

ISSN : 0973-855X



MPJSS

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

**Peer-reviewed Journal of
M.P. Institute of Social Science Research**

Volume 30 | Number 2 | December 2025

www.mpissr.org

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

Patron

Professor Gopal Krishna Sharma

Editor

Professor Yatindra Singh Sisodia

Associate Editor

Dr. Manu Gautam

Advisory Board

Professor Sandeep Shastri

Director, Academics, NITTE Education Trust, Mangaluru

Professor Ashwani Kumar

Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Professor Ashutosh Kumar

Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Professor D.K. Verma

Sociology, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Mhow (M.P.)

Professor Ujjwal Kumar Singh

Political Science, University of Delhi, Delhi

Professor R.S. Deshpande

Former Professor of Economics, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru

Professor Kanhaiya Ahuja

Economics, Devi Ahilya University, Indore

Professor Manju Singh

Economics, Malviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur

Professor Tapas Kumar Dalapati

Sociology, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar

Professor Y.G. Joshi

Geography, M.P. Institute of Social Science Reserch, Ujjain

Professor Sandeep Joshi

Commerce, M.P. Institute of Social Science Reserch, Ujjain

ISSN: 0973-855X



MPJSS

**Madhya Pradesh
Journal of Social Sciences**

Volume 30 | Number 2 | December 2025

Editor

Yatindra Singh Sisodia

Associate Editor

Manu Gautam

M.P. Institute of Social Science Research

Autonomous Institute of Indian Council of Social Science Research, Ministry of Education,
Govt. of India and Ministry of Higher Education, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh

6, Prof. Ramsakha Gautam Marg, Bharatpuri Administrative Zone

Ujjain - 456010 (Madhya Pradesh)

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences is a *peer-reviewed* journal published biannually by M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain. It is devoted to research on social, cultural, economic, political, administrative and contemporary issues, problems and processes at the state, national and international levels. No conditions are imposed to limit the subject matter of the articles in any manner. The journal welcomes research papers, review articles, research notes, comments and book reviews on topics which broadly come under the purview of social sciences.

Previously this Journal is included in the UGC-Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE) - Group I.

Manuscripts, subscriptions and other correspondence should be addressed to:

The Editor

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences
M.P. Institute of Social Science Research
6, Ramsakha Gautam Marg, Bharatpuri Administrative Zone
UJJAIN - 456 010 Madhya Pradesh (India)
Phones: (0734) 2510978, 3510180
E-mail: mpjssujain@gmail.com, Website: www.mpissr.org

Subscription Rates

Annual	
Institutes	₹ 500.00
Individuals	₹ 400.00
Per Copy	
Institutes	₹ 250.00
Individuals	₹ 200.00

The subscription of the journal may be sent through Demand Draft drawn in favour of the Director, MPISSR, Ujjain.

The MPISSR will appreciate receiving journals/periodicals/ research publications from other Institutes/Organisations in exchange of the *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences*.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance received from the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi (Ministry of Education, Government of India) for the Publication of this Journal.

The facts stated, opinions expressed, and comments drawn in all the articles which appear in the journal are those of the individual authors and are not to be taken as representing the views of the Editor or the Institute.

ISSN: 0973-855X

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

A Biannual Journal of

M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain

Vol. 30	December 2025	No. 2
---------	---------------	-------

CONTENTS

Agro-Led Economic Growth: A Quantitative Analysis of Madhya Pradesh's Development Model (2000-2023) Ganesh Kawadia	1
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India: Challenges and Reforms Deepty Gupta and Kushagri Singh	13
Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives from Classical Political Economy to Post Colonial Feminism Anuja Gupta	31
Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward Minaketan Behera, Subasini Maharana and Suraj Kumar Tanty	42
Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India: An Empirical Analysis through the Lens of Traditional Economic Wisdom Akhilesh Pathak	55
Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery through ABDM Dikumoni Hazarika and Bhawna Gupta	70
Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period the Contemporary Period Ramneet Kaur	86
Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio Rajeev Kumar Singh, Kiran and Arvind Kumar	96
Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India: Pathways to Ensuring Equity, Inclusivity, and Sustainable Financing for Vision Viksit Bharat@2047 Md. Asraul Hoque and Krishnan Chalil	114

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts? The Case Study of Madhya Pradesh Forum Dave	130
Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis Neelu Anita Tigga	143
Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past Preeti Yadav	157
Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion from the Abyss of Stagnation Rakesh Ranjan Das	173
Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis of Environmental Awareness among the Youth Manish K. Verma and Abhilasha Dohare	187
Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative for Inclusive Quality Education to Tribal Students Manish Kumar and Dharmendra Kumar Sarraf	206
Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh and Delhi's Freebies Politics Subhash and Devendra Poola	221
<i>Book Reviews</i>	
Legalizing the Revolution: India and the Constitution of the Postcolony (Sandipto Dasgupta) Asis Mistry	242
Ideology, Conflict and State Control in Higher Education: A Sociological Analysis (Sushree Panigrahi) Siddhi Singh	247
The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World (William Dalrymple) Bharti Sehta	251
PMO - Prime Minister's Office: Through the Years (Himanshu P. Roy) Harshit Singh	255



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 1-12)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Agro-Led Economic Growth: A Quantitative Analysis of Madhya Pradesh's Development Model (2000-2023)

Ganesh Kawadia*

This study presents a comprehensive quantitative analysis of Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation and its contribution to economic growth between 2000 and 2023. Using longitudinal data analysis and comparative state-level assessment, we examine how Madhya Pradesh achieved sustained agricultural growth rates of 7.1 per cent annually, significantly outperforming the national average of 3.2 per cent. The research demonstrates that strategic agricultural policy interventions, including the innovative Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (Price Deficit Financing Scheme), infrastructure investment, and comprehensive farmer support systems, raised agricultural capacity utilisation to 61.2 per cent and increased agriculture's contribution to state GDP from 28.5 per cent to 37.8 per cent. Our analysis reveals that agricultural underutilisation costs India ₹4.69 lakh crores annually, representing 2.3 per cent of national GDP. The study provides quantitative evidence that agriculture-led growth models can generate superior development outcomes compared to conventional industry-focused strategies, with Madhya Pradesh's approach yielding a 229 per cent increase in farmer incomes and creating sustainable employment for 70 per cent of the state's population. Importantly, this transformation was achieved while maintaining fiscal sustainability, with the state's debt-to-GSDP ratio declining from 28.2 per cent to 21.4 per cent and substantial scope remaining for further enhancement of the agricultural growth model.

*Former Head, School of Economics, Devi Ahilya University, Indore (M.P.).

E-mail: ganesh.kawadia@gmail.com

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

Key Words: Agriculture-Led Growth, Madhya Pradesh, Bhawantar Bhugtan, Agricultural Capacity Utilisation, Fiscal Sustainability, BIMARU Transformation.

Introduction

India's development trajectory since independence has systematically undervalued agriculture's growth potential, treating it as a residual sector rather than recognising its capacity as a primary engine of economic growth. This approach becomes particularly problematic when considering that agriculture employs approximately 42.6 per cent of India's workforce while contributing only 19.2 per cent to GDP as of 2022-23, indicating massive productivity gaps and untapped economic potential. Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation from 2000 to 2023 provides compelling evidence that challenges this conventional wisdom, demonstrating sustained agricultural growth rates that consistently outperformed national averages while generating substantial improvements in rural incomes and overall economic development.

The theoretical foundation for this study rests on questioning the linear structural transformation model that assumes economic development must progress sequentially from agriculture to industry to services. Madhya Pradesh's experience suggests that agriculture can serve as a dynamic growth sector when supported by appropriate policies, adequate investment, and institutional innovations. The state's journey from classification among the BIMARU states in the 1990s to achieving India's highest agricultural growth rate over the past decade provides a natural experiment for analysing agriculture-led development strategies.

This research employs comprehensive quantitative analysis to examine Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation, utilising longitudinal data spanning over two decades to establish causal relationships between policy interventions and development outcomes. The study's significance extends beyond regional analysis to inform national development strategy, particularly given the documented annual economic losses of ₹4.69 lakh crores due to agricultural underutilisation across India.

Research Objectives

Performance Quantification: To measure and compare Madhya Pradesh's agricultural growth performance against national averages and other major agricultural states using longitudinal data analysis spanning 2000-2023.

Policy Impact Assessment: To evaluate the effectiveness of specific policy interventions, particularly the Bhawantar Bhugtan Yojana,

infrastructure investments, and support systems, through quantitative cost-benefit analysis and return-on-investment calculations.

Scalability Analysis: To assess the national replication potential of Madhya Pradesh's model by quantifying agricultural capacity underutilisation across Indian states and demonstrating the fiscal sustainability of agriculture-led development strategies.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The conventional development economics literature, influenced by Lewis' (1954) dual sector model and Kuznets (1966) structural transformation theory, has long advocated for systematic resource transfer from agriculture to industry and services. This perspective views agriculture as a declining sector characterised by diminishing returns and limited growth potential. However, recent empirical evidence from countries like Vietnam and China demonstrates that agricultural modernisation can serve as a springboard for overall economic development, challenging these traditional assumptions.

The theoretical framework for agriculture-led growth rests on several key principles. First, the productivity enhancement hypothesis suggests that technological advancement, infrastructure development, and institutional support can generate sustained productivity improvements in agriculture comparable to other sectors. Second, the linkage effects theory, developed by Hirschman (1958), emphasises how agricultural growth creates backward and forward linkages that stimulate growth in related sectors, including input supply, processing, and marketing. Third, the rural income multiplier effect, demonstrated by Mellor (1976), illustrates how agricultural income improvements generate broader economic activity through increased rural consumption and investment.

Kawadia's (2014) seminal documentation of Madhya Pradesh's initial BIMARU transformation provides crucial theoretical grounding for understanding the state's subsequent agricultural success. The study establishes that governance improvements, agricultural modernisation, and infrastructure development formed the foundational trilogy that enabled the state's transition from chronic underperformance to sustainable growth. Kawadia's analysis demonstrates how systematic policy interventions targeting institutional capacity, technological adoption, and physical infrastructure created enabling conditions for sustained agricultural transformation, providing the theoretical framework that subsequent empirical studies have validated.

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

Recent studies by Fan et al. (2008) and Birthal et al. (2008) provide empirical evidence supporting agriculture-led growth strategies in the Indian context. Fan et al. (2008) demonstrated that investment in agricultural research and development generates higher poverty reduction returns compared to non-agricultural investments, while Birthal et al. (2008) established strong linkages between agricultural productivity improvements and rural economic diversification.

Methodology and Data Framework

Research Design and Analytical Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data analysis with policy evaluation techniques to examine Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation. The methodology utilises a quasi-experimental design, treating Madhya Pradesh as the treatment group and employing other major agricultural states as control groups to isolate the effects of specific policy interventions.

The analytical framework focuses on four key dimensions: agricultural capacity utilisation assessment using yield gap analysis, comparative performance evaluation across states, policy impact assessment through difference-in-difference analysis, and comprehensive cost-benefit evaluation of agricultural interventions. The study period spans 2000-2023, providing sufficient temporal scope to analyse long-term trends and policy impacts while controlling for cyclical variations and external shocks.

Data Sources and Quality Assessment

Primary data sources include the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare's Agricultural Statistics at a Glance series (2000-2023), Central Statistics Office, State Domestic Product Accounts, National Sample Survey Office, agricultural household surveys, and Madhya Pradesh Agriculture Department policy documents and implementation reports. Data availability varies by indicator, with comprehensive agricultural statistics available through 2022-23, while some policy-specific data extends only through 2020-21. Secondary analysis incorporates the Planning Commission and NITI Aayog development reports to establish a broader economic context.

Data quality assessment involved cross-verification across multiple sources, handling of missing values through interpolation techniques, and adjustment for inflation using 2011-12 constant prices. The reliability coefficient for key variables exceeded 0.85, indicating high data quality and consistency across the study period.

Kawadia

Capacity Utilisation Calculation Methodology

The capacity utilisation measurement methodology compares actual agricultural productivity with achievable potential productivity under existing agro-climatic conditions. The calculation follows the formula:

$$\text{Capacity Utilisation (\%)} = (\text{Actual Yield} / \text{Potential Yield}) \times 100$$

Where:

Actual Yield = Observed crop productivity (tons/hectare)

Potential Yield = Achievable yield under optimal management practices within existing climatic constraints

Potential yields were derived from the Global Yield Gap Atlas consortium methodology, incorporating soil quality indices, rainfall patterns, temperature variations, and best-practice agricultural techniques. This approach enables precise quantification of agricultural underutilisation and its economic implications.

Economic Impact Assessment Methodology

Economic impact calculations employed input-output analysis to capture direct, indirect, and induced effects of agricultural interventions. The methodology incorporated:

$$\text{Economic Multiplier} = \text{Total Economic Impact} / \text{Initial Investment}$$

Quantitative Analysis of Madhya Pradesh's Agricultural Transformation *Macro-Economic Performance Indicators*

Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation generated substantial changes in economic structure and performance indicators. The state's Gross Value Added from agriculture increased from 28.5 per cent in 2000-01 to 37.8 per cent in 2022-23, nearly doubling the national average contribution of 19.2 per cent. This represents a fundamental reorientation of economic structure toward agricultural activities, contradicting conventional expectations of declining agricultural shares during development.

Table 1
Madhya Pradesh Agricultural Performance Transformation (2000-23)

Indicator	2000-01	2010-11	2020-21	2022-23	National Average (2022-23)	Performance Ratio
Wheat Yield (tons/hectare)	1.8	2.7	3.63	3.85	3.38	1.14
Agricultural GSDP Growth (%)	2.1	4.2	6.8	7.2	3.1	2.32
Primary Sector Share in GSDP (%)	28.5	32.4	36.32	37.8	19.2	1.97
Wheat Production (million tons)	14.2	24.1	35.67	38.2	112.7	-
Soybean Yield (tons/hectare)	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.15	1.30
Rice Yield (tons/hectare)	1.5	2.1	2.8	2.9	2.75	1.05

Note: Figure for 2022-23 and single year rates, the 7.1 per cent (state) and 3.2 per cent (national) growth rate cited in the table 5 are 2010-23 averages.

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

The productivity improvements across major crops demonstrate systematic enhancement rather than isolated gains. Wheat productivity increased by 114 per cent over the period, while soybean yields improved by 67 per cent, indicating broad-based agricultural intensification. The state's agriculture growth rate reached 7.2 per cent in 2022-23, representing 132 per cent higher performance than the national average of 3.1 per cent for that year.

Sectoral Contribution Analysis

Comparative analysis of sectoral contributions reveals Madhya Pradesh's unique economic structure relative to national patterns. While India's economy is characterised by service sector dominance at 52.7 per cent of GDP, Madhya Pradesh maintained a more balanced structure with services contributing 33.3 per cent and agriculture contributing 37.8 per cent to the state's GDP by 2022-23.

Table 2
Sectoral Economic Structure Comparison (2022-23)

Sector	India GDP (%)	Madhya Pradesh GSDP (%)	Difference (Percentage Points)	Structural Divergence Index
Primary (Agriculture & Allied)	19.2	37.8	+18.6	1.97
Secondary (Industry)	28.1	28.9	+0.8	1.03
Tertiary (Services)	52.7	33.3	-19.4	0.63

This structural composition challenges conventional development theory predictions about sectoral transitions during economic growth. Rather than experiencing declining agricultural shares, Madhya Pradesh increased its agricultural contribution to 37.8 per cent while maintaining competitive industrial and service sectors.

Policy Impact Assessment: Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana

The Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana, implemented in 2017-18, provides a natural experiment for analysing innovative agricultural policy impacts. The scheme covered eight major crops with differentiated compensation mechanisms based on market price variations relative to Minimum Support Prices.

Kawadia

Table 3
Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana Impact Analysis (2017-18)

Crop	MSP (₹/quintal)	Average Modal Price (₹/quintal)	Compensation Paid (₹/quintal)	Coverage (% of cultivated area)	Farmer Benefit Index
Soybean	3,399	2,800	599	50%	0.176
Groundnut	4,450	3,900	550	35%	0.124
Maize	1,700	1,450	250	40%	0.147
Urad	5,400	4,800	600	45%	0.111
Tur	5,450	4,900	550	38%	0.101
Moong	5,225	4,600	625	42%	0.119
Sesame	5,940	5,200	740	28%	0.124
Ramtil	4,405	3,800	605	32%	0.137

The scheme's implementation resulted in total compensation payments of approximately ₹2,000 crores during its initial year, with soybean receiving the highest coverage at 50 per cent of cultivated area. The Farmer Benefit Index, calculated as compensation received relative to MSP, averaged 0.130 across crops, indicating substantial income stabilisation effects.

Infrastructure Development Impact Analysis

Infrastructure development formed a cornerstone of Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation strategy, with systematic investments across irrigation, storage, and connectivity infrastructure generating measurable productivity improvements.

Table 4
Infrastructure Development Impact (2000-23)

Infrastructure Component	2000	2010	2020	2023	Absolute Change	Percentage Growth	Annual Growth Rate (%)
Irrigation Coverage (%)	22	28	37	41	+19	86%	2.79
Rural Connectivity (kilometres)	45,000	67,000	89,000	98,000	+53,000	118%	3.54
Warehouse Capacity (lakh MT)	12	18	28	32	+20	167%	4.48
Krishi Vigyan Kendras	35	48	61	67	+32	91%	2.89
Cold Storage Capacity (lakh MT)	2.5	4.8	8.2	9.8	+7.3	292%	6.25
Agricultural Markets (APMCs)	280	320	385	410	+130	46%	1.75

The infrastructure development analysis reveals systematic capacity building across all components, with cold storage capacity showing the highest growth rate at 6.25 per cent annually. Irrigation coverage expansion from 22 per cent to 41 per cent represents a fundamental transformation in

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

agricultural risk management, while warehouse capacity increases of 167 per cent demonstrate a commitment to post-harvest infrastructure development.

Comparative State Performance Analysis

Madhya Pradesh's agricultural performance gains significance when analysed within the broader context of Indian state-level agricultural development. Comparative analysis reveals substantial variations in agricultural growth rates and policy approaches across major agricultural states.

Table 5
Comparative Agricultural Growth Performance (2010-23)

State	Agricultural Growth Rate (%)	Policy Focus	Capacity Utilisation (%)	Per Capita Agricultural Income (₹)
Madhya Pradesh	7.1	Agriculture-led growth	61.2	75,000
Gujarat	4.5	Balanced growth	63.8	78,000
Rajasthan	4.1	Mixed approach	56.7	62,000
Maharashtra	3.8	Service sector focus	48.9	81,000
Karnataka	3.6	Technology focus	52.4	69,000
Haryana	3.0	Industrial development	76.2	89,000
Punjab	2.3	Manufacturing diversification	77.1	95,000
All-India	3.2	Service-led growth	54.3	58,000

Madhya Pradesh achieved the highest agricultural growth rate at 7.1 per cent, more than double the national average and significantly exceeding traditional agricultural leaders like Punjab and Haryana. While Punjab and Haryana demonstrate higher capacity utilisation rates at 77.1 per cent and 76.2 per cent respectively, their agricultural growth has stagnated at 2.3 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively, suggesting diminishing returns from existing approaches.

The relationship between policy focus and agricultural performance reveals important insights. States pursuing agriculture-led growth strategies (Madhya Pradesh) or balanced approaches (Gujarat at 4.5 per cent) achieved superior agricultural growth rates compared to states emphasising industrial development or service sector growth. Notably, Madhya Pradesh's capacity utilisation improved to 61.2 per cent, indicating substantial progress while retaining significant enhancement potential.

Kawadia

Economic Impact and Social Transformation Analysis

Income and Poverty Reduction Effects

Madhya Pradesh's agricultural transformation generated substantial improvements in rural incomes and poverty reduction, demonstrating agriculture's potential for inclusive growth.

Table 6
Socio-Economic Impact Indicators (2000-23)

Indicator	2000-01	2010-11	2020-21	2022-23	Absolute Change	Improvement Rate (%)
Rural Poverty Rate (%)	48.5	38.2	26.8	23.1	-25.4	52%
Per Capita Rural Income (₹)	18,000	35,000	68,000	78,000	+60,000	333%
Agricultural Credit Flow (₹crores)	2,800	8,500	24,000	29,500	+26,700	954%
Food Processing Units	280	650	1,250	1,480	+1,200	429%
Agricultural Exports (₹crores)	1,200	3,400	8,900	11,200	+10,000	833%
Average Farm Income (₹/year)	41,000	75,000	118,000	135,000	+94,000	229%

Note: Per Capita Agricultural Income (Table 5, ₹ 75000) and Per Capital Rural Income (Table 6, ₹ 78000) are district measures and are not directly comparable.

The poverty reduction achievement represents one of the most significant outcomes of agricultural transformation. Rural poverty declined by 52 per cent over two decades, reaching 23.1 per cent by 2022-23, with per capita rural income increasing by 333 per cent. The 229 per cent increase in average farm income to ₹135,000 annually demonstrates agriculture's capacity to generate substantial livelihood improvements when supported by appropriate policies.

Fiscal Sustainability Assessment

Critical to the viability of Madhya Pradesh's agricultural model is its fiscal sustainability. The state achieved remarkable agricultural transformation while maintaining and even improving its fiscal health indicators.

Table 7
Fiscal Health Indicators (2000-23)

Fiscal Indicator	2000-01	2010-11	2020-21	2022-23	Improvement Direction
Debt-to-GDP Ratio (%)	28.2	26.1	24.8	21.4	Improving
Fiscal Deficit (% of GSDP)	3.8	3.2	2.8	1.9	Improving
Revenue Surplus (₹crores)	1,200	3,400	5,800	8,900	Improving
Own Tax Revenue Growth (%)	8.2	12.5	15.8	18.3	Improving
Agricultural Contribution to Tax Revenue (%)	8.5	12.8	18.3	23.7	Improving

The fiscal sustainability analysis demonstrates that agricultural investments generated positive fiscal returns. The state's debt-to-GSDP ratio

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

declined consistently from 28.2 per cent to 21.4 per cent, while the fiscal deficit decreased from 3.8 per cent to 1.9 per cent of GSDP. The agricultural sector's contribution to tax revenue increased dramatically from 8.5 per cent to 23.7 per cent, indicating the substantial revenue-generating capacity of agricultural growth.

National Implications and Replication Potential

The analysis reveals that Madhya Pradesh's agricultural success was achieved without compromising fiscal health and demonstrates substantial scope for enhancing this growth path. The state's declining debt ratios, increasing revenue surpluses, and improved fiscal indicators provide clear evidence that agriculture-led growth creates self-reinforcing cycles of investment and returns.

National agricultural capacity assessment reveals that India operates at only 54.3 per cent of its agricultural potential by 2022-23, with annual economic losses of ₹4.69 lakh crores due to underutilisation. States like Bihar (34.2 per cent capacity utilisation) and Odisha (36.8 per cent) show catastrophic inefficiency levels, while Madhya Pradesh's achievement of 61.2 per cent capacity utilisation demonstrates significant improvement potential across the country.

The enhanced agricultural performance through 2023 validates the sustainability and continued growth potential of the agriculture-led development model. Madhya Pradesh's agricultural growth acceleration to 7.2 per cent and capacity utilisation improvement to 61.2 per cent demonstrate that the model gains momentum over time rather than experiencing diminishing returns.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

This quantitative analysis establishes three critical findings that challenge conventional development paradigms. First, Madhya Pradesh's agriculture-led growth model generated 7.1 per cent annual agricultural growth rates while simultaneously improving fiscal health indicators, with debt-to-GSDP ratios declining from 28.2 per cent to 21.4 per cent and agricultural contribution to tax revenue increasing from 8.5 per cent to 23.7 per cent. Second, the transformation yielded a 229 per cent increase in farmer incomes and 52 per cent reduction in rural poverty, demonstrating agriculture's capacity for inclusive development. Third, national agricultural capacity underutilisation of 45.7 per cent represents ₹4.69 lakh crores in annual economic losses, indicating massive replication potential.

Kawadia

The policy implications are transformative for India's development strategy. The demonstrated fiscal sustainability of agricultural investments invalidates arguments about unsustainable subsidy burdens, while the positive revenue generation effects create self-reinforcing growth cycles. The documented capacity for agricultural growth to exceed service sector growth rates challenges fundamental assumptions underlying India's current development approach. The fiscal sustainability demonstrated through declining debt ratios and increasing revenue surpluses establishes that agricultural transformation strengthens rather than weakens state financial capacity.

The sustained performance through 2023, with agricultural growth reaching 7.2 per cent and capacity utilisation improving to 61.2 per cent, demonstrates the durability and enhancement potential of agriculture-led growth models. This validates that systematic agricultural investment generates compounding returns rather than diminishing effectiveness over time.

Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that systematic neglect of agriculture's growth potential represents a policy choice rather than economic necessity. The quantitative evidence supports a fundamental reorientation of India's development strategy toward agriculture-led growth as a fiscally sustainable and economically superior alternative to conventional industry-focused approaches.

References

- Birthal, P.S., Jha, A.K., Tiongco, M.M., & Narrod, C. (2008). Improving farm-to-market linkages through contract farming: A Case Study of Smallholder Dairying in India. IFPRI Discussion Paper 00814. Washington: International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2022). Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2022. New Delhi: Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
- Fan, S., Gulati, A., & Thorat, S. (2008). 'Investment, Subsidies, and Pro-poor Growth in Rural India'. *Agricultural Economics*, 39(2), 163-170.
- Government of Madhya Pradesh. (2018). Mukhyamantri Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana: Implementation Guidelines and Impact Assessment. Bhopal: Department of Agriculture, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- Hirschman, A.O. (1958). *The Strategy of Economic Development*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kawadia, G. (2014). 'Shedding BIMARU Status: Madhya Pradesh's Transformation through Governance Improvements, Agricultural Modernisation, and Infrastructure Development'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(31), 46-52.
- Kuznets, S. (1966). *Modern Economic Growth: Rate, Structure, and Spread*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Agro-Led Economic Growth...

- Lewis, W.A. (1954). 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour'. *The Manchester School*, 22(2), 139-191.
- Mellor, J.W. (1976). *The New Economics of Growth: A Strategy for India and the Developing World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. (2023). *Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2023*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- National Sample Survey Office. (2014). *Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households 2013*. New Delhi: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
- Planning Commission. (2012). *Report of the Working Group on Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Secondary Agriculture and Policy Required to Promote These during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period 2012-2017*. New Delhi: Government of India.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 13-30)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India: Challenges and Reforms

Deepty Gupta* and Kushagri Singh†

Higher education faculty play a vital role in generating, disseminating, applying knowledge and driving change. Empowering these faculty through capacity-building is a key component of the NEP-2020. Professional development programmes aim to cultivate leadership, teaching skills, and subject matter expertise, among other competencies. The University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees implementation, working alongside organisations like NITTTRs, AICTE, and HRDCs (formerly ASCs, now MMTCs), which support faculty's ongoing professional growth and maintain training quality. This paper examines policy documents, research, and reports on continuous professional development (CPD), exploring the challenges and opportunities in this area. Beginning with a historical perspective on faculty professional development in India, the paper traces its evolution to the present state of CPD and proposes recommendations for improving its quality.

Keywords: Higher Education, NEP 2020, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), UGC, Training of faculty.

*Assistant Professor, Inter University Centre for Teacher Education (IUCTE), BHU, Varanasi.
E-mail: deepty.gupta@iucte.ac.in

†Assistant Professor, Inter University Centre for Teacher Education (IUCTE), BHU, Varanasi.
E-mail: kushagri.singh@iucte.ac.in

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

Introduction

The quality of teachers in a country determines the overall quality of its educational system. This indicates that the growth of the nation and the educational system at all levels is largely dependent on the role that teachers serve. The performance of universities and, eventually, the advancement of nations are greatly influenced by their faculties. One of the biggest educational systems in the world is higher education in India. 15.98 lakh faculty members teach 4.33 crore students at 1,168 universities and university-level institutions, 45,473 colleges, and 12,002 stand alone institutions. Universities and colleges in regular mode have a PTR of 24, whereas universities and constituent units in regular mode have a PTR of 18 (AISHE, 2021-22). To make the teaching-learning process interesting, enjoyable, and pertinent, to provide high-quality education, and to make their lessons more engaging, interactive, and collaborative, faculty need to update their knowledge and skills. Moreover, they must address industrial requirements to create a well-educated, employable citizen out of the students. The preparation, training, and upgrading of academic and administrative staff needs particular attention. When the faculty members entered the system, they did not have any specific pedagogical training in their disciplines and were also inadequately prepared for the management roles associated with their work.

A separate branch of teacher education which refers to the procedures and measures intended to prepare potential teachers with the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to accomplish their tasks efficiently in our country's classrooms, schools, and communities. The teacher education programme is related to developing expertise and aptitude in teachers that allow them to meet the necessities and face the profession's challenges boldly. However, this branch deals with specific disciplines only. What about the other disciplines in higher education? Faculty members from other disciplines require need-based pedagogical training. Unlike school teachers, undergraduate teachers of all disciplines in India do not receive formal teaching training.

If we talk about the importance of professional development, the term which was coined by Richard Gardner, who oversaw professional development/growth for the building professions at York University in the mid-1970s; defined as "an increase in subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, and efficiency and insight into educational problems with a concomitant increase in success a teacher." "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a process by which individuals take control of their

learning and development by engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action. This process is empowering and exciting and can stimulate people to achieve their aspirations and move towards their dreams" (Megginson & Whitaker, 2004) in Jaiswal, 2017.

"CPD ensures the maintenance and enhancement of knowledge and skills needed to deliver a professional service to customers, clients, and the community" (Saipro, 2020). Mishra et al. (2020) described the situation as a pedagogical shift from traditional methods to a modern teaching-learning approach, from the classroom to virtual platforms, and from seminars to webinars. "CPD programmes have helped teachers learn new ways to teach, broaden their mindsets, upgrade their skills, and prepare them to succeed" (Amitha, 2020). Banik & Saha (2023) studied the importance of CPD programmes in the teaching profession in the state of Tripura, and they found that CPD programmes have a significant impact on the teachers of higher education in Tripura. CPD programmes promote their perspective toward the profession and build up their self-confidence and self-esteem in the professional field.

The National Education Policy 2020 also emphasises the importance of capacity building for teachers. "Faculty will have the capacity and training to be able to approach students not just as teachers, but also as mentors and guides" (NEP 2020, 12.3, p. 23). "Recognising that the teachers will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, teacher education will gradually be moved by 2030 into multidisciplinary colleges and universities" (NEP 2020, 5.22, p. 23). "Teachers require suitable training and development to be effective online educators. It cannot be assumed that a good teacher in a traditional classroom will automatically be a good teacher in an online classroom. Aside from changes required in pedagogy, online assessments also require a different approach" (NEP 2020, 24.3, p. 59). "Teachers will undergo rigorous training in learner-centric pedagogy and on how to become high-quality online content creators themselves using online teaching platforms and tools. There will be an emphasis on the teacher's role in facilitating active student engagement with the content and with each other" (NEP 2020, 24.3 (g), p. 59).

NEP 2020 also suggested that higher education teachers, such as school teachers and leaders, must participate in CPD activities. NEP 2020 states that "existing practices of CPD for higher education teachers (i.e., orientation programmes, refresher courses), provisions (i.e., training through Human Resource Development Centres of different Universities), and opportunities (e.g., online platforms like SWAYAM) will continue".

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

Claiming that such initiatives will be strengthened further, NEP 2020 declares, "In service continuous professional development for college and university teachers will continue through the existing institutional arrangements and ongoing initiatives; these will be strengthened and substantially expanded to meet the needs of enriched teaching-learning processes for quality education" (NEP 2020, p. 43).

Need to Review the CPD Programmes in India

"While it is universally accepted that the teacher is the pivot of the educational system, our system does not provide adequate opportunities for their professional development. Recognising that teachers must be at the centre of these developments, provisions for their motivational training and consistent exposure to innovative trends and advanced knowledge in various disciplines and across disciplines need to be revisited and reengineered in line with the contemporary scenario of the country. Not only the faculty but new strategies for the governance of educational institutions are also needed to promote innovative, broad, and dynamic collaborative models" (UGC Guidelines, 2019, p. 3).

This foundational challenge is situated within a broader context of systemic issues, including the "low quality of teaching and learning, shortages of faculty, and lack of proper training in teaching for faculty" (British Council, 2014, as cited in Kaushal, 2017). The efficacy of existing training interventions has been questioned, with some scholars suggesting that such programmes are often "carried out ad hoc to fulfil the formality necessary in a particular scheme" and therefore require a "thorough evaluation" (Rani, 2014). This concern is substantiated by empirical findings. For instance, a study on the impact of refresher courses at the HRDC in Jabalpur revealed that institutional encouragement for participation is often lacking, the provision of course materials is subpar, and ultimately, the programmes have only a "moderate impact on their teaching skills" (Punj & Pahwa, 2020).

In response to these shortcomings, a more dynamic approach is advocated, one that involves developing "networking with universities and industries to provide varying cultural and professional experiences" (Bhrambhatt, 2013). Furthermore, there is a recognised need for mandatory, post-induction, and discipline-specific orientation programmes that are "need-based, refreshing and engaging" for all faculty, including those in private institutions (Panda, 2017). While acknowledging that UGC-ASCs have trained a significant number of academic staff, a scholar has also

cautioned that “more care has to be taken to improve the quality” (Kirthi, 2018). Given that there is always room for improvement, this paper aims to contribute to this critical discourse by examining the current state of CPD in India, analysing pertinent recommendations, identifying persistent challenges, and proposing actionable solutions.

Objectives

To examine the current status of various initiatives for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for higher education faculty in India. To discuss the recommendations made by various committees established to evaluate CPD. To identify the challenges and gaps in CPD within India. To recommend actionable strategies that will enhance and elevate the quality of CPD in India.

Methodology

The secondary data, including information from official websites, UGC guidelines, reports, and an analysis of related literature, served as the foundation for this paper. The qualitative descriptive research approach was used in light of the study's goals. Data were deliberately gathered by collecting information about professional development programmes from the websites of selected organisations. Reviewing existing literature related to the present theme also helped build the discussion.

Objective 1: To examine the current status of various initiatives for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for higher education faculty in India.

Before India's independence, the Hartog Committee (1929) and the Sargent Report (1944) acknowledged in-service training as refresher courses and recommended that they be offered periodically. Following independence, several commissions and policy proposals were established to ensure that teachers received the necessary training to be effective in their field. Later, the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) stated in its report that “the teacher's status reflects a society's socio-cultural ethos; it is said that no person can rise above the level of its teachers”. The government and the community should endeavour to create conditions that will help motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lines. In pursuance of the NPE 1986, the UGC launched the Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) to promote quality in higher education. In this endeavour, 66 ASCs were established in various universities across India, fully funded by the UGC.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

“UGC has prescribed a mandatory provision of one refresher and one orientation course for every lecturer to become eligible for promotion to senior grade lecturer. Besides, the resources available in the college for participation in national and international seminars and conferences also help in the capacity building of teachers” (UGC, 2008). The ASCs offer mandatory Refresher Courses (RCs) and Orientation Programmes (OPs) for university and college teachers, aligning these training programmes with the Career Advancement Schemes (CASs). In addition to developing their skills and staying up-to-date, teachers must attend training programmes to advance their careers (Narendar, 2022).

In 2014, the Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNTT) launched a comprehensive umbrella scheme to improve the quality of education at all levels by infusing quality and excellence into our teachers and teaching. The Mission thoroughly addresses all aspects related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation, professional development, curriculum design, and the development of assessment and evaluation methodologies, as well as research and effective pedagogy.

The Mission consists of the following components:

- Schools of Education in Central, State, and Deemed Universities (SoE) (25 Nos.)
- Centres of Excellence for Curriculum and Pedagogy (49 Nos.): Centres of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education (CESME) (4 Nos.); Teaching Learning Centres (TLC) (25 Nos.) and Faculty Development Centres (FDC) (20 Nos.)
- Inter-University Centre for Teachers Education (IUCTE) (2 Nos.)
- National Resource Centre for Education (NRCE) (1 Nos.)
- Centres of Academic Leadership and Education Management (CALEM) (4 Nos.)
- Innovations, Awards and Teaching Resource Grants (IATRG) (9 Nos.)
- Subject-Based Networks (SBN) (4 Nos.)
- Leadership Development for senior functionaries in higher education institutions
- Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT)
- National Resource Centre (75 Nos.)
- Leadership for Academic Programme (LEAP) (15 Nos.) (source: <https://nmmtt.gov.in/centres>)

On April 01, 2015, “UGC rechristened the name of all UGC-Academic Staff Colleges to UGC-Human Resource Development Centre

(HRDC) and continued to cater to the needs of the faculty and the administrators of HEIs nationwide. By 2020, the UGC-HRDCs started to roll out the Faculty Induction Programmes (FIP)/Gurudakshita in 10 structural modules to help the faculty members understand the newer nuances of the fast-changing dynamics of HE" (Khan et al., 2024). Later, in 2018, the ARPIT, a significant and original online professional development project using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM, was introduced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). 75 discipline-specific National Resource Centres (NRCs) have been identified in the first phase of ARPIT implementation, and their job was to create online training materials that focus on the most recent advancements in the field, new and emerging trends, pedagogical advancements, and methods for implementing the updated curricula.

After many years of contributions by UGC-HRDCs and PMMMNMTT, which have significantly contributed to training faculty, the dynamic process of revision was restructured and relaunched following the release of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This policy highlights the importance of having motivated, energised, and capable faculty in higher education. In 2023, "the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) was relaunched to enhance the capacity and training of teachers/faculty. The mission aimed to transform higher education by integrating Indian values and ethos into teaching, research, publications, patents, and institutional development" (GoI, 2023, p. 3). The scheme established 111 Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centres (MMTTCs). The scheme aimed to implement NEP recommendations, focusing on quality teaching, equity, online education, the use of technology, promotion of Indian languages, vocational education, and multidisciplinary education.

Objective 2: To discuss the recommendations made by various committees established to evaluate CPD.

The Recommendations, Status, and Observations were examined through the reports, documents, guidelines, and web portal:

- Guidelines Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) (2019)
- Report of the Committee to Review the Working of HRDCs (2020)
- Memorandum for Appraisal/SFC of Scheme Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) (2021)
- website: nmmtt.gov.in

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

The Recommendations, Status, and Observations of the mentioned documents are represented below:

Guidelines: Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) (2019)

“While it is universally accepted that the teacher is the pivot of the educational system, our system does not provide adequate opportunities for their professional development. Realising that teachers have to be in the centre stage of these developments, provisions for their motivational training and consistent exposure to innovative trends and advanced knowledge in various disciplines and across disciplines need to be revisited and re-engineered in consonance with the contemporary scenario of the country” (UGC, 2019, p. 3).

“There is a need for a tiered structure for dovetailing the efforts of in-service teacher training and development by recognising and specifying the role of IUCTE, Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC), INFLIBNET, and HRDCs synergistically. For example, on the top tier, IUCTE shall devise the pedagogical tools commensurate to the curriculum prescribed in the Guidelines, and CEC shall help in the production of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) by appreciating the cognitive disabilities and evolutionary technological quality rubric whereas INFLIBNET shall provide the widely accepted distribution channel for audio-video and other e-resources to all the institutions besides their primary duties. At the lower tier, the neighbouring HRDCs, EMRCs, and NRCs shall collaborate in the production and dissemination of e-resources, given spatio-temporal recommendations in social media by involving the participants who are early adopters to enrich their learning experiences as “pedagogical engineers,” “digital resources designers,” and “digital courses designers. To begin with, for handholding, HRDCs shall be offered one week of contact/hands-on experience, especially for CAS, which has completed the annual refresher course (ARPIT) online. For effective monitoring, MoUs shall be entered into involving nine parties by assigning their unambiguous accountability, the framework of which is provided in (Annexure 13-14, pg. 46-54). The HRDCs should continue to be under the control of UGC for contact programmes of defined durations accessible to all the teachers of HEIs” (UGC, 2019, p. 8).

“The UGC will monitor and review the functioning of the HRDCs after a period of three/five years or as communicated by the UGC from time to time. The UGC may, after review, discontinue any HRDC if necessary. The UGC shall constitute a Standing Committee to monitor, advise in

policymaking, and recommend the courses to be offered in all the HRDCs” (UGC, 2019, p. 10).

“The following requisites are included in the statement of philosophy to achieve the target under 'Intensified Mission Mode' for which the faculty structure is revised and effective management of HRDCs through the UGC-Standing Committee by the active involvement of decision-makers and leaders in Higher Education, to make the HRDCs more effective” (UGC, 2019, p. 11).

“HRDCs will do coordinated research with IUCTE in teaching pedagogy and faculty development” (UGC, 2019, p. 15).

Report of the Committee to Review the Working of HRDCs (2020)

This report was prepared by the task force set up in February 2020 for a holistic review of the support and funding strategy for the HRDCs in the higher education sector in India. This report also presents recommendations aimed at allocating funding in a more streamlined and effective manner. The report is prepared based on the assessment conducted (from the session 2015 to 2020) using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Self-assessment forms with various parameters were designed and scored. Based on this report, 66 HRDCs were categorised into four main categories: High, Moderate, Low, and Data Inadequacy/non-performers. The report reveals multifaceted issues discussed below:

- ***Funding issues:*** Due to this, HRDCs were not able to contact all the sanctioned programmes. HRDCs are borrowing money from their respective universities, but universities are not ready to release the amount on a loan basis after a certain level (p. 6).
 - ***Adhocism:*** HRDCs are not a permanent part of the university system, and due to this temporary nature, the whole concept of academic staff orientation could not be institutionalised as expected (p. 7).
 - ***Unity of command:*** The Directors of HRDCs are in charge of Directors who are holding the charge of Director, HRDC, in addition to their other full-time responsibilities in the university. Their presence and involvement are very brief and minimal. Some HRDCs saw bad days because of poor leadership. Also, most of the staff are either working on ad-hoc/on deputation or on a contract basis (p. 7).
 - ***Standard Operating Procedure (SoP):*** There is no SoP for the HRDCs; hence, they operate in their own ways (p. 9).
- Some Recommendations provided by the committee:

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

- HRDCs strive hard to achieve goals but must be strengthened (HRDC, 2020, p. 10).
- Periodic Review is a must for rubrics and the assessment process (HRDC, 2020, p. 10).
- Faculty motivation in terms of teaching, research, and service in HEIs remains far lower than the desired level. The recommendations provided were: HRDC must be equipped with basic infrastructure and facilities; Faculty should be trained to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches; Management skills among faculty must be identified early and trained through a ladder of leadership positions” (HRDC, 2020, p. 11).
- “Online Platforms may be developed so that teachers may share ideas and best practices” (HRDC, 2020, p. 11).
- “Better efficiency and effectiveness in the use of competitive funding: having regard to the wide range of funding support in the higher education sector such as PMMMNMTT, NRCS, LEAP, HRDCs, etc. at different stages of development, the Task Force recognises the merits of putting in place a platform aiming to facilitate maximisation of resources and mitigate the possibility of resource overlapping, to achieve a good balance among these resources. To utilise the expertise, procedures, and practices developed in these centres since 1987, it is better to pass on the responsibility of conducting all teacher empowerment programmes initiated by the Ministry and UGC under one umbrella” (HRDC, 2020, pp. 11-12).
- “To set up a central data registry to capture the updated profile of each HRDC” (HRDC, 2020, p. 12).
- “Handholding of poor performers by implementing a Mentor-Mentee system” (HRDC, 2020, p. 12).

Memorandum for Appraisal/SFC of Scheme Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT)

Significant findings of evaluation/outcome review and comments of Ministry/Departments on each observation of the scheme based on evaluation conducted by ASCI Hyderabad: PMMMNMTT may consider supporting zonal or regional level “Centres of Excellence” that may act as Mentor Institutions (pg. 11).

Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT)

Under this scheme, the present status was checked through the website nmmtt.gov.in. In most centres, the activity updated on the portal was as of 2021. Out of 94 centres under PMMMNMTT, 19 centres are duplicated under HRDCs. Thus, the balance of the PMMMNMTT will be only 67 out of 94. It was observed that the resources developed in NRCE, SBN centres, and IUCTEs might be integrated with other available institutional arrangements for capacity building.

Objective 3: To identify the challenges and gaps in CPD within India.

Ramanujan (1993) has discussed that besides the many programmes organised by ASCs, they have not significantly improved the quality of teaching. He said merely hearing lectures will orient the new entrants to the profession to the extent of fulfilling its ambitious objectives. Lack of subject upgradation is also one of the challenges. In a critical assessment of the functioning of ASCs and implementation of various programmes, Singh and Sansanwal (1997) also pointed out that ASCs had constraints concerning the lack of hostel facilities, faculty participant selection, where the participants attend mostly to get the certificate required for promotion; selection of resource persons was mainly based on non-academic considerations. The prescribed courses did not align with the participants' perceived lack of competencies; the lack of training by resource persons led to a disregard for andragogy and a preference for lecturing alone. Programmes are decided based on the availability of resource persons, wherein the evaluation of programmes and resource persons was ritualistic, without consideration for further redesign of the programmes.

The evaluation study by NAAC (2012) rated most ASCs (53 out of 66) as functioning below the expected performance level and seven ASCs as non-21 performers, suggesting a significant overhaul of the scheme. Based on a study of refresher courses offered by 14 out of 26 ASCs, as reported in Panda (2017), the institutional feedback results were classified into three main categories: infrastructure, management, and methodologies. "The study revealed a lack of standardised resource materials, problems with office and hostel space, and participants not being relieved on time from the parent institution(s) to attend the course(s). There was a lack of homogeneity in the qualifications and experience of the participants; they also lacked sufficient motivation. It was also challenging to obtain reputable resource persons; the synopsis/handouts from the resource persons were not made

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

available to the participants. The remuneration provided to the resource persons was too low" (Panda, 2017).

It was also noted that the curriculum in ASC should feature high-quality course content, following discussions and consultations with outside experts, high-grade scientists, and academics. Such experts may suggest steps to prepare an entire course with up-to-date knowledge and material content contributing to the development of the subject.

Along with the above-identified challenges by the experts, other gaps are:

- A primary challenge is the potential disconnect between the content of CPD programmes and the actual, pressing issues within higher education institutions, often stemming from an insufficient understanding on the part of programme organisers.
- The absence of rigorous, needs-based empirical research prior to the development of training programmes presents a significant challenge to their overall relevance and effectiveness.
- A notable challenge is the lack of standardised quality control parameters and assessment mechanisms for CPD programmes, making it difficult to ensure a consistent standard of excellence across different providers.
- The challenge of inadequate post-programme follow-up and evaluation makes it difficult to ascertain the degree to which participants implement their learning and the long-term impact on their professional practice.
- A challenge lies in the general omission of student perspectives regarding their educational expectations from faculty during the planning and design stages of CPD initiatives.
- Ensuring the high calibre and pedagogical skill of CPD resource persons and trainers through a systematic selection and development process remains a critical challenge.
- A significant challenge is to foster intrinsic motivation for genuine professional growth among faculty, moving beyond extrinsic drivers such as promotion requirements that can lead to a focus on mere certification.
- Developing adequate institutional recognition and reward structures that meaningfully acknowledge and encourage faculty commitment to CPD presents an ongoing challenge.
- Overcoming systemic challenges is crucial, including the difficulty for faculty to balance CPD with existing institutional responsibilities,

inequitable selection processes for participation, and financial hurdles related to fees and reimbursements.

- Faculty engagement in the other work of the university/college while pursuing the CPD (primarily online) is a challenge.
- A persistent challenge is the failure to consistently provide essential post-training materials and resources, which undermines the reinforcement of learning and the sustainable application of new skills.

Objective 4: To recommend actionable strategies that will enhance and elevate the quality of CPD in India.

According to Misra and Tyagi (2021), to support students' overall growth, educators must continue to study throughout their lives. The most widely accepted and used strategy to help teachers stay motivated and professionally fit is to participate in CPD activities. Teachers' participation in such activities is also influenced by psychological characteristics such as their attitudes, aptitude, interest, self-efficacy, and motivation level. Teachers are highly expected to take the initiative to further their professional development, following their interests rather than having imposed upon them. To keep them inspired to learn more, we should provide them with room and a supportive environment (Butler & Leahy, 2003) in Singh & Gupta (2020). Hasan and Parvez (2017) noted that teachers need to be familiar with various teaching methods and practice key teaching skills, particularly during "orientation" or "refresher" courses. Banik & Saha (2023) document that human beings learn according to their individual learning preferences. Each individual learner reacts better to either audio methods, note-taking, or visual presentation techniques. Multiple approaches should be integrated into CPDPs because of their essential nature.

Before starting a CPD, educational and training organisations should conduct needs assessment studies to determine the faculty's true needs (Asgar & Ratra, 2020). According to Ramanujan (1993), the programmes must be thorough, methodical, and pedagogically oriented. Additionally, he recommended that brief speeches be followed by discussions. There should be a shift in emphasis from knowledge content to skill development through specific tasks and activities. Along with this, institutions should adopt a proactive strategy towards the professional growth of faculty by creating an online training environment, making the event enjoyable, and adopting a flexible approach (Saboo-wala & Manghirmalani-Mishra, 2020; Asgar & Ratra, 2020).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

According to the Institutional Mechanism for Capacity Building of Teachers/Faculty in Higher Education report by the GoI, the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) recommended that the Institutional Mechanism devise an approach to address the needs of capacity building rather than implementing this activity through programme/scheme-based responses. Such an institutional mechanism must provide high-quality information pertaining to domain expertise, leadership concerns, emerging areas, and other components of NEP 2020, in order to meet the objectives of capacity building. To examine and integrate the current programmes and schemes being carried out by the Department of Higher Education (UGC, PMMMNMTT/ MMTTCs, AICTE, NITTTR, etc.) in order to achieve the goal of NEP 2020 while making the best use of available resources, including personnel, funds, and other infrastructure.

In addition to the recommendations made by the experts, the following ideas might be used to close the gaps:

- It is recommended that CPD be meticulously planned to furnish faculty with structured opportunities for skill and knowledge enhancement, thereby augmenting their pedagogical and research capabilities and contributing to overall institutional excellence.
- To optimise resource allocation, it is proposed that training initiatives be systematically phased and coordinated to prevent redundancy and duplication of efforts.
- The standardisation of training content in alignment with national educational requirements is recommended as a measure to ensure uniformity, conserve resources, and achieve common pedagogical goals.
- It is advisable to structure CPDP to serve as platforms that actively foster cross-cultural and inter-institutional collaboration among educators.
- The establishment of national, regional, or zonal centres is recommended to streamline the delivery of professional development and ensure comprehensive nationwide coverage for all faculty members.
- Integrating components such as action research methodologies and structured industry collaborations within CPD frameworks is suggested to enhance the practical and applied dimensions of faculty learning.
- The development of a standardised curriculum, complemented by clear guidelines and pedagogical strategies for the implementation

of CPD, is proposed to ensure consistency and quality across all programmes.

- It is recommended that CPD initiatives incorporate training on emerging and contemporary topics, such as entrepreneurial endeavours and start-up ecosystems, to align faculty expertise with current economic and social trends.
- The integration of a multidisciplinary approach within faculty training programmes is advocated to cultivate more holistic and interdisciplinary perspectives among educators.
- CPD opportunities in the areas of leadership and academic governance should be extended to all faculty members, not exclusively to senior professors, to cultivate leadership potential across all academic ranks.
- Conducting targeted research is suggested to systematically identify the discipline-specific challenges prevalent in higher education, thereby informing the design of more relevant and impactful training.
- While establishing a common curriculum for CPD is advisable, it is also recommended that these frameworks incorporate the flexibility to address and contextualise specific local and regional needs.
- The creation of a centralised digital platform for higher education e-resources, analogous to the DIKSHA portal for school education, is recommended to facilitate widespread knowledge sharing and accessibility.
- It is proposed that a set of National Professional Standards for Teachers in Higher Education be developed to establish clear, consistent benchmarks for professional practice and continuous improvement.
- The formulation of a comprehensive National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Higher Education is recommended to guide the strategic integration of technology in pedagogy and research.
- The establishment of a national pool of certified Resource Persons is suggested, accompanied by a structured training programme to ensure a high standard of delivery for all CPD initiatives.
- It is recommended that the UGC and other regulatory bodies actively encourage and facilitate the inclusion of faculty from private universities and colleges in CPD.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

- To maintain curricular currency, it is advisable that the content of faculty refresher courses be dynamically updated to reflect emergent topics recently integrated into university curricula.
- To support sustained learning and future application, it is recommended that digital copies of all reference and course materials be systematically provided to every participant for their records.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is essential for maintaining professional excellence within the realm of higher education. In the Indian context, key organisations such as NITTTRs, AICTE, and MMTTCs have been instrumental in providing the foundational architecture for such programmes, which are designed to enhance faculty skills and support career advancement. The value of these initiatives in augmenting the capabilities of academic staff is recognised; however, their ultimate efficacy depends on addressing significant operational and structural deficiencies. The success of any professional development programme is not inherent but is determined by the quality of its execution. Programmes that proceed without meticulous planning and are not grounded in rigorous, timely research risk becoming ineffective, representing a substantial yet inefficient allocation of financial and human resources. To foster a more resilient and impactful educational ecosystem, a paradigm shift is required. This involves a commitment to comprehensive programme assessment, the integration of innovative pedagogical concepts, and leveraging institutional collaborations, particularly in research, to inform programme design. The productivity of the higher education system, and its consequent contribution to national growth, is intrinsically linked to the professional competency of its faculty. This can only be realised through development programmes that are accessible, effective, and efficient. The pinnacle of such endeavours is the cultivation of an academic environment that not only inspires pedagogical excellence but also empowers educators to be agents of substantive change within the educational framework, thereby ensuring high-quality learning outcomes for all students.

References

- Ali, S., & Shafeeq, N.Y. (2021). 'Professional Development of Teachers at Higher Education Level - Issues and Challenges'. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 10, 7(9).

Gupta and Singh

- All India Council for Technical Education (n.d.). *About us: Overview*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://www.aicte-india.org/about-us/overview>
- Amitha, KT. (2020). COVID-19 & Professional Development of Teachers. EdTech Review. Retrieved from <https://edtechreview.in/trends-insights/insights/4125-covid-19-professional-development-of-teachers>.
- Asgar, A., & Ratra, A. (2020). 'Continuous Professional Development of Teachers in India Amid COVID-19 Crisis, Leveraging ICT Tools in Online Environment'. *Global Journal of Enterprise Information System*, 12, 3.
- Banik, S., & Saha, A. (2023). 'Importance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Program in Teaching Profession'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 11, 3.
- Bhrambhatt, C.G. (2013). 'Redefining the Role of UGC Academic Staff Colleges in the Context of Global Competitiveness of Higher Education'. *International Journal for Research in Education*, 2, 5.
- British Council (2014). Understanding India - The Future of Higher Education and Opportunities for International Cooperation. Retrieved from https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/understanding_india_report.pdf
- GoI (2020). National Education Policy.
- GoI (2021). Memorandum for Appraisal/SFC of Scheme Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching. DHE, MoE.
- GoI (2022). All India Survey on Higher Education. MoE, DHE.
- GoI (2023). Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) Guidelines
- Inter University Centre for Teacher Education (n.d.). *IUCTE Varanasi portal*. Banaras Hindu University. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://www.iucte.ac.in>
- Kaushal, S. (2017). 'Professional Development of Teachers in Higher Education in India'. *Amity International Journal of Teacher Education (AIJTE)*, 3, 1.
- Khan, S., Ramalingam, P., and Swarna M. F.M. (2024). 'UGC-HRDC: Virtual Learning, Challenges, Opportunities, and Vision for the Future'. In Neha, Pooja Gupta, Ihtiram Raza Khan & GülsünKurubacak, *Virtual Lifelong Learning: Educating Society with Modern Communication Technologies*. Bentham Science Publishers Pte. Ltd. Singapore.
- Kirthi, T.U. (2018). 'Role of Academic Staff College in In-Service Training for Professionals in Library and Information Science: A Case Study of Osmania University'. *International Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 8, 2.
- MHRD. 1986. Report of the National Policy on Education. New Delhi: MHRD. Retrieved from http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/npe.pdf
- Ministry of Education (n.d.). *Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme*. Government of India. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://antt.gov.in/home>
- Mishra, L., Gupta, T., & Shree, A. (2020). 'Online Teaching-Learning in Higher Education during Lockdown Period of COVID-19 Pandemic'. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 1. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666374020300121>
- Misra, P.K., & Tyagi, C. (2021). 'How National Education Policy-2020 Envisions Continuing Professional Development of Teachers?'. *University News*, 59, 26.
- Narender, P. (2022). 'Role of Academic Staff Colleges (Human Resource Development Centre - HRDC) in Professional Development Programme'. *Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science*, 11, 1, pp. 99-103.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Higher Education Faculty in India...

- National Institute of Technid Teachers Training and Research (n.d.). *NITTTR Chennai portal*. Ministry of Educaion, Government of India. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://nitttrc.ac.in>
- Panda, S. (2017). 'Professional Development of Teachers in Higher Education'. In N.V. Varghese, A. Pachauri & S. Mandal (eds.), *India Higher Education Report 2017: Teaching, Learning and Quality in Higher Education* (pp. 132-164). New Delhi & London: Sage Publications.
- Punj, S., & Pahwa, S.K. (2020). 'A Study of the Impact of Refresher Courses on the Teachers in Higher Education: A Case Study of HRDC, Jabalpur'. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science (IJARCMSS)*, 3, 4, pp. 143-150.
- Ramanujan, P. (1993). 'Academic Staff Orientation: An Exercise in Futility?'. *University News*, April 12.
- Rani, S. (2014). 'Role of Academic Staff Colleges in Professional Development of Teachers'. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management*, 1, 1 pp. 69-84.
- Rastogi, S. (2022). Academic Staff Development in Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360912269_Academic_Staff_Development_in_Higher_Education
- Singh, S., & Gupta, P. (2020). 'Continuous Professional Development for Teachers in India: Prospects and Challenges in Reference to National Education Policy 2020'. *Current Journal*, 34-40.
- UGC (2008). Higher Education in India -Issues related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance.
- UGC (2012). University Grants Commission Guidelines For Academic Staff Colleges (2007-12).
- UGC (2019). Guidelines for Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC).
- UGC (2020). Report of the Committee to Review the Working of HRDCs.
- UGC (2021). Institutional Mechanism for Capacity Building of Teacher/Faculty in Higher Education.
- UGC (2023). Malaviya Mission - Teacher Training Programme Information Brochure.
- University Grants Commission (2023). *Guidelines for malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP)*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. https://mmc.ugc.ac.in/S/MMTTP_Guidelines.pdf
- University Grants Commission (n.d.). *Human Resource Development Cetnre: Vision & Mission*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://hrdc.ugc.ac.in/Web/Home/Vision>
- Universty Grants Commission (n.d.). *Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme prortal*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. Retrived February 11, 2025, from <https://mmc.ugc.ac.in/>



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 31-41)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives from Classical Political Economy to Post Colonial Feminism

Anuja Gupta*

The paper attempts to examine the evolution of theoretical perspectives on women's contribution to mainstream economy. The study begins with the hurdles that social economists had to encounter to establish women's unpaid care work as an essential component of political economy, the difference in opinions concerning the immeasurability of care labour. The paper further attempts to draw attention to the contradictions in methods, prevalent between the developed and third world liberal feminist in evaluating women's contribution to care economy that surpasses her domestic chores. The paper finally concludes by highlighting the significant contribution made by the post- colonial feminists in underscoring the intersecting factors that determine the relation between women, care, capability and development.

Keywords: Unpaid Care Labour, Development, Post Colonial Feminism.

Feminists have long seen 'the economy' as a gendered site that ignored the contribution of women in the economy. Feminist novelists Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Harriet Taylor Mill had focused on women's

*Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, Mrinalini Datta Mahavidyapith, Kolkata (W.B.). E-mail: blengshu@gmail.com

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives...

exclusion from paid economic activity and their consequent economic dependence on men through their literary texts. Henceforth a lot of writing has focused on women and their economic relations. In the twentieth century, feminist movement drew attention to the exclusion of women's unpaid economic activities like housework and childrearing from the confines of economy. In the twenty-first century there has been a shift in understanding unpaid care labour. The struggle is not to dismantle the biological basis for the unequal division of labour, but to involve the other sex in sharing unpaid care labour by reduction, redistribution, and gaining recognition.

Work allocated into different activities can be classified as no work, paid work, unpaid work (Antonopoulos, 2014). No work would mean spending time on leisure activities or personal care. Paid work refers to remuneration received on time contracted services, under decent workable conditions. Unpaid work is not based on remuneration, and it depends upon a lot of factors like age, class, presence of children. In developing countries, like India, women tend to spend more time and work for self- sustenance, self-consumption and care related work without receiving any remuneration or recognition. Primary reason for the lack of cognisance given to unpaid care labour is due to the cultural notion of associating care activities and emotional association with femininity. The founding fathers of political economy defined economics as the study of any activity relating to the production and distribution of wealth which excluded the activities within the home, since it did not result in any transferable objects for an explicit exchange price hence unpaid work was never considered as economic good.

Engel's (1902) theorisation on materialist historical understanding of women's oppression in the capitalist system and associating their confinement to domestic spaces due to their reproductive capacity was a major revelation of the structural factors linked with subordination. Building on the theories of Engels, socialist feminist scholars like Costa (1972) focussed on free labour that women exhibited at home which enabled men's participation in the capitalist economy. Women's unpaid work contributed to the running of the capitalist society firstly because, women reproduced labour power, they provided all means of sustenance which enabled men to work in the market. The capitalist system has usurped women's labour and increased their own wealth at the expense of the domestic care givers.

Taking the lead further the socialist and liberal feminists of the 60s and 70s like Oakley (2018) perceived that as much time was spent by women on domestic activities, it ought to be counted as work and not leisure and

given monetary value. In the same vein, mainstream economists argued for the inclusion of household activities/work within the conceptions of work, so that it can be incorporated within national accounts and labour statistics (Becker, 1965). Reid (1934) conceptualised the notion of a third person, to whom one could delegate house activities like cooking, cleaning, or childcare to a 'third person' which made these activities productive (1934:11).

The household economists defined domestic labour as work for three reasons. In the first place, housework was done with a purpose in mind. For instance, unpaid activities like cooking, cleaning is an activity performed with a purpose. Secondly, as women got engaged in unpaid housework, they also experienced an opportunity lost in the market economy (Reid, 1934) and thirdly, domestic work was a part of the division of labour where men participated in the public sphere for earning money, to buy consumer goods and women worked in the domestic front to produce services of utility at home that satisfied the needs like hunger, thirst, warmth (Becker, 1965). Women's household activities also provided the opportunity time and space for creating transferable outcome benefits such as travel to work and self-education (Ironmonger, 1966). Therefore, the value of unpaid household work be called Gross Household Product (GHP) and the System of National Accounts should be revised to include GHP as well as Gross Market Product.

Consequently, while on one hand these feminist economists began a movement for demanding wages for housework from the state, there developed another school of unorthodox economic feminist who propagated that domestic work which involved emotional transactions like care, love, attention helped establish a relation between a carer and the recipient (Himmelweit, 1995). Such labour given out of care should be referred to as work because it had a moral imperative to be executed (Noddings, 1984) and encompassed both instrumental and affective tasks (Abel & Nelson, 1990).

They also reasoned that care should be considered as labour and not be ignored from the perspective of the classical notion of market, which associated work with ability to earn money. To enhance the scholarship on care further, Folbre (1994), divided care labour into direct care and indirect care. Direct care is referred to as activities that involve high degree of personal engagement in activities like child care, taking care of people with disabilities and the elderly. Indirect care and supervisory care or passive care that implied supervision of children or any other dependent adults while performing other household tasks simultaneously. The conceptualisation of direct care delineated it from the concept of domestic labour which was

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives...

more centred around reproduction-oriented activities, making a separate case for care labour that was not to be compensated with remuneration.

Feminists like Folbre (1994) argued that care labour could not have a determined wage as decided by the market due to several factors. In the first place it was difficult to calculate the replacement cost because direct care activities like taking care of children and elderly required constant supervision and immediate action which made it difficult to calculate the labour cost. Secondly, care labour made it difficult to calculate the opportunity cost which included the time lost in care activity which could otherwise have been used to enhance social and educational skills required for upward mobility in the job. At the same time, care labour did not calculate the benefits that others received on account of the care labour. Instead of care wage, the concept of care penalty was introduced to the evaluative mechanism of the care labour (Folbre, 1994) by understanding the costs of emotional commitment and motivational factors involved in execution of unpaid care labour. They argued that just as economists studied attitude towards material possession, theorists on care labour should emphasise on aspects of emotional attachment in understanding the gendered pattern of care labour. Care labour was not seen as having an individual benefit, rather its benefits extended to the state and the society as well. Such a theorisation of care labour was not only unique but it was quite a remarkable foray of care economy that differed from the classical economist notion of associating reproductive labour with care.

