as well as its standing as the leader of the Islamic World. The APK strives to return Türkiye to these days of glory by being the leader of the present-day Muslim Countries or Ummah.

APK and Erdoğan's strategies have been popular enough to keep the party in power since 2002, although public opinion has been swaying recently.[2] The party's popularity stems from the clashes between the secularists and Islamists in the later half of the twentieth century, with resentment brewing up among the more religious sections of Turkish society, who felt stifled by the strict laicite policies, such as the ban on hijab in the public sphere.[3] This is captured by the author in the chapter, as the moves," were disliked by the masses in rural and far-off areas".

The next two chapters of the book focus on Türkiye's Cold War and Post-Cold War Strategy, placing geography and political system as its key determinants. The author reiterates the rise of APK as because of pushback from the non-elites, but also mentions economic and democratic consolidation by the APK as well as Erdoğan's personality as the reasons for APK's popularity. Thus, we get to know the evolution of Türkiye's domestic politics, which plays a huge role in understanding the foreign policy of any country.

Türkiye's ups and downs with the non-MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries are also mentioned. Relations between the USA and Turkey have been described as neutral as of now, while relations with the European Union remain frayed under the APK because of the breakdown of talks related to Türkiye's EU membership. Because of the latter, Türkiye and Erdoğan are focusing more on emerging powers like China, Russia and the East European countries, although conflicts on various issues remain with China and Russia. Coming to the MENA countries in Chapter Five,

Türkiye's utmost priority seems to be its immediate neighbourhood, as a part of its quest for Neo-Ottomanism. Here again, we are provided with a compact history of Türkiye's relations with each of the MENA countries for a better understanding of its foreign policy. Apart from the boundary and sharing of river-water disputes, Türkiye and various countries in the MENA such as, Syria, Iraq and Iran, struggle to deal with the aspirations of their Kurdish population. This has led to both cooperation between the countries, as well as conflict because any development in one country on the issue would directly affect the aspirations of Türkiye's own Kurds. Hence, "The APK was keen to resolve Türkiye's Kurdish problem through negotiations and peace talks and was looking to the Iraqi Kurds to help facilitate talks with the PKK" (Kurdistan Worker's Party- a banned party actively working towards the goal of a separate Kurdistan). With Iran in particular, the "Kurdish issue created convergences between the two".

The Arab Spring receives a detailed mention in the book, about how it affected Türkiye vis-à-vis other MENA countries. Arab Spring refers to a series of protests, armed rebellions and uprisings, that spread in the Arab world against undemocratic regimes, starting from Tunisia in 2011, the Jasmine Revolution. As part of its Neo-Ottomanism and focusing on its immediate neighbourhood approach, Türkiye saw the "Arab Protests as an opportunity to expand its regional influence". As a democratic country, Türkiye supported the protests as they broke out, showcasing itself as the ideal democracy void of authoritarianism. This led to Türkiye bettering its relations with some countries while escalating tensions with others. The formation of power blocs and asserting itself as a Neo-Caliph of the Islamic World created friction with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. Türkiye's policy, thus, can be said to be revivalist- both at the domestic and foreign front.

Finally, in the last chapter, the author talks about how all of the aforementioned factors in Turkish foreign policy affect India. Türkiye is important for India, as it is one of the very few countries that openly supports Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Under the APK, Indian relations with Türkiye have deteriorated because of this issue. According to author, "Historically, India-Türkiye's relations could have never taken off". This is true, and they are at an all-time low right now[4]. Erdoğan's criticism of the abrogation of Article 370 in the Indian Constitution, raising the Kashmir issue at the United Nations and siding with Pakistan, has concerned India. Trade relations and Erdoğan's "pitch for a Free Trade Agreement" with India has not warmed Indo-Türkiye relations, as Türkiye continues to court

Pakistan. Türkiye and Pakistan have not only had political convergences but increased trade and security cooperation. The latter is of particular concern to India, because of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and arms supply to militants in Indian Kashmir. Unlike Saudi Arabia and many other Arab countries, Türkiye has not de-hyphenated Pakistan and India.