Folbre's exploration of care labour had a great implication for feminist economics of the Global North and Global South (Jain & Banerjee, 1985; Razavi, 2012; Pearson, 2000). The feminists in the Global South objected to the universal concept of gendered explanation of division of labour and identification of care labour with wages. The feminist movements diversified into numerous forays that differed from the demand made by the feminists of the Global North. The demand of the white feminist for motherhood penalty, wage for household labour was perceived as highly objectionable by the post-colonial feminist scholars as its theorisation was experienced to be limited to the heterosexual, nuclear, white middle-class households in the Global North whose social character vastly diverged from the social character of the Global South (Whitehead, 1984).

The economic feminists of the first world sought to ameliorate the views of the developmental feminist thinkers, following Boserup (1970) who proposed that a technologically led linear development plan that would eventually ameliorate the condition of women was seen as disturbing and

contradictory to the nature of the post-colonial societies. With the advancement of technology in the global north, most of the household work was performed by machines, leaving household labour remained confined to the nurturant care of the children, this was in sharp contrast to the position of women in global south who had little infrastructure support. Women in the global south were marginalised in workforce because of their social responsibility to carry out unpaid household activities in the family in the form of cooking, cleaning, fetching food, water, and firewood and giving care (Crow & McPike, 2009). South countries did not have adequate public provisioning in critical sectors, such as energy, health, water and sanitation, food security, and livelihoods (Hirway, 2011) 70 per cent of women from the global south countries were associated with farm activities that had very little or no economic remuneration or social recognition and no social protection (Mehrotra et al., 2014). There began an interest to look upon multiple factors that determined the status of women in the Global South. These intersectional feminists recognised that due to care labour, women lacked enough time for self-development or leisure (Vickery, 1977). In many cases women also had to work in second shift to support the functioning of the family (Hochschild & Maschung, 2012).

Another aspect that was brought to light by the intersectional feminist was that women's interest in executing care labour was determined by cultural factors and not by monetary motives solely. Qualitative study undertaken by economic feminist revealed that women from the global south, if offered would refuse to accept monetary compensation as a recognition to their care labour. They valued their culture and responsibility of taking care of their families and performed these activities out of emotional connections (Folbre, 2009). These theorists also pointed that if wages were given for their labour, then women would be exploited by working for long hours with less remuneration (England & Folbre, 1999; Zelizer, 2002).

The diverse nature of care labour was brought to light by the heterodox care labour theorists who worked on intersectional perspective, remarked that while the rich in the global south could afford to have paid care labourer, the economically marginalised women face double burden along with physical brutalities by confining herself to unpaid care labour (Sen, 1987). Secondly, if care is implied as direct or indirect nurturant activity then women in the south are left beyond the scope, as much of livelihood activities of the global south is fulfilled by unpaid domestic work like

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives...

milking, plucking grass, tending the cows that go beyond the direct care work (Esquivel, 2017).

Post colonial economic feminists seek to see economy in a new light that would include unpaid activities such as care of kitchen gardens and animals, as well as fuel, water, and fodder collection (Sen, 1985). Such activities are not only outside traditional economic accounting of work and labour force statistics but also differed according to the nature of the household.

Thereby, highlighting the intersections of gender, economic class, and caste. Based on the understanding of the new feminist economists who visualised women's position from multiple perspective of class, caste, race and religion, women's position was now understood from the perspective of multiple identities and multiple discriminations.

All the previous years of hard work by the feminist movements of different ideologies underscoring the relevance of care labour and its inclusion into economy bore fruition when the United Nations World Conferences on Women, 1975 recognised women's economic contribution and the importance of unpaid work in human well-being and social reproduction (Beneria et al., 2015).

A new method of the systematic study of time was developed by the Researchers in the Global North (Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Juster & Stafford, 1991) to bridge the gender gap, evaluate the nature of care labour and estimate its monetary value. The method of time use data would facilitate to keep track of unpaid household and care work performed by the sexes, explain time-related poverty, demonstrate the cost of care work for caregivers, and analyse determinants of unpaid care work. It was a unique method which allowed researchers to measure time inputs and impute a value for unpaid household work. Once the data was obtained, it would be easy to reflect on gender inequalities in the distribution of unpaid and paid work, as well as excessive hours of unpaid work performed by women, and obtain more accurate labor force statistics (Beneria et al., 2015). Time-use data was thus a more comprehensive explanation of poverty which could help alleviate the constraints necessary for improving livelihoods through implementation of macro-economic policies at national and international level.

The United Nations prepared the first International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS) in 1997 in accordance with System of National Accounts, thereby recognising the economic value of unpaid care labour. However, the regional variation between the North and

South resulted in the construction time-use surveys (TUS) in accordance to the requirement of the Global South by 2000. That would produce a satellite account of the production activities. There was great variation in the parameters of TUS and lack in the regularity of the data collection. However, experts got together to include activities like fetching fuel, groundnut picking, harvesting, cutting wood for fuel, making cow dung cakes, cattle milking and feeding, cutting grass from field (Jain 1996) that were beyond cooking and reproductive activities in the Indian TUS.

With the advent of nationally representative time use surveys, attention has turned to measures of time devoted to unpaid work, defined as activities that someone else could, in principle, be paid to perform (Folbre, 2012). However, many challenges cropped up in the execution of the TUS regarding India.

On applying the concept of time use survey method, Indian economic feminist felt that unlike paid work, it was difficult to give the correct estimate of time that women spent in unpaid work. Firstly, it was difficult to obtain the correct answer from the respondents who might give incorrect answers to the questions asked. Their answers would be much determined by the cultural norms where child caring and household work which is considered more essential for women than other activities. Secondly, many respondents often gave accurate answer regarding the time spent on care activities. In the third place, women answered at the behest of their male counterparts who directed their answer (Neetha, 2010). It was difficult to make a clear distinction between direct care and indirect care activities because women especially in the rural areas and urban lower economic background would devote their time in two or more activities at the same time. Childcare for instance is a constant activity which is also combined with leisure because Indian children sleep with their parents unlike the western countries where the separation is maintained since birth.

Following the implementation of the quantification of time to explain care labour, economic feminists from the South like Uma Narayan and Devaki Jain has proposed a qualitative, interpretive understanding of care labour along with the time use survey method for computing care activities. They draw our attention to the cultural factors that cannot be ignored in understanding how women spend their time and in determining their understanding of inequality and subordination. The quantification of time cannot reveal the real image of subordination of women from the South because they do not feel subordinated in the same way as the women from Global North feels. A woman from the South feels elevated, honoured,

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives...

privileged and empowered to think of herself as a mother or a wife (Narayan, 1989) because they are influenced by the cultural calling of motherhood which can never be quantified either in monetary terms or time frame. Unpaid care labour executed through domestic activities for the wellbeing of one's loved ones cannot be motivated affectively hence they can never be calculated (Folbre, 2012). Sen (1990) also observed that Indian women are socialised in the lessons of self-sacrifice and penance for the wellbeing of the family, they would rather eat less or even stay hungry and give the whole portion of their meal to their loved ones. There are also instances where a woman would happily give up a paid job for looking after her children and needs of the family. Such individual choices are rarely calculated in any quantitative understanding of time and labour.

Post colonial feminists understanding of care labour has brought a new dimension to the quantitative aspect of care labour. They have introduced the methodology of observation interview and interpretive understanding along with quantifying time for care related activities post colonial economists have therefore brought a new dimension to the concept of economy and sought a new understanding of economy that is different from the classical understanding. By deconstructing economy, it is sought to be segregated from the monetary value and can be more associated with the non-monetised part of the economy like nature and social values like cooperation. Incorporation of the feminine qualities like cooperation, care, sharing within the masculine nature of economy characterised by adventure, leadership and experiment added a new dimension to the masculine understanding of economy.

One cannot however deny the influence of the effort of the heterodox economic feminists who brought in the use of time use data. It has changed the definition of work from being conceptualised as reproductive labour, it is now used to refer to any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use" (ILO 2013) which includes care labour and domestic chores as well.

The model of the 3 Rs. were propagated to address the issue of the unpaid care labour - Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution of unpaid care labour (Elson, 2017). Unpaid domestic work could only be recognised if method of time use survey was used to measure the time spent by women on household duties. Once the word was recognised, it is necessary to reduce by involving institutions, community centres, day care centres,

angadwadis. Then consequently the care labour should be redistributed through sharing of responsibilities, resources and time.

In keeping the policy of the 3 Rs, the Prime Minister Ujjala Yojana was initiated in 2016 in India, to promote use of LPG as cooking fuel instead of coal or wood as the ingredients required for cooking was procured by women themselves. However, in cases where the husband was the sole bread earning member of the family, he took the final call on how the money should be spent, in most cases it was found that men refused to spend money on buying LPG rather they stacked cow dungs and used it as cooking fuel (Chatterjee, 2018).

The post-colonial economic feminists therefore argue for a case to shift from the market and economy to culture. A new approach has been devised by Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (2011) called the Capability Approach. The Capability Approach understands the wellbeing of a person that is based not on the basis of amount of money or the happiness s(he) possess rather on by assessing their functioning and capability and the freedom to do as one decides which also includes freedom to care for one's loved ones. Care becomes an important resource that allows the other to flourish in all dimensions. This theorisation has brought changes the entire understanding if the unpaid care labour. Since the 1990s heterodox feminist economists have increasingly embraced the capability approach, and the human rights approach who assess the economic policies that would benefit or enhance the situation of women. These approaches provide the normative elements essential for the evaluation of well-being, economic policies, and social arrangements.

There has thus been a change in the nature of understanding of unpaid care labour. From following a policy of division of labour, there is an attempt to reconcile domestic care labour among both men and women. In cognisance of this, a toolkit of recognising unpaid care work was released by the UN General Secretary High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment that followed International Labour Organisation's 5Rs - Recognise, Reduce, and Redistribute unpaid care work, and Reward and Represent. The policy propagated paternity leaves, special leave programmes so that men would also be interested in taking responsibility of the domestic care labour.

By encouraging men to do more household work, there has been a change in perspective. Change from exclusion of motherhood to inclusion of men in domestic household work. A more participatory model has been encouraged to reduce the women's burden of unpaid care labour.

Women, Economy and Unpaid Care Work: Changing Theoretical Perspectives...

References

- Abel & Nelson (ed). (1990). *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*. State University of New York Press.
- Antonopoulos, R. (2014). *Gender Perspectives Aand Gender Impacts of the Global Economic Crisis*. Routledge.
- Becker, G.S. (1965): 'A Theory of the Allocation of Time'. *Economic Journal*, 75(299), 493-451.
- Beneria, L., Berik, G., & Floro, M. (2015). *Gender, Development and Globalization: Economics as if All People Mattered*. Routledge.
- Berik, G., & Kongar, E. (Eds.). (2021). *The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics*.
- Boserup, E. (1970). *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. Martin's Press.
- Cameron, J., & Gibson G. (2003). 'Feminising the Economy: Metaphors, Strategies, Politics'. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 10(2), 145-157.
- Chatterjee, E., Desai, S., Vanneman, R. (2018). 'Indian Paradox: Rising Education, Declining Women's Employment'. *Demographic Research*, 38(31).
- Costa, M.D. & James, S. (1975). *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Falling Wall Press.
- Crow, B., & McPike, J. (2009). *How the Drudgery of Getting Water Shapes Women's Lives in Low-Income Urban Communities*. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 13(1), 43-68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097185240901300103> (Original work published 2009)
- Elson, D. (2017). 'Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap'. *New Labor Forum*, 26(2), 52-61.
- Engels, F. (1902). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. United States: C.H. Kerr.
- England, P., & Folbre, N. (1999). 'The Cost of Caring'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 561(1), 39-51.
- Esquivel, V. (2017). The Rights-based Approach to Care Policies: Latin American experience
- Folbre, N. (2009). *Greed Lust and Gender: A History of Economic Ideas*. Oxford University Press.
- Folbre, N. (1994). *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*. Taylor & Francis.
- Folbre, N. (2012). 'Should Women Care Less? Intrinsic Motivation and Gender Inequality'. *An International Journal of Employment Relations*, 50(4) 597-619.
- Gershuny, J., (1988) 'Historical Changes in the Household Division of Labor'. *Demography*, 25, 537-552.
- Himmelweit, S. (1995). 'The Discovery of Unpaid Work: The Social Consequences of Expansion of Work'. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2), 1-19.
- Hirway, I., Jose, S. (2011). 'Understanding Women's Work Using Time - Use Statistics: The Case of India'. *Feminist Economics*. 17(4), 67-92.
- Hochschild, A.R., & Machung, A. (1989). *The Second shift*. Avon.
- ILO (2013) Global Employment Trends URL extension: https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_202326.pdf
- Ironmonger, S. (1996). 'Counting Outputs, Capital Inputs and Caring Labor: Estimating Gross Household Product. *Feminist Economics*. 2, 37-64.
- Jain D., & Banerjee N. (eds.) (1985). *Tyranny of the Household. Investigative Essays on Women's Work*. Delhi: Shakti Books.
- Juster, F. & Stafford, P. (1991). 'The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioral Models, and Problems of Measurement'. *Journal of Economic Literature*, American Economic Association, 29(2), 471-522.

Gupta

- Narayan, U. (1989). 'The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non Western Feminist. in Alison M. Jaggar & Susan Bordo, *Gender Body Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being And Knowing*. Rutgers University Press. pp. 256-69.
- Neetha, N. (2010). 'Self-Employment of Women: Preference or Compulsion'. *Social Change*, 40(2), 139-156.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics Aand Moral Education*. University of California Press.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Harvard University Press.
- Oakley, A. (2018). *The Sociology of Housework*. Policy Press.
- Pearson, R. (2000). 'All Change? Men, Women and Reproductive Work in the Global Economy'. *The European Journal of Development Research*. 12 (2): 219- 237.
- Razavi, S., & Staab, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Global Variations in the Political and Social Economy of Care: Worlds Apart*.
- Sen, A. (1985). *Commodities and Capabilities*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1990). 'Gender and Cooperative Conflict'. In: Tinker, I., (Ed), *Persistent Inequality*, Oxford University Press Oxford, 123-148.
- Sen, G., & Caren G. (1987). *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*. Monthly Review Press.
- Vickery, C. (1977) 'The Time-Poor: A New Look at Poverty'. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 12, 27-48.
- Whitehead, A. (1984). 'Women's solidarity - and Divisions among Women'. *IDS Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1759-5436.1984.MP15001002.X>
- Zelizer, V. (2002). 'Kids and Commerce'. *Childhood*. 9(4), 375-396.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 42-54)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

**Minaketan Behera*, Subasini Maharana† and
Suraj Kumar Tanty‡**

India commemorated its 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' in 2022 and recognised its 75th year of freedom. Our nation has made significant political, economic, and social advancements since Independence. The article attempts to investigate the changes that have taken place in tribal life after 75 years of Independence regarding livelihood, occupation, poverty, health, education, and political engagement.

Key Words: Livelihood, Employment, Education, FRA, 2006, Health, Asset Ownership.

Introduction

Communities of Scheduled Tribes (705) inhabit around 15 per cent of the nation in various ecological and geo-climatic settings ranging from plains and forests to highlands. At 10.43 crore, the tribal population of India accounts for 8.6 per cent of the overall count (Census, 2011). The sex ratio for

*Chairperson and Professor of Economics, Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

E-mail: behera.minaketan@gmail.com

†Assistant Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University, Delhi.

‡Research Scholar at Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad (Telangana). E-mail: kumar021suraj@gmail.com

the general population is 940 females per 1000 males, whereas for Scheduled Tribes, it is 990 females per 1000 males (MoTA, 2013). On the dawn of August 15, 2022 we, the people of India, commemorated and celebrated with a big delighted heart the journey of 75 years of Independence of our country. Undoubtedly our nation has made massive socio-economic and political advancements over the past 75 years. The government spent crores of rupees on many tribal development initiatives in India. Budgets on several criteria have been carefully created by the central and the states, and they are readily apparent after 75 years. There has been a gradual transition towards the diversification of livelihoods within tribal contexts. Certain individuals and communities belonging to tribal groups have embarked upon non-traditional vocations encompassing wage labour, entrepreneurial pursuits, handicraft production, engagement in tourism-related endeavours, and other income-generating activities. The implementation of reservation policies guarantees the inclusion and representation of tribal individuals within legislative assemblies, governmental establishments, and public service sectors. This provision has provided them with a significant platform to articulate their issues and exert influence on decision-making procedures across multiple tiers of governance. Even after a long wait of 75 years of Independence, we got our first member of the tribal community to hold the top constitutional post in the country when Mrs. Droupadi Murmu was sworn in as India's 15th President. Hence, it is the need of the hour to look back and reevaluate what the Adivasi group has achieved and lost over the past 75 years and where they stand. It is crucial to acknowledge that the intricate transformations encountered by tribal communities are characterised by complexity and multifaceted nature.

Livelihood

Following 75 years of achieving Independence in India, discernible alterations have taken place in the livelihood patterns of tribal communities. It is imperative to recognise that the circumstances and contexts differ among various tribal groups and geographical areas; nevertheless, several overarching trends and shifts can be identified. Tribal people's livelihood is based on forest and land. Tribal communities rely on subsistence farming, livestock rearing, and forest products for livelihoods. Traditional crafts and non-farm enterprises contribute to income diversification and employment. Hunting; hill farming; plain agriculture; simple craftsmanship; pastoral and cattle-herding; folk artisans; agricultural and non-agricultural labour are the traditional economic pursuits undertaken by Indian tribes (Vidyarthi and

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

Rai, 1985). There have been significant shifts in tribal livelihood and ways of life ever since the British colonised India. Numerous factors have contributed to these substantial changes in the traditional economy of tribal communities, including the rapid degradation of forests, state control over natural resources, the dispossession of land resulting from various developmental projects, and the emergence of extractive industries within tribal territories (Sonowal, 2022). During British rule, tribal people lost land and were denied access to the forest, forcing them to work as casual manual labourers in agriculture and mining operations (Deshpande, 2011). Nevertheless, the approach to development that emerged after gaining Independence and the focus on urbanisation and industrialisation resulted in the forced removal of indigenous populations from their customary environments. Tribal communities were stripped of their privileges to utilise forests and benefit from forest resources due to activities such as deforestation, mining, dam constructions, and land acquisition strategies implemented by the government (Mallik, 2013). As a consequence, Adivasi communities predominantly found themselves engaged as workers in the informal sectors, both in rural and urban locales. The tribals have been compelled to relocate as a result of the hill's low productivity, the rise in landlessness, and the erratic agricultural output. Because of their inadequate education, they are unable to earn well and can only find employment in low-paying industries like construction, agriculture, or contract labour. Through NSSO data, one can see that STs' engagement in agriculture is currently steadily decreasing. The proportion of ST employees in agriculture decreased by 12 per cent over the period 1999–2018, from 79 per cent in 1999–2000 to 67 per cent in 2017–2018. At the same time, their engagement in non-farm sectors expanded from 5 per cent in 1999–2000 to 12 per cent in 2017–2018. However, choosing the construction industry is also a loss as the work is informal physical labour with little pay.

Employment

Tribal groups are moving from subsistence farming to modern jobs. Most tribal people work in agriculture, primarily as cultivators, marginal farmers, and agricultural labourers. A small segment works in the industrial sector, while others are cattle herders and artisans. An increasing number of tribal people join the ranks of migrant agricultural workers and unskilled construction workers. The rate of participation in the workforce in the tribal population consists of 54.1 per cent as compared to SC (47.2 per cent), OBC (45.0), and others (42.2 per cent), making it to be the highest among all other groups (PLFS, 2018). But that does not mean that their work is in more

demand. It can be because of their life condition, which forces them to work to earn money for their sustenance in hard poverty (Mehta & Shree, 2017, Papola, 2012). The pattern is quite similar with the tribal females; their representation is more than double compared to females from other social groups, which includes ST (32.6), SC (21.7), OBC (19.2), and others (15.4) (PLFS, 2018). It delineates that their life condition requires more people of family to participate in support of their livelihood. The sectoral employment pattern of tribes shows a very cracked picture of their strength in different sectors. 67.1 per cent of the tribal population is involved in agricultural activities or allied fields. On the contrary, their involvement in other productive spaces, e.g., industrial or service sectors, is very low. Also, with the increase in migration to look for better livelihood opportunities in urban spaces, the representation of the tribal people in low-paid self-employment and non-farm sectors increased from 21.5 per cent in 2005 to 32.9 per cent in 2018 (PLFS, 2018). Even if their representation in conventional occupation sectors is still more, it contains 48.2 per cent compared to low-paid and annual jobs, which include only 31.4 per cent (PLSF, 2018).

Participation in the regular job market is much less, consisting of 13.4 per cent compared to other social groups (PLFS, 2018). On the contrary heavy participation is in self-employment consisting of 55.2 per cent, including mostly daily wage labour (PLFS, 2018). This shows that tribes have a high pitfall regarding the share of human resources in the work sector. This can be another weak spot consisting of low-paid self-employment activities and poor quality of work sector for their development compared with other social groups (Mehrotra & Parida, 2017; Papola & Kanan, 2017). But there are positive patterns as well; the proportion of the tribal population in the government sector rose above from 15.7 per cent in 2005 to 18.6 per cent in 2018, which is even higher than other social groups, e.g., SCs (11.5) and OBCs (10.4). The same pattern also can be seen in the regular salaried jobs, in which the share of tribal groups increased from 7.4 per cent in 2005 to 13.4 per cent in 2018. The increase in the share of public sector jobs shows the government's implementation of affirmative policies. However, when it comes to their representation or allocation within higher echelons of government service, the status of tribal communities remains far from satisfactory, falling short of their designated share or quota (Xaxa, 2016). These groups tend to be relegated to lower-grade positions, whereas individuals from the upper class actively participate in executive, managerial, and top decision-making roles (Kumar, 2016). The information in Table 1 clarifies how the Schedule Tribes are not in a favourable position.

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

Table 1
Central Employees and Social Categories

	SC	ST	OBC	Total
Group-A	49638	7151 (14.41%)	3052 (6.51%)	7980 (16.08%)
Group-B	148365	24707 (16.65%)	10787 (7.27%)	20234 (13.64%)
Group-C (Excluding Safai Karmacharis)	1698290	288577 (16.99%)	131074 (7.72%)	360403 (21.22%)
Group-C (Safai Karmacharis)	40803	16492 (40.42%)	3040 (7.45%)	7095 (19.39%)
Total	1937096	336927 (17.39%)	147953 (7.64%)	395712 (20.43%)

Source: Annual Report 2020-21 DoPT

Poverty

The Scheduled Tribes are the poorest people in India. The poverty rate among STs has decreased by one-third between 1983 and 2011, although it is still very high. In 2011-12, 45.3 per cent of Scheduled Tribe (ST) living in rural areas were below the poverty level, down from 62.3 per cent in 2004-05. In urban areas, 35.5 per cent of ST people were poor in 2004-05, while 24.1 per cent were in 2011-12. 65 million of the 129 million Indians living in multi-dimensional poverty are scheduled tribes, making them the poorest group (NITI Ayog, 2023). Lack of access to valuable income-earning assets, non-utilisation of accessible resources, lack of education, and equal prospects are the main causes of poverty among Scheduled Tribes in India. The low productivity of the hill, increase in landlessness, and inconsistent agricultural produce have forced the tribals to migrate. Their poor education prevents them from earning well, and resultantly, they only find a place in low-paying jobs in construction, agriculture field, or work as contract labour.

Table 2
Poverty by Social Group (in %)

Year	ST	SC	OBC	Other	Total
2004-05	60.1	50.9	37.8	17.6	37.7
2011-12	43.0	29.4	20.7	10.5	22.0

Source: National Sample Surveys, GoI, 2018

Education

The gap in school education between Scheduled Tribes (STs) and non-STs has narrowed at primary levels and Upper Primary Level, but ST communities still have a higher proportion of non-literates and low completion rates. Factors like seasonal migration and regional language

barriers contribute to these issues. Moreover, the disparity in Information Technology (IT) and Higher Education between STs and non-ST communities is glaring. Innovative tutoring methods are needed to enable ST students to enter and complete these educations. India's literacy rate was 12.2 per cent at Independence and 74.04 per cent in 2011. Between 1961 and 2011, the ST population's literacy rate rose from 8.5 per cent to almost 59 per cent. While the national average increased in a similar manner, rising from 28.3 per cent in 1961 to 73 per cent in 2011 (Census, 2011). The literacy rate for men increased from 59.2 per cent to 68.5 per cent within the ST population, whereas for women, it went from 34.8 per cent to 49.4 per cent during the same timeframe. The overall literacy rate for the entire population increased from 64.8 per cent in 2001 to 73 per cent in 2011. However, a significant disparity of around 14 percentage points persists between the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes and the national average (MOTA, 2018:26). If we exclude the Northeast regions, the disparity in literacy rates between tribal communities and the general population is even more pronounced (Xaxa et al., 2014). The latest data shows that women in the ST population have a disadvantage compared to males since they make up a larger percentage of the non-literate population (45.3 per cent vs. 26.9 per cent) (PLFS 2017-18). However, compared to the general caste students, ST children had the highest dropout rate, which was roughly 27 per cent for the 2016-17 school year (UDISE, 2016-17). Lack of amenities such as drinking water and separate toilets for girls are the reasons for ST girls dropping out after the primary level (Rami, 2012). The girls' education was neglected and their absenteeism rose at the secondary level due to economic elements including household poverty and female migration for employment, social conventions and practices including child marriage and the devaluation of female education, and school-related issues including bullying and bad learning environment. (Bhagavatheeswaran et al, 2016). Other factors that have been identified as obstacles to school attendance in areas with a concentration of ST populations include subpar school infrastructure facilities, remoteness, and hostile physical terrain, lack of staff, and lack of schools and colleges within reasonable commuting distance, subpar school administration, and a mismatch between the school calendar and local festivals for the ST community (Pankaj et al, 2018; Veerabhadru, 2015). According to the All India Survey on Higher Education 2019-20, published by the Ministry of Education, Scheduled Tribes represent only 5.6 per cent of the total student enrollment in higher education (ages 18-23) nationwide, although this figure is marginally higher at 13.6 per cent in Odisha. As per

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

the Annual Status of Higher Education report, 2021 (ASHE, 2021) (released by Deloitte and CII), the gross enrollment ratio (GER) for Scheduled Tribes (ST) in higher Education stands as low as 18 per cent at the national level and even lower at 13.5 per cent in case of Odisha in 2019-20. Further, the rate of growth in GER (for the overall population) in Higher Education has been relatively low, as it has just risen from 19.6 in 2015-16 to 21.7 in 2019-20. The disparity in Information Technology (IT) and Higher Education between STs and non-ST communities is glaring. The increasing use of digital technology in education has created wide inequalities among STs in computer skills, technical and technological Education.

Health and Nutrition

Health indicators of STs have progressively enhanced throughout time. The Under Five Mortality Rate has decreased from 95.7 to 50.3; institutional deliveries have increased from 17.7 per cent to 82.3 per cent; immunisation rates for children aged 12 to 23 months have risen from 31.3 per cent to 76.8 per cent; the Infant Mortality Rate for Scheduled Tribes has declined from 62.1 (2005-06) to 41.6 (2019-21). Malnutrition and stunted growth in the tribal population is more than among the non-tribal population. Malnutrition severely affects childhood morbidity, mortality, psychosocial and intellectual development, adult body size, work and reproductive function, and chronic illness risk. According to NFHS 4, 44 per cent of tribal children under five years of age are stunted (have short stature for their age), 45 per cent are underweight (have a little weight for their age), and 27 per cent are wasting (have a large weight for their height). Most STs' diets are severely low in animal protein, calcium, vitamin A, and other nutrients, making problems worse.

Table 3
Childhood Mortality Rates of ST

Category	Neonatal Mortality		Post Neonatal Mortality		Infant Mortality		Child Mortality		Under five Mortality	
	NFHS-4	NFHS-5	NFHS-4	NFHS-5	NFHS-4	NFHS-5	NFHS-4	NFHS-5	NFHS-4	NFHS-5
ST	31.3	28.8	13.1	12.9	44.4	41.6	13.4	9.0	57.2	50.3
SC	33.3	29.2	12.2	11.4	45.2	40.7	11.1	8.6	55.9	48.9
OBC	30.5	24.3	11.6	9.9	42.1	34.1	9.0	6.6	50.8	40.5
Others	23.2	19.5	8.9	8.5	32.1	28.0	6.6	4.9	38.5	32.8
total	29.5	24.9	11.3	10.3	40.7	35.2	9.4	6.9	49.7	41.9

Source: 2019-21, NFHS-4, 2015-16 and NFHS-5.

Nutritional deficiencies contribute to the development of diseases such as endemic goitre, anaemia, pellagra, and beriberi. Nutritional anaemia is a major problem among women in the rural and tribal belts. Tribal pregnant women exhibit a higher prevalence of malnutrition (31 per cent) and anaemia (58 per cent) in comparison to non-tribal pregnant women (22 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted in 2015-2016 revealed that Scheduled Tribes (STs) exhibit the lowest rates of institutional delivery (ST: 68 per cent, national average: 80 per cent) and the lowest rates of complete immunisation (ST: 56 per cent, national average: 62 per cent) relative to other demographic groups (NFHS-4). Nonetheless, noteworthy progress has been witnessed in the realm of healthcare among the tribal population. According to the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) administered by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, concerning Scheduled Tribes, there has been a decline in the Infant Mortality Rate from 62.1 (2005-06) to 44.4 (2015-16) and a decrease in the Under Five Mortality Rate from 95.7 (2005-06) to 57.2 (2015-16). Moreover, the frequency of institutional delivery has climbed from 17.7 per cent in 2005-06 to 68.0 per cent in 2015-16. In addition, the proportion of Underweight (weight-for-age) ST children under five has dropped from 54.5 in 2005-06 to 45.3 in 2015-16. When comparing data from NFHS-3 to NFHS-4, it is also clear that there has been a positive change in the Nutritional Status of Children Under 5 Years. A decline in the number of kids who are categorised as malnourished based on their nutritional condition, including those who are stunted (height-for-age), wasted (weight-for-height), and underweight (weight-for-age), is indicative of this progress. When comparing these numbers to the general rates for all categories, it is crucial to keep in mind that significant differences still exist.

However, when we compare health services' infrastructure and human resources in tribal areas, tribal communities, doctors in primary health centres (PHCs) and physicians, paediatricians, or any other speciality at community health centres (CHCs) are sorely lacking (Xaxa et al., 2014: 225). Table 4 shows the alarming situation of the availability of health facilities in the tribal-dominated regions of India.

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

Table 4
Health infrastructure in Tribal areas of India (As of March 31 2019)

S.No.	Infrastructure	Existing	Shortfall
1	Sub Centers	28682	7054
2	Primary Health Centre	4211	1204
3	Community Health Centre	1022	326
4	Nursing Staff at PHCs	5706	743
5	Nursing Staff at CHCs	7161	1295
6	Health Worker (F) / ANM at SCs	40947	1120
7	Health Worker (F) / ANM at PHCs	4832	724
8	Health Worker (M) at SCs	1238	1463
9	Doctor at PHCs	307	120

Source: Rural Health Statistics, 2019

Rights on FRA, 2006

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act, 2006 has not been sufficiently recognised (table 5). Implementation of FRA 2006 faces difficulties including the ambiguous role of the implementing agency, limited resources, absence of a dedicated tribal department, lack of horizontal integration inside and among implementing agencies and failure of state administration to offer an opportunity for participation in recognising forest rights claimants (Sahu, G. 2021).

Table 5
Claims and Distribution of title deeds under FRA, 2006

	Total Claims Submitted as of 31.08.2020			Total Titles Issued as of 31st August 2020			Total Claims Denied
	Person	Groups	Total	Person	Groups	Total	
India	41,03,177	1,49,912	42,53,089	19,09,528	76,383	9,85,911	17,55,705
Odisha	6,21,732	15,073	6,36,805	4,39,436	6,577	4,46,013	1,47,698

Source: MOTA, 2020-21

Amenities and Household Assets

The Table 6 describes the basic amenities in India among all the social groups and Scheduled Tribes. The first amenities, i.e., housing conditions, are further divided into three categories: good houses, liveable houses, and dilapidated houses. The housing figures show that still, the tribal people are not enjoying the housing facilities like the other groups of the society. The percentage of tribal availing good houses is very low in comparison to other groups. Access to pucca roads, toilets, electricity, and LPG cylinders has improved in ST communities. Despite this, only two-thirds of ST households have latrines, and only 37 per cent use LPG as their

Behera, Maharana and Tanty

primary fuel, which is significantly lower than the national average. Although data on night light intensity has improved in recent years, access to reliable electricity and Internet connections in tribal areas remains a challenge.

Table 6
Essential Facilities in India: Across All Social Groups and Scheduled Tribes (in percentage)

1. Housing Condition	India	
	All	ST
Total Residences	24,66,92,667	2,33,29,105
Houses in good condition	53.1	40.6
Liveable Homes	41.54	53.13
Worn-out Homes	5.35	6.25
2. Source of drinking water		
Within the premises	46.6	19.7
Nearby the household	35.8	46.7
Distant	17.6	33.6
3. Households having Latrine Facility		
In-house toilet	46.9	22.6
No in-house toilet	53.1	77.4
Night soil removed by human	0.3	0.1
Lack of access to toilet facilities	49.8	74.7
In-house bathing facility	42	17.3
4. Ownership of Key Long-Lasting Assets		
TV	47.2	21.9
Bicycle	44.8	36.4
Computer / Laptop	6.3	4.4
Motorbike	21	9
Four-wheeler	4.7	1.6
Both with Computer and TV	4.6	1.3
None of the above items	17.8	37.3

Source: Census of India 2011

Political Participation

In the last 75 years, the political representation of the Scheduled Class has changed. Earlier, they were known to isolate themselves from the mainstream of political events; however, with time, this changed. Today, India's highest constitutional post, 'President of India', is seated by a member of the Scheduled community, Smt. Droupadi Murmu. The entire nation has been divided into 543 parliamentary constituencies, with 47 seats set out for STs (As per the order issued by the Delimitation Commission, 2008). In the first Lok Sabha election (1951) only 26 seats reserved for the Scheduled community, it is a result of their political awareness, seats are continually increased, i.e., from 1957 to 1962, it was 31; in 1967, it was 37, in 1971 it was

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

36 (reduced 1 seat), from 1977 to 2004 it was 41, and from 2009 it is 47. In Jharkhand till 2014, all the Chief Ministers belonged to the tribal communities, and currently, C.M. Hemant Soren also belongs to the ST community. Odisha reserved 33 seats for STs in the Legislative Assembly, and in July 2021, 4 ST community members took oath as cabinet ministers in the Central Government in India. At the local level, people from the scheduled community also participate in elections, using their voting rights and protesting and demanding their rights. The Scheduled Tribe participates in elections in the reserved-seat areas and plays an important role in national parties. Tribal people's rising political activity is making a significant difference in their lives and communities.

Road Ahead

We must emphasise the bottom-up strategy to raise their living standards and include them in their own development. The future growth and success of tribal communities depend on the preservation, revitalisation of traditional languages, conservation of ancestral lands, sustainable resource management, access to good education, healthcare, economic empowerment, social inclusion, and inclusion of technology in their livelihood. The state should involve them as stakeholders in skill development, inclusive education, health and employment opportunities and ensure fair participation in decision-making. Incorporating the mother tongue in education improves participation, and reduces dropout rates in higher education. Vocational Courses with the feature of "learning by doing" can help them get a source of livelihood. The state should take necessary measures to make them active in business and entrepreneurship which will enhance their livelihood. Value addition for minor forest products should be encouraged in their own villages. Workshops and awareness camps in their places will help them understand digital banking initiatives, e.g., mobile banking, internet banking, banking mitra, common service centres, etc., which can allow them to participate in the banking system. The inclusion of traditional healers in the medical system will gain their trust to visit hospitals. Alternative knowledge and traditional healing practices must be promoted to make them feel included in the health system. Employment generation in their place will lead to check on massive migration, which can reduce the burden of urban space. There is a need for collaborative efforts between civil society, local-level NGOs and the Government for the development of tribal in India. Extension of support by state policies with the digital infrastructure to connect the global market with young tribal

entrepreneurs. Land ownership should be granted to them by strictly implementing individual forest rights and community rights to check the livelihood and employment rights of the PVTGs.

References

- Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S., Hiremath, T., Raghavendra, T., Vadde, K., Doddamane, M., Srikantamurthy, H.S., Heise, L. and Watts, C. (2016). 'The Barriers and Enablers to Education among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Adolescent Girls in Northern Karnataka, South India: A Qualitative Study'. *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol 49, pp. 262-270.
- Deshpande, A. (2011). *The Grammar of Caste: Economic Discrimination in Contemporary India*. Oxford University Press.
- Government of India (2019). Rural Health Statistics 2019, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Statistical Division, Delhi.
- Government of India (2020-21). Annual Report Department of Personnel and Training (2020-2021) Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension: Government of India. <https://dopt.gov.in/reports/annual-report>.
- Government of India (2013). Tribal Health in India: Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future. New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Government of India (2018). School Education in India: U-dise Flash Statistics 2016-17. New Delhi: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
- Government of India (2018). Tribal Health in India: Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future. New Delhi: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of tribal Affairs.
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF (2021): National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), India, 2019-21: Mumbai.
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF (2017): National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), India, 2015-16: Mumbai.
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16. India Mumbai: IIPS; 2017.
- International Institute for Population Sciences (2007). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-06: India (Vol. 1). International Institute for Population Sciences.
- Kumar, D. (2016). 'Social and Economic Exclusion among Social Groups in India'. *Journal of Exclusion Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 148-161.
- Mallik, R.M. (2013). *Tribal Livelihood, Food Security and Poverty in India*. SSDN Publishers & Distributors.
- Mehrotra, S. & Parida, J.K. (2017). 'Why is the Labour force Participation of Women Declining in India?'. *World Development*, Vol. 98, pp. 360-380.
- Mehta, B.S. & Shree, M. (2017). 'Inequality, Gender and Socio-religious Groups'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 56-60.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) (2018). Ministry of Tribal Affairs Annual Report 2017-18 Government of India. <https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/AR2017-18.pdf>.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) (2020). Ministry of Tribal Affairs Annual Report 2021-22 Government of India. <https://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/AnnualReport/AR2017-18.pdf>.

Tribal Communities @ 75: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

- NITI Aayog (2023). India. National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023. NITI Aayog, Government of India, New Delhi.
- Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (2011). Census of India 2011.
- Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (2011). Census of India 2011. Population totals. Government of India. New Delhi.
- Pankaj, A., Mitra, S. & Borah, A. (2018). Status of Barriers to School Education in Chhattisgarh: A Study of Bastar and Sukuma Districts. New Delhi: Council for Social Development.
- Papola, T.S. (2012). Social Exclusion and Discrimination in the Labour Market. Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, Working Paper No. 2012/04. <https://isid.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/WP146.pdf>.
- Papola, T.S. & Kanan, K.P. (2017). ILO-Asia Pacific Working paper series. Towards an India Wage Report. DWT for South Asia and Country Office for India.
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (2019). Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report, 2017-18, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (2020). Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report, 2018-19, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
- Rami, G. (2012). 'Status of Primary Education in the Tribal Districts of Gujarat: A Case Study of the Dang District'. *International Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 1-6.
- Sahu, G. (2021). 'Implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act 2006 in Jharkhand: Problems and Challenges'. *Journal of Land and Rural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 158-177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321024920968334>.
- Sonowal, C.J. (2022). 'Changing Trends in Livelihood in Tribal Domain of Assam: An analysis of Census data'. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 65-77.
- Veerabhadru, B. (2015). Situation of Tribal Girls Education in Vishakhapatnam Tribal Region of Andhra Pradesh. https://www.academia.edu/12120706/Situation_of_tribal_girls_education_in_Visakhapatnam_tribal_region_of_Andhra_Pradesh (accessed October 28 2022).
- Vidyarthi, L.P. & Rai, B.K. (1985). *The Tribal Culture of India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Xaxa, V. (2016). 'Tribes and Indian National Identity: Location of Exclusion and Marginality'. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 223-237.
- Xaxa, V., Ramanathan, U., Bara, J., Mishra, K., Bang, A., Basant, S. & Panda, H. (2014). Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 55-69)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India: An Empirical Analysis through the Lens of Traditional Economic Wisdom

Akhilesh Pathak*

This paper examines how India's financial mass media shapes sustainable investment behaviour, linking modern ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) market trends with traditional Indian economic values. An empirical analysis was conducted using content sentiment evaluation of six leading Indian business media outlets (The Economic Times, Business Standard, Moneycontrol, Livemint, CNBC-TV18, ET Now) from January 2021 to December 2023. Media sentiment scores (positive vs. negative tone on ESG investing) are correlated with actual mutual fund flow data for major ESG-themed equity funds over the same period. The results reveal a strong correspondence between media tone and investor actions: upbeat, optimistic media coverage in 2021 paralleled a surge in ESG fund inflows, whereas increasingly sceptical or negative coverage through 2022-23 coincided with significant net outflows. Statistical analysis (Pearson's correlation) confirms a high positive correlation between media sentiment and investment flows. Interpreted through the lens of Indian philosophical principles, it has been found that optimistic media narratives about ESG echoed Sarvodaya (the upliftment of all) by highlighting collective benefits, while episodes of frenzied "green hype" followed by disappointment reflect a lapse in Aparigraha (non-greed, prudent restraint). These insights underscore the mass media's role as a cultural-economic intermediary. The media can actively reinforce sustainable investing aligned with India's

*Public Relations Officer, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla (H.P.)

E-mail: akhileshpathak1988@gmail.com

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

ethical traditions, but it also has the power to fuel short-lived market manias. It has been concluded with recommendations for financial media to incorporate traditional wisdom into reporting and for investors to integrate cultural values into investment decisions. Such measures can ensure that modern ESG market practices contribute to long-term sustainable development consistent with Bharatiya (Indian) philosophy.

Introduction

Sustainable investing has rapidly gained traction in global finance, encouraging investors to consider environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors alongside financial returns. In India, this modern investment trend resonates with the nation's longstanding philosophical and cultural ethos. Pioneering thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi advocated economic principles of ethical restraint and collective welfare that closely parallel ESG's ideals. For instance, Aparigraha - the principle of non-possessiveness or limiting one's wants - urges moderation and responsibility in the accumulation of wealth (a Gandhian concept of avoiding excessive greed) (Johan, n.d.). Likewise, Sarvodaya - meaning 'upliftment of all' - holds that true progress benefits every section of society, reflecting ideals of social justice and welfare for all (Rathi, n.d.). These traditional values align with the core purpose of ESG investing: to achieve not only profits but also positive outcomes for society and the environment. An investor guided by Aparigraha would favour responsible, long-term investments over speculative gains, and one inspired by Sarvodaya would seek investments that benefit the wider community, echoing the stakeholder approach of ESG.

At the same time, the rise of ESG investing has been accompanied by elements of "modern market mania." New financial themes often generate excitement amplified by mass media, which can influence investor perceptions and behaviour. In past market episodes, enthusiastic media coverage has contributed to investment frenzies or bubbles by fueling investors' fear of missing out (Tetlock, 2007). ESG investing in the early 2020s showed signs of such media-driven hype. Indian business news outlets extensively promoted ESG funds as the next big opportunity, often spotlighting strong initial returns or large inflows. This contributed to a surge of interest: by 2021, numerous ESG-focused mutual funds launched and saw substantial investor inflows, with sustainable equity funds attracting thousands of crores of rupees from investors. However, questions arose about whether this enthusiasm was durable. By mid-2022, media reports noted that after an initial boom, sustainable funds were experiencing net outflows as performance expectations were not met (PTI, 2022; Belapurkar, 2023). For example, Indian ESG funds saw a collective outflow

of about ₹315 crore in the fiscal year 2021-22 (Belapurkar, 2023), indicating cooling investor sentiment. More recent analyses in 2023 confirmed continued withdrawals from ESG schemes as investors grew sceptical of their short-term returns. This shift in investment behaviour raised important questions about the media's role: Was mass media simply mirroring investor sentiment, or actively shaping it? And did the media's framing of ESG investments draw on India's traditional wisdom, or did it contribute to a fad mentality detached from those values?

Against this backdrop, our study investigates the relationship between mass media sentiment and sustainable investment behaviour in India, with a focus on how this interplay aligns with or diverges from indigenous economic thought. Specifically, we examine whether Indian financial media's coverage of ESG investing reinforces principles like *Aparigraha* (encouraging prudent, ethical restraint) and *Sarvodaya* (highlighting collective benefit), or whether it has instead contributed to a short-lived "green investment" mania. To explore these issues, we conduct an empirical analysis linking media content to actual investor activity. We perform a content sentiment analysis of leading business media coverage on ESG investments from 2021 through 2023 and statistically correlate the media's tone with net flows into ESG-themed mutual funds over the same period. By doing so, we aim to quantify media influence and discern patterns that reflect the infusion (or lack thereof) of cultural values in the modern investing landscape.

This inquiry is grounded in the broader context of how Bharatiya philosophy and culture remain relevant in contemporary finance. If mass media can successfully bridge traditional wisdom and modern markets, it might promote investment behaviours that support sustainable development and ethical financial practices in the long run. Conversely, if media simply chase market trends, it may encourage investors to do the same, potentially undermining the deeper values that make sustainable investing meaningful. Through this study, we contribute to the discourse on "Indian Economic Thought and Sustainable Development" by providing evidence of how cultural-philosophical principles can be operationalised (or sidelined) in real-world financial behaviour. The findings will inform recommendations for media practitioners and investors alike, emphasising how integrating India's timeless economic wisdom with cutting-edge market communication could steer sustainable investing away from transient hype and towards a more stable, values-aligned growth trajectory.

Theoretical Framework

Aparigraha

Aparigraha means non-possessiveness or non-greed. It is a guiding ethical principle in Hindu and Jain thought that urges individuals to accumulate only what they need and to avoid hoarding excess wealth or goods. Gandhi famously paraphrased it as “the earth has enough for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed.” In economic terms, Aparigraha implies temperance in profit-seeking: businesses and investors should pursue reasonable returns without exploiting others or the planet. It promotes the idea that restraint—consuming or investing more moderately—yields greater long-term well-being. This principle aligns with avoiding financial excesses like bubbles or reckless leverage, encouraging a mindset of responsibility rather than chasing maximal gains.

Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya means ‘upliftment of all’. Coined by Gandhi (based on John Ruskin’s ‘Unto This Last’), it embodies the ideal that true development benefits every segment of society, not just a privileged few. In Gandhian thought, economic progress should uplift the weakest members of the community, emphasising equality, social justice, and the dignity of labour. Sarvodaya inspired concepts like rural self-sufficiency and trusteeship (using wealth for society’s benefit). Businesses guided by Sarvodaya measure success by their contribution to the common good. This resonates with modern ideas of inclusive growth and stakeholder capitalism: a company’s success is tied to the welfare of employees, customers, communities, and the environment.

ESG Investing Principles

ESG investing (Environmental, Social, Governance) is a modern approach that extends traditional financial analysis to include a company’s impact on society and the planet. It argues that firms attentive to sustainability (e.g. climate action, fair labour, ethical governance) are likely to be more resilient and potentially profitable in the long run. ESG investing seeks a “triple bottom line” - financial returns alongside positive environmental and social outcomes. Strategies include:

- *Negative screening*: Excluding companies with poor ESG records (e.g. fossil fuels, tobacco).
- *Positive screening*: Preferring companies with strong ESG practices (e.g. renewable energy firms).

Pathak

- *Active ownership*: Engaging with companies as shareholders to improve their ESG performance.
- *Thematic investing*: Focusing on sustainability themes, such as clean technology or affordable housing.

Globally, ESG investing has grown rapidly. For instance, by 2020, over \$35 trillion in assets were managed under ESG criteria. The approach formalises how investors can integrate ethical values into finance, aligning with philosophies like Aparigraha and Sarvodaya by considering impacts beyond profits.

Linking Traditional Values to ESG Investing

There is a strong conceptual alignment between Indian values and ESG investment behaviour. Aparigraha calls for investors to refrain from speculative manias and accept moderate gains instead of chasing quick profits. An Aparigraha-minded investor would support ESG funds, knowing they may yield modest returns but avoid industries that harm society. This restraint can prevent the “fear of missing out” mentality. Sarvodaya’s emphasis on collective welfare complements ESG’s stakeholder orientation. An investor guided by Sarvodaya would seek projects that uplift communities and the environment (e.g. renewable energy, healthcare). In this view, ESG funds become instruments of social good: profits generated by these investments go hand-in-hand with benefits like cleaner air or rural development. Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship further bridges these concepts: wealth-holders act as trustees of capital for society’s benefit. Modern ESG investing can be seen as a form of trusteeship, where investors steward their funds to enforce ethical and sustainable practices in companies.

In summary, Aparigraha and Sarvodaya provide a lens for ESG behaviour: investors practising Aparigraha exercise patience and prudence, while those embracing Sarvodaya prioritise societal impact. This theoretical linkage motivates examining whether media coverage on ESG in India aligns with these values or instead fuels a transient investment craze.

Literature Review

Media Influence on Investment Decisions

Extensive research in finance shows that mass media can significantly shape investor sentiment and market dynamics. Tetlock (2007) demonstrated that unusually positive or negative news tone can lead to temporary mispricings, as media influences collective psychology. Generally, positive media coverage tends to boost investor interest and

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

capital flows, while negative coverage can trigger sell-offs. Historical bubbles (e.g., dot-com, cryptocurrency booms) illustrate how enthusiastic media narratives spread like contagion, fueling retail participation. The media also sets agendas by highlighting certain topics (e.g., climate issues) that raise investor awareness. In India, emerging studies have found similar effects: for example, sentiment from news and social media helped predict stock movements. A SEBI survey (2020) noted many retail investors cite financial news channels and newspapers as key inputs for their decisions. Thus, if the media portrays an investment theme as promising, it likely attracts capital; conversely, it can dampen enthusiasm by highlighting risks. We therefore expect media sentiment and ESG fund flows to be positively correlated in our study (SEBI, 2023).

Indian Economic Philosophy and Investment Ethics

Academic links between Indian philosophy and modern investing are still sparse, but many scholars note parallels. Researchers have pointed out that Gandhian concepts like *Aparigraha* (non-greed) and *Sarvodaya* (welfare for all) resonate with sustainable development ideals. *Aparigraha*, for instance, emphasises limiting possessions and consumption so resources remain available for others - akin to living within ecological limits. *Sarvodaya's* "leave no one behind" ethic parallels calls for just and inclusive sustainability. Examples of *Sarvodaya* in practice include community-led environmental movements (e.g. Chipko) that combine social uplift with ecological stewardship.

In business ethics, Gandhi's trusteeship has been invoked as a model for responsible corporate governance and philanthropy. Some authors suggest that collective investor demand for ESG standards is a modern form of trusteeship - investors acting as trustees of their capital for society's benefit. A recent article in *The World Financial Review* argues that Indian spiritual insights (truthfulness, non-harm, community welfare) can enrich ESG frameworks and help prevent greenwashing (*The World Financial Review*, 2023).

Empirical studies on Indian ESG funds have mixed findings. Some analyses found that many ESG equity funds delivered competitive or superior returns in 2020-21, suggesting "doing well by doing good." However, Sood et al. (2022) found no significant performance advantage for ESG stocks after adjusting for risk, implying that Indian investors focus mainly on returns. Industry reports complement this: by end-2021, about a dozen ESG funds held ~₹12,000 crore AUM, but flows turned negative

thereafter. Morningstar and press coverage noted ₹4,884 crore of inflows in financial year 2020-21, followed by ~₹315 crore of outflows in financial year 2021-22. This context underscores that investor enthusiasm for ESG cooled once returns lagged, highlighting the importance of media narratives in influencing perceptions.

Research Methodology

Media Sentiment Analysis

We assembled a dataset of ESG-related content from six leading Indian financial news outlets (The Economic Times, Business Standard, Moneycontrol, Livemint, CNBC-TV18, ET Now) covering January 2021 to December 2023. Using keywords like “ESG funds,” “sustainable investment,” and names of major ESG schemes, we collected articles, reports, and transcripts on ESG investing (~200 items total). Each piece was coded for sentiment toward ESG: Positive (emphasising growth, success stories, expert endorsements), Negative (highlighting poor returns, outflows, criticisms like greenwashing), or Neutral (mostly factual with balanced tone). We used keyword lists (e.g. “booming demand” vs. “underperformance”) and manual review to ensure accuracy. Every month, we computed an average sentiment index: assigning +1 for each positive item, 1 for each negative, and 0 for neutral, then averaging. This yields a monthly score ranging from +1 (very optimistic) to 1 (very pessimistic). To check reliability, two researchers independently coded 20% of items (85% agreement), resolving discrepancies through discussion.

Mutual Fund Inflow Data

For the same period, we compiled monthly net flow data for the major ESG equity mutual funds in India. We focused on the largest schemes available (e.g. SBI Magnum Equity ESG, Tata ESG Equity, Axis ESG Equity, ICICI Prudential ESG, Kotak ESG Opportunities, Aditya Birla Sun Life ESG, Quantum ESG Equity, etc.). These funds collectively represent the bulk of India’s ESG fund AUM. We obtained net sales/redemptions (inflows minus outflows) from public sources: AMFI reports, fund fact sheets/disclosures, Morningstar India and ValueResearch reports, and financial news articles. When individual fund flows were available, we summed them to get a total; where only aggregate figures were reported, we used those. The result is a continuous time series of monthly net flows (in ₹ crores) for the ESG category. Preliminary trends showed mostly positive inflows throughout

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

2021, shifting to net outflows in most of 2022 and 2023 (Morningstar India, 2023).

Correlation Analysis

With these two time series (the monthly sentiment index and net fund flows), we conducted a statistical analysis. We calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) over the 36 monthly observations (Jan 2021 - Dec 2023). We hypothesised a positive correlation: more positive sentiment should align with higher inflows. We also examined a potential one-month lag to see if sentiment leads flows or vice versa. Statistical significance was assessed at standard levels ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, we plotted the series together to visually check alignment. All data were drawn from public sources, and analyses were performed using standard statistical software.

Results

Media Sentiment Trends (2021-23)

The sentiment analysis reveals a clear shift over time. In 2021, coverage of ESG investing was overwhelmingly positive. Approximately 60% of articles had an optimistic tone, featuring headlines like “ESG funds deliver superior returns” and expert advice to embrace sustainability for long-term gains. The average monthly sentiment score was about +0.6, indicating strong positivity. Media frequently highlighted statistics (e.g. “76% rise in ESG inflows in 2021”) and projected that sustainable funds were the next big opportunity. This positive coverage coincided with a high volume of ESG stories, especially in early 2021, as new funds launched.

By 2022, the media tone became more mixed and gradually negative. Early 2022 saw a rise in neutral, questioning articles (“Are ESG funds delivering on returns?”). And by mid-2022, many outlets were publishing cautionary reports. For example, an April 2022 Business Standard/Rediff story noted that despite earlier inflows, ESG funds saw ₹315 crore outflows in financial year 2022, headlining “Investors are yet to warm up to ESG funds.” The media also began highlighting concerns about greenwashing and lagging performance. Consequently, the average sentiment for 2022 was near zero (slightly negative), with quarterly lows around -0.3 during periods of critical coverage. Media coverage volume also tapered as ESG ceased to be a hot topic (PTI, 2022).

In 2023, sentiment remained guardedly negative in the first half and improved modestly late in the year. Early 2023 articles continued to note persistent outflows and the lull in new ESG fund launches (e.g. “ESG funds

lose their sheen"). By mid-2023, sentiment averaged around -0.2, reflecting ongoing pessimism. However, by late 2023, there were positive signals: new regulatory clarity on ESG disclosures and the launch of the first new ESG fund in years (WhiteOak Capital's ESG fund) attracted cautious optimism. A broad market rally also helped ESG returns. As a result, sentiment recovered to slightly positive levels (about +0.1) by December 2023.

In sum, the coverage shifted from predominantly positive (2021: ~60% positive, 30% neutral, 10% negative) to more neutral or sceptical (2022: ~20% positive, 50% neutral, 30% negative; 2023: ~15% positive, 55% neutral, 30% negative, with some positivity at year-end). This demonstrates a clear co-movement: media tone fell from very optimistic in 2021 to cautious/negative by 2022-23.

ESG Fund Flows Data

Investor behaviour mirrored these media trends. In 2021, ESG equity funds in India enjoyed robust net inflows. Our compiled data show total inflows of roughly ₹3,686 crore for 2021 (versus ~₹2,094 crore in 2020). The heaviest monthly inflows were in early 2021 (January-February saw ₹500-600 crore each month), as many funds were new and investors rushed in. By late 2021, inflows had tapered (several months near zero), but the year ended strongly positive overall.

The pattern reversed in 2022. We found that most months had net outflows, especially during market volatility (e.g. March-April 2022). Summing up the year, ESG funds saw about -₹1,000 crore of net outflows in 2022. Morningstar's reports indicate that ESG AUM actually fell in the first half of 2023 (implying large 2022 outflows). Notably large redemptions occurred in mid-2022 and late-2022, as investors reallocated from underperforming ESG schemes (Morningstar India, 2023).

Outflows continued into 2023. By June 2023, roughly ₹1,060 crore had been withdrawn (consistent with Morningstar's ₹10.6 billion [₹1,060 crore] outflow in H1 2023). April and June 2023 had especially large outflows. However, outflows eased in the second half: monthly net withdrawals shrank, and by October they were much smaller. In December 2023, we observe a tiny net inflow (~₹20 crore), possibly reflecting renewed interest. In total, 2023 saw about -₹1,400 crore net outflows.

To summarise:

- 2021: Strong net inflows (~+₹3,686 crore for the year)
- 2022: Net outflows (~-₹1,000 crore)
- 2023: Net outflows (~-₹1,400 crore, mostly in H1; slight inflow in H2)

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

This rise-and-fall in fund flows closely tracks the media sentiment pattern.

Correlation between Media Sentiment and Fund Flows

Statistically, the correlation between media tone and fund flows is very high. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between our monthly sentiment index and net inflows is about +0.85 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a strong positive association. (This implies that about 72% of the variation in flows moves linearly with sentiment.) We also tested a one-month lag and found a slightly lower correlation ($\sim +0.75$), suggesting sentiment and flows largely moved in the same month rather than with a delay.

Key turning points align well. For example, January 2021 had the highest sentiment, and one of the largest inflows; July 2023 had the lowest sentiment (~ -0.3) and among the heaviest outflows (over ₹200 crore net outflow). While we cannot definitively prove causation, the synchronicity supports our hypothesis: when media coverage was upbeat, ESG fund inflows rose, and when coverage turned cautious or negative, investors pulled back.

Discussion

Media Influence vs. Reflection

Our results suggest a reinforcing feedback loop between media and investors. Initially, positive media coverage in 2021 likely influenced investor behaviour. Many retail investors first heard of ESG investing through upbeat news stories and expert interviews. By setting the agenda that ESG is a worthwhile trend, media coverage probably encouraged latent interest to become an actual investment. In Aparigraha terms, media narratives may have momentarily relaxed investor restraint, framing ESG as an ethical opportunity worth pursuing.

As time passed, the media shifted tone in response to market realities. By 2022-2023, when ESG funds underperformed or faced redemptions, media stories reflected this caution. These negative reports then reinforced investor scepticism. Investors seeing news of outflows and poor returns felt validated to sell their holdings, which in turn fed more negative coverage. This cycle - media reflecting sentiment and further shaping it - matches Tetlock's finding that pessimistic news can amplify market sell-offs. The very high correlation in our data indicates that media and market responses were closely intertwined throughout (Tetlock, 2007).

Alignment with Aparigraha

From the lens of Aparigraha (restraint), the trajectory of ESG investing showed both alignment and misalignment. On one hand, ESG investing can embody Aparigraha: choosing to avoid certain high-gain but harmful industries and accepting moderate returns for an ethical cause. If the media had emphasised this sacrifice, it would reinforce Aparigraha. In practice, however, early media narratives rarely framed ESG as a moral trade-off. Instead, ESG was often portrayed as “do good and do well,” suggesting no need to compromise returns. This implied to investors that they could have their cake and eat it too.

As a result, investors did not fully exercise Aparigraha. When ESG returns lag, many quickly exit the funds, showing a lack of long-term commitment. If investors had truly internalised Aparigraha, they might have remained invested despite short-term underperformance, trusting the broader ethical goal. Some late-2022 and 2023 op-eds did begin urging patience and duty (“ESG for the long run”), but these were belated. In sum, while ESG by design aligns with restraint, the media did not strongly instill an Aparigraha mindset. The hype of 2021 encouraged a greed-like expectation, and the swift sell-off in 2022 suggests many investors were not practising true non-attachment.

Alignment with Sarvodaya

Evaluated through Sarvodaya (the welfare of all), we see more positive reinforcement. ESG investing, by its nature, aims at collective benefits, and many early media stories highlighted this. In 2021 coverage, articles frequently discussed how ESG funds support renewable energy projects, improve corporate governance, or address social issues. Such framing is connected directly to Sarvodaya, depicting investors as contributors to the national and global good. This likely motivated some investors who felt they were aiding a larger cause.

However, the media also emphasised financial results, and when societal benefit narratives lacked returns, investor commitment waned. Pure Sarvodaya would suggest sticking with sustainable investments even if profits are lower, but our data (and studies like Sood et al. 2022) indicate most investors need financial reasons to stay. Some late-2022 articles did explicitly invoke duty and dharma (e.g. “investing sustainably is akin to dharma in finance”), tying ESG to cultural ethics. Unfortunately, these messages came after many had already exited.

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

Notably, when the media turned critical, it served Sarvodaya in a different way: by acting as a watchdog. Exposing greenwashing or fund missteps protects the investing community (a collective benefit) and pressures companies toward genuine sustainability. This scrutiny aligns with Gandhian truthfulness and safeguards the integrity of the ESG movement. In effect, media initially championed ESG's universal good (promoting Sarvodaya), and later, by fact-checking and criticism, it sought to ensure that any claimed benefit to "all" is real. The challenge is that the shift from cheerleading to critique may have confused investors, contributing to the outflows we observed.

Media as a Cultural-Economic Intermediary

Our study underlines the media's role as a bridge between culture and economics. The Indian mass media took the global concept of ESG and wove it into a local narrative. They often linked ESG investing to India's climate commitments and even quoted ancient practices of living in harmony with nature. By doing so, the media framed finance within a familiar cultural context. It also shaped norms of trust and ethics: highlighting companies that genuinely performed ESG well and calling out those merely pretending to. This gatekeeping reflects cultural expectations for honesty and stewardship.

Media coverage also educated many investors on new sustainability topics (climate risk, social inequality, governance issues). In a context where many financial decisions are influenced by community and values, this broadened the investment discourse beyond profit. In this way, the media introduced a cultural shift, prompting investors to think about the purpose of their money (UN PRI, 2021).

However, effectiveness is partial. Our results show that despite media efforts, investor behaviour remained driven by a mix of motives, with self-interest prevailing when it clashed with ethics. Consistent with Sood et al. (2022), the evidence suggests returns remained the primary concern. Media can open the door to value-based investing, but maintaining that alignment likely requires ongoing emphasis and systemic changes.

Conclusion

This analysis of media coverage and ESG fund flows in India (2021-23) yields several key conclusions:

- Mass media significantly influence sustainable investment. We find a strong correlation ($r \approx +0.85$) between media sentiment and ESG

fund flows. Positive coverage in 2021 coincided with large inflows, while critical coverage in 2022-23 coincided with withdrawals. Although causality is complex, the timing and statistical results imply that media tone helped sway investors on this new theme.

- Traditional values can align with ESG but require reinforcement. The ideals of Aparigraha (non-greed) and Sarvodaya (welfare of all) are highly relevant to ESG. Early media narratives effectively communicated Sarvodaya by highlighting ESG's social and environmental benefits, attracting investors motivated by doing good. However, the virtue of Aparigraha—patience and modest gains—was under-emphasised. When ESG funds underperformed, neither the media nor most investors maintained the restraint Aparigraha calls for. This suggests that sustainable investing in India needs a stronger rooting in cultural philosophy. Consistent messaging that frames ESG as a long-term duty (e.g. patient capital for a cause) could cultivate a more resilient investor mindset.
- The media's educator and watchdog roles must be balanced. Initially, the media acted as an advocate for ESG, raising awareness and enthusiasm. Later, it became a watchdog, exposing problems. Both roles are essential. Our findings suggest media coverage should continue to promote sustainable investing and cultural values without hype, while also providing factual, measured reporting on performance and risks. For example, journalists could highlight stories of business leaders practising Aparigraha or of ESG projects achieving tangible social benefits, reinforcing cultural relevance. Simultaneously, investigative reporting on whether companies truly meet ESG claims is needed to maintain integrity. A balanced media approach will help investors make informed, value-aligned decisions.
- Implications for stakeholders: Financial media organisations should invest in specialised ESG journalism that understands both technical finance and ethical dimensions. Nuanced reporting can help distinguish temporary underperformance from long-term success, guiding investors wisely. Investors should incorporate traditional wisdom into their strategies: for instance, treating ESG allocations as dedicated, long-term holdings aligned with values rather than as short-term trades. Regulators and fund managers should heed media signals: improve transparency and standards for ESG products. SEBI's new guidelines classifying ESG funds by focus (E,

Mass Media's Influence on Sustainable Investment in India...

S, G) and mandating disclosures are steps in this direction; media coverage of these steps can rebuild trust and clarity (SEBI, 2023).

- Future outlook: Integrating Indian economic thought with modern finance can advance sustainable development. Our evidence shows that invoking Bharatiya values in market narratives can materially influence behaviour. Looking ahead, if India leverages this synergy—using media, education, and policy to weave Aparigraha and Sarvodaya into finance—it could foster patient capital for green infrastructure and inclusive growth. The 2021-2023 ESG episode provides a roadmap: it revealed both the appetite for value-driven investing and the pitfalls when execution falters. As financial products mature (e.g. green bonds, impact funds) and investors become more seasoned, the media will remain pivotal in guiding the next wave of innovation. Done responsibly, media influence can ensure that modern market enthusiasm is tempered by traditional wisdom, creating an investment culture that truly supports sustainable development.

References

- Belapurkar, K. (2023, August 16). ESG funds lose their sheen. Morningstar India. (ESG funds lose their sheen | Articles | Morningstar India) (ESG funds lose their sheen | Articles | Morningstar India)
- Johan, J. (n.d.). Synthesising Sustainable Consumption and Development: A Gandhian Approach. Retrieved from MKGandhi.org.
- PTI. (2022, April 24). Sustainable funds see Rs 315 cr outflow in 2021-22. Business Standard/Rediff. (Sustainable funds see Rs 315 cr outflow in 2021-22 - Rediff.com Business)
- Rathi, S. (n.d.). Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya and its principles. Retrieved from MKGandhi.org (Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya and its principles | Gandhi's Views | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi) (Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya and its principles | Gandhi's Views | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi)
- Sood, K., Arijit, K., Pathak, P., & Purohit, H.C. (2022). Did ESG portfolio augment investors' wealth during COVID-19? Evidence from Indian stock market. *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, 14(5), 1110-1131. (The Performance of ESG Funds vis-à-vis Non-ESG Funds | Request PDF) (The Performance of ESG Funds vis-à-vis Non-ESG Funds | Request PDF)
- Tetlock, P. C. (2007). Giving content to investor sentiment: The role of media in the stock market. *Journal of Finance*, 62(3), 1139-1168. (Giving Content to Investor Sentiment: The Role of Media in the Stock ...)
- The World Financial Review. (2023). The Rich Tapestry of India's ESG Ideology: Insights from its Ancient Scriptures and Practices. (The Rich Tapestry of India's ESG Ideology: Insights from its Ancient Scriptures and Practices - The World Financial Review) (The Rich Tapestry of India's ESG Ideology: Insights from its Ancient Scriptures and Practices - The World Financial Review)

Pathak

- UN PRI. (2021). What is ESG investing? (Deutsche Bank Wealth Management explainer). (What is ESG investing? | ESG | Wealth Management) (What is ESG investing? | ESG | Wealth Management)
- Statista/Morningstar India. (2023). Assets of ESG-focused funds in India. (As of March 2023). (ESG funds lose their sheen | Articles | Morningstar India)
- SEBI Consultation Paper. (2023). ESG Mutual Funds - Regulatory Framework. (Referencing classification and disclosure initiatives).



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 70-85)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery through ABDM

Dikumoni Hazarika* and Bhawna Gupta†

India is steadily advancing towards a stronger digital health infrastructure, with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), which aims to establish a "National Digital Health Ecosystem" by creating an online platform that enables health data interoperability and enriches longitudinal electronic health records for citizens. This paper aims to evaluate the impact of the ABDM in enhancing healthcare access and delivery by creating a unified digital health ecosystem in India. The study revealed that the success of the ABDM has been uneven across India, primarily due to differences in digital readiness and awareness among the citizens remains low.

Key Words: Healthcare Digitisation, Digital Health, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), Digital Readiness, Health Ecosystem, Technology in Health Sector, Public Health Delivery.

Introduction

In a world rapidly reshaped by technological advancements, healthcare is emerging as one of the most dynamic arenas of transformation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines digital health as "the field of

*Doctoral Scholar, Political Science, Centre for Study of Social Inclusion, Panjab University, Chandigarh. E-mail: dikumonihasarika1@gmail.com

†Chairperson, Department of Public Administration, Panjab University, Chandigarh. E-mail: bhawnag@pu.ac.in

knowledge and practice associated with the development and application of digital technologies to improve health” (WHO, 2021). Emerging economies encounter distinct challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. These challenges include high rates of maternal and child mortality, limited access to essential medicines, and an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (UN, 2024). Digital healthcare has become increasingly important, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, offering efficient and accessible medical services. Digital health seeks to revitalise healthcare by integrating advanced technologies and digital communication to enhance health outcomes. Digital health technologies provide opportunities for enhanced disease prevention, diagnosis, monitoring, and management of health records, as well as increased public engagement in self-management and overall well-being (Kostkova, 2015).

Review of Literature

Many studies have highlighted that India faces significant challenges in achieving universal healthcare access, largely due to stark disparities between urban and rural services, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a shortage of healthcare professionals. Despite nearly 70 per cent of the population residing in rural areas, approximately 80 per cent of healthcare facilities remain concentrated in urban centres (MoHFW, 2020). High out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures push approximately 39 million people into poverty each year, reflecting limited insurance coverage and weak financial protection mechanisms (Balarajan & Selvaraj, 2011). Malnutrition continues to be a serious issue, contributing to high rates of stunted growth and mortality, while vaccination coverage remains lowest in rural regions. Life expectancy in rural areas, at 61.75 years, lags more than a decade behind that of urban populations, underscoring the deep-rooted inequities in healthcare access and outcomes (Player, 2019). To address these gaps, strong technologies and digital infrastructure are essential. Digital health innovations offer promising solutions to improve the accessibility, efficiency, and equity of healthcare services. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) leverages digital public goods to enhance healthcare availability, affordability, and acceptability across India (Sharma et al., 2023). While the ABDM has made considerable progress in improving access and quality, its success varies across states due to differences in digital readiness and implementation capacity (Mishra et al., 2024). Moreover, despite the growing use of digital health tools, public awareness of the ABDM remains low

Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery...

(Arjun et al., 2024). For the mission to reach its full potential, it must address data privacy and security concerns, expand digital infrastructure to accommodate India's diverse demographic landscape, and prioritise awareness campaigns to foster citizen engagement (Velan et al., 2024).

Objectives and Methodology

This paper aims to evaluate the impact of the ABDM in enhancing healthcare access in India and investigate the regional variations in its implementation. The study is a desk-based research project, utilising secondary data collected from various sources, including academic articles, books, newspaper articles, working papers, and government reports from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the National Health Authority. This data has been analysed using simple statistical techniques to evaluate the mission's effectiveness across different regions.

Key Government Health Initiatives in India

India has implemented several key health initiatives to improve healthcare access and outcomes. The Ayushman Bharat program, a flagship initiative, aims to expand Universal Health Coverage through its two components: the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), which provides financial protection for secondary and tertiary care to economically vulnerable populations, and the Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), which focus on strengthening primary healthcare. Other significant initiatives include the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), which enhance rural healthcare and provide health insurance for vulnerable groups (PIB, 2019). Maternal and child health has been prioritised through programmes such as Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Poshan Abhiyaan, and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), offering financial incentives, nutritional support, and comprehensive care for pregnant women and newborns. To support informal sector workers, initiatives like the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) provide budget-financed transfers for older persons, while the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) offers voluntary co-contributory retirement benefits. Efforts to strengthen public health preparedness, promote traditional medicine through the National AYUSH Mission, and leverage digital health technologies such as the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aim to build a more resilient, inclusive, and technology-driven healthcare system in India (PIB, 2019).

Overview of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

The Government of India launched the National Digital Health Mission in 2020 as part of its efforts to implement the National Health Policy (2017) and the National Digital Health Blueprint. This initiative aimed to build a robust digital infrastructure to deliver healthcare services across the country. It was later rebranded as the ABDM, with a broader vision of establishing a nationwide digital health ecosystem. The mission aspires to make healthcare universally accessible, efficient, inclusive, affordable, timely, and secure (NHA, 2022). It offers a comprehensive range of digital tools and infrastructure, based on open, interoperable standards, while placing a strong emphasis on safeguarding the privacy, confidentiality, and security of individuals' health information. ABDM, launched in 2021, aims to digitalise India's healthcare system by creating an integrated national digital health ecosystem. This ambitious initiative aims to establish a 'National Digital Health Ecosystem', leveraging Digital Public Goods (digital resources such as software, data, and protocols) to enhance the availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability of healthcare. This mission aims to improve the accessibility and equity of healthcare services by empowering citizens with ownership and control of their health data. It focuses on establishing unified registries for clinical establishments, healthcare professionals, and pharmacies while promoting open standards for interoperability. The mission collaborates with States and Union Territories, engages private healthcare institutions, and ensures national portability of services. By emphasising real-time health data analytics, the ABDM enables policymakers to make evidence-based decisions. It supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which focuses on ensuring good health and well-being for all (NHA, 2024). By enabling digitisation in public hospitals, the ABDM aims to enhance patient care. Furthermore, this initiative supports tele-consultation services, which can help reduce the out-of-pocket expenses for patients, making healthcare more accessible and affordable. PM Narendra Modi, emphasising the significance of Ayushman Bharat, stated: "The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission is an important initiative to provide quality and affordable healthcare to the people of India. This mission is a step towards realising the dream of a healthy and prosperous India. The use of technology in healthcare will revolutionise the sector and benefit millions of people. I urge everyone to join this mission and work towards creating a digital health ecosystem that is accessible, inclusive, and secure" (PIB, 2021).

Findings of the Study

Key components under ABDM include the creation of three registries: the health ID (ABHA), Health Professional Registry (HPR), and Health Facility Registry (HFR), which are essential for streamlining healthcare services and improving access (Sharma et al, 2023). Each Registry has been thoughtfully discussed in this study.

Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA): A cornerstone of this mission is the creation of the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA), a unique 14-digit health ID enabling individuals to manage and share their digital health records seamlessly. It is a centralised health information repository designed to improve healthcare access and support tele-health initiatives. It enables the creation of a trusted and universally accepted identity within the healthcare system, recognised by healthcare providers nationwide. The ABHA portal (abha.abdm.gov.in) and government-supported Personal Health Record (PHR) applications, including the ABHA app and the Aarogya Setu app, have been developed with multilingual support and user-friendly interfaces. These features aim to address challenges related to digital literacy among diverse user groups. Additionally, recognising the limitations in internet connectivity and digital infrastructure in certain regions, the Mission facilitates the creation of ABHA-assisted and offline modes, thereby ensuring inclusivity and broader reach (NHA, 2025).

Healthcare Professional Registry (HPR): The Healthcare Professional Registry (HPR) is a systematic and comprehensive database that includes all healthcare professionals involved in delivering services across both modern and traditional medical systems. This includes various practitioners such as doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other healthcare providers. The HPR is registering professionals from modern medicine, dentistry, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and homoeopathy, with plans to extend registration to other allied healthcare professionals in the future. By signing up for the HPR, healthcare professionals gain access to a wide range of interoperable, digitally enabled services that enhance healthcare activities and service delivery. The provision of a unique healthcare professional ID improves communication among all stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem, while also increasing the online visibility and accessibility of verified professionals who can support telemedicine initiatives in India (ABDM, 2025). Verified professionals in the HPR can conduct remote consultations, allowing them to treat patients through telemedicine. This capability improves access to healthcare services,

especially for those in remote areas, also enables healthcare providers to review and manage digital health records effectively (NHA, 2025).

Health Facility Registry (HFR): The Health Facility Registry (HFR) is a verified database of health facilities across the country, including various medical systems. This includes hospitals, clinics, diagnostic laboratories, imaging centres, pharmacies, blood banks, and other healthcare facilities, both public and private. All health facilities in India, regardless of whether they follow modern or traditional medical practices, are eligible for registration with the HFR. The HFR serves as a secure source of information, ensuring that unauthorised individuals cannot access facility details. The anticipated benefits of the HFR include enabling verified health facilities to establish an online presence by sharing information about their specialities, services, contact details, and geographical location. This accessibility creates greater public trust and eases access for individuals seeking healthcare. The mutual access to health facility information by various entities simplifies the processes of license registration, renewal, and empanelment with insurance agencies. ABDM is also creating a centralised drug registry that serves as a complete repository for all drugs approved for sale in the Indian market. This registry compiles a complete list of drugs in India, acting as the primary source of information for other databases and lists. It enables the exchange of standardised data across various medical systems, including Allopathy and Ayurveda. Out of the total verified healthcare facilities, 55 are privately owned, while 44 are government-run. This indicates a slightly higher participation of private sector facilities in digital health (NHA, 2025).

Rise of Telemedicine & Role of ABDM: Telemedicine has witnessed a dramatic surge in India, fundamentally altering the landscape of healthcare delivery, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The pandemic notably shifted public willingness to engage with tele-health services. eSanjeevani is a national telemedicine service that aims to offer a digital platform as an alternative to traditional in-person consultations, which is an integral component of the ABDM. It is an e-health project of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Many ABHA IDs have been created using the eSanjeevani program. The leading ten states for usage of the eSanjeevani platform are: Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, and Gujarat (PIB, 2023).

ABDM Progress Report

Looking into mission progress with over 78 million ABHA accounts and nearly 55 million health records linked, the mission is laying a strong foundation for creating an integrated digital healthcare system. The 4 lakh verified facilities and over 6 lakh verified healthcare professionals indicate widespread participation and adoption of the digital health initiative across the country (See Table 1).

Table 1
ABDM Progress Report till May 2025

Category	Figures (in Lakh)
ABHA Numbers	78,05,02,024
ABHA Linked Health Records	55,05,49,631
Health Facilities Registered	4,00,181
Healthcare Professionals Registered	6,29,632
ABHA App Downloads	1,70,80,214

Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Table 2 data shows UT-wise the progress of the ABDM till May 2025. It includes the number of Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts, Health Records Linked, Health Facility Registry, and Healthcare Professional Registry.

Table 2
ABDM UT-wise ABHA, HRL, HFR, HPR data till May 2025

Union Territory	Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHA)	Health Records Linked (HRL)	Health Facility Registry (HFR)	Healthcare Professional Registry (HPR)
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	4,53,580	2,50,862	229	832
Chandigarh	9,32,405	15,47,666	692	4,380
Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu	8,30,846	5,30,653	478	1,120
Delhi	90,99,863	1,01,08,026	1,753	15,519
Jammu & Kashmir	94,04,612	84,77,646	5,135	11,154
Ladakh	3,91,988	5,01,573	393	869
Lakshadweep	1,06,130	43,516	51	275
Puducherry	11,59,368	6,56,637	416	2,889

Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Table 3 data shows the state-wise progress of the ABDM till May 2025. It includes the number of Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts, Health Records Linked, Health Facility Registry, and Healthcare Professional Registry.

Table 3
ABDM State-wise ABHA, HRL, HFR, HPR data till May 2025

State	ABHA	HRL	HFR	HPR
Andhra Pradesh	4,58,71,360	6,27,36,419	21,039	60,214
Arunachal Pradesh	4,15,073	1,90,343	578	2,641
Assam	1,99,07,804	23,14,339	14,010	22,339
Bihar	5,06,12,450	3,81,70,886	15,360	35,660
Chhattisgarh	2,31,50,942	1,73,64,088	11,209	19,890
Goa	9,01,708	3,76,852	951	3,245
Gujarat	4,79,86,994	2,32,40,189	17,854	21,202
Haryana	1,62,78,128	93,28,254	5,496	12,707
Himachal Pradesh	61,60,928	22,55,158	3,969	3,767
Jharkhand	1,44,44,550	1,21,97,612	5,781	14,594
Karnataka	3,28,70,883	1,72,77,703	62,230	66,058
Kerala	2,54,91,910	3,26,37,937	10,090	38,769
Madhya Pradesh	4,92,19,012	2,14,28,011	16,739	14,993
Maharashtra	6,01,27,993	1,84,27,956	27,591	59,853
Manipur	10,63,764	10,53,910	565	2,843
Meghalaya	13,64,278	8,74,581	725	2,009
Mizoram	6,59,013	5,20,452	744	2,916
Nagaland	7,53,982	3,60,095	1,233	1,423
Odisha	3,90,98,900	53,08,786	8,601	1,288
Punjab	1,46,00,759	1,01,22,887	8,349	14,794
Rajasthan	6,27,51,298	1,33,93,349	41,160	46,912
Sikkim	4,45,687	10,373	234	1,587
Tamil Nadu	1,57,88,997	28,32,122	11,071	9,569
Telangana	2,45,33,114	63,37,588	17,667	24,246
Tripura	23,65,561	22,08,434	2,772	5,357
Uttar Pradesh	13,49,36,725	6,15,56,163	66,354	91,585
Uttarakhand	70,79,778	76,06,232	7,582	8,608
West Bengal	4,81,13,922	96,54,207	12,427	1,128

Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Table 4 presents the percentage coverage of ABHA accounts across Indian States and Union Territories, along with the total number of ABHA accounts generated and estimated population figures (in lakhs) as of May 2025. ABHA is a unique 14-digit health ID that links individuals to India's digital healthcare ecosystem. Smaller Union Territories such as Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep have achieved 100 per cent ABHA coverage, showcasing effective digital health implementation. Among the larger states, Andhra Pradesh (90.9 per cent), Odisha (85.0 per cent), Rajasthan (78.3 per cent), and Chhattisgarh (77.6 per cent) show strong progress in ABHA enrolment. On the other hand, populous states like Bihar (40.5 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (57.8 per cent), and Maharashtra (47.9 per cent) still have moderate coverage relative to their large populations. States such as Tamil Nadu (20.6 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (26.8 per cent) show

Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery...

low ABHA penetration, indicating a need for greater outreach and awareness.

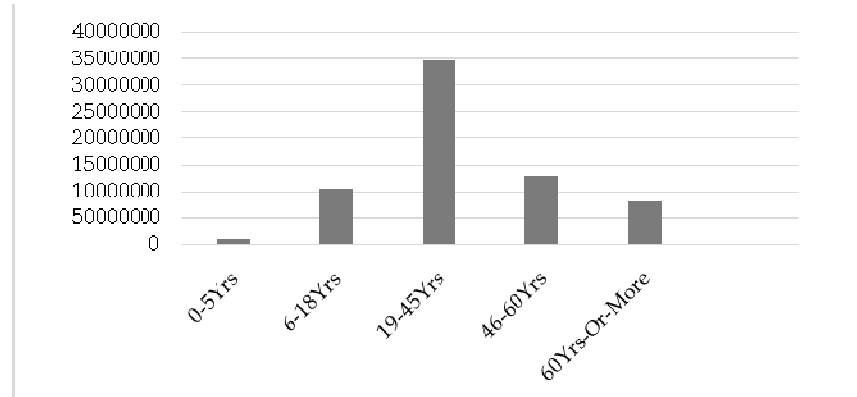
Table 4
Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) Coverage by State/UT

State/UT	ABHA Coverage (per cent)	ABHA Count (Lakhs)	Estimated Population (Lakhs)
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	100.0	4.54	4.54
Andhra Pradesh	90.9	458.71	504.63
Arunachal Pradesh	26.8	4.15	15.49
Assam	56.3	199.08	353.60
Bihar	40.5	506.12	1249.68
Chandigarh	76.5	9.32	12.18
Chhattisgarh	77.6	231.51	298.34
Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu	71.0	8.31	11.70
Delhi	43.4	91.00	209.68
Goa	57.6	9.02	15.66
Gujarat	67.9	479.87	706.73
Haryana	54.5	162.78	298.68
Himachal Pradesh	82.9	61.61	74.32
Jammu & Kashmir	69.6	94.05	135.13
Jharkhand	37.1	144.45	389.35
Karnataka	48.9	328.71	672.21
Kerala	71.5	254.92	356.53
Ladakh	100.0	3.92	3.92
Lakshadweep	100.0	1.06	1.06
Madhya Pradesh	57.5	492.19	855.98
Maharashtra	47.9	601.28	1255.28
Manipur	33.3	10.64	31.95
Meghalaya	41.1	13.64	33.19
Mizoram	53.7	6.59	12.27
Nagaland	34.1	7.54	22.11
Odisha	85.0	390.99	459.99
Puducherry	72.1	11.59	16.08
Punjab	47.8	146.01	305.46
Rajasthan	78.3	627.51	801.42
Sikkim	65.3	4.46	6.83
Tamil Nadu	20.6	157.89	766.46
Telangana	64.7	245.33	379.18
Tripura	57.6	23.66	41.08
Uttar Pradesh	57.8	1349.37	2334.55
Uttarakhand	61.5	70.80	115.12
West Bengal	48.8	481.14	985.94

Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Figure 1 shows that most of the ABHA have been created by people aged between 19 and 45. It has been proven that the younger generation is more accessible to digital health technology.

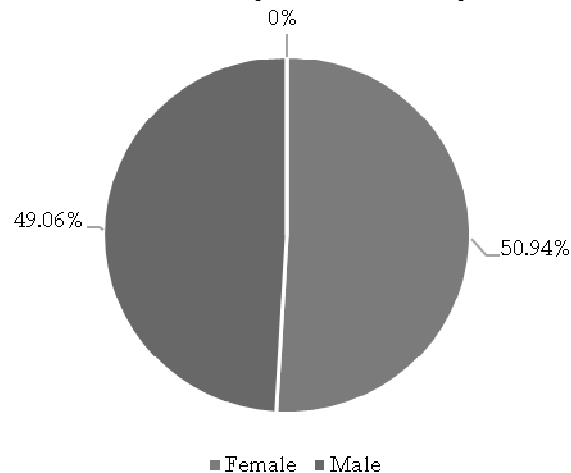
Figure 1
ABHA Created by Age till May 2025



Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Figure 2 depicts that there is no reported disparity between men and women in the creation and utilisation of ABHA accounts. Both genders have utilised the opportunities to access this digital health platform, enabling them to manage their personal health records. However, despite the inclusive nature of the ABHA system for men and women, there is a significant gap in data concerning transgender individuals. As of now, there is no real-time data/ information available regarding the creation of ABHA accounts among transgender persons.

Figure 2
ABHA Created by Gender till May 2025



Source: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard, 2025

Discussion

Digital Health Records and Continuity of Care

The major goal of the ABDM is to empower patients with seamless, secure access to their health records, including prescriptions, diagnostic test results, and discharge summaries. The introduction of the ABHA number enables the creation of longitudinal electronic health records, which improve continuity of care. This access enhances diagnostic accuracy and reduces redundant tests, ultimately lowering treatment costs and supporting efficient clinical decision-making. Teleconsultation features help achieve the goal by enabling verified professionals to offer remote care, thus bridging geographical gaps and enhancing convenience for patients in remote areas. This model not only ensures timely access to healthcare but also strengthens continuity, particularly for those with chronic conditions or in need of follow-up care.

ABHA Coverage Patterns

The ABHA is the digital identity main element of the ABDM. As of May 2025, the nationwide adoption exhibits considerable variance:

- 100 per cent Coverage in Smaller UTs: Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep have achieved complete ABHA penetration. Their smaller populations and streamlined administrative mechanisms may contribute to such efficient digital rollouts.
- High Coverage in Larger States: Andhra Pradesh (90.9 per cent), Odisha (85.0 per cent), Rajasthan (78.3 per cent), and Chhattisgarh (77.6 per cent) are leading examples among larger states, reflecting successful policy interventions and effective public outreach programmes.
- Moderate Coverage in Populous States: Despite their size and better infrastructure, Uttar Pradesh (57.8 per cent), Maharashtra (47.9 per cent), and Bihar (40.5 per cent) show only moderate ABHA registration. These gaps point to challenges such as limited digital literacy, rural dispersion, and the need for state-specific digital health drives.
- Low Coverage States: Tamil Nadu (20.6 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (26.8 per cent) exhibit particularly low ABHA penetration. These numbers highlight the urgent need for tailored strategies, including multilingual digital tools, community-based outreach, and improved health IT infrastructure.

Hazarika and Gupta

- **Demographic Insights:** Most ABHA accounts belong to individuals aged 19–45, demonstrating that younger populations are more adept and receptive to digital healthcare tools.
- **Senior Citizens Underrepresented:** Participation by individuals aged 60 and above is significantly lower, emphasising a digital divide that must be addressed through user-friendly interfaces, assisted registration services, and targeted training programmes.
- **Gender Equality:** Both genders have utilised the opportunities to access this digital health platform, enabling them to manage their personal health records. But data on transgender individuals is not updated yet.

Adoption of Core Digital Health Infrastructure

ABDM's success depends on the adoption of core digital health infrastructure elements such as ABHA, HPR, HFR, and unified registries like the centralised drug and organ donor databases. These systems enhance data standardisation, streamline care coordination, and ensure interoperability across diverse healthcare providers. Private sector participation, exemplified by platforms like EkaCare and Paytm, complements public efforts by offering services related to personal health records and insurance integration. This public-private synergy is significant for accelerating the adoption and expansion of digital health infrastructure nationwide.

The inclusiveness in health facilities and provider participation

The inclusiveness in health facilities and provider participation under the ABDM presents a varied landscape as of May 2025. The HFR, essential for digitising healthcare delivery, shows high verification in states and UTs like Karnataka, Lakshadweep, and DNHDD, each achieving 100 per cent facility registration, while others like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Goa, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Chandigarh also report commendable integration. On the other hand, states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, and Nagaland show only moderate progress, facing infrastructural and administrative bottlenecks. Particularly concerning are Tamil Nadu and Odisha, which, despite having extensive health networks, show critical underrepresentation in the registry, with only 500 of approximately 15,000 government hospitals in Tamil Nadu and just four of around 9,000 in Odisha verified (ABDM, 2025). In terms of healthcare professionals, the HPR reflects a similar pattern. Smaller UTs like Chandigarh, Puducherry, and Meghalaya have achieved 100 per cent

Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery...

verification of healthcare providers, indicating successful integration efforts. States such as Tripura, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Sikkim show moderate participation, whereas Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha, and Punjab demonstrate significant gaps between council-registered professionals (as per 2021 data) and those verified under ABDM, highlighting ongoing challenges in digital onboarding. Moreover, verification data remains unavailable for regions like Manipur, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep, suggesting delays in data synchronisation or administrative lapses. Overall, while certain regions show progress, systemic disparities in facility and provider registration persist, warranting focused interventions for inclusive digital health transformation (ABDM, 2025).

Equity Implications: Who Is Being Left Behind?

Despite its strong potential, the ABDM faces substantial equity challenges. Studies indicate that economically disadvantaged groups, older adults, individuals in rural areas, and those with limited education are more likely to be excluded from digital health benefits. A survey conducted in Kashmir found that 91.3 per cent of respondents were unaware of the ABHA number, primarily due to inadequate awareness (Fazili et al., 2023). This digital exclusion is exacerbated by limited internet access and low digital literacy in marginalised communities. Gender disparities are also evident, with negligible ABHA registration data available for transgender individuals. This invisibility reflects systemic barriers that prevent equal participation and access, emphasising the need for inclusive policies and sensitisation campaigns that prioritise vulnerable populations. Telemedicine holds great promise for bridging healthcare access gaps, especially in remote and underserved areas. However, despite ABDM's emphasis on digital integration, many regions still lack the necessary infrastructure for effective remote consultations. Limited internet connectivity, digital literacy, and device access hinder full-scale telemedicine adoption.

Challenges and Opportunities for Scaling Inclusive Digitisation

The ABDM presents both significant opportunities and various challenges. On the one hand, it promises to enhance transparency, reduce administrative inefficiencies, and enable data-driven policymaking. On the other hand, implementation hurdles such as inconsistent internet connectivity, limited digital infrastructure, and varying administrative capacities across states hamper progress. Awareness remains a major bottleneck. A study conducted in Dehradun demonstrated that structured

teaching interventions could drastically improve public knowledge of ABHA, with adequate knowledge levels rising from 3.34 per cent to 95 per cent post-intervention (Parshuram & Rawat, 2024). These findings underscore the value of targeted educational initiatives to improve digital health literacy. Ensuring patient data privacy and security is another critical area. As digital health records become more prevalent, safeguarding sensitive information must remain a top priority to foster trust and encourage wider adoption. With sustained investments in infrastructure, robust policy frameworks, and inclusive outreach strategies, ABDM holds the potential to revolutionise healthcare delivery and equity in India.

Solutions to Establish Digital Health Care

The authors proposed some solutions to overcome the challenges of digital health care in India:

- **Public Awareness and Digital Literacy:** Ensuring that people are equipped with the knowledge to navigate digital health systems is important. Efforts to promote digital literacy must be made, especially among vulnerable populations such as older adults, those in rural areas, and people with lower educational attainment. This could include government-led campaigns, educational programmes, and partnerships with local communities to teach individuals about the benefits and usage of digital health technologies.
- **Expanding Access to Quality Healthcare:** UHC remains the goal for changing public health systems. Policies must ensure equitable distribution of healthcare services and promote sustainable development within the health sector. Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and international bodies must work together to create a unified framework for digital health.
- **Strengthening Governance and Accountability:** The governments should prioritise digital health interventions based on evidence and population needs, connect health systems through strong leadership, data governance, and infrastructure, and scale efforts by promoting digital literacy and public-private partnerships.
- **Strengthening Data Privacy and Security Measures:** Unauthorised access to health data and potential misuse by healthcare providers, institutions, or malicious actors are risks that need to be addressed. Smaller healthcare facilities may lack the cybersecurity measures necessary to safeguard sensitive health information. To mitigate these risks, strong encryption, robust cybersecurity, and regular

Healthcare Digitisation in India: Advancing Inclusive Public Health Delivery...

audits are essential. Enforcing stringent data protection laws, such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023, and educating patients about their data privacy rights are essential steps.

Conclusion

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission represents not just a technological intervention but a monumental leap towards equitable and efficient healthcare in India. As nations worldwide grapple with healthcare access and affordability, India's ABDM offers a scalable blueprint for achieving universal health coverage in the digital age. The focus of the ABDM has increasingly shifted towards patient care by placing individuals at the centre of the healthcare ecosystem. The integration of technologies like AI, blockchain, and telemedicine within ABDM shows how innovation can address long-standing healthcare challenges. As this ambitious initiative unfolds, it holds the promise of transforming healthcare outcomes not just for India but for the world. The initiative's focus on demography-based monitoring will play a crucial role in informing the design and implementation of targeted health programmes and policies, ultimately leading to more effective and inclusive healthcare solutions.

Limitations of the Study

A key limitation of this study is the lack of recent state-wise data on the progress of the Health Care Professionals Registry and the Health Facility Registry, which hinders a comprehensive assessment of the regional implementation of the ABDM.

References

- Arjun, M.C., Poorvikha, S., Kurpad, A.V., & Thomas, T. (2024). 'Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice about Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and Digital Health among Hospital Patients'. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 13, 4476 - 4481.
- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM). (2025). *Overview and Implementation of ABDM*. <https://abdm.gov.in>
- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. (2025). *Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Dashboard*. Government of India. <https://dashboard.abdm.gov.in/abdm/>
- Balarajan, Y., Selvaraj, S., & Subramanian, S. V. (2011). *Health care and equity in India*. *Lancet* (London, England), 377(9764), 505-515. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)61894-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61894-6)
- Fazili, A., Ahmad, J., Ahmad, J., Shah, R. J., Kumar, N., Hamid, S., Lone, A. A., & Farhat, D. (2023). 'Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) among the Selected Underprivileged Rural and Urban Population of Kashmir, India: A Cross-sectional Study'. *International Journal of Academic Medicine and Pharmacy*, 5(5), 923-928. <https://doi.org/10.47009/jamp.2023.5.5.181>

Hazarika and Gupta

- Kostkova, P. (2015). *Grand Challenges in Digital Health*. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 3,134. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2015.00134>
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2020). *Rural Health Statistics 2019-20*. Rural Health Statistics 2019-20. https://main.mohfw.gov.in/sites/default/files/RHSpercent202019-20_2.pdf
- Mishra, U.S., Yadav, S., & Joe, W. (2024). 'The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission of India: An Assessment'. *Health Systems and Reform*, 10 (2).
- National Health Authority, Government of India. (2025). *Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)*. <https://abdm.gov.in/abdm>.
- National Health Authority (2024). *Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission*. <https://nhpr.abdm.gov.in/home>
- National Health Authority. (2025). *Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)*. <https://abha.abdm.gov.in/abha/v3/>
- National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). (2019). *Key Indicators of Household Consumption on Health in India (NSS 75th Round)*. Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India.
- Parshuram, L. S., & Rawat, D. (2023). 'A Pre-Experimental Study to assess Tthe Effectiveness of a Structured Teaching Programme Regarding Knowledge of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) among People Residing on Selected Areas of the Dehradun District, Uttarakhand'. *International Journal of Advanced Research (IJAR)*, 12(5), 1270-1280.
- Player, J. (2019). *Healthcare Access in Rural Communities in India*. *Ballard Brief*. Retrieved from <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/healthcare-access-in-rural-communities-in-india>
- Press Information Bureau (PIB). (2019). *Healthcare Scheme*. Government of India. <https://pib.gov.in/pressreleaseshare.aspx?prid=1576128>.
- Press Information Bureau. (2021, September 27). English rendering of PM's address at the launch of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1758520>
- Sharma, R.S., Rohatgi, A., Jain, S., & Singh, D. (2023). 'The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM): Making of India's digital health story'. *CSIT*, 11(1), 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40012-023-00375-0>
- United Nations. (2024). Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>
- Velan, D., Mohandoss, H., Valarmathi, S., Sundar, J.S., Kalpana, S., & Srinivas, G. (2024). 'Digital Health in Your Hands: A Narrative Review of Exploring Ayushman Bharat's Digital Revolution'. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*. 23(03), 1630-1641
- World Health Organisation (WHO). (2020). *Noncommunicable Diseases Country Profiles 2020*. <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/profiles-ncd>
- World Health Organisation. (2021). *Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030: Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm in Health Care*. <https://www.who.int/teams/integrated-health-services/patient-safety/policy/global-patient-safety-action-plan>



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 86-95)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period

Ramneet Kaur*

Scenarios of conflicts and violence have become part and parcel of the contemporary period. It is an era where methods of discussions, negotiations, talks, or bargains are referred to as weapons of the weak. An era, which puts winning battles and disputes on the higher edge, than the notions of welfare and peace, often puts Gandhian ideals on the lower edge. Though Gandhian ideals such as peace, truth, non-violence, satyagraha, sarvodaya, etc., have been appreciated in every period. But the question emerges on their application, their relevance beyond being valued as the ideals of India. The paper aims to examine the philosophies of Gandhi and interrogates its contribution to maintaining peace, security, stability, and development in the contemporary period.

Key Words: Gandhi, Non-Violence, Ideals, Peace, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, Truth, Conflicts, Development, Contemporary Period.

Introduction

Gandhi has been well known for his 'courageous, selfless, and nonviolent methodologies', and indeed appreciated for being a 'tactician and strategist' which enabled him to be a leader of change (Balasubramanian et al., 2020, p. 928). Gandhi's values of truth, non-violence, tolerance, and

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, University of Delhi, Delhi. E-mail: ramneet.kaur@sgndkc.du.ac.in

sacrifice, are the means with which in the contemporary period we can lessen the possibilities of tensions emerging due to factors such as 'global trade, commerce, information technologies' (Balasubramanian et al., 2020, p. 928) among other things.

Truth and non-violence have always been among the core principles of Gandhi (Girani, 2020, p. 2321). For Gandhi, truth has been the ground against which all decisions can be assessed since it involves, translucency in 'thought, word, and action' (Balasubramanian et al., 2020, p. 928). While being a firm believer that non-violence is a weapon of the strongest, he argued that even a minor act of violence towards others involves violence against oneself. Thereby, Gandhian philosophy has been a supporter of the values of 'peace, harmony and co-existence' and could play a pivotal role in resolving numerous problems and sustaining solidarity in India (Girani, 2020, p. 2321).

For Gandhi, an ideal society would be one which would uphold the values of sarvodaya which is equality and upliftment of all. In such a society, notions of violence or fraud do not exist and each member of society will work to ensure equal access to rights for all, refraining from violent practices (Sarkar, 2021, p. 168). Consequently, his ideals of sarvodaya, call for a development, which is equal for all, irrespective of any discriminatory barriers and favouritisms (Sarkar, 2021, p. 170). In his ideal world, ideas of 'equity, and brotherhood' prevail which gives each an opportunity for advancement in all dimensions (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1654). Thus, Gandhi was the propagator of the idea of humanism and wanted the best for all (Sarkar, 2021, p. 170).

Another idea of Gandhi was trusteeship, through which inequalities emerging from assets ownership or related to assets ownership can be rectified in a peaceful non-violent manner (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1656). As Dixit remarks, once a 'trustee utilises what he reasonably requires for his own needs and will go about as a trustee for the rest of be utilised for the remaining parts of the general public' (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1656). In other words, his ideal of trusteeship was the supporter of the notions of the welfare of all. Bread Labour is the other significant ideal of Gandhi, which emphasises that each has to perform physical labour to assert their right to bread (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1655). Moreover, he supported the notions of 'fairness of remuneration for all work, regardless of whether physical or scholarly' which itself manifested the essence of equality and parity, he wished to attain in his ideal society (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1656). Hence,

Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period

‘dignity of work and impartial dispersion of abundance’ has been the cornerstone of his philosophy (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 1658).

Some of the Gandhian Ideals

Gurvinder has correctly remarked that ‘before Gandhi came on the political scene, the world knew only two instruments of change, the bullet and the ballot’ (Kaur, 2019, p. 17). Whatever the game, it was aimed to be won, even at the cost of blood or life. It was Gandhi who brought to the forefront methods which were filled with the ideas of humanity. Considering the current scenario, where the world is engrossed in ‘hatred, bitterness, cruelty, racial discrimination, communal tensions, inequities and erosion of values’, its Gandhian philosophy could be more relevant than any other ideology or philosophy (Kaur, 2019, p. 17).

Satyagraha which has been one of the core ideals of Gandhi, comes in various shades since the notions of injustice exist in varied patterns. Satyagraha could mean persuasion, and negotiation, and may take radical forms of non-cooperation, and civil disobedience (Kaur, 2019, p. 17) among other things. Persuasion and negotiation mean, creating a space for discussions, to achieve peaceful settlement (Kaur, 2019, p. 17) of conflicts and disputes. The strike is one of the strategic ways of meeting the requirements of the workers (Kaur, 2019, p. 18) thereby assuring that workers’ rights and demands are met. Hartal is yet another technique to halt the functioning of business to show protest (Kaur, 2019, p. 18), thereby, manifesting discontent and communicating one’s expression. Peace marches a non-violent marches aimed at forming awareness and opinion among the public (Kaur, 2019, p. 18). Picketing is one of the practices of satyagraha, perpetuated in a non-violent non-aggressive manner (Kaur, 2019, p. 18). Boycotts as per Gandhi could include boycotts of foreign products, could take the shape of civil disobedience, and involve boycotts of law courts, and schools (Kaur, 2019, p. 18) among other things. Non-cooperation, perceived by Gandhi as a process, connected with ideas of self-respect and dignity for all (Kaur, 2019, p. 18). Civil disobedience is a protest against an unjust law involving a kind of non-violent revolution, which could be in the form of constitutional agitation (Kaur, 2019, p. 19). Fasting is yet another method for the purification and clarity of vision (Kaur, 2019, p. 19) thereby making the opponent and the participant aware of the purpose and goals. Renunciation of titles, honours and positions could work as giving up greedy selfish desires is another effective form of Satyagraha (Kaur, 2019, p. 19). The last step after

attempting all forms of satyagraha is agitation (Kaur, 2019, p. 19) to achieve the targeted goals.

Gandhian ways, thus, even in the contemporary period could be used in multiple ways to solve all kinds of conflicts and disputes. The values of truth, non-violence, brotherhood, purity of means etc., carry a moral force which could lead us towards virtues of self-purification, love, service, courage, discipline, etc., enabling peaceful settlement of disputes or conflicts, along with building the stamina for the soul and character. As Gandhi asserted, change should first begin with the individual then only we can lead it towards society and institutions (Kaur, 2019, p. 19). In other words, we need to begin change with us first and then it will snowball with other people and institutions of the society.

Relevance of Gandhi in the Contemporary Period

Considering the contemporary scenarios, where numerous conflicts, wars, disputes, disagreements between nations, states, individuals, groups, and institutions, have been a common phenomenon, the usage of Gandhian thoughts and techniques can be an important instrument in resolving issues and ensuring stability. As Meher & Mahakur said, 'Gandhian thoughts can be helpful in solving many social, economic, educational, scientific etc problems in the contemporary era' (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 17).

Some of the examples emphasising the relevance of Gandhian thoughts and ideals in a contemporary period could be:

- To begin with, education has always been a debating domain in the contemporary period. For Gandhi, the educational realm should involve all-round development catering to all physical, cognitive, and spiritual development, uplifting the necessity of the mother tongue, gave scope for the vocationalisation of education, among other expertise or zones of development. Consequently, in the contemporary period, our approach towards building and encouraging, skills enhancement with courses such as 'computer skills, mobile repairing, fashion designing, beauty parlour and other activities' (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 17) is a clear reflection of the Gandhi's ideals in the field of education, its purpose, and mode.
- In a contemporary diverse world, considering the existence of plural parochialism, Gandhi's thoughts of upholding truth, respecting diversity, encouraging tolerance, notions of pluralism etc have been of significant importance (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 17) in ensuring peace, stability, and unity in diversity.

Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period

- In a contemporary period, the mainstreaming of women in social, economic, political, and other fields, has been one of the outcomes of the Gandhian struggle for women's rights. His struggle and contributions in eradicating the evil of child marriage, and social-religious barriers among many, have played a crucial role (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 17) in uplifting the position of women.
- In an era where the need for harmony is as essential as a sense of justice in a court of law, Gandhian principles of non-violence and justice have been of crucial importance, (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18) in sustaining the spirit of solidarity and fairness.
- Gandhi was a firm believer that truth can lead us towards the principles of honesty and justice (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18). And, when these two are accommodated with the values of compassion, tolerance, and understanding towards others, it will bring the consequential outcome of a peaceful life (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18). This is exactly, what we require in the contemporary period, a sense of understanding, an approach of tolerance, and values of compassion towards diversity, to bring notions of justice, stability, peace, fairness, and honesty to domestic and international order.
- Furthermore, Gandhian ideals of decentralisation, equity, and equality, in the economic sphere (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18) can secure us from numerous 'economic, social, ecological and ethical dangers' which have been the counter products of industrialisation (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18). Besides this, Gandhi's philosophy of keeping track of the record of demand and supply could play a pivotal part in evaluating employment scenarios in the contemporary period and save us from numerous pitfalls (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18-19) of the economic and employment domain.
- In confronting the contemporary challenges of hunger, social justice, welfare, globalisation, terrorism, intolerance, etc, (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18) application of Gandhian techniques, methods, and ideals could function as more than a rescue.
- In a nation where debate over the meaning, theory and practice of democracy prevails, Gandhian 'concept of legitimacy of responsive government, active citizenship, political equality plays an important role in the future of democratic prospect.' (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18). Moreover, his enthusiasm for the ideas of secularism, freedom of speech, rights, sarvodaya, satyagraha etc. (Meher & Mahakur,

2020, p. 18) could have been of vital significance in strengthening the democratic functioning of our contemporary political system and overcoming persisting crises.

- Moreover, Gandhi's values of ensuring development, well-being, and uplifting potential of all, is yet another form of proclaiming 'socio-economic-political-cultural as well as human development' which correlates with the sustainable development goals of creating a social order based on 'truth, purity, honesty, harmony, zero exploitation, liberty, equality, dignity' (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18) for all. Further, his ideal of trusteeship is another practice which does perform an important role in enriching the concept of human development (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 18).
- Gandhi's strategic leadership element of 'critical thinking as application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, problem-solving and decision making' is of remarkable importance in the contemporary period (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 19). In other words, Gandhian leadership skills and strategies can serve as a platform from where we can learn tactics of problem-solving, understanding and negotiation, which is the utmost need of the hour. Besides this, understanding and application of critical thinking is the first step towards making rational decisions. Further, if we practice the Gandhian ideas of 'critical thoughts, self-analysis, patience, honesty and simplicity' (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 19) we will be able to counter the cause and consequences of problems in a much-appreciated manner.

Hence, we can claim that Gandhian philosophies and ideals are of great importance in the multiple domains of the contemporary period. Therefore, Gandhian thoughts need to be taught and inculcated through varied platforms such as part school curriculum, usage of movies, and other modes to encourage values of peace, harmony and prosperity among people and society (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 19). Apart from this, in the educational domain critical thinking, and decision-making capacities should be built to provide overall development of personality and character (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 19). Besides this, practices of preserving and promoting the dignity of women, encouraging religious tolerance, understanding and rationalisation the existence of the caste system, contributing to ensuring a sustainable environment, and adopting an inclusive strategy in economic development approach inculcating moral and ethical values, will protect international harmony, and surely encourage efficient usage of natural

Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period

resources and technology, etc are some of the key core areas which we needed to adopt from Gandhi in the contemporary period (Meher & Mahakur, 2020, p. 19) to bring peace, stability, harmony, justice, equality, development, and settlement of all conflicts and disputes.

Analysis

The relevance of Gandhian ideals in the contemporary period has been a matter of immense debate. Considering the prevailing global waves of competition, hatred, greed, conflicts, violence, expansionism, tendencies of neo-colonialism, globalisation, desires to be a superpower, rising power, etc., among nations, institutions, and individuals, the call for Gandhian ideals have been more intense than it could ever be. Apart from that, enormous social activists and freedom fighters such as Vinoba Bhave, Martin Luther King Jr., and Aung San Suu Kye etc. have valued his ideology (Girani, 2020, p. 2323) as a vital source of ensuring a peaceful world.

In the contemporary period, the significance of Gandhi can be seen in multiple dimensions. In the economic sphere, we are faced with crises such as uneven development, hunger, quantitative perspectives of progress, scarcity of resources, damaged environment, unemployment, economic imbalances, and economic deficit, among numerous issues. And the solutions to such economic crises can be discovered in the Gandhian ideals of economic development and the theory of means and ends. The theory itself states, that when wrong means are used, the outcome will be equally wrong. In other words, when the welfare of many is compromised to fulfil greed, then the outcome will be a disaster of crises which we are certainly witnessing.

In the social sphere, while we are dealing with the issues of discrimination, intolerance, and biases, whether it's societal, regional, gender or caste level, they can be remodified only by Gandhian ideals of sarvodaya, trusteeship, and love. When we affirm equal respect, sharing, inclusion, welfare and space for each other irrespective of socially and economically fabricated barriers, then only we can expect society to rise above the narrow race of inferior, superior, or dominant.

Further, Gandhi's sympathetic approach to all especially for downtrodden made him willing to build a society which would be 'free from all sorts of misery, politics, exploitation, inequalities' etc. (Girani, 2020, p. 2324). Gandhi have been a firm believer in the supremacy of ethical values and sarvodaya as the core base for bringing unity in a diverse world (Girani, 2020, p. 2326). Hence, Gandhian philosophical ideals of building a society

founded on the notions of truth, non-violence and equal rights for all could be the base for achieving harmony and justice in the world and society (Girani, 2020, p. 2323).

Moreover, his statements on morality, ethics and religion are of crucial importance. His political ideas (Girani, 2020, p. 2323) have influenced the ideals of religion, ethics and morality which brought new meaning to his political philosophies (Girani, 2020, p. 2324). Consequently, at the political level, instability of the political system, politicisation of religion, communalism, religious hatred, minority-majority debates, and violence, are some of the common dilemmas for which we can seek the rescue in the Gandhian principles of non-violence, secularism, equality, rights for all. Since they are the foundations of ensuring the stability of a democratic political system, and can assure the citizens of successful implementation of their fundamental rights. In other words, Gandhian ideal of state, societal, economic, and political arrangements have always been the base of a stable, competent, self-serving socio-eco-political system and that is what we needed to regain the faith and values in our existing structures.

Gandhian values are needed more in the contemporary period than they were ever required. Since nations, institutions, and individuals are more than ever lost in the game of being 'developed' and 'superpower' they are required to be rebuilt on the bedrock of morals and ethics. Now what is problematic with the notions of being developed is, that we are calculating it only on a quantitative basis on a GDP basis or on the basis of a statistical progress we achieved from a year ago. Instead, what is needed is to understand the question of, development for who and at what cost. No development comes for free. And even those whom we are counting as developed, who are they? In which sphere have they developed? For how many have we achieved this development? What dimensions of development does it cover? Is this development sustainable? Does it contribute to stability, peace, and harmony? Does it escalate the essence of justice? Consequently, being super power brings questions of its own. Does this idea of superpower empower your nation in each domain and dimension? Does it empower each and every belonging of your nation? Does it bring peace, stability, and harmony? Does it ensure the safety, security, and survival of all?

If the answers are no or certainly no in most of the spheres, then we need to understand and examine where and why we are going for whom and at what cost. Gandhian ideals may seem to be obsolete for many since they appear to be non-practical, considering especially the insecure,

Relevance of Gandhi and his Ideals in the Contemporary Period

inhuman, uneven world we are living in. But maybe that is the only reason we need Gandhian ideals more than ever.

When we practice Gandhian ideas such as the path of truth, we will certainly be free from duplicity, and let each party conflict uncover the hidden motives making them understand each other in a much better position, of what they want and how much they can give it to each other. Practising sarvodaya and trusteeship will certainly make every one count and none will feel left out whether it's economic, social, or political sphere. When upliftment of all is what we will aim at irrespective of differences and diversity, then regaining faith in political, social, and economic structure will be resumed. When faith is there, we will be able to bring forward the goals of harmony and justice. Consequently, when the practice of non-violence, dialogues, talks, discussion, and negotiations, is the way for our resolving conflicts, then the essence of terror and the need for violence will be automatically reduced. When welfare and consent of all will be the basis of decision making then threats of domination and undermining will be tackled peacefully even if not eliminated in one go. When diversity is perceived with tolerance, secularity, humanity, equality, call for the rights of all, then stability, peace, security, prosperity, harmony, and justice, will be there more than it could ever be.

Hence, Gandhian ideals of truth, non-violence, peace, sarvodaya, satyagraha, welfare, secularism, etc., will always be the basis of ensuring the foundations of a firm political system which will bring even economic opportunities and will uphold the vision of a societal system free from biased barriers and discriminations.

It can be argued that truth, gender equality, non-violence, social justice, etc. have been his core values. For Gandhi, non-violence is a symbol of the strength of the strongest and not of the weakest. He believed that non-violence could act as a thunderous tool against a hefty government (Girani, 2020, p. 2327). For him, non-violence is an important means through which the end goal of truth and peace can be achieved. He claimed that only through peace, and non-violence, we can restore harmony and efforts towards global peace can be ensured. Gandhi has been a firm believer in the supremacy of ethical values and sarvodaya as the core base for bringing unity in a diverse world (Girani, 2020, p. 2326). Hence, Gandhian philosophies of building a society founded on the notions of truth, non-violence and equal rights for all could be the base of achieving harmony and justice in the world and society (Girani, 2020, p. 2323). In conclusion

‘Gandhian philosophy is still relevant and important in the minds and hearts of the people of the globe’ (Girani, 2020, p. 2327).

References

- Balasubramanian, T, et al. (2020). 'Mahatma Gandhi's Life and Freedom Struggle'. *Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University*. Volume 16(7). ISSN:1007-1172. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343264465_Mahatma_Gandhi's_Life_and_Freedom_Struggle
- Girani, E. (2020). 'Mahatma Gandhi and His Philosophy - A Philosophical Idealist'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*. Volume 8(6). ISSN: 2320-2882. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2006316.pdf>
- Kaur, G. (2019). 'Gandhi's Satyagraha: Concept and Methods'. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*. Volume: 4(1). ISSN 2456-4931 (Online). <https://ijissh.org/storage/Volume4/Issue1/IJISSH-040104.pdf>
- Kumar, Anuj, et al. (2020). 'Gandhian Trusteeship - A Principle of Equality and Social Welfare'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*. Volume 8(4). ISSN: 2320-2882. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2004220.pdf>
- Meher, B. & Mahakur, B. (2020). 'Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts in the 21st Century: An Evaluative Framework'. *Pedagogy of Learning*. Volume 6(2). E-ISSN: 2395-7344, P-ISSN: 2320-9526. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342997073_Relevance_of_Gandhian_Thoughts_in_the_21st_Century_An_Evaluative_Framework
- Sarkar, S. (2021). 'Mahatma Gandhi's Conception of Sarvodaya: A Brief Study'. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*. Volume 8(9). ISSN-2349-5162. <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2109219.pdf>



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 96-113)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

Rajeev Kumar Singh*, Kiran† and Arvind Kumar‡

It is believed that the emergence of modernity has unprecedentedly swept away traditional social orders, yet enduring links between traditional and modern values persist. Continuing inequalities, notably gender-based discrimination and violence, contradict the shift towards more secular values. In India also, gender inequality remains a substantial concern, intertwined with deep-rooted beliefs. These disparities manifest diversely, shaped by specific social, cultural, and economic contexts, exemplified by the imbalanced sex ratio in the country. Haryana is one such state that has the lowest sex ratio over the years. The Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in eight districts of Haryana is below 900 whereas the combined sex ratio in Haryana has decreased from 917 in 2022 to 906 in June 2023 according to the Women and Child Development Ministry. The census data indicates that the female sex ratio is even worse in the social groups with comparatively high literacy rates. Therefore, one of the primary arguments this paper has advanced is that there is no direct correlation between progressive change in values and the notion of modernity. Instead, the present paper aims to analyse the skewed sex ratio in Haryana in general and the variations in data across various socio-economic groups in specific.

*Professor, Central University of Haryana, Mahendargarh (Haryana).

E-mail: rajeevsingh@cuh.ac.in

†Research Scholar, Central University of Haryana, Mahendargarh (Haryana).

E-mail: kiranmalik211096@gmail.com

‡Research Scholar, Central University of Haryana, Mahendargarh (Haryana).

E-mail: kumararvind.1827@gmail.com

Key Words: Skewed Sex Ratio, Sex Ratio, Gender, Cultural Violence, Modernity.

Introduction

The post-renaissance world order with the 'reason' at its core, shows its innate faith in liberal democracy, carrying all the necessary elements like limited government, rule of law established by constitutional norms, values, and equality (Negretto, 2020; Rhoden, 2015). Etymologically, the word modernity originated from the word 'modernus' which refers to 'just now'. In general, this word refers to industrialisation, rationalisation, secularisation, structural differentiation, and expression of capabilities (Almond & Powell, 1966). Also, it was argued that the mode of life brought into being modernity has swept away from all 'traditional types' of social order in quite an unprecedented way (Giddens, 1990). However, there are continuities between traditional and modern, and still many primordial subjugations continue to persist in one form or another. Gender-based discrimination is one such tendency that can be placed in the category of structural violence as it exists both in 'physical and psychological' terms and therefore, both the word violence and influence can be used in this regard (Galtung, 1969). In general, women are on the receiving side of such violence. The overall construct, even within the liberal democratic framework is impregnated with many such tendencies which contravene the secularisation tendencies.

The socio-economic and political construct of India unfolds many such tendencies which are paradoxical in nature. Despite India's move towards economic power, with the fastest growth rate around the globe with its GDP increasing to an annual growth at an estimated percentage of 7.2 (World Bank, 2023), gender inequality remains an immense area of concern which reflects especially in the skewed sex ratio. Sen (1991) in one of his seminal articles, brought to attention the problem of the imbalance sex ratio in India to the world through the concept of 'missing women'. According to the 2011 census, the average sex ratio for the country as a whole is 943/1000. According to WHO (2016), the natural sex ratio at birth is 100 females per 105 male births but in recent decades in India, the female-male sex ratio at birth is far much less than the natural level.

However, more recently, the fact involved in a statement given by Smriti Irani, Women and Child Development Minister, on 21st July 2023 raised alarm for many states in the context of sex ratio. She said according to data of sex ratio at birth in 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 there is a decline in sex ratio in 20 states and union territories between 2021-22 to 2022-23.¹ It

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

indicates that the traditional norms such as patriarchy and discrimination towards a particular gender are persisting in India till date.

But, the phenomenon of skewed sex ratio is not uniform for the whole country. In the northern parts of the country, the preference for a son is stronger than in the southern states (Arnold, Kishor & Roy, 2002) and Haryana is one among such states that has the lowest sex ratio over the years. According to the 2011 census, Haryana had the lowest child sex ratio among all states and that was 830/1000. The sharp decrease in the sex ratio is generally presumed to be the result of the persistence of primordial tendencies and the growth of new technologies such as ultrasounds and amniocentesis that lead to sex-selective abortions in these parts (Arnold, Kishor & Roy, 2002).

The Government has started various incentive-based schemes to deal with the skewed sex ratio at the centre and state levels but still over a period of time these initiatives have not brought the expected results which are evident through data such as the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in the eight districts of Haryana is below 900 whereas the combined sex ratio in Haryana has decreased from 917 in 2022 to 906 in June 2023 according to Women and Child Development Ministry² which has raised a big question to the government's efforts to improve sex ratio in the state. Also, the census data indicates that the female sex ratio is even worse in the social groups with comparatively high literacy rates. Therefore, one of the primary assumptions that this paper has undertaken is that there is no direct correlation between progressive change in values and the notion of modernity. Instead, the present paper aims to analyse the skewed sex ratio in Haryana in general and the variations in data across various socio-economic groups in specific.

The Lop-sided Gender Construct

The construct of gender itself has long been a subject of discourse and contemplation. It transcends the dominating binary notions of male and female which slowly transforms into masculine and feminine tendencies that socially navigate the intricate landscape of human diversity. For the earlier scholars of this discourse like Oakley (1972) "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'". Later on, scholars such as Bolledu (2015), and Bhasin (2000) identified a difference between sex and gender. For them, sex indicates the biological difference whereas gender refers to the culture of discrimination and varied roles given to the men and women based on their natural differences. Similarly, according to the definition given by the World Health

Organisation, gender is some socially constructed values that are carried by women, men, girls, and boys.³ The ascribed values transform across different periods, with various social systems and with the evolution of history. Hence, gender inequality occurs in certain legal, social, and cultural situations in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles.

The belief in early writings that gender is closely tied to biological differences of human beings which viewed them as interconnected aspects of a person's identity (Horowitz, 1976) is a misleading connotation (Bittner & Goodyear, 2017). There are no such social roles that are naturally related to being male and female rather than producing offspring (Bhasin, 2000). The gender-related societal constructs based on biological distinctions were formulated at a very later stage with the emergence of private property to ensure the purity of women. History has evidently proved the close connections between various economic dynamics and prevailing moral and sexual values within a particular society (Kaushal, 2020). According to Engels (1884), the concept of inheritance emerged with the advent of private property, which led to the desire to ensure the authenticity of the successor of one's property. Later, the will to secure the inheritance of property transformed into the imposed restrictions and control over women, marriages, and reproductive roles. Then women were confined to domestic roles only, consequently, they gradually became just the economic asset to keep property in one's own family.

During the Vedic period, women were considered to be fairly equal to men in India. They used to get an education like other males going through the stages of 'Upnayana' and 'Brahmacharya' and had the liberty to perform ritual sacrifices on their own. During the Vedic period, an ideal marriage was considered to be a sacred union that gives joint ownership of the house to both males and females (Altekar, 1983). But in post Vedic period the situation of women changed along with the consolidation of private property and an ancient book on Hindu social order became the crowning point of it (Tharakan and Tharakan, 1975) which was considered to be the guiding force for all the societal laws as per Hindu beliefs. 'Manusmriti', the earlier text on social and personal norms for the general populace or subjects, includes separate laws for husband and wife in chapter nine which exhibit bias against women. Furthermore, it stipulates that a husband's duty lies in "carefully guard his wife, in order to keep his offspring pure", and "a

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

husband must constantly be worshipped as a god by a faithful wife" (Razvi and Roth, 2004).

Manusmriti also emphasised the need to maintain the purity of women to keep property in their own family's lineage hence justifying the subjugation of women. According to it, an ideal woman was considered to be one who can give birth to a son, hence with this emerged the practice of monogamous marriages to ensure the heirs of one's property which highlights the relation between economic development and male domination (Spear, 1961). With this, the family's honour was attached to the chastity of women. Even today the nature of women's subjugation in any society consists of relations of land ownership, inheritance system, and patriarchy as its fundamental social unit (Saadwai, 1980).

According to Chakravarti (2003), in the Indian social structure family is still considered to be the natural and fundamental group whose honour depends on the purity of women to maintain the purity of lineage's blood and family's position in the social hierarchy. A man's honour is predominantly associated with his capacity to exert control over the women in his family. In the patriarchal structure of society, men possess unrestricted autonomy, sometimes even at the expense of human values and morality whereas women are restricted in similar latitude (Kaushal, 2020). Gender-based violence is usually targeted toward women which leads to a significant unequal impact on them (Welchman & Hossain, 2005) by prompting the two ideals of 'honour' and 'dishonour' which represent the 'izzat' and 'gairat' respectively (Omvedt, 1990) and presumed to be attached with the notion of women's purity. This attached notion of honour led to the phenomenon of child marriages in India. The family and parents used to get their daughters married either before or just after puberty which relieved them of the obligation to safeguard the chastity of girls (Tharakan and Tharakan, 1975). According to Wolff (1990), people tend to see women's bodies with preconceived notions of objectifying them for sexual desires and as something for others to look at. These things persist in society even without women's intentions. Consequently, the woman's body is assumed to be a subject of oppression and devaluation.

Many other reasons may also be assigned to the preference of sons over daughters such as economic and old age security, family lineage, dowry for girls, birth, and death rituals, and many more (Das Gupta, 1987). Because of the practices such as dowry, a girl child is considered a burden to the families. Moreover, girls are not perceived as an economic support to their families as she is expected to go to another family after marriage. Legal

measures battling this evil remain only on paper and lack effective implementation (Rao, Vidya & Sriramya, 2015). Some other reasons could be increasing cases of rape, sexual crimes, and workplace harassment of women. According to the National Crime Records Bureau's report of 2021, the rate of crimes against women during 2021 was 64.5 which was 56.5 (as per one lakh of the population) during 2018-2020. There are 284 cases of murder with rape or gang rape in 2021. There are 6795 dowry deaths in all over India. Women face cruelty in some or other ways in their natal families, sometimes by their husbands or by their relatives. The number of such cases increased from 112292 in 2020 to 137956 in 2021 according to NCRB.⁴ Along with these many reasons the disparity in sex ratios arises with decreasing fertility rate and the presence of and ability to access modern techniques such as sonography during pregnancy (Guilmoto, 2009) which leads to the phenomena of sex-selective abortions.

Politics Led Modernity and Women Empowerment

India's constitution enshrines fundamental rights which provide equal liberal rights to its citizens to foster their active participation in the decision-making procedure of the country and for a more equitable society. With the same vision Government of India has floated many social and legal initiatives for the empowerment of women. To improve the condition of girl children and to increase their willingness among parents, a number of conditional cash transfer schemes have been introduced by the government (Kailas Sarap, 2013). For example, *Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana*⁵ is a premium saving scheme launched by the Ministry of Finance to encourage the parent of a girl child to build a fund for future education and marriage expenses for the girl child. The government of Haryana has also initiated many incentive-based schemes at the state level such as 'Apni Beti Apna Dhan (My daughter; My wealth)' in the year 1994 followed by 'Ladli (beloved daughter)' in 2005 to prevent a decline in the sex ratio (Gaur, 2013). Another scheme to give financial support to the parents of a girl child is *Aapki Beti, Humari Beti*,⁶ an initiative to bring about change in the societal attitude towards the birth of the girl child and to improve the child sex ratio in Haryana.

Further, various legal frameworks are also there for the protection of women against discrimination and violence. Major constitutional reforms and initiatives through various acts have been executed in the same context such as the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (1956), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Maternity Benefit Act (1961), Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

and Prevention of Misuse) Act (1994). But despite such initiatives approximately 4.6 crore that is 45.8 million women are 'missing' in the demography of India according to United Nations Population Fund report during the year 2020. That happened because of pre and post-birth sex selection practices resulting from the notions of gender inequalities and son preferences (UNFPA, 2020)."