In fact, India's growing relations with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries might be a reason for Ankara's closeness with Islamabad, and other Indian rivals like China. However, the author, in his policy recommendations, advises Indian officials and policymakers to not be hasty with their decisions and to draw Ankara and Pakistan further close. He recommends a two-pronged strategy, relying on reminding Türkiye of the attractiveness of the Indian market and trade with India. This might deter Türkiye to support Pakistan's claim on Indian Kashmir so openly and quieten Ankara. The other prong, if the first does not work, is to highlight Türkiye's own Kurdistan and Armenian Genocide problem, among other issues with its neighbours, as an incentive for it to reflect on interfering in New Delhi's internal issues. He recommends improving ties with other MENA countries, as India has already been doing, with the IMEEC and 12U2.

In Conclusion, 'Türkiye's Foreign Policy Under APK: Implications and Challenges for India' presents a comprehensive study of Turkish foreign policy from both, a historical and political viewpoint. One can understand Türkiye's relations with various countries through this book, and the APK party's role in shaping them. Most importantly, the policy recommendations at the end are not only useful for Indian policymakers and analysts, but pragmatic as the author recommends countering Türkiye in a way to not permanently damage relations, but instead warn Ankara of the cards New Delhi can play if forced to. This is in line with India's 'Panchsheel' doctrine of peace and non-interference in each other's internal matters. Thus, Türkiye's strategies and interests in different parts of the world are necessary for India to understand vis-à-vis its own interests and how they can align to counter regional rivals like Pakistan and China.

End Notes

1.   https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-erdogan-opposes-india-middle-east-corridor Access date- 26/07/2024

2.   https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/turkey-opposition-victory-erdogan-elections-9247193/ Access date- 26/07/2024

3.   https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/turkey-and-the-headscarf-ban/ Access date- 26/07/2024

4.   https://scroll.in/article/1056167/why-indias-ties-with-turkey-are-worse-than-ever-before Access date- 26/07/2024

Book Review

The Social, Cultural and Political Discourses of Autism
Jessica N. Lester and Michelle O'Reilly

Subham Bhattacharjee*

Recent times have shown that autism can be viewed from multiple dimensions. As autism is not a homogenous condition but rather a broader spectrum, and it can have different impacts on the emotions and behaviour of the person and family. In the quest to gain a holistic perspective, the book tends to encompass unique and critical arguments to construct the meaning of autism in society. The proliferation of individual diagnoses with autism spectrum disorder over the years has shifted the world's discourse towards disability in general and autism in particular, given the abundance of diverse literature on autism, autistic people and their families. They transcend this boundary and foray into new territories to explain the intricacies of the society on autism. The book serves as a buffet of diverse discourses locating autism beyond the argument of ability and disability, normality and abnormality. The book offers eight chapters, which hold six main chapters,

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leaving the introductory at the beginning and the last chapter, which summarises the argument and concluding remarks.

The introductory chapter maps the terrain by demonstrating a theoretical paradigm in the conceptualisation of autism, covering bio-medical viewpoints and nuanced trends of social science and humanities with cutting-edge debates on the meaning of autism and how we give meaning to it. The chapter also explains the sensitive choice of words while preferring to use the term 'Autistic person' instead of 'person with autism' as the former term refers to perceiving autism as an integral part of the person's identity; the latter lends to understanding autism is external facet from their identity. The author is reflexive on her positionality in constructing autism as embracing the diverse intellectual identity of autistic people personally and professionally. Substantively, the first chapter carefully introduces the readers to the arguments and themes in the remaining chapters of the book without leaning heavily on explicitly explaining every argument and theme in this chapter.

Following the discussion in the second chapter, the book dives into the historical context of disability and autism. From reminiscing when disability was considered as a result of witchcraft or magic and curing was done through spiritual healing to the Enlightenment period, which led to the introduction of psychiatric intervention in institutions, further moving into the present-day context where there is a paradigm shift enabling to bring social reforms and the disability movement. It is essential to note that labelling can have a powerful effect on the individual's outlook for their deviance in behaviour. The transformation of the course from viewing disability from several perspectives, from the play of supernatural powers to scientific explanation to an act of social discrimination against disabled people. This chapter challenges the nosological framework and peregrinates the readers to different models of disability that constantly shape and reshape perspectives on viewing disability.

The third chapter is credible in understanding the characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), describing the impairment in social interaction, communication, restricted interest and repetitive behaviours, sometimes combined with a learning disorder or motor skills disorder. Through the interview with parents, they profoundly explore the general emotional aspect of the parents. The linearity of the diagnosis and intervention can be correlated with negative and positive emotions and may be in the long-term transformation of grief and guilt into acceptance. The prevalence of autism is more common in males than in females, which may

probably be less evident in their social applicability or if diagnostic tests are gender biased. The chapter acknowledges the shift in meaning and language in clinical psychiatry while reflecting on how it impacts not just the autistic individual but also their parents and family.