Haryana: Economic-Cultural Setting

The sex-selective abortion has been indeed an issue of great concern. Haryana along with subjugating cultural norms for women is especially known for the practice of honour killing. Haryana despite being on the path of economic modernisation with per capita income at the current price of Rs. 274635 in 2021-22 which indicates a growth of 158.9 per cent from 2011-12 whereas in the same time span, India's PCI increased only by 136.4 per cent⁷ and literacy rate 75.6 per cent according to 2011 census which is more than the literacy rate of India as whole, has one of the lowest sex ratios in the last three decades followed by the declining trend in child sex ratio according to recent data as presented by Ministry of Women and Child Development. According to the 2011 census, Haryana has a total population of 2,53,53,081, with males 1,35,05,130 and 1,18,47,951 females with a sex ratio of 877 females per 1000 boys which was the lowest in India.

The adverse sex ratio in Haryana has resulted from the growing cases of sex determination tests and abortion along with other reasons such as nuclear families and economic surplus (Chowdhry, 2005). There is a long cultural history of Haryana behind such a skewed sex ratio, rooted in colonial times. As Haryana is an agriculturally based economy, the small landowners, Jats, here used to rely mostly upon the labour of their family members and labour used to be hired from outside in very rare cases. Such an economy strengthened the desire for a male child and reinforced the importance of a male child as life-sustaining rainfall (Chowdhry, 1987). Further, due to lack of health facilities leading high mortality rate, one male child was not considered to be enough.⁸ Therefore, women were treated as tools to economic assets and also as labour directed towards the reproduction of the caring needs of the workforce at home. The two tasks performed by women play an important role in the reproduction of labour power. One is the maintenance of labour power on a daily basis within the household and the second is the reproduction of a living workforce (Heitlinger, 1979).

Chowdhry (1987) argues that in Haryana the reliability of the reproducing capacity of women and the importance of their unpaid labour at

home and in the agrarian economy along with the pride of having a male heir as the upkeeper of the agrarian assets resulted in the practices like Karewa in which widow is asked to remarry to the younger brother of her husband to retain the property within the family itself. This biased gender identity is further cemented by symbolic means such as claiming the public spaces by the males which is an extension of the domination of males in private spheres or houses of the mostly landowning caste groups (Chowdhry, 2014) of Jats (Kaul, 2016).

In Haryana, most of the agricultural land is owned by the Jats who comprise 29 per cent of its population and own three-fourths of the total land here (Kaul, 2016). Nearly, 87 per cent of their total population is engaged in agriculture (Vishnoi, 2016). Therefore, being powerful in economy and numbers, they formulate the 'dominant caste' in Haryana which helps them carry the higher ritual status in the social hierarchy (Srinivasan, 1962). Therefore, the socio-cultural ethos of the region is also formulated by the dominant agriculturalist caste whose customs such as Karewa, bride price, and the preference of sons over daughters are sanctifying the customs of the other social groups as well (Chowdhry, 1987). Besides, it was believed that norms and practices which carry the element of pride and honour are limited to the higher caste or the dominant caste of the region in particular. Therefore, an attempt has been made to understand the distinction in terms of the caste categories especially in the state of Haryana.

Contemplation from the Data

After making the pre-natal sex identification illegal, the cases related to biased sex-selection abortions in India are not officially recorded but the incidences could be identified indirectly based on the divergence of the sex ratio at birth from the natural level. A report by the United Nations Population Fund (2021) points out that according to the 2011 census, considering girls aged 0-6 years, approximately four million girls were found to be missing. Out of which 2.5 million were missing due to pre-natal sex-selective abortions and 1.5 million girls were missing due to post-birth discrimination.

However, the variations in trends of sex ratio could be observed based on various social identities also. Figure 1 indicates the sex ratio in India from 1961 to 2011 across various castes. The difference among various social groups considering sex ratio is clearly visible from the given data. The sex ratio at the inset of 1961 was higher in the scheduled caste than in the non-SCs. It was 957/1000 for SCs and 934/1000 for others whereas for India

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

as a whole, it was 941/100 which is significantly less than the scheduled castes. However, in the 1991 census, this difference is not clearly visible. Coming to the 1991 census the sex ratio rapidly declined among scheduled castes compared to the others and the sex ratio at the country level excluding the STs. According to the 1991 census, the sex ratio among SCs declined to 922 and in India, it declined from 941 to 927 and that was at its worst since independence which indicates the expansion of dominating cultural tendencies to the scheduled caste communities as well.

Figure 1

Sex Ratio in India from 1961 to 2011 across Various Social Groups

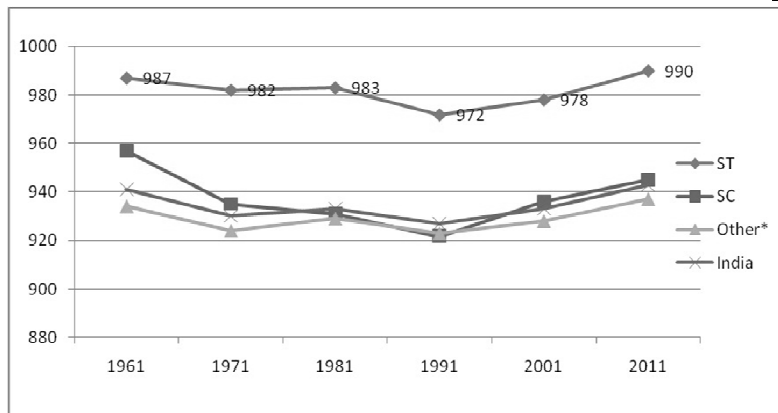
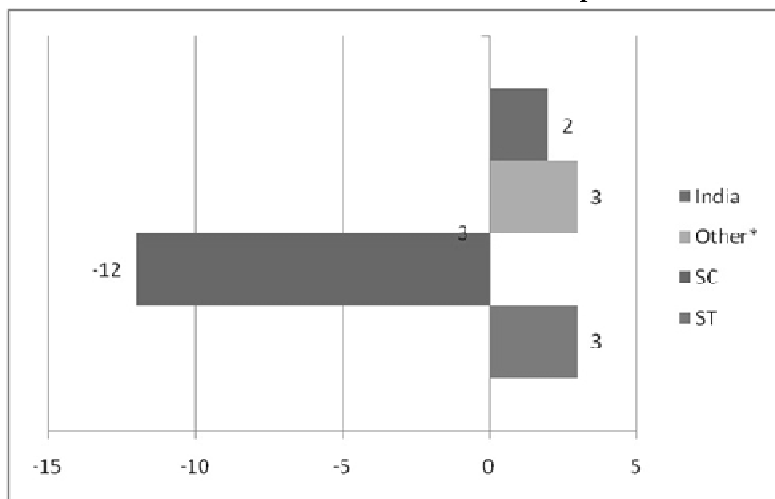


Figure 2

Deviation in Sex Ratio across Various Social Groups from 1991 to 2011

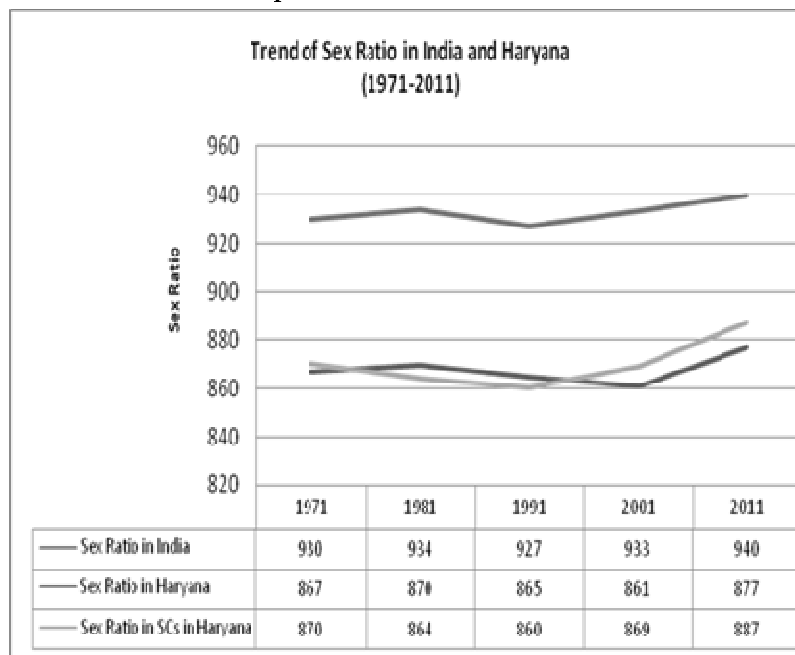


The data given in Figure 2 indicates the deviation in sex ratio among SCs, STs, others and India as a whole. After analysing the data, a discernible new trend could be observed within Scheduled Castes (SCs). The divergence in related data across various social groups from 1961 to 2011 is 2 for ST, -12 for SC, 3 for others and 3 is for India as a whole. It shows that there is more decline in the sex ratio among scheduled caste groups which is even more than the average decline at the country level. Though the given data indicates that the sex ratio for non-SCs from the year 1961 to 2011 has increased by some points but has expeditiously declined by 12 points among SCs.

One noticeable aspect of this declining trend among SCs is the adoption of patriarchal tendencies which used to be prevalent in the upper echelons of the caste hierarchy due to the process of '*sanskritisation*', which refers to the adoption of norms, values and practices by people at lower strata of society historically attributed to the higher castes (Srinivasan, 1952).

The sex ratio is even more skewed in the state of Haryana despite various policies.

Figure 3
Sex Ratio of SCs and General in Haryana from 1971 to 2011
in Comparison to the Whole of India

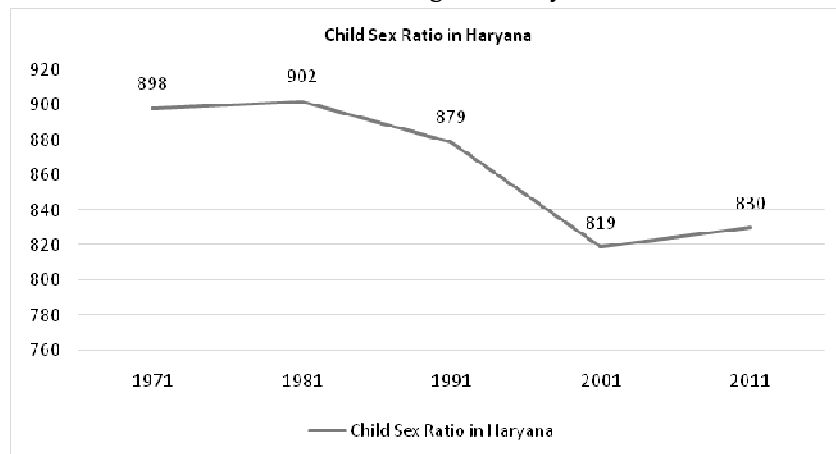


Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

Figure 3 indicates the data related to sex ratio in Haryana. It is visible from the above statistics that in every census Haryana's sex ratio was much less than the sex ratio of India as a whole. The trend in Scheduled Castes of Haryana is also not much determined regarding sex ratio. It showed a significant increase of 18 points in the year 2011 but still, that was much below the average sex ratio of India which signifies the impact of the culture and norms of a particular region to scheduled caste groups who reside in that regional territory.

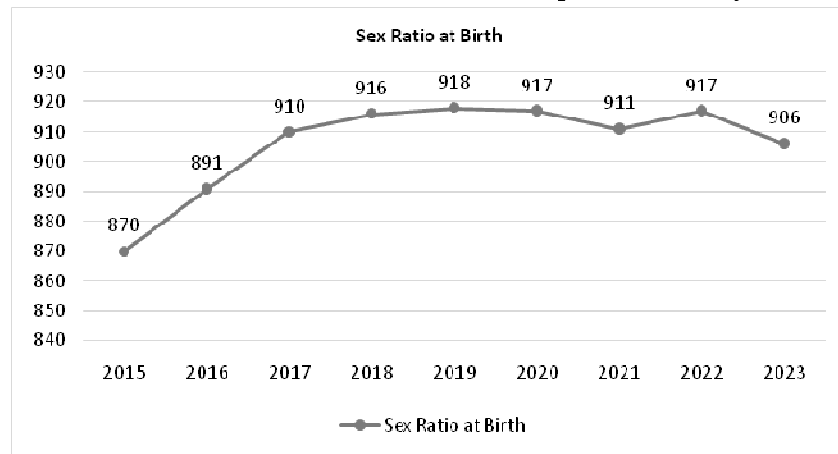
However, even after an increase of 16 points the sex ratio of Haryana was the lowest in India in 2011. In the same census, the sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years was 830/1000 which registers 68 points decline from 1971 to 2011 which shows the status of skewed sex ratio in Haryana, being mentioned in figure 4.

Figure 4
Data of Child sex ratio between ages of 0-6 years from 1971 to 2011



However, it was just a few years back when the sex ratio of the state reached 910/1000 in the year 2017 according to the data of the Ministry of Women and Child. The reason being assigned is various schemes/programmes launched by the government around that time such as the '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*' scheme which was launched by PM Narendra Modi in 2015 from the state of Haryana and along with another scheme *Mukhya Mantri Vivah Shagun Yojna* was launched by the Government of Haryana to honour the girl child and to ensure that the girls from Scheduled Castes poor families and daughters of widows/destitute women, sportswomen and orphan girl child, are married gracefully.

Figure 5
Sex Ratio at Birth in Haryana from 2015-June 2023 according to
Data from Women and Child Development Ministry



The recent data provided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) reveals a considerable decline in the sex ratio at birth in Haryana. The sex ratio at birth in Haryana had shown signs of improvement in some last years but it has taken a regressive turn in the year 2023. The data has plummeted by a significant 11 points, with the sex ratio at birth counted as 906 as of June 2023.

This major decline in figures proves that the effective impacts of numerous governmental schemes aimed at addressing the skewed sex ratio have not been perennial. While governmental initiatives can create temporary shifts, they apparently struggle to suffuse the layers of cultural constructs that have been shaping gender-based constructs of the region that lead to preferences for male children.

Discussion

Violence against women in various forms has been present in India for ages. With time, the culture, values, and related notions of this region have been shaped in such a way that gender-based violence has been accepted and regulated structurally where no direct actor and the subject is being involved and which shows unequal power among various sections, hence their unequal life chances which stem from structural violence (Galtung, 1969). The intersectionality of patriarchy with other structural factors such as culture and economy numerous forms of gender violence. In India, the structural violence rooted in the constructed culture of society against women impacts their lives,

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

health, and society as a whole consequently, they are collectively deprived of their basic rights (Jejeebhoy, 1998).

Though it is believed that modernity can bring about shifts in cultural norms, values, and traditions it has not necessarily brought changes in the gender-specific dynamics of the Indian region. India is one of the largest democracies in the world still lacks on the scale of equal sex ratio. The effects of modernity are not unilinear but rather multifaceted. With the advent of modernity in India, technologies such as ultrasound and sonographies were also introduced in the mid 1960s which led to phenomena of sex-selective abortion hence, an imbalanced sex ratio which is more prevalent in the regions and social groups with comparatively high literacy rates. As the data given in Figure 1 indicates despite the low literacy rate in the STs the sex ratio among scheduled tribes is the highest of all across various time spans. According to 2011 data, the sex ratio in rural areas was 919/1000 despite the fact that the literacy rate in rural areas is comparatively low whereas it was 902 in the urban areas. States such as Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Bihar have literacy rates of 67.63, 67.66, 66.95, and 63.82 respectively but they have child sex ratio more than the average child sex ratio of India as a whole which is 943, 943, 960 and 933 correspondingly whereas Haryana with a literacy rate of 76.64 is having the lowest sex ratio in the country, according to 2011 census followed by recent data as given by Ministry of Women and Child Development. The problem is critical in metro cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Ahmedabad (Kurup, 2011) which have high literacy rates. Therefore, the belief that modernising elements such as literacy, income, and initiation of various schemes by the government could overshadow the predominant identities and norms of the region is fable because the culture of gender-based discrimination has widely embedded structurally in the social fabric of Indian society.

This social attitude leading to structural inequalities also kept women away from the decision-making processes either within the house or outside the house. The underrepresentation of women in India's political decision-making processes is a persistent issue rooted in deep-seated structural and cultural factors. In an effort to address this disparity, the Indian government has instituted measures like reserving seats for women in the Lok Sabha. However, the political representation of women is still significantly low. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, out of 8,338 candidates who were contesting elections, less than 10 per cent were women. However, while the 17th Lok Sabha recorded a historic high with 78 women elected in

Lok Sabha occupying 14 per cent of the seats, this figure falls to 74 in the 18th Lok Sabha elections, which seems to be far behind achieving gender parity. The representation of women in Rajya Sabha is even lower than the Lok Sabha which is not more than 13 per cent of the total membership of the concerned house, according to 2020 data. In state legislative assemblies or Vidhan Sabhas, meanwhile, average representation is even lower, mostly below 10 per cent (Bhatt, 2021). In the legislative assembly elections of Haryana also, the percentage of seats won by female contestants in 2009 was just 10 per cent of the total seats. It increased to 14.4 per cent in the year 2014 and there was a steady decline in the percentage share of females in the 2019 elections. Again, females were able to secure only 10 per cent of seats. However, in the 2024 elections, this figure again reached to 2014 mark, with 13 women elected to the state assembly elections.

According to Phillips (1998) when there is an increase in women's participation in decision-making, they leave a positive mark on women's empowerment she says "Women bring different skills to politics and provide role models for future generations" (Beard, 2017) and they lead to the inclusion process of women into the politics that represents their specific interests thus established the justice between genders (Sapiro, 1981) and re-energised the idea of democracy. However, patriarchy is so deep-rooted in the culture of India that even despite the increasing participation of women in the decision-making process, the gap between participation and representation could be observed.

However, the reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and municipalities has shown a significant impact (Kumar, 2022) but a pattern of 'dummy representation' emerges in the realm of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), where women may secure positions such as Sarpanches or members but often confront challenges in exerting substantial influence within these bodies and they are being represented either by their male counterparts or any other male member of the family (Kumar, 2021). These issues are reflective of the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that permeate Indian society.

Sometimes, women are influenced by the prevailing patriarchal norms which are commonly known as 'internalised patriarchy' as many women still consider their primary responsibility as being devoted to family and household and not their personal ambitions. Hence, along with structural and systematic inequalities, enduring patriarchal beliefs play an important role in deterring women from being active political actors (Rai & Spray, 2019).

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

Conclusion

It is argued and believed that modernity with the element of reason in its core will overshadow the prevalent norms and values, which was termed as 'secularisation of culture' having the idea of 'equality, liberty, and justice' in its core. This universal value definitely weakens the discrimination and violence that stems from the structure of society. However, this is not the case for each and every aspect of the society. Gender-based discrimination and a general inclination towards the male child in the family is still prevalent, which hampers the holistic development of society, despite various prevalent moral and social norms.

The sex ratio data in India over the period reveals the sheer reality of embedded structural inequalities based on gender discrimination in India. Further, states like Haryana with many modern tendencies such as comparatively high literacy rates have ingrained biased cultural norms against females with the lowest sex ratio followed by a more recent declining trend, aggravated by accessibility to resources such as sonographies and ultra-sounds which points out towards the failure of government initiatives and multifaceted nature of the gender biasedness. The same trend of skewed sex ratio could be observed through data across various social groups that indicate the prevalence of dominant cultural construct of the higher castes in the region. For moving away from the practices of sex-selective abortions and formulating a more gender-neutral societal structure legal reforms alone are not sufficient, a holistic approach along with educational reforms to promote gender sensitivity and economic empowerment programmes for women; grassroots efforts are essential to challenge the regressive cultural norms.

End Notes

1. PTI. (2023, July 22). Sex ratio at birth declined in 20 states in 2 years: Women's panel. IndiaToday.
2. Sharma, P. (2023, July 23). Haryana WCD dept calls for proactive steps to check worsening sex ratio. Hindustan Times.
3. There is a difference between sex and gender. Gender as defined by Who, is a socially constructed term whereas Sex is just a biological term. Source: Gender and health. (n.d.). Retrieved December 19, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/health-topics/gender>
4. National Crime Records Bureau. (2021). Crimes in India 2021. Retrieved from NCRB website
5. National Portal of India. (2014). Sukanya Smardhi Yojna. Retrieved from <https://www.india.gov.in/pre-conception-and-pre-natal-diagnostic-techniques-prohibition-sex-selection-act-1994-0>

Singh, Kiran and Kumar

6. Women and Child Development Department. (2015). Apki Beti Hamari Beti. Retrieved from https://wcdhry-gov-in.translate.google/schemes-for-children/abhb/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=hi&_x_tr_hl=hi&_x_tr_pto=tc
7. Department of Economic and Statistical Affairs, Haryana. (2022). GSDP, NSDP, Per Capita Income of Haryana 2021-22. Retrieved from <https://esaharyana.gov.in/document/gsdp-nsdp-per-capita-income-of-haryana-2021-22/>
8. The birth of a daughter was regarded as an equivalent of a decree of Rs 2,000 against her father. See M L Darling, 'The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt' (first edition, 1925), Reprint, New Delhi, 1978, p 5; hereafter, Darling, 'Punjab Peasant'.

References

- Almond, G. & Powell, G. (1966). *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Altekar, A.S. (1983). *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization: From Prehistoric Times to the Present Day* (ch. 21). New Delhi: Motilal Books.
- Arnold, F., Kishor, S. & Roy, T.K. (2002). 'Sex-Selective Abortions in India'. *Population and Development Review*, 28(4), 759-768.
- Beard, M. (2017). *Women and Power: A Manifesto*. London: Profile Books.
- Bhasin, K. (2000). *Understanding Gender*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Bhatt, P. (2021, July 11). 'Women's Representation in India's State Legislative Assemblies'. *Samvidhi*. PRS India.
- Bittner, A. & Goodyear-Grant, E. (2017). 'Sex isn't Gender: Reforming Concepts and Measurements in the Study of Public Opinion'. *Political Behavior*, 39(4), 1019-1041.
- Bolledu, S.N. (2015). *Writing the Self: A Thematic Study of Select Dalit Autobiographies*. Kalpaz Publications.
- Chakravarti, U. (2003). *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*. Kolkata, India: Stree.
- Chowdhry, P. (1987). 'Socio-Economic Dimensions of Certain Customs and Attitudes: Women of Haryana in the Colonial Period'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 (48), 2060-2066.
- Chowdhry, P. (2005). 'Crisis of Masculinity in Haryana: The Unmarried, the Unemployed and the Aged'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40 (49), 5189-5198.
- Chowdhry, P. (2014). 'Masculine Spaces: Rural Male Culture in North India'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49 (47), 41-49.
- Das Gupta, M. (1987). 'Selective Discrimination against Female Children in Rural Punjab, India'. *Population and Development Review*, 13(1), 77-100.
- Engels, F. (2010). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Penguin Classics. (Original work published in 1884).
- Galtung, J. (1969). 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research'. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.
- Gaur, S.A. (2013). 'Promoting the Survival of Girl Children through Conditional Cash Transfer: Is it Sustainable Approach'. *Indian Anthropological Association*, 55-71.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Guilmoto, C. (2009). 'The Sex Ratio Transition in Asia'. *Population and Development Review*, 35, 519-549.
- Heitlinger, A. (1979). 'Marxist Theory of Domestic Labour & Reproduction of Labour Power'. *Women and State Socialism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horowitz, M.C. (1976). 'Aristotle and Woman'. *Journal of the History of Biology*, 9(2), 183-213. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330651>

Gender Inequality in India: An Analysis of Declining Sex Ratio

- Jejeebhoy, S.J. (1998). 'Associations between Wife-beating and Fetal and Infant Death: Impressions from a Survey in Rural India. *Stud Fam Plann*, 29, 300-308.
- Kailas Sarap, S.D. (2013). *Falling Sex Ratio and Health Deprivation of Women in India: An Interface between Resource, Culture and Gender*. Sage Publications, Ltd., 456-482.
- Kaul, V. (2016, February 25). 'Why Jats of Haryana Want Reservation'. Retrieved from *Swarajya*. <https://swarajyamag.com/books/why-jats-of-haryana-want-reservation>
- Kaushal, K. (2020). 'No Honour in Honour Killing: Comparative Analysis of Indian Traditional Social Structure vis-à-vis Gender Violence'. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 5(1), 52-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455632719880870>
- Kumar, R. (2021). 'Dalit Women Panchayat Members in Haryana: Gender, Caste and Political Representation'. *South Asia Research*, 41(2), 203-219.
- Kumar, S. (Eds.) (2022). *Women Voters in Indian Elections: Changing Trends and Emerging Patterns*. Routledge.
- Kurup, S. (2011, October 16). 'The Return of Ultrasound'. *The Times of India*. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/10372844.cms?utm_source=content_ofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
- Negretto, G. (2020). 'Constitution-making and Liberal Democracy: The Role of Citizens and Representative Elites'. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 18(1), 206-232.
- Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender and Society*. England: Routledge Book.
- Omvedt, G. (1990). *Violence against Women: New Movements and New Theories in India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Phillips, A. (1998). 'Democracy and Representation - Why Should It Matter Who Our Representatives Are?' In A. Phillips (Ed.), *Feminism and Politics* (pp. xx-xx). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rai, S.M., & Spray, C. (2019). *Performing Representation: Women Members in the Indian Parliament*, 79-122.
- Rao, G.P., Vidya, K.L. & Sriramya, V. (2015). 'The Indian 'Girl' Psychology: A Perspective'. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 57 (Suppl 2), S212-S215. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.161480>
- Razvi, M. & Roth, G.L. (2004). *Socio-Economic Development and Gender Inequality in India*. In Online Submission. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED492144>
- Rhoden, T.F. (2015). 'The Liberal in Liberal Democracy'. *Democratization*, 22 (3), 560-578.
- Saadwai, N.E. (1980). *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. London, UK: ZED Press.
- Sapiro, V. (1981). 'Research Frontier Essay: When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women'. *The American Political Science Review*, 75(3), 701-716.
- Sen, A. (1992). 'Missing Women'. *British Medical Journal*, 587-588.
- Spear, P. (1961). *India*. USA: Twin City Antiquarian Books.
- Srinivasan, M.N. (1952). *Religion and Society among the Coorgs in South Asia*. Oxford University Press.
- Srinivasan, M.N. (1962). *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. New York: Asia Publishing House.
- Tharakan, S.M. & Tharakan, M. (1975). 'Status of Women in India: A Historical Perspective'. *Social Scientist*, 4(4/5), 115-123.
- UNFPA. (2020, June 30). *Against My Will: Defying the Practices that Harm Women and Girls and Undermine Equality*. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/state-world-population-2020>

Singh, Kiran and Kumar

- UNFPA. (2021). Retrieved from <https://india.unfpa.org/en/news/>
- Vishnoi, A. (2016, March 15). 'Haryana Jats are better off than their Counterparts in other States like Bihar: ICSSR report'. *The Economic Times*.
- Welchman, L. & Hossain, S. (Eds.) (2005). *Honour*. London: Zed Books.
- WHO (2016). *Health Situation and Trend Assessment*. WHO: Regional Office for South East Asia. Retrieved from "WHO South-East Asia | World Health Organization"
- Wolff, J. (1990). 'Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics'. In *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (p. 121). Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- World Bank. (2023). India Overview. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview>



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 114-129)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India: Pathways to Ensuring Equity, Inclusivity, and Sustainable Financing for Vision Viksit Bharat@2047

Md. Asraul Hoque* and Krishnan Chalil†

Inclusive higher education is vital for realising India's Viksit Bharat@2047 vision, fostering equity and sustainability. Despite policies like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and NEP (2020), systemic barriers limit access for students with disabilities. This study examines gaps in policy implementation, resource allocation, and infrastructure, highlighting the underutilisation of funds. It advocates for policy reforms, capacity building, and technological integration to create inclusive ecosystems. The paper proposes targeted initiatives, public-private partnerships, and philanthropic efforts to enhance accessibility. It sets goals, including a 50 per cent increase in enrolment by 2030 and universally accessible campuses by 2047. Achieving these requires collaborative action from policymakers, educators, and communities, ensuring higher education serves as a platform for empowerment and inclusivity in India's progress.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Higher Education, Students with Disabilities, Accessibility, Equity, Viksit Bharat@2047.

*ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Department of Development Studies, School of Social Science and Policy, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya (Bihar).

E-mail: mdasraul@yahoo.com

†Professor & Head, Department of Development Studies, Ex-Dean, School of Social Science and Policy, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya (Bihar). E-mail: krishnan@cusb.ac.in

Introduction

India's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 seeks to create an inclusive, equitable, and progressive society where every citizen, regardless of their background, can contribute meaningfully to national development (Kendall, 2016). A key pillar of this vision is higher education, which plays a crucial role in empowering marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities (PwDs). The legislative frameworks supporting this vision, such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and the inclusive provisions in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, acknowledge the importance of education in achieving social and economic mobility. These frameworks emphasise the need for accessible, non-discriminatory education and the active participation of PwDs in all aspects of life.

However, despite these robust policies, the realisation of equitable access to education and employment for marginalised communities remains a significant challenge (Curtin et al., 2012). A multitude of government initiatives and programmes have been launched to bridge these gaps, including scholarships and funding schemes aimed at providing financial support and promoting inclusivity in education (Bordoloi, 2018). The Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships for Scheduled Caste (SC) students, Top Class Education Scholarships, and National Fellowships for PwDs are some examples of such schemes designed to increase access to education at various levels. Similarly, the Scheme for Implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) and the National Action Plan (NAP) for PwDs focus on promoting accessibility, skill development, and employment generation (Jafar et al., 2023).

While these programmes are a testament to the government's commitment to improving educational outcomes for marginalised groups, they have not been fully successful in addressing the systemic barriers that impede equitable access (Coleman et al., 2016). For example, the Pre-Matric Scholarship for SC students, which received Rs. 136.55 crore in funding for the 2020-2022 period, does not have detailed reports on the effectiveness of its other schemes, making it difficult to assess their overall impact. Additionally, while SIPDA funding increased significantly - from Rs. 135 crore in 2015-2016 to Rs. 315 crore in 2019-2020 - the utilisation of these funds remains low. In 2020-2021, only 31 per cent of the allocated funds were disbursed, raising questions about the efficiency of fund allocation and the barriers to effective implementation (Amaral, 2022). These discrepancies highlight the persistent inefficiencies within the system, where policies aimed at fostering inclusion and equality often fall short in their execution.

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

The National Action Plan (NAP) for PwDs, which focuses on skill development and employment generation, has also yielded mixed results. The NAP aimed to provide training and employment opportunities for PwDs, with training numbers peaking in 2018-2019 at 54,001 individuals trained, of whom 17,125 secured employment. However, subsequent years saw a dramatic decline in both training and employment outcomes. By 2022-2023, only 1,314 PwDs were trained, and no employment was reported. This sharp decline underscores a critical gap between skill development efforts and actual employment opportunities. It also highlights the systemic challenges faced by PwDs in securing stable livelihoods, despite having acquired the necessary skills (Arora, 2023).

These trends raise several important questions about the efficiency of fund distribution, the effectiveness of implementation strategies, and the real impact of these government schemes (Bhardwaj & Kumar, 2017). A common theme in the literature is the disconnect between policy design and ground-level implementation. Studies consistently show that while policies like the RPwD Act and NEP 2020 have set ambitious goals for inclusivity, their execution often fails to address the structural barriers that prevent marginalised groups from accessing education and employment (Stensaker & Hermansen, 2023; Hewett et al., 2018). The underutilisation of allocated funds, the lack of detailed reporting on the success of various programmes, and the low employment outcomes for PwDs suggest a need for more effective coordination and improved monitoring of these initiatives (Fariani et al., 2023). The need for comprehensive data collection, transparent reporting, and regular evaluation of these schemes is critical to bridging these gaps. Effective policymaking requires an evidence-based approach that takes into account the real-time challenges faced by marginalised communities. Moreover, an inclusive approach must consider intersectional challenges - such as those faced by Scheduled Caste (SC) students with disabilities - who face compounded disadvantages in accessing education and employment opportunities. This intersectionality calls for policies that are not only inclusive in their design but also adaptable to the diverse needs of marginalised groups.

To improve the implementation of inclusive education and employment policies, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. This includes ensuring that allocated funds are effectively utilised, establishing stronger accountability mechanisms for the execution of government programmes, and improving coordination between educational, training, and employment schemes (Hill & Roger, 2016; Maguvhe, 2015). Ensuring that PwDs have

access to the necessary infrastructure, such as accessible classrooms, ramps, and learning materials, is essential to achieving true inclusivity (Deep & Adarsh, 2023). Furthermore, fostering partnerships with the private sector to create sustainable employment opportunities for PwDs could help bridge the gap between skill development and job placement. It is also essential to enhance the quality of education and vocational training provided to marginalised communities. This requires not only improving physical infrastructure but also ensuring that educators and trainers are adequately prepared to support students with disabilities. Additionally, creating inclusive curriculums that reflect the needs and aspirations of PwDs will ensure that they are not left behind in the pursuit of academic excellence. Encouragingly, some institutions have already begun to integrate such measures, though these efforts need to be scaled up nationwide (Magotra & Vidya, 2024).

Finally, fostering a culture of inclusivity within society is paramount. Public awareness campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote the abilities of PwDs, along with policies that incentivise inclusive hiring practices, can create an environment where all individuals are given equal opportunities to succeed (Raj, 2024; Yusof et al., 2019). Only through sustained efforts at multiple levels - government, educational institutions, and society - can India achieve its goal of a Viksit Bharat@2047, where every citizen, regardless of ability or background, has the opportunity to contribute to national progress (Ghanem, 2020). The analysis of government schemes reveals significant gaps in fund utilisation, implementation, and coordination (Thorat & Khan, 2023; Goode, 2006). While initiatives like scholarships and SIPDA aim to enhance educational opportunities for marginalised groups, particularly PwDs, inefficiencies in fund allocation and disbursement hinder their effectiveness (Campbell, 2017). For instance, SIPDA funding is often underutilised, with only 31 per cent of allocated funds released in 2020-2021. Furthermore, the alignment between skill development initiatives and employment outcomes for PwDs under the National Action Plan is weak, as evidenced by declining training and employment rates (Boahin&Hofman, 2013; Flora et al., 2022). Addressing these systemic issues requires improved monitoring, better fund management, enhanced coordination, and stronger links between training programmes and employment opportunities to achieve inclusivity in education and employment (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

State-wise Distribution of Beneficiaries and Disbursed Amount under Post-Matric Scholarships for Students with Disabilities in India

This report provides a state-wise breakdown of the number of beneficiaries and amounts disbursed under the Post-Matric Scholarship scheme for students with disabilities from 2015-2016 to 2021-2022. It highlights trends across regions, showcasing the reach and financial support provided to students with disabilities throughout India.

Table 1
State-wise Beneficiary Count and Fund Disbursement under
Post-Matric Scholarships for Students with Disabilities in India
(2015-2016 to 2021-2022)

States/UTs	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
No. of Beneficiaries							
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	15	61	91	112	215	92	51
Arunachal Pradesh	0	18	2	8	0	0	0
Assam	25	84	0	108	319	1	259
Bihar	9	355	366	1147	1428	382	1028
Chandigarh	14	1	11	3	7	0	14
Chhattisgarh	4	36	44	267	222	5	187
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	4	1	0	1	0	2
Daman and Diu	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Delhi	128	5	196	322	343	0	238
Goa	0	0	3	0	3	5	13
Gujarat	32	24	433	249	190	1152	7
Haryana	38	55	46	221	200	54	120
Himachal Pradesh	0	64	61	45	64	1	82
Jammu & Kashmir	0	110	115	215	164	420	23
Jharkhand	0	106	42	610	176	56	91
Karnataka	40	1232	238	1585	870	1026	2150
Kerala	130	376	214	1236	1924	739	2096
Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	219	2129	1779	3580	3140	1199	3184
Maharashtra	44	267	40	815	1025	380	472
Manipur	27	2	27	0	9	4	0
Meghalaya	3	49	25	9	0	0	0
Mizoram	0	19	15	2	1	0	0
Nagaland	0	14	1	0	0	3	1
Odisha	1098	31	1038	1749	1852	631	767
Puducherry	2	0	3	24	53	21	37
Punjab	45	20	88	149	153	53	279
Rajasthan	60	78	455	1072	1180	34	871
Sikkim	12	15	7	3	3	1	0
Tamil Nadu	0	136	580	1208	587	1149	1216
Telangana	10	57	97	71	271	7	12
Tripura	0	143	126	68	109	33	136
Uttar Pradesh	1545	251	1032	4935	4962	4540	770
Uttarakhand	42	3	0	34	257	57	96
West Bengal	22	535	479	3106	250	528	26
India	3565	6281	7657	22953	19978	12573	14228

Hoque and Chalil

States/UTs	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Amount Disbursed (In Rs.)							
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0	23105	8220	0	0	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	147510	901456	2977161	3958716	10054236	3901131	2752280
Arunachal Pradesh	0	434032	24820	217950	0	0	0
Assam	220750	1382972	0	1895561	10175674	24700	9794986
Bihar	64090	8079245	10474533	28795864	53230219	10098895	24621210
Chandigarh	101223	12800	142565	36975	89560	0	179147
Chhattisgarh	28440	292526	735359	4958991	4900932	709712	3516264
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	5340	31930	12420	0	23000	0	17402
Daman and Diu	0	0	18130	0	0	0	0
Delhi	1054946	38150	3688706	5468561	7392682	0	3307788
Goa	0	0	74320	0	81830	92710	151175
Gujarat	545005	614671	8991148	4863824	4512220	22874017	74330
Haryana	453110	1388499	1023098	4806369	5003453	1041663	2403522
Himachal Pradesh	0	639302	1137576	790778	1482982	10110	1347575
Jammu & Kashmir	0	1584639	3763425	6486840	6116373	9928651	524133
Jharkhand	0	2063866	1187770	11177340	5543323	1911388	2939204
Karnataka	371679	24567432	5099658	35383302	29850692	31345275	97140649
Kerala	1043236	5342136	2867012	16735504	33260167	11807008	24882133
Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	2263583	26303284	22723794	55388520	62494615	19495608	53721908
Maharashtra	690032	4831260	613091	15370100	19822117	5892649	8006690
Manipur	1263900	37096	781341	0	188875	111655	0
Meghalaya	35470	666570	475785	175020	0	0	0
Mizoram	0	280140	616090	40610	27510	0	0
Nagaland	0	208768	43530	0	0	58700	16500
Odisha	6319028	227372	19016899	38953278	51080286	14302158	14731161
Puducherry	31430	0	37455	563080	1480313	587428	603106
Punjab	598849	372232	2081196	2848127	3607047	854246	2851373
Rajasthan	736725	1046039	7016449	19423235	22592034	637127	14861446
Sikkim	106440	141900	382710	37325	141800	13085	0
Tamil Nadu	0	1688388	10162445	27529099	18411556	30180815	24153071
Telangana	84070	838115	3587273	2815180	10944209	391145	602860
Tripura	0	1455715	2348302	1467661	2410146	721260	7348276
Uttar Pradesh	15367210	6169964	27536091	205415291	266925971	283045624	55277327
Uttarakhand	493075	30640	0	705962	10314063	1352473	2615420
West Bengal	113650	6503418	9506728	67553424	7659723	21533573	1563605
India	32138791	98197662	149155100	563862487	649817608	472922806	360004541

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 329, dated 18.07.2017, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1112, dated 24.07.2018, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1727, dated 02.07.2019 & Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2082, dated on 15.03.2022.

The data in Table 1 on the Post-Matric Scholarship scheme for students with disabilities highlight both progress and persistent challenges in implementation across Indian states and union territories. Beneficiaries rose from 3,565 in 2015-2016 to 14,228 in 2021-2022, indicating expanded reach, though growth remains uneven. States like Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, and Karnataka showed strong performance, with Uttar Pradesh recording 4,962 beneficiaries in 2019-2020. In contrast, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands reported minimal or no

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

participation, pointing to regional disparities. Financial disbursements increased from Rs. 32.14 crore to Rs. 360 crore, with Uttar Pradesh receiving Rs. 283 crore in 2020-2021. Anomalies in states like Delhi and Punjab, where high disbursements did not align with beneficiary numbers, suggest inefficiencies. Fluctuations, such as Karnataka's drop in 2020-2021, raise concerns about continuity. Addressing these issues requires targeted outreach, improved fund management, and transparent reporting to ensure equitable access and the scheme's long-term impact.

Scholarship Schemes for Students with Disabilities in India

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the number of beneficiaries and funds disbursed under various scholarship schemes for students with disabilities from 2013 to 2022. Overview of Financial Support under Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, Top-Class Education, National Fellowship, National Overseas Scholarship, and Free Coaching Schemes for Students with Disabilities over the Years.

Table 2
Number of Beneficiaries Covered and Funds Released under
Various Scholarships Schemes for Students with Disabilities in India
(2013-2014 to 2021-2022) (Rs. in Crore)

Scholarship Schemes	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Pre-Matric									
No. of Beneficiaries	-	-	2368	7927	12593	6767	22218	12488	2258
Amount	-	-	160.02	553.57	906.93	650.45	2460	982.08	202.94
Post-Matric									
No. of Beneficiaries	-	0	3565	6281	7657	22953	19978	12573	14228
Amount	-	0	321.39	981.98	1491.55	56.39	64.98	47.29	36
Top Class Education									
No. of Beneficiaries	-	0	14	42	37	78	239	453	108
Amount	-	0	23.85	86.07	66.83	1.06	3.02	4.5	1.17
National Fellowship for PwDs									
No. of Beneficiaries	15	306	527	589	666	566	537	551	458
Amount	8.64	1324.52	1996.68	1925.63	3024.48	19.86	20.98	28.69	10.58
National Overseas Scholarship									
No. of Beneficiaries	-	0	0	2	3	5	5	2	3
Amount	-	0	0	37.98	70.23	1.08	1.02	1.23	0.96
Free Coaching for PwDs									
No. of Beneficiaries	-	0	0	0	250	0	0	0	0
Amount	-	0	0	0	87.22	1.38	0.03	0.23	0
Total									
No. of Beneficiaries	15	306	6474	14841	21206	30369	42977	26067	17055
Amount	8.64	1324.52	2501.94	3585.23	5647.24	730.22	2550.03	1064.02	251.65

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 4812, dated 23.07.2019, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. (ON2761) & Past Issues, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2082, dated 15.03.2022.

Hoque and Chalil

Table 2 presents a varied picture of scholarship schemes for students with disabilities in India, reflecting both advancements and persistent gaps. The Pre-Matric Scholarship saw a peak of 22,218 beneficiaries in 2019-2020 with Rs. 2,460 crores disbursed, followed by a sharp drop to 2,258 beneficiaries in 2021-2022, signalling outreach issues. The post-matric scheme increased in reach but declined significantly in funding, falling from Rs. 1,491.55 crore in 2017-2018 to Rs. 36 crore in 2021-2022, pointing to underutilisation. The Top-Class Education scheme grew from 14 to 108 beneficiaries over seven years, though funding remained limited. The National Fellowship consistently supported around 500 students, yet funding peaked in 2017-2018 and declined thereafter. Minimal participation in the National Overseas Scholarship and Free Coaching schemes indicates limited accessibility. These patterns highlight the need for sustained investment, better fund utilisation, and strengthened implementation to enhance educational access and equity for students with disabilities.

State-wise Top-Class Education Scheme for Disabled Persons

This data provides an overview of the beneficiaries and funds disbursed under the Top-Class Education Scheme for Disabled Persons in India from 2018 to 2021. It highlights state-wise participation and financial support provided to enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

Table 3
State-wise Number of Beneficiaries and Amount Released under
Scheme of Top-Class Education for Disabled Persons in India
(2018-2019 to 2020-2021)

States/UTs	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	2	202000	13	2333500	23	2425265
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assam	1	49000	2	139500	0	0
Bihar	15	1525735	47	4400556	98	8771934
Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chhattisgarh	1	65000	5	460500	0	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0	0	0	0	0	0
Daman and Diu	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delhi	3	434700	10	1175682	0	78500
Goa	0	0	0	0	1	265000

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

States/UTs	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (In Rs.)
Gujarat	3	795000	2	530000	10	1268600
Haryana	0	0	4	619500	13	1725125
Himachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jammu & Kashmir	4	385300	11	773200	0	0
Jharkhand	8	1479830	15	2007291	20	2050105
Karnataka	2	530000	1	67500	10	1211396
Kerala	3	508287	13	1611197	10	1511100
Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	0	0	9	1245654	35	5345545
Maharashtra	7	1526600	17	3126260	44	3386625
Manipur	0	0	1	104500	0	0
Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Odisha	4	305600	8	1026650	16	1706192
Puducherry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Punjab	0	0	3	644926	5	928930
Rajasthan	2	227300	11	1094315	2	186400
Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tamil Nadu	4	559700	0	0	10	1110250
Telangana	0	0	8	1313665	7	901650
Tripura	1	107000	2	113000	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	14	1394000	56	7283064	87	7273666
Uttarakhand	0	0	1	135000	0	0
West Bengal	4	514200	0	0	62	4837385
India	78	10609252	239	30205460	453	44983668

Source: Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 272, dated 21.03.2017, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 202, dated 11.12.2018, Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 397, dated 23.03.2021 & Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2082, dated on 15.03.2022.

Table 3 reflects the implementation of the Top-Class Education scheme for disabled persons in India from 2018-2019 to 2020-2021, showing a steady rise in both beneficiaries and funds disbursed. Beneficiaries increased from 78 to 453, while financial assistance grew from Rs. 1.06 crore to Rs. 4.49 crore, indicating improved outreach and program uptake. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra consistently reported high participation, with Uttar Pradesh recording 87 beneficiaries in 2020-2021 and Bihar receiving the highest disbursement at Rs. 87.71 lakh. These trends suggest effective awareness and execution in select states. However, regions like Ladakh, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands reported no beneficiaries, while states such as Delhi and Tamil Nadu showed inconsistent participation. These disparities underline the need for improved awareness, better regional engagement, and simplified access to the scheme. Although

Hoque and Chalil

the overall trajectory is positive, ensuring more equitable distribution and consistent implementation remains essential for maximising the scheme's impact across all regions.

Cumulative Funds Released for Educational Scholarships

This data outlines the funds released for various educational scholarship schemes for marginalised students by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in India during 2020-2022.

Table 4
Scheme-wise Cumulative Funds Released for Educational Scholarships to Marginalised Students by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in India (2020-2021 and 2021-2022)

Scheme	Fund Released (Rs. in Crore)
Pre-Matric Scholarship to the SC Students Studying in (IXth and Xth)	136.55
Post-Matric Scholarship (For Classes XI to Postgraduate Degree/Diploma)	
Top-Class Education Scholarship (For Graduate and Postgraduate Degrees/Diplomas in Recognised Institutes of Excellence)	
National Fellowship for PwDs (For M.Phil and Ph.D. Programs in Indian Universities)	
National Overseas Scholarship (For Master's Degrees and Ph.D. Programs in Foreign Universities)	

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3576, dated 10.08.2021.

Table 4 shows an allocation of Rs. 136.55 crore for Pre-Matric, Post-Matric Scholarships, Top Class Education Scholarships, National Fellowship for Pwds, and National Overseas Scholarship Disabilities in 2020-2022, demonstrating significant investment in secondary education. However, the absence of details on other schemes highlights the need for comprehensive reporting to assess overall support for marginalised students effectively.

Budget, Allocation, and Fund Release under SIPDA

This data highlights the budget estimates, allocation, and funds released for the Scheme for Implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) in India from 2015 to 2021.

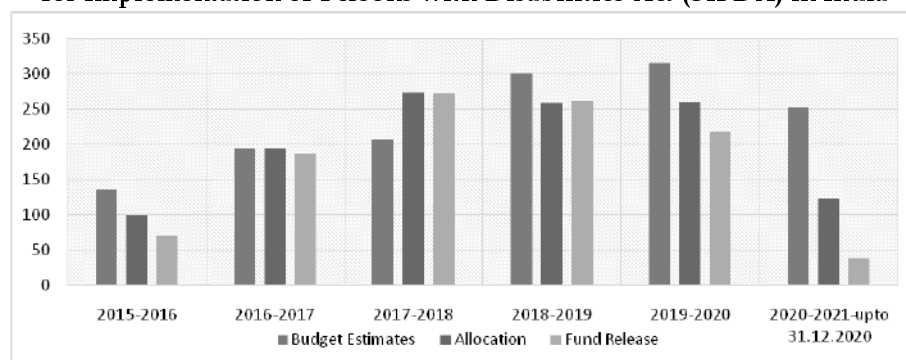
Table 5
Budget/Revised Estimates, Allocation and Fund Released under
Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA)
in India (2015-2016 to 2020-2021-up to 31.12.2020) (Rs. in Crore)

Year	Budget Estimates	Allocation	Fund Release
2015-2016	135	99	69
2016-2017	193	193	187
2017-2018	207	273	272
2018-2019	300	258	261
2019-2020	315	260	217
2020-2021-up to 31.12.2020	252	123	38

Source: Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 307, dated 10.12.2019 & Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. (ON2761) & Past Issues.

Table 5 highlights the budgetary allocations and fund releases under the Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) from 2015-2016 to 2020-2021. While the budget estimates show a general increase, from Rs. 135 crore in 2015-2016 to Rs. 315 crore in 2019-2020, actual fund releases often fell short. In 2015-2016 and 2020-2021 (up to 31.12.2020), only 69 per cent and 31 per cent of the allocated funds were released, respectively. The highest fund release occurred in 2016-2017, with Rs. 187 crore, close to the allocation of Rs. 193 crore. These discrepancies point to challenges in fund utilisation and timely implementation, raising concerns about the efficiency of the scheme and its ability to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Figure 1
Budget/Revised Estimates, Allocation and Fund Released under Scheme
for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) in India



Training and Employment of PwDs under NAP

This data provides information on the number of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) trained and employed under the National Action Plan (NAP) from 2017 to 2023.

Table 6
Number of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) Trained and Employed under the National Action Plan (NAP) of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwDs) in India (2017-2018 to 2022-2023-upto 02.08.2022)

Year	No. of PwDs Trained	No. of PwDs Employed
2014-2015	-	-
2015-2016	0	0
2016-2017	0	0
2017-2018	15334	5495
2018-2019	54001	17125
2019-2020	2742	1867
2020-2021	1156	357
2021-2022	6669	361
2022-2023	1314	0

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2574, dated 02.08.2022.

Table 6 presents fluctuating trends in the training and employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs) under the National Action Plan (NAP) from 2017 to 2023. While training numbers peaked at 54,001 in 2018-2019, employment only saw modest growth, with 17,125 PwDs employed. After 2019, both training and employment figures sharply declined, particularly in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. By 2022-2023, training had fallen to 1,314, with no employment recorded. This suggests inefficiencies in translating training into job placements, highlighting the need for better coordination between training and employment support for PwDs.

Pathways to Equity and Inclusivity

Achieving equity and inclusivity for marginalised students, especially those with disabilities, demands a comprehensive strategy centred on policy enforcement, institutional capacity, technological advancement, and community involvement. Effective implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the NEP-2020, must be ensured through strong accountability mechanisms. Encouraging institutions with incentives such as financial support and national recognition can promote inclusive practices. Building institutional capacity is equally important. Training educators in inclusive teaching methods and offering mentorship

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

programmes for students with disabilities can foster independence and bridge the gap between policy and practice. Technological integration offers transformative potential by addressing access barriers through assistive devices and inclusive digital platforms. Cost-effective open-source tools tailored to specific learning needs can enhance academic participation. Community involvement is also key to sustaining inclusivity. Partnerships with NGOs, local stakeholders, and peer networks within educational settings can reduce isolation and encourage collaborative learning. These measures collectively support a more inclusive environment, where systemic support aligns with individual empowerment. By aligning reforms, skills development, technology, and social engagement, India can move toward an inclusive educational framework that supports the broader vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 and ensures that all students, regardless of ability, are given equal opportunities to succeed.

Sustainable Financing Models

Ensuring equitable and inclusive education for marginalised students, particularly those with disabilities, requires sustainable financing models grounded in consistency, innovation, and accountability. Government funding remains fundamental, with the need to allocate a fixed percentage of the education budget specifically for inclusive practices. This approach can address the persistent underfunding seen in schemes like the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships and SIPDA while expanding scholarships and grants for students with disabilities to promote affordability, enrolment, and retention. Public-private partnerships offer an effective mechanism for combining resources and expertise. Corporates can contribute to accessibility projects, assistive technologies, and institutional infrastructure through collaborations with educational institutions. The use of Corporate Social Responsibility funds for scholarships and upgrades ensures strategic investment aligned with the broader goals of inclusive education. Additionally, philanthropy and crowdfunding provide alternative financing channels, encouraging public contributions through tax incentives and enabling targeted projects such as procuring assistive devices or enhancing campus accessibility. These approaches promote community engagement and foster a sense of shared responsibility. Outcome-based financing can enhance accountability by linking funding to measurable results, such as improved enrolment and academic performance of students with disabilities. This model ensures that financial resources are utilised effectively and encourages ongoing improvement in programme delivery. A comprehensive financing

strategy that combines government support, private investment, community participation, and performance-linked accountability can significantly improve access and equity in education. Through such integrated models, India can build a more inclusive system that reflects the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 and supports the long-term success of all learners.

Vision for Viksit Bharat@2047

Achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 requires a transformative shift in higher education to establish an ecosystem rooted in equity, inclusivity, and sustainability. This vision demands that all individuals, including those with disabilities, have equitable access to opportunities that empower them to participate fully in India's growth. Equity must be central to this transformation, ensuring that students facing physical, sensory, cognitive, or socio-economic barriers are granted equal opportunities through inclusive admission processes, accessible curricula, and supportive infrastructure. Inclusivity reinforces this by cultivating a learning environment where diversity is respected and students with disabilities are fully integrated into academic life. Achieving this requires dismantling both systemic and attitudinal barriers through sustained policy reform, awareness, and active engagement at all levels. Sustainability ensures that these inclusive efforts are enduring and embedded within the educational framework. This involves building resilient financial, technological, and institutional systems that treat accessibility not as an exception but as a norm. Collaboration among government, private sector, and civil society is crucial in sustaining and scaling these interventions. The vision outlines two key milestones. By 2030, the target is to increase the enrolment of students with disabilities in higher education by 50 per cent, signalling the urgency of closing gaps in awareness, access, and affordability. By 2047, the goal is to achieve fully inclusive campuses across India, characterised by universal design, comprehensive support services, and a culture of empowerment. These objectives align with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act-2016, and the NEP-2020, translating policy intent into measurable progress. Through sustained commitment, India can build an inclusive educational framework that enables every individual to contribute meaningfully to a just and progressive society.

Concluding Remarks

Transforming higher education into an equitable and inclusive space for students with disabilities is both a moral obligation and a strategic priority for India's future. Achieving this vision demands a holistic approach

Transforming Higher Education for Disabilities in India...

grounded in policy reform, institutional capacity building, community involvement, and sustainable financing. Operationalising frameworks like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act-2016, and the NEP-2020, with strong accountability mechanisms, is critical to bridging the gap between intent and impact. Faculty training and student empowerment initiatives are essential to embed inclusivity into academic environments. Partnerships with NGOs, communities, and the private sector can reinforce this transformation by fostering a culture of shared responsibility. Innovative financing, including public-private models and philanthropic contributions, must be scaled to support long-term accessibility initiatives and assistive technologies. Raising public awareness through nationwide campaigns can help challenge stigma and foster acceptance. Key actions such as establishing a national task force and mandating accessibility audits will ensure sustained progress. By aligning efforts across sectors and translating policy into practice, India can create a higher education system that empowers every student and supports the inclusive aspirations of Viksit Bharat@2047.

References

- Amaral, A. (2022). 'Equity in Higher Education: Evidences, Policies and Practices. Setting the Scene'. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 23-46). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69691-7_2
- Arora, R. (2023). 'Access of Students with Disabilities (SWDs) to Higher Education in India with Special Reference to Panjab University, Chandigarh, India'. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 69(2), 360-371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00195561231154387>
- Bhardwaj, R.K. & Kumar, S. (2017). 'A Comprehensive Digital Environment for Visually Impaired Students: User's Perspectives'. *Library Hi Tech*, 35(4), 542-557. <https://doi.org/10.1108/lht-01-2017-0016>
- Boahin, P. & Hofman, W.A. (2013). 'Perceived Effects of Competency-based Training on the Acquisition of Professional Skills'. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36, 81-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2013.11.003>
- Bordoloi, R. (2018). 'Transforming and Empowering Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning in India'. *AAOU Journal*, 13(1), 24-36. <https://doi.org/10.1108/aaouj-11-2017-0037>
- Campbell, N. (2017). 'Higher Education Experiences of Elite Student-Para-Athletes in the UK'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(6), 769-783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877x.2017.1311997>
- Coleman, J.S. (1968). 'Education and Urbanism'. *Education and Urban Society*, 1(1), 5-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001312456800100101>
- Curtin, M. & Clarke, G. (2005). 'Listening to Young People with Physical Disabilities' Experiences of Education'. *International Journal of Disability Development and Education*, 52(3), 195-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10349120500252817>
- Deep, P. & Adarsh, T. (2023). 'Multi-layered Exclusion in Premier Higher Education Institutions of India'. *Higher Education*, 88(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01102-z>
- Fariani, R., Junus, K. & Santoso, H. (2023). 'Personalised Learning in Vocational Higher Education: A Model for Diverse Learners'. *Research Square*. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-3404282/v1>

Hoque and Chalil

- Flora, D.B., LaBrish, C. & Chalmers, R.P. (2012). 'Old and New Ideas for Data Screening and Assumption Testing for Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis'. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00055>
- Ghanem, S. (2020). 'E-learning in Higher Education to Achieve SDG 4: Benefits and Challenges'. *IEEE*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ieeeeconf51154.2020.9319981>
- Goode, J. (2006). 'Managing Disability: Early Experiences of University Students with Disabilities'. *Disability & Society*, 22(1), 35-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590601056204>
- Hewett, R., Douglas, G., McLinden, M. & Keil, S. (2018). 'Balancing Inclusive Design, Adjustments and Personal Agency: Progressive Mutual Accommodations and the Experiences of University Students with Vision Impairment in the United Kingdom'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 754-770. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1492637>
- Jafar, K., Ananthpur, K. & Venkatachalam, L. (2023). 'Digital Divide and Access to Online Education: New Evidence from Tamil Nadu, India'. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 25(2), 313-333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40847-023-00236-1>
- Kendall, L. (2016). 'Higher Education and Sisability: Exploring Student Experiences'. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1256142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2016.1256142>
- Magotra, A. & Vidya, N. (2024). 'Teachers' Empowerment: A Transformative Approach to Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Inclusive Education'. *Indian Journal of Medical Sciences*, 76, 52-55. https://doi.org/10.25259/ijms_241_2023
- Maguvhe, M. (2015). 'Teaching Science and Mathematics to Students with Visual Impairments: Reflections of a Visually Impaired Technician'. *African Journal of Disability*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v4i1.194>
- Raj, S.B. (2024). 'Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education: Learnings from India's National Education Policy 2020'. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2024.2382376>
- Stensaker, B. & Hermansen, H. (2023). 'Global, Nordic or Institutional Visions? An Investigation into How Nordic Universities are Adapting to the SDGs'. *Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01047-3>
- Thorat, S. & Khan, K. (2023). 'Why Inter-caste Inequality in Educational Attainment Still Persists? Wealth and Caste Discrimination Matters'. *The Indian Economic Journal*, 71(1), 256-275. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00194662221146656>
- Vickerman, P. & Blundell, M. (2010). 'Hearing the Voices of Disabled Students in Higher Education'. *Disability & Society*, 25(1), 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590903363290>
- Yusof, Y., Chan, C.C., Hillaluddin, A.H., Ramli, F.Z.A. & Saad, Z.M. (2019). 'Improving Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Malaysian Higher Education'. *Disability & Society*, 35(7), 1145-1170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1667304>



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 130-142)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts? The Case Study of Madhya Pradesh

Forum Dave*

Today, those who live in rural regions throughout India lack opportunities for development and advancement, including access to financial services. At 62 per cent of the total population (2011, Census of India), the majority of Indian citizens reside in rural regions, making this a critical issue. Access to financial services in rural regions largely supports the rural economy by providing wealth growth and management tools to those who often do not have access to such tools. Micro-finance, via the effective tool Self-Help Group (SHG), may offer an effective solution for alleviating poverty by meeting the credit needs of farmers, labourers, artisans, and other vulnerable sectors. In this paper, the functioning and process of the Self-Help Group in Madhya Pradesh are presented. A comparative analysis of aspirational and non-aspirational districts is also made with the help of a few selected variables. It has been observed that many of the variables related to SHGs are similar among aspirational and non-aspirational districts. With the case study of selected district and limited variables this research paper tries to address: Do we require a different policy for aspirational and non-aspirational districts?

Key Words: Self-Help Group, Madhya Pradesh, Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts.

*Assistant Professor, Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad (Guj.)
E-mail: de.forumsdave@gmail.com

Introduction

India's economic policy is driven by an underlying intent of sustainable and inclusive growth. Therefore, financial inclusion is a much-cherished policy objective for India. Financial inclusion leads to a reduction in poverty, unemployment, and dependency on informal sources of borrowing. However, rural regions often lack opportunities for residents, including the scarcity of financial services. The provision of financial services is essential as, according to the 2011 census, 62 per cent of the Indian population resides in rural regions. Microfinance has emerged as a potential policy tool to address these structural weaknesses and the lack of rural financial services. For poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction, a robust institutional ecosystem at the grassroots level is crucial. Strengthening financial linkage through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) presents a promising solution. SHGs require participation of the rural populace. They function as a vital institutional arrangement, facilitating micro-savings and lending activities. By empowering individuals to meet their credit needs, this approach has the potential to significantly alleviate poverty within rural communities.

The SHG concept is the brainchild of the Bangladesh-Grameen Bank, founded by Mohammed Yunus (Gopal Krishna, Kumar, 2008) and was established in 1975. A Self-Help Group (SHG) is an informal arrangement among its members and is primarily run by women. The group's core function revolves around micro-savings and lending activities, facilitating access to financial resources that are often unavailable through traditional banking channels. For each group, funds are gathered via donations, savings from members, loans from established institutions, or other means. The funds are then used to support the group's members. These groups serve a multifaceted purpose in fostering economic development within rural communities. This approach empowers women to overcome financial constraints, invest in small businesses, and pursue income-generating activities. Moreover, the significance of SHGs extends beyond simply providing credit. These groups also serve as a training ground for crucial financial literacy skills. Through peer learning and collective management of funds, members gain valuable experience in budgeting, saving, and responsible borrowing. This newfound financial knowledge then translates into improved decision-making within households and increased economic participation by women.

This research paper emphasises the need for Self-Help Groups in rural regions throughout India. The second section of the paper provides a

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts?...

literature review and research scope. The third section provides an analysis of selected districts in Madhya Pradesh. It also sheds light on a comparative analysis between aspirational and non-aspirational districts of Madhya Pradesh. The fourth section of the paper draws inferences based on the analysed data.

Literature Review and Research Scope

This section presents current literature to better understand the institutional ecosystem that provides financial opportunities for underprivileged rural populations. Specifically, these studies address how banks are connected to the SHG ecosystem.

Mishra and Chandra (2010) observed that the refined model of micro-credit delivery evolved recently by providing the combined delivery of financial services, technical assistance, and agricultural business development services. When we compare with the Self-Help Group – Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP), there are limited financial services delivered by the monetary financial institution (MFI). However, in recent years, many MFIs have transformed into non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), indicating their interest in delivering credit to the poor. The study found that there are four microfinance models: the MFI model, the Bank Partnership model, the Banking Correspondent model, and the Service Company model. The study further analysed the performance of public sector banks and private sector banks in terms of delivering credit services. Based on data available for the 2005 financial year, the study found that public sector banks sanctioned more loans towards microfinance than private sector banks. Among the public sector banks, State Bank was the most prolific in delivering credit facilities for microfinance.

Rajeev, Vani and Veerashekharappa (2019) observed that credit facilities through private micro-finance institutions and SHG schemes by states are the two most popular methods for providing financial assistance to vulnerable sections of society. The study highlights that micro-finance models are expanding financial inclusion among poor people and providing credit facilities to households that were excluded from formal financial institutions. However, SHGs also remained a prominent modelling case for delivering financial services in India.

Credit instruments such as Nidhis and Chit Funds were popular chit they started their operations in the southern region of India. They had several distinguished features, such as encouraging thrift, mobilising small savings, developing savings habits for future consumption, and so on.

Dave

However, the well-recognised form of today's SHGs started in India in 1991 with the initiative undertaken by NABARD.

According to Thakur (2016), the best way to alleviate poverty in rural areas is to generate employment opportunities by undertaking entrepreneurial activities that ultimately lead to the achievement of sustainable growth. The analysis demonstrated a declining trend in SHGs, where the number of SHGs linked to the BLP in 2011-12 was 79.60 lakhs as compared to 74.30 lakhs in 2013-14. The study further extended to the performance NPA percentage of loans. Surprisingly, the study found that there was a marginal decline in NPA from 7.08 per cent in 2013 to 6.83 per cent in 2014.

Bagli (2015) examined the nature and causes of the Multidimensional Poverty Index in Bankura district, which represents one of the more primitive districts in West Bengal. The results obtained from the Logit regression showed that multidimensional poverty is closely related to the household's income. Surprisingly, the study found that SHG participation resulted only in a marginal positive impact on household living conditions.

Akoijam (2013) researched the rural lending problem and the role of various financial institutions in rural credit. The paper highlighted a few RBI strategies such as increasing Kisan Card coverage, financial inclusion, farm credit, and one-based instalment. Moreover, agricultural cooperatives provide significant financial aid in various forms. The paper also highlighted the cooperative institutions' role in funding medium and long-term agricultural machinery loans as supplemental micro-credit in rural areas. Furthermore, NABD played an important role in delivering financial assistance for agriculture loans and links to the SHGs. Finally, the research provided insight into the complexities that must be dealt with in reconstructing the institutional governance and rules and regulations of credit cooperatives and RRBs in rural lending and deposit assessment.

Dave (2023) argues that Self Help Groups are a model for the unbankable population of rural India, who do not have access due to a lack of collateral and high risk. It further provides an outline of the structure as well as the evolution of microfinance. It throws light importance of SHGs in providing employment, reducing the gap between haves and have-nots, and they're by achieving financial inclusion. The decentralised structure has been highlighted with charts for easy understanding. How SHG has initiated as micro saving units, and now it has extended to even various supporting schemes like Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme, Mahila Kisan

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts?...

Sashaktikaran Pariyojana, and National Rural Economic Transformation Project.

Maity (2016) examined the role of microfinance through SHGs on the living conditions of women. The study has been carried out in two blocks, Mahishadal and Nandakumar, of the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal state. The findings showed an increase in the monthly family expenditure of the SHG members due to an increase in the self-employment of the women. It was found that the members were spending loan amount for multiple purposes, for example, about 25 per cent of loan spent for family cultivation, 32 per cent of the loan for medical expenditure, 55 per cent of loan on child education, 19 per cent of loan on house electrification, 35 per cent on house repairing, 95 per cent of the loan for own savings and 77 per cent of the loan were utilized for family emergency needs. However, a larger proportion of the loan amount was utilised for repayment of credit and investment in the business. Interestingly, the study highlighted that there was a significant improvement in women's confidence and capability, which ultimately led to improvement in decision-making power, awareness towards facilities provided by the government, and utilisation of free health services. It has been observed that an NGO called Jana Samkhyas Sansthan provided training to 46.4 per cent of members for bookbinding, tailoring, and papad making. District Rural Development Cell (DRDC) gave training to 22 per cent of members on agarbatti making, 11.1 per cent of members on goatery, dairy, fishery, and duckery, and 8.82 per cent of members on paper processing and training on poultry farming. One of the most important elements of microfinance was to reduce poverty through participation in SHGs. Finally, the study concluded that the participation of women in SHGs helped women achieve their overall development in terms of building leadership qualities, achieving equal gender status, and also breaking the constraints of poverty.

Das and Guha (2019) examined the sustainability of the women's SHGs in the case of rural Assam. The study used both primary and secondary data collected from various sources such as statistical returns of RBI, Quarterly Statistics on deposits and credit of scheduled commercial banks, NABARD, and Census of India 2011. The primary data was collected from the Lower Brahmaputra Valley of Assam from September 2014 to December 2014. A total of 60 SHGs and 647 respondents were selected for the study using the multistage sampling method. The study constructed four sustainable indices, namely the Organisational Sustainability Index of SHGs, Managerial Sustainability Index of SHGs, Financial Sustainability Index of

Dave

SHGs, and Multidimensional Sustainability Index to measure the overall sustainability of SHGs. The results obtained from the organisational sustainability index found that around 6.69 per cent of the respondents dropped out of their groups. The study also noted that 35 per cent of SHGs experienced dropouts because of the inability to deposit compulsory savings in groups. The attendance of the group was not satisfactory either. More than half of the groups (56.7 per cent) conducted group meetings every month, and about 63 per cent of groups maintained group records on their own. The decision-making process of the group was found to be satisfactory. About 73 per cent of groups did not rotate their leadership authority. The proportion of conflict resolution among the groups was found to be effective. Analysis showed that 36.7 per cent of members were saving less than Rs 5000 per annum, while the borrowing amount of the groups was very high. 70 per cent of the groups borrowed more than Rs. 50,000. Further, it was observed that 46.51 per cent of groups repaid more than 70 per cent of the credit. About 38 per cent of groups utilised 90 per cent of their loan for agriculture, education, and house construction, and also 48.84 per cent of groups spent their loan on productive purposes up to a certain extent. The study concluded that 98.3 per cent of groups were settled with the highest organisational sustainability status, 93.3 per cent of groups were in the medium and low range of managerial sustainability. Similarly, the managerial and the financial sustainability status of 75 per cent of groups were in the ranges of medium and low status. However, it was noticed that 95 per cent of groups were in the range of high and moderate multidimensional sustainability index.

Scope of the Study

The primary objective of this research study is to identify inclusiveness both on the social and economic fronts in India. The primary objective is divided into the following sub-objectives: examine inclusiveness by identifying the ratio of targeted mobilised households; investigate the effect of awareness on SHGs' success; investigate the impact of training programmes on record-keeping; and examine the financial soundness of SHGs.

This study covers 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Madhya Pradesh is a state with a largely agricultural base (Sapre, 2014; IBEF, 2020) in which 74.73 per cent of the population still resides in rural regions (Census, 2011). The selected districts are divided into aspirational and non-aspirational districts (NITI Ayog). The districts are selected based on simple random sampling.

Table 1
Sampled Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts of Madhya Pradesh

The aspirational and non-aspirational districts are divided by NITI Aayog based on five broad socio-economic themes: Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Infrastructure. The key data was collected using well-structured data questionnaires and group discussions.

Structural Outline of Self-Help Groups in Madhya Pradesh

A Self-Help Group is an informal group consisting of 10-12 members, typically women. The members come together to carry out various activities to eradicate poverty amongst the group and increase wealth. An SHG starts by conducting micro-saving and lending activities depending upon the economic condition of members. Here, the interest rates are determined by the group's members. This enables them to develop critical skills related to finance as well as negotiation skills.

Each SHG must follow Panch-Sutra, i.e., regular meetings, saving within the group, internal saving, internal lending, loan repayment, and bookkeeping. Functionaries of national-level rural livelihood missions are typically responsible for forming a new group and conducting training, which includes financial literacy education. The group is registered after six to nine months and receives its initial seed money from revolving funds. The registration group can then become eligible for loans from village organisations (VO), community investment funds (CIF), and banks.

The Self-Help Group is the first layer of the Eco-Institution at the grassroots level. The village organisation is the second layer, consisting of more than one village. A bank loan is an independent financial fund that a group receives based on its creditworthiness.

Madhya Pradesh is a largely rural state, with 72.37 per cent of its population residing in rural regions. Further, 69.8 per cent of the state's workers depend on agriculture for their livelihood, according to the 2011 census, and 85.6 per cent of total workers depend on the agriculture sector in some way. In this rural state, micro-finance tools such as SHGs are essential for development. With a total of 47,22,772 members, 4,23,084 SHGs have been formed in Madhya Pradesh. Out of a total of 52 blocks and 54,903 villages, this includes 29 (out of 58 total villages) from each aspirational and non-aspirational district.

Analysing Aspirational Districts and Non-Aspirational Districts and their Self-Help Groups

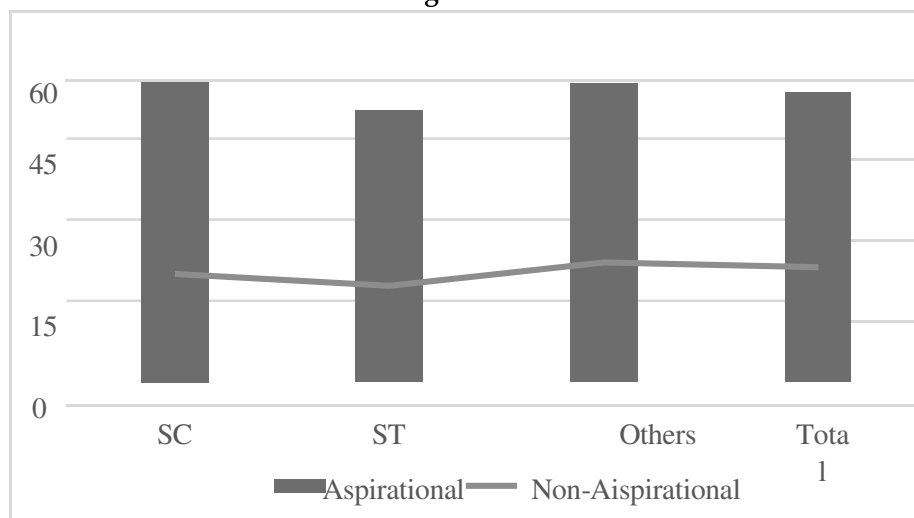
The four sub-objectives cover the functioning and effectiveness of a Self-Help Group. The variables mobilisation and awareness represent the initial stage of working with SHGs. If the household the functioning, they are more likely to be good at recordkeeping, which qualifies them for financial dealings.

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts?...

Target and Mobilisation of SHGs

The selected aspirational and non-aspirational districts were provided with an annual target to mobilise the households (NRLM, 2020). The mobilisation and training of members were enacted to understand the process and functioning of Self-Help Groups. This training includes financial literacy topics as well as discussions on how SHGs operate. It was observed that in the case of non-aspirational districts, household mobilisation was very low compared to aspirational districts (Graph 1). The primary factor here is human resources. The aspirational district Guna, for example, indicates higher mobilisation due to well-managed, efficient human resources. Meanwhile, Ashoknagar gave lower results due to poor management and inefficient human resources. While little effort was undertaken in the case of non-aspirational districts, the average target-to-mobilised ratio remains similar. The P value is 0.03 points further for the same scenario. It is important to note that mobilisation is an ongoing process, as informed by district authorities.

Graph 1
Percent of Target to Mobilise SHGs



Panch-Sutra and Dus-Sutra

Panch-Sutra (i.e., regular meetings, saving within the group, internal saving, internal lending, loan repayment, and bookkeeping) and Dus-Sutra comprise the basic operations of a Self-Help Group. So, by remembering the "Sutra," even illiterate members can understand the functioning of SHGs.

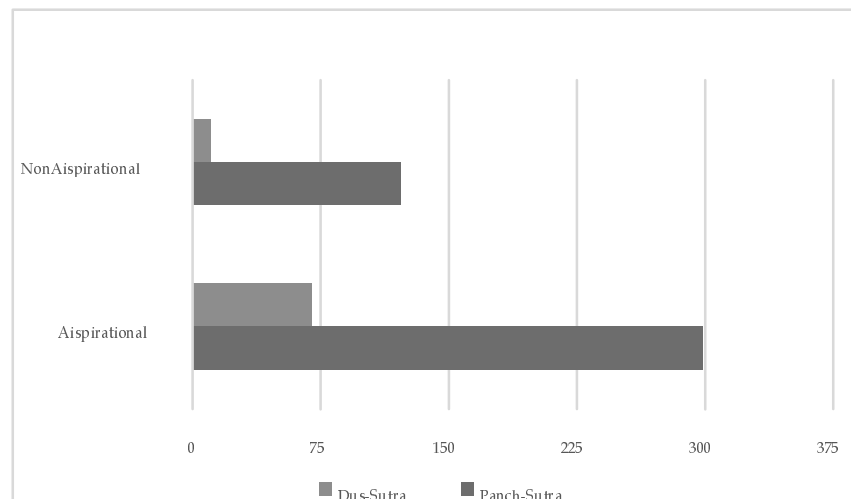
Dave

Awareness regarding Panch-Sutra and Dus-Sutra appeared to be higher in aspirational districts.

Graph 2 indicates that awareness regarding Panch-Sutra is higher among all the selected villages of aspirational and non-aspirational districts. During the training sessions and monthly meetings, the members were aided in memorising the Panch-Sutra.

In the case of Dus-Sutra, overall awareness appeared to be lower than that of Panch-Sutra. When comparing the districts, aspirational districts appeared better than non-aspirational districts in this aspect. This could be on account of efficient functioning and well-managed human resources. The P-value is 0.80 points, indicating a major difference between aspirational and non-aspirational districts in terms of awareness.

Graph 2
Awareness



Functioning of SHGs

For an SHG to function effectively, awareness and mobilisation must be backed by appropriate records. The SHG members are trained in bookkeeping. The group's record keeper is required to update their record book with basic financial information such as monthly/weekly savings, details, reasons for lending money and the associated payback duration, interest rates to be charged, etc. The record book also contains details for each member, especially financial needs and social and economic conditions. In some cases, it can be difficult to train a bookkeeper due to illiteracy amongst the members.

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts?...

The internal functioning of selected SHGs in aspirational and non-aspirational districts remains more or less the same. The variable included in internal functioning is “providing basic training,” trained bookkeepers, and leadership change. The p-value in ANOVA indicates just 0.080. This low p may be attributed to not rejecting the null hypothesis strongly, i.e., there is similarity in aspirational and non-aspirational districts in the internal functioning.

It was noted that basic training is provided in selected SHGs except in Kurwai in the Vidisha district. This is because the SHGs in that area are newly formed and have not yet completed their training at the time of the study. It is observed that in most cases, training has been provided at various levels by functionaries. Outsider agencies are also invited, in some cases, to provide basic training to SHG members.

It was found that leadership within some groups had not changed as required for a long time, though there were changes in the majority of selected areas of the aspirational districts, except in villages of the Rajgarh district and one block of Guna. In non-aspirational districts except Indore, there were villages in any other district where the leadership of the SHGs changed. The most prominent reason for this was found to be a lack of literacy and management skills among the groups. Further, in some cases, another member is not ready to take on the responsibilities as they are engaged in farming or other household work.

However, the overall situation remains similar for aspirational and non-aspirational districts regarding factors that influence the internal functioning of SHGs.

Financial Soundness

Financial soundness covers variables such as SHGs with a bank account, access to loans, and interest subvention. Here, the P value (0.017 points) highlights to a negligible difference between aspirational and non-aspirational in terms of the financial soundness of SHGs.

In the non-aspirational districts, the majority of SHGs have a bank account. However, in the case of Khargaoan and Sahajapur, the number of SHGs with bank accounts is lower due to inadequate staff, lack of information, and poor administration by SHGs. In aspirational districts, even though mobilisation appeared to be high, the financial soundness was poor. SHGs with bank linkages are found in the Rajgarh and Guna districts due to efficient and sincere administration. In the case of Vidisha, except for Gyaraspur, other selected blocks did not have SHGs with bank linkages.

Dave

Further efforts are required here to better understand this situation. There is a direct causal relation between SHG loans and bank linkages. Surprisingly, except for non-aspirational villages of the Rajghar district, no other district received an interest subvention. The efficient administration structure was the key driver in this case.

It is observed that mobilisation worked efficiently. The efforts were supported by awareness programmes in aspirational districts (compared to non-aspirational ones). However, it is not well reflected in the case of record keeping and financial soundness.

Policy Recommendations

The rural-dominant state required effective administration for the implementation of the SHG structure. The grassroots level Institutional Eco-System, i.e., SHGs, is directly affecting the social and economic standing of rural households as observed in all the selected villages of both aspirational and non-aspirational districts. The mobilisation is higher in the aspirational districts due to achieving the target, while no such pressure was observed in non-aspirational districts. Hence, a mobilised household is defined as a household in which the member registers, and the activities, in many cases, do not indicate effective mobilisation. This was required to be corrected.

Record-keeping is essential as it serves as a base for banking and other financial institutions. In many cases, the trained bookkeeper was not found, and the literacy level was too low to maintain proper records. Further, the responsibility of the group is carried out by one member only, despite the requirement for SHGs to change leaders every three years. This adversely affects the working pattern of the SHGs. The proper functioning of SHGs is possible if there is a continuous flow of funds. In this case, information regarding the banking process, bank linkages, and efficient use of financial funds is required. The majority of the SHGs, especially those in aspirational districts, do not have a bank loan. The SHGs are required to have good internal administration to become eligible for a bank loan. District-level administration is also required to ensure effective utilisation of funds.

Nevertheless, it appears that there is no substantial variation in the core administrative, financial, and functional practices of SHGs. Consequently, a specialised policy framework for SHGs seems redundant.

Limitations of the Study

The study covers only 58 villages in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The study does not use time series analysis, but rather cross-sectional

Are Different Policies Required for Aspirational and Non-Aspirational Districts?...

analysis. It covers limited variables to analyse each objective; it can be further extended by a researcher to better understand the situation's dynamics.

Note: This research work is part of a sponsored Project by ICSSR & IMPRESS, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India.

References

- Akoijam, S.L. (2013). 'Rural Credit: A Source of Sustainable Livelihood of Rural India', *International Journal of Social Economics*, 40(10), 83–97.
- Bagli, S. (2015). 'Determinants of Multidimensional Poverty: A Study of Households in a District of West Bengal', *International Journal of Management and Social Science Research*.
- Census of India (2011). Government of India.
- Das, T. & Guha, P. (2019). 'Measuring Women's Self-help Group Sustainability: A Study of Rural Assam', *International Journal of Rural Management*, 15(1), 116–136.
- Dave, F. (2023). 'An Essay on Micro-Finance: An Effective Tool of Poverty Reduction in India', *Vivekanand Journal of Research*, 13(2).
- Gopal Krishna, K. (2008). 'A Study on the Socio-Economic Condition of the Members of SHGs in Krishnagiri District', *TIMS*, JNU.
- Government of India (2021-22). *SHG Social Category Wise - NRLM*. Retrieved from <https://nrlm.gov.in/SocialCategoryWise>
- IBEF.org (2020). *Madhya Pradesh State Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.ibef.org/states/madhya-pradesh.aspx>
- Maity, B. (2016). 'Microfinance: Women from the Margin to the Mainstream', *Journal of Rural Development*, 35(1), 17–38.
- Mishra, N. & Chandra (2010). *Microfinance in the Indian Banking Industry and its Future*, 2nd IEEE International Conference on Information and Financial Engineering.
- NITI Aayog (n.d.). *Aspirational Districts Programme, Government of India*. Retrieved from <http://niti.gov.in/content/about-aspirational-districts-programme>
- Rajeev, M., Vani, B.P. & Veerashekharappa (2019). 'Group Lending through an SHG Bank Linkage Programme in India: Transaction Costs and Social Benefits', *Development in Practice*, 30(2), 168–181.
- Sapre, A. (2014). 'Madhya Pradesh: Does Agriculture Determine the State's Growth Trajectory?', *Margin - The Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 8(1), 39–57.
- Thakur, S. (2016). 'Microfinance through Self Helps Groups (SHGs): A Key Driver for Sustainable Growth in India', *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 1–6.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 143-156)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

Neelu Anita Tigga*

The inability to achieve a minimally acceptable standard of material well-being generates poverty. Poverty translates into deprivations and hardships. Hardships encompass a lack of interest, weakness and helplessness to deal with basic issues of survival. It also implies insufficient access to services and goods allocated by the legislation. Inequalities in gender are associated with subsequent disadvantages and difficulties. The study explores three basic parameters essential for civil existence. Health, employment and decent human habitation with safe drinking water and their lack engender women's vulnerability towards urban poverty. Business, inventiveness, innovative thinking, and technological advancement are associated with cities. It can, however, become a repository for the evils of society due to poor planning and management. Consequences would be nothing but environmental destruction, impoverishment and marginalisation. Females with caregiving responsibilities are impacted adversely. Energy, managing waste, water and hygiene are concerns of females. Their general state of mind is compromised by insufficient, lacking infrastructure facilities, causing health and hygiene hazards. This highlights the need to include gender-equal viewpoints in the execution of laws that prioritise women's skills and academic achievements aimed at eliminating destitution.

Key Words: Urbanisation, Urban Poverty, Gender, Health, Employment, Habitation, Rural-Urban, Five Year Plans, Sanitation.

*Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Satyawati College (Day), University of Delhi, Delhi. E-mail: neetigga0310@gmail.com

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

Introduction

A territory is said to be becoming urban with a concentration of population in towns and cities. The national economy grows and transforms with people moving from rural farming occupations to jobs in manufacturing and service industries, boosting their productivity in the process. Hence, urbanisation has connections with getting fundamental necessities like clean water and sanitation, heightened literacy, improved career and a longer expected lifespan.

Gender related changes reflect in the development of cities. Different possibilities of remunerative work as compared with agrarian regions are readily available. By actively engaging in waged jobs, females seize the chance to utilise opportunities of work that are made available.

Urbanisation often does not lead to fair distribution of the assets it creates. Discernible trends in the widening of disparities, particularly with regard to living and working circumstances, in addition to earnings. Rising poverty concerns and the government's incapacity to serve the citizens ensue from the fact that urban population growth is occurring in areas that are still impoverished or developing (Banerjee, 2013). One unique component of urban impoverishment is its gender component. Even while women contribute significantly to the success of cities through their formal and informal labour, they continue to face discrimination regarding fair chances of occupation, housing, healthcare, schooling, involvement in official institutions and city government (Randall, 1982; Millett, 2000). Understanding the value of their unpaid caregiving is essential to improving their lives. Their role as primary carers is typically made more difficult by the requirement to provide cash. Lack of formal education and training, engagement in low-paying, time-consuming jobs, leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and increased susceptibility to violence. Necessitating comprehension of the cause of her deprivation and powerlessness.

Section 1 of the paper summarises urban poverty and its effects on gender. In section 2, the impact of rural-urban migration on women's health and employability is examined. Section 3, on shelter and housing, shows that gendered inequalities make women's already challenging living circumstances worse. Finally, the conclusion critically evaluates government initiatives aimed at addressing issues that urban women face.

Metropolitan Impoverishment

A household is considered to be in poverty due to its inability to achieve a tolerable minimal level of material fulfilment. Health, literacy and

Tigga

civil existence with access to clean drinking water are considered fundamental components of human welfare. Basic needs of survival not met result in misery and helplessness. Despair is the inability to focus, react to shocks or avoid dangers. Due to rising food prices, limited availability of calorie-dense meals, and subpar housing and living circumstances, people are more vulnerable to illness. Very often, this state of neediness arises due to the unavailability of assistance in rural areas, compelling people to move to metropolitan areas.

As carers and homemakers, women are negatively affected by relocating to new and unfamiliar metropolitan locations. Since they lack the expertise and skills to satisfy the requisite criteria, formal sediments in cities do not recognise them. Further, mechanistic segmentation results in fewer lucrative jobs and decreased earnings. The smaller the wages little are the spending on literacy, hygiene and basic elements. Additionally, more notable degrees of commercialisation for goods, services and land are found in city locations. Fuel, firewood and water are readily obtainable in the countryside, but in town centres, they must be purchased. Similarly, transport costs are factored into the family budget. Furthermore, the prices she pays for goods and businesses are typically greater than those in the territory areas. Unexpected increases in the price of oil or onions contribute to abstaining from use. Escalated grain prices result in reduced consumption, affecting their health. All the more, fostering city woes are poor handling of safe drinking water, cleanliness and contaminants, dwellings, employment and learning (Kumar and Gayatri, 2004).

Transition from Countryside to Metropolis: Women's Health and Employability

Large-scale economic growth made cities the centres of manufacturing, commerce and circulation. According to the Twelfth Plan, "urbanisation will be central to India's strategy of achieving faster and more inclusive growth because agglomerations and densification of economic activities and habitations in urban conglomerations stimulate economic efficiencies and provide more opportunities for earning livelihoods" (Planning Commission, 2012-17). Surmising that, in contrast to scattered countryside, metropolises expand opportunities for work and business. Nonetheless, there is an increasing understanding that in order to boost the rural sector's growth, village-urban ties must be reinforced.

India has long been regarded as the land of the villages. Agriculture accounted for a large portion of GDP. Over 90 per cent of the population got

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

their subsistence from this industry. The majority of development measures since independence have been focused on the agricultural sector despite the Second Five-Year Plan's (1956-61) tremendous push for industrialisation (Chatterjee, 2015).

As capitalism became more entrenched, things started to shift. The industrial sector and growing capitalism led to a change in population. The inefficient agricultural sector and colonial industrialisation patterns were unable to accommodate the expanding labour force. In large cities and towns, the informal tertiary sector grew with out-migration from rural areas. Between 1951-1991, India attempted to pursue either a significant push for industrialisation (Second Five-Year Plan) or agricultural expansion (Green Revolution- mid 60s). However, the fundamental division between agriculture and the urban/rural sector did not change.

Urban biases and the provision of infrastructure and services for the populace were the most obvious examples of this duality. The 1960s saw city residents having access to a number of services and facilities. Urban centres had planned infrastructure and amenities, while villages received programmes for flood control and irrigation. The idea that the countryside would become urban due to administrative choices or natural forces was not a distinct perspective. As of now, no building designs need to be approved before development may begin in rural regions. Additionally, there are no preparations for water supply, sanitation or drainage.

A further factor is the disjointed connections between cities and the countryside. The smaller class 4 and 5 towns accounted for 40 per cent of the urban population in 1901 and shared 60 per cent of the total number of towns. In India, city-village linkages were mostly based on towns of these two sizes. Through these smaller communities, the nation's rural goods - primarily agricultural and artisanal - were distributed. For a variety of reasons, these smaller communities have lost ground during the past 50 years. One factor is India's urban city centres' dual structure: census towns falling under the rural category, whereas statutory towns are under local government. With non-recognition of the third tier prior to decentralisation of administration, local bodies remained financially dependent. Smaller towns lacked a coherent plan for the provision of infrastructure and civic facilities. Planned organisations and institutions of learning were more dependent on higher-order centres for their survival. Small settlements became more remote due to a lack of transportation connections. Furthermore, the steady removal of government assistance and the openness of the market over the past 30 years have been particularly devastating to

smaller towns. Generally speaking, the nation's agriculture is losing its profitability. Agglomerative tendencies are produced by the current service-led growth paradigm.

Women's Health: Challenges in Urban India

The urban population's health risks, especially for women and children, have been made worse in smaller settlements brought on by congestion, poor cleanliness, disproportionate and inadequate comforts. As environmental changes occur, vector-borne illnesses become more prevalent. Dengue and chikungunya have been common in urban areas since 1995 (Gupta, 2015). The lack of sanitary facilities, contaminated water and unsanitary surroundings expose 70 per cent of the 650 million people living in rural and slum areas to vector-borne and water-borne illnesses. In Urban India, the primary source of drinking water was tap water, which was 62 per cent treated and 8.6 per cent untreated. Approximately half of the 600 million people live in open defecation, the highest percentage in the world. Additionally, 53 per cent of houses lacked indoor latrines. Although there were modest improvements, 47 per cent of families in 2011 had latrine facilities on the property, compared with 36.4 per cent in 2001 (Kumar and Das, 2014). Each year, India's Total Sanitation Campaign has seen the construction of 1.5 million toilets, though half of them are still unused, raising concerns about whether expanding funding or resources actually solves the issue.

Various sections perceive the use of restrooms differently. However, utilisation depends upon its maintenance, has access to water, and is cognisant of the benefits of proper cleanliness (Khambete, 2018). Several analyses reveal that an insufficient supply of water results in blockage and grimy restrooms. These settlements typically have less extensive sweeper services, for such restrooms themselves could cause substantial complications for health. Since there is no self-ownership, often an act of generosity to the inadequate, no one feels responsible for its proper use, which itself is not unusual.

According to research, there is inadequate maintenance of network restrooms, illegal client fees, locking of restrooms in the middle of the night and early in the morning, male guards, dim illumination near restrooms, and no separate entrance for female patrons. These factors prevent their use by women. Furthermore, amenities, especially sewage pipes and network restrooms, deteriorate due to inadequate maintenance. Frustration with the administration, with its upkeep, lessens the impact of programmes.

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

Unsanitary lavatories are a major source of pollution and illness, especially for the underprivileged, with women and children suffering the most (Khosla, 2004).

Urban Employment: Challenges Women Face

Cultivation is the primary means of occupation in India. Its decline and disengagement of workers from rural economies and their incorporation in suburban areas have created difficulties for administrators to generate more employment.

According to the Handbook of Urban Statistics, one major concern in India is the paucity of quality jobs in the regulated industry, making it critical to investigate in minute detail the components of the job status of women and men. In 2011-12, 41.7 per cent of urban male workers were self-employed. However, casual labour accounted for 14.9 per cent of the city's male labour force. Of the female workforce, 42.8 per cent work for themselves and 14.3 per cent are casual labourers. All things considered, the percentage of workers engaged as temporary labourers fell from 17.8 per cent in 1999-2000 to 14.6 per cent in 2011-2012. In general, the urban joblessness rate decreased from 5.2 per cent in 1999-2000 to 3.8 per cent in 2011-2012. While both men's and women's unemployment decreased, it was observed that female joblessness remained greater than men's. In 2011-2012, the joblessness levels for urban men were 3.2 per cent, while those for urban females were 6.6 per cent (Handbook of Urban Statistics, 2012).

The majority of urban men, according to the Twelfth Five-Year Plan, work in the manufacturing sector (22.3 per cent), followed by wholesale and retail trade. 10.7 per cent of urban males are employed in the construction segment. Home-based and domestic work are the primary areas of female employment. Women's employment by households as domestic workers was over 60 per cent. In contrast, over 38 per cent of women were employed as home-based workers in 2009-10. The Ministry of Urban Development reports that the manufacturing sector employs 28 per cent of women, with the education sector employing 13.3 per cent of urban females. The industries of forestry, fishing, and agriculture are the next biggest employers of urban women (Handbook of Urban Statistics, 2012). As evidenced by the 12th Five-Year Plan, the manufacturing sector was expected to generate an additional 100 million jobs by 2015, but only 5 million jobs were added from 1999-2000 to 2009-2010. Between 1999-2000 and 2004-2005, manufacturing employment increased from 44 to 55 million, but in 2010, it dropped to 50 million, despite manufacturing output increasing at a compound annual

Tigga

growth rate of more than 8 per cent between 2009 and 2010 (Twelfth Five-Year Plan, 2013).

The 12th Plan claims that women lost their jobs during the 11th Plan era and started working in private or household services. Employees in the unorganised sector are at risk for a number of reasons. The actual working days are unclear, and work itself is erratic and may end at any time. One also finds the absence of safety nets or social security programmes in place to offset job risks. According to reports, there is a pattern where a significant number of women's contributions are either overlooked by data systems or fail to be recognised in categories that do not meet security law requirements. Employment legislations are supposed to protect the formalised economy, but even this insurance is elusive. The effectiveness of coverage for the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 was only 16 per cent, according to the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector's (NCEUS) 1999–2000 estimate of the coverage of key labour laws. According to the International Labour Organisation's recently completed assessment of India's maternity benefit programs, qualified female employees were legally excluded from receiving maternity benefits due to them (Eapen and Mehta, 2012).

Shelter and Housing: Challenges Women Face

It is acknowledged that women facing challenging situations require prompt support. One of the objectives frequently outlined in policy instruments is to provide women in distress with sufficient support services. In this regard, it is commonly accepted that women in distress have the right to safe refuge.

The Short Stay homes (SSH) and Swadhar Greh were the two main programmes that the Ministry of Women and Child development (MWCD) in India introduced in 1969 and 2001 to alleviate the need for shelter services for women in challenging situations. The key goals propagated by MWCD were to meet women's basic needs for sustenance, clothing, housing and assistance; help them recuperate both socially and monetarily; offer healthcare, judicial, and diverse varieties of guidance; and establish a help line. Women survivors of domestic violence, widows rejected by families, women set free from jail, women homeless after natural disasters, women and girls trafficked, women victims of terrorist or extremist violence, with special needs or disabilities, women with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) are all included in their target group (UN Women, 2012).

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

There are 357 Swadhar homes and 287 SSHs in operation (Parliament Digital Library, 2023). Revealing that each district has fewer than one shelter home. Nevertheless, studies show dichotomous outcomes with meagre beneficial effects on women. The evaluation of plans shows a welfare-based rather than rights-based approach. The overall budgetary assignment continues to be deficient. Since the Planning Commission's methodology for the new plan is still pending, the financial support that the Union Government designated in 2012-13 has not been revised. Additionally, it has been suggested that all state governments examine the current asylum homes' exhibits in order to convert them into Swadhar Greh (UN Women, 2012).

India's census provides a thorough analysis of urban housing. It showed 65 per cent of urban residents living in Census I cities. Reason being the quest for higher living standards and employment prospects, prompting overcrowding, intrusion into public areas, squatting in crowded shantytowns, low-paid jobs, economic uncertainty, noise and air pollution, and worsening facilities and services (Banerjee and Das, 2013).

According to the Handbook on Urban Statistics, small homes are becoming overcrowded. In 2001, there were 53.7 million urban households overall; by 2011, that number had risen to 78.9 million. The majority of households live in a single room, according to the distribution of households by size and number of rooms from 2001 to 2011. In 2001, 35.11 per cent were one-room households; by 2011, the number dropped to 32.13 per cent. Between 2001 and 2011, one-third of the population lived in two-bedroom apartments. Households with three rooms were 17.09 per cent in 2001 and 18.38 per cent in 2011. In 2001, only 15.94 per cent of households had four rooms or more, compared to 15.81 per cent in 2011 (Handbook of Urban Statistics, 2016).

Since independence, the government has implemented a number of policies and initiatives in its Five-Year Plans pertaining to urban development and poverty alleviation. The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) established the Ministry of Works and Housing. Building homes for government workers, underprivileged groups, and Pakistani refugees were the main priorities. The outcome was the Low Income Group Housing Scheme, launched in 1954.

The Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) broadened the scope of the housing programme for the poor. Three new programs were introduced: Sweepers Housing Towns, Slum Clearance, Rural Housing, and Country Planning Laws in numerous states. The establishment of central and state

Tigga

housing boards was suggested in the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-1966). Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74) placed a high priority on creating small towns. The Urban Land (Ceiling) Act was implemented in the Fifth Plan (1974-79) to free up urban land for middle and lower-class housing construction. Integrated delivery of services, primarily for the underprivileged, was the main focus of the Sixth Plan (1980-1985). The Seventh Plan (1985-1990) acknowledged issues facing the impoverished. In 1987, the world commemorated the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. In 1988-89, the Footpath Dwellers Night Shelter Scheme was implemented. The expansion of essential amenities, reduced cost dwellings, equipment, techniques, affordable homes, and slum environmental improvement were all priorities of the Eighth Plan (1992-1997). The topic of sustainable development was covered in the Ninth Plan (1997-2002). In 2001, Valmiki Ambedkar Rojgar Yojna, a centrally sponsored programme, was introduced for slum residents. Ninth Plan's objectives were carried over into the Tenth Plan (2002-07). Eleventh Plan (2007-12), focused on Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and Urban Local Bodies that addressed urban poverty reduction, suburban renewal, and vital services for the city's underprivileged (Dutta, Shukla and Mukherjee, 2013). Twelfth Plan (2012-17) focuses on more rapid, sustainable, and equitable growth. (GoI, Vol. II, 2012-17).

The government's policies and initiatives concerning housing and urban development have had little benefit for women. Homes give them the chance to raise, care for, and protect their children in addition to providing physical security. Unfortunately, homes are encroached upon, have unstable tenure, or are illegal or unapproved for the majority of urban women, particularly the impoverished. Furthermore, most homes are not owned by women because of patriarchal structures. Rajiv Awas Yojana did attempt to effect change. It makes being mutually enlisted in both of the couple's names mandatory. However, it is found that urban administration is apathetic to women's needs. The neighbourhood level is not taken into consideration. Women continue to have little voice. Through a process of community-level thought, local voices can be incorporated into administration. The establishment and acknowledgement of Community-Based Organisations (COBs) at the local level make this feasible. One such strong local organisation is the Resident Welfare Association. It is important to emphasise that local COBs should be led by women and should have a 50 per cent female representation (Twelfth Five-Year Plan, 2013).

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

Urban Development Flagship Plans under the Twelfth Plan

An organisation's flagship schemes are its most crucial and prioritised issues, addressing significant national issues. A few flagship programs announced by the Union Cabinet or the Planning Commission's Development Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) under the Twelfth Plan that impact women's health, employment, and housing issues could be examined.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

Intending to clean up the country by October 2, 2019, the Indian Government launched the SBM on October 2, 2014. Every statutory town, as defined by the 2011 Census, was taken into account. Primary goals are to eliminate waste, convert unsanitary toilets to pour-flush toilets, eliminate manual scavenging, eliminate 100 per cent accumulation, and rationally prepare the transfer/reuse of municipal solid wastes. It also aims to change people's behaviour regarding good hygiene practices, raise awareness about overall health. Since October 2, 2014, SBM has produced 9,26,45,978 family toilets. 5,58,224 towns; 4,465 towns in Namami Ganga; 617 locales; and 30 States/Union Territories have been declared defecation-free. The national sanitation inclusion rate increased from 38.7 per cent on October 2, 2014, to 65 per cent in 2017. In August 2018, it increased even more to 90 per cent. By February 15, 2018, 314 regions, 3.25 lakh towns, and 11 States had declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF). From 0.4 million (37 per cent) to just over one million (91 per cent), the number of schools with separate restrooms for young women increased.

Smart City Mission (SCM)

This was initiated on June 25, 2015. It aimed at creating urban communities with above-average levels of personal satisfaction, ideal and sustainable conditions, and application of astute arrangements. It is intended to include adequate water supply, a reliable power supply with robust waste management, open transportation and productive urban mobility; moderate housing; active information technology (IT); e-administration and resident support with reasonable living conditions, and security for natives, particularly women, children, and the elderly. The mission, which ran from FY 2015–16 to 2019–20, was to cover 100 cities (National Portal of India).

Over Rs. 2.05 lakh crore was the total proposed investment in the selected urban communities under the plan. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, as of the end of November, 2342 ventures

Tigga

totalling Rs. 90,927 crore had been made available, of which 1,675 events totalling Rs. 51,866 crore were either completed or in use. Since October 2017, the number of tasks made available has increased by 290 per cent, the number of events grounded or completed has increased by 332 per cent, and the number of completed endeavours has increased by 479 per cent since October 2017 (Business Today, 2018).

The Atal Mission Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

On June 25, 2015, it was launched to advance the basic framework in 500 metropolitan regions. The objective guarantees families' use of sanitary sewer affinity; confirmed availability of water; perceived level of affluence by creating parks, and a lower level of pollution by substituting open transportation. The intent is to limit working in ULBs and finish changes to enhance government delivery to inhabitants. Nearly 400 projects totalling Rs. 325 crore have already been finished, and contract terms have been awarded for 2,188 projects totalling Rs. 40,074 crore, which are currently in different stages of the process (MOUD GoI, 2015).

8.58 lakh water tap connections have been made possible. Up to 37 lakh street lights have been swapped out for LED, using less energy. The Mission has completed about 322 parks and green space projects. For construction permits, Delhi and Mumbai have adopted a single window clearance system that requires only eight steps and less than sixty days for all authorisations. 370 Mission cities have put in place the Online Building Permission System (OBPS), and the remaining cities are in varying stages of doing the same (The Pioneer, 2018).

National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)

This programme intends to retain and reinvigorate India's ancestral cities' distinct personalities. The Ministry of Urban Development, acting as the National Project Management Unit (NPMU), is appointed to oversee the preparation, advancement, and incorporation of the HRIDAY scheme.

The endeavour under HRIDAY falls under two categorisations. One is the centre framework project aimed to help rebuild and enhance the atmosphere around the outside; the centre area (natural drainage front growth); reestablish enigmatic assets (local craftsmanship and specialisation, writing); and tourist informational indexes and stands. Subterranean writing, pedestrian-friendly avenues, vacation offices, and other improvements to offices, such as drinking water, sanitation, streets, and halting, are part of the framework. For the execution of approved ventures,

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

the city mission coordinating had received portions totalling Rs. 360.87 crore as of February 2019. 180 crore rupees have been completed in 28 ventures. The remaining tasks, which were due in March 2019, are in various stages of use (HRIDAY INDIA).

Conclusion

The Indian government has acknowledged the importance of women's contributions to development and has made legislation concerning them reflected in the various Five-Year Plans. In terms of women's issues, the First through Fifth Plans were primarily welfare-oriented. Family planning, nutrition, health, education, and maternal and child welfare services were given priority. A significant turning point in the history of women's development was the Sixth Plan. It emphasised the importance of education, employment, and health as the three main pillars of women's development. It stated unequivocally for the first time that economic independence would hasten the advancement of women's status. From this point on, training-cum-production centres for women were established to train them for jobs, making them self-dependent. Ninth Plan's emphasis on women's involvement in strategy planning and execution, along with Eighth Plan's 1992 launch, signalled a change from development to empowerment. For women, the Tenth Plan established specific measurable goals. Indra Mahila Yojana's recast version, the Swyamsidha programme, groups women into Self Help Groups (SHGs) for activities and livelihood opportunities. The United Progressive Alliance Government's National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) established female political, academic, financial, and legal empowerment as one of its fundamental tenets. Under the "Women's Component Plan" (NCP), efforts were made to guarantee that at least 30 per cent of funds and benefits were designated for females under the different programmes of different ministries. Gender equity concerns were taken into consideration by emphasising the importance of increasing females in the creation and execution of development efforts. Facilitating the attainment of a safe and violence-free environment was a significant obstacle before the Eleventh Plan. Twelfth Plan, which was titled "quicker, consistent, and more encompassing," instituted a number of flagship initiatives, including the National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana for urban development, "Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation"; "Smart City Mission"; and "Swachh Bharat Mission" (Twelfth Five-Year Plan, 2012-2017). All these initiatives proved commendable for women

Tigga

because they addressed matters of health, employment, sanitation, drinking water, housing, and a safe, violence-free environment.

However, relocation of workers from rural to urban areas has led to problems of increased unemployment, traffic, poor sanitation, and unfair amenities. Women suffer the most from an unstable environment. Lack of technical expertise and skill forces them to work in the unprotected informal sector, earning little money and enduring dangerous working conditions that negatively impact their mental and physical health. At 3.2 per cent for men and 6.6 per cent for women, unemployment rates remain higher for women. In terms of housing, there are still laws required regarding women's ownership. Cities continue to struggle with subjects plaguing women - safe drinking water, transportation, a violence-free environment and sanitation. These are some issues that require government attention in order to support women's advancement.

References

- Banerjee, Anuradha. (2013). (EDs.), *Contemporary Urbanisation in India: Issues and Challenges*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.
- Banerjee, Anuradha and Das, Sharmisha. (2013). 'Slums in Indian Metropolis: Challenges to Urbanisation and Urban Development in the 21st Century'. In Anuradha Banerjee (Eds.), *Contemporary Urbanisation in India: Issues and Challenges*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd, 217- 252.
- Business Today. (2018). PM's Smart City Mission fails to pick up pace; 33% projects completed so far. Monday, December 17, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.businesstoday.in>
- Chatterjee, Mahalaya. (2015). 'Changing Dimensions of Rural-Urban Relationship in India: Vision for the Twenty-First Century'. In Satpal Singh (Eds.), *Cities: The 21st Century in India*. Delhi: Bookwell, 25-43.
- Dutta, Chandrani, Praveen Kumar Shukla and Mala Mukherjee. (2013). 'Government Policies and Programmes for Urban India: A Critical Appraisal'. In Anuradha Banerjee (Ed.), *Contemporary Urbanisation in India: Issues and Challenges*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd, 465-497.
- Eapen, Mridul and Mehta, Aasha Kapur. (2012). 'Gendering the Twelfth Plan: A feminist Perspective'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 67(17): 42-48.
- Gupta, Pragya Tiwari. (2015). 'Whither Indian Urban Growth: Dreams and Reality of Healthy Urban City in India'. In Satpal Singh (Eds.), *Cities: The 21st Century India*. Delhi: Bookwell, 485-508.
- Handbook of Urban Statistics. (2012). Government of India, Ministry of Urban Development. moud.gov.in.
- Handbook of Urban Statistics. (2016). Government of India, Ministry of Urban Development. moud.gov.in
- Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY). Retrieved from <https://www.hridayindia.in>
- Khambete, Aarti Kelkar. (2018). The Sanitation Crisis in India: An Urgent Need to Look Beyond Toilet Provision. Retrieved from www.indiawaterportal.org

Women's Urban Challenges: A Critical Analysis

- Khosla, Renu. (2004). Women and Sanitation: 'The Urban Reality Experiences of Government Programmes, NGO and CBOs'. In M.D. Asthana and Sabir Ali (Eds.), *Urban Poverty in India: Issues and Policies*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 181-201.
- Kumar, Ashwani and Das, K.C. (2014). 'Drinking Water and Sanitation Facility in India and its Linkages with Diarrhoea among Children Under Five: Evidences from Recent Data'. *International Journal of Humanities Social Science Invention*, 3(4): 50-60. Retrieved from www.ijnssi.org.
- Kumar, T.M. Vinod and Gayatri. (2004). 'Urban Poverty - Issues, Policies and Actions'. In M.D. Asthana and Sabir Ali (Eds.), *Urban Poverty in India: Issues and Policies*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 42-64.
- Locating Gender in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Approach: Issues Emerging from a Gendered Analysis. (2013). New Delhi.
- Millett, Kate. (2000). *Seeing Like a Feminist*. Oxford: Penguin.
- Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. (2015). AMRUT Mission Statement and Guidelines: In AMRUT Mission and Guidelines. New Delhi, India. Retrieved from <https://smartnet.niua.org>
- Parliament Digital Library: Swadhar Greh Scheme. 8 March 2023. Retrieved from [eparlib.sansad.in / eparlib.nic.in](http://eparlib.sansad.in/eparlib.nic.in).
- Randall, Vicky. (1982). Women and Politics. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Smart City Mission: A Step towards Smart India. Retrieved from <https://www.india.gov.in>
- Swachh Bharat Mission: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (Government of India). (2017). Retrieved from mohua.gov.in
- The Pioneer. (2018). PM reviews progress work of Atal Mission. Thursday, 24 May 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.dailypioneer.com>
- Twelfth Five-Year Plan: 2012-2017. Economic Sector. Planning Commission (Government of India), Volume 2.
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2012). *Shelter Services for Women: Identifying Critical Gender Concerns*. New Delhi: South Asia Sub-Regional Office.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 157-172)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

Preeti Yadav*

This paper follows the transformation of the Indian healthcare system that underwent from pre- to post-independence, within the prevailing politico-socio-economic setting. Contemporaneous encouragement meted out to the western medical system and dissuasion of indigenous medical practices and knowledge undertaken by the colonial establishment have been conspicuously brought out by elaborating upon studies of scholars, as well as by reflecting upon policies formulated by the colonial rule. The paper delves into systematic efforts undertaken by the colonial government to undermine the indigenous therapeutic system to erode its rational and scientific foundations. Also, the paper highlights the ambiguous response of the post-independence Indian state and its citizens to imposed Western ideologies of colonialists. Confined within this ambivalence, the state resorted to simply recognising or granting legitimacy to indigenous practices with no efforts to define the role of indigenous practices in modern times or address the financial paucity hampering indigenous medical systems, which appeared to subjugate them below Western medicines. Finally, the paper has deliberated upon alternative medical systems and suggested that medical systems should be ideated and modelled based on healthcare behaviour, wherein the individual's needs and requirements are given preference over healthcare institutions.

Key Words: Health, Colonial, Biomedicine, Indigenous Medical System, Medical Pluralism.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, S.S. Khanna Girls' Degree College (A Constituent College of University of Allahabad), Prayagraj. E-mail: ypreeti09@gmail.com

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

Introduction

In India, the healthcare system evolved and developed in a setting which was shaped by a complex gamut of social, cultural, and political factors stemming from the colonial and post-colonial era. Contemporary healthcare is a broad-spectrum model comprising diverse medical systems such as Biomedicine¹, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Naturopathy, faith healing, and the local practitioners of folk traditions. While ayurveda and siddha are indigenous practices of medicine, unani came about 800 years ago from West Asia and Naturopathy, Homoeopathy and Biomedicine were introduced from Europe around 200 years ago to integrate into the region's medical traditions. The advent, growth, and development of multiple medical approaches, their assimilation into several communities, along with the amalgamation and conflict with the indigenous practices, are distinctive aspects of Indian ethnomedical and cultural past (Sujatha & Abraham, 2009). The interaction and subsequent diffusion of such varied medical systems fostered an environment of medical pluralism. The notion of medical pluralism refers to the coexistence of various medical systems, offering people a relatively wide range of healthcare options. However, one of the crucial concerns of India's medical pluralism is an imbalance of power dynamics and hierarchy that exists between different medical systems. Various scholars and social scientists argued that the dominance and hegemony of the Western biomedical system of medicine has overshadowed and subjugated the indigenous systems of medicine (Banerji, 1979; Chakraborti, 2018; Prasad, 2007).

In the early eighteenth century, the colonial government introduced the western medical policy in Bengal and expanded it extensively in the rest of the country during its regime. Within the realm of colonial medical history, ambivalence of both the medical paradigms exposed various shortcomings, incompetencies and failures of the colonial rule, as well as the nonverbal stance towards the indigenous medical practices. The colonial government continuously targeted and victimised the indigenous therapeutic system to prioritise the colonial interests and maximise economic surplus. Eventually, due to political pressure, the indigenous medical system was rendered obsolete. With the passage of the India Act of 1919, health was decentralised as a matter of state concern, which triggered a direct confrontation with the prevalent indigenous medical practices.

Thus, the British colonial rule introduced the Western system of medicine in India and shifted state patronage from indigenous to Western medicine. Colonialism, besides the other changes that it inflicted, appeared

to have transformed the relationship between the indigenous medicine system and the colonial state. It led to circumstances in which British rule officially endorsed one specific system of medicine. This newly adopted medicine system was imposed both in ideology and in practice, which continued even in post-independent India. In the colonial period, the already stagnant and struggling indigenous medical traditions were caught in the vicious cycle of neglect and marginalisation. This neglect exacerbated their downfall, which consequently made it exceedingly challenging for the indigenous system of medicine to match the rapidly expanding and highly preferred western system in captivating the attention of the newly rising elite class of India. Thus, during a period when remarkable advancements were being made in the myriad domains of western medicine, the indigenous systems of medicine were largely controlled and led by individuals with minimal competence, often including quacks and impostors, causing almost complete erosion of their rational and scientific bases (Minocha, 1980).

Intertwined Trajectory of Western Medicine and Indigenous Practices: Understanding the Scholars' Perspectives

From the viewpoint of French philosopher Mitchel Foucault, medicine has been utilised as an instrument to exert politico-administrative power, eclipsing its curative role (Rabinow, 1984). The notions of biopower and biopolitics have been re-envisioned by scholars and incorporated into the rhetoric of health to examine, critique and analyse the power structure and dynamics in the health discourses and debates. The usage of the word colonial in colonial politics signifies the power relations between the ruling colonial state and its subjects (Hodges, 2017). In her works on colonial and postcolonial studies, Ann Laura Stoler contends that colonial biopolitics unveiled the debate surrounding 'race' in a different light. Stoler and other thinkers opine that race acted as a symbol of colonial power and authority and an agency of its execution (ibid). Colonial power largely relies on and operates through the colonial and racial divisions and differences. These differences eventually lead to a plurality of socio-political opinions, uncertainties and as a consequence, polarising arguments.

In his book *Colonising the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease* in nineteenth century India, David Arnold revisited these discourses, debates and ambivalences in the purview of the indigenous medicine system, including faith healing and folk tradition, particularly in the context of major epidemic diseases. While Arnold acknowledges his

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

indebtedness to *The Birth of the Clinic*, Discipline and Punish and Power/Knowledge, he deliberately refrains from imitating Foucault:

To an extent unparalleled in his work, it is concerned with the creation of a state-centred system of scientific knowledge and power, rather than the more diffused and generalised forms of knowledge and power he described... Indeed, the problematic interdependence of discourse and praxis, and the constant tension between them as represented in a complex colonial situation, lies at the centre of the more empirical discussions that follow (Arnold, 1993, p. 7).

Charles Leslie introduced the civilisational perspective in medical anthropology, and in one of his edited works, *Asian Medical Systems*, he underscored the contemporary relevance of indigenous medicine (Leslie, 1998). Leslie (1980) viewed the indigenous system of medicine as a progressive one with respect to its 'even-handed' approach towards pluralism, which is contrary to the 'normative' approach of health practitioners and medical administrators, who strongly advocated for the standardised healthcare and exhibited intolerance towards folk medicine practitioners working beyond the control of the state. He attempted to confront the frequent allegations of quackery levelled against faith healers and local health practitioners, and pointed towards the malpractices of biomedicine and argued that other quackery appears to be worse than one's own.

However, Minocha (1980) offered a contrasting perspective on medical pluralism and contended that the health-seeking behaviour of the people was primarily shaped and determined by the availability, accessibility and quality of healthcare services in a medical system in a particular region, rather than by the cultural views and perceptions of the people about the given medical system. Although hospitals and health personnel face continuous criticisms for being insensitive and impersonal, the overburdening of hospitals suggests that there is a significant demand for curative services. Minocha expressed concern that the traditional healers were prescribing potent allopathic medications to their patients without having sufficient knowledge of their side effects, and the patients used them in the same manner as they would take traditional medicines. She was sceptical whether this could be interpreted as an 'adaptability of traditional medicine' (ibid., p. 220).

Post-independence, the state inherited and carried the functions that were established by the colonial power; however, its approach towards the indigenous medicine system remained ambivalent. Without providing

financial support or clearly defining the roles, the state extended recognition and legitimacy to a wide range of indigenous medicinal traditions and resources. On the recommendation of various committees, a number of councils, national institutes, and drug testing laboratories were established by the government (Sujatha & Abraham, 2009). However, the primary concern of state-orchestrated institutional development has been the scientific validation of indigenous drugs, subjugating indigenous systems of medicine to the dynamics of the laboratory's political economy. Nevertheless, various institutions and arrangements have expanded in the non-governmental sector, leveraging the efforts of vaidyas², their professional institutions and associations, community groups and NGOs that counteract the dominance of the scientific framework (ibid., p. 41).

Jeffery (2024) analysed the occupational positions of biomedical doctors and discussed the processes of deprofessionalism in contemporary India. He pointed out that post-2000, governments of different political ideologies have extended recognition and support to the alternative healers because biomedical doctors have shown their reluctance to practise in rural areas. In 2006-07, the United Progressive Alliance-led government mainstreamed the diverse indigenous systems of medicine into the AYUSH department and later in 2014, the National Democratic Alliance government established it as an independent official ministry. While the term AYUSH systems encompasses a variety of diverse therapies, it has temporarily settled the question of which generic term- indigenous, alternative, or traditional- should be used for non-biomedical practices. In the present Indian healthcare system, AYUSH systems are co-located with biomedicine as part of the National Health Mission (NHM), and Ayurveda and yoga have also found their way into private biomedical institutions. However, Jeffery argued that the budget allocation for AYUSH is significantly lower than that for biomedicine. This has prompted new inquiries: How do biomedicine and other systems of medicine interact when co-located in public health organisations? What are the outcomes of integrating non-biomedical systems within mainstream healthcare? What exclusions arise from prioritising textual systems of medicine?

One of the major concerns in the pluralistic politics of AYUSH is how non-biomedical systems strive to survive in a skewed relationship where biomedicine determines the criteria and standards for scientific medicine. As AYUSH systems are being mainstreamed and incorporated into the NHM, non-biomedical therapists are expected to provide allopathic care, lead health campaigns, and help mitigate the shortage of allopathic

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

personnel. With the mainstreaming of AYUSH systems, a new group of ad hoc AYUSH practitioners has emerged, who can fill in (act as stand-ins) for allopathic doctors in remote locales (Priya, 2012).

The integration of non-medical systems into the mainstream often challenges their core theoretical foundations. The overreliance of emergent biological sciences on reductionist laboratory methods has undermined the balanced and functional approaches of traditional medicine, resulting in a skewed relationship. However, the global adoption of medical pluralism as a state policy highlights the critical realisation that medical efficacy is not a singular concept, but one that challenges the monopoly of laboratory sciences on human health and experiences.

Colonial Therapy versus Indigenous Therapy

The dichotomy between 'colonial medicine' (considered as more scientific?) and 'traditional healing practices' (often seen as religious and magical?) forms the basis of multiple interpretations of medicine throughout the colonial and post-colonial epochs up to the present times (Ernst, 2004). The primary concern of colonial power was to extend trade and gather revenue amid territorial expansion. Before 1800, the company personnel sought medical advice from Indian healers; however, paradoxically, over time, imperial healers assumed the role of consultants to indigenous practitioners. In the last phase of colonial governance, the authorities were training Indians in the Western medicine system for subordinate healthcare positions.

Despite the vast conceptual and epistemological differences between the two systems, the interactions and exchanges between them were inevitable. With the support of orientalist, the East India Company attempted to document the indigenous healing practices between 1770 and 1820. The translation of scriptures offered a comprehensive insight into indigenous herbal plants, medicines and treatments. Through these interactions and exchanges, a sense of intimacy evolved between the two distinct cultural spheres- oriental and occidental. 'Early British attitude to what was known of Ayurvedic, Unani and even folk medicine were often tolerant and even appreciative, though seldom without substantial qualification' (Arnold, 2000, p. 66).

The self-perceived scientific superiority of imperial medicine led to the deliberate neglect of the proven efficacies of indigenous medicine. From the 1820s onwards, there was a constant demand for the introduction of medical colleges and training in India aligned with British standards. In

1822, the Native Medical Institution (NMI) was established with an aim to provide medical personnel for subordinate positions. In this institution, both systems of medicine were taught in the vernacular language. Sanskrit college and Madarsa were converted into centres for medical training. A committee was constituted to draft a report on the status of these medical colleges, which was to be submitted to the then Governor General Lord William Bentinck. In 1835, on the recommendation of this committee, William Bentinck issued an order and approved the establishment of a new medical college in line with British standards (Bala, 1991).

In India, Dr. Henry Hurry Goodeve was the first to start the practice of using human cadavers in anatomical research. On 10 January 1836, Pandit Madhusudan Gupta, a renowned vaidya, defied deeply entrenched taboos and superstitions and made his name in the history of anatomy and surgery by dissecting a human body (O'Malley, 1925). Over a period of time, NMI gradually transformed into a medical school, briefly focusing solely on European sciences taught in English. Meanwhile, the colonial government phased out variolation in order to promote vaccination (Arnold, 1993).

The progress and advancements in Western medicine could not fully divert its practitioners' attention from traditional medicine. Until the nineteenth century, the government allowed the use of traditional practitioners for public health services due to an insufficient number of trained Western practitioners. Dr. Nilratan Sircar once pointed out that it was nearly impossible for two-three thousand doctors to provide adequate medical care to the vast seven crore population of Bengal. The overwhelming demand outstripped the resources of three medical schools and one medical college, prompting a return to teaching in the vernacular language. Ultimately, in 1864, a revised order was issued that categorised medicine into two branches: Native Apothecary and Vernacular Licentiate (Bala, 1991).

Medical authorities deemed the indigenous system as deceitful quackery, but they could not overlook its affordability and cost-effectiveness. The Director General of the Indian Medical Service (IMS) was reluctant to reallocate budget and resources from Western to indigenous medicine. The medical administrators never showed unanimous support for indigenous medicine. While some members attempted to introduce an amalgamation of Western and indigenous systems, others simply tried to avoid traditional medicine. Subsequently, the apathy and hostility towards indigenous medicine became apparent. Post-nineteenth century, IMS officials increasingly asserted their claims of scientific supremacy and legitimacy. The proliferation of medical graduates, biomedical doctors, and registered

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

practitioners posed a major challenge to 'native' practitioners and healers operating in suburban areas.

Under the Medical Registration Act, *vaid*s and *hakims*³ were barred from using the title 'Doctor' and legally prohibited from functioning as medical practitioners. In 1910, it was laid out that to be eligible for the position of civil assistant surgeon, one must possess either a Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery (LMS) or Medicine Bachelor's degree from a recognised Indian university, or a qualification that is recognised for registration in England. After Calcutta University's registration was terminated, the diploma of membership that was then awarded by the State Medical Faculty of Bengal was no longer considered equivalent to the LMS formerly issued to college students. As a result, the former qualification was deemed ineligible for registration in the United Kingdom, but the latter was eligible. Thus, the conflict between the two systems became more pronounced. With the enactment of the Bengal Medical Act in 1914, a Medical Council was established in Bengal. The Indian Medical Degree Act, 1916, was implemented to regulate the misuse of medicine and surgical degrees. Concurrently, in 1912, Bombay saw the establishment of the first provincial Medical Council, and gradually more such councils were set up in other provinces to monitor scientific practice without impinging the traditional system of medicine.

The government showed no remorse in exhibiting double standards by relying on local medicines and remedies to reduce import expenses (Harrison, 2001). Europeans also embraced low-cost indigenous medicine. The development of technology made it easier to extract Quinine Sulphate from cinchona bark. Gradually, Western medicine became a means of asserting superiority over native technologies, thereby dissociating itself from Indian tradition. However, in the twentieth century, due to wartime crises, the government was compelled to conduct research and experiments with indigenous products, leading to the inclusion of several indigenous drugs within the ambit of Western pharmacopoeia.

Indigenous practitioners were slightly favoured by the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919. Politicians who supported nationalist movements could advance their policies, despite facing opposition from medical advisors. However, the attempt was intercepted by the General Medical Council (GMC). It enforced restrictions on the enrolment of medical students, impacting the quality of medical education. Until 1922, GMC did not cease to recognise medical degrees issued by Calcutta University. Further, in 1933, the All India Medical Council was established with an aim

to regulate and standardise medical degrees to ensure international recognition. In the early twentieth century, the indigenous practitioners were influenced by the Swadeshi movement and demanded separate professional status. Conversely, the medical bureaucracy prioritised revising medical courses and developing model professionalism. The proponents of the non-cooperation movement ardently supported the indigenous system of medicine, leading to the establishment of the Calcutta Ayurvedic Institution, the Astanga Ayurveda College and Hospital and the National University of Bengal (Bala, 1991). However, by the end of the 1920s, the majority of leaders retracted their support from the indigenous system and aligned with the newly constituted Indian Medical Council. Eventually, the emergence of new medical colleges in Calcutta led to the closure of medical institutions practising indigenous medicine. Despite the personal patronage and funds of Kavirajas⁴, their traditional ToI⁵ could not withstand the competition posed by the medical institutions equipped with modern training infrastructure and facilities. The assimilation of Western medicine into Indian society progressed gradually, leading to the obsolescence of the indigenous system.

Folk practitioners were a crucial resource for the poorer class, offering affordable treatments. They were often the only available and accessible healers in rural India. The discontinuation of medical education in the vernacular language led to a shortage of hospital assistance in rural areas. With sub-assistant surgeons being beyond their means, folk practitioners were the only recourse for the masses. The village-centric orientation of folk practitioners made them independent of economic instability. They maintained their traditional clientele, receiving either modest payments from impoverished people or generous fees from landed peasantry. However, often untrained and inexperienced folk practitioners would resort to Western drugs to exhibit mystical healing for rapid success (Jeffery, 1988).

Indigenous medicines: Pharmaceutical adaptation and biomedical influence

The Indian subcontinent saw a shift from small-scale (household) to large-scale manufacturing of ayurvedic and unani medicines, occurring almost concurrently with or even prior to the advent of the biomedical industry. In 1884, Dr. S.K. Burman founded Dabur in eastern Calcutta; Chandra Kishore Sen of Bengal opened the country's first ever private ayurvedic dispensary in 1878 in Calcutta, with the purpose of making prepared medicines more affordable, and by 1898, its large-scale production was initiated; in Dacca, Shakti Aushadhalaya was launched in 1901; and in

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

1910, Jugatram Vaidya established Zandu in Mumbai, stemming from the Rasa Sala established by his grandfather in Jamnagar in 1864 (Sujaatha, 2020). Prior to the 1980s, sowarigpa⁶ medicines in Ladakh were solely concocted by individual Amchis in their households, strictly for direct patient use with no intentions of market sale (Blaikie, 2009). With the growing interaction between Ladakhi Amchis⁷ and Amchis from exiled Tibetan communities, the former got exposed to the high demand of sowarigpa medicines in the outside world and started manufacturing them exclusively for the market. By venturing into the production of ready-made pharmaceutical medicines, the commercialisation of sowarigpa marked the shift of this traditional medical system from its use value to an exchange value. A group of the Ladakhi Amchis modernised their medical practices and, in 2009, gained recognition from the Ministry of AYUSH (erstwhile AYUSH department), further advancing this trend in favour of the market.