After providing us with the backdrop of clinical and medical positions on autism, the fourth chapter discusses the socio-cultural construction of autism. The authors critique the functionalist reductionist approach of the medical model and bring our attention to understanding the lived experience of the autistic individual and their family. The neurodiverse movement gave autistic people an opportunity for self-advocacy, defying the deficit model and neurotypical values of normalcy by society. Ostensibly, the movement was accelerated through the internet and social media, reaching out to more people with more stories, which has encouraged autistic individuals to embrace their identity. The last section of the chapter reflects on the everyday struggles of autistic people, where some of them require very little to no assistance from others, while some of them need their close ones to be with them. After setting both the clinical and social position of autism in the preceding chapter, in the fifth chapter, the author takes the reader to explore the negative connotation of labelling autism as a deficit condition that can lead to stress, cynical, violent or abusive behaviour and can even lead to discrimination. Understanding autism only through physical or perceptible characteristics may often create a stereotypical outlook accorded by high verbal proficiency society. The chapter guides us through different interviews and stories of parents, therapists, and autistic individuals.

In chapter six, the authors shed light on the plethora of challenges faced by autistic persons and their parents, which include commotion in realising autism efforts to get proper diagnosis and therapies. The inequality in the distribution of resources or lack of opportunities for autistic individuals to access the resources, especially during a pandemic like COVID-19, worsens the scenario for them. The author makes contrasting remarks with her previous chapter on neoliberal society promoting equality and acceptance. On the other hand, the neoliberal market imperils the economic, medical care and educational needs of autistic people as the market runs on a consumer-driven agenda. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the barriers for autistic people while accessing employment and education opportunities resulting from cultural prejudice, which often stands as a barrier. The seventh chapter expounds on the role of stigma in the lives of autistic individuals and their families, redefining our frame on

how we perceive the concept of autism. The author addresses us through the contours of media portrayal of autism and the religious and societal ideology on autism, which may hinder the possibility of getting a diagnosis and therapy. The individual or the family follows these moral implications because of the fear of ostracising. The reinforcement of social stigma is more common against mothers. The author highlights that, in most cases, mothers are often blamed and excluded from the family and society. Circumventing more neurodiverse language while talking about someone's mental condition can contribute to the process of creating an inclusive society. The chapter balances the two dominant views, one the negative connotation of medication while carefully weighing other points of its potential role of professional therapies for a better quality of life for autistic people.

The eighth chapter highlights the significant points in the book and analyses and synthesises the arguments mentioned in the book, information novitiates and data acquisition, and data comprehension and overview and research outlook. The authors, with their years of experience in disability studies, introduce us to the possible research direction on the subject matter, emphasising that the voices of autistic individuals have the potential to stir up a new wave of knowledge and a perspective that can prove to be valuable in advancing our understanding regarding autism and its many related situations. The chapter exposes us to discourse analysis and conversational analysis that work on the narratives of autistic people and their families, making sense of their cognitive ways. Congruently, the author urges for Video Reflexive Ethnography (VRE) that can become a yardstick to generate nuanced insight into the lives of autistic individuals. For what autism is can be a varied perspective, the chapter likely shed light on new approaches to understanding the more profound thoughts by decoding their personal voices on autism.

Globally, the biggest challenge is to make society aware of and acknowledge the diversity that exists in the world, and without adequately understanding public perception, it is difficult actually to achieve an inclusive education and an inclusive society. Therefore, it boils down to the question of what relevance and value the book can provide in the present-day context to understand and solve an issue. The book is a wonderful ride in the quest for understanding autism through both the medical and social worlds, which both lie at a distance pole and link them without strongly endorsing any argument but guiding them through the contours of stories and issues. The author adopts reflexivity to ensure that the readers are open to myriads of ideas that address the lived experiences of autistic people and

their families. The book is an interesting choice as it defies cultural stereotyping and aligns with the idea of creating an inclusive society. Additionally, the book ensures poly-vocality by incorporating the views of people in diverse fields working with autistic people, such as anthropologists, sociologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, public policymakers, health carers, and paediatricians, to achieve the ultimate goal of creating an inclusive society across the globe.

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In-text Citations (As per APA, 7th Edition)

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