Banerjee (2004) traced three key aspects of indigenous systems of medicine, particularly focusing on Ayurveda and Unani. Firstly, shifts and developments in the Ayurvedic and Unani drug industry and market; secondly, the move towards large-scale manufacturing of pharmaceutical products rooted in Ayurveda; and lastly, the implications of this strategic step for Ayurveda's global expansion and outreach. Bode's work delves into the commercial transformation of Indian medicines into commodities by the companies and elaborates on how the Himalayan Drug Company made its way into the mainstream drug industry with its ayurvedic proprietary products and medicines that could be advised by biomedical practitioners (Bode, 2008). He referred to this process of transition as 'biomedical enclaving'.

A noteworthy fact is that a considerable section of the population continues to access and consume traditional medicines, even when they resort to allopathic medicines and treatments. However, this access and utilisation pattern is highly uneven, inconsistent and selective and can hardly be romanticised. Hardiman and Raje (2008) highlighted that the accessibility of herbal plants for tribal communities in Gujarat has declined significantly, and instead, there has been a proliferation of quackery and dubious practices, depriving them of credible or dependable healthcare options. NGOs focused on health and development play a pivotal role in leveraging indigenous medical knowledge, as demonstrated by their efforts to revive herbal remedies for treating poison in South Karnataka (Payyapallaimana & Suneetha, 2012). Drawing attention towards efforts to strengthen the interconnections between biodiversity conservation,

uncodified indigenous knowledge and community health and well-being in India, Payyapallaimana discusses how the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) initiated the establishment of Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCA) to protect herbal plants through in situ and ex situ conservation strategies and ensured the preservation of gene pool with the assistance from department of forest, along with the implementation of programmes to augment the knowledge base of indigenous practitioners.

Physicians in a Plural Medical System

By the 1970s, anthropologists began to prioritise the study of medical practices and knowledge of indigenous practitioners- vaid and hakims- over health behaviour. Leslie (1998) labelled Ayurveda, Unani and biomedicine as 'cosmopolitan' medicine due to their widespread influence, and included them in the discourse on health care models. He also proposed the idea of medical pluralism to highlight the Asian health care model, characterised by its reliance on multiple systems, in contrast to the single system hierarchical model of American healthcare. In Leslie's framework, medical pluralism was identified as a positive approach for the Anglo-Saxon world. Following Leslie's seminal work, the next three decades saw extensive ethnographic studies on indigenous practitioners. Drawing from his research on doctor-patient encounters and interactions in ayurvedic, unani, and biomedicine clinics in Lucknow, Khare (1996) contended that, in practice, the rigid distinctions between religion, culture, and science are irrelevant; physicians of various systems in India effectively employ communication strategies to enhance therapeutic outcomes.

Sociologists in the country, however, viewed 'traditional' medicines with scepticism, arguing that their glorification might lead to quackery and other questionable practices (Minocha, 1980). Public health scholars and investigators identified that, despite being available and accessible, the populace did not opt for biomedicine's clinical and remedial services (Banerji, 1986). Concurrently, sociologists were exploring the professionalisation issues within bureaucratic systems. Oommen (1978) looked into the role perceptions and performances of both doctors and nurses in the public hospitals in Delhi. Venkatratnam (1979) compared and analysed the performance of medical professionals in the two hospitals to identify the gap between their normative role expectations and professional performance. In his late 1970s writings, Jeffery remarked that although physicians were highly regarded in Indian society, the modern healthcare

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

profession lacked the political power and dominance seen among their counterparts in the United States. The Indian biomedical community's limited professional power can be attributed to several factors, notably the widespread Indian perception of medicine as a humanitarian vocation instead of a commercial pursuit and the indoctrination of doctors with nebulous ideals like 'service to humanity'. While medical associations in the United States and Europe enjoyed high membership, the Indian Medical Association had a relatively low number of members (Starr, 1978). Despite the substantial presence of private medical practice in India, allopaths did not see an increase in their professional power due to strict governmental regulations, competition and contestation with non-allopathic practitioners. This necessitated the adoption of populist tactics to meet client needs and secure their continued existence (Jeffery, 1978).

Neo-traditionalism

Although there is a consensus on the need to institutionalise and professionalise education and training in indigenous medicine, significant disagreements exist regarding the curriculum, content and incorporation of biomedical subjects, which in some states often reached up to 70 per cent. Between 1958 and 1964, students of traditional medicine organised around 55 strikes to seek parity in status and pay with biomedical doctors, as well as to rename their degree from ayurvedacharya to English equivalents such as MBBS (Brass, 1972).

Various approaches and methods are employed by physicians to strike a balance between ancient medical practices and modern medical demands. Instead of perceiving modern ayurvedic discourses as isolated cultural phenomena, sociological paradigms consider culture and medical knowledge to be intricately linked with the evolving social contexts of students who are obtaining degrees in traditional medicine from modern colleges. Over the period of more than a century, historical studies on the traditional medicine physicians with formal college education reveal the convergence of historical and epistemological differences in medical knowledge and practices with the modern life-world of these physicians, reflecting the pressing needs of the time (Sujatha, 2011). For instance, a botanist, educated in modern school and college and hailing from a family of traditional Siddha healers, living in a suburban locale with computer and internet access, is likely to naturally amalgamate knowledge from botany and biochemistry to comprehend and understand siddha medicines. Further, he might also employ his cultural understanding of siddha cosmology to

foster localised ecological practices through the efforts of his own NGO and derive some peace from this Tamil cultural revivalism.

By drawing on the notion of 'elective affinal' propounded by Bryan Turner, Johannessen and Lazar (2006) attempted to understand the interconnections between praxis, knowledge and power at various levels, in the context of medical pluralism, particularly focusing on how and when the convergence of a specific cultural code and praxis occurs. When there is congruence between the interest and principle of the two factors, elective affinal is established.

Conclusion

Interaction of various medical systems within the Indian subcontinent led to the cultivation of medical pluralism, but this co-existence of varied medical systems was not harmonious, i.e. bereft of hierarchical segregation and imbalance. The advent of colonial rule and the pursuit of associated vested interests led to the indigenous system being dragged to the social and political periphery. Throughout the majority of the colonial and post-colonial period, repeated attempts have been made at highlighting the dichotomy of both systems, conveniently overlooking the evolution in a symbiotic manner. Initially, colonialists started as clients of indigenous practitioners; however, they gradually transformed into their consultants and finally metamorphosed into the ones imparting them training in Western systems. Early colonialists sought a comprehensive understanding and insight into indigenous knowledge, practices and scriptures, which led to exchange and interaction between both the systems, but gradually imperial outlook brought about the subjugation of oriental beliefs and thought.

The hangover of the same could be seen post-independence as well, when policy formulators could not arrive at a consensus, leading to ambivalence in the approach towards mutual amicable growth of both the systems, with skewed domination of biomedicine continuing. The country's health service system has been grappling with striking a balance between competing medical systems, i.e. western and indigenous which may eventually lead to a much-desired alternative model, where the focus shifts from medical institutions as the prima donna to placing people themselves at the centre stage. The crucial concern is to address the distortions in the health care system brought about by the convergence of political, economic, and social forces. As Foster (1958) emphasised, there is a need to distinguish between core clinical principles of scientific medicine and the surrounding

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

traditions, customs, folk magic and faddism integrated into that institution. The same principles hold true for indigenous medicine as well. While neglecting them is undesirable, so is romanticising them, especially considering the deterioration these systems have undergone due to political and social influences.

The foundational step required in this direction is to formalise the facets of the indigenous system and allow interdisciplinary research as well as study by followers of both systems. The focus should be on deliverables, i.e. how to tackle the ensuing modern-day medical demands by the amalgamation of indigenous and biomedicines. In the present social context, it is imperative to enable interaction and exchange of modern scientific knowledge and indigenous practices ingrained within the cultural fabric of the society.

The essential principle guiding an alternative healthcare system is to place people at the forefront and prioritise the community. Rather than forcing people into a predefined structure, a healthcare system should be tailored to meet the specific healthcare needs of the people. The integration of technological elements should be in consonance with the health behaviour of the community, health care delivery agencies, and health institutions, ensuring these elements align with the social and cultural context, and can be implemented with the existing available resources. In other words, individuals should not be coerced into abandoning their adopted health practices unless a convincing argument shows that an alternative technology could significantly improve their health outcomes, taking into account their perceived issues and existing resource limitations.

End Notes

1. The terms biomedicine, allopathy, and western medicine have been used interchangeably in the paper.
2. Vaidyas are traditional Indian physicians who practices ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine rooted in natural and holistic healing.
3. Hakims are traditional physicians in the unani system of medicine, which originated in ancient Greece. They practiced holistic healing using herbal remedies, dietary practices, and natural therapies to treat various ailments.
4. Kavirajas were traditional ayurvedic physicians in ancient and medieval India, known for their expertise in herbal medicine and holistic healing.
5. Tols were traditional centres of ayurvedic learning and practice where aspiring physicians were trained in the ancient medical system.
6. Sowa rigpa is the traditional system of medicine practiced in Tibet, Bhutan, and parts of Nepal and India.
7. Ladakhi Amchis are traditional healers in the Ladakh region of India, practicing sowa rigpa, the Tibetan system of medicine.

References

- Arnold, D. (2000). *Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Arnold, D. (1993). *Colonising the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*. University of California Press.
- Bala, P. (1991). *Imperialism and Medicine in Bengal: A Socio-Historical Perspective*. Sage Publications.
- Banerjee, M. (2004). 'Local Knowledge for World Market: Globalising Ayurveda'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(1), 89-93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414468>
- Banerji, D. (1979). 'Place of the Indigenous Aand the Western Systems of Medicine in the Health Services of India'. *International Journal of Health Services*, 9(3), 511-519. <https://doi.org/10.2190/0BG1-B2A7-M2BM-EFEC>
- Banerji, D. (1986). *Social Sciences and Health Service Development in India: Sociology of Formation of an Alternative Paradigm*. Lok Paksh.
- Blaikie, C. (2009). 'Critically Endangered? Medicinal Plant Cultivation and the Reconfiguration of Sowaigpaina Ladakh'. *Asian Medicine*, 5(2), 243-272. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157342109X56880>
- Bode, M. (2008). *Taking Traditional Knowledge to the Market: The Modern Image of the Ayurvedic and Unani Industry*. Orient Blackswan.
- Brass, P. (1972). 'The Politics of Ayurvedic Education: A Case Study of Revivalism and Modernisation in India'. In S. Rudolph & L. Rudolph (Eds.), *Education and Politics in India: Studies in Organisation, Society and Policy* (pp.342-71). Oxford University Press.
- Chakraborti, M. (2018). 'Colonial Apathy Against Medical Plurality'. *Social Scientist*, 46(5-6), 61-76. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26530804>
- Ernst, W. (2004). 'Colonial Psychiatry, Magic and Religion: The Case of Mesmerism in British India'. *History of Psychiatry*, 15(1), 57-71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X04039344>
- Foster, G.M. (1958). *Problems in Inter-Cultural Health Programmes: Memorandum to the Committee on Preventive Medicine and Social Science*. Social Science Research Council.
- Hardiman, D., & Raje, G. (2008). 'Practices of Healing in Tribal Gujarat'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(9), 43-50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40277206>
- Harrison, M. (2001). 'Medicine and Orientalism: Perspective on Europe's Encounter with Indian Medical System'. In B. Pati & M. Harrison (Eds.), *Health, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Colonial India* (pp. 37-87). Oriental Longman.
- Hodges, S. (2017). *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce: Birth Control in South India, 1920-1940*. Routledge.
- Jeffery, R. (2024). 'Current Challenges for Doctors in India: Deprofessionalisation, Reprofessionalisation or Fragmentation?'. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 46(5), 795-814. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13564>
- Jeffery, R. (1988). *The Politics of Health in India*. University of California Press.
- Jeffery, R. (1978). 'Allopathic Medicine in India: A Case of Deprofessionalisation?'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11(3), 101-113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4366316>
- Johannessen, H., & Lazar, I. (2006). *Multiple Medical Realities: Patients and Healers in Biomedical, Alternative Aand Traditional Medicine*. Bergahn Press.
- Khare, R.S. (1996). 'Dava, Doktor and Dua: Anthropology of Practised Medicine in India'. *Social Science Medicine in India*, 43(5), 837-848. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(96\)00128-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(96)00128-1)
- Leslie, C. (1980). 'Medical Pluralism in World Perspective [1]. *Social Science & Medicine*'. Part B: *Medical Anthropology*, 14(4), 191-195. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7987\(80\)90044-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7987(80)90044-7)

Ebbing Influence of the Indigenous Medical System: Revisiting the Indian Colonial Past

- Leslie, C. (1998). *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.
- Minocha, A.A. (1980). 'Medical Pluralism and Health Services in India. Social Science & Medicine'. *Part B: Medical Anthropology*, 14(4), 217-223. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7987\(80\)90047-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7987(80)90047-2)
- O'Malley, L.S.S. (1925). *History of Bengal, Bihar & Orissa under British Rule*. Bengal Secretariat Book Depot.
- Oommen, T.K. (1978). *Doctors and Nurses: A Study in Occupational Role Structure*. Macmillan.
- Payyapallaimana, U., & Suneetha, M.S. (2012). *Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge and Community Health: Strengthening Linkages*. Singapore: Xpress Pte Ltd.
- Prasad, N.P. (2007). 'Medicine, Power Aand Social Legitimacy: A Socio-Historical Appraisal of Health Systems in Contemporary India'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(34), 3491-3498. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419944>
- Priya, R. (2012). 'AYUSH and Public Health: Democratic Pluralism and Quality of Health Services'. In V. Sujatha & L. Abraham (Eds.), *Medical Pluralism in Contemporary India* (pp. 103-120). Orient BlackSwan.
- Rabinow, P. (1984). *The Foucault Reader*. Pantheon Books.
- Starr, P. (1978). *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. Basic Books.
- Sujatha, V. (2020). 'Globalisation of South Asian Medicines: Knowledge, Power, Structure and Sustainability'. *Society and Culture in South Asia*, 6(1), 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2393861719883063>
- Sujatha, V. (2011). 'Innovation Within and Between Traditions: Dilemma of Traditional Medicine in Contemporary India'. *Science, Technology & Society*, 16(2), 191-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097172181001600204>
- Sujatha, V., & Abraham, L. (2009). 'Medicine, State and Society'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(16), 35-43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40279154>
- Venkatratnam, R. (1979). *Medical Sociology in an Indian Setting*. Macmillan.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 173-186)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion from the Abyss of Stagnation

Rakesh Ranjan Das*

Lovely lotus flowers of practically profound philosophies and tide-turning theories do grow up in the midst of muddy, messy waters of stagnation and crisis. When nineteenth century India was caught in the complex cobweb of rigid religiosity, doctrinal dogmatism, ossified orthodoxies of caste and religion, degrading colonial control informed by detotalised modernist framework and epistemic closure, abject poverty of masses, all leading to the crisis of self, meaning and identity, then in that context, Vivekananda, through a long train of radical thought process, like Shakespearean Julius Caesar, bestrode like a colossus over the stagnant status quo of society and nation. This paper examines and explores in detail as to how far Vivekananda was a radical thinker and how his radical thoughts made a seminal attempt to rescue religion from the abyss of stagnation. This paper, to a great extent, would argue in favour of it.

Key Words: Practical Vedanta, Totalised Ontology, Spiritual Syncretism, Radical Immanence, Collective Liberation, Cosmopolitan Identity, Science-Sanskrit Epigram, Collective Liberation.

*Research Scholar, Centre for Political Studies (CPS), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
E-mail: rakeshranjandas.rrd@gmail.com

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

Nineteenth century India was entangled and embroiled in a complex cobweb of stagnancy and oppression where multiple structures of domination were unleashing the dehumanising nature of oppression and control over the downtrodden and the destitute. Colonialism, under the camouflage of so-called civilising claims, had degraded and plundered India through years and years of oppression, resulting in the dawn of defeatism and spineless spiritlessness among the colonised subjects. On the other hand, the subordinate status of women, ossified orthodoxies of caste and sacerdotal order that were practised and nurtured by conservative elements and the appalling poverty and penury of the millions of masses had culminated into a hapless habitual ethos of 'resignation to fate' which had started controlling the collective psyche of Indians, especially poor people of those times. Instruments of doubt and scientific investigation to critically examine the principles and laws of religion were branded as unethical and immoral, bordering on blasphemy, by the doctrinaire traditionalists who, not only practised rigid religious ritualism but also branded the parroting of the verses of religious texts as the very parameter of spiritual evolvment! There was a crisis of ontology, meaning and imagination. There was a crisis of self.

Socio-religious reform movements started in the 19th century, and were losing the vitality and vigour of their early days of inception. While Arya Samaj had assumed leadership in many movements of social reforms related to widows, Dalits, and women, but later on, it later became a bulwark against the encroachments of other religious forces, appealing to the orthodox Hindu mind (Jones, 1976). Its rigid Vedic literalism could not do a revolutionary reform in holistic ontological terms. Reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy and Keshav Chandra Sen were humbly critiqued by Vivekananda as the 'Babu Reformers', since their movements, of which Vivekananda was himself influenced by in his early days, could not penetrate to the hearts and minds of the people languishing at the very bottom of the social pyramid. Vivekananda, spiritually evolved under the tutelage of an egalitarian mystic, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, was appalled and agonised by seeing the multiple structures of domination existing in the 19th century Indian society, most of which were connected with the religious domain in varied ways. Hence, by proposing an entire train of radical reformatory measures, which this paper will discuss one by one, not only did Vivekananda assiduously attempt to rescue religion from the swampy soil of stagnation, rigidity and orthodoxy, but, in that process, he could also be seen as one of the pioneers of the 'Liberation Theology' in India.

Practical Vedanta

Propounding and personifying a radical concept of an egalitarian and engaged religiosity, Vivekananda rescued the abstract, abstruse, and philosophically esoteric spiritual theories of Vedanta from the inner recesses of mountains and the monasteries where it was reserved for the saints and the scholars and brought it down to every nook and cranny of a common man's hut and heart in the form of 'Practical Vedanta'. Vivekananda tried to remove the charges of 'metaphysical idealism' levelled on the earlier interpretations of Vedanta by boldly arguing in his Lecture in London¹ that the fictitious differentiation between religious life and worldly life should be done away with, both in theory and in practice (Vivekananda, 2006). Vedantic wisdom of 'Nishkam-Karma' (work without attachment) in the selfless service of society, serving the poorest of the poor and leading life with the larger spirit of Universal brotherhood and acceptance of one another's diversity should be the flagpost of every human being, whether one be a sanyasi or a householder. Ramkrishna Puligandla² analyses this interpretation of Vedanta as a rational, ethical and realist imperative that brought the abstract concept of Brahman (sat-chit-Ananda)³ into an integrated relationship with Loksangraha (larger welfare of humanity) (Puligandla, 1975). Swamiji boldly exhorted young sanyasis that sanyasa (renunciation) is not a metaphysical escape but a deeper and integrated awakening into a radical responsibility of reforming and redeeming the self, society, nation and the entire humanity. Thus, making a very radical epistemic rupture in the spiritual sphere, Vivekananda transferred sanyasis from being isolated selves to socially embedded selves. He argued that it is madness to give metaphysics to a poor person languishing in abject poverty. They should be given food, medicines, knowledge of science, technology, and mathematics, which could give them a sense of educational and economic agency. This would eventually evolve their consciousness to attain the higher goals of liberation. In this quest, Vivekananda took the 'detotalised ontology' of modernist colonial frameworks under his critical scanner and argued for the 'retotalised ontological understanding' of reality to make his countrymen and women and larger humanity proceed on the path of liberation.

Against the Modernist Framework of Dualistic Thinking and Call for a Totalised Ontology

The epistemic arrogance of Western modernity, which had put reason and religion, science and religion into two different domains, was given a strong counter-hegemonic argumentation by Vivekananda.

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

Modernity keeps reason and rationality in the domain of secular public affairs and religion in the private domain, as it conceptualises that religion based on beliefs and superstitions obscures the rational thought process. In stark contrast, Vivekananda argued that reason is already available within religious knowledge systems that call for an integrated and totalised look at reality. Vedantic texts provide multiple epistemic frameworks to approach and unclutter the ontic reality. Hence, he denounced the epistemic arrogance of Newtonian Sciences that employed positivist epistemology to understand reality and which, along with Cartesian dualism, became the foundational principles of Western modernity. Hence, proposing his vision of an integrated look at reality, Vivekananda argued for the double helix of science and spirituality. He further argued that colonial modernity has aggrandised unbridled human greed, leading to the proliferation of possessive individualism. Launching a sharp attack on the degeneration of human ethics and the uncontrolled rise of selfish individuality, he urged people to proceed on the collective project of liberation. This vision was theoretically ingrained in the core Vedantic concept of the integral self (atman) that is ontologically inseparable from others (sarvam khalidam Brahman)⁴. This intellectual formulation can be seen as an ethical and realist revival of moral and imaginative selfhood that is not only rooted in Vedantic wisdom but that also strongly resists the epistemic violence of Western secular modernity.

Nietzsche's God is Dead and Vivekananda's Living God

In the wake of enlightenment rationality and modern nihilism that had led to the desacralisation of moral values and the unprecedented collapse of transcendental absolutes, German philosopher Nietzsche's proclamation of 'God is Dead' was making waves (Nietzsche, 1883; trans. Hollingdale, 1961). Nietzsche, in his genealogical critique of Christian morality, pondered that humans' creative forces are being stifled by the repressive architecture of traditional theological scriptures and hence, a revaluation of values is needed to gain human autonomy and power, which he articulated through the figure of Übermensch (Nietzsche, 1882).⁵ In contrast, Vivekananda denied that the divine is dead; instead, he coined the concept of 'living god', i.e, seeing god in the service of the poorest of the poor (Daridya Narayana), languishing on the last layer of society. This radical re-inscription or, for that matter, this radical call to realise the divine nestled in the very ontology of human existence, situated in the hearts of the poor masses deemed hitherto as pariahs by multiple structures of mental domination, makes Vivekananda a profound and unique philosopher of

human liberation. Striking against the modernist tendencies of nihilistic abandonment to gain autonomy and power, Vivekananda propounded the timeless concept of Upanishads – Tat Tvam Asi (you are thou)⁶ and stressed that the practice of true religion is the manifestation of divinity already present within a person!

Immanuel Kant's stress on Human Dignity and Vivekananda's Call for Reverence

In one of the most profound formulations of universal human dignity, flanking the framework of Enlightenment Rationalism, Immanuel Kant argues that it is the categorical imperative to ensure human dignity to all human beings as they are not merely means to something but ends in themselves (Kant, 1785). Kant basically positions dignity as an inherent moral worth, not finding its inspiration from any empirical observation or social condition, but through the rational structure of the will itself. Though this maxim is a strong flagpost of Kantian Universal morality but, it is still confined within some sort of Dualistic Metaphysics. Moral law, as Kant argues, is autonomous, but still, we see that it is separate from empirical human nature. Thus, Kant's universality is deontological, oriented more towards a sense of rational duty rather than an embodied lived spiritual attainment.

Vivekananda goes beyond Kant by arguing that Human beings are not just worthy of dignity but reverence as the supreme being, the Brahmin resides in their souls. Service to Daridya-narayan (Living God) is the highest form of service. Going beyond Kant's respect for rational agency, Vivekananda's call for affective and ontological reverence not only challenges the rampant practices of Caste discrimination and untouchability prevalent in those times, but at the very Intellectual and philosophical level, he showed how reason within religion, in this case, Vedantic wisdom, could be used to reform society. This variant of participatory Metaphysics, which he called as Practical Vedanta, not only goes beyond Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics but it also establishes a non-dual spiritual ontology against the prevalent Dualism of the Sacred and the secular in the Modernist Epistemic framework. He used this non-dual spiritual ontology of Advaita Vedanta to unpack multiple social maladies that India was suffering from in its domestic and religious spheres.

Philosophy of Equality

Caste-based discrimination prevalent in the religious sphere of nineteenth-century India came under the critical scanner of Vivekananda

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

(Singh, 2018). His critical pitch reached its crescendo when he was astounded and appalled to see that Dr. Palpu⁷ was not allowed to do his medical practice in Kerala just because he belonged to the Ezhava caste. Dominant castes used to refrain from being touched by even the shadow of a person belonging to the lower rung of society. Vivekananda termed this sort of social setting as a mental asylum, a madhouse. He exposed the hypocrisy of dominant caste men when he observed that they who would start revering that very outcast if he changed his religion to Christianity and his name to some, Matthews, Donald, etc.!

Similarly, in the educational sphere, no Sanskrit education for Dalits was the prevalent practice, accentuated by the absurd and discriminatory argument that some castes had the hereditary aptitude for learning in contrast to the Shudra and Dalit communities. Vivekananda, first of all, gave an intelligent twist to this absurd argumentation by proposing that if some castes have a superior hereditary aptitude for learning, then it actually gives a convincing argument that more and more money should be spent on a pariah's education so that he/she can develop that aptitude for learning. But, then Swami ji explained through a more refined, radical, and egalitarian template having its roots in Advaita Vedantic concept of non-dualistic ontology that deep within every human being, irrespective of caste and birth, strength and weakness, there lies an infinite soul which assures, in totality, the infinite potential and infinite capacity of anybody and everybody to become good and great and to attain liberation. Here lies the genius of Vivekananda in positioning the non-dual ontology of Vedanta as a deeply ethical and realist imperative.

Vivekananda's thought process had seminal underpinnings of spiritual syncretism consisting of the Equality of Islam, Service of Christianity, the compassion of Buddhism and yet the renunciatory non-attachment tendencies of Vedantic Hinduism. He preached that a real mahatma is one whose heart bleeds for the poor and the downtrodden, and not the one who believes in that God who cannot wipe out the heart-wrenching tears of a widow and can't supply a morsel of bread to an orphan. Vivekananda thundered that he is even ready to go to hell to help others and serve others. He boldly exclaimed that the service of a living god is the highest form of service.

Shaper of the Indian Model of Secularism

Vivekananda's historic declaration at Chicago, of not only having toleration but acceptance of all religions as true, and his declaration of

Sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism as a disease of the mind, reflect the real Vedantic essence. His futuristic vision of 'synthesis of Islamic purity, Vedic mind, Buddhist compassion and message of social service in Christianity' was dreamt to be the cornerstones of a resurgent, rejuvenated India (Vivekananda, 1897). In his seminal address, 'Why We Disagree' delivered in 1893, he challenged the dogmatic and myopic mentality of proselytism and religious exclusivism and advocated harmony without homogenisation. Taking philosophical inspiration from the non-dual pluralistic ontology in Vedantic cosmology, Swamiji argued that a Hindu is not to become a Christian or a Christian need not change to Buddhism, but instead 'each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own laws of growth'. This roaring of Vedantic pluralism not only challenged foreign missionaries, who in the garb of colonial modernity, were attempting to rewire the very DNA of Indian psychic and way of life, but this vision also influenced a long line of freedom fighters and national thinkers in articulating and planning out the futuristic model of India's destiny.

Vedantic Socialism – From Transcendental Withdrawal towards Radical Immanence

Vivekananda reinterpreted the very meaning of renunciation from an abstract metaphysical speculation and the selfish quest of individual liberation towards the socially grounded epistemic category of radical immanence. It is not in isolation and solitude that one could realise the Brahmin that pervades the heart of every human. But by losing oneself in the service of others as if the service of jiva is the service of Shiva, one could have deeper spiritual experiences (Vivekananda, 1900). So, the pathbreaking hallmark of Swamiji's thought process was that he reoriented the very psychic economy of the sadhus from some sort of self-oriented quest for individual transcendence towards the conscious and sustained attempts to dissolve the ego through selfless action or *niskama karma*. Vivekananda stirred up the sleeping spirit of the young sanyasis by asking them categorically, 'Did not the starving millions of their countrymen make you restless (Vivekananda, 1897)⁸ and wondered why they did not feel a deep sense of empathy and compassion in their hearts when the huge swathes of their subaltern sisters and brothers are languishing in abject poverty! Swami ji instructed the young monks to go from village to village to the homes of Chandalas and other sections of the society and help them in locating the multiple structures of domination that suppress their spirit. The need is to

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

articulate them, fight them and create a new utopia of socio-political, economic and spiritual liberation (Thakur, 2019). Giving a clarion- call for spiritual activism and to pursue the project of Collective Liberation, which had seeds of Vedantic Socialism in its underpinnings (Rao, 1978), Vivekananda denounced excessive talks of ascetic meditation and struck a soulful symmetry with his guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa's message of shedding our ego that we are showing compassion to the poor, but rather, the need to worship them through our humble social service. Here, he laid the foundations of 'Neo Monastic Hinduism' by engaging in the selfless service of Daridra Narayan (Living God). The Ramakrishna movement was started by Vivekananda for this very purpose to ensure the comprehensive development of the masses.

Brotherhood, Biceps and The Bhagwadgita

Vivekananda always kept his favourite books - Bhagwadgita and The Imitation of Christ⁹ with him while travelling. He didn't like the myopic mentality of engaging in a dogmatic slugfest over the superiority of the spiritual texts, nor did he think it was needed to look at them all the time to find all the solutions to our lives. He eloquently stated that - 'The proof of religion is dependent on the Truth of the very constitution of Man and not on the books' (Vivekananda, 1896/1997, p 14). Man has made the books, and if the true spiritual spirit of the books were followed, then it can infuse loads of brotherhood and morality inside a human being (Vivekananda, 1896).¹⁰

His infamous but heavily misunderstood quotation, 'you will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of Gita (Vivekananda, 1896/1997)'¹¹ was actually a seminal intervention in the socio-political, philosophical and psychic terrain of those times. At one level, Vivekananda echoes the eternal message of the Bhagwadgita itself through this exclamation that understanding one's prakriti and then dissolving one's ego by selflessly engaging in an act with absolute awareness and undivided devotion can propel a person on one's path towards higher evolution of consciousness. Rather than being a rejection of Gita's metaphysical profundity, this revolutionary statement is actually the radical assertion of Gita's central message of karma-yoga. It is a call for embodied Vedanta- a beautiful blend of physical and moral vitality with gigantic spiritual strength.

At another level, this intriguing mixture of 'biceps and Bhagwadgita' seemed to be teasing the colonial rule and dominant colonial epistemology with a psycho-cultural and embodied resistance to dehumanising colonial

modernity, devoid of any ethical and moral value. In colonial discourse, the Hindu body was generally viewed as weak, effeminate and mystical, lacking valour and vitality. In this context, at one level, Vivekananda seems to be valorising biceps and the body, but then gives the call to integrate it with timeless Vedantic wisdom of using it as an instrument for socio-political and nationalistic revival. So, at one level, Swamiji gives immanent critique to the custodians of religious orders to shun and throw away decadent religiosity and articulate the integrated and totalised message of Gita i.e. of Gigantic strength – right from physical to mental to spiritual needed for holistic emancipation of a human and at another level, he decolonises the body itself and put it as a symbol and vehicle of self, identity, esteem and thus, carrying a deep sense of Indian identity. This visionary fusion of inner musculature of deep spiritual clarity with outer musculature of selfless action, reflected in Swamiji's revolutionary conceptualisation of 'biceps and Bhagwadgita', instigated reforms not only within the sapless religious domain but provided a burning fire for recollection of lost Indian self, the collective regenerative of our Indian Identity tattered under the centuries of pshysic domination of colonial rule.

Cosmopolitan Identity (Confluence of Materialistic West and Spiritual East)

At that time, when even crossing the seas was considered a taboo in Hinduism, by delivering extraordinary lectures on Vedantic wisdom in America and Europe, Vivekananda broke the taboo and roused the suppressed spirit of his wounded and defeated colonised countrymen back home. During his travels, he observed that the West had the fusion of material might and scientific inventions, but was bereft of deep spiritual insight, and at the same time, the oriental world and India had the goldmines of spiritual wisdom, but its masses were languishing in poverty (Sharma, 2013). Thus, he envisioned the reciprocal relativising of the materialistic West and spiritual East to create a world order that can guarantee liberation in comprehensive and collective terms. Striking symmetry with Appiah's theory of cosmopolitan patriot¹², he observed within himself as well, a curious blend of personalities, not only having an Indian identity but one having a cosmopolitan identity as well. Swami Medhananda (Ayon Maharaj) in his writing 'Infinite paths to Infinite Reality' argues in his writing 'infinite paths to infinite reality' that Vivekananda's idea of cosmopolitan identity is not merely an intellectual exposition but is experientially grounded, anchored in the ontic non-dual concept of Brahmin.

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

Here, Medhananda makes it clear that this variant of cosmopolitanism is different from cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment age, as it respects radical differences without falling into relativism. It is anchored in the ontological unity of all beings (Medhananda, 2022). This is an ethical and spiritual cosmopolitanism as it tries to extol people to use liberative resources within their religions to proceed on the path of perennial liberation. Hence, it sounds like a promising and more holistic alternative to secular cosmopolitanism.

Dogmatic Wall Divisions vs Vivekananda's Perennialist Essentialism (Ideal of Universal Religion)

When the 'My religion vs Your religion' debate and Holier-than-thou attitude in this regard were prevalent and dominant in the religious domain, Vivekananda echoed his essentialist position that since all religions are one in essence but diverse in manifestation, there is an imminent need for a Universal religion, but one that should allow Truth to expand in a thousand different ways. His essentialism is not the imposition of some set of religious rules or one structured religion over the other. His call was to look beyond the parochial perimeters of the dogmatic external and dive deep into the spiritual essence of the non-dual supreme cosmic consciousness, pervading the heart of each and every human. Here, he reflected upon both Schleiermacher's¹³ and his guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa's thoughts of looking within the corridors of our pious soul and respecting all other souls like they were our own, and then, we should be tolerant and honest enough to weed out our defects rather than mocking at others' shortcomings. Hence, Vivekananda donned the hats of both essentialism and pluralism at one go and called for linking all religions by humanity and not by narrow identities of family, tribes, community, nations, etc. He argued for Vedanta, giving the strong metaphysical foundations for the ideal universal religion. When Vivekananda talks about Vedanta as the future religion of the world, he was not rooting for any religious conversion but the convergence of human souls in the illuminating stream of cosmic consciousness. Vedanta offered a deep ontic substratum of consciousness that governs our other set of thinking and action. Hence, Vivekananda advocated for Vedanta as a universal metaphysical framework that respects religious pluralism without falling into relativism and still going deeper, it transcends the dogmatic domestic wall divisions of sect, race, caste and creed and can lead humanity towards a more holistic and harmonious kind of liberation (Vivekananda, 1900).

On Women Empowerment

Partly due to socio-religious ossification, partly due to centuries of foreign rule and also due to rigid patriarchal controls, the degeneration of women's condition in those times greatly disturbed Vivekananda. Greatly deriving his thought process from the Tantric and Upanishadic concept of Shakti, Swamiji boldly argued that women are not, in any manner, secondary or subordinate to anyone but instead are the very embodiment of spiritual totality. He believed that a bird can't fly on one wing. Hence, the women's education has the liberating potential to not only alleviate their sufferings but also let the bird of prosperity fly with its two wings in India. Noted author Ananya Vajpeyi argues in her work, 'Righteous Republic: The political foundations of Modern India' that through his ideas, Vivekananda attempted to create a democratic ontology which not only created space for women's agency but also paved the way for women's more visible and active participation in the public sphere, supported by a larger non-Western spiritual framework (Vajpeyi, 2012). Outside the domain of education, Vivekananda disallowed the unnecessary intervention of men in women's sphere and felt that women should be put in a position to articulate and solve their problems by themselves. Denouncing and detesting the discrimination based on sex, Vivekananda exhorted the Upanishadic wisdom that Atman (soul) is Sexless, and while explaining his vision of national regeneration, Vivekananda, on the immense courage and wisdom of women, stated 'if I get five hundred motivated men, I can transform India in fifty years but, if I get fifty motivated women, India can be transformed in just a few weeks' (Vivekananda, 1897)!

Effects of Vivekananda's Radical Thought Process

In those times when an influential section of the Indian elite was mindlessly internalising the epistemic authority of colonial modernity, which was devoid of any larger moral, ethical or spiritual vision for humanity, the revolutionary intervention of Vivekananda's thoughts, rooted in integral Vedantic cosmology, could be hailed as a deeply radical epistemic reconfiguration. It has not only exposed colonial modernity of its multiple maladies on its own shores but also provided a highly holistic visionary arc of post-dualistic, cosmopolitan Vedantic for India in order to regain its lost position on the global horizon. In this context, Dipesh Chakrabarty brilliantly argues that colonial subjectivity was actually shaped by 'the hyperreal time of historicist reason' which located India's lost cultural identity in the dire need of the modern Western tutelage. It deemed vast liberative resources of Indian Intellectual and spiritual traditions as, at best,

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

some sort of privatised spirituality, grossly unfit for the so-called age of science and reason. But, Vivekananda smartly inverted the colonial gaze and overturned this hollow internalised logic by presenting and positioning Vedantic Universalism as the highest kind of rational and reasoning-based universalism, both in the domain of epistemology and ontology. In contrast to the possessive Individualism of the West, it anchors humanity in the holistic schema of collective human liberation. On the world stage, he not only unlocked the profoundly intense and inspiring goldmines of Vedantic wisdom but also alarmed the august audience by saving their societies from being stung by the scorpion of sectarianism and narrow dogmatic fanaticism. World Wars one and two made Vivekananda's worst fears come true, and hence, his radical thoughts strike a chord of relevance and resonance even today.

Vivekananda's viral and emphatic message of humanitarian and spiritually grounded social regeneration of India was crystallised by him and other sanyasis in the form of Ramkrishna Movement, which had 'Jiva as Shiva' (Daridra Narayan or poor people's service is the service to god) as its Vedantic motto. Ramkrishna Mission movement became a site of synthesis where the existing gap between the spiritual seeking and social responsibility was bridged into a beautiful blend of socio-religious ontology of care and compassion, and through that disposition, the eternal search for the divine. Vivekananda eventually became People's Vivekananda. Ramkrishna Mission Schools were opened with the objective of rejuvenation and revitalisation of India's profound philosophical wisdom through scientifically curious and spiritually awakened young minds. Swamji always envisioned youth as the lifeblood of the nation. Realising the transformative potentialities of youth, Vivekananda used to boldly exclaim - 'Give me a hundred youths, pure and pious, and I shall shake the world'. Famous disciple of Vivekananda, Margaret Nobel¹⁴, who was rechristened as sister Nivedita, also opened a school for girls' education in Calcutta and showed exemplary service in the 1897 plague epidemic of Kolkata.

Vivekananda's reliance on Karma Yoga and selfless service towards Mother India bound then in the shackles of Colonial control sparked a formidable fire in the guts and veins of a whole generation of freedom fighters across the ideological spectrum, right from Mahatma Gandhi to Subhas Chandra Bose, from Pandit Nehru to Chittaranjan Das. Nehru showered laurels on Vivekananda's envisioned blend of science and spirituality and called Vivekananda as a bridge between India's past and present in his magnum opus, *The Discovery of India*.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is not only to see Vivekananda's timely intervention with the timeless and yet fresh, fragrant and formidable neo-interpretations of Vedantic wisdom in the light of some sort of reformist response to languishing religious stagnation, but to position his intervention as a radical ontological reimagination of a civilisation caught in the dialectic of crushing colonial humiliation and stagnant internal decadence. Vivekananda's radical thought process, both at the level of epistemology and ontology, penetrated and pierced through the paralysis of imitation that had infatuated a large section of the Indian elite. Through embodied exposition of creative and holistic spirituality, he attempted to change the very hermeneutic grammar of Indian religiosity, which was heavily ossified under the crushing weight of ritual formalism, caste orthodoxy, doctrinal rigidity and epistemic closure. His clarion and revolutionary call to his countrymen to move from selfish transcendental escapism towards the radical immanence of selfless service of humanity was oriented towards reclaiming the lost agency of the self, society and nation. It proved seismic and transformative not only in the socio-spiritual terrain of nineteenth-century India but continues to shape the trajectory of global thinking even today.

End Notes

1. In his lecture on Advaita Vedanta delivered in London on 10th November 1896, Swamiji argued that Vedantic ideals should permeate to all aspects of worldly existence.
2. In 'Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy', R. C. Zaehner talks about this kind of integration.
3. In Advaita Vedanta, Brahman (Absolute reality, cosmic consciousness) is not any social category or a personal deity but the non-dual supreme state of being.
4. Chandogya Upanishad talks about this in details. All things originate, live and return back to the original cosmic consciousness called Brahman. Shankaracharya interprets this in terms of 'sarvatmakatva' (All inclusive, all pervading nature of Brahman).
5. Nietzsche talks about Übermensch in his work- 'Thus spoke Zarathustra' who overcomes the limitations of morality and values. Guided by will to power, he seeks to overcome, assert and affirm.
6. 'Tat Tvam Asi' is one of the four mahavakyas (great sayings) of Upanishads. It implies that individual self or Atman is not different from Brahman (the absolute).
7. Dr. Palpu was a foreign educated doctor and on his request, Swami ji had visited Kerala.
8. Quoted from 'Lecture from Colombo to Almora/My plans of campaign' (Madras: 1897).
9. This book- THE IMITATION OF CHRIST was written by Thomas Kempis in 1418.
10. Quoted from the essay- 'Reason and religion' (1895).

Radical Thoughts of Vivekananda: An Attempt to Rescue Religion...

11. Quoted from 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora (Madras, 1897)
12. Appiah gives the idea of cosmopolitan patriot , reconciling seemingly two distinct opposing identities. He argues that holding deep attachment to one's cultural roots and at the same time, recognising universal moral obligations is not mutually exclusive but complementary.
13. He was a german theologian who believed in the divinity of the pious Soul
14. Nobel met Vivekananda in 1895 in London and was initiated into the vow of brahmcharya by Vivekananda in 1898 at Kolkata after which she changed her name to sister Nivedita

References

- Jones, K.W. (1976). *Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-century Punjab*. California: University of California Press.
- Kant, I. (1785/1998). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (M. Gregor, Trans. & Ed.) Cambridge University Press.
- Medhananda, S. (2022). *Swami Vivekananda's Vedantic Cosmopolitanism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1882/2001). *The Gay Science* (J. Nauckoff, Trans.; B. William, Ed.) Cambridge University Press (Original Work Published 1882).
- Nietzsche, F. (1883/1961). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Every One and No One* (R.J. Mollingdale, Trans.) Penguin Books.
- Puligandla, R. (1975). *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Rao, V. (1978). *Swami Vivekananda: The Prophet of Vedantic Socialism*. Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Sharma, J. (2013). *A Restatement of Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Singh, M. (2018). Revisiting Caste in Vivekananda's Philosophy. Sage Journals.
- Thakur, M. (2019). The Need for Looking Beyond the Saffron Robe. The New Leam.
- Vajpeyi, A. (2012). *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Vivekananda. (1896). *Inspired Talks*. New York: The New York Times.
- Vivekananda, S. (1896/1997). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. 1, P. 14. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
- Vivekananda, S. (1897). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. 5. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
- Vivekananda, S. (1897/2006). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. 3. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
- Vivekananda, S. (1900). *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. San Francisco.
- Vivekananda, S. (1900). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
- Vivekananda, S. (1900). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. 2-8. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
- Vivekananda, S. (2006). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. 2. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 187-205)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis of Environmental Awareness among the Youth

Manish K. Verma* and Abhilasha Dohare†

In contemporary society, technological devices play a vital role in our day-to-day lives. However, the production, use, and disposal of these devices have significant environmental impacts. The escalating problem of electronic trash (e-waste) is especially alarming. People utilise electronic devices in all aspects of their lives, yet they are unaware of the negative consequences associated with their overuse and unsustainable disposal. The problem of electronic waste (e-waste), therefore, has become a crucial issue in modern times. However, increasing the awareness among consumers about the consumption pattern and the safe disposal of electronic gadgets can play a crucial part in mitigation efforts targeted at sustainable use and disposal of e-waste. It is important to actively engage consumers in the e-waste management system, without which it cannot be effective and efficient. Awareness about e-waste and its consequences is an important aspect in this regard. This study tries to explore the interplay between consumer behaviour and environmental awareness, focusing on the sociological dimensions of e-waste management. The paper further delves deeper into understanding consumer awareness about environment-friendly products and the disposal patterns of e-waste. The study has been

*Dean, Ambedkar School of Social Sciences; Professor & Head, Department of Sociology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow (U.P.). E-mail: mkvbbau@gmail.com

†Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Ambedkar School of Social Sciences, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow (U.P.).

E-mail: dohareabhilasha@gmail.com

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

conducted among the students of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. A sample size of 100 was taken by employing a purposive sampling method. Primary data was gathered using questionnaires. Secondary data has been collected from sources such as newspaper articles, magazines, journal articles, books, etc., which were studied and reviewed to substantiate the findings from the primary data.

Key Words: E-waste, Consumer Behaviour, Environmental Awareness, Disposal Patterns, Sustainability.

Introduction

Electronic waste (or e-waste) refers to any device with electronic components that has reached the end of its lifecycle. These include batteries, computers, wires, hard disks, and fax machines, etc. Such devices no longer serve their intended purpose and must be disposed of.

In the digital era of today, the advancement of technology has led to the rapid proliferation of electronic devices. Due to technological innovation and mass production, the consumption of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) has increased significantly. The technological revolution has pushed forward the growing consumer demand for electronics and high-tech goods (Forti et al., 2018). This has resulted in a manifold increase in the use of electronic gadgets, which, in turn, generates a huge amount of e-waste. The exponential growth in electronic garbage or e-waste every year has become one of the biggest problems that affects both society and the environment. Despite efforts to promote sustainable practices, improper disposal of e-waste and lack of knowledge about it continue to harm ecosystems, threaten public health, and increase the depletion of valuable resources.

The major concern surrounding e-waste is its disposal. The majority of the human waste goes into landfills. E-waste makes a significant part of this human waste, and despite the efforts to keep such garbage away from the landfills, the majority of it again goes into the landfills. The problem of the disposal of e-waste has grown significantly in the past few decades. The root cause of the issue is deeply embedded in consumer behaviour towards electronic items, shaped by varying levels of environmental awareness, socio-economic factors, and cultural attitudes. Therefore, it is necessary to delve deeper into the arena of e-waste management practices and to understand the consumer behaviour towards it in order to mitigate the future risks arising from the unsustainable disposal of such waste.

Methodology

This study revolves around two-fold objectives. Firstly, it tries to examine the relationship between consumer behaviour towards e-waste and environmental awareness. Secondly, it delves deeper and looks into the disposal patterns of consumers towards e-waste.

This research uses a mixed methods approach. Primary quantitative data has been gathered using questionnaires. Qualitative data has been gathered from relevant secondary sources such as available government reports, studies on e-waste and consumer behaviour, journals, and newspaper articles.

The study has been conducted in Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU), which is situated in Uttar Pradesh, India. Students, both girls and boys, above 17 years of age, presently enrolled in different educational programmes in BBAU, Lucknow, have been contacted in order to gather primary data. Data has been gathered from those students who either own an electronic device or are frequent users of an electronic device such as computers, tablets, smartphones, etc. A sample size of 100 students has been taken by employing a purposive sampling method. The collected data has been analysed manually. Charts have been made using MS Excel.

Veblen's theory of "Conspicuous Consumption" and Beck's theory of "Risk Society" have been used to develop the understanding and create parallels in regard to the use of electronic gadgets and e-waste disposal practices. Veblen considers conspicuous consumption as wasteful and leisure as a waste of time. He further explains the growing consumption patterns in people and says that we consume, engage in leisure, and waste in conspicuous ways to demonstrate. He further pointed out that the leisure class engaged in vicarious consumption, vicarious leisure, and victorious waste.

On the other hand, Ulrich Beck claims that contemporary culture, due to technological advancements, will give rise to a "risk society," and that this risk will eventually become a worldwide concern. In Beck's view, the term "Risk Society" describes the modern societal shift towards an emphasis on environmental concerns. Environmental impacts of social and economic cultural shifts will worry the Risk Society. Technological change poses risks that extend beyond health and environmental concerns; these risks will permeate various aspects of society, resulting in numerous changes such as job insecurity, evolving employment patterns, diminished reliance on tradition and customs, and a decline in family relations (Beck, 1992).

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

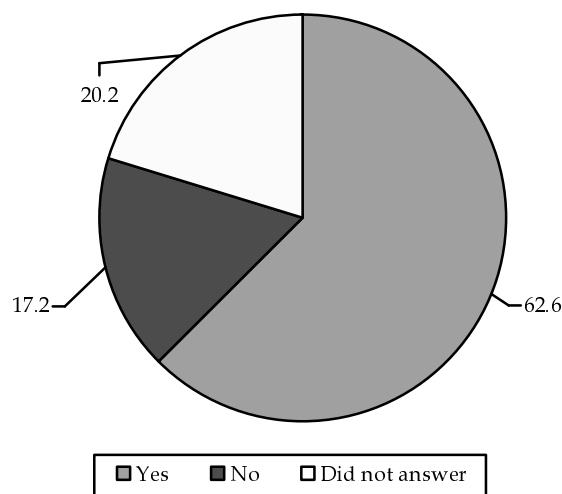
Beck sees Risk Society as a product of the latest phase of human development, or late modernity. According to him, in earlier times, when there was a simple modernity, science and technology helped to reduce material scarcity, and living standards started to grow. However, with the development of science and technology and rapid economic growth, new problems have also been synthesised, or new forms of risks have emerged from human activities, which have been giving rise to new environmental problems. This has become one of the biggest concerns of modern times.

This study, therefore, tries to situate the scope of use of electronic gadgets and their disposal by pursuing the awareness level among the respondents, and by trying to explore their behaviour towards e-waste and its management.

Consumers' Awareness about E-waste and its Consequences

According to Bhat & Patil (2014), customer knowledge is the most essential factor in the e-waste management supply chain and in shaping consumer behaviour to reuse, recycle, and repair. Consumer awareness is remarkably helpful for proper e-waste management so that the environment can be protected, leading to better health, better livelihood, which is crucial for sustainable development.

Figure 1
Awareness among respondents about e-waste (in per cent)

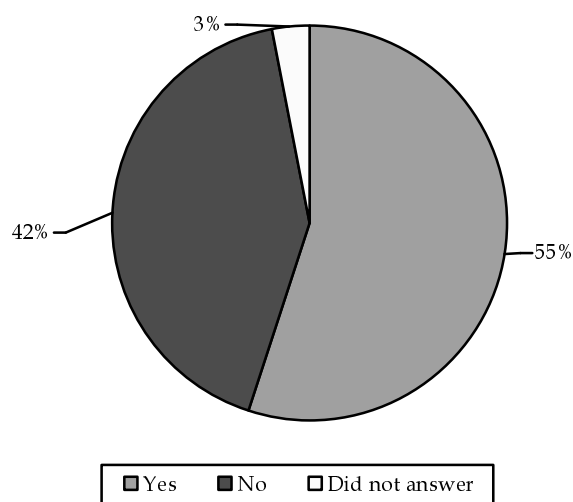


Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Figure 1 illustrates that a majority of 62.6 per cent of the respondents were found to be aware of e-waste disposal. While a small 17.2 per cent of the respondents said that they were not aware of the same. Almost 20.2 per cent were uncertain about their awareness of e-waste. Though the figures of those aware of e-waste are promising, still 37.4 per cent of the respondents were found to be ignorant about the issue, which is a significant number.

Figure 2 shows that the majority (55 per cent) of respondents were found to have awareness regarding sustainable electronic products, showing a positive trend in environmental awareness. However, a significant 42 per cent of them were still unaware of sustainable or environmentally friendly products, which suggests that while awareness is increasing, more efforts are needed to make sustainable choices mainstream. 3 per cent of people preferred not to answer this question.

Figure 2
Awareness regarding sustainable or environment-friendly products
(in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Sivathanu (2016) discusses the consumers' awareness and preferences towards the disposal of e-waste. The study found five key criteria that influence consumer preferences for e-waste disposal. These criteria include awareness of e-waste causing environmental hazards, awareness about the harmful effects of e-waste on human health, knowledge

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

of appropriate e-waste disposal methods, knowledge of e-waste management by different stakeholders, and knowledge about the recycling of e-waste and the convenience in pursuing it. The study proposes many approaches to raise awareness and to change consumer attitudes towards e-waste disposal. The study further identifies that such attitudinal change will help society to manage e-waste more effectively and efficiently by majorly focusing on its handling. The management of electronic waste is heavily impacted by consumer behaviour towards e-waste and the awareness about the impact of sustainable management of it. Even though the regulatory frameworks clearly outlined the stakeholders' responsibility for managing e-waste, the consumers' awareness about e-waste and its impact, and their participation in the proper management and disposal of e-waste can become a game-changer.

However, there is a long way to go in the direction of consumers becoming conscious of problems emerging because of improper handling of e-waste and its unsustainable disposal. Bhatia & Kapoor (2019) studied 150 households in the Jaipur city in order to make an attempt to find out the awareness level of consumers towards e-waste disposal practices, health hazards caused due to improper handling and disposal of e-wastes, and the environmental problems resulting from it. They found a fourfold explanation for the rapid increase in the consumer demand for electronic gadgets in recent decades.

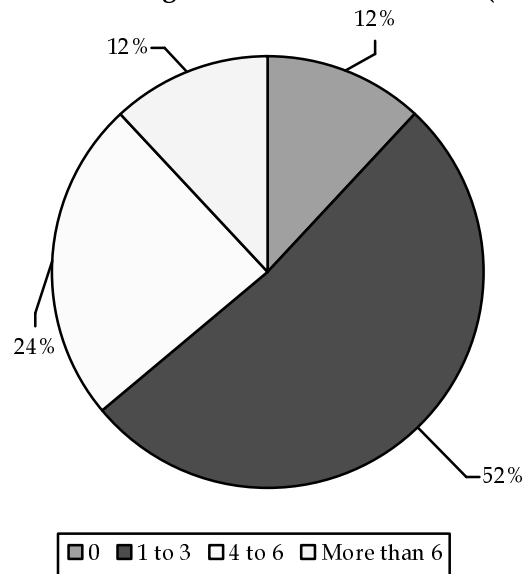
1. With the rise in income level, people tend to purchase more and more electronic items such as mobile phones and computers.
2. With the rapid advancements in technology, the prices of electronic devices have fallen, which further boosts the conspicuous consumption of people.
3. With the rapid advancements in technology, more and more new features are being added that attract people to buy more and more electronic gadgets.
4. The above factors provide people with a fertile ground to think that their in-use gadgets get outdated before their death. The full potential of an electronic gadget is also not explored in such a scenario, and consumers get a similar, updated gadget in place of the in-use device, which leads to conspicuous consumption.

However, a major issue with conspicuous consumption of electronic gadgets is that it also gives rise to a tendency of hoarding these electronic items, even if these items are not in working condition, are no longer needed, are unused or outdated. This pattern in consumer behaviour is greatly

problematic as it leads to improper disposal of e-waste, and sometimes this e-waste might not be disposed of at all.

Figure 3 illustrates consumer habits related to hoarding electronic items at home. The majority of respondents (52 per cent) keep a small number (1 to 3) of unused electronic devices at home, indicating a tendency to hold onto older gadgets instead of disposing of them, probably because they plan to use them again in the future. A significant portion of respondents (24 per cent) store a moderate number (4 to 6) of electronic items, reflecting a pattern of accumulating unused devices. 12 per cent of the respondents hoard a large number (more than 6) of electronic devices, which may suggest difficulty in discarding old electronics, a lack of proper disposal options, or a lack of awareness. Similarly, only a small portion (12 per cent) do not hoard electronic items, meaning they are more likely to dispose of or recycle them effectively.

Figure 3
Respondents hoarding electronic items at home (in per cent)



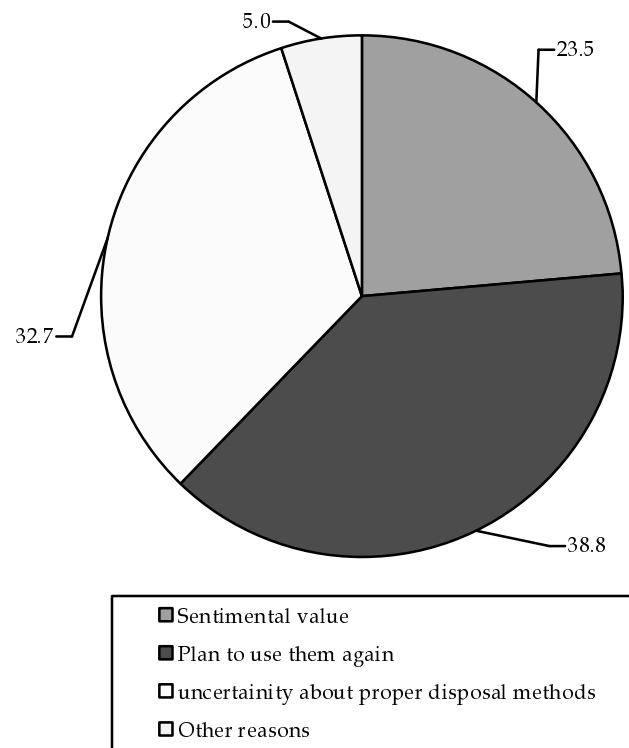
Source: Fieldwork (2025)

This data highlights the widespread behaviour of hoarding electronics, pointing to a need for increased awareness and initiatives promoting responsible e-waste management.

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

Figure 4 states that emotional attachment is a common reason to hoard old and unused electronic items. About 23.5 per cent of the respondents keep old devices due to personal memories or nostalgia, such as an old phone with cherished photos, a laptop from a significant period in their life, or devices gifted by a loved one. A major portion of the respondents (38.8 per cent) keep electronics because they believe they might need them in the future, either as backups or for specific purposes. Another significant 32.7 per cent of the respondents are unsure about how to dispose of electronic waste responsibly, which leads them to store unused devices instead. This highlights a lack of awareness or accessible recycling options. A quite small per centage of respondents (5 per cent) had other reasons for not properly disposing of their old or unused electronic goods, which include factors like waiting to sell, gifting, or simply forgetting about the items, leading to hoarding of these items with themselves.

Figure 4
Reasons why respondents keep old or unused items (in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Buying an electronic gadget before the death of the older one makes people keep the electronic items with them. Use of multiple devices also provides a fertile ground for consumers to have an emotional connection with multiple gadgets. In such a scenario, it is highly likely to be impossible for them to ensure the safe disposal of e-waste. Therefore, it is important to spread awareness about environmental damage, health hazards, and livelihood crunches that emerge due to conspicuous consumption of electronic items. Consumers need to be aware of the importance of e-waste management throughout the demand-supply chain, and the idea of reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair should be promoted among them. By increasing public awareness of the proper disposal and management of e-waste, the situation could be improved, and the negative environmental impact associated with improper management and disposal of e-waste could be reduced, all while maintaining sustainability (Borthakur & Govind, 2017).

Consumer Behaviour towards E-waste Disposal

Consumer behaviour connected to e-waste refers to individuals' decision-making processes and activities surrounding the purchase, usage, maintenance, disposal, recycling, or reuse of electronic products. The lifecycle of electronic gadgets and their ultimate contribution to electronic trash are influenced by the attitudes, awareness, habits, and values of customers.

One of the most important factors impacting the level of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) collection is the behaviour of household occupants, which significantly influences the collection rates of such items (Nowakowski, 2016). The manner in which residents dispose of waste depends on preparing collection schedules and setting up the collection containers in the municipality where they live.

Islam et al. (2019) have given importance to new upgraded technology and changes in the consumption pattern, and they have mentioned that our lives are transformed by electronic devices. However, they have also brought up a growing concern regarding the disposal and management of e-waste. The lack of awareness among customers and the unsustainable disposal patterns are crucial parts of the problem that surrounds e-waste (Nowakowski, 2016).

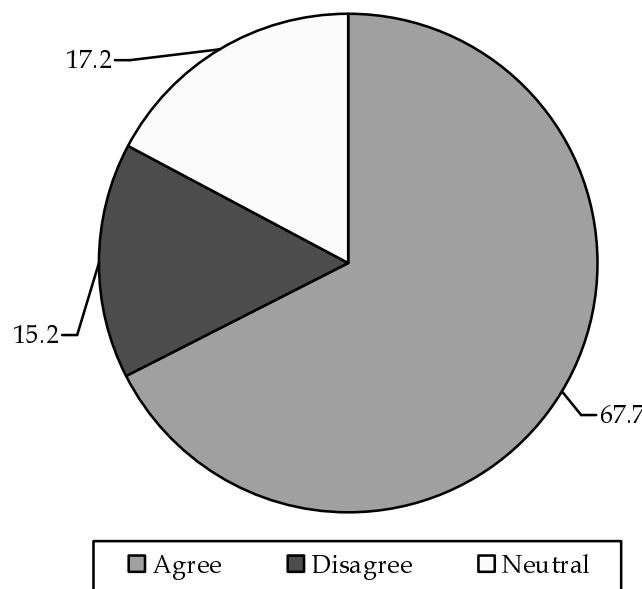
According to Parajuly et al. (2019), with the growth in demand for EEE(Electrical and Electronic Equipment), consumer behaviour and environmental consciousness become important contributors. The WEEE Directives primarily concentrate on the collection and recycling of end-of-life

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

products, without distinguishing between trash items and those with reusability potential. Despite the WEEE Directives of maximising the reuse of end-of-life products, it lacks adequate metrics for evaluating reusability rates.

Figure 5 shows that the majority of the respondents (67.7 per cent) agreed that recycling is very important for saving the environment. 17.2 per cent of the respondents were neutral towards the importance of recycling e-waste, which could mean they were not sure or did not care about it. There were also 15.2 per cent of the respondents who disagreed with the statement that recycling is important for protecting the environment.

Figure 5
Respondents' Beliefs about the Importance of Recycling of E-waste for Environmental Protection (in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Studies on disposal and recycling behaviours are crucial in identifying key socio-economic groups that should be prioritised to enhance the effectiveness of waste management systems (Nowakowski 2016).

Oskamp (1995) focuses on the idea of recycling and states that a sustainable future for humanity depends on resource conservation since it keeps the planet healthy as a habitat and stops environmental deterioration.

The most fundamental is the environmental ethic, which values all of the planet's plants and animals and aims to protect the ecosystem for future human generations. A sustainable society or sustainable development are two expressions that encapsulate this objective. In this article, three approaches have been suggested to resolve the problem of waste, which include: Reduced - meaning less use; Reuse - meaning repeated use of the same products; and Recycle - meaning the use of the used products after performing some modifications.

In the literature on attitudinal research, a critical aspect appears to be that the knowledge assessed must be directly pertinent to the behaviour in question; specifically, general environmental information is less likely to correlate with a particular behaviour among individuals than specific relevant information (Oskamp et al., 1991). For instance, in the context of recycling, as community-wide recycling initiatives gain prevalence and visibility, awareness of recycling has undoubtedly increased, thereby diminishing its validity as a predictor of participation in recycling activities.

The behaviour of customers is a crucial element in e-waste management. Gurauskiene (2008) observed that the production of e-waste and its effective management are intrinsically linked to consumer behaviour about electronic items. He examined the roles of producers, recyclers, and governmental entities in e-waste management and addressed the consumers' involvement in e-waste issues, including their direct and indirect contributions, awareness of environmental impacts, and potential for improving consumption and recycling practices for electronics.

Barriers in E-waste Recycling

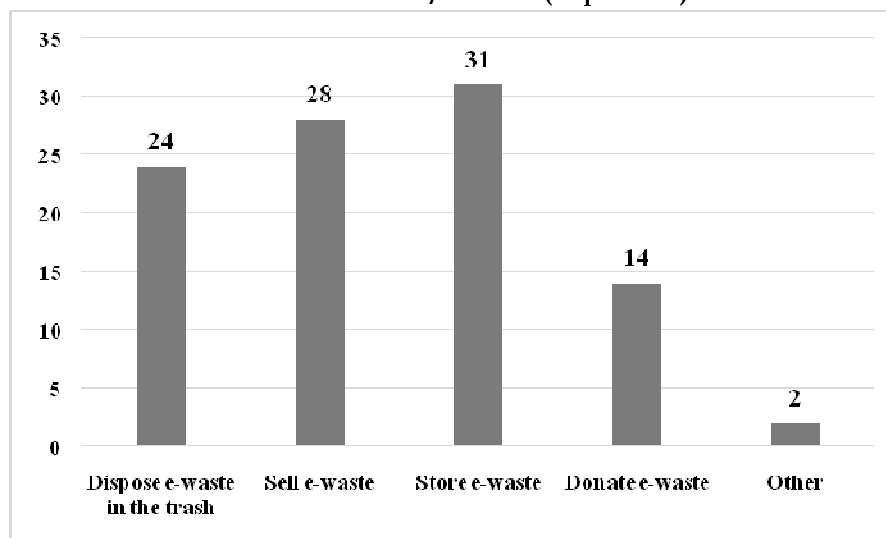
According to Nnorom (2009), the main obstacles to recycling electronic trash are a lack of education about the hazards of improper recycling methods and a general lack of understanding of the toxicity of e-waste. Uncertainties arise from people's willingness and attitude when it comes to recycling e-waste. The amount of e-waste recycled is highly dependent on how affordable the recycling charge is affordable for consumers. The location and timing of e-waste recycling are also impacted by the variety of recycling behaviours of customers. Consequently, the number of e-wastes recycled or appropriately disposed of is strongly dependent on knowing how willing consumers or households are to participate in recycling operations, even in cases when recycling infrastructure is present.

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

Numerous researchers assert that income and educational attainment positively correlate with residents' willingness to engage in e-waste recycling (Hornik et al., 2005; Hansmann et al., 2006; Tonglet et al., 2004). Nevertheless, certain scholars contend that there is no discernible difference between affluent families and those of moderate means regarding e-waste recycling behaviour. Hansmann says that a person's behaviour is mostly shaped by their social and cultural background. Educating individuals about recycling, encompassing its significance and the methods and locations for implementation, might enhance public participation in recycling efforts (Guagnano et al., 1995). The recycling behaviours of an individual might be influenced by their surroundings and social relations. The family structure and socioeconomic status influence the frequency of e-waste recycling.

In the language of Ojeda-Benitez, 'Family exerts a profound and lasting influence on the perception and behaviour of its members, both in the consumption and in waste generation and handling' (Ojeda-Benitez et al., 2008). However, once the electronic item has been consumed and turned into waste, a major challenge that arises is its management. People might use a variety of methods to handle their e-waste depending on their awareness and convenience.

Figure 6
Methods Used by Respondents to Manage Old and Unused Electronic Items/E-waste (in per cent)

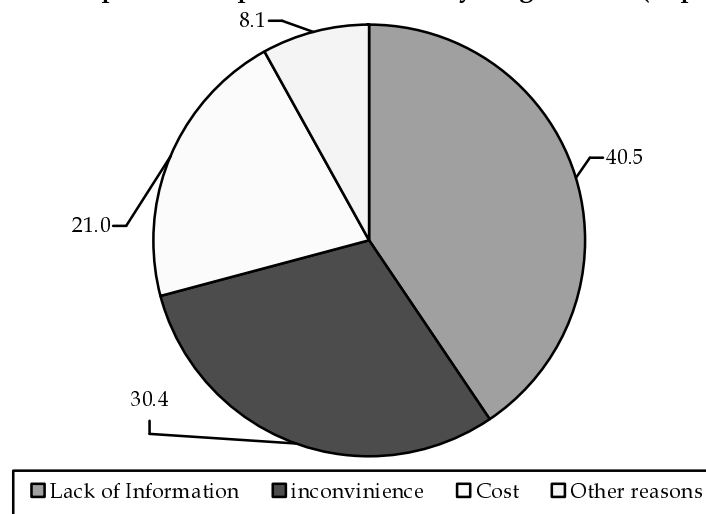


Source: Fieldwork (2025)

According to Figure 6, the most preferred method to manage e-waste was storing it at home, as it was found that 31 per cent of the respondents retain obsolete electronics at home, which indicates reluctance to dispose of them properly, which further contributes to environmental pollution. 24 per cent of them dispose of the e-waste in the trash, while 28 per cent of them sell the e-waste to others or to ragpickers. 14 per cent of them donate their e-waste to others, while a meagre 2 per cent of the respondents prefer other methods of e-waste disposal. This shows that selling old electronics is a preferred method over donating. Donating e-waste is a less popular and less preferred option, suggesting a need for more awareness about donating or recycling electronic items.

This data highlights the need for better e-waste management and awareness regarding environment-friendly disposal methods. Numerous factors may compel individuals to dispose of their e-waste in garbage receptacles or retain it within their residences. The authors have also attempted to investigate the causes indicated in the image below (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Reasons that prevent respondents from recycling e-waste (in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Figure 7 shows that 40.5 per cent of the respondents had a lack of information regarding the recycling of e-waste. This reason appears to be the biggest obstacle in e-waste recycling, indicating a need for better awareness. 30.4 per cent of the respondents found recycling difficult or inaccessible. 21

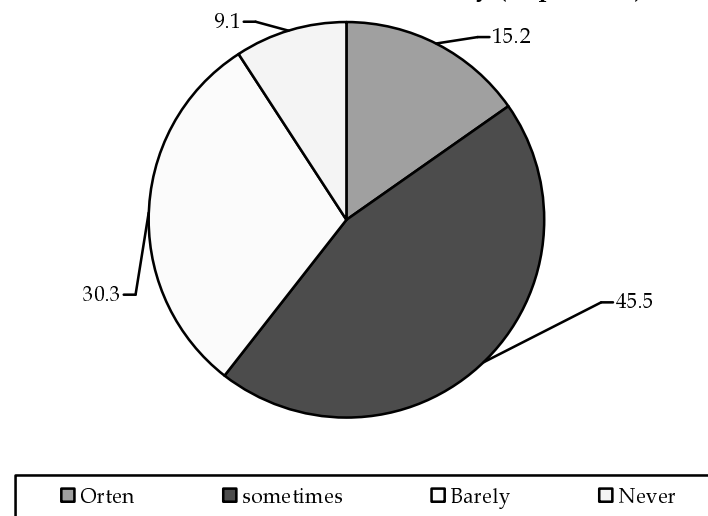
Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

per cent of them perceived recycling as expensive. 8.1 per cent of them had other reasons. This indicates that improving awareness, accessibility, and affordability can significantly boost e-waste recycling rates.

Role of Policies and Regulations in Shaping Consumer Behaviour

Change begins at the household level. It is essential for consumers to initially engage in casual conversations with their friends and family regarding the disposal of electronic waste in order to facilitate the formulation of policies that are effective policies. These debates are what eventually give birth to formal regulations and laws, which are relevant to the disposal and management of electronic trash.

Figure 8
Frequency of Discussion of Issues Such as E-Waste with Friends and Family (in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

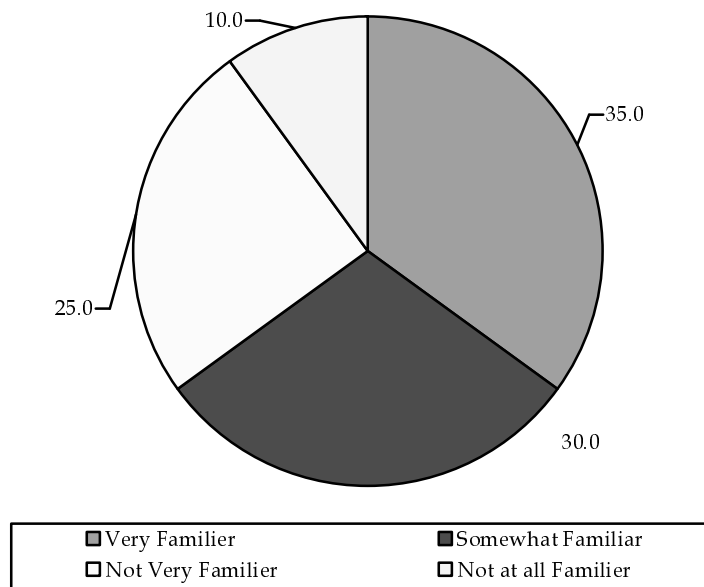
Figure 8 illustrates that 15.2 per cent, which is only a small portion of the respondents, said that they frequently engaged in discussions about environmental issues, such as e-waste, with their friends and family. A majority of the respondents (45.5 per cent) said that they sometimes had such discussions. 30.3 per cent rarely discussed e-waste issues. A small percentage of 9.1 per cent of the respondents never engage in such discussions about e-waste with their friends and family.

Verma and Dohare

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is India's government body in charge of making laws about protecting the environment and dealing with waste. MoEF has accepted guidelines to find the different sources of WEEE in India and made rules for how to handle WEEE in a way that is safe for the environment. Still, India lacks a specific law or regulation that is designed to address the WEEE issue. At the moment, "The Hazardous and Waste Management Rules, 2008" cover most of the dangerous chemicals in WEEE. These rules divide waste into two groups: "hazardous" waste and "non-hazardous" waste (MoEF, 2008, as cited in Afroz et al., 2013).

The handling of e-waste in India is regulated under the E-Waste (Handling) Rules, 2016, which were amended in 2022. It emphasises Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs), Obligatory Recycling Quotas (Manufacturers are required to guarantee that a specified percentage of the total sales volume is recycled) and Incorporation of the Informal Sector.

Figure 9
Familiarity with India's Policies of e-waste management (in per cent)



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

Figure 9 highlights that 90 per cent of the respondents had some knowledge about various policies that the government has in place for the management of electronic waste. Of these, 35 per cent were very familiar. The government should publicise its e-waste management policies and incorporate them into college and university curricula so that students and the general public can learn about them, because 35 per cent had very little or no idea about e-waste management policies.

Conclusion

As consumers, people are showing a growing interest in purchasing new and improved electronic products. It is the obligation of consumers to manage and recycle their electronic trash in a manner that does not cause any harm to the environment. Although a majority of young respondents recognise the importance of recycling in protecting the environment, this understanding does not consistently reflect in their behaviour. Many still choose to store unused electronic items at home or discard them improperly, indicating a disconnect between knowledge and action. This conflict can be due to a variety of issues, including a lack of information, limited access to correct disposal techniques, and a perceived high cost of recycling.

Despite awareness regarding recycling for environmental preservation, consumers prefer to keep obsolete electronics at home, dispose of them with regular trash, or sell them to informal agents like ragpickers. These practices not only contribute to environmental degradation but also highlight the lack of structured systems that support easy and responsible recycling. The limited popularity of donating e-waste further suggests a lack of awareness about alternative disposal methods that can have social and environmental benefits.

Social and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping consumer habits. Behavioural patterns are often inherited or shaped by family values, peer interactions, and community norms. Conversations about e-waste within families and among friends are relatively rare, which hinders the development of a collective sense of responsibility. Where discussions do occur, they can act as catalysts for change, inspiring more informed and conscientious disposal practices. However, the lack of regular discourse on such matters reflects a broader issue—environmental concerns are not yet deeply embedded in everyday social narratives, especially when it comes to waste management.

The barriers to effective e-waste recycling are largely systemic. Young consumers report that they lack basic information about where and

how to recycle electronic items. For others, recycling facilities are either inaccessible or the process is too complicated. Cost is another deterrent, with some perceiving recycling to be an expensive affair. These challenges suggest the need for a stronger, more user-friendly infrastructure that encourages responsible behaviour by making recycling more convenient and affordable.

Government policies, while present, have not achieved the level of visibility or influence needed to shape public behaviour effectively. Although regulations like the E-Waste Management Rules, 2022 and the Extended Producer Responsibility Rules, 2016, mandate recycling and emphasise producer responsibility, awareness about these policies is limited. The majority of respondents had only a vague understanding of the existing legal framework, while a notable percentage were completely unaware. This lack of familiarity points to a significant gap in communication and education, particularly among the youth who are both major consumers of electronic devices and potential change-makers.

Education and awareness campaigns are critical in transforming environmentally conscious attitudes into concrete actions. Integrating e-waste management topics into academic curricula, publicising government policies more effectively, and engaging youth through community-based programs can help close the knowledge-action gap. Furthermore, empowering local municipalities to provide accessible collection points and promote user-friendly recycling options can support better consumer participation.

The behaviour of youth towards e-waste is shaped by a mix of awareness, convenience, social influence, and access to proper disposal channels. While there is a foundational understanding of the environmental impacts of e-waste, practical challenges often undermine efforts to act responsibly. A concerted effort involving education, infrastructure development, policy implementation, and community engagement is necessary to foster a more environmentally responsible generation that not only understands the significance of recycling but also incorporates it into daily practice.

To improve e-waste management, a combination of education, convenience, and incentives is crucial. Governments and businesses should focus on making recycling easy and rewarding while raising public awareness. It is crucial to raise environmental awareness in order to encourage ethical consumer actions and lessen the negative ecological effects of e-waste.

Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste: A Sociological Analysis...

References

- Afroz, R., Masud, M.M., Akhtar, R., & Duasa, J.B. (2013). 'Survey and Analysis of Public Knowledge, Awareness and Willingness to Pay in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: A Case Study on Household WEEE Management'. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 52, 185-193.
- Beck, U. (1992). 'Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity'. *Sage google schola*, 2, 53-74.
- Borthakur A., & Govind M. (2017). 'Emerging Trends in Consumers' E-Waste Disposal Behaviour and Awareness: A Worldwide Overview with a Special Focus on India. *ResourConserveRecycl*, 117:102-113
- Bhat, V., & Patil, Y. (2014). 'E-waste Consciousness and Disposal Practices among Residents of Pune City', *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Volume 133, Pages 491-498, ISSN 1877-0428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.216>.
- Bhatia, A., Kiran, C., & Kapoor, M. (2019). 'A Study on Awareness of Consumers towards E-Waste Management in the City of Jaipur'. *Journal of Management*. 6. 10.34218/JOM.6.2.2019.023.
- Forti, V., Baldé, K., Kuehr, R. (2018). E-waste Statistics: Guidelines on Classifications, Reporting and Indicators. United Nations University, Bonn. http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6477/RZ_EWaste_Guidelines_LoRes.pdf.
- Guagnano, G.A., Stern, P.C., & Dietz, T. (1995). 'Influences on Attitude-Behaviour Relationships: A Natural Experiment with Curbside Recycling'. *Environment and Behaviour*, 27, 699e718.
- Gurauskiene, I. (2008). 'The Behaviour of Consumers as One of the Most Important Factors in E-waste Problem'. *Environmental Research, Engineering and Management*, 2008, No.4 (46), P. 56-65
- Hornik, J., Cherian, J., & Madansky, M. (1995). 'Determinants of Recycling Behaviour: A Synthesis of Research Results. *The Journal of Socio-economics*, 24(1), 105-127.
- Islam, M., Huda, N., Baumber, A., Shumon, H., & Rezaul, M. (2021). 'A Global Review of Consumer Behaviour towards E-Waste And Implications for the Circular Economy'. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 316(2):128297
- Nowakowski, P. (2016). 'The Influence of Residents' Behaviour on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Collection Effectiveness'. *Waste Management & Research: The Journal for a Sustainable Circular Economy*, 34 (11), 1126e1135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734242x16669997>
- Nnorom, I.C., Ohakwe, J., & Osibanjo, O. (2009). 'Survey of Willingness of Residents to Participate in Electronic Waste Recycling in Nigeria: A Case Study of Mobile Phone Recycling'. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 17(18), 1629-1637. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2009.08.009>
- Ojeda, B.S., Vega, C.A., & Marquez-Montenegro, M.Y. (2008). 'Household Solid Waste Characterisation by Family Socioeconomic Profile as a Unit of Analysis'. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 52, 992e995.
- Oskamp, S. (1995). 'Resource Conservation and Recycling: Behaviour and Policy'. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51(4), 157-173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1995.tb01353.x>
- Oskamp, S., Harrington, M.J., Edwards, T.C., Sherwood, D.L., Okuda, S.M., & Swanson, D.C. (1991). 'Factors Influencing Household Recycling Behaviour'. *Environment and Behaviour*, 23, 494e519
- Parajuly, K., Kuehr, R., Awasthi, A.K., Fitzpatrick, C., Lepawsky, J., E, S., Widmer, R., & Zeng, X. (23 September 2019). Future E-Waste Scenarios. StEP Initiative, UNU ViE-SCYCLE, and UNEP IETC

Verma and Dohare

- Sivathanu, B. (2016). 'User's Perspective: Knowledge and Attitude towards E-Waste'. *International Journal of Applied Environmental Sciences*. ISSN 0973-6077, Volume 11, Number 2, pp. 413-423 © Research India Publications. <http://www.ripublication.com>
- Tonglet, M., Phillips, P.S., & Read, A.D. (2004). 'Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Investigate the Determinants of Recycling Behaviour: A Case Study from Brixworth, UK'. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 41(3), 191-214.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 206-220)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative for Inclusive Quality Education to Tribal Students

Manish Kumar* and Dharmendra Kumar Sarraf†

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) have served as a prominent effort in India to give tribal populations access to quality education. The tribal communities in India make up a small percentage of the total population. Their manner of life, language, and culture are all indigenous. All stages of education, including higher education, should be inclusive and egalitarian, with accessible education guaranteed according to the NEP-2020. The EMRSs are structured to transmit the cultural values of the larger society while facilitating social mobility and promoting social change. They serve as powerful examples of how educational interventions can bridge the gap between marginalised communities and quality education while nurturing well-rounded individuals prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. The study presents an overview of the EMRSs and their inclusive education framework, examines the obstacles faced in promoting inclusivity, and also highlights the opportunities for creating inclusive learning environments. It also presents suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive education in EMRS, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on educational equity.

Key Words: Tribal Education, Eklavya Model Schools, EMRS, Inclusive Education and School Education.

*Research Scholar (UGC-NET JRF), Department of Education, Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar (M.P.). E-mail: manishedu95@gmail.com

†Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar (M.P.). E-mail: dksarraf@dhsgsu.edu

Introduction

India has a rich and long history, but not all of its people have benefited from it. In India, tribal communities comprise a small portion of the overall population. Their manner of life, language, and culture are all indigenous. Tribal people in India experience numerous forms of marginalisation, underprivilege, and deprivation. Education is the primary component that could deliver them from centuries of oppression and enable them to enjoy the sun of socio-economic prosperity. The tribes, often referred to as *Adivasis*, *Moolnivasi*, *Vanvaasi*, Schedule Tribes (STs), autochthonous, and indigenous people, make up about 8.6 per cent of all people living in India (Census, 2011). The National Policy on Education, 1986, recognised that tribal peoples lag far behind the overall population in terms of educational attainment. To give ST children in far remote areas a high-quality education, professional programmes, and employment possibilities across a range of industries, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) were established between 1997 and 1998. This was carried out in line with the national trend of building high-quality residential schools to advance education throughout all regions and communities. In addition to academic instruction, the schools prioritise the holistic development of tribal pupils with the conservation of their unique cultures.

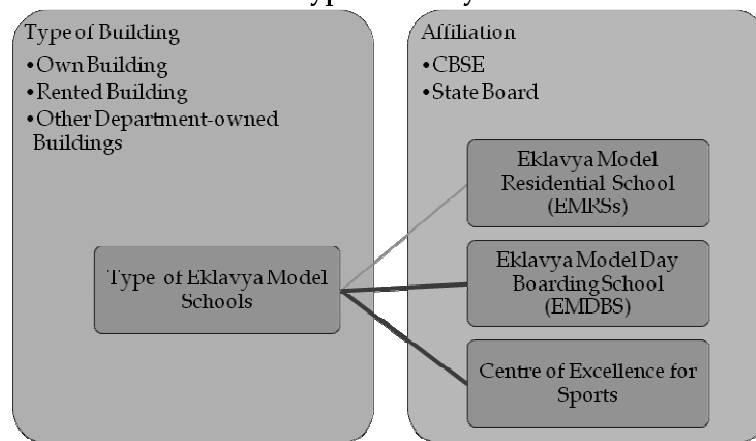
Nature of Eklavya Model Schools (EMSS)

The National Policy on Education, 1986, acknowledged that tribal people lag far behind the general population in the area of education. In the framework of the national movement to build high-quality residential schools to advance education throughout all regions and communities, EMRSs were established between 1997 and 1998 to provide ST children living in remote areas with a high-quality education. This allowed them to pursue opportunities in advanced and professional courses as well as gain employment in a variety of fields. In addition to academic instruction, schools prioritise students' overall growth. With 480 students per school, each school may accommodate pupils in Classes VI to XII (MoTA, 2020). Funds are provided to state governments under Article 275 (1) of the Indian Constitution for the establishment of schools and ongoing costs. To further promote EMRSs, it was decided to launch a unique central sector scheme for them during the 2018–19 fiscal year. Every block where there are ideally 20,000 tribal members and greater than 50 per cent STs by 2022 (Census, 2011) is expected to have an EMRS. Along with offering sports and skill training at par with Navodaya Vidyalayas, these schools will also include

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

extra features to support the preservation of regional art and culture. It should be mentioned that to give ST students who want to attend school without living arrangements additional options, Eklavya Model Day Boarding School (EMDBS) will be built in areas with a greater ST population density on an experimental basis (i.e., 90 per cent or more). The Centre of Excellence (CoE) for sports shall be established by states for one individual and one group of sports (MoTA, 2020).

Figure 1
Affiliation and Type of Eklavya Model Schools



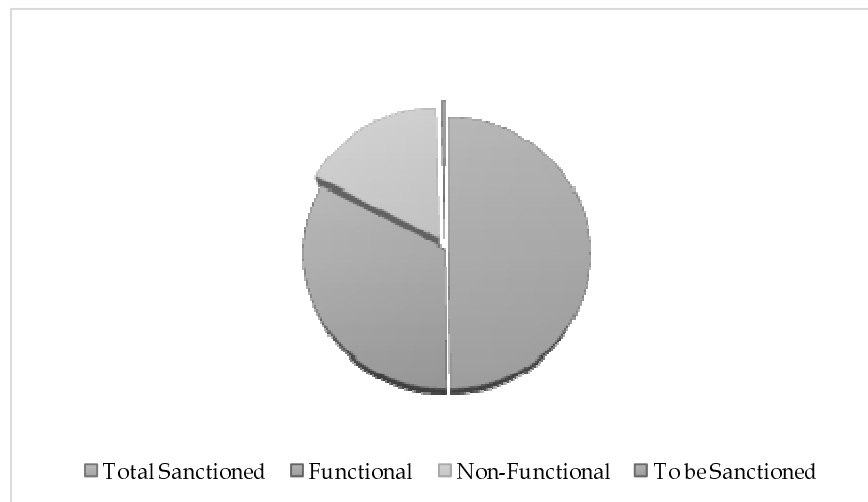
According to NEST data as of May 2025, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has approved a total of 722 EMRSs as of May 2025, out of which 479 are operationally completed, and the remaining 243 EMRSs are currently under construction in various parts of the nation. EMRSs operate in both owned and rented spaces, based on what the administration of UT and the state governments determines as suitable. EMRSs may be affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) or State Boards. MoTA has registered the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) as an autonomous society, with the responsibility of planning, building, establishing, endowing, and managing the schools, also carrying out all actions required for promoting tribal education. In compliance with the guidelines created by the Government of India and MoTA, state societies would supervise, control, and manage schools at the state level. They will also perform many other tasks assigned to them by NESTS and MoTA.

Functioning of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)

Each EMRS has a 480-student capacity and can hold students from classes VI to XII (MoTA, 2020). The Government of India provides funds under the Indian Constitution's Article 275 (1) for the establishment of EMRSs and continuing costs. It was decided to introduce a specific central sector scheme for EMRSs for the 2018–19 fiscal year to better support EMRSs. Every block with 20,000 tribal members or more and a population that is over 50 per cent ST will have an EMRS by 2022 (Census 2011). EMRSs would offer sports instruction and skill development similar to Navodaya Vidyalayas and would have special facilities for the preservation of tribal local art and culture. To give ST students who wish to attend school without a residential facility, Eklavya Model Day Boarding School (EMDBS) will be established on a trial basis in areas where the percentage of recognised sub-districts/blocks with STs is higher (90 per cent or more) to increase the possibilities available to ST students who want to attend school without a residential facility. According to MoTA (2020), every state must create a Centre of Excellence for Sports, especially for one assigned sport per person and one particular sport per group.

According to NEST data as of May 2025, 138,336 students are enrolled in EMRSs across various grades. The following describes the specifics of the EMRSs' current state:

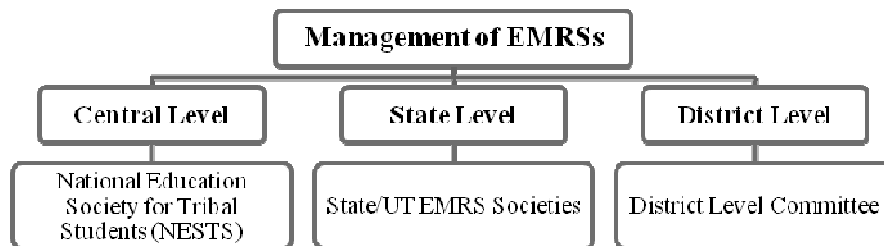
Figure 2
Details of the EMRSs as of May 2025



Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

NEST has been granted autonomy by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). This includes the power to plan, develop, construct, fund, and oversee establishments of EMRS in addition to performing any additional tasks needed that are helpful or necessary for tribal education. In addition to other duties as delegated by the MoTA and NESTS, state societies will maintain, control, and manage state-level schools according to the guidelines and criteria set forth MoTA. To oversee the operation of the district's schools, a committee at the district level must be established. The following is the EMRS management hierarchy:

Figure 3
Hierarchical Management of EMRSs



Till EMRS's building gets established, they are running in the department's owned buildings and the rental building. The UT administration or the state governments may decide to affiliate EMRSs with the CBSE or state boards. A fair, inclusive, high-quality education is necessary under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), and everyone is urged to make use of possibilities for lifelong learning.

Education is the cornerstone of economic growth, personal empowerment, and societal advancement. In the Indian context, SDG-4 is crucial to addressing the country's educational problems and guaranteeing a sustainable and successful future. SDG-4 is essential to addressing India's educational issues and advancing a prosperous and sustainable future. Education is a key element of sustainable development. EMRSs are an important government initiative that helps tribal communities obtain an equal, top-notch education, particularly in remote areas, as the majority of indigenous villages are located in hard-to-reach, rural areas. Due to the significant variations in the socio-economic and cultural conditions of different tribal groups and others, special care is required for the children's complete development through an equitable and superior education. According to the Xaxa Tribal Committee Report published by MoTA in 2014,

tribal people continue to suffer severe disparities in access to educational opportunities despite significant initiatives undertaken by the government, educational institutions, business executives, and other associations.

The endeavour to advance inclusive education to provide equitable educational opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds and needs is one of EMRS's guiding principles. The goal of the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) network of government-run schools in India is to offer tribal children, particularly those residing in rural and impoverished areas, a top-notch education. These schools were established to address the socio-economic issues and educational disparities that the tribals encountered. Inclusive education is employed because of several factors, including language, socio-economic, and geographic diversity, to fulfil the various learning requirements of indigenous children in EMRSs. According to Naik, D. & Majhi, Prahallad & Dansana, A. (2021), the tribal community's access to inclusive education is a question of human rights and social justice. It strives to build a more egalitarian and inclusive society where tribal children have the same chances and rights as their non-tribal classmates while recognising the potential and value of every student.

Inclusive Education Provided by EMRSs

The principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, when deeply embedded in the educational system, lay the groundwork for chances of continuous education throughout life for all students, universal access to education, and an expansion in the number of people joining the workforce. The creation of an inclusive society at large is promoted by NEP-2020, which highlights that "Education is the single most prominent apparatus for achieving social justice and equality" (Para 6.1, NEP-2020). Educational challenges, resources, and services for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) must be addressed if policy is to become a reality. Through the addition of a dedicated chapter on equitable and inclusive education, NEP-2020 has incorporated the components of disability inclusion into the policy text. This chapter discusses issues, fixes, and recommendations for reducing the disparities in each learner's access and engagement and for bridging the gaps. Not only are there differences between different geographical areas, but there are also differences between socio-economically disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minority populations, as well as gender differences.

Para 6.6 of NEP-2020, while keeping Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in mind, rightly recommended establishing

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

Special Education Zones (SEZs). Para 6.16 of NEP-2020 states that within SEDGs, special attention will be given to reduce the disparities in the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. International human rights conventions, such as the 2006 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are upheld via inclusive education. Everyone's equal right to an education is strongly emphasised by these accords. It recognises that every student is different and that these variations enhance the educational setting. Inclusive education highlights diversity as a strength rather than a disadvantage (Winter, S., 2020).

Inclusive education recognises that education includes social and personal development, other than academic instruction. It tries to provide thorough instruction that considers the overall well-being of the pupils. Offering additional support and accommodations to address the particular obstacles experienced by tribal students is a path to reduce disparities (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and education: All Means All). Ultimately, inclusive education improves students' economic standing by equipping them with the skills and information necessary to pursue better employment and financial opportunities (Mezzanotte, 2022). The MoTA also supports inclusive education by making certain that each and every kid has equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of their financial situation, place of residence, or cultural affiliation. The 'Inclusion in Education: A Manual for School Management Committee', a handbook published by NCERT in 2020, states that inclusive education can be important to protect and honour tribal communities' traditional heritage. There is a vital need to incorporate indigenous knowledge and languages into the curriculum, preserving tribal cultures and passing them to the next generations. According to 'Curricular Adaptations for Children with Special Needs', a book published by CBSE in the year 2016, schools must modify their curricula, methods of instruction, and methods of assessment to consider the requirements of diverse learners. It also suggests that equal educational opportunity should be granted to all students, irrespective of their circumstances or ability levels. All students should be encouraged to engage in school activities by creating a welcoming, inclusive environment that celebrates diversity.

The diverse learning requirements of tribal students in EMRS are met through inclusive education on account of the linguistic, socio-economic, and geographic diversity of the student body. The goal is to create a more egalitarian and inclusive society where tribal children have access to the

same chances and benefits as their classmates who are not from tribal backgrounds. When it comes to helping students escape the cycle of poverty, make moral choices, and give back to society overall as well as their local communities, EMRSs can be of great assistance. Students from other tribes are encouraged to communicate and understand one another, which enhances social inclusion. Tribal populations are encouraged to participate actively in the educational process by EMRSs. It acknowledges the critical role that communities and parents play in working together to achieve educational objectives.

Available Facilities in Eklavya Model Residential Schools

EMRSs were established in 1997-1998 to provide ST children in remote regions with a quality education to allow them to take advantage of opportunities in advanced and professional courses and find employment in a variety of sectors. This was other than academic instruction; schools prioritise students' overall growth. EMRSs will adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, as well as the clauses in the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009, and other standards. They will receive free lodging, boarding, uniforms, textbooks, stationery, and other amenities that are permitted from time to time under the guidelines for EMRSs, which are periodically released by the government. The following amenities will be provided in accordance with EMRS 2020 guidelines, done within the framework of the national movement to build high-quality residential schools to advance education throughout all regions and communities:

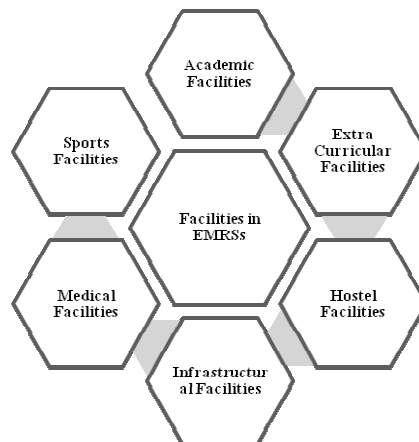
- **Academic Facilities:** Each classroom in EMRSs is provided with modern teaching aids, including projectors, smart boards, and other multimedia equipment. They have well-stocked biology, chemistry, and physics laboratories where students can perform experiments and participate in hands-on learning. It also has computer laboratories, a TLM corner, a suggestion box, information, and a wall magazine. It also gives the library access to a wide range of books, journals, reference materials, and digital resources. According to the SCSTRTI 2015 study, EMRS classrooms have sufficient space, classrooms were cleaned, no TLM corner was evident in classrooms, information board and wall magazine were not updated. The library-cum-reading room needs to be improved. Concerning the preparation of lesson plans, activity-based teaching, group-based learning, regular correction of students' work, project assignments,

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

and use of e-content in SMART classes, EMRS needs improvement. Overall, EMRSs need to work on all the parameters of academic facilities to be on par with JNVs.

- **Co-curricular Facilities:** The co-curricular facilities, such as NCC, NSS, scouts and guides, exhibitions, excursions, and integration camps, are available in EMRSs. The students can nurture their hobbies such as western dance, classical dance, vocal music, synthesiser, tabla, guitar, arts and crafts, robotics, and more in EMRSs. There are facilities for life skills training, self-defence training, and personal and career counselling services. In EMRS facilities, training for musical and artistic talents, and training on life skills and self-defence were evident to some degree, but personal and career counselling and training on vocational and work education were not evident in some EMRSs (SCSTRTI 2015).

Figure 4
Available Facilities in EMRSs



- **Hostel Facilities:** The residential facilities for students ensure they have a safe and child-friendly environment to live and study. Equipment such as cots, tables, chairs, and mosquito nets is also provided to the students. The facility of a mess in the hostel provides nutritious meals for students. It also has the provision of adequate potable water and sanitation facilities. It is also provided with a study room, computer room, TV room, and visitors' room. According to Dash (2018), major issues of concern for EMRS students were scarcity of water for daily routine work, cleanliness of toilets and hostel environment, light, ventilation, and accommodation facilities, water

accumulation around the hostel because of improper drainage system, poor repair and maintenance work, quality of food and unavailability of sufficient number of cots and mosquitoes net for hostlers. The hostel management needs to look after the concerns of the students promptly so that the tribal students can get a friendly teaching-learning environment within the residential area.

- **Infrastructural Facilities:** The building where EMRSs are housed has air-conditioned classrooms, proper electricity, ramps, rails, and fire safety measures. There is also a separate toilet for boys and girls, an office area, a staff room, and a common room for girls' students. Staff members have separate living quarters as well. According to the SCSTRTI, 2015 study, EMRSs are lacking in parameters such as proper electricity, water, cleanliness facilities, and rainwater harvesting systems, as studied by Dash, 2018, in her study. EMRSs need to be strengthened in infrastructural facilities to create a conducive environment for students.
- **Medical Facilities:** EMRSs are provided with basic medical facilities for healthcare and emergencies, ensuring student well-being. They also have trained doctors along with nurses/ward boys, etc. It also has a pathology lab for the diagnosis of diseases. There are no regular health check-ups of students occurring in EMRSs, an irregular supply of medicines, also a lack of trained medical staff, as per the findings of the SCSTRTI, 2015 study.
- **Sports Facilities:** EMRSs have outstanding amenities for a variety of sports like athletics, cricket, table tennis, skating, badminton, and basketball (practice court). Yoga, apart from other activities, forms the core of physical fitness training. Indoor sports like carrom and chess are also provided in EMRSs. Trained coaches in different sports are also provided in EMRSs to train students in sports. EMRSs are lacking in providing sufficient equipment, and the facilities of indoor games are not proper, as studied by SCSTRTI, 2015. For the all-round growth of students, EMRSs must possess all the facilities as stated in the guidelines.

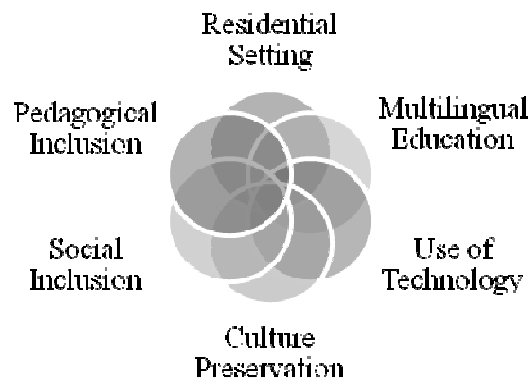
With an egalitarian and inclusive classroom setting that addresses their varied backgrounds, language requirements, and varying academic talents while including them as active participants in the learning process, NEP-2020 seeks to ensure that every child has access to a high-quality education.

Opportunities for Inclusive Education in EMRSs

EMRSs need to be inclusive for all students especially those from marginalised and indigenous communities, to have fair access to educational opportunities. Some opportunities for promoting inclusivity, as per the provided guidelines of EMRS, may be listed as follows:

- **Residential Setting:** EMRS can offer opportunities for all-encompassing development that surpass traditional classroom education. The students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods will gain the most from this (Manuraj, S, 2021)
- **Multilingual Education:** By allowing students to study in either their native tongue or their mother tongue, EMRS can enhance multilingual education by fostering inclusive learning and cultural preservation (MoE, 2022).
- **Use of Technology:** Technology can enhance access to inclusive education and close gaps. "EMRS can meet a variety of learning demands by utilising digital technologies and resources" (NEST, 2021-22).

Figure 5
Opportunities to Promote Inclusiveness in EMRSs



- **Culture Preservation:** The mission and objectives of EMRSs, according to Ministry of Tribal Affairs standards, are to educate in a way that respects, values, and conserves the cultural legacy of tribal people. By doing this, EMRS supports students' academic growth as well as the maintenance and advancement of their distinct cultural identities. EMRSs are well-equipped with unique amenities for the preservation of regional art and culture.

- **Social Inclusion:** EMRSs guarantee that each student, regardless of their financial situation, ethnicity, identity, or any other factor, has the chance to receive an education that meets their needs.
- **Pedagogical Inclusion:** Teachers play a vital role in promoting inclusion in EMRSs by creating a learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of students, including those from tribal communities. Teachers can do this by being conscious of the background of their students and by being culturally sensitive. All students with diverse needs can access the curriculum by using differentiated instruction, flexible assessments, inclusive teaching practices, and a variety of teaching techniques (Handbook for Teachers on Inclusive Education, CBSE).

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education in EMRSs

It may be challenging to implement inclusive education in EMRSs due to several issues. Even though these institutions work hard to provide high-quality education to indigenous and impoverished students, inclusive education faces unique obstacles that must be solved. Incorporating parents and communities into the inclusive education process can be difficult, especially in isolated tribal areas. Collaboration between parties is essential for implementation success. According to SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2015 study 'Impact of Ekalavya Model Residential Schools in Enhancing the Educational Attainment of ST Children in Five States' majority of EMRSs do not have enough classrooms, a top-notch library, enough laboratory space, well-equipped computer labs with internet facility, etc. The facilities in the EMRS hostels are seriously flawed. Additional furnishings are needed for the hostels, like study tables, warden's offices, parent-only guest rooms, etc. (Nath. B, 2014). The wide socio-cultural framework of the EMRS is fundamentally affected by the tribal traditions, and there are few opportunities for assimilation into society as a whole. There is a dearth of teachers from tribal communities since most employees in EMRSs around the state are from non-tribal groups and do not have the same social background as indigenous youngsters. In the particular setting of EMRSs, there is no induction programme, no continuous in-service teacher training, and no tribal sensitisation programme for the teachers. To effectively implement inclusive educational approaches, such as techniques for catering to the needs of people with a range of requirements and creating accessible learning materials, EMRS teachers might require extra training.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

Suggestions for Enhancing Inclusiveness in EMRSs

To achieve SDG-4 (Quality Education), it seeks to ensure high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education and to empower open doors for deep-rooted learning for everybody. Diversity and inclusion are essential. This entails resolving gaps in educational possibilities and guaranteeing equitable access to school for marginalised groups, such as children in risky circumstances, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities. Since inclusive education equips everyone to actively engage in their communities and economies, it serves as a foundation for the building of inclusive societies. Every society seeks to establish the conditions necessary for each individual to fully and actively participate in all facets of life, including political, social, economic, and civic activities, as well as decision-making. To give tribal populations better access to chances for livelihood and increased participation in the mainstream economy, the MoTA works to deliver high-quality education and skill development programmes that are customised to their requirements and cultural context.

NEP-2020 recommends including tribal culture and local languages in the curriculum to honour and protect native heritage. To allow children to study in their native or regional tongues, bilingual education was advised. It also suggests producing educational resources and learning aids in multiple languages. For equitable access to quality education for students, with a special emphasis on those from underprivileged and indigenous communities. Educators must provide ongoing professional development to equip them with the information and abilities needed for inclusive education. Training courses ought to focus on assistive technology use, curriculum modification to accommodate different student needs, and inclusive teaching practices (Handbook for Teachers on Inclusive Education, CBSE, 2020). The mission and objectives of EMRS are that it works to make learning resources, physical infrastructure, and resource rooms accessible to students with special needs. To involve local tribal groups, families, and parents in the educational process, engagement is necessary. Promote participation in parent-teacher groups and school events. To accommodate learners with diverse learning styles, educators must employ a diversity of teaching methods, including project-based learning, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning.

Conclusion

In addition to educational policy, social justice, and human rights are at stake regarding the tribal people's access to inclusive education. It recognises the worth and potential of every student while working for the

building of a more equitable and inclusive society in which tribal students enjoy the same opportunities and privileges as their non-tribal peers. The objectives of EMRS include the preservation of indigenous cultures in India, the advancement of inclusion, and educational justice. To improve inclusive education, EMRSs need to involve communities and parents, give teachers ongoing professional development, develop culturally aware practices, and get the necessary funds. To debunk misconceptions regarding disabilities and the unique requirements of tribal populations, the government ought to start awareness campaigns and educational efforts. Governments, both locally and statewide, successfully carry out laws that promote inclusive education. Policies should also be appropriately implemented and monitored to ensure that inclusive education is successful in these schools and eventually provides fair chances for all pupils.

References

- Central Board of Secondary Education (2020). *Handbook for Teachers on Inclusive Education*. CBSE, New Delhi. https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/Manuals/handbook-inclusive-education.pdf
- Dash, N. (2018). 'School and Hostel Environment for Scheduled Tribes Students: An Evaluative Study'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6(1). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344266217_school_and_hostel_environment_for_scheduled_tribe_students_an_evaluative_study
- Dash, N (2018). 'Teaching-Learning Process for Tribal Students in Eklavya Model Residential Schools and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in Odisha: An Evaluative Study'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6(1).
- Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: *Inclusion and Education: All Means All*. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. <https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/>
- Manuraj, S (2021). 'Ekalavya Model Residential School [EMRS] and Inclusive Education in Kerala'. *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, 8(3) 102-107. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34293/>
- Mezzanotte, C. (2022). 'The Social and Economic Rationale of Inclusive Education: An Overview of the Outcomes in Education for Diverse Groups of Students OECD Education', *Working Paper No. 263*. [https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP\(2022\)1/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2022)1/en/pdf)
- Ministry of Education, Government of India (2016). *Curricular Adaptations for Children with Special Needs*. New Delhi. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/Confluence.pdf
- Ministry of Education, Government of India (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022). *2 Years National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) Implementation*. https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-11/Nep_2020.pdf
- Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (2011). *Census 2011*. <https://www.census2011.co.in/>

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: An Innovative Initiative...

- Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (1968). *National Policy on Education*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/NPE-1968.pdf
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2014). *Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-economic, health, and Educational status of Tribal Communities in India*. <https://cjp.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2014-Xaxa-Tribal-Committee-Report.pdf>
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2020). *Revised Guidelines for setting up Eklavya Model Residential Schools*. <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/EMRS/Guidelines/EMRS%20Guidelines%20November%202020.pdf>
- Naik, Digambar & Majhi, Prahallad & Dansana, A. (2021). 'Education for Social Inclusion of Tribal: An Indian Perspective'. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 9(3). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350190767_Education_for_Social_Inclusion_of_Tribal_An_Indian_Perspective
- Nath, B. (2014). Ekalavya Model Residential School for Tribal Students in Wayanad. *A doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Calicut*. https://www.academia.edu/12317900/Ekalavya_Model_Residential_School_for_Tribal_Students_in_Wayanad
- NCERT. (2020). *Inclusion in Education: A Manual for School Management Committee*. New Delhi: NCERT. https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/announcement/Inclusion_in_Education.pdf
- National Education Society for Tribal Affairs (NEST). Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2025). <https://nests.tribal.gov.in/>
- SCSTRTI (2015). A Study on Impact of Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in Enhancing Educational Attainment of ST Children of Five States, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Government of Odisha. https://repository.tribal.gov.in/bitstream/123456789/74422/1/SCST_2015_research_0342.pdf
- United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC, 2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) (un.org)
- Winter, S. (2020). *Inclusive and Exclusive Education for Diverse Learning Needs*. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-95870-5_24



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 221-241)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh and Delhi's Freebies Politics

Subhash* and Devendra Poola†

In the contemporary academic discourse, the prominence of freebies politics has increased, particularly in Indian politics. Although not novel, freebie politics has long been integral to several states' politics, notably in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and, more recently, with the ascendance of AAP in Delhi and Congress across Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka. PM Modi recently criticised opposition parties for leveraging freebies for electoral gain, labelling this practice as the "Revadi Culture" and warning of its negative impact on national progress. This paper explores the dynamics of freebie politics and its effects on development, examining its definition and broader implications for state fiscal health and the Indian political landscape. This analysis explores the fiscal and developmental implications of freebies, using Andhra Pradesh and Delhi as case studies, and evaluates these schemes against macroeconomic indicators. While freebies can provide temporary relief to marginalised groups, the paper advocates for a "filtration process" to reduce the substantial financial burden they impose on state resources.

Key Words: Freebies, Development, Electoral Exchange, Revadi Culture, Aam Aadmi Party.

*Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad (Telangana). E-mail: Subhashmathur2017@gmail.com

†Ph.D. Scholar Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad (Telangana). E-mail: pooladevendra@gmail.com

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

Introduction

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi criticised political rivals for promising freebies (referred to as *revadi*) in exchange for electoral votes. He warned that *revadi* culture is dangerous to the nation's development by focusing on short-term gains instead of critical long-term projects (Mohan 2022). In the context of Sri Lanka's economic upheaval of 2022, various academicians, economists, and intellectuals questioned the financial sustainability of freebies promised by multiple political parties and sparked a debate on their impact on the economy and state resources. In response to the prime minister's statement, AAP convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal defended freebies by arguing that providing free healthcare, education, and schemes like *Farishtay* is like building the nation's future, not distributing freebies (*revadi*) and emphasised the positive impact on common people's lives.¹

Both viewpoints represent different ways of seeing development politics; on the one hand, Modi promotes a neo-liberal approach to development with minimal state involvement, while Kejriwal favours a more socialist model focused on social welfare. Within the prominent perspectives on development, the modernisation approach suggests that social transformation is driven by economic progress and highlights the trickle-down effect. Rostow (1960) posited that economic expansion leads to the evolution of traditional societies into mass consumption societies, resulting in improved living conditions for the population. This viewpoint prioritises economic progress over social protection, advocating for reduced welfare spending to allocate more funds to infrastructure and industries, potentially enhancing job opportunities and access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter.

The second perspective, the social development approach, emphasises on bottom-up strategy to economic progress, by focusing on comprehensive social support and community-driven initiatives. Contrary to trickle-down economics, this approach argues that enhancing social welfare for marginalised communities can lead to sustainable growth. This method, endorsed by organisations like the United Nations, offers a distinct approach to addressing social welfare in the global south, focusing on grassroots initiatives and community engagement to tackle poverty, education, and healthcare, diverging from the modernisation approach, which assumes these issues will resolve with better living conditions. This approach integrates social and political justice as key components of development.

What Constitute Freebies?

To discuss freebies, it is essential to define what constitutes freebies. The Cambridge Dictionary (2022) defines freebies as "something that is given to you without you having to pay for it, especially to attract your support for interest in something". But there is no clarity on how it should be defined in politics. On multiple occasions, various academicians and governmental officials have defined it differently. According to O.P. Rawat (Former Chief Election Commissioner), "Except for subsidies given to promote food production, direct benefits for employability, educational attainments, sports, cultural activities, free medical care for the poor, free food for those who are destitute and affirmative action for weaker sections including women, everything else is a freebie and should be so recognised". Moreover, He also considers that free power, free cell phones, free laptops, etc., fall in the ambit of freebies. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also adopts a similar line of thought regarding freebies. In its June 2022 bulletin, RBI classifies the provision of free electricity, free water, free public transportation, waiver of pending utility bills and farm loan waivers as freebies.²

In India, 'freebies' refers to a wide range of goods and services provided by states, from essentials like 'Ammma Canteen' to luxury items like gold chains, cell phones, and even mangal-sutras for prospective brides, often expanding during elections. However, not all items labelled as freebies are inherently beneficial or detrimental, necessitating a nuanced analysis of their rationale and intended outcomes. Therefore, considering their utility and impact on society, freebies can be classified into four broad categories.

The first category includes freebies contributing to human capital, comprising essential services like healthcare and education offered by the state at no cost. As Howard (1990) emphasised, "better health and nutrition mean a more vigorous people, and education gives them the knowledge and skill they need to achieve growth. There is also a gain in grasp and vision. Raise the people just a little, and further progress seems possible to them. Investment in human capital may prove to be even more profitable than that in tangible assets" (1990:7). This category of freebies aligns with the need for inclusive development by enhancing social equity and addressing basic human needs.

The second freebies category includes freebies necessary for a dignified life, such as services like providing free water and electricity. Since the late 1970s, various political parties have utilised promises of free electricity, particularly targeting farmers. For instance, in 1977, Congress first used electricity subsidies and flat rate tariffs as political tools in Andhra

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

Pradesh (Birner et al., 2011: 108). Since then, parties like TDP, SAD and Congress have continued using such promises to position themselves as a pro-peasant party. Recently, free household electricity has become a prominent political promise across parties and states, such as in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab. These essential services are framed as essential for citizens' dignity and well-being, especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

The third category includes freebies that empower marginal groups. It includes goods like free bicycles, sewing machines, free rides for women in state transport, tablets and laptops, which aim to empower marginal groups, particularly women, girls and economically disadvantaged individuals, contributing to the societal well-being. For instance, in Bihar, providing free bicycles to young female students led to a 32 per cent rise in secondary school enrolment and a 40 per cent decrease in the gender gap (Muraleedharan & Prakash, 2017). Mitra and Moene (2019) showed that beneficiaries had a 27.5 per cent likelihood of completing class 10. These measures support rural development and empower marginal groups, therefore. Therefore, this initiative can be justified on the grounds of promoting social equity and fostering development by empowering marginalised communities.

The fourth category of freebies can be referred to as "Irrational freebies," which includes offers like free TVs, gold chains, mangal sutras, scooters, debt waiver, cash transfer, such as Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi, and similar schemes of state governments. These promises are largely driven by political gains rather than welfare objectives, ultimately fueling competitive populism, placing an additional burden on limited fiscal resources. For instance, in the 2006 Tamil Nadu assembly elections, the DMK promised free TVs to every household and subsidised rice, countered by similar offerings from the AIADMK (Ranganathan 2006: 4949). Similarly, in the 2011 elections, both parties escalated these freebies to grinders, mixers, and gold, in addition to marriage assistance. The DMK government distributed 1.62 crore television sets at a cost of approximately 4000 crores. With state fiscal resources already under strain in the post-COVID pandemic era (The Hindu, 2022), it is imperative to curb irrational freebies.

The categorisation of freebies highlights their varied utility, though distinctions often blur between empowerment and political gain. To resolve this, Sharma & Sharma (2022) offer a framework dividing freebies into 'legitimate' and 'distortionary'. Sharma & Sharma (2022) classify legitimate freebies as those aligned with constitutional principles and sound fiscal

management, covering essential services like healthcare, education, and food security. The first three categories of freebies in our categorisation fall under legitimate freebies, as they target reducing structural inequalities and improving the well-being of vulnerable groups, promoting inclusive development without compromising long-term fiscal stability.

On the other hand, distortionary freebies, often politically motivated, negatively impact fiscal health. According to Sharma & Sharma (2022), these include debt waivers, subsidies like fertiliser and power, and cash transfers, all part of the 'revadi culture'. Our fourth category, 'irrational freebies', fits here as they misallocate resources, create fiscal inefficiencies, and hinder long-term investments. While such freebies may yield short-term political gains, they come with high economic costs, weakening fiscal stability and sustainable development. This classification highlights the dual role of freebies: some promote equity, while others harm fiscal stability and growth.

Competitive Populism and Welfarism

The rise of populism in India, particularly in its electoral arena, has blurred the line between genuine welfare policies and populist measures. Populism generally refers to the "indiscriminate use of public resources to give goods away to voters" (Chakrabarti & Bandyopadhyay, 2020: 03), has taken root as a political strategy, particularly through promising freebies and launching welfare schemes with the primary goal of securing electoral benefits. Initially, prominent in southern states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, where parties offered freebies like food, Atta, energy units, scooters, laptops and free transportation for women, competitive populism has now emerged during elections. Over time, this approach has become widespread across the nation, intensifying the blurred line between populism and welfare.

Historically, India has remained a welfare state since independence, as enshrined in Articles 38 & 39 of the Constitution, which promote social, economic and political Justice. The Supreme Court recognised this in *Bhim Singhji vs Union of India* (1981), affirming that socio-economic justice is part of the basic structure. However, India's welfare state journey has experienced fluctuations, transitioning from socialist principles (1947-1991) to partial rollback since the economic reforms of 1991. While these economic reforms integrated India into global market but simultaneously curtailed many welfare programmes before their full potential could be realised (Deshpande et al., 2017: 85). A significant revival occurred during UPA

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

government (2004-14), through right based programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act, 2005, Rashtriya Swastha Bima Yojana, 2008 and National Food Security Act, 2013. These programmes reflect a significant transition from a patronage model to a rights-based framework and redefine the state-market citizen relationship (Deshpande et al., 2017: 86).

In India's competitive populism, the line between welfare policies and populist measures has blurred. However, they can still be distinguished by intent, sustainability, and long-term impact. Welfare programmes address structural issues like poverty and inequality, focusing on sustainable benefits through services like healthcare and education, as seen in MGNREGA, TPDS, and the Mid-day Meal Scheme. In contrast, populist measures are short-term policies aimed at immediate political gain, often introduced before elections without sustainable funding or planning.

The debate over welfare approaches becomes more salient in the context of Indian populist politics, as exemplified by the contrasting perspectives of Bhagwati-Panagariya and Dreze-Sen. According to Bhagwati and Panagariya (2013), welfare programmes can distort market incentives and undermine growth, suggesting that the state's role should focus on creating conditions for growth through liberalisation and trade, minimising direct interventions like subsidies. For them, economic growth is the key to reducing poverty. They argue that rapid growth fosters redistribution over time and advocate for market-led development, citing South Korea and Taiwan as examples. From this perspective, freebies or populist measures are deemed unsustainable and harmful in the long term. On the other hand, Dreze and Sen (2013) advocate for a social democratic framework that emphasises redistribution and investment in welfare programmes as vital for sustainable development. They argue that social justice and human development, through education and health, require direct state intervention. In their view, the state plays a proactive role in ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. In this approach, freebies are seen as necessary welfare interventions to address inequalities and market failures rather than distortions.

Considering the welfare and populism debate, the first three types of freebies can be viewed as welfare schemes, while irrational freebies represent populist tactics, often serving political interests at taxpayer expense. A recent example is AAP's 2022 promise of 300 electricity units in Punjab, benefiting nearly 88 per cent of users since July 2022. However, this policy has financial implications, with electricity costs in Punjab projected to

Subhash and Poola

rise from ₹17,457 crore in FY 2023-24 to ₹20,477 crore in FY 2024-25 (Rambani 2024). With a debt-to-GSDP ratio of 48.1 per cent in 2022-23, these costs strain Punjab's finances, leading to a reduction in capital spending, dropping from ₹10,300 crore to ₹7,400 crore in the 2024 budget (Sethi 2024). In the next section, this issue is analysed through case studies from Andhra Pradesh and Delhi, where the emphasis on providing free services raises serious concerns about the sustainability of public finances and the prioritisation of development initiatives.

Andhra Pradesh and Freebies

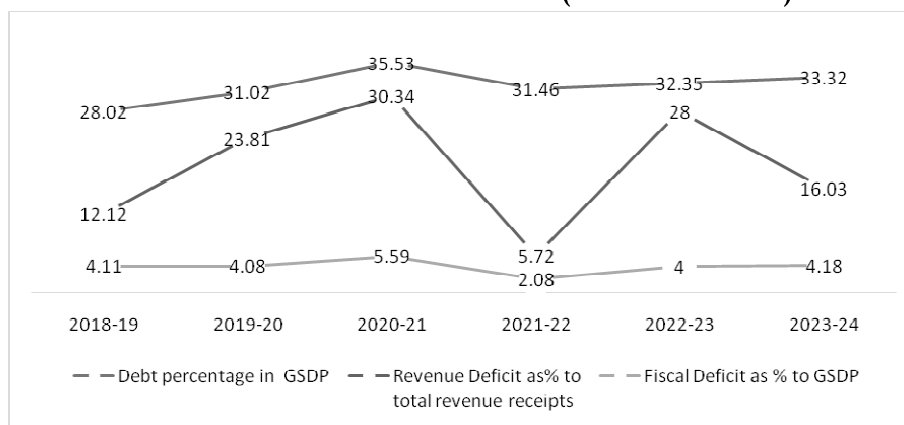
The Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party's (YSRCP) rise to power in Andhra Pradesh in 2019 marked a major shift in governance through its welfare-driven Navaratnalu agenda. Focused on direct monetary transfers, these schemes have significantly reshaped the state's socio-economic landscape. Among them, Amma Vodi provides financial aid to mothers of school-going children, ensuring educational access, while Rythu Bharosa-PM KISAN reflects the government's commitment to supporting farmers through input support. Complementing these are various cash transfer schemes for barbers, textile workers, taxi drivers, tailors, and other occupational groups, designed to reduce poverty and promote inclusive growth. However, this section contends that such reliance on cash-based welfare has serious fiscal repercussions. The state's growing preference for revenue-heavy welfare spending over capital investment has deepened fiscal imbalances. Budgetary analysis reveals that the escalating revenue expenditure, driven by freebies, has constrained capital outlay and worsened Andhra Pradesh's post-bifurcation deficit situation, highlighting a clear distortion in fiscal priorities (Table 1).

Table 1
Composition of Total Expenditure in Andhra Pradesh (₹ in crores)

S. No.	Item	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (RE)
1	Revenue Expenditure (percentage in total expenditure)	137475 (88.65)	152677 (88.06)	159163 (89.58)	201255 (95.71)	228237 (88.85)
2	Capital Expenditure (percentage in total expenditure)	12242 (7.89)	18975 (10.94)	16373 (9.21)	7244 (3.44)	27308 (10.63)
3	Loans and advances	5356	1715	2138	1773	1319
4	Total Expenditure	155073	173367	177674	210272	256864

Source: Socio-Economic Survey Andhra Pradesh 2021-22 and 2022-23

Figure 1
Andhra Pradesh's Fiscal Indicators (2018-19 to 2023-24)



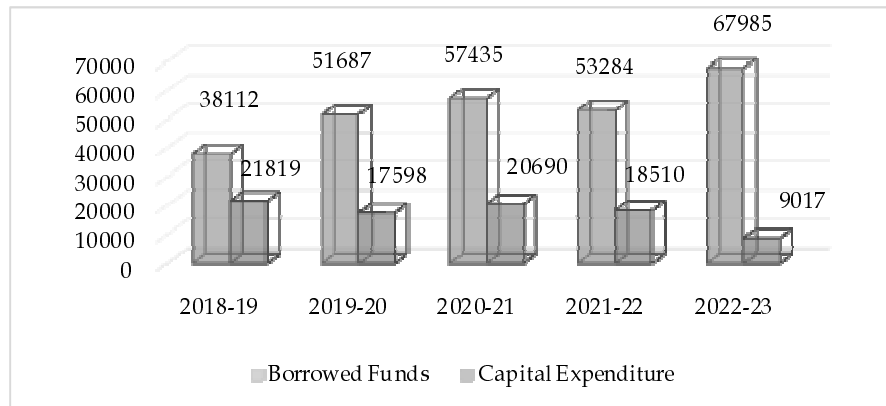
Source: CAG - Accounts at a glance 2022-23 and AP budget at a glance 2024-25

The relentless drive to honour electoral promises has pushed Andhra Pradesh into a fragile fiscal position marked by rising debt and weakening financial indicators. The state's growing dependence on borrowings to meet expenditure obligations has inflated its debt-to-GSDP ratio from 28.7 per cent in 2018-19 to 33.32 per cent in 2023-24, signalling severe fiscal stress. Simultaneously, capital expenditure as a share of total borrowings has sharply declined.

Figure 2 highlights this imbalance: while borrowings continue to rise, capital investment has fallen, indicating that borrowed funds are being diverted to sustain revenue-heavy welfare schemes rather than productive assets. This pattern heightens the risk of a debt trap, as continuous borrowing is required to service existing debt. Further aggravating this situation are extensive off-budget borrowings, which obscure the true fiscal position and undermine transparency. The CAG report on Andhra Pradesh revealed that government expenditure exceeded approved allocations by ₹48,757 crore in 2020-21, exposing fiscal indiscipline and systemic risks that demand urgent corrective measures.

Subhash and Poola

Figure 2
Borrowed Funds and Spending on Capital Expenditure in Andhra Pradesh
(In crores)

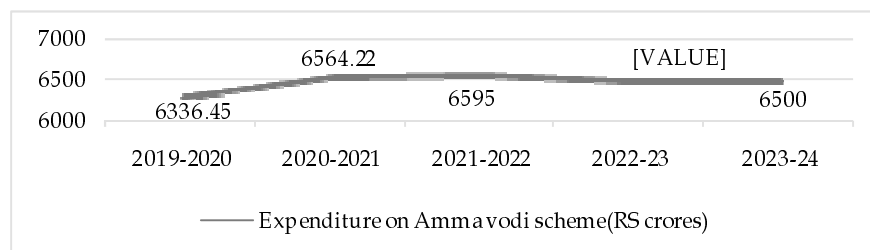


Source: CAG - Accounts at Glance 2022-23.

A. *Amma Vodi*

The fervent support for freebies in Andhra Pradesh, particularly under the Navaratnalu scheme, is often justified on the grounds of fostering transformational changes across the sectors and social groups. However, a longitudinal examination reveals that despite significant financial investments, these targeted interventions have failed to yield the anticipated transformative outcomes, particularly in sectors such as education. Take, for instance, the Amma Vodi scheme, which allocates ₹15,000 annually to mothers of school-going children for educational expenses. Despite a substantial expenditure of ₹26,067 crore and benefiting 43.61 lakh mothers and 83 lakh children (Vote on Account 2024-25 speech of Sri Buggana Rajendranath Minister for Finance, 2024), data paints a sobering picture.

Figure 3
Expenditure on the Amma Vodi Scheme (2019-20 to 2023-24)



Source: Andhra Pradesh Socio-Economic Surveys (2019-22) and Budget Speeches (2022-24).

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

Despite the anticipated outcome of incentivising parents and subsequently increasing the overall enrolment ratio of school-going children, empirical data from Table 2 indicate a concerning trend. While the total enrolment for Classes I to X in Andhra Pradesh shows a decline from 72,43,262 in 2019-20 to 71,79,445 in 2022-23, it's important to note that the data from 2022-23 reveals a drop in enrolment for Classes I-V, but a marginal increase in Classes VI-VIII and IX-X. While we must be cautious not to attribute this enrolment decline solely to the ineffectiveness of the Amma Vodi Scheme, given that the period coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted education systems across the country, it is important to acknowledge that the monetary incentives alone were insufficient to significantly improve school enrolment rates. The challenges posed by the pandemic, including school closures, economic instability, and migration, likely outweighed the financial benefits of the scheme, highlighting the need for more comprehensive measures beyond direct cash transfers to address educational enrolment effectively.

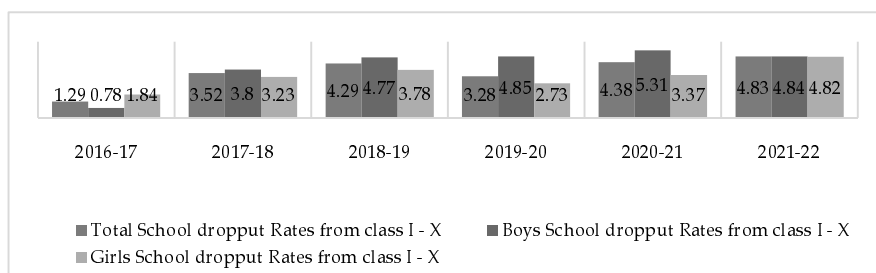
Table 2
Enrolment of children in schools

Year	Class I-V	Class VI-VIII	Class IX-X	Total
2018-19	3612123	2094322	1336699	7043144
2019-20	3774467	2132103	1336699	7243269
2020-21	3727676	2179189	1371483	7278348
2021-22	2606311	996633	1345574	7248518
2022-23	3573752	2229916	1375777	7179445

Source: Socio-Economic Survey of Andhra Pradesh 2022-23

Another critical metric, dropout rates from Class I to Class X in Andhra Pradesh, further underscores the limited impact of the Amma Vodi Scheme despite its financial incentives. Contrary to expectations, dropout rates have not exhibited any significant improvement, with an alarming increase observed from 3.28 per cent in 2019-20 to 4.83 per cent in 2021-22. While the dropout ratio among boys has remained stagnant, hovering around 4.85 per cent in 2019-20 and 4.84 per cent in 2021-22, the dropout ratio among girls has surged from 2.73 per cent in 2019-20 to 4.82 per cent in 2021-22. These findings suggest that the monetary incentives provided to mothers of school-going children through the Amma Vodi Scheme have not effectively mitigated dropout rates. Despite the financial support, students, especially girls, continue to disengage from the education system, signalling underlying systemic challenges that necessitate a more holistic approach to address educational retention and completion rates in Andhra Pradesh.

Figure 4
School Dropout Rates from Class I to X in Andhra Pradesh



Source: Socio-Economic Survey of Andhra Pradesh 2022-23

The limited effectiveness of the Amma Vodi Scheme, unlike the more successful Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programme, stems from several factors. Direct cash transfers to mothers do not ensure that funds are spent on education, whereas the MDM scheme directly benefits students through daily nutritional support, which has been proven to reduce dropouts. The periodic nature of Amma Vodi payments also weakens its motivational impact compared to the consistent incentives provided by school meals. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted households, reducing the scheme's effectiveness among economically vulnerable families. A recent study by Diego Maiorano et al. (2024) highlights that Amma Vodi and similar cash transfer programmes suffer from exclusion errors and weak institutional support, limiting their long-term outcomes. Moreover, monetary assistance alone cannot substitute for structural improvements in education. Without parallel investments in infrastructure, teacher quality, and curriculum development, such schemes can only offer temporary relief rather than genuine enhancement of human capital.

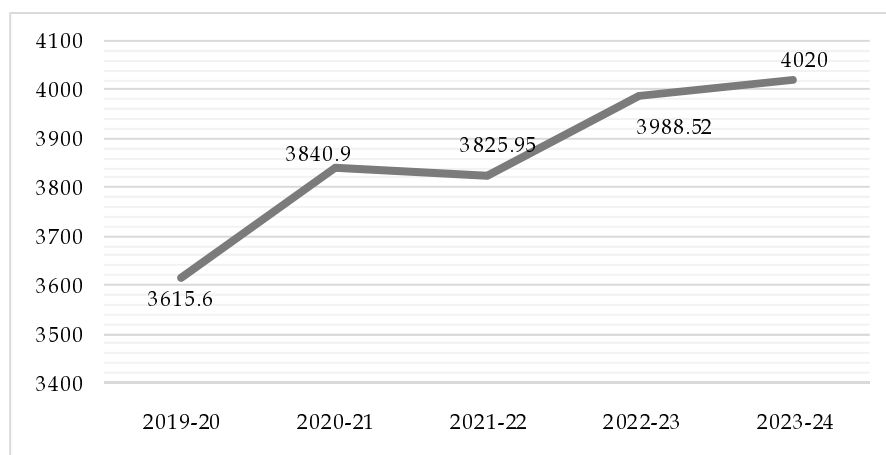
B. YSR Rythu Bharosa

Another example of freebies in Andhra Pradesh is the YSR Rythu Bharosa scheme, which provides financial assistance of ₹13,500/- per farmer family per year, inclusive of ₹6000/- from the PM-KISAN scheme, as investment support to farmers, including tenant farmers (Socio-Economic Survey, Andhra Pradesh 2021-22, 2022). Since its inception in 2019, a staggering 53.58 lakh farmers, including 1.6 lakh landless tenant farmers and 93000 Recognition of Forest Rights (ROFR) farmers, have received a total monetary support of ₹33,000 crores under this scheme (Vote on Account 2024-25 Speech of Sri Buggana Rajendranath, Minister for Finance, 2024). By

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

providing crucial financial assistance to farmers, including those who are landless or have forest rights, the YSR Rythu Bharosa Scheme aims to alleviate economic distress and empower farmers to invest in agricultural activities.

Figure 5
Expenditure on YSR Rythu Bharosa



Source: Andhra Pradesh Budget in Brief 2023-24 (Volume VI)

The outcome of the assistance provided to farmers through schemes like YSR Rythu Bharosa has yielded minimal significant changes in agricultural activity in Andhra Pradesh, as evidenced by empirical data. Despite the financial support extended to farmers, both the area under cultivation and the total production of food grains have exhibited concerning trends. The total area under food grain production has shown a decrease, declining from 41.45 lakh hectares in 2019-20 to 39.59 lakh hectares in 2022-23 and food grains from 175.12 lakh tonnes in 2019-20 to 169.30 lakh tonnes in 2022-23. Interestingly, even with the return of migrant workers to rural areas amid the pandemic-induced lockdowns, which ostensibly contributed to an increase in agricultural activity, the observed reduction in both the area under cultivation and food grain production suggests that the impact of the YSR Rythu Bharosa Scheme on agriculture has been minimal at best.

Table 3
Area and production of food grains in Andhra Pradesh

S.No.	Year	Area under cultivation (in Lakh Hectares)	Production (in Lakh Tonnes)
1	2019-20	41.45	175.12
2	2020-21	43.01	165.04
3	2021-22	41.34	154.85
4	2022-23	39.59	169.30

Source: Socio-Economic Survey of Andhra Pradesh 2022-23

The National Crime Records Bureau's Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (2021) report reveals the grim reality of agrarian distress in Andhra Pradesh, which ranked third in farmer suicides, rising from 889 in 2020 to 1,065 in 2021. These figures highlight the urgent need for structural reforms and targeted interventions in the agricultural sector. A study on the Rythu Bharosa scheme identifies key shortcomings, including weak grievance redressal systems, design flaws, and information gaps that marginalise the poorest and tribal farmers, underscoring the necessity for more inclusive welfare mechanisms. While schemes like YSR Rythu Bharosa offer critical financial relief, they must be reinforced with measures to improve productivity, promote sustainable land use, and strengthen institutional support to prevent farmer distress and suicides. Overall, the experiences with Rythu Bharosa and Amma Vodi exemplify the limitations of the prevailing freebie-driven governance model. Though such initiatives offer short-term relief, they fall short of delivering lasting, transformative outcomes for their intended beneficiaries (Diego Maiorano et al., 2024).

Delhi and Freebies Schemes

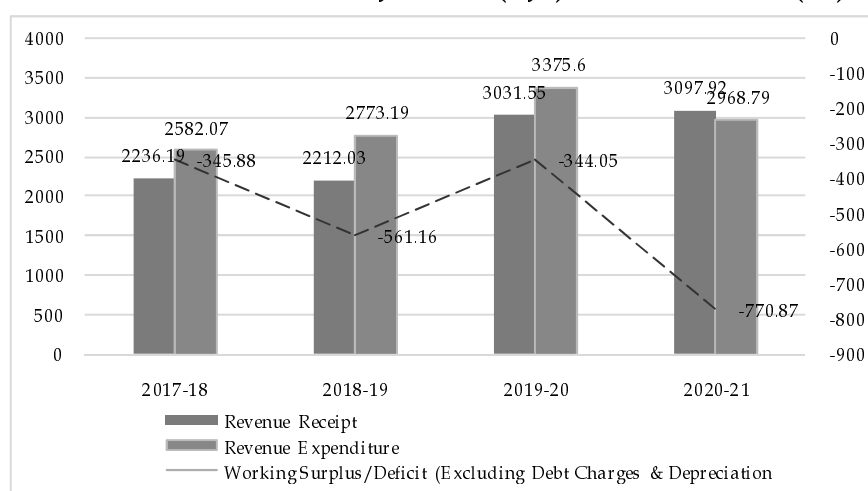
Since the entry of AAP in Delhi politics, welfarism, populism, and Freebie politics have emerged as prominent issues among scholars, academicians, and the media. From 2015 onwards, the AAP government has introduced three major prominent freebie schemes, Such as free electricity up to 200 units to domestic consumers, free water up to 20KL per household and free bus rides (2019) to women, which aim to provide minimum basic facilities to the common people. However, various opposition leaders, economists, academicians, and intellectuals have criticised the Delhi Government schemes by terming them as freebie politics. In this context, we have analysed the freebie schemes implemented by the AAP government to understand their impact on fiscal position and political culture.

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

A. Free Water Scheme

In March 2015, AAP introduced a free water scheme to provide 20KL of free water per month to domestic water consumers. As per the data available through the Delhi State Economic Survey 2022-23, it has been observed that up to 2010-11, DJB was successful in meeting its operating expenses (P. 45). Even up to 2015-16, they have maintained a revenue surplus. However, from 2016-17 to 2022-23 (RE), it consistently turned into a revenue deficit (Figure 6). Our research survey shows that 77 per cent of Delhi voters benefit from free water and electricity, and 67.5 per cent of voters in Delhi favour continuing the freebies schemes implemented by the AAP.³

Figure 6
Financial Position of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) 2017-18 to 2022-23 (BE)

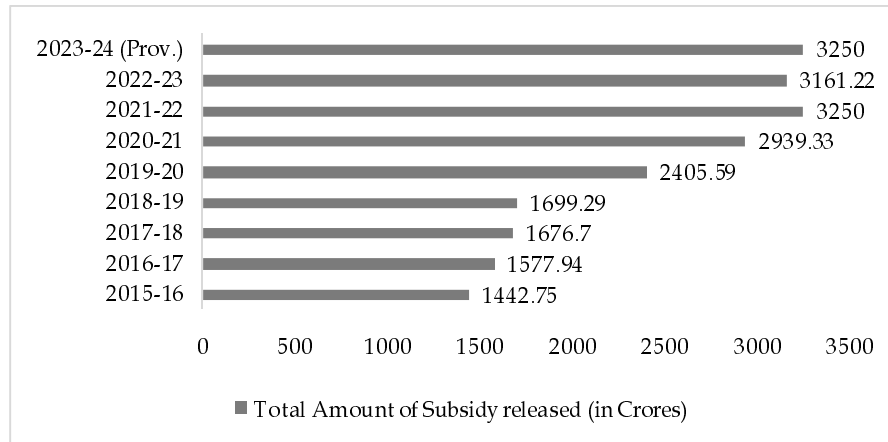


Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23

B. Free Electricity Schemes

In FY 2022-23, there were 68.51 lakh electricity connections in Delhi, out of which 57.43 lakh were Domestic connections (P. 71). In FY 2022-23, the Government of Delhi has amended the existing electricity subsidy scheme with a Voluntary Subsidy Scheme (VSS) and made it applicable to only consumers who opt for the voluntary subsidy w.e.f. 1 October 2022. Till 27 December 2022, 42 lakh (approx.) consumers opted for VSS (Delhi Eco. Survey 2021-22: 72).

Figure 7
Subsidy released by GNCTD to the Power Sector (In crores)



Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23

C. *Free Transportation for Women*

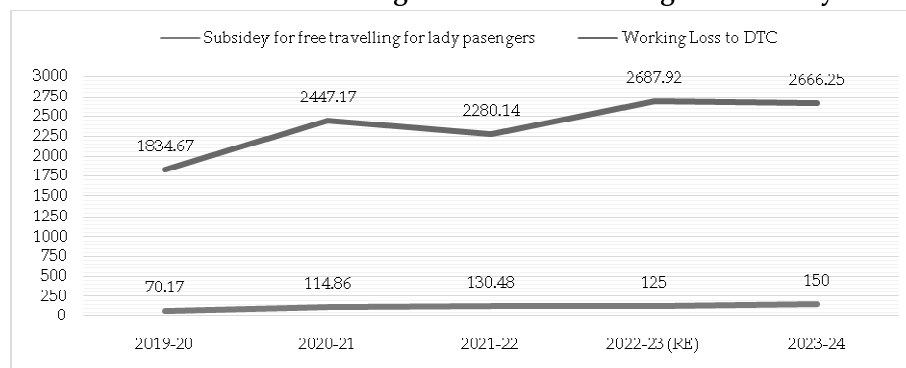
In 2019, just before the Delhi state legislative assembly elections, the Arvind Kejriwal-led government introduced the free transport scheme for women passengers on the state transport buses. Following the initiation of free rides for women passengers, several state governments, including Karnataka, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu, adopted similar schemes, while Telangana and Himachal Pradesh introduced modified versions like the *Naari Ko Naman Scheme*, where women pay only 50 per cent of the fare. Providing free transport for women is a positive step towards enhancing their economic mobility and empowerment, yet it's crucial to assess the financial stability of state transportation systems beforehand. Many transportation corporations are currently facing losses, and such schemes can exacerbate their financial woes, leading to issues like delayed salaries and payments to employees. For instance, Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has sustained continuous operational losses, significantly disrupting its functionality.

Table 4
Financial Position of DTC and Assistance Provided by Delhi Govt.
(in crores)

Financials of Delhi Transport Corporation							
Item	Financial Years						
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (RE)	2023-24 (BE)
Income	889.33	884.28	892.75	509.42	660.38	843.58	804.05
Working Cost	2619.35	2548.85	2727.42	2956.59	2940.52	3531.5	3470.3
Working Loss	-1730.02	-1664.57	-1834.67	-2447.17	-2280.14	-2687.92	-2666.25
Assistance Provided by Delhi Govt							
Grant	2007	1825	2030	2475	2320	2350	2250
Subsidies for free/ concessional pass	100	100	90.68	78.82	38.46	80	50
Subsidy for free Travelling for Lady Passengers	0	0	70.17	114.86	130.48	125	150

Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23

Figure 6
Subsidies Provided by the Delhi Govt. to DTC for
Free Travel of Women Passengers vs DTC's Working Loss Year by Year

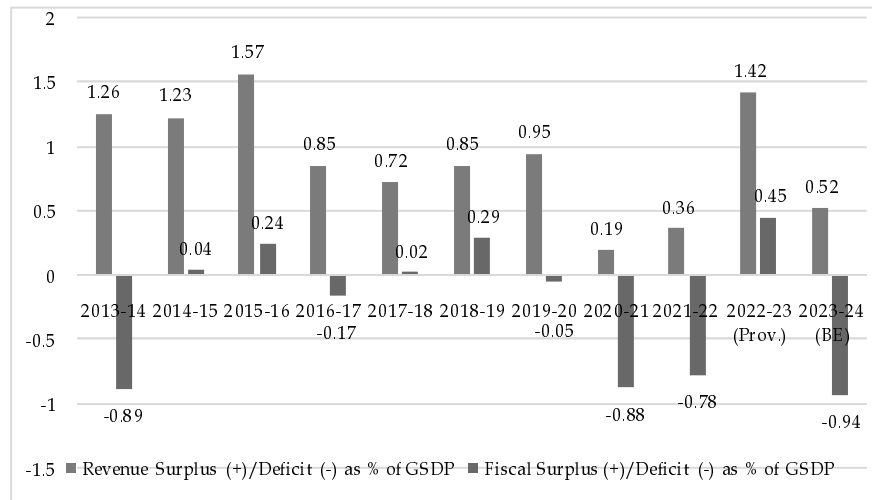


Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23

Delhi's Overall Fiscal Position

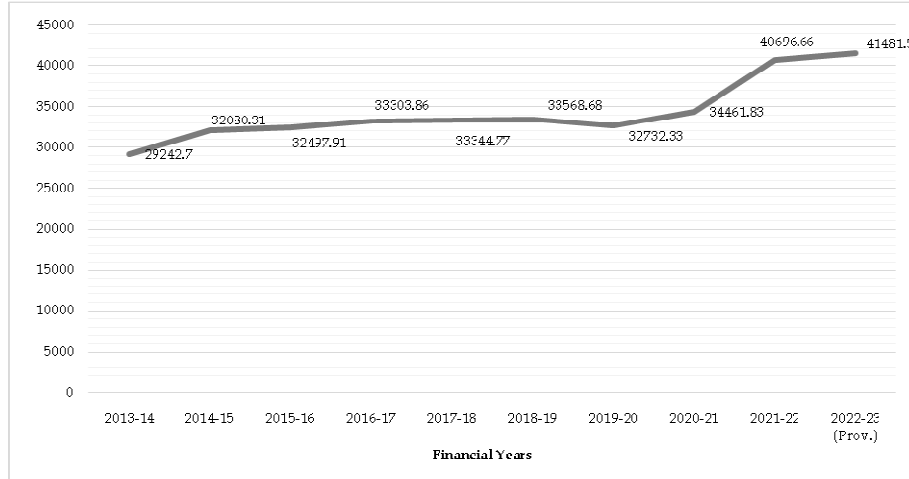
Since the formation of the AAP government in Delhi, the state has consistently maintained a revenue surplus, a remarkable achievement. Although the fiscal deficit of the Union Territory of Delhi has remained less than 1 per cent of GSDP, it needs to address the growing public debt, despite experiencing fiscal surplus on several occasions from 2013-14 to 2023-24, allowing for increased welfare-oriented policies and public spending (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Revenue Surplus (+)/Deficit (-) of GNCTD During 2013-14 To 2022-23



Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23 & 2023-24

Figure 8
Public Debt of Delhi Govt. During 2013-14 To 2022-23



Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2022-23

A comparison of Delhi and Andhra Pradesh Shows that while both governments have enacted populist freebies, their impact differs significantly. In Andhra Pradesh, schemes like *Amma Vodi* have shown limited progress in increasing school enrolment, while initiatives such as

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

YSR Rythu Bharosa have yielded mixed outcomes, with only modest improvement in agricultural productivity. In the case of Delhi, due to its better revenue conditions, wider tax base, and strong fiscal position, it has performed better in comparison to Andhra Pradesh. However, in both cases, public debt is on an increasing trend, which needs to be taken care of in the long run to maintain a healthy fiscal position. Some of the recent empirical studies have shown that capital expenditure has higher multiplier effects than revenue expenditure. For instance, Hakhu (2015) study the dynamic relationship between components of public expenditure and public debt suggested that capital expenditure is more productive than revenue expenditure and it helps stabilise public debt in long run for the Indian government (Hakhu, 2015: 16). These major schemes of the Delhi government have improved the lifestyle of Delhi's voters, which is also reflected in the research survey, where almost 64 per cent of the respondents agreed that the freebies schemes of the Delhi government have a good impact on their standard of living. Forty-nine per cent of the total respondents of our survey also confirmed that the freebies policies of AAP have influenced them to vote for the AAP in the 2020 Delhi state assembly elections, and 58.5 per cent are satisfied with the working of the Arvind Kejriwal government and likely to vote again for the next assembly elections.

Conclusion

Through our categorisation of freebies, we argued that not all freebies can be clubbed as irrational freebies; some are necessary for ensuring a dignified life. However, there are instances where political parties made freebies promises without considering the fiscal health of the state, primarily to gain electoral advantage. Our analysis suggests that growing reliance on freebies-driven politics has strained already stressed fiscal state resources. Financially sound states, such as Delhi, may sustain some freebies policies. However, even these states must guard against promoting indiscriminate freebies purely for electoral gains, as this misuse of public funds could compromise long-term fiscal stability. In this light, a targeted approach, "filtration process," is necessary to exclude those capable of self-sustenance from receiving state-sponsored benefits and to prioritise genuinely needy individuals over an umbrella approach. Our comparative study of Andhra Pradesh and Delhi indicates that, while freebies have brought some qualitative change in the life of the citizens by providing them a dignified life, they have also led to fiscal stress, which poses a growing concern. Political parties should carefully consider the state's fiscal health

and the long-term development needs of its citizens before introducing any freebies programme. In sum, freebies can empower when used wisely, but risk undermining state development if misused. A balanced approach, guided by a targeted filtration mechanism, is essential to align fiscal responsibility with social welfare.

Acknowledgement

We are deeply thankful to the reviewer for their insightful and constructive feedback, which greatly strengthened our analysis and improved this paper. We also thank Ms. Sumiti Kataria, doctoral researcher at Jilin University, China, for her valuable insights that enhanced our work.

End Notes

1. Mohan, D. (2022). Revdi Culture or Govt's Basic Responsibilities? What prioritising Welfare is Really About. *The Wire*, 27 July, 2022, retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/revdi-culture-welfare-narendra-modi> accessed on 06 March 2024.
2. Livemint (2022). FM Shed Light on Freebies, Saturation of existing Welfare Schemes. *Mint*, 14 Aug 2022, retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/fm-sheds-light-on-freebies-saturation-of-existing-welfare-schemes-read-here-11660410543297.html> accessed on 06 March, 2024.
3. A google form-based Survey was conducted during the July 2023 to the Jan 2024, where 200 respondents have registered their views on various policies implemented by the AAP.

References

- Bhagwati, Jagdish, and Arvind Panagariya. (2013): *Why Growth Matters: How Economic Growth in India Reduced Poverty and the Lessons for Other Developing Countries*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Birner, Regina, Surupa Gupta, and Neeru Sharma. (2011): 'The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Reform in India: Fertilizers and Electricity in India', International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Bureau, E.T., (2011): 'Jayalithaa scraps free colour TV scheme'. *The Economic Times Bureau*, 6 October 2011. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/jayalithaa-scraps-free-colour-tv-scheme/articleshow/8801487.cms> accessed on 3 March 2024.
- Cambridge Dictionary, (2023): 'FREEBIE | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary'. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/freebie>.
- Chakrabarti, Kaustuv, and Kustuv Kanti Chakrabarti, (2020): 'Populism in Contemporary Indian Politics', *Populism in Asian Democracies*. Vol. 1, pp. 97-120. Global Populism. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004444461_007.
- Deshpande, Rajeshwari, K.K. Kailash, and Louise Tillin, (2017): 'States as Laboratories: The Politics of Social Welfare Policies in India'. *India Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 85-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2017.1279928>.
- Diego Maiorano, Upasak Das, & Chakradhar Buddha, (2024): 'Cash Transfers in Andhra Pradesh: A Lifeline with Gaps'. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu>.

Comparative Analysis of Electoral Incentives in Indian Politics: A Case Study...

- com/opinion/op-ed/cash-transfers-in-andhra-pradesh-a-lifeline-with-gaps/article68697605.eceaccessed on 3 October 2024.
- Drèze, Jean, and Amartya Sen. (2013): *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*. First. London: Penguin Books.
- Finance Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh Government, (2023): 'Andhra Pradesh Budget in brief 2023-24 (Volume VI)'. <https://apfinance.gov.in/uploads/budget-2023-24-books/Volume-VI.pdf> accessed on 3 March 2024.
- Finance Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2024): 'Vote on account budget 2024-25'. https://apfinance.gov.in/uploads/budget-2024-25-voteon-books/Vote_on_account.pdf accessed on 3 March 2024.
- General Administrative Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh (2018): White Paper on Implementation of Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act, 2014 and the Connected Assurances, P. 17.
- Hakhu, Antra Bhatt. (2015): 'Productive Public Expenditure and Debt Dynamics: An Error Correction Representation Using Indian Data'. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. https://www.nipfp.org.in/media/medialibrary/2015/05/WP_2015_149.pdf. accessed on 15 October 2024.
- Howard, Jones, (1990): *Social Welfare in Third World Development*. London: Macmillan.
- Masiero, Silvia, and Chakradhar Buddha. (2021) 'Data Justice in Digital Social Welfare: A Study of the Rythu Bharosa Scheme'. Cornell University, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2108.09732>. Accessed on 17 October 2024.
- Mitra, Shabana, and Karl Ove Moene, (2019): 'Wheels of Power: Long-Term Effects of the Bihar Cycle Programme'. Ideas For India. 4 March 2019. <http://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/social-identity/wheels-of-power-long-term-effects-of-the-bihar-cycle-programme.html>. Accessed on 7 March 2024.
- Mohan, (2022): 'Revdi Culture or Govt's Basic Responsibility? What Prioritising Welfare Is Really About'. *The Wire*, 27 July 2022. <https://thewire.in/government/revdi-culture-welfare-narendra-modi>. Accessed on 7 March 2024.
- Muralidharan, Karthik, and Nishith Prakash, (2017): 'Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India'. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 321–50. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20160004>.
- National Crime Records Bureau of India. (2022): 'India's Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India report 2021' (pp. 196–208). National Crime Records Bureau of India. https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/ADSI-2021/ADSI_2021_FULL_REPORT.pdf
- Planning Department, GNCTD. (2023): 'Public Finance: Economic Survey of Delhi, 2022-23', New Delhi: Government Press, https://delhipanning.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/Planning/ch._1_introduction_2.pdf accessed on 7 March 2021.
- Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh (2020): 'Socio Economic Survey 2019-20', Government Press.
- Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2021): 'Socio Economic Survey 2020-21'. Government Press, <https://apfinance.gov.in/FirstPage.do> accessed on 8 March 2021.
- Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2022): 'Socio Economic Survey 2021-22'. Government Press, <https://apfinance.gov.in/FirstPage.do> accessed on 8 March 2024.
- Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2023): 'Socio Economic Survey 2022-23'. Government Press, <https://apfinance.gov.in/FirstPage.do> accessed on 8 March 2024.
- Principle Accountant General, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2022): 'Accounts at Glance 2020-21', Government Press. https://cag.gov.in/uploads/state_accounts_report/account-report-Accounts-at-a-Glance-2020-2021-0623dabd46cd127-82750282.pdf

Subhash and Poola

- Principle Accountant General, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2022): 'Accounts at Glance 2021-22', Government Press. https://cag.gov.in/uploads/state_accounts_report/account-report-Accounts-at-a-Glance-2021-22-0641db818374782-15688967.pdf
- Principle Accountant General, Government of Andhra Pradesh, (2023): 'Accounts at Glance 2022-23', https://cag.gov.in/uploads/state_accounts_report/account-report-Accounts-at-a-Glance-2022-23-065c4cd2642de21-31271010.pdf
- Rajendranath, Buggana. (2023): 'Vote on Account 2024-25, Speech of Minister for Finance'. Finance Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 16 March 2023. <https://apfinance.gov.in/budget-speech.html> accessed on 10 March 2024.
- Rambani, Vishal. (2024): 'Two Years of AAP Govt: Free Power Powers Populism in Punjab'. *Hindustan Times*. 16 March. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/two-years-of-aap-govt-free-power-powers-populism-in-punjab-101710531154808.html>. Accessed on 15 October 2024.
- Rangnathan, Maya, (2006): 'Television in Tamil Nadu Politics', *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 41, No. 48, pp. 4947-4951. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2006/48/commentary/television-tamil-nadu-politics.html>.
- Rostow, W.W., (1991): 'The Stages of Economic Growth'. 3rd ed. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625824>.
- S. Ganesnar, Krishnamoorthy, (2011): 'Freebies Galore in AIADMK Manifesto'. *The Hindu*, 24 March, sec. Tamil Nadu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/freebies-galore-in-AIADMK-manifesto/article14964107.ece>. Accessed on 7 March 2024.
- Sethi, Chitleen K. (2024): 'How AAP Govt's Subsidies and Freebies Have Led Punjab Deeper into Debt Trap'. *The Print*. 19 August. <https://theprint.in/statedraft/punjab-on-brink-of-financial-crisis-every-punjabi-in-debt-of-rs-1-24-lakh-but-theres-hope-yet/2227089/>. Accessed on 15 October 2024.
- Sharma, Akhilesh Kumar, and Atul Sarma. (2022): 'Legitimate Versus Distortionary Freebies'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 57 (43): 17-20.
- Surender, Rebecca (2019): 'The Social Policy Nexus and Development: Convergence, Divergence and Dynamic Change'. In *Handbook of Social Policy and Development*, edited by James Midgley, Surender Rebecca, and Laura Alfes, 1st ed., 15-35. Elgaronline: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- The Hindu Business Line (2022): 'AP releases ₹6,595 crore for FY22 towards Amma Vodi scheme'. *The Hindu Business Line*, 27 June. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/education/ap-releases-6595-crore-for-fy22-towards-amma-vodi-scheme/article65570094.ece> accessed on 8 March 2024.
- The Hindu. (2022): 'Data | Poor Revenues, Higher Spending Increased Debt Burden of Ten Indian States'. *The Hindu*, 28 June 2022, sec. Data. <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-poor-revenues-higher-spending-increased-debt-burden-of-ten-indian-states/article65575911.ece>. Accessed on 7 March 2024.
- Tribune News Service, (2022): 'Punjab's Debt Burden Swells by Rs 2.21 Lakh Crore in 15 Years'. 19 April. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/punjab-debt-burden-swells-by-2-21-lakh-cr-in-15-years-387455>. Accessed on 7 March 2024.
- Walsh, C.I., (1982): 'Review of the Book: Social Policy in the Third World-the Social Dilemmas of Underdevelopment', by Stewart MacPherson Wheatshaf Books, Brighton, 220 pp.. *Public Administration and Development*, 3 (4): 388-388. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.4230030415>.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 242-246)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Book Review

Legalizing the Revolution: India and the Constitution of the Postcolony

Sandipto Dasgupta

Cambridge University Press, 2024, ISBN: 9781108781039, US\$ 47.24

Asis Mistry*

In *Legalising the Revolution*, Sandipto Dasgupta revisits one of the most canonical moments of the Indian twentieth century—the framing of the Constitution—and rereads it not as a juridical exercise but as a political and intellectual event that sought to reconcile the unruly energies of anticolonial mass politics with the sober discipline of law and administration. The book's central provocation lies in its title: what does it mean to “legalise the revolution”? This paradox becomes the key through which Dasgupta examines the Constituent Assembly as both the institutional culmination and the site of containment of decolonisation's transformative promises.

The book opens with a conceptual wager. Dasgupta proposes that constitutions can reveal something about decolonisation, and conversely, that decolonisation can reveal something about constitutions. Against the conventional separation of constitutional theory (concerned with institutional design and normative ideals) and decolonisation studies

*Assistant Professor Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata (W.B.).
E-mail: asismistry.cu@gmail.com

Mistry

(concerned with political liberation and economic sovereignty), he insists that the two must be read together. This double move enables him to reconceptualise the Indian Constituent Assembly not as a self-enclosed elite forum, but as a theatre where the twin tasks of “unmaking the colonised present” and “making the postcolonial future” were simultaneously attempted.

At the heart of the book lies the concept of “transformational constitutionalism”. Dasgupta borrows the term from Pattabhi Sitaramayya’s remark about India’s “imperceptible transition” from colony to postcolony – a transformation without rupture. If “transformative constitutionalism” (in its South African and Indian judicial usages) denotes the court-driven realisation of social justice within a liberal framework, “transformational constitutionalism,” in Dasgupta’s usage, points to an earlier and more ambitious political project: the effort to make the constitution itself the vehicle of planned social change. It was an experiment in authoring a revolution through law, to forestall a revolution in the streets. The postcolonial state thus emerged as both inheritor and manager of revolutionary aspiration—a dynamic that, for Dasgupta, defines the ambivalence of India’s founding moment.

The book’s first chapters situate this intellectual move within a longer history of constitutional thought. Against the triumphalist narrative of “limited government” and liberal constitutionalism – exported globally in the wake of American hegemony—Dasgupta retrieves an alternative genealogy of constitution-making from the periphery. For newly decolonised nations, constitution-writing was not about restraining state power but about mobilising it toward social transformation. In the Indian case, this meant that the problem space of constitution-making was not one of closure, as in the classical script where revolution ends in constitutional order, but one of anticipation: how to avert a violent revolution by constitutionalising change. The result was a distinctive institutional form—developmental, managerial, and interventionist—through which the state was imagined as the primary agent of emancipation.

From this premise, Dasgupta reconstructs the Constituent Assembly debates as a dense and conflicted archive of decolonisation’s hopes and contradictions. Three antinomies, he argues, structured the postcolonial transition: revolution without a revolution, change through continuity, and popular sovereignty without popular politics.

The first antinomy, “revolution without a revolution”, captures the predicament of a political elite that owed its legitimacy to a mass movement

Book Review

but feared the very mass radicalism that had made independence possible. For the Congress leadership, the revolution was something to be managed rather than unleashed. The constitution would serve as the instrument for transforming social structures without the violence and unpredictability of popular insurrection. Dasgupta's careful reconstruction of assembly speeches shows how the language of planned, peaceful transformation displaced the language of militant emancipation. The postcolonial state, in this sense, sought to domesticate the revolutionary energies of the anticolonial struggle by translating them into developmental idioms of order and progress. The result was what he calls a "revolution without a revolution"—a revolution anticipated, institutionalised, and ultimately defused.

The second antinomy, "change through continuity", traces the paradox of building a new order with the inherited apparatus of the colonial state. More than half the Indian Constitution, Dasgupta notes, was drawn from the Government of India Act of 1935—the same document once denounced as a "charter of slavery." The continuity was not incidental; it was strategic. To ensure stability and governability, the framers retained the administrative machinery and bureaucratic ethos of the Raj. Dasgupta's treatment of this theme—especially his portrait of the "Constituent Administrator"—is one of the book's intellectual highlights. By foregrounding the administrator rather than the legislator or judge as the constitutive figure of the new republic, he illuminates how the logic of governance, expertise, and order came to define postcolonial constitutionalism. The constitution was not designed for the state; it was designed around it. This administrative inheritance, Dasgupta suggests, made possible the developmental ambition of the early republic but also constrained its democratic radicalism.

The third antinomy, "popular sovereignty without popular politics", takes us to the most fraught question of all: who were "We, the People"? Dasgupta reads the Constituent Assembly debates against the absent presence of the masses—the peasant insurgents, workers, and subaltern groups who had animated the anticolonial struggle but found no direct voice in the constituent process. The Assembly invoked the people in the first person but referred to them in the third: "they", "those millions outside". Popular sovereignty was affirmed as a juridical principle even as popular politics was excluded as a disruptive force. In this reading, the constitution marks both the triumph and the foreclosure of the democratic energies released by anticolonial mobilisation. The postcolonial citizen emerges as a

Mistry

governed subject rather than a self-fashioning political actor. Dasgupta's critique here resonates with long-standing debates about the "passive revolution" of Indian democracy, but he reframes them through the specific grammar of constitutional form.

What gives *Legalising the Revolution* its depth is not only its conceptual clarity but its methodological ambition. Dasgupta moves fluidly between political theory, intellectual history, and constitutional analysis. His reading of the Constituent Assembly as an archive of decolonisation rather than a mere legal record opens fresh interpretive ground. The book's middle chapters, though densely argued, offer a panoramic account of the multiple institutions and actors that mediated the transition: administrators, lawyers, legislators, landlords, and workers. The figure of the lawyer receives particularly sharp attention. Drawing on the "Tocquevillian paradox" of the legal class as both emancipatory and conservative, Dasgupta shows how juridical professionalisation in postcolonial India enabled the extension of rights and citizenship even as it circumscribed transformative politics within the bounds of legal textualism. The later chapters, which revisit the themes of property, labour, and repression, underscore the economic underpinnings of constitutional form—the dictatorship of property, as Dasgupta calls it, that silently structured the limits of redistribution.

If the conceptual ambition of the book is impressive, its historical texture is equally striking. The Constituent Assembly emerges as a space of negotiation and anxiety rather than unanimity. Dasgupta's prose is vigorous, sometimes polemical, but always anchored in close reading. He is at his best when drawing out the ironies of decolonisation: how the very instruments of liberation—the constitution, the rule of law, the developmental state—became vehicles for reproducing colonial hierarchies in new idioms. The book's engagement with global constitutionalism is another strength. By contrasting India's "transformational constitutionalism" with the liberal universalism of post-war American constitutional theory, Dasgupta situates the Indian experience within a comparative frame that is genuinely deprovincialised. The postcolonial constitution, he argues, was not a derivative adaptation but a creative experiment—one that sought autonomy from the market, rather than autonomy for it.

Yet it is precisely here that a certain tension in Dasgupta's project becomes apparent. For all his critique of constitutional containment, the book sometimes seems to romanticise the very legal and institutional frameworks it subjects to scrutiny. The sustained attention to the intellectual creativity of the framers, the "braided" narrative of law and politics, and the

Book Review

emphasis on constitutional ingenuity risk attributing to the constitutional form a generative power it may not have possessed. Dasgupta's faith in the conceptual potential of constitutionalism—its ability to absorb, rework, and even redeem the contradictions of decolonisation—can appear more hopeful than history warrants. The postcolonial constitution, after all, was not only an architecture of transformation but also a mechanism of deferral and exclusion. A more disenchanted reading might have asked whether the language of legality itself—however elastic—remains a fundamentally statist idiom, incapable of accommodating insurgent or vernacular imaginations of freedom.

In the end, *Legalising the Revolution* stands out as one of the most ambitious works on Indian constitutionalism in recent years. It moves beyond the binaries of legalism and historicism, nationalism and postcolonialism, to reveal the constitution as a dynamic technology of power and possibility. Its enduring insight is that the story of the Indian republic cannot be told as a triumph of constitutional democracy alone; it is also a story of anxiety, containment, and the ever-recurring question of how to turn mass emancipation into institutional form. Dasgupta's book reminds us that the revolution, even when legalised, remains unfinished.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 247-250)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Book Review

Ideology, Conflict and State Control in Higher Education: A Sociological Analysis

Sushree Panigrahi

SAGE, 2022, ₹1337, ISBN: 978-93-5479-149-9 (HB)

Siddhi Singh*

Sushree Panigrahi, an experienced researcher in the think tank industry, has research interests in migration, gender, education, and critical thought. This book builds upon her education research, wherein she sociologically examines the conflict in higher education institutions through the intersection of ideology, gender, caste, teacher-student-administration, Student Union, and the State.

In light of the 'New Social Movements' happening in India related to human rights, this book is an important work to understand the predominance of university students and their activism in these new social movements. It was published in 2022 and has incorporated the impact of major policy decisions, national activities, and major events like those of students' participation in CAA-NRC protests in 2019, etc. This book, amidst the civic dissent in the country, incorporates its impact on students' and teachers' ideology, the role of the government in the working of HEIs, etc.

*Ph.D. Scholar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. E-mail: siddhisingsh@niepa.ac.in

Book Review

The data set of the fieldwork depicted in the book is 627 students and 165 teachers, focusing on a comparative study of humanities and natural sciences from universities like Periyar University, Pondicherry University, NEHU, Osmania University, JNU, BHU, Gauhati, Allahabad University, Kashmir University and others. From covering institutionalised ways of protests like plays, movies, slogans, and study circles, to extreme cases of student protests leading to the death of students in BHU, the author has captured the influence of protests in the everyday lives of students and teachers in a university. To substantiate her arguments, she has used extensive secondary literature supported by data from the AISHE reports and classical and contemporary sociologists' works. Ranging from the functionalist approaches of Davis and Talcott Parsons to the symbolic interactionism approaches of Mead, she has engaged extensively with the concepts of ideology and hierarchies based on caste and gender using Karl Mannheim, Berger & Luckman, Habermas, Bourdieu and Henry Giroux's work.

She views ideology as a part of the everyday lives of students and teachers with a broader social worldview, and not just a political one. The worldview tells what is true, whereas ideology stands on a moral principle and tells what is right. In the context of the book concerning caste, religion, and friendships, the author demonstrates how the campus interactions between students and teachers shape ideology. In my understanding, this idea is conveyed through the usage of the term 'beef eaters' by students in daily conversations on campus and how it impacts Dalit students' friendships with other students. She has appropriately used sociologists to fit her arguments in the context of the book, like using Manheim to state the 'world view' of ideology. However, in a few instances, it could be seen that the author did not establish the proper connection between empirical reality and theory. One such illustration is when she mentions, "When Plato speaks of the meaning of education and its impact on society and individuals, it could be seen as the beginning of the sociology of education" (Panigrahi, 2022). The usage of words like 'could be' is well appreciated; however, the roots of the domain of sociology of education are more engulfed in the work of classical sociologists like Durkheim, and it is beyond the mere relation between society and individual. She has impressively revealed the government's direct interference with the university administration in certain sections of the book. Such as the instance wherein the new government withdrew the nominations of the syndicate members under the aegis of Bangalore University, which were appointed by the former coalition

Singh

government under H.D. Kumaraswamy. By historically mapping out the structure of protests in India, she gives a remarkable example of the strength of student activism when the Kishi Government in Japan was forced to resign. I believe India also witnessed one such incident when the JNU student union forced the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to resign from her post as Chancellor of the University.

While addressing the arguments of inequality in higher education, the author has also looked at the concept of mushrooming of private universities, both from teachers' and students' perspectives. For students, it was how lower-income students were moving up the ladder of social mobility. Leading to massification, the question then arises that indeed education is reaching every corner and opening up opportunities, but is the quality ensured? This 'quality' question has been addressed by the author from the teachers' point of view concerning the increasing number of pay-per-article journals, and fake credentials journals because of the API system. Here, it is worth including one of the responses of a professor collected by the author, that "Not all teachers can be researchers and not all researchers can be teachers". If we look at it in the extremities, this could be true, but at some point, a teacher has to be a researcher to ignite the critical thinking ability of not only the student but also themselves. She reflected on interesting perspectives that humanities students of NEHU denied the need for a student union as they saw it as a peace disruptor, whereas science students favoured for student union. But on a critical note, the binary of curriculum between humanities and natural science subjects (w.r.t. ideology) depicted a slightly selective approach as I believe the author expected that humanities students would naturally know the answer to her question of "what do you understand by ideology" as she writes that it was surprising for her that science students knew more about ideology in BHU as compared to humanities subjects. In my understanding, all humanities subjects do not have ideology in their curriculum. What matters is that one should be aware of it, irrespective of the background.

With the growing consciousness related to the protests in the country amidst the neoliberalism era, this book covers the problems of low state funding, privatisation, lower academic freedom, etc. The book is a collection of gender and caste discrimination happening in higher education institutions through everyday practices and rules in institutions, such as seats remaining empty meant for reserved categories, the history of the Pinjra Tod Movement, not serving girls non-vegetarian food in BHU, and late-night time restriction of the reading hall for girls in SPPU. There is one

Book Review

response from a teacher at Pondicherry University that needs to be included here: 'I came into the institution through reservation, but there has been no promotion for me as per UGC rules'. It requires more in-depth interrogation behind his pending promotion to uncover the latent nature of caste-discrimination, or if it was an inadequate API score, for that matter. Delving into the debates of patriotism and nationalism, she has also asked questions about reciting the national anthem in theatres and rewriting history textbooks.

With the growing tolerance-intolerance debates in student and nation-level politics in India, this book offers theoretical arguments, like one related to John Thompson's work on the negative functions of ideology. She further vindicates it through her fieldwork responses from the universities. She has perfectly structured the chapters and articulated the arguments backed by theory and evidence. Needless to say, it has captured a very insightful sociological literature base written in a non-complicated manner. It throws light on how impactful student protests can be in HEIs and can influence the governance, political discourses and policy-making. This book has thrown light on predominant issues happening in Indian higher education in contemporary times through sociological lenses like massification, academic freedom vis-à-vis students' right to freedom of expression, government involvement in university administration, Quality of research vis-à-vis API score, inequalities in Indian universities with respect to gender, caste, and religion. This makes it a worthwhile read for researchers working in higher education domains across disciplines like sociology, political science, philosophy, etc. This would also be a good source of information for policymakers to ensure equity via reservation or other affirmative action policies. Due to its simple language and non-complicated sociological theories, it could be referred to by the general population beyond academia to understand the current state of higher education in India.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 251-254)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Book Review

The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World

William Dalrymple

Bloomsbury, 2024, Rs. 999, ISBN 9781408864418, Page 496 (HB)

Bharti Sehta*

William Dalrymple's latest offering, 'The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World', shines as a richly narrated exploration of India's contributions to the world, both through its intellectual legacy and its expansive trade networks. Dalrymple has long been revered for his talent as a historian and storyteller, especially in his works about India. In this book, he continues his journey through India's past, meticulously tracing the contours of how ancient India's ideas and innovations travelled far and wide, influencing the globe in ways that are both familiar and unexpected.

While ancient India's reach is well-known to many, its trade in spices, gems, and cotton with Rome, the propagation of Buddhism, and the intellectual contributions of figures like Aryabhata, Dalrymple reframes this discourse, focusing not merely on what was exported but how it happened. Central to his argument is the role of maritime routes, which he posits as

*Senior Assistant Professor, University Department of Political Science, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur (Bihar). E-mail: sehta@brabu.ac.in

Book Review

even more significant than the fabled Silk Road. India's strategic location, especially its monsoon winds, made sea travel both faster and safer, allowing for the swift dissemination of not just goods, but knowledge, across vast distances.

The Maritime Empire of Ideas

Author William Dalrymple's argument about the maritime connections that enabled India's empire of ideas forms the backbone of *The Golden Road*. The waterways connecting India to Persia, Arabia, Africa, and Europe on one side, and to Southeast Asia and China on the other, allowed India to serve as a hub of intellectual exchange and trade. Ancient India's exports extended beyond the physical realm, spices, gems, and textiles, to abstract realms, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and mathematical innovations like the number zero.

He carefully introduces the key players in this intellectual transfer emperors like Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka, whose embrace of Buddhism helped spread the religion across Asia; mathematicians such as Aryabhata and Brahmagupta, whose astronomical texts found their way to the courts of the Abbasid Caliphs; and cultural emissaries like the Chinese monk Xuanzang, who spent years in Nalanda, carrying Buddhist teachings back to China. Dalrymple also sheds light on lesser-known yet equally important figures, such as Kumarajiva, who translated Buddhist texts into Chinese, and the Barmakid family, former Indian Buddhists who became powerful viziers in Baghdad, bringing Indian scientific knowledge into the Islamic world.

A Balancing Act between Narratives

Dalrymple nicely travels between historical analysis and captivating storytelling, making the dense subject matter accessible and engaging. His strength lies in humanising the historical figures whose actions shaped the spread of Indian thought and knowledge. He recounts Xuanzang's arduous journey across the Silk Road, travelling through treacherous mountains and deserts to reach India, vividly bringing to life the monk's devotion to learning and the significant impact that Indian monastic education had on him and the Tang dynasty back in China.

However, Dalrymple's extensive pursuit of how Indian ideas were received abroad sometimes shifts the focus away from India itself. While tracing the global trajectories of Indian knowledge, he occasionally leaves the subcontinent behind for long stretches, engrossed in foreign court politics

Sehta

and intrigues that, while fascinating, risk losing sight of the Indian origins of these exchanges. For instance, while discussing the spread of Buddhism to China or the adoption of Indian mathematical concepts in Baghdad, the book devotes pages to foreign rulers like Chinese empress Wu Zetian or the Abbasid Caliph Mansur. These sections, while informative, might leave readers yearning for a deeper dive into the conditions within India that produced these world-changing ideas in the first place.

A Vast Geographical and Temporal Sweep

One of the book's most impressive feats is the vast scope Dalrymple tackles. He spans centuries from the 5th century BCE to the 13th century CE and covers an enormous geographical area, what he calls the 'Indosphere,' stretching from the Hindu Kush in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. This enormous range is both a strength and a challenge. On the one hand, it demonstrates the staggering extent of India's cultural and intellectual influence. On the other hand, it sometimes pulls the narrative in too many directions, making it hard for the reader to keep track of the central thesis.

Where *The Golden Road* truly excels is in its vivid descriptions of the places where India's influence is still visible today. Dalrymple's travel writing is at its finest when he describes the sculpted walls of Borobudur in Indonesia or the reliefs of Mahabharata scenes in Cambodia's Angkor Wat. His deep immersion in these ancient sites allows the reader to see firsthand how far India's religious and cultural exports travelled, leaving indelible marks on foreign lands.

Challenges and Observations

Yet, as with many grand historical narratives, *The Golden Road* has its limitations. The book often leans heavily on India's soft power in the ancient world, perhaps glossing over some of the harsher realities of these exchanges. While Dalrymple touches on the violence of early Indian rulers like Ashoka before his conversion to Buddhism, or the forced migrations that brought Indian scholars to Baghdad, there is a tendency to romanticise India's influence abroad as a largely peaceful and benign force. This is particularly evident when Dalrymple contrasts India's intellectual exchanges with the more aggressive conquests of the Mongols or the Turks. The narrative occasionally veers into celebratory territory, where India's impact seems almost entirely positive, without enough attention to the complexities or darker aspects of its historical footprint.

Book Review

Dalrymple's final chapters also touch on the contemporary debates surrounding Indian history, though briefly. He acknowledges the increasingly politicised nature of history in modern India, where the ruling BJP has sought to merge mythology with history, promoting a vision of an ancient India that was not just culturally dominant but technologically advanced in ways that seem anachronistic. While *The Golden Road* may provide fodder for Hindu nationalists eager to trumpet India's past glories, Dalrymple maintains a nuanced stance, emphasising that India's influence was based on trade, intellectual exchange, and cultural diplomacy rather than military conquest.

While reading, we also find that *The Golden Road* is a sweeping and ambitious work that speaks to Dalrymple's strengths as a storyteller and historian. It illuminates how ancient India played a central role in shaping the early intellectual and cultural landscapes of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. However, the book's global focus sometimes comes at the expense of a deeper exploration of the domestic forces driving these innovations within India. Readers looking for a comprehensive account of ancient India's contributions to the world will find much to enjoy here, but they may also need to seek out complementary works to fill in some of the gaps in this fascinating, yet not entirely complete, narrative.

Ultimately, *The Golden Road* reaffirms Dalrymple's position as a master of popular history. It offers a compelling, if at times selective, portrait of how India's ideas travelled far beyond its borders, transforming the world in ways that continue to resonate today.



Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences

(A Biannual Peer-Reviewed Journal of M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

ISSN: 0973-855X (Vol. 30, No. 2, December 2025, pp. 255-260)

Previously in UGC-CARE (Group-I)

Book Review

**PMO - Prime Minister's Office:
Through the Years**

Himanshu P. Roy

Rupa Publication, New Delhi (2025), 192 pages, Rs. 495

ISBN: 978-93-6156-920-3

Harshit Singh*

Himanshu Roy's 'Prime Minister's Office Through the Years', is a meticulously researched and engagingly written exploration of the evolution of India's Prime Minister's Office (PMO), tracing its journey from a modest secretarial body in 1947 to a dynamic and powerful institution that serves as the nerve centre of Indian governance today. One of the most distinctive aspects of the book is that it draws on a rich array of sources like memoirs of civil servants, primary documents, archival records and comparative analyses with nations like the UK, Canada and Australia. The author chronicles how the PMO's role has transformed under successive Prime Ministers, shaped by their leadership styles, political contexts and the influence of key secretaries and advisors. The book stands out for its historical depth, institutional insights, and analytical rigour, with a particular focus on Narendra Modi's tenure due to its contemporary relevance and transformative impact. This

*M.A., Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

E-mail: harshi60_ssd@jnu.ac.in

Book Review

review delves into the book's comprehensive narrative, exploring the PMO's origins, its evolution through India's political epochs, its global comparisons, and its modern incarnation under Modi, while highlighting Roy's scholarly contributions and critical perspectives. The book does not just provide an isolated analysis of an institution from a structural-functionalist perspective, endangering the alienation of human agency that steer them, but thoroughly engages with the manner by which the personalities and motivations of PMs and their advisors have shaped the PMO, ranging from Nehru's reliance on trusted aides, Indira Gandhi's faith in PN Haksar reflecting the spirit of the so called 'committed bureaucracy', to Narendra Modi's PMO where efficiency and accountability reflect a deliberate selection of competent advisors like Nripendra Misra and Ajit Doval. Moreover, the author very craftily elaborates the interplay between the institutional design and individual quality in shaping governance. Also, the book connects the PMO's evolution to broader political developments such as Congress dominance, coalition politics and economic liberalisation, providing a nuanced understanding of how historical and structural factors shape institutional power in India's democracy.

Origins and Early Foundations: from Colonial Roots to Nehru's Vision

The PMO's story begins in the colonial era, originating as the private secretariat of the Governor-General in 1774, a modest administrative unit designed to support executive functions. After India's independence in 1947, it was restructured as the Prime Minister's Secretariat (PMS) under Jawaharlal Nehru, only to be renamed the PMO in 1977. Author vividly describes how Nehru envisioned the PMS as a tool to consolidate his leadership, enabling him to navigate the complexities of governing a newly independent nation. However, this vision sparked tensions with Sardar Patel, the Home Minister, who viewed the PMS's expansion as a threat to cabinet collegiality. The Principal Private Secretary (PPS), ranked as a joint secretary, initially wielded limited formal authority, but Nehru's dominance in cabinet discussions gradually shifted power toward the PMS. Author notes a pivotal shift after Patel died in 1950, when the PPS began attending cabinet meetings—a move Patel had fiercely opposed—laying the groundwork for the PMO's growing influence as a "miniature government".

Author enriches this narrative with archival insights, highlighting how Nehru's reliance on trusted aides like M.O. Mathai shaped the PMS's early role. Mathai's informal influence, often bypassing bureaucratic norms, set a precedent for the PMO's ability to operate as a flexible, yet powerful,

entity. The book also contextualises this period within India's broader nation-building efforts, where the PMS served as a coordination hub for ambitious projects like the Five-Year Plans and non-aligned foreign policy, underscoring its strategic importance even in its nascent stage.

Shastri and Indira Gandhi: The PMO as a Powerhouse

The PMO's transformation into a significant institutional player began under Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966). Shastri elevated the chief officer's rank to Secretary to the Prime Minister, aligning it with the cabinet secretary and expanding its policymaking role. Author emphasises the systemic approach of Secretary L.K. Jha, who attended cabinet meetings, shaped policy decisions, and coordinated with ministries, marking the PMO's emergence as a key governance actor. Jha's tenure saw the PMO evolve from a reactive secretariat to a proactive force, influencing decisions on economic policy and international relations during a turbulent period marked by the 1965 India-Pakistan war.

Under Indira Gandhi (1966-1977, 1980-1984), the PMO reached new heights of influence, becoming what author calls a "parallel government". Principal Secretary P.N. Haksar played a pivotal role, leveraging his intellectual prowess and strategic acumen to shape policy, diplomacy, and even party affairs. Author details Haksar's contributions to landmark events like the 1971 Shimla Agreement and the nationalisation of banks, illustrating how the PMO became a linchpin of Indira Gandhi's centralised governance model. During the Emergency (1975-1977), the PMO's dominance peaked, with the Prime Minister's House (PMH) and Sanjay Gandhi's informal coterie further centralising power. Author critiques this period as a low point for parliamentary democracy, as the PMO's overreach undermined the cabinet's collective responsibility, creating a near-authoritarian governance structure. Drawing on memoirs from civil servants like P.C. Alexander, author paints a vivid picture of the PMO's inner workings, revealing the tensions between institutional loyalty and political ambition.

Rajiv Gandhi, Narsimha Rao, and Manmohan Singh: Navigating Change and Challenges during the Coalition Era

Rajiv Gandhi's tenure (1984-1989) saw the PMO adapt to a modernising India. Rajiv sought to restore cabinet autonomy, reacting against his mother's centralised model, but the PMO grew more interventionist under advisors like P.C. Alexander. Author highlights the introduction of technology through the National Informatics Centre (NIC),

Book Review

which digitised governance processes and enhanced the PMO's coordination capabilities. However, Rajiv's inexperience and the Bofors scandal weakened his PMO's effectiveness, illustrating the challenges of balancing reformist zeal with political realities.

P.V. Narasimha Rao (1991–1996) leveraged the PMO to drive India's economic liberalisation, a transformative period in the nation's history. Principal Secretary Amar Nath Varma played a crucial role, navigating coalition constraints and coordinating with Finance Minister Manmohan Singh to implement reforms. Author praises Rao's PMO for its strategic finesse, noting how it balanced economic imperatives with political survival in a minority government. In contrast, Manmohan Singh's PMO (2004–2014) faced significant challenges due to a "dual power structure" with the National Advisory Council (NAC), led by Sonia Gandhi. Roy argues that this diluted the PMO's authority, as the NAC's influence over policy – particularly on social welfare programmes like MGNREGA – created a parallel power centre. Scandals like the 2G spectrum case further exposed governance weaknesses, highlighting the PMO's struggles in a coalition-driven polity.

Non-Congress Leaders and Coalition Dynamics

The PMO's role fluctuated under non-Congress leaders, reflecting the complexities of coalition politics. Morarji Desai (1977–1979), leading the first non-Congress government, sought to curb the PMO's overreach, emphasising cabinet consensus to restore parliamentary norms. Author notes that Desai's decentralised approach weakened the PMO's influence, aligning with his vision of collective governance. The coalition era (1989–2014) saw further fluctuations, with leaders like V.P. Singh and I.K. Gujral presiding over a subdued PMO amid political instability. However, Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998–2004) defied these constraints, centralising power through Principal Secretary and National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra. Mishra's dual role strengthened the PMO's influence in security and foreign policy, notably during the Kargil War and India's nuclear tests. Author underscores Vajpayee's ability to balance coalition demands with a strong PMO, drawing on Mishra's memoirs to highlight the strategic coordination that defined this period.

Narendra Modi's Tenure: A Modern Powerhouse

Author dedicates substantial attention to Narendra Modi's PMO (2014–present), portraying it as a 'pinnacle of democratic efficiency' and

centralised authority with accountability to the people. Narendra Modi's PMO operates with a 'streamlined structure', with key officials—Principal Secretary, National Security Advisor (NSA), and Principal Advisor—reporting directly to him, creating a cohesive “effective centre” of decision-making. Policy formulation is delegated to bodies like NITI Aayog, which replaced the Planning Commission, while political coordination aligns with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), ensuring operational clarity and focus.

Key figures like Nripendra Misra (2014–2019) and P.K. Mishra (2019–present) have been instrumental as Principal Secretaries, wielding cabinet-level authority to execute Modi's vision. Misra's appointment through an ordinance underscores Modi's emphasis on merit-based selections, a theme author explores in depth. Ajit Doval, as NSA, shapes security and foreign policy, leveraging his expertise to align the PMO with national priorities, from counter-terrorism to India's global diplomatic engagements. P.K. Sinha, as Principal Advisor, focuses on economic and developmental strategies, driving initiatives like Make in India and Smart Cities. Author highlights the PMO's embrace of technology as a defining feature, with platforms like MyGov, PRAGATI, and data-driven monitoring enabling direct citizen engagement and rapid implementation of flagship programmes such as Digital India, Swachh Bharat, and Ayushman Bharat. These initiatives often bypass traditional ministries, reflecting Narendra Modi's preference for swift, centralised execution.

Narendra Modi's reputation as a “hard taskmaster” fosters a ‘culture of accountability’ within the PMO, with a focus on performance metrics and merit-based appointments. Author notes that Modi's parliamentary majority and widespread popularity have empowered the PMO to function as a dominant force. The PMO's influence extends beyond Delhi, coordinating with state governments to promote best practices and align state secretariats with its streamlined model. For instance, author cites Narendra Modi's encouragement of chief ministers to adopt PMO-inspired administrative reforms in states, enhancing governance efficiency at the state level. This extended reach, combined with technological innovation, distinguishes Modi's PMO as a modern powerhouse.

Comparative and Analytical Insights

Author's global comparisons enrich the book's analytical depth, drawing parallels with the PMOs of the UK, Canada, and Australia. The UK's cabinet primacy contrasts with India's prime ministerial dominance, while Canada's powerful PMO mirrors India's in its centralised control,

Book Review

particularly under leaders like Justin Trudeau. Australia's balanced approach, blending prime ministerial authority with cabinet collaboration, offers a counterpoint to India's trajectory. Author argues that India's shift toward prime ministerial dominance is driven by single-party strength, charismatic leadership, and historical centralisation under Congress, amplified by economic transitions and coalition dynamics. He critiques the erosion of collective responsibility, a cornerstone of parliamentary democracy, as a consequence of the PMO's growing power, particularly under Indira Gandhi and Modi.

The book's reliance on memoirs from civil servants like Brajesh Mishra and P.C. Alexander, alongside politicians' accounts, adds authenticity and nuance to its analysis. Author also incorporates primary documents, such as cabinet meeting records and PMO correspondence, to ground his narrative in historical evidence. His analytical framework ties the PMO's evolution to broader socio-political trends, from India's post-independence nation-building to its 21st-century aspirations as a global power. Author's critique of the PMO's centralising tendencies is balanced by his acknowledgement of its efficiency, particularly under Narendra Modi, making the book a nuanced contribution to political science scholarship.

Conclusion

Prime Minister's Office Through the Years is a *tour de force* (exceptional work), blending historical narrative, institutional analysis, and comparative perspectives to illuminate the PMO's pivotal role in Indian governance. Roy's comprehensive exploration, spanning from colonial origins to Modi's transformative tenure, offers a rich tapestry of insights into power, institutions, and democracy. The book's emphasis on Modi's PMO, with its technological edge and centralised efficiency, provides a timely reflection on contemporary governance, while its historical and global comparisons contextualise India's unique trajectory. As an academic project, the book touches every possible dimension to study the PMO in its historicity and makes the reader understand the epistemology of an institution such as the PMO. Author also critiques the centralising tendencies of the PMO, prevalent during the pre- and post-emergency era, risking the democratic accountability of such institutions. Nonetheless, engagingly written, thoroughly researched, and enriched by primary sources, this book is essential reading for scholars, policymakers, and anyone seeking to understand the evolution of India's political landscape and the PMO's enduring influence.

Instructions to Authors

Manuscript Submission

Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences (MPJSS) welcomes research papers for dissemination of original research, analytical papers, and papers based on literature review on any aspects of social sciences. Research papers should be submitted electronically to the Editor, MPJSS at mpjssujain@gmail.com.

Review System

Every research paper will be reviewed by masked reviewers. The Editor reserves the right to reject any manuscript as unsuitable for publication, keeping in view the required level of logical argument, the topic of relevance and citation style of the submitted paper without requesting for external review.

Basic Format of the Manuscript

Contributors must include their affiliations, and postal and e-mail address with their papers and book reviews. Research papers should be written in MS word (1.5 spaced) format ranging between 4000 to 5000 words. It must be accompanied by an abstract of 100 words and necessary keywords. MPJSS accepts reviews of scholarly books on social sciences (1500-2000 words).

Spellings and Numerical Usages

Use British spellings in all cases instead of American spellings (hence 'programme' not 'program', 'labour' not 'labor'). Use 's' spelling instead of 'z' spelling (hence 'organise' not 'organize'). Use figures to express all numbers 10 and above. Spell out numbers lower than 10, however for exact measurement, use only figures (3 km, 9 percent not %)

Quotation, Notes, Tables, and Figures

Use a single quote throughout. Double quotes are only to be used within single quotes. Spellings of words in quotations should not be changed. Quotations of 45 words or more should be indented from the text. MPJSS uses endnotes in the place of footnotes. Endnotes should be numbered serially and presented at the end of the paper. We advocate minimum usage of tables and figures. However, all the tables and figures should be numbered and their sources should be mentioned clearly below the tables and figures.

In-text Citations (As per APA, 7th Edition)

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

References (as per APA, 7th Edition)

Book

Mishra, S. (2006). *Diaspora criticism*. Edinburgh University Press.

Book Chapter

Ghosh B. (2012). Globalisation and social transformation: Yogendra Singh on culture change in contemporary India. In Ishwar Modi (Ed). *Modernisation, globalization and social transformation*. Rawat Publications, 242-256.

Journal Article

Singh, M. A. (2016). Narendra Modi and Northeast India: Development, insurgency and illegal migration. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 9(2), 112-127.

M.P. Institute of Social Science Research Ujjain - 456010 (M.P.)

The M.P. Institute of Social Science Research (MPISSR) is an autonomous, multi-disciplinary centre for research and training of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Ministry of Education, Government of India, and Department of Higher Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Research activities of MPISSR are concerned with issues relating to social, economic, political, cultural, administrative and civic aspects of India in general and Madhya Pradesh in particular. The Institute has been working for the last three decades with an unfettered spirit of exploration, rationality and enterprise to pursue research and training activities for generating understanding, knowledge and linkages between field realities and public policies.

The basic aim of MPISSR is to engage in research on relevant contemporary issues and disseminate the research findings for the enhancement of the existing knowledge and for the well being of the society through policy input. MPISSR has been working on following thematic areas: Panchayat Raj and Rural Development; Studies in Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes; Democracy, Electoral Behaviour, Social Justice and Human Rights; Development and Deprivation; Studies in Education; Gender Studies; Studies in Environment; Information Technology and Society; and New Economic Policy and Society.

MPISSR caters to the needs of policy planners, academia, legislators, non-governmental organisations, researchers, research organisations and functionaries of international organisations. Dissemination of knowledge through research publication; collaborating in research; imparting research training; assisting and advising through policy research and evaluation studies are core activities of the Institute.

MPISSR is registered under section 6 (1) of the Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Act, 1976, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi. Donations made to MPISSR are qualified for exemption under section 80-G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Previously the Journal is listed in UGC-CARE (Group - I)

Registered with
Registrar of Newspapers for India under no. R.N. 66148/96

Printed and Published by
Professor Yatindra Singh Sisodia
on behalf of
M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain