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## From the Editor

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present the fifth issue of *Explorations*. I am also happy to announce that *Explorations* has been now included in the University Grants Commission-Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE) list of journals. The present issue consists of four papers published under the 'Articles' category and one paper under the 'Research in Progress' category.

The first article, titled *Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework*, by Sonal Pandey is based on a systematic review of the existing literature. It suggests a conceptual framework delineating the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in India. It emphasises the training of professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people to identify children at risk and situations of child abuse as well as providing trauma-informed care to parents and children in preventing and treating child sexual abuse.

In the next article titled *Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective*, A.K. Nongkynrih maintains that tourism provides the ground for social interactions between social actors, that is, the host and the visitors. It is at one level a social interaction and social relationship based on rational exchange of money and service, and on the other, meeting of diverse cultures. Arguing that the sustainability of the local ecosystem and culture must not be sacrificed while promoting tourism, the paper examines as to what extent sustainable tourism is a part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework.

The following article by Randhir Gogoi and Barnali Sarma, titled *Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-Reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India*, seeks to understand movement organisation and mobilisation by moving beyond addressing them as resultants of structural phenomenon like migration or ethnicity. The author believes that socio-political movements are also effected by discourses and they operate using narratives provided by researches, memoirs, stories, etc. The article goes beyond identity-centric movements and brings into focus new movements organised around issues of human rights violation and development induced displacement.

The last article, *Tuloni: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society*, by Maitrayee Patar examines the different constructions around menstruation among Assamese women in terms of menstrual rituals, taboos and prescriptions and lived experiences. It attempts to explore the negotiations that take place around menstrual taboos in the everyday life of the menstruating women and the complex role that individual agency plays in pushing the boundaries of these taboos.

The paper under Research in Progress titled *Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur* by Rambooshan Tiwari demonstrates the trends of crime in metropolitan cities with special focus on severe crime and crime against women in the Jabalpur city of central India. It seeks to understand the probable reasons for the higher crime rates and possible surveillance strategies to combat crime in major urban centres, which the author feels do not get the desired attention in policy making and planning.

*Explorations* invites your contributions for future issues of the journal. We will appreciate your feedback or suggestions on the journal.

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**Article: Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework**

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## Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework

--- Sonal Pandey

### *Abstract*

Until recently academic research in India had been primarily preoccupied with crimes against females in the reproductive age, such as rape or sex trafficking, downplaying the sexual abuse of boys and girls of pre-pubertal age or teenagers. However, of late Child Sexual Abuse is also being recognised and reported as a criminal justice issue and an increasing number of such incidents are being published in the country. Based on a systematic review of the existing literature, this article suggests a conceptual framework delineating the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in India. The paper concludes with implications for policy and research.

*Key words: Child Sexual abuse, Disclosure, Perpetrator characteristics, Systematic review, India*

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### **Introduction**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is one of the most common yet underreported forms of violence against children prevalent across the globe (Pellai & Caranzano, 2015). In the year 2009, Pereda, Guilera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, conducted a worldwide study among the students and community to find the prevalence of child sexual abuse. The analysis of the available data from 22 countries revealed that CSA is a serious problem worldwide. The retrospective data suggested that almost 7.9 percent of men and 19.7 percent of women have suffered some form of sexual abuse before the age of eighteen. Widely underreported, the phenomenon of CSA has global prevalence irrespective of socioeconomic diversity amongst different nations. Millions of children are subject to varying forms of sexual abuse every year without coming into the preview of the criminal justice system. Until recently academic research had been preoccupied with crime against females in the reproductive age (mainly rape or prostitution), negating the sexual abuse of boys and girls of pre-pubertal age or teenager. However, of late, CSA is being recognised as a criminal justice issue and more incidents are being identified and

reported. In this backdrop, this systematic review attempts to delineate the risk factors of CSA in India and presents the conceptual framework highlighting the protective measures for CSA.

### What is Sexual Abuse?

According to World Health Organization's Violence and Health in the WHO African Region Report (2010), 'sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in any kind of sexual liaison that he/she is unable to comprehend fully, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society'. Broadly, sexual abuse is classified into four categories: non-contact, non-penetrative contact, penetrative contact, and internet-based sexual abuse (Figure 1). Non-contact sexual abuse includes any verbal or non-verbal references to sexual matters such as implicit or explicit invitations for sexual liaisons, being exposed to genitals, sexual acts, or sexually explicit materials, or being asked to reveal own genitals to someone else. Non-penetrative contact abuse comprises of being kissed or fondled sexually, caressing others' genitals or masturbating someone else or watching somebody masturbate, while attempting intercourse, oral intercourse, anal intercourse, and genital intercourse come under the preview of penetrative contact abuse (Elklit, 2015). The growth of the world wide web has exposed children to a new hazard of internet-based CSA comprising of creating, depicting or distributing sexual images of children online, stalking, grooming and engaging in sexually explicit behaviour with children through the internet (Pellai & Caranzano, 2015).



**Figure 1.** Types of Sexual Abuse (Source: Elklit, 2015)

Sexual abuse may be a single sporadic incident or multiple episodes occurring in succession (Behere, Rao, & Mulmule, 2013). Similarly, a child may be exposed to repeated abuses by different individuals during his/her childhood. Bhaskaran & Sheshadri (2016) rightly pointed out that CSA is an experience and not a disorder. Hence, it is challenging to detect CSA as some of the victims may manifest a wide variety of symptoms while the others may be asymptomatic (Bhaskaran & Sheshadri, 2016; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Research suggests that sometimes initially asymptomatic sexually abused children may develop severe psychiatric disorders years after the trauma (Aydin, Akbas, Turla, Dundar, Yuce & Karabekiroglu, 2015). Any sudden change in the behavior of a healthy child may be suggestive of a probable abuse, and the parents must look out for following verbal, bodily, emotional, and sexual symptoms among the children (Jensen, 2005). The presence of any one or more traits may indicate a probable incident of sexual abuse. The self-disclosure of CSA is the best diagnostic tool to report a CSA. However, an explicit verbal disclosure of abuse is quite rare and may be quite indirect, which the caregivers may find difficult to decipher.

Further, sudden changes in child's stimuli may also hint at the probable incidents of sexual abuse such as the presence of enuresis, encopresis, stomach aches, headaches, and so on. Sometime, sudden aversion towards certain food items such as yogurt or milk also may be suggestive of CSA (Jensen, 2005). Similarly, parents must watch out for any abrupt behavioural changes in their children, such as mood swings, frightening or anxiety reactions, bizarre behaviour, or refusal to meet or visit any specific individual as these may be indicative of probable CSA. Other subtle signs of a likely CSA are masturbation in children, sexualised play with dolls, sexual experimenting with other children, or drawing pictures or images of sexual acts.

### **Disclosure of CSA**

Research suggests most people who experience sexual abuse in childhood do not disclose this abuse until adulthood and delays in the disclosure are also not uncommon (McElvaney, 2015). The disclosure is delayed when the perpetrator is a family member or a close relative. Age is a significant predictor of the disclosure. For example, older children are more likely to divulge and report CSA compared to younger children. Besides, children who are abused by a family member are less likely to come forward to reveal the abuse, or there would be some delay compared to those abused by strangers or someone outside the family.

Gender has also been found to influence the phenomenon of the disclosure. Usually, boys are more reluctant to disclose CSA incidents as compared to girls. The boys perceive disclosure of abuse as a threat to their manly stature or stigmatisation of being weak and docile. Parental bonding is also a significant predictor of revelation for both boys as well as girls. Children from the protective families may find it easier to report experiences of abuse to their parents or caregivers.

Despite being one of the most common forms of violence against children worldwide, available statistics or data have underestimated CSA. Research revealed that 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys face some form of CSA before the age of 18 (GHSPHS, 2009). In their study of child abuse victims and their parents in India, Bala, Maji, Satapathy & Routray (2015) found that CSA is quite rampant in India. The low reportage could be on account of the stigma associated with the disclosure of CSA. The fear of social stigma may force them to stay numb to avoid social ridicule even if they are aware of any CSA incident. The stigma surrounding sexual violence in India fosters a pervasive culture of silence around CSA in the country (Bala et al., 2015). Further, children also frequently hide their experiences of abuse from their caregivers or parents due to fear of retribution (Carson, Foster, & Chowdhary, 2014). Often children are unable to comprehend incidents of abuse and are perplexed about what to report and whom to report. Victims do not disclose the experiences of CSA fearing rejection or disbelief, especially when the perpetrator is from the family or an ally. They often choose to stay silent burrowing the episodes of abuse within them (Virani, 2000).

On the other hand, the closed relationships can also act as a deterrent to disclosure in several cases. Sometimes victims are reluctant to share their ordeal due to concerns of upsetting their parents while others may choose to deliberately remain silent evaluating the repercussions and the consequences for others of their disclosure (McElvaney, 2015). Furthermore, the severity of abuse (e.g., penetrative abuse) is also a significant predictor of disclosure as in the case of an explicit physical injury the victim is unable to hide the abuse from parents or caregivers.

The phenomenon of 'recantation' related to disclosure is also not uncommon among the victims of CSA (McElvaney, 2015). The recantation is the denial of previously held opinion or retraction from one's statement. Many children are found to deny incidents of CSA due to vested interests. Sometimes, children may

disclose initially, but later may have mixed feelings about their abuser and fearing the implications of disclosure upon their abuser may then revoke their complaints. Many times, the abusers are found to take an oath of secrecy about their activities from the child, and this dilemma of breaking the promises may coerce the victims to withdraw from their charges.

Further, many times children are so bewildered by CSA that they may not be able to face to it, and this mystification may lead them into a state of uncertainty where they display inconsistent behaviour. They might say something at one moment and deny it later. Sometimes families may also force children to recant to avoid confrontation with the abuser. Recantation is common in cases where the abuser is a familiar person or is related to the family. Further, a delay in the prosecution of the perpetrator may also lead a child to recant to avoid further distressing involvement in the legal process. A minuscule percentage of children retract later as they may have made a false accusation due to vested interests (GHSPHS, 2009). The negative responses to a disclosure from the parents or the caregivers are quite hazardous and intimidating for the child and restrict them from disclosing any such events soon also. The impact of negative responses to disclosure is cyclical and continues to deter other children from disclosure (Wallace-Henry, 2015).

### **Methodology**

For the current study, the Google Scholar, Medline, PubMed, EMBASE, Web of Science, and PsycINFO were used to extract articles from January 1, 2000, to August 31, 2018 using a keyword search strategy. The search input yielded around 450 literatures; however, studies reporting only on child sexual abuse were included for the final review (10). These electronic searches were supplemented by screening the reference lists of included papers, citation tracking, and expert recommendations. The following inclusion criteria were adopted: (1) The study location was restricted only to India. (2) The literature published only in the English language was included in this review. (3) The studies were eligible for inclusion if they: (a) included participants (males or females, adults, or children) who self-identified, or were defined by researchers, as having been sexually abused; (b) only the peer-reviewed research based on either a cross-sectional survey; a case-control study; cohort study; case series analysis; or experimental investigation. Data was extracted from published articles only which were peer-reviewed papers reporting on the prevalence, risk factors and outcomes of child

sexual abuse, including physical, mental, or sexual issues among the victims of child sexual abuse. This systematic review suggests a high prevalence of child sexual abuse in the country and adverse outcomes of sexual abuse on the health and well-being of the victims.

### **Child Sexual Abuse in India**

India has the world's most significant number of CSA cases every year. One out of every ten children is a victim of CSA in India at any given point of time (Virani, 2000). Behere et al. (2013) found that every second child is prone to one or the other forms of sexual abuse such as eve-teasing, molestation, sexual violence, etc. and every fifth child faces critical forms of CSA in the country. According to the Childline India (2014), every 155<sup>th</sup> minute a child less than 16 years of age is raped, for every 13<sup>th</sup> hour child below 10, and one in every ten children is a victim of CSA.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences undertook the first ever study on child sexual abuse in Mumbai in 1985 among the adults aged twenty and twenty-four (Virani, 2000). The results of the survey revealed that one out of three girls and one out of every ten boys had been victims of CSA and half of these abuses happened at home. Later in the year 1996, a group of medical practitioners carried out a research study to find the prevalence of CSA among 348 girl students from eleven schools and colleges in Bangalore. The results revealed that 15 percent of the sample was sexually abused as children inclusive of being subjected to rape, forced into oral sex or penetrated with foreign objects, and so on. The family members or relatives inside the households were the most common perpetrators.

In the year 1998, Recovery and Healing from Incest (RAHI) conducted a nationwide survey among 600 English speaking middle and upper-class women to find the prevalence of CSA. Around 76 percent of these women revealed being sexually abused in their childhood. In more than fifty percent of the cases, the perpetrator was a familiar person including family members or relatives. The Tulir-Centre for Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse (CPHCSA) also carried out a large-scale survey to find the prevalence of CSA among 2211 school going children in Chennai in the year 2006. The study revealed that, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds, around 42 percent of the children had been sexually abused.

The first ever government sponsored research assessing the extent and gravity of child sexual abuse in the country was carried out in the year 2007 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The sample consisted of a total of 12447 children, 2324 young adults, and 2449 stakeholders across 13 states of the country. This study covered multiple dimensions of abuse like physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. The study also included child neglect in 5 evidence groups, namely children in a family environment, children in schools, children at work location, street children, and children in institutions. The study reported a widespread prevalence of emotional, physical and sexual abuse prevalent in all the states surveyed. While every second child reported emotional abuse, 69 percent (n = 12,447) of the children said being subjected to physical abuse, while 53 percent (n = 12,447) of the children reported incidents of some forms of sexual abuse. Sadly, half of the sexual violations were committed by the persons known to the child or caregivers responsible for their growth and well-being (Kacker, Baradan, & Kumar, 2007). The results of the study further highlighted the absence of child-specific legislations to check child abuse in the country impinging on the need for specific legislation to deal with CSA in the country.

### **Risk Factors to Child Sexual Abuse**

Although India has the highest prevalence of CSA (Singh, Parsekar, & Nair, 2014), yet there is a lack of research on CSA in the Indian context. The limited research evidence suggests that it is quite difficult to predict the risk factors to abuse as there is a wide discrepancy in the profile of the CSA victims. It is found that the children from all backgrounds affluent as well as poor are prone to CSA. Similarly, it is quite difficult to earmark the age of the victims as media reports suggest that babies as young as 2-3 months are also being sexually abused.

#### *Geography, Race and Ethnicity*

It is commonly believed that the prevalence of CSA is higher in the urban areas; however, Matiyani (2011) and Patel & Andrew (2001) suggest that the prevalence of CSA is similar in rural and urban settings but the reporting of CSA is higher in urban areas. Similarly, in other contexts ethnicity is also found to be associated with the prevalence of child sexual abuse (Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, & Mhlongo, 2015), however, in the Indian context sporadic studies assert that race and ethnicity do not seem to be risk factors for CSA and children from all

socioeconomic groups are equally vulnerable (Matiyani, 2011; Pal, Rana, Sharma, & Sehgal, 2018; Virani, 2000).

#### *Economic Factors*

Some data indicate higher rates of CSA reports in areas with high levels of poverty (Matiyani, 2011; Priyanka, 2015), whereas other studies demonstrate no associations between CSA and economic status (Carson et al., 2014; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Poverty may not directly stimulate abuse. However, overcrowding may facilitate sexual abuse due to the necessity of co-sleeping and lack of privacy.

#### *Familial Factors*

The size and the structure of the family are essential indicators of sexual abuse victimisation. Children from larger families or living in extended households are quite vulnerable as parents may be unable to spare more time for each child (Matiyani, 2011). Similarly, children from single parent or divorced partners are particularly susceptible (ibid). Further, children from dysfunctional families or poor parent-child relationship are quite vulnerable to sexual abuse victimisation. Educational status of the mother is also found to influence the prevalence of CSA. The mental health of the parents is further found to be a risk factor to CSA. Besides, parental substance abuse or alcohol addiction is also associated with sexual abuse victimisation (Matiyani, 2011; Whitehead & Roffee, 2016). Orphanhood is another predictor for sexual abuse victimisation (Kamuwanga & Ngoma, 2015). Research suggests that street children are particularly vulnerable (Malhotra, 2010; Matiyani, 2011; Seth, 2015).

#### *Gender*

Research suggests females are exposed to sexual abuse more often than males (Pal et al., 2018; Singh, 2009). However, others argue that sexual abuse of male victims is under-reported (Carson et al., 2014; Kacker et al., 2007; Patel & Andrew, 2001). Social stigma, including the fear of being labeled as gay, as well as issues related to victimisation and masculinity, may make it difficult for boys to seek help (GHPSPHS, 2012). Garnefski & Diekstra (1997) suggest that gender appears to influence symptom expression, with boys having worse outcomes than girls (Tyler, 2002).

### *Individual Factors*

Certain categories of children are found to be susceptible to CSA such as emotionally insecure children, children lacking strong support from the parents and caregivers, and so on (Saul & Audage, 2007). Sexual victimisation is also associated with child hyperactivity, child disability, and wasting (Seth, 2015; Virani, 2001). CSA is quite common among mentally challenged or deaf and dumb children as they are unable to vocalise their dissent, or, disclosure to others is less likely.

### *Social Factors*

Research suggests that a particular social structure facilitates abuse implicitly. At the societal level, low recognition of the child's rights, patriarchy, and prevalence of violence, discrimination and weak social norms also perpetuate child sexual abuse (Minto, Hornsey, Gillespie, Healy, & Jetten, 2016). For example, in South Africa and Namibia, Jewkes et al. (2005) noted that child rape might be used as punishment or a method of communicating power and control (cited in Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Further, lax laws and legislation, and low prosecution also enable a culture of abuse and victimisation (Meinck et al., 2015).

### **Outcomes of Child Sexual Abuse**

CSA is one of the most heinous forms of crime against children prevalent worldwide. CSA has been found to be detrimental for the affected children and leads to severe dysfunction among the victims. Although it is quite difficult to estimate the damages cost to the children, the socioeconomic prices are profound. Some of the common physical outcomes of CSA include, but are not limited to, pain, discoloration, sores, cuts, bleeding or discharges in the genitals, anus or mouth, persistent or recurring pain during urination and bowel movements, gynecologic conditions, gastrointestinal problems, and so on. For many children wetting and soiling accidents are the allusive outcome of CSA (GHPPHS, 2012; Seth, 2015). CSA is also associated with subsequent sexual victimisation, unwanted pregnancy and HIV transmission (Meinck et al., 2015). Further, CSA also results in a range of long-term adverse sexual outcomes for the victims such as sexual inhibition, sexual avoidance or aversion, and vaginal or pelvic pain to sexual dis-inhibition, compulsive or impulsive sex, risk-taking sexual behaviours, and numerous sequential or simultaneous sexual partners.

The experiences of CSA lead to multiple adverse outcomes for children, paralysing the victims' minds more than their bodies (Berkowitz, 1998; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010; Elklit, 2015; Johnson, 2004; Matiyani, 2011; Meinck et al., 2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder, delinquency, academic difficulties, low self-esteem, withdrawal, conduct disorders, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and personality disorders are not uncommon among the victims. Victims of CSA may experience avoidance, dissociation or denial which could have initially developed as adaptations to the abuse. The severity of the mental health outcome is dependent upon the age of the onset, the duration of the abuse, relationship with the perpetrator, as well as the kind of abuse – penetrative or non-penetrative (National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Sexual Abuse Committee, 2009; Ventus, Antfolk, & Salo, 2017).

The outcomes of incest or abuse perpetrated by close kin are more devastating as victims may find it difficult to trust others in their social network forever which in turn jeopardizes their recovery post abuse. Research suggests in cases of violence by the known person, the dilemma to report or not to communicate further aggravates the trauma (Durham, 2003). The experience of CSA is often emotionally paralysing for the victims and many victims fail to recover throughout their life. Unfortunately, CSA has a cyclical effect, and CSA victimisation does appear to be a risk factor for future perpetration (Becker & Murphy, 1988; Bhaskaran & Sheshadri, 2016). In their study of 224 male victims of CSA, Salter et al. (2003) found that around 12 percent had official records of perpetrating a sexual offense against children (cited in Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). However, the model of a victim-perpetrator cycle has been found to be relevant for the males, but not for the females (Glasser, Kolvin, Campbell, Glasser, Leitch, & Farrelly, 2001; Virani, 2001).

### **Perpetrator Characteristics**

Popular literature indicates that sexual abuse is more prevalent than was once believed and that the perpetrators are usually unknown to the victims (Segal 1992; Virani 2001). Underreporting of incest or molestation by parents/relatives is quite common. The spate of media reports on sexual abuse by strangers does not always imply that abuse is any less by persons familiar to the child. On the contrary, it highlights that abuse by strangers is treated seriously and reported to the law enforcement agencies. Parents are often found to suppress incidents of sexual violence by familial persons to avoid strain in relations (Carson et al., 2014;

Jensen, 2005). Research further suggests that, contrary to popular belief, the perpetrator could be a female as well as male (Behere et al., 2013; Matiyani, 2011).

The perpetrator and the victim may be of the same sex or opposite sex (Behere et al., 2013). Further, perpetrators may be single individuals or may act in compliance with other individuals, familial or non-familial. Regarding age span, it is difficult to detach the specific age group for CSA perpetrators, as the perpetrators have been found to belong to pre-teens up to elderly individuals. Many CSA cases involve teenagers as perpetrators. There is no conclusive evidence regarding the marital status of the perpetrators in the literature. Both married as well as single individuals have been found to be complicit in CSA. Besides, the perpetrators could be reputed or trusted caretakers, such as parents, priests, aid workers, hospital workers, and educators (Matiyani, 2011). Matiyani (2011) further suggests that alcoholism is often associated with sexual abuse offenses. Alcohol results in a state of inebriation and emotional excitement in an individual that they lose their normal restraints over their sexual desire causing them to satiate themselves through any individual including children. Most common tactics employed by perpetrators include befriending children, seducing, or luring with gifts. Many times, they also resort to threats or use of violence to gain subservience from the child. Contradicting the popular norm that home is the safest haven for children, most popular den for CSA perpetrator includes homes of the children.

### **Laws and Legislation concerning Children in India**

Before 1986, each state in India had its enactment of juvenile justice with children being treated differently by the respective state legal systems. The Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act of 1986 was the first central legislation concerning juveniles passed by the Union Parliament of India in the year 1986. With the inception of the JJ Act in the year 1986, India became the first country in the world to have introduced a universal juvenile justice, the law that covered both children in need of care and protection, and children who come in conflict with the law under its preview. The JJ Act ensured protection for children in difficult circumstances. In the history of legal jurisprudence in the country, protection of children came to be viewed as an integral part of social justice as well as the justice delivery system. The JJ Act 1986 however, was discriminating in nature. It was applicable for girls till they

attained majority, i.e., up to eighteen years of age, while for boys the age limit was only sixteen years.

In the year 2000, the JJ Act (1986) was repealed and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 came into being. It was later amended in 2006 to build on minimum standards of care and protection as part of justice delivery and to strengthen the existing child protection mechanisms. The Act underwent further amendment in 2010 to end the segregation of disease-hit children from other occupants within child care institutions. This JJ Act of 2000, with modifications made in 2006 and 2010 is followed till date. The JJ (C & CP) Act 2000, amended in 2006 and 2010, internalises the Constitution of India (as prescribed in Article 15 (3), Article 39 (e) and (f), Articles 45 and 47); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, 1985 ('the Beijing Rules'); the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990; the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, 1990 ('The Riyadh Guidelines'); the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures, 1990 ('The Tokyo Rules'); and many other international conventions/treaties and instruments.

The current JJ Act is highly progressive legislation that has as its primary focus the protection of the best interests of the child. This law covers all children less than eighteen years of age. It provides for appropriate care and protection of the children by catering to the child's needs and rights by adopting a child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of the cases relevant to the children. The focus of the Juvenile Justice Law in India, as it currently stands, centres on the protection of the dignity of the child and ensuring their access to their rights, security, and rehabilitation through State responsibility and action.

### **Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012**

Until 2012, the only sexual offenses against children recognised by the law were covered by three sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) not specific to children. Only three kinds of crimes viz., rape (sexual intercourse without consent – section 376), outraging modesty of a woman (unspecified acts – section 354) and unnatural acts defined as 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal' (anal sex, homosexuality or bestiality – section 377) were treated as severe and registered and reported in the annals of the law enforcement.

Other forms of non-penetrative sexual assaults, harassment and exploitation were not explicitly recognised as crimes and therefore not recorded (assuming if they were reported). The 2007 National Study on Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the wide prevalence of child sexual abuse in the country and the dire need of specific legislation to deal with these abuses. After years of deliberation, the Government of India passed the first ever specialised legislation on the ‘Protection of Children against Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act’ in the year 2012. The POCSO Act criminalises all sexual offenses against a child (under 18 years of age) namely penetrative, non-penetrative, genital, non-genital, touch and non-touch based including internet-based abuses and is gender neutral (The POCSO Act, 2012). The Act requires mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse by doctors and other professionals. The POCSO Act emphasises incorporating child-friendly mechanisms for reporting and recording of evidence. It also attempts to safeguard the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process of investigation such as the speedy disposal of trials through the designated Special Courts. The law is very stringent and comprehensive as even the intent to abetment is punishable under the POCSO Act and the onus of the acquittal rests with the accused and not on the victim.

### **Child Welfare Committees (CWC)**

The Juvenile Justice Act follows a two-pronged approach, the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) being the competent authority for the Children in Conflict with Law (CICL), while for the Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) exercise the highest administrative prerogative. In usual practice, all juveniles or adolescents engaged in deviant or criminal behaviour are known as the CICL. On the other hand, CNCP includes vulnerable children such as orphans or abandoned children, street children, homeless children or children living on the streets. Moreover, child brides, or child victims of physical/sexual abuse, trafficked children, mentally/physically challenged children, children affected by HIV/AIDS, missing or runaway children, children harmed by natural disasters or human-made disasters like armed conflicts, earthquakes, floods, etc. are also treated as CNCP. The CWCs are final authority regarding disposal of cases for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of the children as well as to provide for their basic needs and safeguard their human rights (Child Welfare Committees in India: A comprehensive analysis aimed at strengthening the Juvenile Justice System for children in need of care and protection, 2013). According to Section 29 (5) of the

JJ Act, the CWCs are to function as a Bench of Magistrates. The power of the CWCs are equivalent to the powers held by a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of the first class as conferred by the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973 (2 of 1974). The CWC comprises of a chairperson and four members. The chairperson should be a person well versed in child welfare issues, and at least one member of the CWC should be a woman. The CWCs are responsible for tracking the progress reports during inquiry meanwhile delivering the best care to the child. The CWCs have the authority to remove the child from his/her home and place him/her in short-term care or long-term care if the need arises. The CWCs are also responsible for monitoring of the child care institutions and other child-related agencies. Besides, the CWCs are also authorised to review and report about the quality of the child care institutions within their jurisdictions to the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD).

### **The Proposed Conceptual Framework**

Child sexual abuse is one of the universal forms of violence against children prevalent across all socioeconomic groups in India, however, research on the etiology of CSA is still in its nascent stage in the country. Hence, it becomes imperative to invoke theories on incest and mating to unveil the etiology of CSA. Universally mating and intimacy between biological kin is forbidden due to specific natural and cultural reasons and is popularly known by the term incest. Incest includes any physical relationship between blood relations example between father and daughter, or mother and son, or brother and sister, and so on. Any sexual advances made by father or mother and brother to an under eighteen offspring or sibling respectively qualifies as sexual abuse. The incest CSA and the non-incest CSA are two broad categories under consideration in the present study. The incest CSA includes sexual abuse by blood relatives from within the family ties while non-incest CSA encompasses all other sexual abuse categories outside the preview of incest such as the sexual abuse by relatives, acquaintance or strangers. Although incest CSA and non-incest CSA are entirely different, yet both bear certain commonalities regarding elements of vulnerability, perpetrator characteristics, outcomes, and so on.

All incidents of CSA involve the presence of two individuals: at-risk child susceptible to abuse and another individual preying upon the vulnerability of the child. Now, this vulnerability may stem from the economic condition of the child and his family. For example, overcrowding and lack of privacy in a household

may dispose child to the risk of abuse. Further, the structure and configuration of family also make children susceptible to abuse. Children from single parents, dysfunctional families, substance abusing parents or uneducated parents are quite vulnerable to CSA. Individual factors contributing to vulnerability include, but are not limited to gender, disability, hyperactivity, and so on. Besides this, the socio-cultural configuration of society also facilitates CSA such as gender inequality, social tolerance of violence, inadequate legislation, and so on. For example, in several African countries, child rape is used as punishment or a method of communicating power and control over the child (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). For the current study, vulnerability is of four types: economic, familial, individual and social vulnerability.

The perpetrators of CSA are a heterogeneous population with varying age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, and socio-cultural background. Perpetrators could be males as well as females and may target victims from the same or opposite sexes. Further, they may be elderly or adults as well as children less than eighteen years of age. Marital status has no significant relationship with the perpetrator history. It is generally believed that individuals without sexual partners would potentially sexually abuse the children; however, it is found that married individuals having sexual partners also indulge in sexual abuse of children. The perpetrators may target known children as well as unknown children (Santhosh, 2016). According to Wiehe (2003), perpetrators are self-centered, narcissistic individuals who lack self-confidence, impulse control and usually will be deficient in empathy (cited in Santhosh, 2016). Contrary to popular belief, perpetrators are often reputed and well-known individuals of the society. CSA perpetrators are of two types: paedophile and non-paedophile. The former belongs to a specific group who preferentially abuse children for sexual gratification. The non-paedophile is an opportunistic predator targeting the vulnerable children to satisfy their sexual urges.

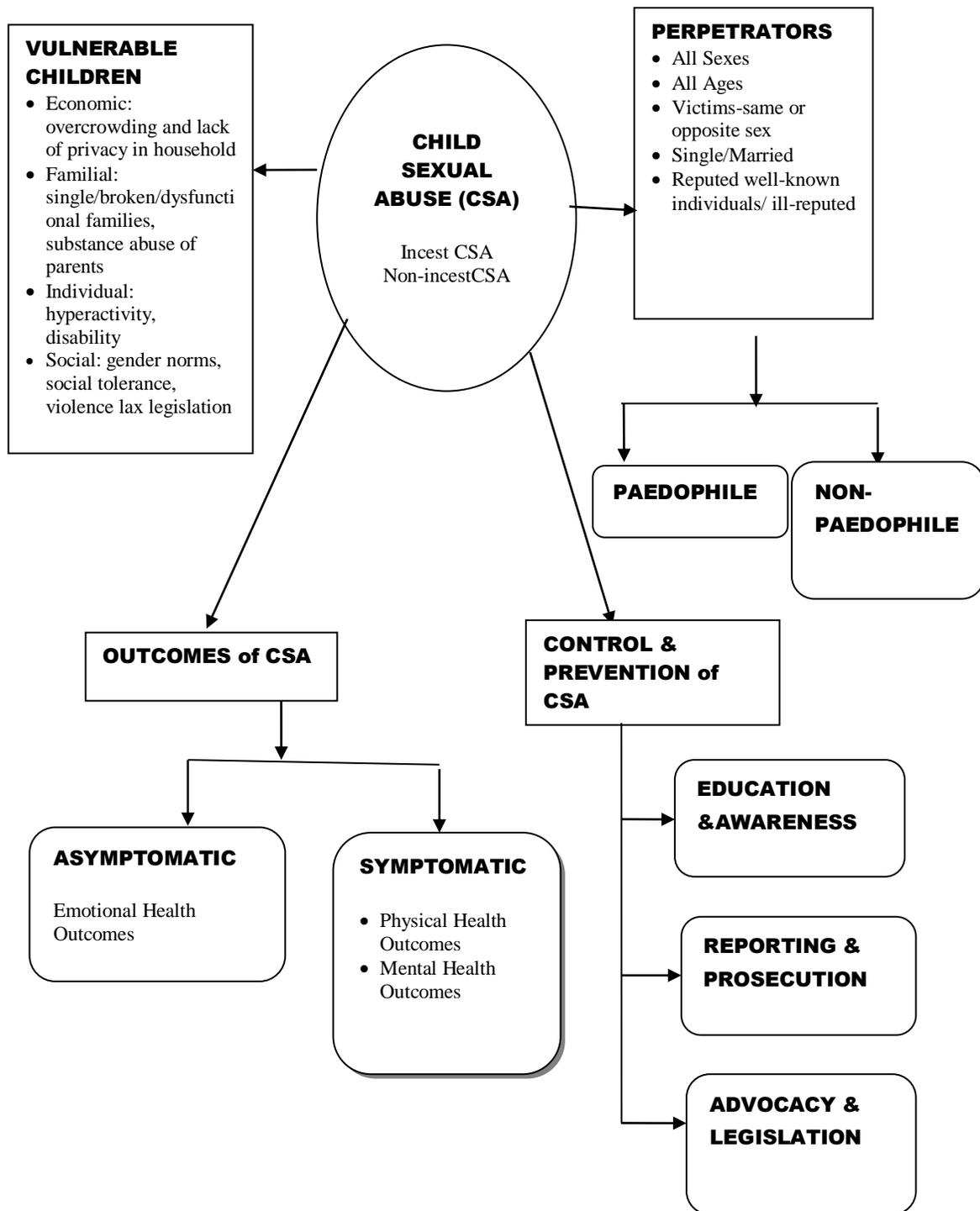
The asymptomatic nature of CSA often makes it quite difficult to detect the abuse. Nevertheless, sometimes it may include the use of violence resulting into visible bodily symptoms such as cuts or abrasions in the body, pain in private body parts, or soreness in the genitals, and so on. Though the physical health outcomes of CSA are quite severe and gradually heal with time, however, the mental health outcomes are quite complex and irrevocable leaving lasting trauma in the minds of the victims. The victims of CSA are found to suffer from the Post-traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, academic difficulties, conduct disorders, substance abuse, personality disorders, suicidal ideation, and so on.

The prevention of CSA is multipronged and requires cumulative efforts of diverse stakeholders such as parents, caregivers, community, government, etc. Since the damages caused by CSA, trafficking, or similar abuses are irreparable hence the best possible measure should be to prevent the occurrence of these events in the first instance. Therefore, the best intervention would be to avoid CSA through education and awareness. Education and awareness of CSA is the single potent measure to prevent CSA. Aware and informed children will be able to defend themselves and confront their abusers. Similarly, educated parents will be able to protect their children from potential perpetrators in their family or vicinity.

The reporting and prosecution of offenders is also vital to prevent and control CSA. The trial not only helps in the conviction of the offenders but also deters future perpetrators from committing CSA. The biggest challenge against law enforcement is the low disclosure rate of CSA. Very few parents are interested in reporting the crimes of CSA, and in fact, many parents coerce their children to remain silent about the abuse. The low disclosure rates also inhibits authorities acting in legal and child custody cases and constitutes an obstacle in establishing public awareness for CSA. Hence, parents must encourage their children to report incidents of CSA and get the offenders convicted. Further, the role of legislation and judiciary in controlling CSA cannot be undermined. CSA laws must be strengthened worldwide to protect vulnerable children. CSA cases must be expedited in the court of rules to minimise the distress and inconvenience caused to the children during the court proceedings.

The following model (Figure 2) presents the framework for the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in the country:



**Figure 2.** The conceptual framework representing risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the current study presents an exhaustive overview of child sexual abuse in the country, yet the generalisation of the review is limited in the following contexts. Sexual abuse does not occur in isolation, and the other forms of violence and maltreatment are found to be complicit. However, the current review explicitly focuses on child sexual abuse. Secondly, the present study does not highlight the social construct of certain types of child sexual abuse such as incest. Several anthropological pieces of literature suggest that in certain communities incest is socially acceptable up to certain degrees and is not viewed as a form of sexual abuse; hence a separate review may elaborate upon this fact.

### **Scope of the Study**

Child sexual abuse is a serious form of violence against children which has several detrimental outcomes on the growth and development of the child victims. Besides the physical violation of the genitals, the victims of CSA are found to suffer from severe emotional and psychological outcomes. The victims of CSA need rigorous medical and psychological assistance for recovery and reconstruction. Sometimes, the trauma of CSA may last forever. However, CSA is not taken as a serious health hazard violating the rights of the children. The exposure to CSA strongly interferes with the growth and well-being of children, hence, this review strongly advocates in favor of strict intervention measures for the prevention of CSA.

The results of the review reveal that research in the Indian context on CSA are in nascent stage; hence, the review recommends undertaking research on different aspects of CSA such as victim or perpetrator characteristics, disclosure of CSA, effective prevention and intervention measures for CSA, and so on. The review further suggests that children from dysfunctional or broken families are quite susceptible to CSA; hence, the sensitisation material on CSA must include the probable role of dysfunctional or broken families in aggravating vulnerability to CSA. It is found that the current research is basically victim-centric, i.e., the popular subjects of research are characteristics of the victims of CSA, outcomes of CSA, disclosure pattern of CSA and so on. The perpetrator-centric studies are virtually absent; hence, the review advocates for more research centering around perpetrators in order to design suitable intervention and sensitisation material for CSA prevention. Further, the perpetrators are often related to the victims and incidents take place in and around the homes of the victims; hence, sensitisation

programmes for the public regarding this may come in handy in preventing a potential episode of CSA. Little sensibility and insight can help an individual detect a prospective victim and save many lives from the scourge of CSA. Further, the government must promote research prima facie on crime sites, context, space/location, information on the background of the victims and the perpetrators to generate more data which will aid in policy formation and development.

Keeping in mind the prevalence of CSA in the Indian context, there is a dire need to establish suitable intervention programs for the prevention of CSA for an at-risk cohort. Parents are the primary caregivers hence education campaigns on CSA for parents would be quite fruitful in informing parents about the potential abuser and risks factors for CSA. Prevention programs should emphasise to parents that the risks of sexual abuse to children are more likely to come from family members, friends and acquaintances. The sensitisation training must include the risk factors for CSA, essential traits of the abuser as well as what to do if parents believe their child is at risk or has been sexually abused. Age-appropriate Information and Communication Material (IEC) on CSA must be included in the school curriculum to educate children about CSA. The informed children will be able to defend themselves better from a probable CSA. In his paper *Moving Upstream: The Merits of Public Health Law Approach to Trafficking*, Todres (2011) advocates in favor of public health law approach to prevention of trafficking. Similarly, doctors and paramedical professionals are in the best position to detect a likely case of rape and violence as they are often the first to come into contact with the victims. But due to lack of training and sensitisation, they fail to distinguish between a causal wound and a violent wound. Training of professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people to identify children at risk and situations of child abuse as well as providing trauma-informed care to parents and children is vital in preventing and treating child sexual abuse, and could be quite fruitful and pragmatic in the long run.

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**Article: Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective**

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## Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective\*

--- A.K. Nongkynrih

### *Abstract*

Tourism is a global phenomenon and it has assumed significance in the field of sociology, economics, commerce and cultural studies; it has both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The paper maintains that tourism provides the ground for tourist relationships, the social relationship of actors between hosts and visitors. In such social relationship, the action can be qualified as instrumentally rational action. Further, regional landscape has its own importance in the sustainability of environment-ecosystem and culture of the place. The paper examines as to what extent sustainable tourism is a part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework. The description and analysis is based on secondary data as well as field observation of the author. Lastly, the paper argues that Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework is yet to address issues related with sustainable tourism.

*Key words: Environment, Hosts-Visitors, Requisite, Sustainable Tourism*

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### **Introduction**

Sustainable tourism is a theme of global and local interests, and also a theme that cuts across various disciplines in social science, humanities, arts and culture, and in particular tourism, economics, commerce and development studies. This paper deals with sustainable tourism in the context of the state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is acknowledged as one of the states in the Northeastern region of India which attracts visitors. In recent times the number of visitors to the state of Meghalaya has increased (Table 1) tremendously, and particularly to Sohra (earlier known as Cherrapunjee) and Mawlynnong.

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\*The paper is based on the keynote address delivered at the National Seminar on Sustainable Tourism: Striking a Socio-Economic and Environmental Balance, organised by the Department of Sociology, Synod College, Shillong, on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of Tourists*

<b>Tourists</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Domestic	68025	681269	716469
Foreign	5313	6773	8664
Total	685567	698042	725133

Source: Annual Final Report of Tourism Survey for the State of Meghalaya (2014, p. 18), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Taking into account this aspect, the paper attempts to examine whether sustainable tourism is part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework. The description and analysis is based on secondary data and the field observation of the author in Sohra region.

Firstly, it is necessary to focus on the movement of people, followed by discussions on tourism. Human beings may voluntarily move away from their homes and their place of residence for different purposes such as marriage, education, employment or work; and may also temporarily move away from their homes to visit kinsmen, friends or for leisure. It has been observed that in the modern times, modern occupations and modern life styles can be stressful for social actors. One comes across expressions routinely made by social actors 'I need a holiday', and this expression 'reflects a modern discourse on the idea that people's physical and mental health will be restored if only they can get away from time to time' (Urry & Larsen, 2001, p. 6).

The expression of 'I need a holiday' is a crucial aspect that drives tourism, meaning temporary movement of social actors to another place for leisure. It was highlighted (Urry & Larsen, 2011) that tourism has also been associated with travelling. The authors further elaborated that prior to the nineteenth century only the elite and the upper class could afford to travel. However, in post nineteenth century mass tourism and organised tours have led to increase of movement of visitors globally. 'Tourism can be considered one of the most remarkable socio-economic phenomena of the twentieth century... It now reaches an increasingly

larger number of people throughout the world and can be considered a vital dimension of global integration' (Neto, 2003, p. 1). Urry & Larsen (2011) emphasised that tourism is more about leisure and is different from the day to day routine; and added that tourism is part of modern societies. It was further elaborated (Holden, 2005, pp. 7) that tourism 'has become increasingly omnipresent in the global, it has brought with it economic, social, cultural and environmental changes, emphasising the requirement for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon of contemporary society'. Thus, the phenomenon of tourism has gained attention from various fields such as Sociology, Management, Economics and other disciplines. The phenomenon of tourism has also led to global debates on the issue of sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

### **Defining Tourism**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2005), 'Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal business and professional purposes. Such persons are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure'. Tourism can be viewed as 'the movement of people and their stay in space which is both physical and socio-cultural in nature' (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008, p. 44). Broadly, one can say that tourism is a temporary and voluntary movement of social actors from their own homes to another place.

It has been pointed out that there is another side of tourism. 'Tourism provides considerable economic benefits for many countries, regions and communities, its rapid expansion can also be responsible for adverse environmental, as well as socio-cultural impact' (Neto, 2003, p.4). Neto (2003) further elaborated on the adverse impacts such as the pressure on natural resources and damage to ecosystems. The author observed that uncontrolled tourism can pose serious threat to environment and tourism itself. The threats are the intensification of competition for land resources and the increase in the level of pollution of water sources; and the disposal of liquid and solid waste including contamination of waste on the landscape. This shows that tourism is embedded with environment and ecology of the place.

It was pointed out by Neto (2003) that tourism also deals with human interactions. It is a social interaction between two sets of social actors, i.e., the host and the visitor. They may be from similar culture or from two different cultures. In their mental make-up both the host and the visitor represent their cultures and are engaged in a social activity guided by 'give and take' relationship. It is 'give and take' interaction and relationship and the encounters that take place are 'situations where tourists are purchasing goods or services or situations in which they meet and share knowledge and ideas' (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008, p. 45). However, Neto (2003) shared that tourism has its negative aspects and it is connected with the issue of conflict of relationship between host communities and tourism industry or tourism promoters. Tourism promoters have always managed to appropriate more benefits for themselves at the cost of local communities.

One may argue that tourism is connected with environment and ecology; with socio-economic aspects and social interactions between different cultures. It is these issues that have caught global attention and discussions on sustainable tourism in various international forums. The United Nations had initiated global discourse on sustainable tourism. As a result of this global initiative the programme of sustainable tourism was included in sustainable development framework.

### Meanings of Sustainable Tourism

The term sustainable tourism is derived from the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a concept adopted and applied by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in the year 1999, and subsequently it was adopted in other international conventions and accepted by member countries of United Nations (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Sustainable Development*

<b>International Bodies</b>	<b>Fundamental Issues</b>
<b>United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 1999</b>	Emphasis was placed on the need for the development of policies, strategies and master plans for sustainable tourism.

<b>The World Trade Organisation Code of Ethics for Tourism, 1999</b>	Emphasis on the special role of tourism in contributing to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and act as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment.
<b>Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) , 2003</b>	Governments are invited to integrate CBDs in their strategies and plans for tourism.
<b>Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, 2002</b>	Foster for the development of ecotourism; and making all tourism sustainable.
<b>World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002</b>	The promotion of sustainable tourism as one of the strategies for protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.

Source: United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organisation, 2005

On the basis of international conventions, the concept sustainable tourism has been adopted and applied in tourism planning, tourism strategies and tourism management. Before proceeding further in the discussion, it is important to clarify the definition of sustainable tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (1998, p.18) defines sustainable tourism as ‘development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system’. In other words, sustainable tourism focuses on sustainability of environment and ecology, economic opportunities, sustaining ethical standards and fair share for all. The United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has summarised the basic tenets of sustainable tourism for the purpose of implementation (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*Principles of Sustainable Tourism*

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
Enhancing the well-being of communities	Sustainable tourism development supports and ensures the economic, social and cultural well-being of the communities in which tourism takes place in general and women in particular.
Supporting the protection of the natural and cultural environment	Sustainable tourism allows the use of natural and cultural resources for gaining economic benefits while at the same time guaranteeing that these resources are not deteriorated or destroyed. Additionally, tourism is expected to be the driving force with regard to the establishment or the enhancement of the protection of nature and the maintenance of cultural values.
Quality and tourist satisfaction	The quality of tourism products offered by a region is a key factor for the economic success of tourism. It is not only characterised by material criteria like the quality of transport, accommodation and food, but also by non-material criteria like hospitality or the quality of experiences.
Applying adaptive management and monitoring	To ensure that tourism is developed in a way that is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, adequate management

	and monitoring are established, following the basic principles of sustainable use of resources.
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Source: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Firstly, on the basis of preceding discussions, sustainable tourism has four key aspects: enhancing the well-being of communities; supporting the protection of the natural and cultural environment; quality and tourist satisfaction; and applying adaptive management and monitoring. Secondly, it seems that sustainable tourism can be achieved by networking; that is, a network of multi-stake holders and collaboration between local communities, local governments, tourism enterprises, local organisations and visitors. Thirdly, sustainable tourism is a joint venture where every party has specific role and responsibility, mutual and reciprocal support for the benefits of the host state, local communities, the service providers, the satisfaction of visitors, and the sustainability of the environment and ecology. Lastly, sustainable tourism is achievable only on the basis of implementing the requisite sustainable tourism framework (Table 4). It can be said that sustainable tourism is an integration of various elements. Each element has a specific role and link to other parts. This network and integration of parts functioning as one whole determines the process of sustainable tourism.

**Table 4**  
*Requisite of Sustainable Tourism*

<b>Kinds of Requisite</b>	<b>Intended Purpose</b>
Policy Framework	Emphasis on sustainable use of the environment and ecology; on aspects related to gender and youth; multi-stake holder collaboration in particular the role of local authorities; investments and support in local micro-enterprise; equitable benefits particularly local communities; socio-cultural aspects; Licensing and Operation and standards of tourism services and

	monitoring; and limiting adverse impacts on the place and people.
Regulations on the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of both Hosts and Visitors, and the management of the tourism site.	This cover number of areas such as: 'Home Stay' and Guest Houses or Hotels; basic knowledge on local culture and respecting local culture; waste management of site and waste collection and waste disposal mechanisms; site management practices under local authorities or under other bodies or individuals; safety and security; and movement of people and transport.
Licensing meaning providing recognition under given rules	Standard conditions for Tourist guides; Homestays, Guest Houses, Hotels; Life Guards; Travel Agencies and Travel Operators; Ecotourism promoters and guides; and control of movement of interstate tourist vehicles.
Enforcement meaning inspection and action in places of stay, tourism sites or spots and any other area related with tourism.	Special Team of Tourism Police and village level team and local authorities; Food Inspector; Waste and Disposal team; and Environment and Ecology Evaluation team; and Pollution Control team.
Local Community	Awareness and understanding, participation, ownership and economic benefits; skills and micro-enterprise; basic skills in hospitality; basic knowledge of one's own culture and history; and manners and etiquette in handling visitors.
Health services and emergency	Local centres have basic support

response	system in case of emergency.
Accommodation and Transport	Good infrastructure, maintaining basic standards and easy access for movement from one place to another.
Quality of service	Food, interpersonal handling of visitors and women; information and care; wayside facilities and availability of clean wash rooms, and drinking water.

### Meghalaya as a Case of Sustainable Tourism

The state of Meghalaya is known as one of the global bio-diversity hotspots. It has diverse natural beauty and topography, and some of the villages located outside the city of Shillong (i.e., the state capital) are known for their natural tourism sites. Over the years Meghalaya has attracted visitors from the country and abroad. Tourism is becoming another alternative employment for the people of Meghalaya. However, tourism activities in the state have also raised questions on tourism sustainability. To understand sustainable tourism in Meghalaya the author reviewed two official documents and made field observation on the Sohra region.

The Government of Meghalaya prepared a document entitled *Tourism Development Plan for Meghalaya, 2010*. The plan document was prepared by Heritage Tourism Division of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The report highlighted varied aspects for the development of tourism in Meghalaya. According to the plan document (2010, p.8), 'sustainable tourism plan for Meghalaya has been prepared to strengthen primary sector (agriculture) and secondary sector (manufacturing and mining) for rapid inputs and raw materials in order to improve overall productivity of the economy'. It seems the plan document has given emphasis on sustainable development.

The second document deals with *The Tourism Policy of Meghalaya, 2011*. The policy has two aspects: objectives and action plan. The objectives of the policy document can be highlighted as follows: holistic growth; effective marketing

strategy; quality and attractiveness of tourism experience; promote new opportunities for the future development of tourism; to strengthen the cultural aspects of tourism product in Meghalaya and to actively promote local participation, including community-based tourism; emphasis on training of local youth and tourism stakeholders in the State; and to establish relevant practices in the tourism sector. The action plan has identified a number of key areas to be implemented such as: basic infrastructure; facilitating private investment; promoting entrepreneurship within the local communities; promoting community participation; ensuring sustainability and conservation of the State's environment and natural resources, and adhering to minimum standards with regards to environmental performance; ensuring health standards; promoting a clean, healthy and safe environment along with friendly and efficient services; developing a unique brand to attract visitors; and building physical structure that will merge with the surroundings and the natural environment of the area. Taking into account both the plan and policy documents, it is apparent that the government of Meghalaya is keen on promoting sustainable tourism.

What has been the impact of the plan and policy document on sustainable tourism in the state? The answer to this question can be located in the empirical world. It is a fact that the inflow of visitors to Meghalaya in general and in particular to some regions of the Khasi-Jaintia hills has increased. The rise in the number of visitors has also brought out the challenges of managing tourism. Both local and regional newspapers and social media have been providing information with regard to the challenges of tourism. The assessment is carried out from the perspective of requisite sustainable tourism framework. Benjamin Lyngdoh in his article on *Issues Plaguing Tourism in Meghalaya* (The Shillong Times, 2015, p. A6) remarked, 'Our tourism development should be based on the platform of sustainability. This is more so as our tourism is predominantly nature based. It takes many lifetimes to nurture nature and just a single lifetime to destroy it. Hence, sustainability should be at the centre. Our destination planning and development will have to be sensitive to the environment and its carrying capacity'. But then, he maintains that tourism is not the single solution to Meghalaya's economic problems.

Similarly, such views and opinions occasionally have been shared in vernacular newspapers while highlighting number of issues affecting tourism in Meghalaya. The issues addressed are related with lack of proper wash rooms and basic facilities on road side, insufficient number of food stalls to cater to the number of

tourists; uncontrolled and irresponsible use of the landscape by visitors, the uncontrolled movement of inter-state tourist vehicles and large inflow of visitors in some selected sites, lack of proper waste collection and waste disposal management system in tourist sites. It has also been pointed out that irresponsible behaviour of visitors by throwing waste or leaving waste in tourist sites has added to the problem of waste disposal.

The field investigation was carried out in Sohra region between the 18th December to the 31st December of each year (i.e., from 2014 to 2017). Sohra region is probably the place which attracts largest number of visitors who come from both within and outside the state of Meghalaya. All the tourist sites are symbiotically connected with the landscape, myths and legends of the place. In recent years the number of hotels, guest houses, and 'home-stays' has significantly increased. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of local food stalls and restaurants. Tourism has provided income generation and employment to local population.

There is another side of the story; in recent times Sohra region has attracted business persons from outside of Sohra, and these business persons have managed to convince some of the traditional authorities to part away with sizable acres of communal land with an understanding that local communities will be given opportunity of employment. Some of the leaders of traditional authorities have taken these decisions without the consent of the people. This action has facilitated the process of privatisation of communal land in parts of Sohra region. It has led to the gradual erosion of customary beliefs and practices such as the role and responsibility of traditional authority to protect communal lands.

The other issue related with tourism in Sohra is waste disposal. This is a major environmental problem confronted by Sohra region and its population. The tourist sites and the open space of Sohra region is used by visitors. In using such places, visitors have been disposing waste, both biodegradable and non-biodegradable. There is lack of environmental consciousness on the part of visitors and also the lack of regulation and proper system of collection of waste. As it stands today, tourist sites are piling up with waste and are gradually damaging the ecology and environment of Sohra. Another issue that can be said is that Sohra as a region does not have proper waste dumping sites and this is adding to the ecological and environmental problems. The same can be said in the case of public utility. The lack of civic wash rooms has led to visitors travelling to Sohra on the Shillong-

Sohra route to relieve themselves in the open. It is undignified and particularly so in the case of women. Public defecation is a threat to health and hygiene. The threat to ecological and environmental damage to tourist sites of Sohra region is real and could be irreversible.

The 'book view' and the 'field view' do not correlate with the plan and policy document of the government of Meghalaya. The case of Sohra illustrates the challenges of sustainable tourism. These problems and challenges can be attributed to lack of regulations, enforcement and proper implementation of the plan and the policy of sustainable tourism in the state.

### **Other dimensions related with Sustainable Tourism**

It should be pointed out that government plan and policy on tourism has not been sensitive to local diversity. This diversity can be explained by taking example from the Khasi-Jaintia hills of Meghalaya. Traditionally, Khasi-Jaintia hills are divided into *Ki Thaiñ* (regions). When two persons meet and interact they prompt or refer to the region they come from. Nongkynrih (2001) highlighted that in the case of those villages and their residents of the upland plateau, running east to west are referred to as *Ki Khyrniam*; those residing in the eastern part of the *Khyrniam* plateau are referred to as *Ki Pnar*; those residing in the southern slopes bordering Bangladesh are referred to as *Ki War*; those in the western part of the *Khyrniam* plateau are known as *Ki Maram*; the area between the *Maram* and Garo hills are called *Ki Lynggam*; and *Ki Bhoi* are those who are settled in the northern slopes bordering the plains of the state of Assam. The clustering of villages into region-wise was an indigenous method of placing villages and their residents according to their landscape (both physical aspects and cultural aspects).

Such regions are located on different plateaus and they have distinct characteristics, i.e., some are situated on the upland, some on the lowland; some are located along steep hillocks or hills, and plain areas. The soil composition varies including climatic conditions. Each region has different kinds of forestlands including flora and fauna. There are variations at the levels of dialects, dress and festivals. Lastly, in these regions one can find varieties of food crops, wild edible plants, food items, and indigenous technology and knowledge. The variations of the landscape provide the conditions for the existence of varieties of agro-biodiversity, ecosystem and cultural practices.

A particular regional landscape has its own kind topography, climatic conditions, natural beauty, agro-biodiversity, food habits and indigenous cuisine, flora and fauna, beliefs and practices, local dialects, festivals, indigenous sports and various other cultural dimensions. Therefore, a regional landscape offers a distinct physical presentation of the place and cultural presentation of the social world. Hence, regional landscape demands a separate plan and approach as far as sustainable tourism is concerned. Each region in this sense is a landscape of its own. Thus, regional landscape can be a suitable model for policy, planning and implementation of sustainable tourism since most of the tourist sites are located in such regions. It is in the regional landscape that social interactions and social relationships between the host and visitors take place. The regional landscape, therefore, assumes significance for tourism in general and for sustainable tourism in particular.

Another aspect concerning regional landscape is the fragile slopes and hilly terrain where road transport is the major line of communication. For example, movements or transferring of persons and goods is shared by one and all along the common public road which could be a state highway or a village road. The landscape is shared by both host communities and visitors on daily basis. Some of the roads connecting to tourism sites are narrow and cannot handle large numbers of vehicular traffic. The road has to be accessible to all and this is leading to pressure on the available infrastructure and causing traffic jam and disturbing the movements of both host communities and visitors. Ensuring the protection of the fragile environment and ecosystem and ensuring smooth flow of vehicles for the common benefits is yet to be addressed by the government. The same goes in the context of tourist site protection or human security. It should be recognised that some of the tourism sites have their own limitations in terms of services and handling of the number of visitors visiting at one time in one place. The presence of large number of visitors in one place can create pressure both on the physical world of the landscape, the visitors as well as the residents. This aspect has been left unregulated by the government. If the government of Meghalaya is serious in achieving sustainable tourism, *Ki Thaiñ* could have been adopted and applied as a conceptual tool in the plan and policy document including the requisite of sustainable tourism.

Lastly, tourism is inseparable from the social world, and there are other social dimensions that need to be understood for the purpose of achieving sustainable tourism. Tourism provides the ground for social interactions between the host and

the visitor. In this sense, tourism can also be seen from the Weberian view as social action and social relationship; 'social action which includes both failure to act and passive acquiescence, may be oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others... The "others" may be individual persons, and may be known to the other actor as such, or may constitute an indefinite plurality and maybe entirely unknown individuals' (Weber, 1968, p. 22). Weber further illustrated the connection between social action and money, 'Thus, money is a means of exchange, which the actor accepts in payment because he (she) orients his/her action to the expectation that a large but unknown number of individuals he is personally unacquainted with will be ready to accept it in exchange on future occasion' (ibid).

According to Weber (1968), social action can be categorised under four types: instrumentally rational; value rational; affectual; and traditional. In the context of tourism, the interaction is between the host and the visitor, in this type of interaction the medium of exchange is money for service, and can be said to be instrumentally rational action. Morrison (1968, p. 281) writes, 'Action is instrumentally rational when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends'. Thus, in the context of tourism both hosts and visitors are in a process of exchange and both do take into account the ends and means. This kind of social interaction creates the condition of social relationship, and social relationship is meant 'to denote the behaviour of plurality of actors insofar as, in its meaningful content, the action of each takes into account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms' (Weber, 1968, p. 26).

However, it should be pointed out that in the context of tourism, the host-visitor social interactions and social relationships is not merely a calculated relationship based on exchange of money and service. It is also an interaction of diverse background and cultures as both are from diverse ethnicity, class, race and culture. Efforts should be made to sensitise the visitors about local culture and the hosts should be trained on the art of handling visitors of another culture. This can enrich understanding and mutual respect. In Khasi-Jaintia hills relieving oneself on the roadside is considered bad manners and undignified. If one has to relieve oneself one has to be out of site. It is this reason that tourism cannot be seen only as an economic activity. Socio-cultural aspects are equally significant for both the hosts and visitors because tourism provides the scope for cross-cultural

interactions. The tourism plan and policy of the government of Meghalaya has not emphasised this aspect of cross-cultural interaction between social actors.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, one can say that tourism is a global phenomenon and it has assumed significance in the field of sociology, economics, commerce and cultural studies; and in the context of nation-states it is part of the developmental framework. It has both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. From the sociological viewpoint, tourism provides the ground of social interactions between social actors, that is, the host and visitors. It is at one level a social interaction and social relationship based on rational exchange of money and service, and on the other, meeting of diverse cultures. Another aspect is that tourist sites are located in regional landscapes, and regional landscapes have their own importance and significance to hosts and visitors. Tourism can be unsustainable or sustainable depending on number of factors such as policy and action plan framework, requisite of sustainable tourism and in particular regulation and enforcement, and implementation. Lastly, sustainable tourism is an outcome of integration of responsible and accountable network of social actors such as hosts and local communities, visitors, service providers, tourism promoters, and local governments.

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**Article: Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India**

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## Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India

--- Randhir Gogoi and Barnali Sarma

### *Abstract*

There is an absence of serious engagement by researchers, within and outside the Northeast India, with the imagined attachment to the image of the ‘migrant’ as the ‘other’ in conceptualising movement organisation, as well as with the many other discursive genres that form part of movement repertoires. Most of the earlier accounts worked around ideas of migration, class and ethnicity as structural factors and argued on premises where interactions of these structures were said to produce movements. Such arguments however, are not complete without including factors like factionalisms, inter-group alliances between groups that otherwise may have opposing narratives of ‘otherness’ and mobilisational schemas. This paper attempts to address these questions and follows a discursive approach that incorporates a framework of social-psychological ideas, new social movement theory and structuralist accounts of some of the major movements in Northeast India to theorise their organisational designs. In the process, the paper will highlight some of the major discursive genres and mobilisational tools used in their organisation.

*Key words: Discursive genre, Discursive limitations, Mobilisations schemas, Movement repertoires*

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### **Introduction**

A constant inter and intra-regional movement of people, drawing of new administrative boundaries and policies in the last century have triggered demographic changes and a re-distribution of economic and political resources, thus creating conflict of interests amongst communities of Northeast India. Further, the operation of a socio-political structure which associates cultural or ethnic identity with geographic space has led to certain communities, usually minorities, being labeled as ‘migrants’ and perceived as threats by the majority within shared spaces. Such perceptions have influenced the character of socio-

political movements in the region and have often molded collective organisation and action along lines of indigenous insider vis-à-vis the migrant outsider, even when issues having inter-group ramifications are at stake. Nevertheless, serious engagement by researchers, within and outside the region, with the imagined attachment to the image of the ‘migrant’ as ‘other’ in conceptualising movement organisation, as well as with the many other discursive genres that form part of movement repertoires has not been forthcoming. Most of the earlier accounts worked around ideas of migration, class and ethnicity as structural factors and argued on premises where interactions of these structures were said to produce movements<sup>1</sup>. Such arguments however, are not complete without including factors like factionalisms, inter-group alliances between groups that otherwise may have opposing narratives of ‘otherness’ and mobilisational schemas. Furthermore, what seems to be amiss from these works are the ways ‘modern’ processes of migration and identity formation have come to be psychologically adopted by communities here and how such adoptions also affect the cognitive thinking of people. And more importantly, allowing discourses to be converted into discursive genres which are then used as tools for mobilisation during movement organisation.

This paper attempts to address these questions and follows a discursive approach that incorporates a framework of social-psychological ideas, new social movement theory and structuralist accounts of some of the major movements in Northeast India to theorise their organisational designs. In the process, the paper will highlight some of the major discursive genres used in movement organisation. A major portion of the arguments are devoted to deconstructing the discursive genre of ‘migration’ and that of the ‘migrant outsider’, as it has affected the organisational schemas of numerous protest movements of the region. In fact, a closer look at movement goals and outcomes, strategies of mobilisations and alliances of several identity movements against ‘migrant outsiders’ seem to push the causality of migration as an ongoing process to the background, revealing more intricate political designs, struggles and motives. The paper also highlights the discursive limitations of mobilisational genres and focuses on analysing other discursive genres and forms of mobilisation and action beyond identity movements.

### **Perceptions of Identity and Migration: Colonial Givings, Post-Colonial Pickings**

Mobility and movement have significantly been tied to the modern world and its identity since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While there may be a few who argue that mobility of people is associated with ideas of suspicion, there have been significant others who accord it a legitimate space in the rise of modern identity. Cresswell (2006) outlines the various perceptions of mobility, negative and positive, and underlines that all of it makes up the modern world, the modern citizen. His work is however, about conceptions of mobility and movement in the western world. It is true, people in South Asia had a different sense of mobility in terms of migration than Europe, and it translated in the kind of ideas and choices people had or made to stay at a particular place. Babur mentions in his memoirs in *Babur Nama*<sup>ii</sup> how peasants had an option of shifting to villages which charged lesser revenue or sometimes they would flee to the jungle to avoid paying taxes. In a study to record migration of people in 19<sup>th</sup> century Saran district of Bihar, Yang (1979) states that people from this district were seasonal migrants who would visit the nearby districts as well as Calcutta in search of work during off-season in their fields. Such instances of mobility are also recorded by Scott (2009) in talking about how whole villages fled into jungles in rural Burma upon the approach of officials of the state. Northeast India, a region that lies at the convergence of the Indian sub-continent and the South-Asian massif, has also been characteristic of such mobility. The advent of colonialism in Asia led to alterations in cognition systems of people, which resulted in changes in the way groups and individuals look at migration, even as inter and intra-regional movement continued with gusto. However, there were physical changes in the directions and systems that informed this movement too. The dual effect has been felt in the post-colonial period, where negative perceptions of migration and the ‘migrant’ have led to a violent politics of identity in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural region like Northeast India.

The changes in perceptions as well as in the physical systems of migration from the colonial period were the result of a chain of processes that linked collective identity with ‘space-centric’ notions to create labels of indigenous and migrants. These processes were sparked with the need of a new colonial state to consolidate administration. And perhaps the most convenient way of doing this was by acquiring knowledge about the colonised. Colonial administrative systems looked to categorise and classify its colonised subjects into compartments on the basis of cultures, ethnicities and religions, which were then often assigned geographical spaces. Indeed, this was possible because of the large corpus of ethnographic, scientific and cartographic data collected by colonial recorders. This facilitated

control and allowed a mechanism of resource extraction. More importantly, elements of 'control' and 'reform' in colonial governance led to erosion of traditional ties of the village and space-centric ethnicity became the basis of collective organisation. For example, policies like Inner Line regulations and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Act, which were elements of 'control', also aided in the administrative separation of hills and plains, tribal and nontribal, but more importantly, they implanted a new cognitive and affective 'difference' in perceptions of collective identity. Even re-classification of pre-modern instruments for inter-group existence, like *Posa*<sup>iii</sup> further espoused this perceptual 'difference' making space-centric and exclusivist tendencies chief characteristics of identity definitions.

Of course the 'colonised' were more than mere receptors, as they too began to be participants of a new dialogue of representations and self-representations. A critical reading of 19<sup>th</sup> century census reports reveal how people from low caste communities wanted different enumerations and 'indigenous' enumerators blocked such acts<sup>iv</sup>. Even then, several entries did provide opportunities to families of lower castes to be enumerated otherwise. There are several other instances that we glean from a critical re-reading of such colonial sources, where communities and individuals established their indigeneity vis-à-vis other communities over shared spaces<sup>v</sup>; while at the same time the colonial agency also established such criteria for others. Thus, a new discourse emerged where communities were not only labeled indigenous and migrant to an area by colonial classifiers but communities themselves began constructing narratives that put themselves as indigenous and others as migrants/outside. Such changes however, have led to closed definitions of indigenous and migrant/outside in today's post-colonial Northeast India which produces a dual effect on movement occurrence and organisation. On the one hand, it delivers the overt causalities that inspire movements, especially identity movements; and on the other it helps in the construction and reception of select discursive genres that allow the amplification of movement mobilisations.

### **Migration and the 'Migrant' as Discursive Genres: A New Reading**

No doubt the movement of people happened with a much larger ferocity than in the pre-colonial times due to new requirements of labour from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in turn complicating demography and resource sharing systems; especially, when the British administration started a new process of bringing in labour from an over

populated East-Bengal through land grants and lucrative revenue offers, as well as through the indentured labour system for tea gardens. This has indeed contributed in the creation of a politics of identity as several groups compete with each other on at least some levels to acquire limited resources – political, economic and social. Besides this, several intra-regional issues like construction of large scale state infrastructure and river-bank erosion have also intensified demographic issues leading to displacement of people internally. This works as a cyclical system as competition for resources and movement of internally displaced people spill over into armed conflicts, further displacing people<sup>vi</sup>. According to Weiner (1978), in multi-ethnic societies that are part of the developing world, migration tends to have a destabilising effect and can arouse intense conflicts. In his pioneering work on migration in India, Weiner identifies three important concepts for understanding ethnic demography: notions of territorial ethnicity, dual labour markets and ethnic divisions of labour. Based on these premises, multi-ethnic societies in the developing countries compete for access to economic, political and social resources, as well as power and status. The motivations of movement organisation, especially for autonomy in the region, can be identified with such a theoretical premise as different ethnic groups fight over not only territorial control but also control over economic resources such as jobs and education within that territory. This idea, usually captured with slogans of ‘sons of the soil’ has been invoked many times in academic writings of identity movements in Northeast India. And the movements have no doubt been, for resources and territorial control against migrants.

Nevertheless, Weiner’s (1978) assertion poses some challenges in light of certain historical evidences. Migration was never a new phenomenon in the region, and to look for a historical causality, we will have to attribute it to the re-settlement of ethnic groups in assigned spaces and the inflow of new labour for agriculture and plantations, both initiated by British administrators, that changed the demographic structure and created a new visibility of it. However, even as structural factors have affected close-ended ideas of identity and negative perceptions of migrants, it is the adoption, definition and re-definition of the ‘migrant visibility’ through a constant process of repeated political speeches, pamphleteering campaigns, newspaper reports and the large corpus of academic writings that equate migration and identity conflicts which keep alive conflicting narratives of shared spaces and resources. Indeed, various agencies are able to transform such a discourse into discursive genres to be used for collective mobilisations. This is observed in socio-political movements that have been regular occurrences in

Northeast India and where there is an overbearing presence of ‘anti-migrant’ frames during mobilisation. For example, during the movement for jobs in 1970s Assam, the major mobilisational schema was based on the idea that indigenous Assamese were being deprived of jobs and preference was given to ‘outsiders’. Even regular electoral gains are garnered by local politicians mobilising along similar lines of indigenous and migrants. Chaube’s (1999) analysis of hill politics is replete with cases when regional parties, independent candidates as well as national parties like the Congress (I), CPI(M) applied the binaries to very localised spaces, pitting communities who had shared common space against each other for electoral victories.

‘Alarming trend of migrants to Nagaland worrying’ – *The Morung Express*, a daily in Nagaland had this particular headline on July 20, 2011. This is just one of the many such news reports that appear daily in various newspapers across the Northeast. The above news report also revealed that by 2015, 22,000 square kilometers of land in Bangladesh will submerge due to global warming producing six million refugees who will flow into Northeast endangering the cultures here. While noting the UN figures of *Bangladeshi* refugees in India for 2013, which is a little over three million<sup>vii</sup>, it is argued that gross misrepresentations in the media feeds migrant-phobia amongst the majority communities and fear of persecution amongst the minorities. Researches on social movements have produced evidences of ‘selection bias’ in newspapers, thus affecting what people read and don’t<sup>viii</sup>. Indications of such biases can be found in the media around the region as is seen in reports like the one published in *The Morung Express*. Furthermore, many cases in rural and interior areas can be documented how local issues of theft, land and other such petty conflicts are often depicted in frameworks of ethnic conflict. A case in the Assam-Nagaland boundary is in point, where encroachment by villagers into unclaimed land, which has been a natural process that happens from both sides of the boundary, has been reported as a case of outsiders grabbing the right of the ‘indigenous’<sup>ix</sup>. Thus, such troubled interaction of identity, politics and migration produced by different agencies keep alive binaries of indigenous and migrant in the memories of people, so much so that it features in informal networks of communications as a registered stereotype. The memories of registered stereotypes then occur in mobilisational and action repertoires of identity movements in the region.

An early post-independence era event that contributed to the accentuation of space-centric and exclusivist perceptions of identity was the state re-organisation

in 1955. Territorial ethnicity as a migration related discursive genre to be used for mobilisation gained momentum and a trend in identity movement organisation emerged where members of a group targeted minority communities within their asserted 'homeland'. This targeting even in much localised contexts was often preceded by labelling of communities as indigenous and migrants, where migrants were usually a minority in an area, even within shared spaces. The Assam movement, Hill State movement and the Bodo movement are some of the major movements where ethnic mobilisations have been conducted based on the indigenous-migrant binary. However, such mobilisations also followed strategic considerations in using the binary. The leadership during the Assam movement of 1979-85 against illegal migrants from Bangladesh sought alliance with groups which they clarified as outsiders/migrants like the *Marwaris* during the 1960s language movement and the food movement<sup>x</sup>. The Hill State movement sought to bring together all hill tribes into one fold by using the call for a tribal-non-tribal mobilisation scheme and where non-tribal groups were labelled 'outsiders'. Though it was a failure as only the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills were joined together to form Meghalaya in 1970, there were attacks even on some minority tribal groups like the *Vaipheis*. As Hawmazaul Vaiphei, a resident of Shillong, Meghalaya, reveals that his grandfather fearing the safety of the family contemplated shifting to Guwahati and even bought a piece of land there. Similar actions were also repeated in the Khasi Students Union (KSU) agitations of 2001, where anti-social elements targeted non-Khasis<sup>xi</sup>. In Mizoram, definition of indigenous does not include the *Chakmas* and *Tongchangyas* who are tribal groups of Bangladesh and are often targets of persecution<sup>xii</sup>.

Major incidences of violence have also occurred over questions of migrant intrusion; the Nellie massacre of 1983 is a gruesome example, where over 3000 Bengali-Muslims were hatched to death by surrounding tribal groups. The reason: they were *bahirogita* (outsider or migrant). Instances of violence during movement action showcase the discursive limitations of using frames that run on binaries of indigenous and migrants. The 'migrant' itself has become a category that often changes contextualisation and meaning as political leaders, activists and movement leaderships create new frames around it for mobilisation. Indeed, there is a constant change in the definitions as new alliances and intra-group divisions continue to form newer labels of indigenous and migrant. Moreover, the constant application of such labels and their continued changes in definition suggest a more complicated political power-play in the region. In case of the Bodo Movement, as recent as 2012, greater number of attacks were occurring on

Bengali Muslims, even as the movement repertoire of the Bodos have Adivasis in their categories of the 'other'. And although earlier clashes had occurred with Adivasis as well, it is precisely because Bengali-Muslims have the added tag of being illegal Bangladeshis, which make them easier targets of attacks. Furthermore, arguments portraying migration related conflicts as intra-class struggle between the middle classes of different ethnic groups have not accounted for the continued factionalisms within ethnic groups, and even amongst their respective middle classes. The *Assam Sahitya Sabha* which had been a middle class platform for organising identity centric movements withdrew from the Assam Movement when it began to show signs of violence. Sections of civil society in Meghalaya were against the KSU agitations of 2001 which was based on labels of indigenous and migrants. Such instances show that there are considerable differences in stands and views within ethnic groups and their middle classes as well and steer us towards re-thinking agency in the continued recurrence of anti-migrant sentiments.

One of the major reasons cited by the Assam Movement leaders was the taking over of land by migrants as well. The mobilisation in most rural areas was conducted through the use of such a frame. However, interviews conducted with information officer of the Nagaon district<sup>xiii</sup>, where large tracts of *char* or riverine land have seen settlement of Bengali-Muslims, revealed that most of them have been provided by government agencies. Even private land owned by Assamese people, were taken up for cultivation by the Bengali-Muslims through systems like *adhiya* where a share of the produce would go to the Assamese owners. Moreover, during the height of the anti-foreigners agitation where Bengali-Muslims were the target of attacks according to official reports, personal memories shared during interviews at villages like Phulaguri remembered how both Assamese and Bengali-Muslims attacked as well as safeguarded each other in some instances. On the other hand, in upper Assam areas like Sivsagar and Nazira, the movement took the shape of a conflict between All Assam Students Union (AASU) and Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) against Congress and Communist party members<sup>xiv</sup>. Thus, mobilisational frames were interpreted in different ways within the same movement. Local leaderships in these different places combined the messages and orders issued by the central leaderships with their own interpretations. For instance, even when the call for Assam Agitation was for a peaceful movement, various districts witnessed clashes not only between communities classified as indigenous and migrants but also amongst indigenous Assamese community divided along political lines as in Nazira or

Sivsagar. What is also observed is that sometimes the methods and goals set by central leaderships are not acceptable to certain participants and they break away creating factionalisms within the movement, thus reducing its potency for mass participation. The various off-shoots of the Naga Socialist movement and the Bodo autonomy movement are evidential examples of such cases.

There has also been a growing trend of land alienation amongst the tribal communities of the region, not only to migrants but within the group itself as certain members take advantage of rules of private property and take over community property resources. Glaring examples have been amply demonstrated by several writers about how changes in land use pattern, large development projects like dams have also caused displacement of people and land alienation. However, a multifaceted process is blurred by a discourse that espouses singular causality of land being acquired by ‘migrants’<sup>xv</sup>. Such a discourse offered by movement leaderships, political candidates, intellectuals and the media has been the common discursive genre for mobilisation during identity movements. Indeed, ‘frames’ designed by movement leaders as well as by electoral candidates using such labels for mobilisation have been one of the most successful ones as can be seen in the intensity of the Bodo Movement or level of participation in the Anti-foreigners movement. Trends highlighted by writers like Fernandez and Borbora (2009) help draw a critique of such labels working in the region, where alienation especially of land cannot be attributed to the ‘handiwork’ of the migrant and compels us to take a closer look at inter-group associations and alliances that cut across categories of indigenous and migrant. These trends are reflective of the limitations of migration as a discursive genre during mobilisation as inter-dependencies between ‘indigenous’ and ‘migrant’ communities may prevent participation. Another work by Fernandez (2005) about how changing labour requirements have brought Bangladeshi migrants, legal and illegal to be employed heavily into construction and mining in Northeast India is indicative of new inter-dependencies being forged. This reduces the affective power of frames that talk about employment being taken over by migrant workers leaving the natives unemployed.

### **Other Discursive Genres and Forms of Mobilisations**

Identity movements in the region have been particularly bloody and have more often than not involved inter-communal clashes. A number of studies have noted such ranges of behaviour during movements and have conceptualised identity as

being conflicted in the region. However, we here focus on forms of mobilisation like evoking martyrs, shaming and blockading. All these forms of mobilisations could be distinctly seen in the Assam Agitation, where the name of Khargeshwar Talukdar as the first martyr of the movement has been hailed in numerous speeches and pamphlets. While on the other hand interviews conducted in Sivsagar and Nazira district revealed that various school teachers and college professors were publicly shamed and even beaten for showing even a hint of non-support to the movement<sup>xvi</sup>. Also drawing from newspaper reports from leading dailies like Assam Tribune, New-Star (this paper is no longer in circulation), provide the numerous instances that blockades were carried out in front of educational institutions forcing them to remain closed during 1980 and later also blockading the Guwahati refinery. However, in the case of Assam Agitation it can also be said that these forms were not used in one consorted form to push forward for a 'permanent' solution. Local leaders in several districts sometimes worked, removed from the central AGSP and AASU leaderships, and at times even tried to extract personal vendetta. The case of Kunti Konwar and her daughter being murdered by unknown assailants under the guise of a movement procession still rings fresh in the minds of people of Mezenga village in Nazira sub-district<sup>xvii</sup>. The central leadership at Guwahati constantly reiterated their stand that the movement was non-violent; even then the very nature of it being one of pushing away foreigners could not have been totally a non-violent one.

Researches, intellectuals, movement leaderships, i.e. the politicised sections of the society, have pinpointed inadequate policy measures based on security concerns by the government as reasons for growing grievances and displacements of communities here in the region. Baruah (2005) configures something called 'cosmetic federalism' that dictates central state's tendencies of cutting down sub-national movements and maintaining authority. Other than that its own projects of massive infrastructure development and security procedures under acts like the Terrorist and Disruptive (Prevention) Act (TADA) and Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) have also contributed to the displacement of whole communities, creating new arenas of contestation and complicating movement discourses. Moreover, the steps that the Indian state has taken in the last fifty years to pacify ethnic unrest have also been based on colonial classifications with slight modifications, usually resulting in ad-hoc measures that satisfy collective aspirations only partially. Thus, this has always left space for dissatisfaction to be used as mobilisation capital during movement organisation.

Grievance in the form of neglect from the central government can be seen being evoked in speeches and pamphlets of various identity movements throughout the Northeast. To take the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam from 1979-1985, its pamphleteering campaigns constantly used 'neglect' in terms of resources and opportunities by the Indian State. Pamphlets issued by the main leadership All Assam Gana Samgram Parishad, The Assam Freedom Fighters Association, The Gauhati University Teachers Association, Sahitya Sabha Branches of Sonari, Jorhat, Nazira all had weaved a narrative where the migration from East-Bengal had been grossly neglected by successive governments at Delhi. Furthermore, writings like that of Tilottama Misra's (1980) *Assam: A Colonial Hinterland* provides further amplification of mobilisational frames of central government apathy during organisation. In fact, the carving of separate tribal states is also evoked as a 'grievance' and 'injustice' to the people of Assam who have always stood up for the Union of India.

In case of tribal groups organising movement frames, the sixth schedule, where certain groups are considered scheduled tribes while others are, not becomes a discursive genre. This schedule is seen to be a regular occurrence in the speeches and newspaper articles by several tribal groups of Assam who have been kept outside its ambit. Such dichotomies aid in the creation of collective grievances which are directed towards creating frames that feature forms like 'neglect' and 'deprivation' of a singular community in shared spaces. And more often than not the collateral damage in this process has been the physical uprooting of many minority communities within the same spaces. Assamese, Naga, Khasi, Bodo, all these groups have, in the course of their autonomy seeking movements, carried out warnings and attacks on minority communities in their respective territories, often labelling them 'migrants'. In fact, mobilisation schemas of protest agitations far removed from seeking autonomy have also deployed similar frames to garner movement support. As recent as September 2018, in an employee agitation for pending remuneration underway by employees of an essential ambulance service in Guwahati, the employee union in its interviews to media houses has expressed the apathy that its non-indigenous boss has displayed against Assamese employees<sup>xviii</sup>. In the light of the theoretical premise argued by this paper, this can be regarded as a strategic manoeuvre to garner maximum support and sympathy for their cause. Indeed, ideas of state apathy and neglect have provided necessary capital to a number of movements organised not only around the issues of identity and autonomy but also human rights, like the one led by the Meira Paibis of Manipur in 2005, and also development induced displacement like the 2012

Subansiri Anti-Dam movement in Assam. In many frames constructed by leaderships of these movements one finds expressions of ‘exploitation’, ‘rights violation’, and ‘insensitivity’ towards and of local community sentiments, directed against a centre that is constructed as the ‘outsider-other’.

The Meira Paibis movement against AFSPA represents a strong protest against a series of human rights abuse that has allegedly been conducted by the armed forces of the Indian state. Pradip Panjoubam wrote in August 7, 2004 edition of *The Statesman* that the AFSPA had been in full force for almost two decades, yet protests against its draconian nature reached flashpoint only in the past fortnight. These protests were sparked by the killing of a thirty-two year old Manipuri woman named Thangjam Manorama in July 2004; and the subsequent protest by middle aged Manipuri women, known as Meira Paibis, in front of the Kangra Fort at Imphal, the headquarters of the armed forces. However, what was unusual about the protests was the method adopted by the women. A dozen or so of these women stripped themselves naked and stood in front of the fort with banners asking for the Indian army to come rape them. This drew international coverage and outrage. Even then, *The New York Times* only reported in 2005 how Indian soldiers and forces ‘saturate’ this border state, and locals hold a seething sense of grievance against them. Nevertheless, the combination of protest techniques and mobilisational ‘frames’ that the Meira Paibis drew upon produced a new protest repertoire in Northeast India. They combined forms like personal connections, kin and clan based mobilisations, along with the idea of ‘body as a weapon’. Urvashi Buthalia (2010) writes ‘they dared the army to come and rape them, offering their bodies, using them as weapons, not to harm but to shame and humiliate’<sup>xix</sup>. Of course Meira Paibis movement against AFSPA atrocities is older than this particular protest, and earlier forms were more ‘dignified’ where they would hold torch marches at night out in the streets. However, the Kangra Fort protest was a complete new form where they commodified their bodies in protest and held India and the world in a guilt silence. Their protests led to a resurgence of the demand of the repeal of the AFSPA in Manipur. Furthermore, emotions here have also played a heavy role in the words of two of the leading Meira Paibis who were present on that faithful day. Nevertheless, even with such a drastic system of organisation, the Meira Paibis movement has its limitation as far as universal human rights are concerned. Meitei ethnicity plays a major role in its mobilisation schema as most of the women in the Meira Paibies are Meitei women. And while women of tribal groups in Manipur have not become its official participants, the AFSPA has affected their living too in most gruesome ways.

The anti-dam protest over the construction of the Subansiri dam from 2012 is one of the recent social movements organised with a large scale mobilisation schema. Large infrastructure projects such as this have often resulted in internal displacement of communities. Most times the result of faulty planning, and improper rehabilitation programmes for effected communities have created dissatisfaction and skepticism amongst many. Quiet protests since 2005 have been ongoing, mostly coming from sections of ecological activists and lawyers and later joined by AASU. However, it was only in 2012 when construction was scheduled, a well organised movement emerged led by a peasant organisation Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), aided by AASU<sup>xx</sup>. The movement repertoire here was a combination of various discursive genres that re-defined mobilisation for an issue that had inter-group ramifications. Perhaps, one of its kind in recent times, this movement showcases ways in which communities in Northeast India can overcome their closed identity frameworks and move towards the consensus range of behaviours for problem solving. Of course, we cannot argue that movements like this might find or have found more supporters in the region; however, we might take assurance that joint problem solving in the future through closer inter-communal associations and alliances might be a more trending ideology. Even though the composition of the protestors did not go beyond the locally inhabiting communities, the coming together of these inhabitants for a joint problem solving movement over shared space reveals a new cognitive structure in the making.

An overarching mobilisational frame deployed by movement organisers was indeed the apathy of the Indian state and its resource extraction plans, without providing proper relief and rehabilitation for the local inhabitants. Where in one instance KMSS claimed the support of more than 5,00,000 fishermen dependent on the Brahmaputra River, and using techniques like road blocks halted the delivery of construction materials for the Dam. KMSS was also able to draw experiences of other anti-dam movements across the country and also create communication channels with national and international organisations working for the same. Today, almost forty such organisations are working for the movement. Besides, other local organisations like the Duliajan units of AASU, AJYCP, Muttock Yuba Chatra Sanmilan, Tea Tribes Students Union, Gorkha Students Union, Brihottor Asomiya Mahila Manch and Nibonua Yuba Parishad have also provided mobilisational support to the movement in various ways. Taking out processions, these organisations, albeit using crude methods like

burning effigies, have been able to provide a level of awareness to local inhabitants as well as to the rest of the region. Some of the mobilised groups identified are: farmers, indigenous groups or traditional communities, landless peasants, local political parties, neighbours/citizens/communities, social movement activists, local scientists and professionals. And the major forms of mobilisation are blockades, boycotts of official procedures/non-participation in official processes, development of a network/collective action, development of alternative proposals, lawsuits, court cases, judicial activism, media based activism/alternative media, objections to the EIA, official complaint letters and petitions, public campaigns, street protest/marches, strikes. And mobilisational frames, other than state apathy and neglect, which have been used are environmental threats such as biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity), floods (river, coastal, mudflow), food insecurity (crop damage), loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, soil erosion, deforestation and loss of vegetation cover, groundwater pollution or depletion, large-scale disturbance of hydro and geological systems, reduced ecological/hydrological connectivity; and socio-economic threats such as displacement, loss of livelihood, loss of traditional knowledge/practices/cultures, violations of human rights, land dispossession, loss of landscape/sense of place.

Perhaps for some researchers the trajectory of this movement might imply a Nimby typology<sup>xxi</sup>, when actors here exhibited a localised reaction to the dam construction and the highly emotional reactions like the road blockages by complete prostration or the violent clash during a protest on December 27, 2011 in Lakhimpur<sup>xxii</sup>. However, judging from the number of issues around which mobilisation has occurred, including questions of 'quality of life' and the large network of activists and organisations that this movement has been able to create, we might argue that it goes beyond a mere Nimby typology; in fact, it can be characterised as a new social movement. Of course, to use Marc W. Steinberg's (2002) framework<sup>xxiii</sup>, the exhibitions of violence can be regarded as the limitations of the mobilisational frames and the discursive genres used. Furthermore, even with the relative success of the Subansiri movement, similar movements like the Pagladia or the Tipaimukh anti-dam protests, despite drawing local inter-group alliances, have remained isolated from each other. Thus, even as movement organisation in Northeast India have begun to move away from identity concerns only, the capacity to form sustainable inter-group networks remain weak, mostly due to the historical distrust.

### Concluding Remarks

This paper is a new attempt at understanding movement organisation and mobilisation that move beyond addressing them as resultants of structural phenomenon like migration or ethnicity. The author believes that socio-political movements are also effected by discourses and they operate using narratives forwarded by researches, memoirs, stories, etc. The paper begins with the argument that new ideas and perceptions of identity and migration generated from the colonial period have been re-interpreted by different agencies in post-colonial India to give rise to a new discourse that links the two. In the process, this inter-linkage helps in the creation of discursive genres around such perceptions to be used for mobilisations for political gains, movement organisations, etc. Furthermore, analysis have focused on how frames generated for mobilisation using the indigenous-migrant binary find amplification due to closed ideas of identity and negative perceptions of migration, also stating what its growing limitations are and can be in the future. Major limitations of deploying such frames are not only noted in restricted participation, and the reduced effectiveness of movement impact, especially when issues having inter-group ramifications are concerned. Furthermore, reactions of violence in many cases too, complicate problems of displacement and inter-group dynamics. The numbers of armed conflicts in the region are glaring examples of such interpretations.

Besides analysing discursive genres and frames related to migration and identity, the paper goes beyond identity-centric movements, especially from the ones seeking autonomy, and brings into focus new movements organised around issues of human rights violation and development induced displacement. Importantly, the focus lies in enlisting other forms of mobilisations that have been used in socio-political movements around the region, and which overlap with each other. Of course, in no way can we argue for a generalised pattern for all movements, even among identity based ones; nevertheless, similar forms have been borrowed from one movement to the other, re-arranging the combinations of frames and adding more according to localised settings.

Finally, this paper is a small step towards creating a new awareness in academic research for movement study in the region. It calls for a need to move away from tracing movements only to structural factors and assignment of agency only to 'vested interests', and focus on the organisational and mobilisation techniques, the problematic discourses and discursive genres that are kept alive by different

agencies. This in turn will allow researchers to understand why regular occurrences of such movements have failed to bring about a permanent peaceful solution to the region and why inter-group alliances over shared spaces are few or are not sustainable in solving problems that have inter-group ramifications.

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Notes:

<sup>i</sup> Guha, A. (1980). *Little nationalism turned chauvinist Assam's anti-foreigner upsurge, 1979-80*; Hussain, M. (1994). *The Assam Movement*; Baruah, S. (2008). *Territoriality, indigeneity and rights in the North-East India*; Sharma, M. (1988). *The Assamese middle-class and integration: The role of the Assam Sahitya Sabha*; Sharma, M. (1992). *The Assamese middle class and its attitude to ethnic polarisation in Assam: An analysis of Assam Sahitya Sabha*.

<sup>ii</sup> See Babur Nama (Memoirs of Babur) by Annette Susannah Beveridge (trans.). Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

<sup>iii</sup> Alexander Mackenzie describes *Posa* as blackmail, a tool used by hill groups to extract taxes and services from plains villages. However, *Posa* in Ahom regimes meant a 'right' to collect; and was often given to hill chiefs in lieu of certain tributes to be given to the Ahom king. A brilliant example is a stone pillar exhibited in the State Museum at Guwahati, which contains an inscription that notes the allowing of some Mishimi tribes right over certain villages in lieu of snake venom, used for various purposes.

<sup>iv</sup> Census Report of 1891, Assam; E.A. Gait.

<sup>v</sup> Archival files mention how the formation of a sub-district of all Mzemi Naga areas in Cachar Hills was stopped on the behest of the Kachari council in 1944/45. The Kachari council claimed that the Mzemi Nagas were in fact migrants to that area. (File no.129-C/46 at Assam State Archives). Also see Alexander Mackenzie, *Relations of Hill Tribes with the British*, (1886).

<sup>vi</sup> IDMC in a report '*This is our Land*' *Ethnic Violence and internal displacement in north-east India* released on November 2011 discusses the status of displacement in Northeast India. According to the report more than 8,00,000 people are displaced within the region as a result of: violence and displacement in Assam and Meghalaya states in December 2010 and January 2011; violence and displacement in Western Assam during the 1990s and 2000s; and violence and displacement from Mizoram state to Tripura state in 1997 and 2009.

<sup>vii</sup> The migrant profile files in the UN website counts the figure of the total Bangladeshi migrant stock at 3, 230,025 for 2013.

<sup>viii</sup> See Oliver, P. E., Roa, J. C. & Strawn, K. D. (2003). *Emerging trends in the study of protest and social movements*, pp. 223-225.

<sup>ix</sup> News reported in Pratidin Time, an Assamese news channel on November 21, 2017; Nagaland Encroaching Land in Assam, *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2009; 300 Nagas in Dimapur in Bid to Encroach Land in Assam, says Cop, *Times of India*, April 28, 2014.

<sup>x</sup> See Hussain, M. (1994). *The Assam Movement*.

<sup>xi</sup> See Srikanth, (2005). *Prospects of liberal democracy in Meghalaya: A Study of civil society's response to KSU-led agitation*, pp. 3990.

<sup>xii</sup> The Chakmas and the Tonchongyas are immigrants from the Chittagong Hill tract which lies in Bangladesh now. Some Chakmas are also displaced in Arunachal Pradesh where also they are considered migrants and are often targets of racial attacks.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Sumita Ghose (2010) *Dealing with Conflict and Violence, The Power of attitude*, pp 322.

<sup>xiv</sup> Incidences of mob lynching, especially of Bengali Muslims have been reported from Dimapur since 2015 and now Arunachal Pradesh has similar reports.

<sup>xv</sup> See editorial on land alienation: Fernandes, W. & Borbora, S. (2009). *Land, people and politics: Contest over tribal land in Northeast India*. Several writers from across the Northeast have written how land alienation cannot be attributed to migration alone.

<sup>xvi</sup> Interview conducted with former CPI members, Mr. M. Kalita (Principal at Naizra High School) and Mr. Boragohain (Former principal of Joymoti High School, Nazira).

<sup>xvii</sup> This particular case was remembered by more than ten households of the Mezenga village.

<sup>xviii</sup> Interview of protestors televised on September 8, 2018, in DY365, a local news channel in Guwahati, Assam.

<sup>xix</sup> See Urvashi Butalia's *The body as weapon*. Cited from Gill, P. (Ed.) *The peripheral centre voices from India's North-East*.

<sup>xx</sup> *Assam's dam crisis: Protests against dams are snowballing into a political movement in Assam* by Arnab Pratim Dutta (September 17, 2015) in Down to Earth.

<sup>xxi</sup> According to the *Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, a Nimby typology for a movement is applicable when actors show a. local and parochial attitudes, excluding broader implications; b. distrust of the project sponsors; c. high concern for project risk; d. highly emotional responses to the conflict.

<sup>xxii</sup> Anti-dam protest gets violent again, by Times of India Bureau (December 28, 2011).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Steinberg has used a dialogic framework to analyse Social Movements, where he argues that violence cannot be regarded as a spill over but is the use of agency by movement participants at different levels of the movement. For him, a movement is not always equivocal and there can be various ways that frames are interpreted by participants; and therefore also presents itself as a limitation of certain frames.

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**Article:** *Tuloni*: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society

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## *Tuloni: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society*

--- Maitrayee Patar

### **Abstract**

Based on empirical field research, this paper critically looks at the different constructions around menstruation among women in Assam in terms of menstrual rituals, taboos and prescriptions, and lived experiences. It attempts to explore the negotiations that take place around menstrual taboos in the everyday experiences of the menstruating women and the complex role that individual agency plays in pushing the boundaries of these taboos. It looks into the traditional initiation rites of puberty that an Assamese girl has to go through at menarche, and tries to locate the structures of patriarchy that works through the menarche rituals. Women have been seen as central characters of this research and women's own perspectives have been kept on the front while arriving at an understanding of their everyday negotiations with menstrual taboos and prescriptions.

*Key words: Lived experience, Menstruation, Rituals, Sexuality, Taboos, Womanhood*

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### **Introduction**

*'Maah baati loi suli dhuaai diu oi Raam joubonot disaahi bhori hey, Kunuba purushor kopaal hol mukoli oi Raam konya kaal hol aahi buli he.'*

(We'll wash your hair with grinded cereals for you have reached your youth now; The fortune of some man has smiled for you have reached your girlhood now)

(Assamese folk song on menarche)

Menstrual taboos can be understood as 'those customs that are found in society that publicly restrict the behaviour of a woman at the time of menstruation, and apply throughout most of a woman's life' (Shah, 2012, p. 63). The mention of menstruation and its discussion continues to inspire a feeling of awe among the

discussants and listeners. In most societies and cultures, the topic of menstruation has been that of avoidance, and menstrual experience is considered to be something that needs to be carefully tucked away under the clothes of dignity, shame, fear and honour. It is uncomfortable, and what is uncomfortable must be made invisible, or must be at least transformed to something which is socially acceptable, something which falls into the safe realm of normativity.

Heteronormative social values ensure the construction of gender norms and subsequent social situations which are normatively comfortable. Consequently, in popular mass representations for instance, menstrual blood changes its color from an uncomfortable red to a convenient blue; black polythene bags or newspaper wraps cover up an already packaged menstrual hygiene product. The discomfort that exists in both public and private spheres alike further tempers the social environment, and creates a social situation where the discomfort seems natural, leading the women to feel a certain guilt about her own body which bleeds. The sense of guilt reinforces the discomfort and vice-versa. Discussing menstruation as an experience and the causes of a social discomfort around it then becomes a taboo; something which cannot be overtly talked about, something the existence of which everyone is aware of but which is socially invisible. This social invisibility of menstrual experience has been knit around society in such a way that there has been a social tendency to consciously believe that menstrual experience does not exist.

Menstruation seems to have found expression in liberal spaces such as art and literature which claim to have created spaces for subversion; however, those can hardly be read or perceived as alternate perspectives as majority of those expressions have either conformed to or reinforced the existing cultural notions about menstruation; the flavour has always been prepared by keeping in mind attributes such as fertility, importance of womanhood, feminine shame, guilt and restraints around menstruation; most have only added to the discomfort. Even in relatively liberal spaces such as academia itself, critical discourse on the experience of menstruation has for long been a topic of discomfort, a taboo, resulting in an inadequacy of insightful academic literature on the mundaneness of the whole experience; the everydayness that constantly gets constructed and reconstructed around it has also not been covered. 'Everydayness' creates room for negotiations; to talk about everydayness of the experience of menstruation amid a conscious silence of the normative social environment then itself becomes an act of subversion.

A great deal of complexity surrounds menstrual experience of the Assamese women. In terms of enactment, the taboos which influence her menstrual life are a curious mixture of religion and culture. These taboos are neither exclusively religious nor are they only cultural. However, what shapes the unique nature of the menstrual experience of the women, and what also became evident from the field visits during this research is that, in this context, the religious and the cultural cannot be looked at in isolation from each other. The religious embodiment of the menstrual taboos gets manifested in such ways that these taboos come across as the celebration of an Assamese culture itself. These embodiments definitely play a crucial role in the overall shaping of the personhood of the girl. Moreover, the performative nature of the embodiments leads to a constant construction and reinforcing of a feminine self, sexuality and identity. As Butler (1990) argues, the signs of a fixed, naturally sexed bodily identity are nothing more than the products of performativity. The performative practices of everyday life help one to create implicit knowledge about oneself as a gendered being (Hauser, 2012). *Tuloni biya*, the fictitious marriage ceremony carried out in an Assamese household as part of the puberty rituals of the female adolescent of the house is highly performative in nature. Thus, the celebration of the menarche ceremony of the Assamese girl is something that seals her identity as a gendered being. With a critical approach towards understanding the ceremony of *tuloni*, the paper would try to discuss the socio-religious processes that lead to cultural constructions and lived experiences around menstruation.

The ethno-cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the state of Assam requires a researcher to specify his/her location of research, both in terms of physical as well as social geography. In the context of this research, the term 'Assamese woman' has been used to refer to the women who fall under the Assamese caste Hindu fold; the term has been used to also refer to the women who are members of an ethnic group in Assam, the Plains-Tiwas, that has been majorly influenced and assimilated into the greater Assamese identity, through the teachings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century religious and cultural reformer Srimanta Sankardev. How and why these women of the periphery came to adopt the Hindu patriarchal customs? What may have been the agency of women in the tribal way of life, and the possible residues of the same within the Hindu way of life? How do the anxieties of assimilation and alienation to and from a normative structure manifest in the lives of women? What are the nature of negotiations and bargains that women of different geographical and social locations exercise in terms of their caste, age and class? The paper attempts to address these not so physiological issues

pertaining to an experience that is universal to women and discuss the ways in which a physiological condition as menstruation morphs itself into religion and culture.

### **The Sacred and the Profane: Constructions and Fluidities**

Making sense of social meanings and of the interactions of competing social definitions are the situations that make the study of social processes challenging. Sophie Laws (1990) has looked at the social treatment of menstruation and how practices of a culture produce messages about male superiority and compulsory heterosexuality to women. Laws argues that menstruation also becomes important as symbol of femaleness, and that how a society deals with menstruation can reveal a great deal about how that society views women. She challenges the universal menstrual taboo theory which proposes that menstrual blood is inherently dirty and that men are naturally repulsed by a physical function they do not share with women. Laws argues that there exists an immense variety of cultural practices related to menstruation and it is not useful to reduce the complexity and variety of rituals, practices and beliefs around menstruation across different cultures to generalised statements about taboos.

In Assamese society, menstrual blood is considered inherently dirty and the contact with it in any form is discouraged. The perception of menstrual dirt is not only physical but also is symbolic of a pollution that transcends the body of the menstruating woman. However, the complexities prevalent in the Assamese attitude towards menstruation further complicate its understanding as an experience of women. A coherent observation of the menstrual attitude among the Assamese thus tends to point towards a paradox, both in terms of performative practices and social experience of the women. The question that emerges is then on the nature of the taboo itself – on many levels, menstrual taboo in Assam comes across as a mixture of sacredness, profaneness and convenience. While the sacred and the profane can be understood in terms of formal representations, convenience works more in terms of the informal everyday mundaneness. The construction of the woman – her self, sexuality and personhood – has to be understood within the realm of these formal and informal representations.

According to Mircea Eliade, ‘the first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane’, and ‘man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane’.

(Eliade, 1957, p. 10-11). This view of Eliade was derived from the early Durkheimian view of the sacred as ‘things set apart and forbidden’ (Durkheim, 1995, p. 44). Durkheim had argued that ‘sacred things are the things protected by prohibitions, and profane things are those things to which prohibitions are applied and they must keep a distance from what are sacred’ (ibid, 38). This binary approach towards sacred and profane has been critiqued by sociologists of later times, since the evolution of social theory has proved that the idea of sacred and profane cannot be understood in terms of a dichotomy between the two; social realities are dynamic and complex, and boundaries of these realities are always fluid.

The mystery around menstruation makes it appear as a sacred one, and at the same time social construction of pollution makes it a profane affair. An attempt to transgress the boundaries thus has to be actions that are carried out with the knowledge that the self or the agency of the individual is itself a construct or an ensemble of all the social relations and discourses around one.

The ideas of sacredness, monstrosity, fear and mystery have to be understood in connection to each other and not in isolation; the sacred demands a certain acknowledgement of mystery, and the mysterious has connotations of monstrosity, or uncertain social attributes; this uncertain or monstrous character needs to be feared. What is feared requires that it is tabooed; it is thus possible that the cultural taboo on menstrual blood and the menstruating female body may have had been originally derived from a kind of fear of the monstrous unknown. Sacredness and taboo thus also go hand in hand. Analysis of cultural history of menstruation suggests that menstruation as a space of seclusion has always been a complex site of constructing culture. It is true that acknowledging this site requires an acknowledgement of the androcentrism that surrounds the understanding of culture; however, studies of societies like Yurok indicate how menstrual seclusion in fact may have played pivotal role in giving birth to culture itself (Buckley, 1982).

### **Menstrual Taboo and the Fluid Feminine: The Case of Kamakhya**

In the context of Assam, the power of the menstruating Goddess Kamakhya is considered as something that is immensely potent. It is her ‘sacredness’ that creates a yearly taboo of three days on her believers whereby the space occupied by the Goddess becomes a tabooed space for the ‘visiting others’. However, this

is interesting and points towards a paradox, as for any other regular Assamese woman the taboo is reversed; it is her mobility that is restricted rather than the other members of household or the community. Thus, the menstrual taboo imposed on the woman primarily rests on the idea of her profaneness, whereas the menstrual taboo of Goddess Kamakhya essentially represents her sacredness, involving restriction not on the Goddess but on her believers. The fluidities and contradictions of social constructions around menstrual taboos become evident here.

Kamakhya is worshipped for her power to provide fertility; during menstruation this power is believed to be heightened, hence more sensitive, thus resulting in her seclusion from any profane distractions. Amlan Jyoti Sharma (53), a *panda* (local priest) of the Kamakhya temple said,

*She is more a mother than a Goddess. She holds the power to fertility. It is because of her that we exist. Throughout the year mother keeps her arms open for us. It is (in) these days that she rests. It is not wise to disturb (her). We can't dare to touch (her) during this stage.*

(Interview taken during researcher's visit to annual Ambubachi Mela, 06.08.2016)

A state of sacredness similar to that of Kamakhya is also extended to earth during this time. The Assamese community attributes this menstrual sacredness to *Basumati* (colloquial term for earth) as well, since Basumati and Kamakhya are believed to menstruate at the same time. For seven days, people restrain from any activity of digging, cutting or harvesting, or sitting directly on earthen floor. The earth which is the most mundane character in the everyday of an average Assamese suddenly gains the character of the sacred.

Mr. Sharma added,

*Cooked food should be avoided for these days. Both the mothers are at rest... She holds us all the time... so now (we) should not cause disturbance... no digging of soil or cutting of trees, forest... and only dry food and fruits are to be consumed.*

(Interview taken during researcher's visit to Ambubachi Mela, 06.08.2016)

The above perception of the ritual rest of Basumati and Kamakhya, which is inherently pure and of high honour, can be seen in relation to the profane idea of rest around menstruation of a regular Assamese woman, along with the idea of pollution and shame that surrounds her everyday. The perception of rest is reversed in case of the latter. In case of Kamakhya, the ritual rest restricts the commoners from visiting the Goddess, wherein rest for a regular menstruating woman suggests a restriction on the latter. This restriction is highly spatial in nature, though it latently extends to a ritual restriction on the woman in terms of her physical movement to certain spaces which are considered ritually pure.

Contrasting values in representation of pollution and shame can also be seen in the portrayal of the menstruating Goddess and in the experience of the menstruating woman. Pollution around the menstrual period of Kamakhya involves everything else excluding the Goddess herself. This is implied from the fact that on the third day when the temple reopens, pieces of the red cloth soaked in her symbolic menstrual blood is distributed among the believers as holy possession and a carrier of power and luck, thus proving that menstrual pollution does not apply to the Goddess. It is the profane woman who is considered polluted when she is menstruating, and her pollution has to be done away with throughout the period of menstruation, which is essentially carried out through a spatial as well as ritual seclusion, forbidding all sorts of physical contact with the woman and her menstrual blood.

A subsequent shame follows. The shame is primarily derived from the physical source of menstruation, i.e. the vagina. The vagina is something which the woman is socialised to be extremely conscious of; she is encouraged to conceal its existence in all possible ways, until marriage. Marriage is the only social institution within which the woman is expected to exercise her sexuality without an attached sense of guilt or shame – a socially sanctioned way to put the vagina into use, suggesting more of a reproductive purpose than that of pleasure. Menstruation implies an active, physical involvement of the vagina, and a self-repeating, acknowledgement of its physical existence which cannot be controlled; hence, the shame. This is in direct contrast to the values that inspire the worship of Goddess Kamakhya, the physical representation of whose existence is her ‘sacred’ vagina.

Thus, in a way, both menstruating Kamakhya and the menstruating regular woman become a taboo for a specific period, but the former becomes a sacred

taboo restricting others' mobility while the latter becomes a profane taboo, a pollutant, resulting in restriction of her own mobility; this becomes clear in their respective manifestations.

The ritual celebration of menarche of the Assamese girl also marks an embodiment of the social values of menstruation. Processes of gendered socialisation ensure the gradual construction of the 'woman' from birth itself, and subsequent internalisation of an assigned femininity works from pre-puberty. However, in the case of an Assamese girl, her menarche celebration or tuloni biya serves as a rite of passage that socially leads her to concrete ways of 'becoming' a woman.

### **The Tuloni Biya: Sealing 'Womanhood'**

The menarche in an Assamese household is an event. Bonti Kalita (name changed), a respondent from Karakushi, Sarthebari in Nalbari district, described:

*In Assamese culture, when a girl is flowered it is an event, and the culture of celebrating this event has been here since time immemorial. We call it Tuloni Biya. It is also known as Shanti Biya in some parts of Assam. The puberty rituals of the girl begin from the moment the first blood is spotted. She is sent into seclusion for seven days and on the seventh day she is purified and her biya is celebrated. It is a feast and everybody eats, sings and dances. In earlier times, in any household with a girl child, marriage of the girl used to take place before reaching her puberty. This was called 'aag biya'. After aag biya the girl was supposed to stay in her natal house, till she reached her puberty. On reaching puberty she was sent to her conjugal home after celebrating a second marriage ceremony called shanti biya or tuloni biya. Aag biya doesn't happen anymore since people started getting educated about child marriage. Girls have started going to school since long back. Tuloni biya is still celebrated as a token marriage. You'll find it all across Assam. I feel it is a way of staying connected to the culture of past. It is also a very happy occasion. We women have greater responsibilities towards our culture. I think it (tuloni biya) is a great way of telling our girls that they are now grown up. Moreover, parents have a fear that our girls might elope after*

*tuloni biya. To be able to marry off a girl properly is thing of great honour and respect. It is a big thing for the parents. But you never know about the future. So parents take the opportunity to celebrate beforehand through shanti biya... though in both of my daughters' tuloni biya I had prayed that I get to celebrate their bor biya (real marriage). I am thankful to God as I could fulfill that wish. Both my girls are happily married.*

(Bonti Kalita, 62, Sarthebari, in-depth interview, 02.08.2016)

When a girl attains puberty in a regular Assamese household, she is immediately sent to a seclusion of seven days. A makeshift bed is set up in a separate room. No one except the mother and a few close female relatives are allowed to enter this room during these seven days. Entry of any male member, even the father or male siblings is prohibited. The prohibition is not only in terms of physical meeting but also in terms of sound and light. No male voice should reach the girl and vice versa; she has to be kept away from sunlight. The girl has to go through two ritual baths in these seven days, the first bath on the fourth day of menarche and the second on the seventh day of menarche. The seventh day usually marks the end of the rites of passage, a series of puberty rituals that are carried on during the weeklong seclusion, and it culminates with a fictitious marriage ceremony of the girl. This marriage is called the tuloni biya.

Tuloni in Assamese means 'to carry up', and biya refers to 'marriage'; thus tuloni biya can literally be translated to 'a marriage which uplifts the girl'. The symbolism involved in this upliftment bears multiple connotations for the girl's understanding of her own life thereafter, and the term has been interpreted in multiple layers (Devi, 2014). Apart from the ritual upliftment, tuloni definitely implies a kind of 'social' upliftment for the adolescent girl. It signifies her first ritual initiation into a sexual being, her socially elevated status as a fertile, menstruating, hence sexually eligible female. It is interesting because this initiation also directly marks the girl's transition from a non-sexual being to someone who is made aware about her sexuality; but this awareness is more often of shame and subsequent guilt, and involves suppressing the sexuality she is becoming conscious of. Thus from the perspective of gender, the tuloni or social/ritual upliftment bears significance not because it elevates the girl's social status to a sexual and fertile being, but because it generates social situations which initiates the girl into a status of restraint, thus conditioning her to behave in particular ways.

### **Menarche: Pressure of Attaining Puberty**

For the Assamese, attaining puberty bears great significance, since it confirms that the girl is now a fertile female. The patriarchy in Assamese society is hegemonic and is almost always served with euphemism in everyday life of the members; perpetuating the patriarchy then becomes an implicit responsibility of the stakeholders, women being the most important carriers of the same. The implicit responsibility works as a form of guilt on the pre-pubescent girls. The confirmation of fertility thus comes as a relief to the girl herself. Reaching menarche becomes a passive pressure on the young girls, at multiple levels, and for multiple reasons. Togor (name changed), who had attained her menarche about a year ago, shared:

*I was late. All my friends and female cousins of (same) age have had their tuloni. I was the sakhi in my friend's biya before (my) tuloni. I also drank the water. They say you immediately have it (menarche) if you do so... yes, it is embarrassing, especially when you are publicly asked by the aunties when your biya (is) happening.*

(In-depth Interview, 30.07.2016)

If one or more peers have had their tuloni biya, then the pressure further increases. Though the nature of this pressure appears passive, it actually casts tremendous influence on the young girl's psyche; this pressure also continues to stay with her throughout her life as a woman. In a typical tuloni biya, the girls who are yet to receive their menarche are jokingly taunted by the elderly women and given ritual water from the biya. This is carried out as an attempt to make the girls menstruate at the earliest. The social importance bestowed upon the fertility of a female member becomes interesting here.

### **Puberty Rituals: The Stage of Liminality and Construction of the 'Feminine' Woman**

Using a functionalist view to explain the role of ritual and religious processes on the individual, Arnold van Gennep (2004) wrote about rites of passage to describe the transition of individuals from one social status to another. He termed this phase of transition as liminal phase. Initiation rites have particularly well-marked liminal periods, where neophytes typically are removed, secluded, darkened, hidden, without any social rank; in terms of social structures, neophytes are invisible.

They are neither here nor there, no longer a child, nor an adult. The ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed in a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualise social and cultural transitions (Turner, 1969).

The role of ritual practices in the creation of belonging is very significant (Douglas, 2002). Just like belief is a step beyond knowledge, belongingness is a step beyond mere membership. Human social interdependence requires that at least some of the memberships become solidified into something potent and secure- in other words, belonging. The best way to understand rituals' epistemic and integrative functioning is to begin with its most universal and salient aspect- its practices. The effects of rituals that generate belongingness are mostly found among rituals accompanying life transitions. Initiation ceremonies ensure that one's subjective sense of belonging change with objective membership, and that old bonds and identities are relaxed and new ones are forged; effortful nature of ritual practices is fundamental to the creation of belief and belonging. Ritual practices also construct the individual's perception of self, apart from affecting one's knowledge structure (ibid, 2002).

Assamese puberty rituals can be looked at as a rite of passage as it initiates the girl into the social group of fertile, sexually eligible women. However, a phenomenological perspective of the puberty rituals of the Assamese girl requires a critical analysis of the functionalist positivist understanding of these rituals as rites of passage as provided by Van Gennep (2004) and Victor Turner (1967). Similarly, while Douglas (2002) provides a functionalist understanding of ritual practices, he appears to ignore the latent and manifest control the individual experiences while carrying out the ritual practices.

As mentioned earlier, in most parts of the Assamese society the puberty rituals of an Assamese girl begin from the moment of her first bleeding. The girl informs the mother, or anyone of the elderly female relative, who immediately takes her to a corner of a room. The room has to be an isolated one with no sight of the sun and the moon, and men. She is then draped in a new/clean pair of hand-woven traditional Assamese dress called the *mekhela saador*; a makeshift bed is made on the floor in the corner of the room and she is made to sit on it. A few women, usually neighbours, gather in the room and collectively perform *uruli*, a ritual chant without words. After this the relatives approach the astrologer who then examines the time and stars under which the girl had attained menarche and prescribes appropriate rules and regulations to be followed by the girl for a period

of time. These rules are called *vidhana* and may last from a period of seven days to that of three months, depending on the prescription by the astrologer. For the first three days, the girl is allowed to eat only fruits. On the fourth day, as per the time prescribed by the priest, she is given a ritual bath by the women, mostly neighbors and relatives, with grinded cereals and mustard oil. The old clothes are changed and new mekhela saador is draped. All other clothes used by the girl are also replaced by new ones. The girl is made to sit on the newly made bed along with a few other young girls, and all of them are fed fruits, cereals, milk, roasted grinded rice, etc. The womenfolk too are offered food, and blessings are sought before they leave. From the fourth day onwards, the girl is made to eat only fruits during the day, fast through the evening and eat *siddha bhaat* (boiled rice with sea salt and cow ghee) at night as prescribed by the priest. From the same day, the girl is given separate utensils to prepare her own food until her *vidhana* ends. The mother and other relatives see to it that the utensils and clothes used by the girl for the seven days of rituals are in good shape, preferably new. In most cases, the girl is either fed on banana leaves or on stone utensils; this is done with the hope that the girl develops a moral character as strong and firm as stone. In the early morning of the seventh day, the girl is given a ritual bath. The water used for the bath has to be brought by the womenfolk from a nearby water source. An elephant ears plant and a young banana tree are planted in the place of bath. The banana tree symbolises the girl's husband and the smaller plant symbolises a son, and the girl bows and prays before both the plants after the ritual bath; the bowing and the prayer of the girl signify her seeking for a husband and a son and offering her youth for their good.

The enactment of the entire ceremony of *tuloni biya* is accompanied by a mixture of folk and ritual songs portraying the life journey of an adult, eligible woman. From extracting water from nearby water source to the ritual bathing and prayer to the dressing of the bride, these songs describe the cultural significance of *tuloni biya* in explicit details. These folk songs which are exclusively sung by womenfolk are popularly called *biya naam* (wedding songs).

### **Representation of the 'Assamese' Woman in Biya Naam: Portrayal and Appropriation of Gender**

The universe of humans is hugely symbolic and not merely physical. The web of diverse human experience is usually knit through various symbols, which in turn addresses culture. Language usually plays a significant medium of this symbolic

universe. Language then also becomes a carrier of culture, and the use of language in imposing meaning to a particular experience becomes a way of asserting culture. Biya naam or wedding songs are folk songs sung by women throughout the ceremony of an Assamese marriage (Devi, 2014); tuloni biya is a symbolic wedding ceremony of the girl attaining puberty, and biya naam is thus an integral part of this fictitious yet significant arrangement of marriage.

The biya naam is a way of depicting the importance and significance of each ritual action through performativity. These ceremonial songs are instrumental in portraying the social significance of attaining puberty and henceforth, of being a woman. An analysis of the biya naam sung in tuloni biya presents one with a deeply rooted patriarchal structure of the Assamese society. However, biya naam also becomes an interesting and a very significant element in the understanding of the experience of menstruation, not because these songs depict the existing culture around menarche celebration, but because the content of these songs point towards a way in which women understand their own experience of menarche in particular and menstruation in general. A subtle yet distinct existence of subversion that is evident in these folk songs becomes important in analysing women's perception of their own lives, in terms of how they see themselves in a societal structure that is otherwise deeply patriarchal in nature. This perception cannot be observed as a resistance to the existing structure, but has to be understood as a consciousness among the women, of the patriarchy at work.

A few examples of the various biya naam are given below:

On spotting the first menstrual blood:

*O dear,  
Your friends are now left behind  
You reached this stage this young O dear,  
you're in deep trouble now  
All these seven days our dear has been in trouble  
But now she is out and we're here for her  
Our dear is so young and she has reached youth already  
Wouldn't it be wise to think of her marriage now?*

On purification bath:

*Our dear is so young and she has reached youth already  
It wouldn't be wise to keep her for long.*

On femininity and fertility:

*O dear your fingers are like flowers  
And your eyes, stars of heaven  
O dear now that you are ready  
We pray to God with all our heart  
That he graces you with a groom like lord Ram who will get for  
our dear, delicious fruits  
Who will get for our dear, sweets  
O lord who will get for our dear,  
Aniruddha Konwar from the heavenly city of Dwarka*

Puberty and the rituals through which it gets manifested thus also directly impact the construction of sexuality of the Assamese girl. As described earlier, shame is a very necessary ingredient in the construction of the sexual woman. It is a kind of necessary shame as menstruation indicates fertility, but an overt display of this fertility becomes embarrassing. The complexity of this dual existence complicates the woman's understanding of her own sexual self, leading mostly to passiveness. Baishya (2015) writes that in the larger established cultural knowledge of Assamese society, the social attitude towards sexuality is discriminating against women. He states that the sexuality of the Assamese woman is to be understood as a 'chained sexuality'. Sexual freedom of men is taken as given, whereas that of the women is limited to marriage. Adultery by men is considered a natural flaw that can be ignored by social sanctions; adultery by a woman is however unacceptable. The woman is expected to suppress her sexuality and her sexual desires until she finds her husband, the right, suitable and able man.

The 'ideal' Assamese woman is a beautiful, educated, humble young woman who is honest and holds a firm moral character and who is also an expert in managing a home. The social processes that lead to the construction of this package of femininity and womanhood have to be seen in the light of women's own understanding of this construction and in terms of interpersonal relations that get formed everyday throughout her life, the strategies and negotiations through which she exercises her individual agency, in family and in marriage, at home and at work, and how power operates in all of these relations and what role age plays in such operations. The construction of this femininity has to be understood also in terms of her perception of her own sexuality and the experience of sexuality and sexual decision-making in her everyday life. The stress on female sexuality

and reproduction are part of the requirements of patrilineal systems, and the particular way in which they are expressed in the Indian context have to do with the ideology and language of caste. The ideology of motherhood as developed in patrilineal systems subsumes the category of woman in that of a mother, and sublimates the erotic (Ganesh, 1990), basically purifying sexuality towards the utility of fertility, i.e., motherhood.

### **Menstruation as a lived experience**

Drawing from Simone de Beauvoir's famous argument 'one is not born, but, rather becomes a woman', Judith Butler writes about how gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realising possibilities, or as a process of interpreting the body, thereby giving it a cultural form. For Butler, it is in this sense that to be a woman is to become a woman, and not merely a matter of adhering to a fixed ontological status in which one could be born a woman. Becoming a woman is rather an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting the received cultural possibilities (Butler, 1986).

In the Assamese context, becoming a woman has a lot to do with the socialisation that works together with gender norms to create the feminine woman. A feminist understanding of menstruation as an everyday social experience of women thus has to be seen in the light of the socialisation of the girl, and as the process which goes on to shape the perception of her own self as an adhering, normative, heterosexual, feminine woman. Norms, values and cultural beliefs transform into inner reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of the women in ways which the specific feminine identity that gets constructed through internalisations seems natural to her. The identity that gets constructed by socialisation in early life gets repeated and reinforced in the further life experiences of the women. This constructed identity also impacts and gets impacted upon by the social, interpersonal and intimate relations that constitute the woman's life. This identity, thus, is not a passive construct of socialisation; rather it has to be seen as an active contributor in the formation of further identities of the woman, while constantly interpreting and reinterpreting and reinforcing itself in the woman's life.

If one analyses the experience of menstruation from a feminist perspective, it can be understood that the internalisation of feminine identity with respect to menstruation gets exercised in ways that women themselves become the agents of a patriarchal structure. Almost all the actors are women, and the cycle of

discrimination and violence expresses itself where these women themselves are the central characters, carrying out enactment of taboos and prescriptions in their own lives and in their intimate and social relationships. Strategic absence and convenient distancing of men from the social enactments of menstrual experience of women points towards an interesting realisation – the nature of installation of patriarchal structure in the women's lives makes it appear that the patriarchy that gets perpetuated in the everyday experiences of women has women as the central perpetrators, instead of men. The lived experience of menstruation among the Assamese women comprises of many such instances of participation within this strategic installation of a patriarchal structure.

In a social environment that operates through normative heteronormativity, the centrality of marriage and childbearing in women's sense of identity and personhood work in a way that is perceived as women's destiny. Hindu texts and rituals glorify marriage and motherhood, and most of the times it is observed that this glorification gets translated into the woman's own idea of her perception of the 'ideal' femininity. The women failing to bear children thus become a source of shame. This social importance given to fertility and a subsumed sexuality expressible only through marriage finds expressions in the experiences of menstruation of the Assamese women. For instance, Ms. Paahi, a respondent shared:

*I had irregular periods since my girlhood. I have always suffered from malnutrition. My menarche was very late. I remember everyone saying the pale flower had finally bloomed. After marriage I did not have a child for 4 years. My husband and in-laws were worried that I would not be able to bear any. I badly wanted to become a mother. Everyone was happily shocked when I gave birth to a son. But it was both happiness and relief for me.*

(In-depth interview, 15.07.2016)

Women's sexuality is affected by the socialisation into female sex roles and the subordinate status attached to it (Miller & Fowlkes, 1980). Sexual autonomy can be said to be intrinsically related to social, economic and political autonomy. This autonomy has historically been readily available to men as a result of the unequal distribution of the available resources, both physical and social. The attempt here was to understand how sexuality is perceived and exercised in the everyday life of women with respect to their experience of menstruation. Looking through the lens

of the mundane, sexuality is treated as a very sensitive, intimate and covert relationship of the Assamese woman with herself. Most often than not, discussion around sexuality in a social group or setting is euphemised with words that imply romantic love. Sexuality is thus expressed through the symbolisms of everyday life. However, realisation of being a sexual individual first comes to the woman through her first encounter with menstruation. However, what one finds is that the realisation of sexuality has more to do with the social sexual than the biological sexual, and it also comes across as an important reality about the socialisation of the Assamese girl. The following excerpts from some of the interviews illustrate this point:

*My friends had discussed now we could get married to boys. I remember I first got to know from them only that we all could get pregnant now. It was so scary. I was scared to be near boys. I wanted to tell my mother about this but did not know how to say. I now know it was stupid. But I obviously did not want to get pregnant then. I was very scared.*

(Nihali, 25, in-depth interview, 16.06.2016)

*I had felt like a real bride. I was dressed like a bride. Everyone was saying that I had grown up and I should behave properly from now onwards. I remember everyone giving me blessings and praying that I get a good groom soon. They brought me a lot of gifts too. It was awkward. I remember having some strange feelings inside. There was shame. My relatives had asked me to mingle less with boys. I told them I had male friends in school and in tuition. They said it cannot be the same anymore. Maybe it was actually not the same. I myself had felt very different after coming out after seven days. Everybody knew that I had tuloni. My friends had later teased me. I have a lot of male friends now. But I was so ashamed then.*

(Rimli, 28, in-depth interview, 30.07.2016)

What is evident is that the first encounter of the women with the idea of sexuality vis-à-vis menstrual experience is layered with the feelings of fear, confusion, awkwardness and shame about one's own body. It is also because 'growing up' of the woman is always seen primarily in relation to or as a pre-event of a greater event of her getting married to a man. The constant reminder of being 'ready' for

someone else, someone superior can be seen as creating pressure on the girl's perception of her 'self', thus confusing her perception of her own sexuality. The first memory of the social encounter of the woman with her own sexuality being that of fear, shame and confusion of the newly achieved sexual status, thus negatively impacts her ability of sexual decision-making.

Another important factor that influences the menstrual experiences of Assamese women is age. The social position of the Assamese women has much to do with her social as well as her biological ageing. While biological ageing implies the natural ageing process of the woman with time, social ageing can be understood as the elevated social status of the woman, which again has to be seen in terms of her changing relations at home. Transition from being a maiden to being a wife, and that from being simply married to being a mother and so on leads to changes in the everyday menstrual experiences of the women. What has been observed is that the strictness of menstrual prescriptions and taboos get diluted on many occasions for the married woman as compared to the unmarried ones. This further loosens when one experiences motherhood. The relation of changing social status to the changing experiences of taboos speaks something interesting about the nature of individual agency of women in patriarchal structures – that agency of the woman in her everyday has to be understood in terms of her interpersonal and intimate relations – that the status of being married, the ability to bear children then make ways for elevated social positions for the women.

The factor that becomes extremely relevant when analysing the loosening of taboos with respect to ageing is sexuality. For the Assamese woman, a decreasing sexuality works as a factor of decreasing taboos. The pressure of menstrual taboos decreases with increasing age and decreasing sexuality of the women. These taboos finally come to an end with the woman attaining menopause. Menopause in this sense can be seen as a way of accessing power, as decreasing sexuality with age enables increasing power. Thus, in terms of menstrual experience, sexuality is inversely proportional to access to power. Increase in age also leads to change in performative practices of gender. There is a kind of social exposure that builds for the ageing/menopausal women which facilitates greater networking, enabling them to socialise more. Attached to it is a sense of permanent purity which derives from permanent infertility. This idea of permanent purity deriving from permanent infertility again points towards a complex nature of the perception of infertility among the Assamese society. What is infertile is pure, but it is only the infertility that is induced by ageing and menopause that qualifies for

a status of purity. Infertility at young age, i.e. inability to menstruate at all, puts the woman at the lowest step in the ladder of hierarchy of all social relations. Menopause provides women with a social identity that is pure and is devoid of any 'dirt'. It also enables her to access spaces that had otherwise been inaccessible to her, thus enabling her to climb the social ladder and placing her higher in the hierarchy of the social relations that surrounds her everyday life.

### **Conclusion**

The primary aim of this research was to look at menstruation as a lived experience, to document the narratives of how the 'ideal' feminine woman is constructed through a series of taboos and performative practices, and how the everyday experiences of menstruation contribute towards the construction of gender. Butler (1986) writes that to be a gender is to be in an ongoing cultural interpretation of the bodies, and hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities. Drawing from this understanding of gender, I have used empirical data and existing narratives around menstruation in Assam to analyse how the representations, contestations and contradictions in the construction of gender in turn shape the everyday experience of the women's lives. Socialisation and internalisation of bodily and sexual identity influence everyday experiences of the menstruation and bodily changes in terms of age shape menstrual experiences of the women. However, by using individual agency in strategising and negotiating around taboos and prescriptions on menstruation that limit their mobility, interpersonal relations and social interactions, women constantly construct their everyday reality. The important aspect to remember in such an understanding of agency is that it is the mundaneness attached to the entire process that creates spaces for negotiations within the structure. The everyday experiences of menstruation contribute towards formations, contestations and reinforcement of a feminine identity; it can be seen that bargaining with these taboos and prescriptions by being within the heteronormative social order puts the women in a position of convenience rather than directly challenging normativity.

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**Research in Progress: Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur**

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## Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur

--- Rambooshan Tiwari

### *Abstract*

Crime is a social problem that disturbs peace and tranquility. It is generally assumed that urban areas are more prone to crime in comparison to their rural counterparts. Rapid urbanisation and complexities in an urban system brought crime into the central stage of contemporary urban studies. Like many cities of developing countries, Indian cities, especially metropolitan cities, are characterised by higher incidents of crime. The nature and rate of crime and its severity also varies across the metropolitan cities. Jabalpur city, one of the most prominent urban centers of Central India, has higher incidents of crime and is ranked higher in criminality. Apart from other cognisable crimes, crime against women is particularly high in the city. The focal theme of the paper is to describe the trends of crime with special focus on severe crime and crime against women in the Jabalpur city. Probable reasons for higher crime rates and possible surveillance strategies to combat crime would also be discussed in the paper.

*Key words: Crime, Cognisable Crime, Crime against Women, Severe Crime, Surveillance*

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### **Introduction**

The city is the point of maximum concentration of power and culture of a community (Mumford, 1961). It is also believed that urban centers are the largest concentration of different kinds of environment and social pollution. Increasing crime is one the most crucial social pollution that dominates the urban scenario worldwide. There is no uniform definition of crime. Crime can be described as violation of legal codes, but this does not undermine the fact that legal codes themselves are culturally, geographically specific. What is considered to be criminal varies across cultures, geographical locations and the period of history.

The main theoretical theme argues that criminal events can be understood in the context of people's movements in the course of everyday lives, offenders commit

offenses near places they spend most of their time, and victims are victimised near places where they spend most of their time. This line of theory also argues that location of crimes is determined through a premeditated decision process of the offenders shaped by perceptions of environment that separate good criminal opportunities from bad risks; targets located along highly accessible street networks attract crime (Brantingham, Glasser, Singh & Vajihollahi, 2005).

The *Dictionary of Human Geography* argues that geography of crime is the study of the spatial arrangement of criminals and crime. The geographical study of crime seeks to explain the spatial clustering of criminal behavior; consider how the construction and monitoring of space might reduce the incidence of criminality. Like many other social phenomena, criminal behavior is unevenly distributed (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009, p. 120). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the geography of crime became more focused on urban areas when an urban ecologist at the University of Chicago related the home addresses of delinquents with characteristics of urban neighborhoods thought to spawn delinquency. The spatial pattern that they discovered is termed the urban crime gradient, which is the tendency for the number of criminals living in a neighborhood defined with distance from the center of the city (Rengert, 2006). Much work in geography attempts to account for this variation, typically by elaborating the demographic characteristics and common social patterns in places where crime is concentrated (Smith, 1986).

A related, and highly popular, criminology of place concentrates on the alleged effects of so-called 'broken windows' as incubators of crime. Places where broken windows are not fixed signify a lack of informal social control that invites the criminally minded into their midst (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). In later 20<sup>th</sup> century commentators have focused on the role of crime, and fear of crime appears to have played increasingly in the role of surveillance, policing and security within the highly sanitised and standard urban space of shopping malls, retail parks and leisure spaces of the contemporary urban environment. Such development appears to demonstrate the close interplay between individual and collective concern about personal safety and security (Caves, 2005).

Indian cities present a wide range of diversity in their socio-economic structure. This diverse nature has generated the diversity in the incidents of crime and crime pattern across the country. National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) published the crime data reported throughout the country. Metropolitan cities have significant

contribution in the total crime rate of their respective states. The detail of crime in metropolitan cities has been published by NCRB for the better understanding of the crime pattern across the cities in the country.

Jabalpur city is one of the prominent urban centres of central India characterised by the higher concentration of criminal activities. It is believed that the city and its surrounding areas historically was a hub of criminal activities. In modern times also the city has recorded relatively higher concentration of criminal activities and is among the high crime prone cities of the country. As per the 2011 Census, the city with 1.27 million inhabitants shares only 0.79 percent burden of the Indian metropolitan population, while 1.37 percent of criminal incident (violation of different sections of the IPC) of all metropolitan cities was recorded here during 2015. Due to a disproportionate share of crime the city ranked 10<sup>th</sup> (on the basis of crime rate) in criminality.

The paper intends to discuss several aspects related to crimes in the city through the following objectives: to analyse the recent crime trends in the city; to describe the incident of severe crime and crime against the women in the city; to identify the probable causes behind the higher rate of crime activities.

### **Sources of Data**

This study is mainly based on the data published by the NCRB during different years. The data on various crimes is taken from the NCRB publication *Crime in India, 2014, Statistics* and *Crime in India, 2015, Statistics*. For trends of crime in the city, the NCRB report 'Crimes in India, Statistics' from 2010 to 2015 is also used in the study.

The population data used for the calculation of different rates has been taken from census data of 2001 and 2011. Other data used for the analysis has been taken from the city development plan published in 2006 for the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewable Mission. Census data of 2001 and 2011 are also taken into consideration during the analysis.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Data provided by NCRB carry a wide range of criminal activities that have happened during previous years. Unfortunately, spatial attributes of these data are

not readily available and that hinders the geographical analysis of data. A comprehensive data is required for the spatial analysis of crime in the city.

The definition and understanding of crime may vary over the states in India so the violation of Special and Local Laws (SLL) is not considered for the analysis. The analysis of crime made in the paper is only based on violation of different sections of the Indian Panel Code (IPC).

The data on crime is acquired from the NCRB publication *Crime in India, 2015, Statistics* and *Crime in India, 2016, Statistics*. The population data used for the calculation of different rates has been taken from census data of 2011. The extrapolation of population data for the calculation of crime rate is not used to avoid errors related to extrapolations. The actual crime rate may be low if extrapolated data is used in the analysis but to keep the analysis simple the extrapolation is avoided.

### Crime Rates and Rank in Criminality

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 2010 the city has reported 6205 incidences of violation of IPC (NCRB, 2011). The city is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the 35 metropolitan cities in violation of IPC with a rate of 555.50 per lakh population. Table 1 indicates that the rank of the city remained consistently high during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Table 1**  
*Incidents and Rate of Total Cognizable Crimes (IPC) in Jabalpur City*

Sl.	Year	Incidents of Crime	Population (in Lakh)	Rate (I/P)	Rank on Criminality
1	2010	6205	11.17	555.5	7 <sup>th</sup>
2	2011	6560	12.68	517.4	9 <sup>th</sup>
3	2012	7217	12.68	568.8	9 <sup>th</sup>
4	2013	6996	12.68	551.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
5	2014	8377	12.68	660.6	12 <sup>th</sup>
6	2015	9253	12.68	729.7	10 <sup>th</sup>

Source: NCRB, 2011 to 2016

Incidents of crime have increased from 6205 in 2010 to 9253 in 2015, which means an increase of about 50 percent (base year 2010) in the total incidents of crime within the period of five years. Table 1 suggesting that during the period of one year the incidents of cognizable crimes have increased 10.45 percent (base year 2014) while the incidence rate has increased from 660.6 to 729.7 during the same period. It is a clear indication that the trend of increase in crime is continuing in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The annexation of peripheral areas in the city boundary is the most probable reason behind the sharp increase in the number of crimes. Apart from the increase in incidents of crime, a rapid growth in the rate of crime is also a serious issue for the society as well as the concerned city authorities.

According to NCRB, the city is ranked on 10<sup>th</sup> position among the 53 metropolitan cities listed in 2011 census (Table 2). One fact should be mentioned here is that Kollam, Jodhpur and Gwalior are the new entries in the list of metropolitan cities. They achieved the metropolitan status first time in the 2011 census. Without consideration of these three cities the relative position of the city would have been same as it was in 2010.

**Table 2**  
*Top Ten Cities in Rank of Criminality in Violation of IPC*

<b>Rank in Criminality</b>	<b>Name of City</b>	<b>No. of Incidents</b>	<b>Population (in Lakh)</b>	<b>Rate (I/P)</b>
1	Kollam	13257	11.1	1194
2	Delhi (City)	173947	163.1	1066
3	Jodhpur	11822	11.4	1038
4	Thiruvananthapuram	15415	16.9	913
5	Jaipur	26288	30.7	855
6	Indore	18463	21.3	852
7	Patna	16871	20.5	824
8	Bhopal	14857	18.8	789
9	Gwalior	8531	11.0	774
10	Jabalpur	9253	12.7	730

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, Statistics, 2016

One more important fact that should be taken into consideration is that all the four metropolitan cities of Madhya Pradesh are ranked very high in the crime rate (Table 2). Jabalpur ranks lowest among them. The higher rate of crime in the metropolitan cities of the state is the main reason behind the higher position of the state in the overall crime incidence (Tiwari, 2018). With 268,614 incidents of violation of IPC in 2015 the state ranked second in the total incidents of crime (followed by Maharashtra) as well as in crime rate (followed by Kerala).

### Incidents of Serious Crime

There is a general consciousness that a crime is a crime, and there should be no discrimination between a minor crime and a serious crime. A serious (violent) crime creates an irreversible loss to the victim. Sometimes, the nature of incidence creates a greater public consciousness and mass mobilisation against the criminals. For instance, on December 16, 2012 the nation witnessed the massive protest and demonstration wherein thousands of people without any barriers of caste, religion and class came out on the streets of Delhi and demanded justice for the victim (Nirbhaya) of gang rape that forced the government to change the law. Since then the public perception towards gang rape victims has changed a lot. Study of serious crimes will be helpful to understand the situation of law and order (how safe we are?) in the city. Table 3 presents the details of selected serious crime occurred during 2014 and 2015.

**Table 3**  
*Incidences of Serious Crime in Jabalpur City (2014 and 2015)*

Type of Crime	2014				2015			
	No. of Incidents	Rate (I/P)	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**	No. of Incidents	Rate (I/P)	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**
<b>Murder</b>	57	4.5	2.2	4 <sup>th</sup>	41	3.2	2.1	12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Attempt to Murder</b>	93	7.3	2.9	7 <sup>th</sup>	114	5.5	2.9	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rape</b>	113	18.7	7.5	5 <sup>th</sup>	83	6.5	3.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Kidnapping and Abduction</b>	359	28.3	9.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>	363	28.6	12.1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Riots</b>	43	3.4	3.7	15 <sup>th</sup>	64	5.0	3.9	16 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, Compendium, 2015 & 2016

\* Average rate for all 53 metropolitan cities.

\*\* Showing rank among the 53 metropolitan cities in the particular crime.

Taking the life of someone (murder) is the most serious offence against humanity. The city placed 4<sup>th</sup> position in terms of violation of section 302 of the IPC (murder) in 2014. Fortunately, the rate has declined from 4.2 to 3.2 in 2015. Due to sharp decline in the rate of murder, the rank of the city has also gone down to 12<sup>th</sup> position in 2015. Similarly, the rank of city in terms of attempt to murder has also declined from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> position.

Similarly, in terms of kidnapping and abduction (violation of Sec.363-369,371-373 IPC), the city ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> just behind Delhi and Patna. The rate slightly increased during the year, while the ranking remained constant. In terms of cases of riot, the city ranked 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> during the successive years of 2014 and 2015 respectively. Fortunately, no riots have been reported as communal riots during the same period. Similarly, cases of political and agrarian riots have not been reported in these two years.

### **Crime against Women**

Crime against women is a sensitive index to measure crime in any society. Gender biases in the treatment in public and personal sphere as well as male domination in the society makes them more crime prone than their male counterparts. Table 4 presents the incidence of crime against women in the city.

In spite of multiple technology driven changes in the social system during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in the traditional thinking towards marriage is still prevalent to some extent in the all parts of the country. Dowry is the worst social problem prevalent in our society and dowry deaths are still a bitter truth of 21<sup>st</sup> century India. Even the metropolitan cities have registered 749 and 689 deaths due to dowry during 2014 and 2015 respectively. The Jabalpur city contributes more than five percent of dowry deaths of the metropolitan India and ranked very high at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> position during 2014 and 2015 respectively. The city ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of rape cases in 2014 that has declined to the 10<sup>th</sup> place in the very next year due to a very sharp decline in the rate (6.5 per lakh). This sharp decline in rape incidents is a positive sign of improvement in law and order. For the better understanding at research level the phenomenon needs a more detailed investigation.

**Table 4**  
*Incidences of Crime against Women in Jabalpur City (2014 and 2015)*

Type of Crime	2014				2015			
	No. of Incidents	Rate	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**	No. of Incidents	Rate	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**
<b>Dowry Deaths</b>	17	2.8	1.0	7 <sup>th</sup>	13	1.0	0.4	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rape</b>	113	18.7	7.5	5 <sup>th</sup>	83	6.5	3.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Assault</b>	221	36.6	18.6	7 <sup>th</sup>	194	15.3	9.6	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Sexual Harassment</b>	-	-	-	-	63	5.3	3.1	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Stalking</b>	-	-	-	-	41	4.3	1.4	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Insult to Modesty of Women</b>	31	5.1	3.8	6 <sup>th</sup>	19	1.5	1.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Deaths due to Negligence</b>	145	11.4	8.7	18 <sup>th</sup>	242	19.1	9.0	5 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, 2015 & 2016

\* Average rate for all 53 metropolitan cities.

\*\* Showing rank among the 53 metropolitan cities in the particular crime.

Assault, sexual harassment, eve teasing, molestation and stalking are very common crimes women face during their daily life courses in Indian cities. Most of these cases may not even get reported to police due to the inherent complexities of our criminal justice system. As per the reported cases Jabalpur city ranked very high in such crimes against women (Table 4) during 2014 and 2015.

The death of women due to negligence of relatives is very common in our society. It may take several forms such as persistent negligence during illness or higher maternal mortality due to negligence, but they rarely reported a crime under IPC. As per the reported cases, rash driving is the most common reason behind women's deaths due to negligence. In other words, women become victim of rash driving by their male counterparts (most of the time). Unfortunately, both the rate and rank of these incidents has increased very sharply. More precisely the number of deaths of women due to rash driving increased from 145 in 2014 to 242 in 2015.

### Reasons behind High Crime Rates

The data regarding crime incidents are readily available and it is evident from the data that the city has a disproportionate share in terms of criminal activities. In terms of population size the city ranked 40<sup>th</sup> while it ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in terms of violation of IPC. The rank of the city is equally higher in terms of serious (violent) crime and crime against women. Searching reasons for readily available data is a difficult task that needs to be accomplished. The probable reasons behind the higher crime rates are as follows:

- a. The city has harsh distributaries distributional inequalities. As per the 2011 census, more than a quarter of the city population is living in slum areas. Apart from that, as per the 2001 census, 59 out of 60 wards have reported slum population. The figure clearly suggests that the city has a higher percent of residents living in distress without any marked territorial division. Slums are easily evident in posh areas such as Civil Lines and Napier Town also.
- b. Crimes against women are very high in the city. Data suggests that most of the big cities are more prone to crime against women, and it is surprising that in spite of its relatively smaller size, the city is facing higher incidents of crime against women. Even the city like Kollam which has the highest rate of crime has relatively low rates of crimes against women.
- c. Detailed analysis of crime data of various years across the cities may provide one clue that apart from larger metropolitan cities (mega cities) only few small cities have higher rates of crime against women. Most of these cities are neo educational/commercial hub of central and north India. These cities, like Kota, Patna, Bhopal, Jabalpur and Raipur have accommodated a large number of students including female students. These students sometimes become easy victims of crime due to inexperience of the city environment or working in an urban milieu.
- d. Geographical factors, especially arrangement of streets and roads in the city, may enhance the probability of crime in various locations. Hills and water bodies are the feature characteristics of the urban milieu of the city. These two are the most crucial hindrance in the formation of desired network of road at all places and on the other hand, they increase the density of roads and street in other places. The higher density of streets and roads makes the surveillance tough and provides secret non-specified routes for the criminals.

- e. The location of too many educational institutions in the peripheral and relatively sparsely populated areas may enhance the crime against women, especially those who are studying there and arriving from distant rural areas. Sometime the commuters are prime targets of anti-social youth active in these areas.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of violation of IPC in the Jabalpur city suggests that the city is victim to excess rate of crime and possesses higher rank in criminality. Apart from the consistent trends of higher crime rates, the rate of serious (violent crime) and crime against women are also very high. There are certain geographical factors that may enhance the probability of crime in certain locations and against certain groups such as women. Therefore, a detailed micro level research and planning based on research is required to identify the centres of crime in the city. An advance surveillance system is also required to ensure a peaceful urban environment.

It is also worth mentioning that the urban social problems such as crime may not get the desired attention in policy making and planning due to many reasons, including lack of awareness or lack of sensitivity towards these issues. Unfortunately, the planning and insight to combat the crime is completely missing in the development strategies. For instance, the ambitious, Smart City project was started with the objective to improve quality of life in selected cities including Jabalpur. The project proposal of Jabalpur Smart City Mission does not even mention the term crime, which raises a big question on the efficiency of policy measures to tackle crime. It must be acknowledged by the authorities that a safe city is not a demand, it is a right of every citizen residing in the city. Therefore, a more focused attempt to combat crime in the city is required to make the city safe and sustainable.

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**Appendix I***Violation of IPC Sections under different Criminal Activities*

<b>Name of Criminal Activity</b>	<b>Violation of IPC</b>
<b>Murder</b>	Sec. 302 IPC
<b>Attempt to Murder</b>	Sec. 307 IPC
<b>Rape</b>	Sec. 376 IPC
<b>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</b>	Sec. 363-369, 371-373 IPC
<b>Dacoity</b>	Sec. 395-398 IPC
<b>Robbery</b>	Sec. 392-394, 397, 398 IPC
<b>Theft</b>	Sec.379-382 IPC
<b>Riots</b>	Sec.143-145,147-151, 153, 153A, 153B, 157, 158, 160 IPC
<b>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</b>	Sec.363-369, 371-373 IPC
<b>Dowry Deaths</b>	Sec.304B IPC
<b>Cruelty by Husband and Relatives</b>	Sec.498A IPC
<b>Molestation</b>	Sec.354 IPC
<b>Sexual Harassment (Eve-Teasing)</b>	Sec.509 IPC

Compiled from NCRB, 2010

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## **E-journal of the Indian Sociological Society (ISS)**

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### **Vision**

Sociology as a discipline, like other social sciences, is passing through a transition. The developments in the contemporary world have opened up new areas of enquiry expanding the traditional frontiers of the discipline. Many sociologists are engaged in these new and emerging areas of study which is often informed by a multidisciplinary approach. Sociologists in India are also in increasing numbers engaged in such research (in areas which includes environment, minority rights, gender studies, sexuality studies, etc. to name a few). However, they have an additional challenge posed by the need to integrate the enormous regional, social and cultural multiplicities of India into the Indian sociological canvas. These diversities, especially those of the socially marginal and geographically peripheral societies, have remained somewhat out of the radar of Indian sociology. However, emerging discourses on caste, tribe, ethnicity, religion, region, nation and nation building in contemporary India have created new consciousness and imperatives to integrate the marginal regions and societies into the broad canvas of India Sociology. The journal is sensitive to such discourses and it aims to encourage scholarly publications focused on such identities and regions. While the major focus of the journal is societies, histories and cultures of India, it also welcomes publications of comparative studies with other countries as well as on societies and cultures of South Asia.

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- Single quotes should be used throughout. Double quote marks are to be used within single quotes. Spellings of words in quotations should not be changed. Quotations of words or more should be separated from the text.
- Notes should be numbered serially and presented at the end of the article. Notes must contain more than a mere reference.
- Use 'per cent' instead of % in the text. In tables, graphs etc, % can be used. Use '20th century', '1990s'.
- We do not encourage frequent use of capital letters. They should be used selectively and consistently. Only the first word of title and subtitle should start with capitals. Although proper names are capitalised, many words derived from or associated with proper names, as well as the names of significant offices are lowercased. While the names of ethnic, religious and national groups are capitalised (*the Muslims, the Gorkhas, the Germans*), designations based loosely on colour (*black people*) and terms denoting socio-economic classes or groups (*the middle class, the dalits, the adivasis, the african-american*) are lowercased. All caste, tribe and community names (*the Santhals, the Jatavs*) are to be capitalised but generic terms (*the kayasthas*) are to be lower cased. Civil, military, religious, and professional titles (*the president*) and institutions (*the parliament, the united nations*) are to be put in lower case, but names of organisations (*the Labour Party, the Students Federation of India*) are to be capitalised. The names of political tendencies (*the marxists, the socialists*) should remain in lower case.
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## From the Editor

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present the fifth issue of *Explorations*. I am also happy to announce that *Explorations* has been now included in the University Grants Commission-Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE) list of journals. The present issue consists of four papers published under the 'Articles' category and one paper under the 'Research in Progress' category.

The first article, titled *Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework*, by Sonal Pandey is based on a systematic review of the existing literature. It suggests a conceptual framework delineating the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in India. It emphasises the training of professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people to identify children at risk and situations of child abuse as well as providing trauma-informed care to parents and children in preventing and treating child sexual abuse.

In the next article titled *Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective*, A.K. Nongkynrih maintains that tourism provides the ground for social interactions between social actors, that is, the host and the visitors. It is at one level a social interaction and social relationship based on rational exchange of money and service, and on the other, meeting of diverse cultures. Arguing that the sustainability of the local ecosystem and culture must not be sacrificed while promoting tourism, the paper examines as to what extent sustainable tourism is a part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework.

The following article by Randhir Gogoi and Barnali Sarma, titled *Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-Reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India*, seeks to understand movement organisation and mobilisation by moving beyond addressing them as resultants of structural phenomenon like migration or ethnicity. The author believes that socio-political movements are also effected by discourses and they operate using narratives provided by researches, memoirs, stories, etc. The article goes beyond identity-centric movements and brings into focus new movements organised around issues of human rights violation and development induced displacement.

The last article, *Tuloni: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society*, by Maitrayee Patar examines the different constructions around menstruation among Assamese women in terms of menstrual rituals, taboos and prescriptions and lived experiences. It attempts to explore the negotiations that take place around menstrual taboos in the everyday life of the menstruating women and the complex role that individual agency plays in pushing the boundaries of these taboos.

The paper under Research in Progress titled *Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur* by Rambooshan Tiwari demonstrates the trends of crime in metropolitan cities with special focus on severe crime and crime against women in the Jabalpur city of central India. It seeks to understand the probable reasons for the higher crime rates and possible surveillance strategies to combat crime in major urban centres, which the author feels do not get the desired attention in policy making and planning.

*Explorations* invites your contributions for future issues of the journal. We will appreciate your feedback or suggestions on the journal.

**Chandan Kumar Sharma**

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April 2019

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**Article: Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework**

**Author(s): Sonal Pandey**

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## Risk Factors, Outcomes, and Protective Factors of Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Conceptual Framework

--- Sonal Pandey

### *Abstract*

Until recently academic research in India had been primarily preoccupied with crimes against females in the reproductive age, such as rape or sex trafficking, downplaying the sexual abuse of boys and girls of pre-pubertal age or teenagers. However, of late Child Sexual Abuse is also being recognised and reported as a criminal justice issue and an increasing number of such incidents are being published in the country. Based on a systematic review of the existing literature, this article suggests a conceptual framework delineating the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in India. The paper concludes with implications for policy and research.

*Key words: Child Sexual abuse, Disclosure, Perpetrator characteristics, Systematic review, India*

---

### **Introduction**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is one of the most common yet underreported forms of violence against children prevalent across the globe (Pellai & Caranzano, 2015). In the year 2009, Pereda, Guilera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, conducted a worldwide study among the students and community to find the prevalence of child sexual abuse. The analysis of the available data from 22 countries revealed that CSA is a serious problem worldwide. The retrospective data suggested that almost 7.9 percent of men and 19.7 percent of women have suffered some form of sexual abuse before the age of eighteen. Widely underreported, the phenomenon of CSA has global prevalence irrespective of socioeconomic diversity amongst different nations. Millions of children are subject to varying forms of sexual abuse every year without coming into the preview of the criminal justice system. Until recently academic research had been preoccupied with crime against females in the reproductive age (mainly rape or prostitution), negating the sexual abuse of boys and girls of pre-pubertal age or teenager. However, of late, CSA is being recognised as a criminal justice issue and more incidents are being identified and

reported. In this backdrop, this systematic review attempts to delineate the risk factors of CSA in India and presents the conceptual framework highlighting the protective measures for CSA.

### What is Sexual Abuse?

According to World Health Organization's Violence and Health in the WHO African Region Report (2010), 'sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in any kind of sexual liaison that he/she is unable to comprehend fully, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society'. Broadly, sexual abuse is classified into four categories: non-contact, non-penetrative contact, penetrative contact, and internet-based sexual abuse (Figure 1). Non-contact sexual abuse includes any verbal or non-verbal references to sexual matters such as implicit or explicit invitations for sexual liaisons, being exposed to genitals, sexual acts, or sexually explicit materials, or being asked to reveal own genitals to someone else. Non-penetrative contact abuse comprises of being kissed or fondled sexually, caressing others' genitals or masturbating someone else or watching somebody masturbate, while attempting intercourse, oral intercourse, anal intercourse, and genital intercourse come under the preview of penetrative contact abuse (Elklit, 2015). The growth of the world wide web has exposed children to a new hazard of internet-based CSA comprising of creating, depicting or distributing sexual images of children online, stalking, grooming and engaging in sexually explicit behaviour with children through the internet (Pellai & Caranzano, 2015).



**Figure 1.** Types of Sexual Abuse (Source: Elklit, 2015)

Sexual abuse may be a single sporadic incident or multiple episodes occurring in succession (Behere, Rao, & Mulmule, 2013). Similarly, a child may be exposed to repeated abuses by different individuals during his/her childhood. Bhaskaran & Sheshadri (2016) rightly pointed out that CSA is an experience and not a disorder. Hence, it is challenging to detect CSA as some of the victims may manifest a wide variety of symptoms while the others may be asymptomatic (Bhaskaran & Sheshadri, 2016; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Research suggests that sometimes initially asymptomatic sexually abused children may develop severe psychiatric disorders years after the trauma (Aydin, Akbas, Turla, Dundar, Yuce & Karabekiroglu, 2015). Any sudden change in the behavior of a healthy child may be suggestive of a probable abuse, and the parents must look out for following verbal, bodily, emotional, and sexual symptoms among the children (Jensen, 2005). The presence of any one or more traits may indicate a probable incident of sexual abuse. The self-disclosure of CSA is the best diagnostic tool to report a CSA. However, an explicit verbal disclosure of abuse is quite rare and may be quite indirect, which the caregivers may find difficult to decipher.

Further, sudden changes in child's stimuli may also hint at the probable incidents of sexual abuse such as the presence of enuresis, encopresis, stomach aches, headaches, and so on. Sometime, sudden aversion towards certain food items such as yogurt or milk also may be suggestive of CSA (Jensen, 2005). Similarly, parents must watch out for any abrupt behavioural changes in their children, such as mood swings, frightening or anxiety reactions, bizarre behaviour, or refusal to meet or visit any specific individual as these may be indicative of probable CSA. Other subtle signs of a likely CSA are masturbation in children, sexualised play with dolls, sexual experimenting with other children, or drawing pictures or images of sexual acts.

### **Disclosure of CSA**

Research suggests most people who experience sexual abuse in childhood do not disclose this abuse until adulthood and delays in the disclosure are also not uncommon (McElvaney, 2015). The disclosure is delayed when the perpetrator is a family member or a close relative. Age is a significant predictor of the disclosure. For example, older children are more likely to divulge and report CSA compared to younger children. Besides, children who are abused by a family member are less likely to come forward to reveal the abuse, or there would be some delay compared to those abused by strangers or someone outside the family.

Gender has also been found to influence the phenomenon of the disclosure. Usually, boys are more reluctant to disclose CSA incidents as compared to girls. The boys perceive disclosure of abuse as a threat to their manly stature or stigmatisation of being weak and docile. Parental bonding is also a significant predictor of revelation for both boys as well as girls. Children from the protective families may find it easier to report experiences of abuse to their parents or caregivers.

Despite being one of the most common forms of violence against children worldwide, available statistics or data have underestimated CSA. Research revealed that 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys face some form of CSA before the age of 18 (GHPSPHS, 2009). In their study of child abuse victims and their parents in India, Bala, Maji, Satapathy & Routray (2015) found that CSA is quite rampant in India. The low reportage could be on account of the stigma associated with the disclosure of CSA. The fear of social stigma may force them to stay numb to avoid social ridicule even if they are aware of any CSA incident. The stigma surrounding sexual violence in India fosters a pervasive culture of silence around CSA in the country (Bala et al., 2015). Further, children also frequently hide their experiences of abuse from their caregivers or parents due to fear of retribution (Carson, Foster, & Chowdhary, 2014). Often children are unable to comprehend incidents of abuse and are perplexed about what to report and whom to report. Victims do not disclose the experiences of CSA fearing rejection or disbelief, especially when the perpetrator is from the family or an ally. They often choose to stay silent burrowing the episodes of abuse within them (Virani, 2000).

On the other hand, the closed relationships can also act as a deterrent to disclosure in several cases. Sometimes victims are reluctant to share their ordeal due to concerns of upsetting their parents while others may choose to deliberately remain silent evaluating the repercussions and the consequences for others of their disclosure (McElvaney, 2015). Furthermore, the severity of abuse (e.g., penetrative abuse) is also a significant predictor of disclosure as in the case of an explicit physical injury the victim is unable to hide the abuse from parents or caregivers.

The phenomenon of 'recantation' related to disclosure is also not uncommon among the victims of CSA (McElvaney, 2015). The recantation is the denial of previously held opinion or retraction from one's statement. Many children are found to deny incidents of CSA due to vested interests. Sometimes, children may

disclose initially, but later may have mixed feelings about their abuser and fearing the implications of disclosure upon their abuser may then revoke their complaints. Many times, the abusers are found to take an oath of secrecy about their activities from the child, and this dilemma of breaking the promises may coerce the victims to withdraw from their charges.

Further, many times children are so bewildered by CSA that they may not be able to face to it, and this mystification may lead them into a state of uncertainty where they display inconsistent behaviour. They might say something at one moment and deny it later. Sometimes families may also force children to recant to avoid confrontation with the abuser. Recantation is common in cases where the abuser is a familiar person or is related to the family. Further, a delay in the prosecution of the perpetrator may also lead a child to recant to avoid further distressing involvement in the legal process. A minuscule percentage of children retract later as they may have made a false accusation due to vested interests (GHSPHS, 2009). The negative responses to a disclosure from the parents or the caregivers are quite hazardous and intimidating for the child and restrict them from disclosing any such events soon also. The impact of negative responses to disclosure is cyclical and continues to deter other children from disclosure (Wallace-Henry, 2015).

### **Methodology**

For the current study, the Google Scholar, Medline, PubMed, EMBASE, Web of Science, and PsycINFO were used to extract articles from January 1, 2000, to August 31, 2018 using a keyword search strategy. The search input yielded around 450 literatures; however, studies reporting only on child sexual abuse were included for the final review (10). These electronic searches were supplemented by screening the reference lists of included papers, citation tracking, and expert recommendations. The following inclusion criteria were adopted: (1) The study location was restricted only to India. (2) The literature published only in the English language was included in this review. (3) The studies were eligible for inclusion if they: (a) included participants (males or females, adults, or children) who self-identified, or were defined by researchers, as having been sexually abused; (b) only the peer-reviewed research based on either a cross-sectional survey; a case-control study; cohort study; case series analysis; or experimental investigation. Data was extracted from published articles only which were peer-reviewed papers reporting on the prevalence, risk factors and outcomes of child

sexual abuse, including physical, mental, or sexual issues among the victims of child sexual abuse. This systematic review suggests a high prevalence of child sexual abuse in the country and adverse outcomes of sexual abuse on the health and well-being of the victims.

### **Child Sexual Abuse in India**

India has the world's most significant number of CSA cases every year. One out of every ten children is a victim of CSA in India at any given point of time (Virani, 2000). Behere et al. (2013) found that every second child is prone to one or the other forms of sexual abuse such as eve-teasing, molestation, sexual violence, etc. and every fifth child faces critical forms of CSA in the country. According to the Childline India (2014), every 155<sup>th</sup> minute a child less than 16 years of age is raped, for every 13<sup>th</sup> hour child below 10, and one in every ten children is a victim of CSA.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences undertook the first ever study on child sexual abuse in Mumbai in 1985 among the adults aged twenty and twenty-four (Virani, 2000). The results of the survey revealed that one out of three girls and one out of every ten boys had been victims of CSA and half of these abuses happened at home. Later in the year 1996, a group of medical practitioners carried out a research study to find the prevalence of CSA among 348 girl students from eleven schools and colleges in Bangalore. The results revealed that 15 percent of the sample was sexually abused as children inclusive of being subjected to rape, forced into oral sex or penetrated with foreign objects, and so on. The family members or relatives inside the households were the most common perpetrators.

In the year 1998, Recovery and Healing from Incest (RAHI) conducted a nationwide survey among 600 English speaking middle and upper-class women to find the prevalence of CSA. Around 76 percent of these women revealed being sexually abused in their childhood. In more than fifty percent of the cases, the perpetrator was a familiar person including family members or relatives. The Tulir-Centre for Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse (CPHCSA) also carried out a large-scale survey to find the prevalence of CSA among 2211 school going children in Chennai in the year 2006. The study revealed that, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds, around 42 percent of the children had been sexually abused.

The first ever government sponsored research assessing the extent and gravity of child sexual abuse in the country was carried out in the year 2007 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The sample consisted of a total of 12447 children, 2324 young adults, and 2449 stakeholders across 13 states of the country. This study covered multiple dimensions of abuse like physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. The study also included child neglect in 5 evidence groups, namely children in a family environment, children in schools, children at work location, street children, and children in institutions. The study reported a widespread prevalence of emotional, physical and sexual abuse prevalent in all the states surveyed. While every second child reported emotional abuse, 69 percent (n = 12,447) of the children said being subjected to physical abuse, while 53 percent (n = 12,447) of the children reported incidents of some forms of sexual abuse. Sadly, half of the sexual violations were committed by the persons known to the child or caregivers responsible for their growth and well-being (Kacker, Baradan, & Kumar, 2007). The results of the study further highlighted the absence of child-specific legislations to check child abuse in the country impinging on the need for specific legislation to deal with CSA in the country.

### **Risk Factors to Child Sexual Abuse**

Although India has the highest prevalence of CSA (Singh, Parsekar, & Nair, 2014), yet there is a lack of research on CSA in the Indian context. The limited research evidence suggests that it is quite difficult to predict the risk factors to abuse as there is a wide discrepancy in the profile of the CSA victims. It is found that the children from all backgrounds affluent as well as poor are prone to CSA. Similarly, it is quite difficult to earmark the age of the victims as media reports suggest that babies as young as 2-3 months are also being sexually abused.

#### *Geography, Race and Ethnicity*

It is commonly believed that the prevalence of CSA is higher in the urban areas; however, Matiyani (2011) and Patel & Andrew (2001) suggest that the prevalence of CSA is similar in rural and urban settings but the reporting of CSA is higher in urban areas. Similarly, in other contexts ethnicity is also found to be associated with the prevalence of child sexual abuse (Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, & Mhlongo, 2015), however, in the Indian context sporadic studies assert that race and ethnicity do not seem to be risk factors for CSA and children from all

socioeconomic groups are equally vulnerable (Matiyani, 2011; Pal, Rana, Sharma, & Sehgal, 2018; Virani, 2000).

#### *Economic Factors*

Some data indicate higher rates of CSA reports in areas with high levels of poverty (Matiyani, 2011; Priyanka, 2015), whereas other studies demonstrate no associations between CSA and economic status (Carson et al., 2014; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Poverty may not directly stimulate abuse. However, overcrowding may facilitate sexual abuse due to the necessity of co-sleeping and lack of privacy.

#### *Familial Factors*

The size and the structure of the family are essential indicators of sexual abuse victimisation. Children from larger families or living in extended households are quite vulnerable as parents may be unable to spare more time for each child (Matiyani, 2011). Similarly, children from single parent or divorced partners are particularly susceptible (ibid). Further, children from dysfunctional families or poor parent-child relationship are quite vulnerable to sexual abuse victimisation. Educational status of the mother is also found to influence the prevalence of CSA. The mental health of the parents is further found to be a risk factor to CSA. Besides, parental substance abuse or alcohol addiction is also associated with sexual abuse victimisation (Matiyani, 2011; Whitehead & Roffee, 2016). Orphanhood is another predictor for sexual abuse victimisation (Kamuwanga & Ngoma, 2015). Research suggests that street children are particularly vulnerable (Malhotra, 2010; Matiyani, 2011; Seth, 2015).

#### *Gender*

Research suggests females are exposed to sexual abuse more often than males (Pal et al., 2018; Singh, 2009). However, others argue that sexual abuse of male victims is under-reported (Carson et al., 2014; Kacker et al., 2007; Patel & Andrew, 2001). Social stigma, including the fear of being labeled as gay, as well as issues related to victimisation and masculinity, may make it difficult for boys to seek help (GHPSPHS, 2012). Garnefski & Diekstra (1997) suggest that gender appears to influence symptom expression, with boys having worse outcomes than girls (Tyler, 2002).

### *Individual Factors*

Certain categories of children are found to be susceptible to CSA such as emotionally insecure children, children lacking strong support from the parents and caregivers, and so on (Saul & Audage, 2007). Sexual victimisation is also associated with child hyperactivity, child disability, and wasting (Seth, 2015; Virani, 2001). CSA is quite common among mentally challenged or deaf and dumb children as they are unable to vocalise their dissent, or, disclosure to others is less likely.

### *Social Factors*

Research suggests that a particular social structure facilitates abuse implicitly. At the societal level, low recognition of the child's rights, patriarchy, and prevalence of violence, discrimination and weak social norms also perpetuate child sexual abuse (Minto, Hornsey, Gillespie, Healy, & Jetten, 2016). For example, in South Africa and Namibia, Jewkes et al. (2005) noted that child rape might be used as punishment or a method of communicating power and control (cited in Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Further, lax laws and legislation, and low prosecution also enable a culture of abuse and victimisation (Meinck et al., 2015).

### **Outcomes of Child Sexual Abuse**

CSA is one of the most heinous forms of crime against children prevalent worldwide. CSA has been found to be detrimental for the affected children and leads to severe dysfunction among the victims. Although it is quite difficult to estimate the damages cost to the children, the socioeconomic prices are profound. Some of the common physical outcomes of CSA include, but are not limited to, pain, discoloration, sores, cuts, bleeding or discharges in the genitals, anus or mouth, persistent or recurring pain during urination and bowel movements, gynecologic conditions, gastrointestinal problems, and so on. For many children wetting and soiling accidents are the allusive outcome of CSA (GHPPHS, 2012; Seth, 2015). CSA is also associated with subsequent sexual victimisation, unwanted pregnancy and HIV transmission (Meinck et al., 2015). Further, CSA also results in a range of long-term adverse sexual outcomes for the victims such as sexual inhibition, sexual avoidance or aversion, and vaginal or pelvic pain to sexual dis-inhibition, compulsive or impulsive sex, risk-taking sexual behaviours, and numerous sequential or simultaneous sexual partners.

The experiences of CSA lead to multiple adverse outcomes for children, paralysing the victims' minds more than their bodies (Berkowitz, 1998; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010; Elklit, 2015; Johnson, 2004; Matiyani, 2011; Meinck et al., 2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder, delinquency, academic difficulties, low self-esteem, withdrawal, conduct disorders, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and personality disorders are not uncommon among the victims. Victims of CSA may experience avoidance, dissociation or denial which could have initially developed as adaptations to the abuse. The severity of the mental health outcome is dependent upon the age of the onset, the duration of the abuse, relationship with the perpetrator, as well as the kind of abuse – penetrative or non-penetrative (National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Sexual Abuse Committee, 2009; Ventus, Antfolk, & Salo, 2017).

The outcomes of incest or abuse perpetrated by close kin are more devastating as victims may find it difficult to trust others in their social network forever which in turn jeopardizes their recovery post abuse. Research suggests in cases of violence by the known person, the dilemma to report or not to communicate further aggravates the trauma (Durham, 2003). The experience of CSA is often emotionally paralysing for the victims and many victims fail to recover throughout their life. Unfortunately, CSA has a cyclical effect, and CSA victimisation does appear to be a risk factor for future perpetration (Becker & Murphy, 1988; Bhaskaran & Sheshadri, 2016). In their study of 224 male victims of CSA, Salter et al. (2003) found that around 12 percent had official records of perpetrating a sexual offense against children (cited in Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). However, the model of a victim-perpetrator cycle has been found to be relevant for the males, but not for the females (Glasser, Kolvin, Campbell, Glasser, Leitch, & Farrelly, 2001; Virani, 2001).

### **Perpetrator Characteristics**

Popular literature indicates that sexual abuse is more prevalent than was once believed and that the perpetrators are usually unknown to the victims (Segal 1992; Virani 2001). Underreporting of incest or molestation by parents/relatives is quite common. The spate of media reports on sexual abuse by strangers does not always imply that abuse is any less by persons familiar to the child. On the contrary, it highlights that abuse by strangers is treated seriously and reported to the law enforcement agencies. Parents are often found to suppress incidents of sexual violence by familial persons to avoid strain in relations (Carson et al., 2014;

Jensen, 2005). Research further suggests that, contrary to popular belief, the perpetrator could be a female as well as male (Behere et al., 2013; Matiyani, 2011).

The perpetrator and the victim may be of the same sex or opposite sex (Behere et al., 2013). Further, perpetrators may be single individuals or may act in compliance with other individuals, familial or non-familial. Regarding age span, it is difficult to detach the specific age group for CSA perpetrators, as the perpetrators have been found to belong to pre-teens up to elderly individuals. Many CSA cases involve teenagers as perpetrators. There is no conclusive evidence regarding the marital status of the perpetrators in the literature. Both married as well as single individuals have been found to be complicit in CSA. Besides, the perpetrators could be reputed or trusted caretakers, such as parents, priests, aid workers, hospital workers, and educators (Matiyani, 2011). Matiyani (2011) further suggests that alcoholism is often associated with sexual abuse offenses. Alcohol results in a state of inebriation and emotional excitement in an individual that they lose their normal restraints over their sexual desire causing them to satiate themselves through any individual including children. Most common tactics employed by perpetrators include befriending children, seducing, or luring with gifts. Many times, they also resort to threats or use of violence to gain subservience from the child. Contradicting the popular norm that home is the safest haven for children, most popular den for CSA perpetrator includes homes of the children.

### **Laws and Legislation concerning Children in India**

Before 1986, each state in India had its enactment of juvenile justice with children being treated differently by the respective state legal systems. The Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act of 1986 was the first central legislation concerning juveniles passed by the Union Parliament of India in the year 1986. With the inception of the JJ Act in the year 1986, India became the first country in the world to have introduced a universal juvenile justice, the law that covered both children in need of care and protection, and children who come in conflict with the law under its preview. The JJ Act ensured protection for children in difficult circumstances. In the history of legal jurisprudence in the country, protection of children came to be viewed as an integral part of social justice as well as the justice delivery system. The JJ Act 1986 however, was discriminating in nature. It was applicable for girls till they

attained majority, i.e., up to eighteen years of age, while for boys the age limit was only sixteen years.

In the year 2000, the JJ Act (1986) was repealed and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 came into being. It was later amended in 2006 to build on minimum standards of care and protection as part of justice delivery and to strengthen the existing child protection mechanisms. The Act underwent further amendment in 2010 to end the segregation of disease-hit children from other occupants within child care institutions. This JJ Act of 2000, with modifications made in 2006 and 2010 is followed till date. The JJ (C & CP) Act 2000, amended in 2006 and 2010, internalises the Constitution of India (as prescribed in Article 15 (3), Article 39 (e) and (f), Articles 45 and 47); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, 1985 ('the Beijing Rules'); the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990; the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, 1990 ('The Riyadh Guidelines'); the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures, 1990 ('The Tokyo Rules'); and many other international conventions/treaties and instruments.

The current JJ Act is highly progressive legislation that has as its primary focus the protection of the best interests of the child. This law covers all children less than eighteen years of age. It provides for appropriate care and protection of the children by catering to the child's needs and rights by adopting a child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of the cases relevant to the children. The focus of the Juvenile Justice Law in India, as it currently stands, centres on the protection of the dignity of the child and ensuring their access to their rights, security, and rehabilitation through State responsibility and action.

### **Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012**

Until 2012, the only sexual offenses against children recognised by the law were covered by three sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) not specific to children. Only three kinds of crimes viz., rape (sexual intercourse without consent – section 376), outraging modesty of a woman (unspecified acts – section 354) and unnatural acts defined as 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal' (anal sex, homosexuality or bestiality – section 377) were treated as severe and registered and reported in the annals of the law enforcement.

Other forms of non-penetrative sexual assaults, harassment and exploitation were not explicitly recognised as crimes and therefore not recorded (assuming if they were reported). The 2007 National Study on Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the wide prevalence of child sexual abuse in the country and the dire need of specific legislation to deal with these abuses. After years of deliberation, the Government of India passed the first ever specialised legislation on the ‘Protection of Children against Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act’ in the year 2012. The POCSO Act criminalises all sexual offenses against a child (under 18 years of age) namely penetrative, non-penetrative, genital, non-genital, touch and non-touch based including internet-based abuses and is gender neutral (The POCSO Act, 2012). The Act requires mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse by doctors and other professionals. The POCSO Act emphasises incorporating child-friendly mechanisms for reporting and recording of evidence. It also attempts to safeguard the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process of investigation such as the speedy disposal of trials through the designated Special Courts. The law is very stringent and comprehensive as even the intent to abetment is punishable under the POCSO Act and the onus of the acquittal rests with the accused and not on the victim.

### **Child Welfare Committees (CWC)**

The Juvenile Justice Act follows a two-pronged approach, the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) being the competent authority for the Children in Conflict with Law (CICL), while for the Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) exercise the highest administrative prerogative. In usual practice, all juveniles or adolescents engaged in deviant or criminal behaviour are known as the CICL. On the other hand, CNCP includes vulnerable children such as orphans or abandoned children, street children, homeless children or children living on the streets. Moreover, child brides, or child victims of physical/sexual abuse, trafficked children, mentally/physically challenged children, children affected by HIV/AIDS, missing or runaway children, children harmed by natural disasters or human-made disasters like armed conflicts, earthquakes, floods, etc. are also treated as CNCP. The CWCs are final authority regarding disposal of cases for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of the children as well as to provide for their basic needs and safeguard their human rights (Child Welfare Committees in India: A comprehensive analysis aimed at strengthening the Juvenile Justice System for children in need of care and protection, 2013). According to Section 29 (5) of the

JJ Act, the CWCs are to function as a Bench of Magistrates. The power of the CWCs are equivalent to the powers held by a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of the first class as conferred by the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973 (2 of 1974). The CWC comprises of a chairperson and four members. The chairperson should be a person well versed in child welfare issues, and at least one member of the CWC should be a woman. The CWCs are responsible for tracking the progress reports during inquiry meanwhile delivering the best care to the child. The CWCs have the authority to remove the child from his/her home and place him/her in short-term care or long-term care if the need arises. The CWCs are also responsible for monitoring of the child care institutions and other child-related agencies. Besides, the CWCs are also authorised to review and report about the quality of the child care institutions within their jurisdictions to the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD).

### **The Proposed Conceptual Framework**

Child sexual abuse is one of the universal forms of violence against children prevalent across all socioeconomic groups in India, however, research on the etiology of CSA is still in its nascent stage in the country. Hence, it becomes imperative to invoke theories on incest and mating to unveil the etiology of CSA. Universally mating and intimacy between biological kin is forbidden due to specific natural and cultural reasons and is popularly known by the term incest. Incest includes any physical relationship between blood relations example between father and daughter, or mother and son, or brother and sister, and so on. Any sexual advances made by father or mother and brother to an under eighteen offspring or sibling respectively qualifies as sexual abuse. The incest CSA and the non-incest CSA are two broad categories under consideration in the present study. The incest CSA includes sexual abuse by blood relatives from within the family ties while non-incest CSA encompasses all other sexual abuse categories outside the preview of incest such as the sexual abuse by relatives, acquaintance or strangers. Although incest CSA and non-incest CSA are entirely different, yet both bear certain commonalities regarding elements of vulnerability, perpetrator characteristics, outcomes, and so on.

All incidents of CSA involve the presence of two individuals: at-risk child susceptible to abuse and another individual preying upon the vulnerability of the child. Now, this vulnerability may stem from the economic condition of the child and his family. For example, overcrowding and lack of privacy in a household

may dispose child to the risk of abuse. Further, the structure and configuration of family also make children susceptible to abuse. Children from single parents, dysfunctional families, substance abusing parents or uneducated parents are quite vulnerable to CSA. Individual factors contributing to vulnerability include, but are not limited to gender, disability, hyperactivity, and so on. Besides this, the socio-cultural configuration of society also facilitates CSA such as gender inequality, social tolerance of violence, inadequate legislation, and so on. For example, in several African countries, child rape is used as punishment or a method of communicating power and control over the child (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). For the current study, vulnerability is of four types: economic, familial, individual and social vulnerability.

The perpetrators of CSA are a heterogeneous population with varying age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, and socio-cultural background. Perpetrators could be males as well as females and may target victims from the same or opposite sexes. Further, they may be elderly or adults as well as children less than eighteen years of age. Marital status has no significant relationship with the perpetrator history. It is generally believed that individuals without sexual partners would potentially sexually abuse the children; however, it is found that married individuals having sexual partners also indulge in sexual abuse of children. The perpetrators may target known children as well as unknown children (Santhosh, 2016). According to Wiehe (2003), perpetrators are self-centered, narcissistic individuals who lack self-confidence, impulse control and usually will be deficient in empathy (cited in Santhosh, 2016). Contrary to popular belief, perpetrators are often reputed and well-known individuals of the society. CSA perpetrators are of two types: paedophile and non-paedophile. The former belongs to a specific group who preferentially abuse children for sexual gratification. The non-paedophile is an opportunistic predator targeting the vulnerable children to satisfy their sexual urges.

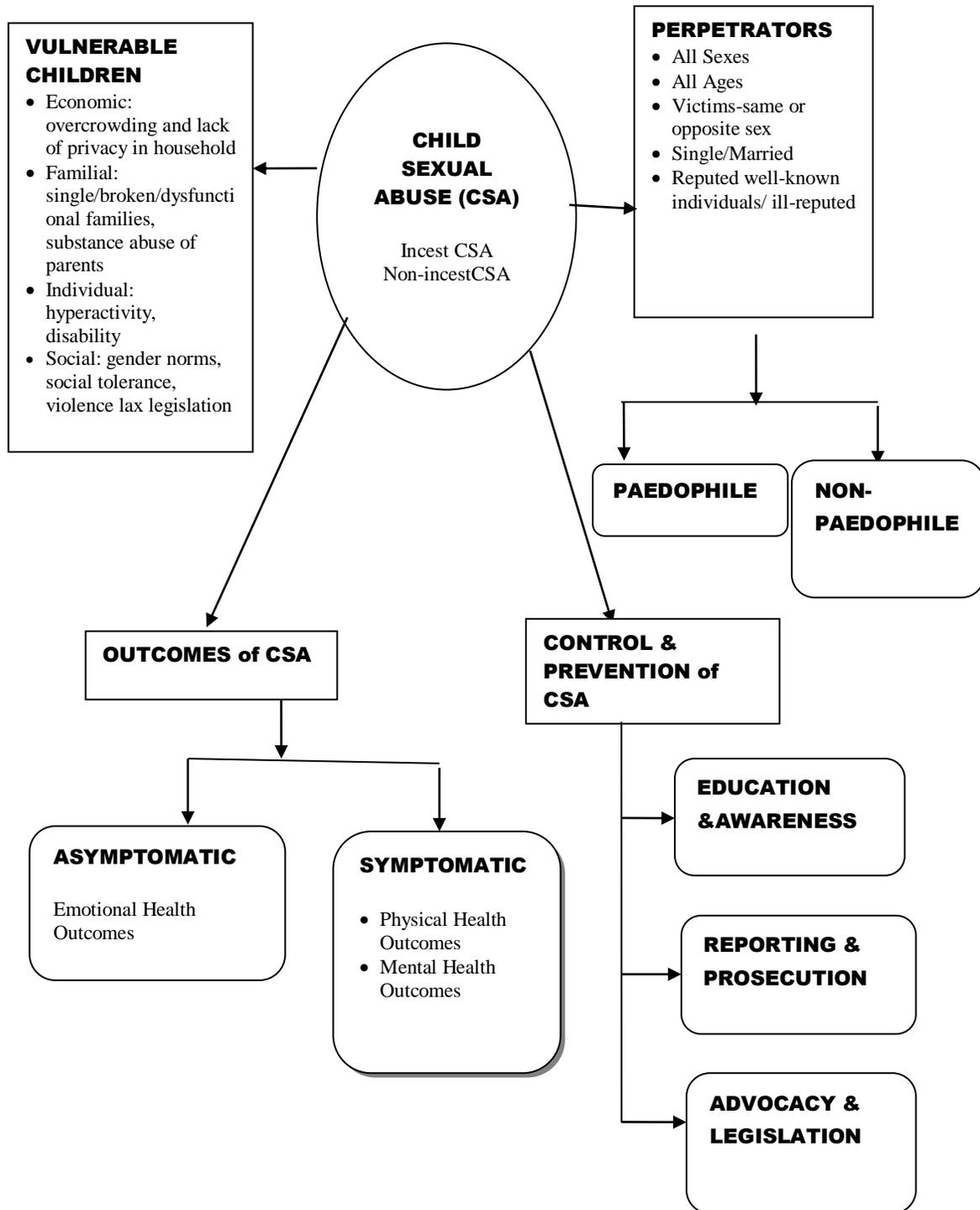
The asymptomatic nature of CSA often makes it quite difficult to detect the abuse. Nevertheless, sometimes it may include the use of violence resulting into visible bodily symptoms such as cuts or abrasions in the body, pain in private body parts, or soreness in the genitals, and so on. Though the physical health outcomes of CSA are quite severe and gradually heal with time, however, the mental health outcomes are quite complex and irrevocable leaving lasting trauma in the minds of the victims. The victims of CSA are found to suffer from the Post-traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, academic difficulties, conduct disorders, substance abuse, personality disorders, suicidal ideation, and so on.

The prevention of CSA is multipronged and requires cumulative efforts of diverse stakeholders such as parents, caregivers, community, government, etc. Since the damages caused by CSA, trafficking, or similar abuses are irreparable hence the best possible measure should be to prevent the occurrence of these events in the first instance. Therefore, the best intervention would be to avoid CSA through education and awareness. Education and awareness of CSA is the single potent measure to prevent CSA. Aware and informed children will be able to defend themselves and confront their abusers. Similarly, educated parents will be able to protect their children from potential perpetrators in their family or vicinity.

The reporting and prosecution of offenders is also vital to prevent and control CSA. The trial not only helps in the conviction of the offenders but also deters future perpetrators from committing CSA. The biggest challenge against law enforcement is the low disclosure rate of CSA. Very few parents are interested in reporting the crimes of CSA, and in fact, many parents coerce their children to remain silent about the abuse. The low disclosure rates also inhibits authorities acting in legal and child custody cases and constitutes an obstacle in establishing public awareness for CSA. Hence, parents must encourage their children to report incidents of CSA and get the offenders convicted. Further, the role of legislation and judiciary in controlling CSA cannot be undermined. CSA laws must be strengthened worldwide to protect vulnerable children. CSA cases must be expedited in the court of rules to minimise the distress and inconvenience caused to the children during the court proceedings.

The following model (Figure 2) presents the framework for the risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse in the country:



**Figure 2.** The conceptual framework representing risk factors, outcomes, and protective factors of child sexual abuse

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the current study presents an exhaustive overview of child sexual abuse in the country, yet the generalisation of the review is limited in the following contexts. Sexual abuse does not occur in isolation, and the other forms of violence and maltreatment are found to be complicit. However, the current review explicitly focuses on child sexual abuse. Secondly, the present study does not highlight the social construct of certain types of child sexual abuse such as incest. Several anthropological pieces of literature suggest that in certain communities incest is socially acceptable up to certain degrees and is not viewed as a form of sexual abuse; hence a separate review may elaborate upon this fact.

### **Scope of the Study**

Child sexual abuse is a serious form of violence against children which has several detrimental outcomes on the growth and development of the child victims. Besides the physical violation of the genitals, the victims of CSA are found to suffer from severe emotional and psychological outcomes. The victims of CSA need rigorous medical and psychological assistance for recovery and reconstruction. Sometimes, the trauma of CSA may last forever. However, CSA is not taken as a serious health hazard violating the rights of the children. The exposure to CSA strongly interferes with the growth and well-being of children, hence, this review strongly advocates in favor of strict intervention measures for the prevention of CSA.

The results of the review reveal that research in the Indian context on CSA are in nascent stage; hence, the review recommends undertaking research on different aspects of CSA such as victim or perpetrator characteristics, disclosure of CSA, effective prevention and intervention measures for CSA, and so on. The review further suggests that children from dysfunctional or broken families are quite susceptible to CSA; hence, the sensitisation material on CSA must include the probable role of dysfunctional or broken families in aggravating vulnerability to CSA. It is found that the current research is basically victim-centric, i.e., the popular subjects of research are characteristics of the victims of CSA, outcomes of CSA, disclosure pattern of CSA and so on. The perpetrator-centric studies are virtually absent; hence, the review advocates for more research centering around perpetrators in order to design suitable intervention and sensitisation material for CSA prevention. Further, the perpetrators are often related to the victims and incidents take place in and around the homes of the victims; hence, sensitisation

programmes for the public regarding this may come in handy in preventing a potential episode of CSA. Little sensibility and insight can help an individual detect a prospective victim and save many lives from the scourge of CSA. Further, the government must promote research prima facie on crime sites, context, space/location, information on the background of the victims and the perpetrators to generate more data which will aid in policy formation and development.

Keeping in mind the prevalence of CSA in the Indian context, there is a dire need to establish suitable intervention programs for the prevention of CSA for an at-risk cohort. Parents are the primary caregivers hence education campaigns on CSA for parents would be quite fruitful in informing parents about the potential abuser and risks factors for CSA. Prevention programs should emphasise to parents that the risks of sexual abuse to children are more likely to come from family members, friends and acquaintances. The sensitisation training must include the risk factors for CSA, essential traits of the abuser as well as what to do if parents believe their child is at risk or has been sexually abused. Age-appropriate Information and Communication Material (IEC) on CSA must be included in the school curriculum to educate children about CSA. The informed children will be able to defend themselves better from a probable CSA. In his paper *Moving Upstream: The Merits of Public Health Law Approach to Trafficking*, Todres (2011) advocates in favor of public health law approach to prevention of trafficking. Similarly, doctors and paramedical professionals are in the best position to detect a likely case of rape and violence as they are often the first to come into contact with the victims. But due to lack of training and sensitisation, they fail to distinguish between a causal wound and a violent wound. Training of professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people to identify children at risk and situations of child abuse as well as providing trauma-informed care to parents and children is vital in preventing and treating child sexual abuse, and could be quite fruitful and pragmatic in the long run.

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**Article: Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective**

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## Sustainable Tourism in the context of Meghalaya: A Sociological Perspective\*

--- A.K. Nongkynrih

### *Abstract*

Tourism is a global phenomenon and it has assumed significance in the field of sociology, economics, commerce and cultural studies; it has both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The paper maintains that tourism provides the ground for tourist relationships, the social relationship of actors between hosts and visitors. In such social relationship, the action can be qualified as instrumentally rational action. Further, regional landscape has its own importance in the sustainability of environment-ecosystem and culture of the place. The paper examines as to what extent sustainable tourism is a part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework. The description and analysis is based on secondary data as well as field observation of the author. Lastly, the paper argues that Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework is yet to address issues related with sustainable tourism.

*Key words: Environment, Hosts-Visitors, Requisite, Sustainable Tourism*

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### **Introduction**

Sustainable tourism is a theme of global and local interests, and also a theme that cuts across various disciplines in social science, humanities, arts and culture, and in particular tourism, economics, commerce and development studies. This paper deals with sustainable tourism in the context of the state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is acknowledged as one of the states in the Northeastern region of India which attracts visitors. In recent times the number of visitors to the state of Meghalaya has increased (Table 1) tremendously, and particularly to Sohra (earlier known as Cherrapunjee) and Mawlynnong.

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\*The paper is based on the keynote address delivered at the National Seminar on Sustainable Tourism: Striking a Socio-Economic and Environmental Balance, organised by the Department of Sociology, Synod College, Shillong, on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of Tourists*

<b>Tourists</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Domestic	68025	681269	716469
Foreign	5313	6773	8664
Total	685567	698042	725133

Source: Annual Final Report of Tourism Survey for the State of Meghalaya (2014, p. 18), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Taking into account this aspect, the paper attempts to examine whether sustainable tourism is part of Meghalaya's tourism plan and policy framework. The description and analysis is based on secondary data and the field observation of the author in Sohra region.

Firstly, it is necessary to focus on the movement of people, followed by discussions on tourism. Human beings may voluntarily move away from their homes and their place of residence for different purposes such as marriage, education, employment or work; and may also temporarily move away from their homes to visit kinsmen, friends or for leisure. It has been observed that in the modern times, modern occupations and modern life styles can be stressful for social actors. One comes across expressions routinely made by social actors 'I need a holiday', and this expression 'reflects a modern discourse on the idea that people's physical and mental health will be restored if only they can get away from time to time' (Urry & Larsen, 2001, p. 6).

The expression of 'I need a holiday' is a crucial aspect that drives tourism, meaning temporary movement of social actors to another place for leisure. It was highlighted (Urry & Larsen, 2011) that tourism has also been associated with travelling. The authors further elaborated that prior to the nineteenth century only the elite and the upper class could afford to travel. However, in post nineteenth century mass tourism and organised tours have led to increase of movement of visitors globally. 'Tourism can be considered one of the most remarkable socio-economic phenomena of the twentieth century... It now reaches an increasingly

larger number of people throughout the world and can be considered a vital dimension of global integration' (Neto, 2003, p. 1). Urry & Larsen (2011) emphasised that tourism is more about leisure and is different from the day to day routine; and added that tourism is part of modern societies. It was further elaborated (Holden, 2005, pp. 7) that tourism 'has become increasingly omnipresent in the global, it has brought with it economic, social, cultural and environmental changes, emphasising the requirement for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon of contemporary society'. Thus, the phenomenon of tourism has gained attention from various fields such as Sociology, Management, Economics and other disciplines. The phenomenon of tourism has also led to global debates on the issue of sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

### **Defining Tourism**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2005), 'Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal business and professional purposes. Such persons are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure'. Tourism can be viewed as 'the movement of people and their stay in space which is both physical and socio-cultural in nature' (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008, p. 44). Broadly, one can say that tourism is a temporary and voluntary movement of social actors from their own homes to another place.

It has been pointed out that there is another side of tourism. 'Tourism provides considerable economic benefits for many countries, regions and communities, its rapid expansion can also be responsible for adverse environmental, as well as socio-cultural impact' (Neto, 2003, p.4). Neto (2003) further elaborated on the adverse impacts such as the pressure on natural resources and damage to ecosystems. The author observed that uncontrolled tourism can pose serious threat to environment and tourism itself. The threats are the intensification of competition for land resources and the increase in the level of pollution of water sources; and the disposal of liquid and solid waste including contamination of waste on the landscape. This shows that tourism is embedded with environment and ecology of the place.

It was pointed out by Neto (2003) that tourism also deals with human interactions. It is a social interaction between two sets of social actors, i.e., the host and the visitor. They may be from similar culture or from two different cultures. In their mental make-up both the host and the visitor represent their cultures and are engaged in a social activity guided by 'give and take' relationship. It is 'give and take' interaction and relationship and the encounters that take place are 'situations where tourists are purchasing goods or services or situations in which they meet and share knowledge and ideas' (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008, p. 45). However, Neto (2003) shared that tourism has its negative aspects and it is connected with the issue of conflict of relationship between host communities and tourism industry or tourism promoters. Tourism promoters have always managed to appropriate more benefits for themselves at the cost of local communities.

One may argue that tourism is connected with environment and ecology; with socio-economic aspects and social interactions between different cultures. It is these issues that have caught global attention and discussions on sustainable tourism in various international forums. The United Nations had initiated global discourse on sustainable tourism. As a result of this global initiative the programme of sustainable tourism was included in sustainable development framework.

### Meanings of Sustainable Tourism

The term sustainable tourism is derived from the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a concept adopted and applied by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in the year 1999, and subsequently it was adopted in other international conventions and accepted by member countries of United Nations (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Sustainable Development*

<b>International Bodies</b>	<b>Fundamental Issues</b>
<b>United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 1999</b>	Emphasis was placed on the need for the development of policies, strategies and master plans for sustainable tourism.

<b>The World Trade Organisation Code of Ethics for Tourism, 1999</b>	Emphasis on the special role of tourism in contributing to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and act as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment.
<b>Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) , 2003</b>	Governments are invited to integrate CBDs in their strategies and plans for tourism.
<b>Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, 2002</b>	Foster for the development of ecotourism; and making all tourism sustainable.
<b>World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002</b>	The promotion of sustainable tourism as one of the strategies for protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.

Source: United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organisation, 2005

On the basis of international conventions, the concept sustainable tourism has been adopted and applied in tourism planning, tourism strategies and tourism management. Before proceeding further in the discussion, it is important to clarify the definition of sustainable tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (1998, p.18) defines sustainable tourism as ‘development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system’. In other words, sustainable tourism focuses on sustainability of environment and ecology, economic opportunities, sustaining ethical standards and fair share for all. The United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has summarised the basic tenets of sustainable tourism for the purpose of implementation (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*Principles of Sustainable Tourism*

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
Enhancing the well-being of communities	Sustainable tourism development supports and ensures the economic, social and cultural well-being of the communities in which tourism takes place in general and women in particular.
Supporting the protection of the natural and cultural environment	Sustainable tourism allows the use of natural and cultural resources for gaining economic benefits while at the same time guaranteeing that these resources are not deteriorated or destroyed. Additionally, tourism is expected to be the driving force with regard to the establishment or the enhancement of the protection of nature and the maintenance of cultural values.
Quality and tourist satisfaction	The quality of tourism products offered by a region is a key factor for the economic success of tourism. It is not only characterised by material criteria like the quality of transport, accommodation and food, but also by non-material criteria like hospitality or the quality of experiences.
Applying adaptive management and monitoring	To ensure that tourism is developed in a way that is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, adequate management

	and monitoring are established, following the basic principles of sustainable use of resources.
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Source: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Firstly, on the basis of preceding discussions, sustainable tourism has four key aspects: enhancing the well-being of communities; supporting the protection of the natural and cultural environment; quality and tourist satisfaction; and applying adaptive management and monitoring. Secondly, it seems that sustainable tourism can be achieved by networking; that is, a network of multi-stake holders and collaboration between local communities, local governments, tourism enterprises, local organisations and visitors. Thirdly, sustainable tourism is a joint venture where every party has specific role and responsibility, mutual and reciprocal support for the benefits of the host state, local communities, the service providers, the satisfaction of visitors, and the sustainability of the environment and ecology. Lastly, sustainable tourism is achievable only on the basis of implementing the requisite sustainable tourism framework (Table 4). It can be said that sustainable tourism is an integration of various elements. Each element has a specific role and link to other parts. This network and integration of parts functioning as one whole determines the process of sustainable tourism.

**Table 4**  
*Requisite of Sustainable Tourism*

<b>Kinds of Requisite</b>	<b>Intended Purpose</b>
Policy Framework	Emphasis on sustainable use of the environment and ecology; on aspects related to gender and youth; multi-stake holder collaboration in particular the role of local authorities; investments and support in local micro-enterprise; equitable benefits particularly local communities; socio-cultural aspects; Licensing and Operation and standards of tourism services and

	monitoring; and limiting adverse impacts on the place and people.
Regulations on the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of both Hosts and Visitors, and the management of the tourism site.	This cover number of areas such as: 'Home Stay' and Guest Houses or Hotels; basic knowledge on local culture and respecting local culture; waste management of site and waste collection and waste disposal mechanisms; site management practices under local authorities or under other bodies or individuals; safety and security; and movement of people and transport.
Licensing meaning providing recognition under given rules	Standard conditions for Tourist guides; Homestays, Guest Houses, Hotels; Life Guards; Travel Agencies and Travel Operators; Ecotourism promoters and guides; and control of movement of interstate tourist vehicles.
Enforcement meaning inspection and action in places of stay, tourism sites or spots and any other area related with tourism.	Special Team of Tourism Police and village level team and local authorities; Food Inspector; Waste and Disposal team; and Environment and Ecology Evaluation team; and Pollution Control team.
Local Community	Awareness and understanding, participation, ownership and economic benefits; skills and micro-enterprise; basic skills in hospitality; basic knowledge of one's own culture and history; and manners and etiquette in handling visitors.
Health services and emergency	Local centres have basic support

response	system in case of emergency.
Accommodation and Transport	Good infrastructure, maintaining basic standards and easy access for movement from one place to another.
Quality of service	Food, interpersonal handling of visitors and women; information and care; wayside facilities and availability of clean wash rooms, and drinking water.

### Meghalaya as a Case of Sustainable Tourism

The state of Meghalaya is known as one of the global bio-diversity hotspots. It has diverse natural beauty and topography, and some of the villages located outside the city of Shillong (i.e., the state capital) are known for their natural tourism sites. Over the years Meghalaya has attracted visitors from the country and abroad. Tourism is becoming another alternative employment for the people of Meghalaya. However, tourism activities in the state have also raised questions on tourism sustainability. To understand sustainable tourism in Meghalaya the author reviewed two official documents and made field observation on the Sohra region.

The Government of Meghalaya prepared a document entitled *Tourism Development Plan for Meghalaya, 2010*. The plan document was prepared by Heritage Tourism Division of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The report highlighted varied aspects for the development of tourism in Meghalaya. According to the plan document (2010, p.8), 'sustainable tourism plan for Meghalaya has been prepared to strengthen primary sector (agriculture) and secondary sector (manufacturing and mining) for rapid inputs and raw materials in order to improve overall productivity of the economy'. It seems the plan document has given emphasis on sustainable development.

The second document deals with *The Tourism Policy of Meghalaya, 2011*. The policy has two aspects: objectives and action plan. The objectives of the policy document can be highlighted as follows: holistic growth; effective marketing

strategy; quality and attractiveness of tourism experience; promote new opportunities for the future development of tourism; to strengthen the cultural aspects of tourism product in Meghalaya and to actively promote local participation, including community-based tourism; emphasis on training of local youth and tourism stakeholders in the State; and to establish relevant practices in the tourism sector. The action plan has identified a number of key areas to be implemented such as: basic infrastructure; facilitating private investment; promoting entrepreneurship within the local communities; promoting community participation; ensuring sustainability and conservation of the State's environment and natural resources, and adhering to minimum standards with regards to environmental performance; ensuring health standards; promoting a clean, healthy and safe environment along with friendly and efficient services; developing a unique brand to attract visitors; and building physical structure that will merge with the surroundings and the natural environment of the area. Taking into account both the plan and policy documents, it is apparent that the government of Meghalaya is keen on promoting sustainable tourism.

What has been the impact of the plan and policy document on sustainable tourism in the state? The answer to this question can be located in the empirical world. It is a fact that the inflow of visitors to Meghalaya in general and in particular to some regions of the Khasi-Jaintia hills has increased. The rise in the number of visitors has also brought out the challenges of managing tourism. Both local and regional newspapers and social media have been providing information with regard to the challenges of tourism. The assessment is carried out from the perspective of requisite sustainable tourism framework. Benjamin Lyngdoh in his article on *Issues Plaguing Tourism in Meghalaya* (The Shillong Times, 2015, p. A6) remarked, 'Our tourism development should be based on the platform of sustainability. This is more so as our tourism is predominantly nature based. It takes many lifetimes to nurture nature and just a single lifetime to destroy it. Hence, sustainability should be at the centre. Our destination planning and development will have to be sensitive to the environment and its carrying capacity'. But then, he maintains that tourism is not the single solution to Meghalaya's economic problems.

Similarly, such views and opinions occasionally have been shared in vernacular newspapers while highlighting number of issues affecting tourism in Meghalaya. The issues addressed are related with lack of proper wash rooms and basic facilities on road side, insufficient number of food stalls to cater to the number of

tourists; uncontrolled and irresponsible use of the landscape by visitors, the uncontrolled movement of inter-state tourist vehicles and large inflow of visitors in some selected sites, lack of proper waste collection and waste disposal management system in tourist sites. It has also been pointed out that irresponsible behaviour of visitors by throwing waste or leaving waste in tourist sites has added to the problem of waste disposal.

The field investigation was carried out in Sohra region between the 18th December to the 31st December of each year (i.e., from 2014 to 2017). Sohra region is probably the place which attracts largest number of visitors who come from both within and outside the state of Meghalaya. All the tourist sites are symbiotically connected with the landscape, myths and legends of the place. In recent years the number of hotels, guest houses, and 'home-stays' has significantly increased. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of local food stalls and restaurants. Tourism has provided income generation and employment to local population.

There is another side of the story; in recent times Sohra region has attracted business persons from outside of Sohra, and these business persons have managed to convince some of the traditional authorities to part away with sizable acres of communal land with an understanding that local communities will be given opportunity of employment. Some of the leaders of traditional authorities have taken these decisions without the consent of the people. This action has facilitated the process of privatisation of communal land in parts of Sohra region. It has led to the gradual erosion of customary beliefs and practices such as the role and responsibility of traditional authority to protect communal lands.

The other issue related with tourism in Sohra is waste disposal. This is a major environmental problem confronted by Sohra region and its population. The tourist sites and the open space of Sohra region is used by visitors. In using such places, visitors have been disposing waste, both biodegradable and non-biodegradable. There is lack of environmental consciousness on the part of visitors and also the lack of regulation and proper system of collection of waste. As it stands today, tourist sites are piling up with waste and are gradually damaging the ecology and environment of Sohra. Another issue that can be said is that Sohra as a region does not have proper waste dumping sites and this is adding to the ecological and environmental problems. The same can be said in the case of public utility. The lack of civic wash rooms has led to visitors travelling to Sohra on the Shillong-

Sohra route to relieve themselves in the open. It is undignified and particularly so in the case of women. Public defecation is a threat to health and hygiene. The threat to ecological and environmental damage to tourist sites of Sohra region is real and could be irreversible.

The 'book view' and the 'field view' do not correlate with the plan and policy document of the government of Meghalaya. The case of Sohra illustrates the challenges of sustainable tourism. These problems and challenges can be attributed to lack of regulations, enforcement and proper implementation of the plan and the policy of sustainable tourism in the state.

### **Other dimensions related with Sustainable Tourism**

It should be pointed out that government plan and policy on tourism has not been sensitive to local diversity. This diversity can be explained by taking example from the Khasi-Jaintia hills of Meghalaya. Traditionally, Khasi-Jaintia hills are divided into *Ki Thaiñ* (regions). When two persons meet and interact they prompt or refer to the region they come from. Nongkynrih (2001) highlighted that in the case of those villages and their residents of the upland plateau, running east to west are referred to as *Ki Khyrniam*; those residing in the eastern part of the *Khyrniam* plateau are referred to as *Ki Pnar*; those residing in the southern slopes bordering Bangladesh are referred to as *Ki War*; those in the western part of the *Khyrniam* plateau are known as *Ki Maram*; the area between the *Maram* and Garo hills are called *Ki Lynggam*; and *Ki Bhoi* are those who are settled in the northern slopes bordering the plains of the state of Assam. The clustering of villages into region-wise was an indigenous method of placing villages and their residents according to their landscape (both physical aspects and cultural aspects).

Such regions are located on different plateaus and they have distinct characteristics, i.e., some are situated on the upland, some on the lowland; some are located along steep hillocks or hills, and plain areas. The soil composition varies including climatic conditions. Each region has different kinds of forestlands including flora and fauna. There are variations at the levels of dialects, dress and festivals. Lastly, in these regions one can find varieties of food crops, wild edible plants, food items, and indigenous technology and knowledge. The variations of the landscape provide the conditions for the existence of varieties of agro-biodiversity, ecosystem and cultural practices.

A particular regional landscape has its own kind topography, climatic conditions, natural beauty, agro-biodiversity, food habits and indigenous cuisine, flora and fauna, beliefs and practices, local dialects, festivals, indigenous sports and various other cultural dimensions. Therefore, a regional landscape offers a distinct physical presentation of the place and cultural presentation of the social world. Hence, regional landscape demands a separate plan and approach as far as sustainable tourism is concerned. Each region in this sense is a landscape of its own. Thus, regional landscape can be a suitable model for policy, planning and implementation of sustainable tourism since most of the tourist sites are located in such regions. It is in the regional landscape that social interactions and social relationships between the host and visitors take place. The regional landscape, therefore, assumes significance for tourism in general and for sustainable tourism in particular.

Another aspect concerning regional landscape is the fragile slopes and hilly terrain where road transport is the major line of communication. For example, movements or transferring of persons and goods is shared by one and all along the common public road which could be a state highway or a village road. The landscape is shared by both host communities and visitors on daily basis. Some of the roads connecting to tourism sites are narrow and cannot handle large numbers of vehicular traffic. The road has to be accessible to all and this is leading to pressure on the available infrastructure and causing traffic jam and disturbing the movements of both host communities and visitors. Ensuring the protection of the fragile environment and ecosystem and ensuring smooth flow of vehicles for the common benefits is yet to be addressed by the government. The same goes in the context of tourist site protection or human security. It should be recognised that some of the tourism sites have their own limitations in terms of services and handling of the number of visitors visiting at one time in one place. The presence of large number of visitors in one place can create pressure both on the physical world of the landscape, the visitors as well as the residents. This aspect has been left unregulated by the government. If the government of Meghalaya is serious in achieving sustainable tourism, *Ki Thain* could have been adopted and applied as a conceptual tool in the plan and policy document including the requisite of sustainable tourism.

Lastly, tourism is inseparable from the social world, and there are other social dimensions that need to be understood for the purpose of achieving sustainable tourism. Tourism provides the ground for social interactions between the host and

the visitor. In this sense, tourism can also be seen from the Weberian view as social action and social relationship; 'social action which includes both failure to act and passive acquiescence, may be oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others... The "others" may be individual persons, and may be known to the other actor as such, or may constitute an indefinite plurality and maybe entirely unknown individuals' (Weber, 1968, p. 22). Weber further illustrated the connection between social action and money, 'Thus, money is a means of exchange, which the actor accepts in payment because he (she) orients his/her action to the expectation that a large but unknown number of individuals he is personally unacquainted with will be ready to accept it in exchange on future occasion' (ibid).

According to Weber (1968), social action can be categorised under four types: instrumentally rational; value rational; affectual; and traditional. In the context of tourism, the interaction is between the host and the visitor, in this type of interaction the medium of exchange is money for service, and can be said to be instrumentally rational action. Morrison (1968, p. 281) writes, 'Action is instrumentally rational when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends'. Thus, in the context of tourism both hosts and visitors are in a process of exchange and both do take into account the ends and means. This kind of social interaction creates the condition of social relationship, and social relationship is meant 'to denote the behaviour of plurality of actors insofar as, in its meaningful content, the action of each takes into account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms' (Weber, 1968, p. 26).

However, it should be pointed out that in the context of tourism, the host-visitor social interactions and social relationships is not merely a calculated relationship based on exchange of money and service. It is also an interaction of diverse background and cultures as both are from diverse ethnicity, class, race and culture. Efforts should be made to sensitise the visitors about local culture and the hosts should be trained on the art of handling visitors of another culture. This can enrich understanding and mutual respect. In Khasi-Jaintia hills relieving oneself on the roadside is considered bad manners and undignified. If one has to relieve oneself one has to be out of site. It is this reason that tourism cannot be seen only as an economic activity. Socio-cultural aspects are equally significant for both the hosts and visitors because tourism provides the scope for cross-cultural

interactions. The tourism plan and policy of the government of Meghalaya has not emphasised this aspect of cross-cultural interaction between social actors.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, one can say that tourism is a global phenomenon and it has assumed significance in the field of sociology, economics, commerce and cultural studies; and in the context of nation-states it is part of the developmental framework. It has both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. From the sociological viewpoint, tourism provides the ground of social interactions between social actors, that is, the host and visitors. It is at one level a social interaction and social relationship based on rational exchange of money and service, and on the other, meeting of diverse cultures. Another aspect is that tourist sites are located in regional landscapes, and regional landscapes have their own importance and significance to hosts and visitors. Tourism can be unsustainable or sustainable depending on number of factors such as policy and action plan framework, requisite of sustainable tourism and in particular regulation and enforcement, and implementation. Lastly, sustainable tourism is an outcome of integration of responsible and accountable network of social actors such as hosts and local communities, visitors, service providers, tourism promoters, and local governments.

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**Article: Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India**

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## Discursive Genres and Mobilisational Schemas: Re-reading Movement Organisation in Northeast India

--- Randhir Gogoi and Barnali Sarma

### *Abstract*

There is an absence of serious engagement by researchers, within and outside the Northeast India, with the imagined attachment to the image of the ‘migrant’ as the ‘other’ in conceptualising movement organisation, as well as with the many other discursive genres that form part of movement repertoires. Most of the earlier accounts worked around ideas of migration, class and ethnicity as structural factors and argued on premises where interactions of these structures were said to produce movements. Such arguments however, are not complete without including factors like factionalisms, inter-group alliances between groups that otherwise may have opposing narratives of ‘otherness’ and mobilisational schemas. This paper attempts to address these questions and follows a discursive approach that incorporates a framework of social-psychological ideas, new social movement theory and structuralist accounts of some of the major movements in Northeast India to theorise their organisational designs. In the process, the paper will highlight some of the major discursive genres and mobilisational tools used in their organisation.

*Key words: Discursive genre, Discursive limitations, Mobilisations schemas, Movement repertoires*

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### **Introduction**

A constant inter and intra-regional movement of people, drawing of new administrative boundaries and policies in the last century have triggered demographic changes and a re-distribution of economic and political resources, thus creating conflict of interests amongst communities of Northeast India. Further, the operation of a socio-political structure which associates cultural or ethnic identity with geographic space has led to certain communities, usually minorities, being labeled as ‘migrants’ and perceived as threats by the majority within shared spaces. Such perceptions have influenced the character of socio-

political movements in the region and have often molded collective organisation and action along lines of indigenous insider vis-à-vis the migrant outsider, even when issues having inter-group ramifications are at stake. Nevertheless, serious engagement by researchers, within and outside the region, with the imagined attachment to the image of the ‘migrant’ as ‘other’ in conceptualising movement organisation, as well as with the many other discursive genres that form part of movement repertoires has not been forthcoming. Most of the earlier accounts worked around ideas of migration, class and ethnicity as structural factors and argued on premises where interactions of these structures were said to produce movements<sup>1</sup>. Such arguments however, are not complete without including factors like factionalisms, inter-group alliances between groups that otherwise may have opposing narratives of ‘otherness’ and mobilisational schemas. Furthermore, what seems to be amiss from these works are the ways ‘modern’ processes of migration and identity formation have come to be psychologically adopted by communities here and how such adoptions also affect the cognitive thinking of people. And more importantly, allowing discourses to be converted into discursive genres which are then used as tools for mobilisation during movement organisation.

This paper attempts to address these questions and follows a discursive approach that incorporates a framework of social-psychological ideas, new social movement theory and structuralist accounts of some of the major movements in Northeast India to theorise their organisational designs. In the process, the paper will highlight some of the major discursive genres used in movement organisation. A major portion of the arguments are devoted to deconstructing the discursive genre of ‘migration’ and that of the ‘migrant outsider’, as it has affected the organisational schemas of numerous protest movements of the region. In fact, a closer look at movement goals and outcomes, strategies of mobilisations and alliances of several identity movements against ‘migrant outsiders’ seem to push the causality of migration as an ongoing process to the background, revealing more intricate political designs, struggles and motives. The paper also highlights the discursive limitations of mobilisational genres and focuses on analysing other discursive genres and forms of mobilisation and action beyond identity movements.

### **Perceptions of Identity and Migration: Colonial Givings, Post-Colonial Pickings**

Mobility and movement have significantly been tied to the modern world and its identity since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While there may be a few who argue that mobility of people is associated with ideas of suspicion, there have been significant others who accord it a legitimate space in the rise of modern identity. Cresswell (2006) outlines the various perceptions of mobility, negative and positive, and underlines that all of it makes up the modern world, the modern citizen. His work is however, about conceptions of mobility and movement in the western world. It is true, people in South Asia had a different sense of mobility in terms of migration than Europe, and it translated in the kind of ideas and choices people had or made to stay at a particular place. Babur mentions in his memoirs in *Babur Nama*<sup>ii</sup> how peasants had an option of shifting to villages which charged lesser revenue or sometimes they would flee to the jungle to avoid paying taxes. In a study to record migration of people in 19<sup>th</sup> century Saran district of Bihar, Yang (1979) states that people from this district were seasonal migrants who would visit the nearby districts as well as Calcutta in search of work during off-season in their fields. Such instances of mobility are also recorded by Scott (2009) in talking about how whole villages fled into jungles in rural Burma upon the approach of officials of the state. Northeast India, a region that lies at the convergence of the Indian sub-continent and the South-Asian massif, has also been characteristic of such mobility. The advent of colonialism in Asia led to alterations in cognition systems of people, which resulted in changes in the way groups and individuals look at migration, even as inter and intra-regional movement continued with gusto. However, there were physical changes in the directions and systems that informed this movement too. The dual effect has been felt in the post-colonial period, where negative perceptions of migration and the 'migrant' have led to a violent politics of identity in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural region like Northeast India.

The changes in perceptions as well as in the physical systems of migration from the colonial period were the result of a chain of processes that linked collective identity with 'space-centric' notions to create labels of indigenous and migrants. These processes were sparked with the need of a new colonial state to consolidate administration. And perhaps the most convenient way of doing this was by acquiring knowledge about the colonised. Colonial administrative systems looked to categorise and classify its colonised subjects into compartments on the basis of cultures, ethnicities and religions, which were then often assigned geographical spaces. Indeed, this was possible because of the large corpus of ethnographic, scientific and cartographic data collected by colonial recorders. This facilitated

control and allowed a mechanism of resource extraction. More importantly, elements of 'control' and 'reform' in colonial governance led to erosion of traditional ties of the village and space-centric ethnicity became the basis of collective organisation. For example, policies like Inner Line regulations and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Act, which were elements of 'control', also aided in the administrative separation of hills and plains, tribal and nontribal, but more importantly, they implanted a new cognitive and affective 'difference' in perceptions of collective identity. Even re-classification of pre-modern instruments for inter-group existence, like *Posa*<sup>iii</sup> further espoused this perceptual 'difference' making space-centric and exclusivist tendencies chief characteristics of identity definitions.

Of course the 'colonised' were more than mere receptors, as they too began to be participants of a new dialogue of representations and self-representations. A critical reading of 19<sup>th</sup> century census reports reveal how people from low caste communities wanted different enumerations and 'indigenous' enumerators blocked such acts<sup>iv</sup>. Even then, several entries did provide opportunities to families of lower castes to be enumerated otherwise. There are several other instances that we glean from a critical re-reading of such colonial sources, where communities and individuals established their indigeneity vis-à-vis other communities over shared spaces<sup>v</sup>; while at the same time the colonial agency also established such criteria for others. Thus, a new discourse emerged where communities were not only labeled indigenous and migrant to an area by colonial classifiers but communities themselves began constructing narratives that put themselves as indigenous and others as migrants/outside. Such changes however, have led to closed definitions of indigenous and migrant/outside in today's post-colonial Northeast India which produces a dual effect on movement occurrence and organisation. On the one hand, it delivers the overt causalities that inspire movements, especially identity movements; and on the other it helps in the construction and reception of select discursive genres that allow the amplification of movement mobilisations.

### **Migration and the 'Migrant' as Discursive Genres: A New Reading**

No doubt the movement of people happened with a much larger ferocity than in the pre-colonial times due to new requirements of labour from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in turn complicating demography and resource sharing systems; especially, when the British administration started a new process of bringing in labour from an over

populated East-Bengal through land grants and lucrative revenue offers, as well as through the indentured labour system for tea gardens. This has indeed contributed in the creation of a politics of identity as several groups compete with each other on at least some levels to acquire limited resources – political, economic and social. Besides this, several intra-regional issues like construction of large scale state infrastructure and river-bank erosion have also intensified demographic issues leading to displacement of people internally. This works as a cyclical system as competition for resources and movement of internally displaced people spill over into armed conflicts, further displacing people<sup>vi</sup>. According to Weiner (1978), in multi-ethnic societies that are part of the developing world, migration tends to have a destabilising effect and can arouse intense conflicts. In his pioneering work on migration in India, Weiner identifies three important concepts for understanding ethnic demography: notions of territorial ethnicity, dual labour markets and ethnic divisions of labour. Based on these premises, multi-ethnic societies in the developing countries compete for access to economic, political and social resources, as well as power and status. The motivations of movement organisation, especially for autonomy in the region, can be identified with such a theoretical premise as different ethnic groups fight over not only territorial control but also control over economic resources such as jobs and education within that territory. This idea, usually captured with slogans of ‘sons of the soil’ has been invoked many times in academic writings of identity movements in Northeast India. And the movements have no doubt been, for resources and territorial control against migrants.

Nevertheless, Weiner’s (1978) assertion poses some challenges in light of certain historical evidences. Migration was never a new phenomenon in the region, and to look for a historical causality, we will have to attribute it to the re-settlement of ethnic groups in assigned spaces and the inflow of new labour for agriculture and plantations, both initiated by British administrators, that changed the demographic structure and created a new visibility of it. However, even as structural factors have affected close-ended ideas of identity and negative perceptions of migrants, it is the adoption, definition and re-definition of the ‘migrant visibility’ through a constant process of repeated political speeches, pamphleteering campaigns, newspaper reports and the large corpus of academic writings that equate migration and identity conflicts which keep alive conflicting narratives of shared spaces and resources. Indeed, various agencies are able to transform such a discourse into discursive genres to be used for collective mobilisations. This is observed in socio-political movements that have been regular occurrences in

Northeast India and where there is an overbearing presence of ‘anti-migrant’ frames during mobilisation. For example, during the movement for jobs in 1970s Assam, the major mobilisational schema was based on the idea that indigenous Assamese were being deprived of jobs and preference was given to ‘outsiders’. Even regular electoral gains are garnered by local politicians mobilising along similar lines of indigenous and migrants. Chaube’s (1999) analysis of hill politics is replete with cases when regional parties, independent candidates as well as national parties like the Congress (I), CPI(M) applied the binaries to very localised spaces, pitting communities who had shared common space against each other for electoral victories.

‘Alarming trend of migrants to Nagaland worrying’ – *The Morung Express*, a daily in Nagaland had this particular headline on July 20, 2011. This is just one of the many such news reports that appear daily in various newspapers across the Northeast. The above news report also revealed that by 2015, 22,000 square kilometers of land in Bangladesh will submerge due to global warming producing six million refugees who will flow into Northeast endangering the cultures here. While noting the UN figures of *Bangladeshi* refugees in India for 2013, which is a little over three million<sup>vii</sup>, it is argued that gross misrepresentations in the media feeds migrant-phobia amongst the majority communities and fear of persecution amongst the minorities. Researches on social movements have produced evidences of ‘selection bias’ in newspapers, thus affecting what people read and don’t<sup>viii</sup>. Indications of such biases can be found in the media around the region as is seen in reports like the one published in *The Morung Express*. Furthermore, many cases in rural and interior areas can be documented how local issues of theft, land and other such petty conflicts are often depicted in frameworks of ethnic conflict. A case in the Assam-Nagaland boundary is in point, where encroachment by villagers into unclaimed land, which has been a natural process that happens from both sides of the boundary, has been reported as a case of outsiders grabbing the right of the ‘indigenous’<sup>ix</sup>. Thus, such troubled interaction of identity, politics and migration produced by different agencies keep alive binaries of indigenous and migrant in the memories of people, so much so that it features in informal networks of communications as a registered stereotype. The memories of registered stereotypes then occur in mobilisational and action repertoires of identity movements in the region.

An early post-independence era event that contributed to the accentuation of space-centric and exclusivist perceptions of identity was the state re-organisation

in 1955. Territorial ethnicity as a migration related discursive genre to be used for mobilisation gained momentum and a trend in identity movement organisation emerged where members of a group targeted minority communities within their asserted 'homeland'. This targeting even in much localised contexts was often preceded by labelling of communities as indigenous and migrants, where migrants were usually a minority in an area, even within shared spaces. The Assam movement, Hill State movement and the Bodo movement are some of the major movements where ethnic mobilisations have been conducted based on the indigenous-migrant binary. However, such mobilisations also followed strategic considerations in using the binary. The leadership during the Assam movement of 1979-85 against illegal migrants from Bangladesh sought alliance with groups which they clarified as outsiders/migrants like the *Marwaris* during the 1960s language movement and the food movement<sup>x</sup>. The Hill State movement sought to bring together all hill tribes into one fold by using the call for a tribal-non-tribal mobilisation scheme and where non-tribal groups were labelled 'outsiders'. Though it was a failure as only the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills were joined together to form Meghalaya in 1970, there were attacks even on some minority tribal groups like the *Vaipheis*. As Hawmazaul Vaiphei, a resident of Shillong, Meghalaya, reveals that his grandfather fearing the safety of the family contemplated shifting to Guwahati and even bought a piece of land there. Similar actions were also repeated in the Khasi Students Union (KSU) agitations of 2001, where anti-social elements targeted non-Khasis<sup>xi</sup>. In Mizoram, definition of indigenous does not include the *Chakmas* and *Tongchangyas* who are tribal groups of Bangladesh and are often targets of persecution<sup>xii</sup>.

Major incidences of violence have also occurred over questions of migrant intrusion; the Nellie massacre of 1983 is a gruesome example, where over 3000 Bengali-Muslims were hatched to death by surrounding tribal groups. The reason: they were *bahirogita* (outsider or migrant). Instances of violence during movement action showcase the discursive limitations of using frames that run on binaries of indigenous and migrants. The 'migrant' itself has become a category that often changes contextualisation and meaning as political leaders, activists and movement leaderships create new frames around it for mobilisation. Indeed, there is a constant change in the definitions as new alliances and intra-group divisions continue to form newer labels of indigenous and migrant. Moreover, the constant application of such labels and their continued changes in definition suggest a more complicated political power-play in the region. In case of the Bodo Movement, as recent as 2012, greater number of attacks were occurring on

Bengali Muslims, even as the movement repertoire of the Bodos have Adivasis in their categories of the 'other'. And although earlier clashes had occurred with Adivasis as well, it is precisely because Bengali-Muslims have the added tag of being illegal Bangladeshis, which make them easier targets of attacks. Furthermore, arguments portraying migration related conflicts as intra-class struggle between the middle classes of different ethnic groups have not accounted for the continued factionalisms within ethnic groups, and even amongst their respective middle classes. The *Assam Sahitya Sabha* which had been a middle class platform for organising identity centric movements withdrew from the Assam Movement when it began to show signs of violence. Sections of civil society in Meghalaya were against the KSU agitations of 2001 which was based on labels of indigenous and migrants. Such instances show that there are considerable differences in stands and views within ethnic groups and their middle classes as well and steer us towards re-thinking agency in the continued recurrence of anti-migrant sentiments.

One of the major reasons cited by the Assam Movement leaders was the taking over of land by migrants as well. The mobilisation in most rural areas was conducted through the use of such a frame. However, interviews conducted with information officer of the Nagaon district<sup>xiii</sup>, where large tracts of *char* or riverine land have seen settlement of Bengali-Muslims, revealed that most of them have been provided by government agencies. Even private land owned by Assamese people, were taken up for cultivation by the Bengali-Muslims through systems like *adhiya* where a share of the produce would go to the Assamese owners. Moreover, during the height of the anti-foreigners agitation where Bengali-Muslims were the target of attacks according to official reports, personal memories shared during interviews at villages like Phulaguri remembered how both Assamese and Bengali-Muslims attacked as well as safeguarded each other in some instances. On the other hand, in upper Assam areas like Sivsagar and Nazira, the movement took the shape of a conflict between All Assam Students Union (AASU) and Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) against Congress and Communist party members<sup>xiv</sup>. Thus, mobilisational frames were interpreted in different ways within the same movement. Local leaderships in these different places combined the messages and orders issued by the central leaderships with their own interpretations. For instance, even when the call for Assam Agitation was for a peaceful movement, various districts witnessed clashes not only between communities classified as indigenous and migrants but also amongst indigenous Assamese community divided along political lines as in Nazira or

Sivsagar. What is also observed is that sometimes the methods and goals set by central leaderships are not acceptable to certain participants and they break away creating factionalisms within the movement, thus reducing its potency for mass participation. The various off-shoots of the Naga Socialist movement and the Bodo autonomy movement are evidential examples of such cases.

There has also been a growing trend of land alienation amongst the tribal communities of the region, not only to migrants but within the group itself as certain members take advantage of rules of private property and take over community property resources. Glaring examples have been amply demonstrated by several writers about how changes in land use pattern, large development projects like dams have also caused displacement of people and land alienation. However, a multifaceted process is blurred by a discourse that espouses singular causality of land being acquired by ‘migrants’<sup>xv</sup>. Such a discourse offered by movement leaderships, political candidates, intellectuals and the media has been the common discursive genre for mobilisation during identity movements. Indeed, ‘frames’ designed by movement leaders as well as by electoral candidates using such labels for mobilisation have been one of the most successful ones as can be seen in the intensity of the Bodo Movement or level of participation in the Anti-foreigners movement. Trends highlighted by writers like Fernandez and Borbora (2009) help draw a critique of such labels working in the region, where alienation especially of land cannot be attributed to the ‘handiwork’ of the migrant and compels us to take a closer look at inter-group associations and alliances that cut across categories of indigenous and migrant. These trends are reflective of the limitations of migration as a discursive genre during mobilisation as inter-dependencies between ‘indigenous’ and ‘migrant’ communities may prevent participation. Another work by Fernandez (2005) about how changing labour requirements have brought Bangladeshi migrants, legal and illegal to be employed heavily into construction and mining in Northeast India is indicative of new inter-dependencies being forged. This reduces the affective power of frames that talk about employment being taken over by migrant workers leaving the natives unemployed.

### **Other Discursive Genres and Forms of Mobilisations**

Identity movements in the region have been particularly bloody and have more often than not involved inter-communal clashes. A number of studies have noted such ranges of behaviour during movements and have conceptualised identity as

being conflicted in the region. However, we here focus on forms of mobilisation like evoking martyrs, shaming and blockading. All these forms of mobilisations could be distinctly seen in the Assam Agitation, where the name of Khargeshwar Talukdar as the first martyr of the movement has been hailed in numerous speeches and pamphlets. While on the other hand interviews conducted in Sivsagar and Nazira district revealed that various school teachers and college professors were publicly shamed and even beaten for showing even a hint of non-support to the movement<sup>xvi</sup>. Also drawing from newspaper reports from leading dailies like Assam Tribune, New-Star (this paper is no longer in circulation), provide the numerous instances that blockades were carried out in front of educational institutions forcing them to remain closed during 1980 and later also blockading the Guwahati refinery. However, in the case of Assam Agitation it can also be said that these forms were not used in one consorted form to push forward for a 'permanent' solution. Local leaders in several districts sometimes worked, removed from the central AGSP and AASU leaderships, and at times even tried to extract personal vendetta. The case of Kunti Konwar and her daughter being murdered by unknown assailants under the guise of a movement procession still rings fresh in the minds of people of Mezenga village in Nazira sub-district<sup>xvii</sup>. The central leadership at Guwahati constantly reiterated their stand that the movement was non-violent; even then the very nature of it being one of pushing away foreigners could not have been totally a non-violent one.

Researches, intellectuals, movement leaderships, i.e. the politicised sections of the society, have pinpointed inadequate policy measures based on security concerns by the government as reasons for growing grievances and displacements of communities here in the region. Baruah (2005) configures something called 'cosmetic federalism' that dictates central state's tendencies of cutting down sub-national movements and maintaining authority. Other than that its own projects of massive infrastructure development and security procedures under acts like the Terrorist and Disruptive (Prevention) Act (TADA) and Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) have also contributed to the displacement of whole communities, creating new arenas of contestation and complicating movement discourses. Moreover, the steps that the Indian state has taken in the last fifty years to pacify ethnic unrest have also been based on colonial classifications with slight modifications, usually resulting in ad-hoc measures that satisfy collective aspirations only partially. Thus, this has always left space for dissatisfaction to be used as mobilisation capital during movement organisation.

Grievance in the form of neglect from the central government can be seen being evoked in speeches and pamphlets of various identity movements throughout the Northeast. To take the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam from 1979-1985, its pamphleteering campaigns constantly used 'neglect' in terms of resources and opportunities by the Indian State. Pamphlets issued by the main leadership All Assam Gana Samgram Parishad, The Assam Freedom Fighters Association, The Gauhati University Teachers Association, Sahitya Sabha Branches of Sonari, Jorhat, Nazira all had weaved a narrative where the migration from East-Bengal had been grossly neglected by successive governments at Delhi. Furthermore, writings like that of Tilottama Misra's (1980) *Assam: A Colonial Hinterland* provides further amplification of mobilisational frames of central government apathy during organisation. In fact, the carving of separate tribal states is also evoked as a 'grievance' and 'injustice' to the people of Assam who have always stood up for the Union of India.

In case of tribal groups organising movement frames, the sixth schedule, where certain groups are considered scheduled tribes while others are, not becomes a discursive genre. This schedule is seen to be a regular occurrence in the speeches and newspaper articles by several tribal groups of Assam who have been kept outside its ambit. Such dichotomies aid in the creation of collective grievances which are directed towards creating frames that feature forms like 'neglect' and 'deprivation' of a singular community in shared spaces. And more often than not the collateral damage in this process has been the physical uprooting of many minority communities within the same spaces. Assamese, Naga, Khasi, Bodo, all these groups have, in the course of their autonomy seeking movements, carried out warnings and attacks on minority communities in their respective territories, often labelling them 'migrants'. In fact, mobilisation schemas of protest agitations far removed from seeking autonomy have also deployed similar frames to garner movement support. As recent as September 2018, in an employee agitation for pending remuneration underway by employees of an essential ambulance service in Guwahati, the employee union in its interviews to media houses has expressed the apathy that its non-indigenous boss has displayed against Assamese employees<sup>xviii</sup>. In the light of the theoretical premise argued by this paper, this can be regarded as a strategic manoeuvre to garner maximum support and sympathy for their cause. Indeed, ideas of state apathy and neglect have provided necessary capital to a number of movements organised not only around the issues of identity and autonomy but also human rights, like the one led by the Meira Paibis of Manipur in 2005, and also development induced displacement like the 2012

Subansiri Anti-Dam movement in Assam. In many frames constructed by leaderships of these movements one finds expressions of ‘exploitation’, ‘rights violation’, and ‘insensitivity’ towards and of local community sentiments, directed against a centre that is constructed as the ‘outsider-other’.

The Meira Paibis movement against AFSPA represents a strong protest against a series of human rights abuse that has allegedly been conducted by the armed forces of the Indian state. Pradip Panjoubam wrote in August 7, 2004 edition of *The Statesman* that the AFSPA had been in full force for almost two decades, yet protests against its draconian nature reached flashpoint only in the past fortnight. These protests were sparked by the killing of a thirty-two year old Manipuri woman named Thangjam Manorama in July 2004; and the subsequent protest by middle aged Manipuri women, known as Meira Paibis, in front of the Kangra Fort at Imphal, the headquarters of the armed forces. However, what was unusual about the protests was the method adopted by the women. A dozen or so of these women stripped themselves naked and stood in front of the fort with banners asking for the Indian army to come rape them. This drew international coverage and outrage. Even then, *The New York Times* only reported in 2005 how Indian soldiers and forces ‘saturate’ this border state, and locals hold a seething sense of grievance against them. Nevertheless, the combination of protest techniques and mobilisational ‘frames’ that the Meira Paibis drew upon produced a new protest repertoire in Northeast India. They combined forms like personal connections, kin and clan based mobilisations, along with the idea of ‘body as a weapon’. Urvashi Buthalia (2010) writes ‘they dared the army to come and rape them, offering their bodies, using them as weapons, not to harm but to shame and humiliate’<sup>xix</sup>. Of course Meira Paibis movement against AFSPA atrocities is older than this particular protest, and earlier forms were more ‘dignified’ where they would hold torch marches at night out in the streets. However, the Kangra Fort protest was a complete new form where they commodified their bodies in protest and held India and the world in a guilt silence. Their protests led to a resurgence of the demand of the repeal of the AFSPA in Manipur. Furthermore, emotions here have also played a heavy role in the words of two of the leading Meira Paibis who were present on that faithful day. Nevertheless, even with such a drastic system of organisation, the Meira Paibis movement has its limitation as far as universal human rights are concerned. Meitei ethnicity plays a major role in its mobilisation schema as most of the women in the Meira Paibies are Meitei women. And while women of tribal groups in Manipur have not become its official participants, the AFSPA has affected their living too in most gruesome ways.

The anti-dam protest over the construction of the Subansiri dam from 2012 is one of the recent social movements organised with a large scale mobilisation schema. Large infrastructure projects such as this have often resulted in internal displacement of communities. Most times the result of faulty planning, and improper rehabilitation programmes for effected communities have created dissatisfaction and skepticism amongst many. Quiet protests since 2005 have been ongoing, mostly coming from sections of ecological activists and lawyers and later joined by AASU. However, it was only in 2012 when construction was scheduled, a well organised movement emerged led by a peasant organisation Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), aided by AASU<sup>xx</sup>. The movement repertoire here was a combination of various discursive genres that re-defined mobilisation for an issue that had inter-group ramifications. Perhaps, one of its kind in recent times, this movement showcases ways in which communities in Northeast India can overcome their closed identity frameworks and move towards the consensus range of behaviours for problem solving. Of course, we cannot argue that movements like this might find or have found more supporters in the region; however, we might take assurance that joint problem solving in the future through closer inter-communal associations and alliances might be a more trending ideology. Even though the composition of the protestors did not go beyond the locally inhabiting communities, the coming together of these inhabitants for a joint problem solving movement over shared space reveals a new cognitive structure in the making.

An overarching mobilisational frame deployed by movement organisers was indeed the apathy of the Indian state and its resource extraction plans, without providing proper relief and rehabilitation for the local inhabitants. Where in one instance KMSS claimed the support of more than 5,00,000 fishermen dependent on the Brahmaputra River, and using techniques like road blocks halted the delivery of construction materials for the Dam. KMSS was also able to draw experiences of other anti-dam movements across the country and also create communication channels with national and international organisations working for the same. Today, almost forty such organisations are working for the movement. Besides, other local organisations like the Duliajan units of AASU, AJYCP, Muttock Yuba Chatra Sanmilan, Tea Tribes Students Union, Gorkha Students Union, Brihottor Asomiya Mahila Manch and Nibonua Yuba Parishad have also provided mobilisational support to the movement in various ways. Taking out processions, these organisations, albeit using crude methods like

burning effigies, have been able to provide a level of awareness to local inhabitants as well as to the rest of the region. Some of the mobilised groups identified are: farmers, indigenous groups or traditional communities, landless peasants, local political parties, neighbours/citizens/communities, social movement activists, local scientists and professionals. And the major forms of mobilisation are blockades, boycotts of official procedures/non-participation in official processes, development of a network/collective action, development of alternative proposals, lawsuits, court cases, judicial activism, media based activism/alternative media, objections to the EIA, official complaint letters and petitions, public campaigns, street protest/marches, strikes. And mobilisational frames, other than state apathy and neglect, which have been used are environmental threats such as biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity), floods (river, coastal, mudflow), food insecurity (crop damage), loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, soil erosion, deforestation and loss of vegetation cover, groundwater pollution or depletion, large-scale disturbance of hydro and geological systems, reduced ecological/hydrological connectivity; and socio-economic threats such as displacement, loss of livelihood, loss of traditional knowledge/practices/cultures, violations of human rights, land dispossession, loss of landscape/sense of place.

Perhaps for some researchers the trajectory of this movement might imply a Nimby typology<sup>xxi</sup>, when actors here exhibited a localised reaction to the dam construction and the highly emotional reactions like the road blockages by complete prostration or the violent clash during a protest on December 27, 2011 in Lakhimpur<sup>xxii</sup>. However, judging from the number of issues around which mobilisation has occurred, including questions of 'quality of life' and the large network of activists and organisations that this movement has been able to create, we might argue that it goes beyond a mere Nimby typology; in fact, it can be characterised as a new social movement. Of course, to use Marc W. Steinberg's (2002) framework<sup>xxiii</sup>, the exhibitions of violence can be regarded as the limitations of the mobilisational frames and the discursive genres used. Furthermore, even with the relative success of the Subansiri movement, similar movements like the Pagladia or the Tipaimukh anti-dam protests, despite drawing local inter-group alliances, have remained isolated from each other. Thus, even as movement organisation in Northeast India have begun to move away from identity concerns only, the capacity to form sustainable inter-group networks remain weak, mostly due to the historical distrust.

### Concluding Remarks

This paper is a new attempt at understanding movement organisation and mobilisation that move beyond addressing them as resultants of structural phenomenon like migration or ethnicity. The author believes that socio-political movements are also effected by discourses and they operate using narratives forwarded by researches, memoirs, stories, etc. The paper begins with the argument that new ideas and perceptions of identity and migration generated from the colonial period have been re-interpreted by different agencies in post-colonial India to give rise to a new discourse that links the two. In the process, this inter-linkage helps in the creation of discursive genres around such perceptions to be used for mobilisations for political gains, movement organisations, etc. Furthermore, analysis have focused on how frames generated for mobilisation using the indigenous-migrant binary find amplification due to closed ideas of identity and negative perceptions of migration, also stating what its growing limitations are and can be in the future. Major limitations of deploying such frames are not only noted in restricted participation, and the reduced effectiveness of movement impact, especially when issues having inter-group ramifications are concerned. Furthermore, reactions of violence in many cases too, complicate problems of displacement and inter-group dynamics. The numbers of armed conflicts in the region are glaring examples of such interpretations.

Besides analysing discursive genres and frames related to migration and identity, the paper goes beyond identity-centric movements, especially from the ones seeking autonomy, and brings into focus new movements organised around issues of human rights violation and development induced displacement. Importantly, the focus lies in enlisting other forms of mobilisations that have been used in socio-political movements around the region, and which overlap with each other. Of course, in no way can we argue for a generalised pattern for all movements, even among identity based ones; nevertheless, similar forms have been borrowed from one movement to the other, re-arranging the combinations of frames and adding more according to localised settings.

Finally, this paper is a small step towards creating a new awareness in academic research for movement study in the region. It calls for a need to move away from tracing movements only to structural factors and assignment of agency only to 'vested interests', and focus on the organisational and mobilisation techniques, the problematic discourses and discursive genres that are kept alive by different

agencies. This in turn will allow researchers to understand why regular occurrences of such movements have failed to bring about a permanent peaceful solution to the region and why inter-group alliances over shared spaces are few or are not sustainable in solving problems that have inter-group ramifications.

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Notes:

<sup>i</sup> Guha, A. (1980). *Little nationalism turned chauvinist Assam's anti-foreigner upsurge, 1979-80*; Hussain, M. (1994). *The Assam Movement*; Baruah, S. (2008). *Territoriality, indigeneity and rights in the North-East India*; Sharma, M. (1988). *The Assamese middle-class and integration: The role of the Assam Sahitya Sabha*; Sharma, M. (1992). *The Assamese middle class and its attitude to ethnic polarisation in Assam: An analysis of Assam Sahitya Sabha*.

<sup>ii</sup> See Babur Nama (Memoirs of Babur) by Annette Susannah Beveridge (trans.). Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

<sup>iii</sup> Alexander Mackenzie describes *Posa* as blackmail, a tool used by hill groups to extract taxes and services from plains villages. However, *Posa* in Ahom regimes meant a 'right' to collect; and was often given to hill chiefs in lieu of certain tributes to be given to the Ahom king. A brilliant example is a stone pillar exhibited in the State Museum at Guwahati, which contains an inscription that notes the allowing of some Mishimi tribes right over certain villages in lieu of snake venom, used for various purposes.

<sup>iv</sup> Census Report of 1891, Assam; E.A. Gait.

<sup>v</sup> Archival files mention how the formation of a sub-district of all Mzemi Naga areas in Cachar Hills was stopped on the behest of the Kachari council in 1944/45. The Kachari council claimed that the Mzemi Nagas were in fact migrants to that area. (File no.129-C/46 at Assam State Archives). Also see Alexander Mackenzie, *Relations of Hill Tribes with the British*, (1886).

<sup>vi</sup> IDMC in a report '*This is our Land*' *Ethnic Violence and internal displacement in north-east India* released on November 2011 discusses the status of displacement in Northeast India. According to the report more than 8,00,000 people are displaced within the region as a result of: violence and displacement in Assam and Meghalaya states in December 2010 and January 2011; violence and displacement in Western Assam during the 1990s and 2000s; and violence and displacement from Mizoram state to Tripura state in 1997 and 2009.

<sup>vii</sup> The migrant profile files in the UN website counts the figure of the total Bangladeshi migrant stock at 3, 230,025 for 2013.

<sup>viii</sup> See Oliver, P. E., Roa, J. C. & Strawn, K. D. (2003). *Emerging trends in the study of protest and social movements*, pp. 223-225.

<sup>ix</sup> News reported in Pratidin Time, an Assamese news channel on November 21, 2017; Nagaland Encroaching Land in Assam, The Economic Times, July 14, 2009; 300 Nagas in Dimapur in Bid to Encroach Land in Assam, says Cop, Times of India, April 28, 2014.

<sup>x</sup> See Hussain, M. (1994). *The Assam Movement*.

<sup>xi</sup> See Srikanth, (2005). *Prospects of liberal democracy in Meghalaya: A Study of civil society's response to KSU-led agitation*, pp. 3990.

<sup>xii</sup> The Chakmas and the Tonchongyas are immigrants from the Chittagong Hill tract which lies in Bangladesh now. Some Chakmas are also displaced in Arunachal Pradesh where also they are considered migrants and are often targets of racial attacks.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Sumita Ghose (2010) *Dealing with Conflict and Violence, The Power of attitude*, pp 322.

<sup>xiv</sup> Incidences of mob lynching, especially of Bengali Muslims have been reported from Dimapur since 2015 and now Arunachal Pradesh has similar reports.

<sup>xv</sup> See editorial on land alienation: Fernandes, W. & Borbora, S. (2009). *Land, people and politics: Contest over tribal land in Northeast India*. Several writers from across the Northeast have written how land alienation cannot be attributed to migration alone.

<sup>xvi</sup> Interview conducted with former CPI members, Mr. M. Kalita (Principal at Naizra High School) and Mr. Boragohain (Former principal of Joymoti High School, Nazira).

<sup>xvii</sup> This particular case was remembered by more than ten households of the Mezenga village.

<sup>xviii</sup> Interview of protestors televised on September 8, 2018, in DY365, a local news channel in Guwahati, Assam.

<sup>xix</sup> See Urvashi Butalia's *The body as weapon*. Cited from Gill, P. (Ed.) *The peripheral centre voices from India's North-East*.

<sup>xx</sup> *Assam's dam crisis: Protests against dams are snowballing into a political movement in Assam* by Arnab Pratim Dutta (September 17, 2015) in Down to Earth.

<sup>xxi</sup> According to the *Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, a Nimby typology for a movement is applicable when actors show a. local and parochial attitudes, excluding broader implications; b. distrust of the project sponsors; c. high concern for project risk; d. highly emotional responses to the conflict.

<sup>xxii</sup> Anti-dam protest gets violent again, by Times of India Bureau (December 28, 2011).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Steinberg has used a dialogic framework to analyse Social Movements, where he argues that violence cannot be regarded as a spill over but is the use of agency by movement participants at different levels of the movement. For him, a movement is not always equivocal and there can be various ways that frames are interpreted by participants; and therefore also presents itself as a limitation of certain frames.

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Article: *Tuloni*: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society

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## *Tuloni: Experiences and Negotiations around Womanhood in Assamese Society*

--- Maitrayee Patar

### **Abstract**

Based on empirical field research, this paper critically looks at the different constructions around menstruation among women in Assam in terms of menstrual rituals, taboos and prescriptions, and lived experiences. It attempts to explore the negotiations that take place around menstrual taboos in the everyday experiences of the menstruating women and the complex role that individual agency plays in pushing the boundaries of these taboos. It looks into the traditional initiation rites of puberty that an Assamese girl has to go through at menarche, and tries to locate the structures of patriarchy that works through the menarche rituals. Women have been seen as central characters of this research and women's own perspectives have been kept on the front while arriving at an understanding of their everyday negotiations with menstrual taboos and prescriptions.

*Key words: Lived experience, Menstruation, Rituals, Sexuality, Taboos, Womanhood*

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### **Introduction**

*'Maah baati loi suli dhuaai diu oi Raam joubonot disaahi bhoi hey, Kunuba purushor kopaal hol mukoli oi Raam konya kaal hol aahi buli he.'*

(We'll wash your hair with grinded cereals for you have reached your youth now; The fortune of some man has smiled for you have reached your girlhood now)

(Assamese folk song on menarche)

Menstrual taboos can be understood as 'those customs that are found in society that publicly restrict the behaviour of a woman at the time of menstruation, and apply throughout most of a woman's life' (Shah, 2012, p. 63). The mention of menstruation and its discussion continues to inspire a feeling of awe among the

discussants and listeners. In most societies and cultures, the topic of menstruation has been that of avoidance, and menstrual experience is considered to be something that needs to be carefully tucked away under the clothes of dignity, shame, fear and honour. It is uncomfortable, and what is uncomfortable must be made invisible, or must be at least transformed to something which is socially acceptable, something which falls into the safe realm of normativity.

Heteronormative social values ensure the construction of gender norms and subsequent social situations which are normatively comfortable. Consequently, in popular mass representations for instance, menstrual blood changes its color from an uncomfortable red to a convenient blue; black polythene bags or newspaper wraps cover up an already packaged menstrual hygiene product. The discomfort that exists in both public and private spheres alike further tempers the social environment, and creates a social situation where the discomfort seems natural, leading the women to feel a certain guilt about her own body which bleeds. The sense of guilt reinforces the discomfort and vice-versa. Discussing menstruation as an experience and the causes of a social discomfort around it then becomes a taboo; something which cannot be overtly talked about, something the existence of which everyone is aware of but which is socially invisible. This social invisibility of menstrual experience has been knit around society in such a way that there has been a social tendency to consciously believe that menstrual experience does not exist.

Menstruation seems to have found expression in liberal spaces such as art and literature which claim to have created spaces for subversion; however, those can hardly be read or perceived as alternate perspectives as majority of those expressions have either conformed to or reinforced the existing cultural notions about menstruation; the flavour has always been prepared by keeping in mind attributes such as fertility, importance of womanhood, feminine shame, guilt and restraints around menstruation; most have only added to the discomfort. Even in relatively liberal spaces such as academia itself, critical discourse on the experience of menstruation has for long been a topic of discomfort, a taboo, resulting in an inadequacy of insightful academic literature on the mundaneness of the whole experience; the everydayness that constantly gets constructed and reconstructed around it has also not been covered. 'Everydayness' creates room for negotiations; to talk about everydayness of the experience of menstruation amid a conscious silence of the normative social environment then itself becomes an act of subversion.

A great deal of complexity surrounds menstrual experience of the Assamese women. In terms of enactment, the taboos which influence her menstrual life are a curious mixture of religion and culture. These taboos are neither exclusively religious nor are they only cultural. However, what shapes the unique nature of the menstrual experience of the women, and what also became evident from the field visits during this research is that, in this context, the religious and the cultural cannot be looked at in isolation from each other. The religious embodiment of the menstrual taboos gets manifested in such ways that these taboos come across as the celebration of an Assamese culture itself. These embodiments definitely play a crucial role in the overall shaping of the personhood of the girl. Moreover, the performative nature of the embodiments leads to a constant construction and reinforcing of a feminine self, sexuality and identity. As Butler (1990) argues, the signs of a fixed, naturally sexed bodily identity are nothing more than the products of performativity. The performative practices of everyday life help one to create implicit knowledge about oneself as a gendered being (Hauser, 2012). *Tuloni biya*, the fictitious marriage ceremony carried out in an Assamese household as part of the puberty rituals of the female adolescent of the house is highly performative in nature. Thus, the celebration of the menarche ceremony of the Assamese girl is something that seals her identity as a gendered being. With a critical approach towards understanding the ceremony of *tuloni*, the paper would try to discuss the socio-religious processes that lead to cultural constructions and lived experiences around menstruation.

The ethno-cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the state of Assam requires a researcher to specify his/her location of research, both in terms of physical as well as social geography. In the context of this research, the term 'Assamese woman' has been used to refer to the women who fall under the Assamese caste Hindu fold; the term has been used to also refer to the women who are members of an ethnic group in Assam, the Plains-Tiwas, that has been majorly influenced and assimilated into the greater Assamese identity, through the teachings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century religious and cultural reformer Srimanta Sankardev. How and why these women of the periphery came to adopt the Hindu patriarchal customs? What may have been the agency of women in the tribal way of life, and the possible residues of the same within the Hindu way of life? How do the anxieties of assimilation and alienation to and from a normative structure manifest in the lives of women? What are the nature of negotiations and bargains that women of different geographical and social locations exercise in terms of their caste, age and class? The paper attempts to address these not so physiological issues

pertaining to an experience that is universal to women and discuss the ways in which a physiological condition as menstruation morphs itself into religion and culture.

### **The Sacred and the Profane: Constructions and Fluidities**

Making sense of social meanings and of the interactions of competing social definitions are the situations that make the study of social processes challenging. Sophie Laws (1990) has looked at the social treatment of menstruation and how practices of a culture produce messages about male superiority and compulsory heterosexuality to women. Laws argues that menstruation also becomes important as symbol of femaleness, and that how a society deals with menstruation can reveal a great deal about how that society views women. She challenges the universal menstrual taboo theory which proposes that menstrual blood is inherently dirty and that men are naturally repulsed by a physical function they do not share with women. Laws argues that there exists an immense variety of cultural practices related to menstruation and it is not useful to reduce the complexity and variety of rituals, practices and beliefs around menstruation across different cultures to generalised statements about taboos.

In Assamese society, menstrual blood is considered inherently dirty and the contact with it in any form is discouraged. The perception of menstrual dirt is not only physical but also is symbolic of a pollution that transcends the body of the menstruating woman. However, the complexities prevalent in the Assamese attitude towards menstruation further complicate its understanding as an experience of women. A coherent observation of the menstrual attitude among the Assamese thus tends to point towards a paradox, both in terms of performative practices and social experience of the women. The question that emerges is then on the nature of the taboo itself – on many levels, menstrual taboo in Assam comes across as a mixture of sacredness, profaneness and convenience. While the sacred and the profane can be understood in terms of formal representations, convenience works more in terms of the informal everyday mundaneness. The construction of the woman – her self, sexuality and personhood – has to be understood within the realm of these formal and informal representations.

According to Mircea Eliade, ‘the first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane’, and ‘man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane’.

(Eliade, 1957, p. 10-11). This view of Eliade was derived from the early Durkheimian view of the sacred as ‘things set apart and forbidden’ (Durkheim, 1995, p. 44). Durkheim had argued that ‘sacred things are the things protected by prohibitions, and profane things are those things to which prohibitions are applied and they must keep a distance from what are sacred’ (ibid, 38). This binary approach towards sacred and profane has been critiqued by sociologists of later times, since the evolution of social theory has proved that the idea of sacred and profane cannot be understood in terms of a dichotomy between the two; social realities are dynamic and complex, and boundaries of these realities are always fluid.

The mystery around menstruation makes it appear as a sacred one, and at the same time social construction of pollution makes it a profane affair. An attempt to transgress the boundaries thus has to be actions that are carried out with the knowledge that the self or the agency of the individual is itself a construct or an ensemble of all the social relations and discourses around one.

The ideas of sacredness, monstrosity, fear and mystery have to be understood in connection to each other and not in isolation; the sacred demands a certain acknowledgement of mystery, and the mysterious has connotations of monstrosity, or uncertain social attributes; this uncertain or monstrous character needs to be feared. What is feared requires that it is tabooed; it is thus possible that the cultural taboo on menstrual blood and the menstruating female body may have had been originally derived from a kind of fear of the monstrous unknown. Sacredness and taboo thus also go hand in hand. Analysis of cultural history of menstruation suggests that menstruation as a space of seclusion has always been a complex site of constructing culture. It is true that acknowledging this site requires an acknowledgement of the androcentrism that surrounds the understanding of culture; however, studies of societies like Yurok indicate how menstrual seclusion in fact may have played pivotal role in giving birth to culture itself (Buckley, 1982).

### **Menstrual Taboo and the Fluid Feminine: The Case of Kamakhya**

In the context of Assam, the power of the menstruating Goddess Kamakhya is considered as something that is immensely potent. It is her ‘sacredness’ that creates a yearly taboo of three days on her believers whereby the space occupied by the Goddess becomes a tabooed space for the ‘visiting others’. However, this

is interesting and points towards a paradox, as for any other regular Assamese woman the taboo is reversed; it is her mobility that is restricted rather than the other members of household or the community. Thus, the menstrual taboo imposed on the woman primarily rests on the idea of her profaneness, whereas the menstrual taboo of Goddess Kamakhya essentially represents her sacredness, involving restriction not on the Goddess but on her believers. The fluidities and contradictions of social constructions around menstrual taboos become evident here.

Kamakhya is worshipped for her power to provide fertility; during menstruation this power is believed to be heightened, hence more sensitive, thus resulting in her seclusion from any profane distractions. Amlan Jyoti Sharma (53), a *panda* (local priest) of the Kamakhya temple said,

*She is more a mother than a Goddess. She holds the power to fertility. It is because of her that we exist. Throughout the year mother keeps her arms open for us. It is (in) these days that she rests. It is not wise to disturb (her). We can't dare to touch (her) during this stage.*

(Interview taken during researcher's visit to annual Ambubachi Mela, 06.08.2016)

A state of sacredness similar to that of Kamakhya is also extended to earth during this time. The Assamese community attributes this menstrual sacredness to *Basumati* (colloquial term for earth) as well, since Basumati and Kamakhya are believed to menstruate at the same time. For seven days, people restrain from any activity of digging, cutting or harvesting, or sitting directly on earthen floor. The earth which is the most mundane character in the everyday of an average Assamese suddenly gains the character of the sacred.

Mr. Sharma added,

*Cooked food should be avoided for these days. Both the mothers are at rest... She holds us all the time... so now (we) should not cause disturbance... no digging of soil or cutting of trees, forest... and only dry food and fruits are to be consumed.*

(Interview taken during researcher's visit to Ambubachi Mela, 06.08.2016)

The above perception of the ritual rest of Basumati and Kamakhya, which is inherently pure and of high honour, can be seen in relation to the profane idea of rest around menstruation of a regular Assamese woman, along with the idea of pollution and shame that surrounds her everyday. The perception of rest is reversed in case of the latter. In case of Kamakhya, the ritual rest restricts the commoners from visiting the Goddess, wherein rest for a regular menstruating woman suggests a restriction on the latter. This restriction is highly spatial in nature, though it latently extends to a ritual restriction on the woman in terms of her physical movement to certain spaces which are considered ritually pure.

Contrasting values in representation of pollution and shame can also be seen in the portrayal of the menstruating Goddess and in the experience of the menstruating woman. Pollution around the menstrual period of Kamakhya involves everything else excluding the Goddess herself. This is implied from the fact that on the third day when the temple reopens, pieces of the red cloth soaked in her symbolic menstrual blood is distributed among the believers as holy possession and a carrier of power and luck, thus proving that menstrual pollution does not apply to the Goddess. It is the profane woman who is considered polluted when she is menstruating, and her pollution has to be done away with throughout the period of menstruation, which is essentially carried out through a spatial as well as ritual seclusion, forbidding all sorts of physical contact with the woman and her menstrual blood.

A subsequent shame follows. The shame is primarily derived from the physical source of menstruation, i.e. the vagina. The vagina is something which the woman is socialised to be extremely conscious of; she is encouraged to conceal its existence in all possible ways, until marriage. Marriage is the only social institution within which the woman is expected to exercise her sexuality without an attached sense of guilt or shame – a socially sanctioned way to put the vagina into use, suggesting more of a reproductive purpose than that of pleasure. Menstruation implies an active, physical involvement of the vagina, and a self-repeating, acknowledgement of its physical existence which cannot be controlled; hence, the shame. This is in direct contrast to the values that inspire the worship of Goddess Kamakhya, the physical representation of whose existence is her ‘sacred’ vagina.

Thus, in a way, both menstruating Kamakhya and the menstruating regular woman become a taboo for a specific period, but the former becomes a sacred

taboo restricting others' mobility while the latter becomes a profane taboo, a pollutant, resulting in restriction of her own mobility; this becomes clear in their respective manifestations.

The ritual celebration of menarche of the Assamese girl also marks an embodiment of the social values of menstruation. Processes of gendered socialisation ensure the gradual construction of the 'woman' from birth itself, and subsequent internalisation of an assigned femininity works from pre-puberty. However, in the case of an Assamese girl, her menarche celebration or tuloni biya serves as a rite of passage that socially leads her to concrete ways of 'becoming' a woman.

### **The Tuloni Biya: Sealing 'Womanhood'**

The menarche in an Assamese household is an event. Bonti Kalita (name changed), a respondent from Karakushi, Sarthebari in Nalbari district, described:

*In Assamese culture, when a girl is flowered it is an event, and the culture of celebrating this event has been here since time immemorial. We call it Tuloni Biya. It is also known as Shanti Biya in some parts of Assam. The puberty rituals of the girl begin from the moment the first blood is spotted. She is sent into seclusion for seven days and on the seventh day she is purified and her biya is celebrated. It is a feast and everybody eats, sings and dances. In earlier times, in any household with a girl child, marriage of the girl used to take place before reaching her puberty. This was called 'aag biya'. After aag biya the girl was supposed to stay in her natal house, till she reached her puberty. On reaching puberty she was sent to her conjugal home after celebrating a second marriage ceremony called shanti biya or tuloni biya. Aag biya doesn't happen anymore since people started getting educated about child marriage. Girls have started going to school since long back. Tuloni biya is still celebrated as a token marriage. You'll find it all across Assam. I feel it is a way of staying connected to the culture of past. It is also a very happy occasion. We women have greater responsibilities towards our culture. I think it (tuloni biya) is a great way of telling our girls that they are now grown up. Moreover, parents have a fear that our girls might elope after*

*tuloni biya. To be able to marry off a girl properly is thing of great honour and respect. It is a big thing for the parents. But you never know about the future. So parents take the opportunity to celebrate beforehand through shanti biya... though in both of my daughters' tuloni biya I had prayed that I get to celebrate their bor biya (real marriage). I am thankful to God as I could fulfill that wish. Both my girls are happily married.*

(Bonti Kalita, 62, Sarthebari, in-depth interview, 02.08.2016)

When a girl attains puberty in a regular Assamese household, she is immediately sent to a seclusion of seven days. A makeshift bed is set up in a separate room. No one except the mother and a few close female relatives are allowed to enter this room during these seven days. Entry of any male member, even the father or male siblings is prohibited. The prohibition is not only in terms of physical meeting but also in terms of sound and light. No male voice should reach the girl and vice versa; she has to be kept away from sunlight. The girl has to go through two ritual baths in these seven days, the first bath on the fourth day of menarche and the second on the seventh day of menarche. The seventh day usually marks the end of the rites of passage, a series of puberty rituals that are carried on during the weeklong seclusion, and it culminates with a fictitious marriage ceremony of the girl. This marriage is called the tuloni biya.

Tuloni in Assamese means 'to carry up', and biya refers to 'marriage'; thus tuloni biya can literally be translated to 'a marriage which uplifts the girl'. The symbolism involved in this upliftment bears multiple connotations for the girl's understanding of her own life thereafter, and the term has been interpreted in multiple layers (Devi, 2014). Apart from the ritual upliftment, tuloni definitely implies a kind of 'social' upliftment for the adolescent girl. It signifies her first ritual initiation into a sexual being, her socially elevated status as a fertile, menstruating, hence sexually eligible female. It is interesting because this initiation also directly marks the girl's transition from a non-sexual being to someone who is made aware about her sexuality; but this awareness is more often of shame and subsequent guilt, and involves suppressing the sexuality she is becoming conscious of. Thus from the perspective of gender, the tuloni or social/ritual upliftment bears significance not because it elevates the girl's social status to a sexual and fertile being, but because it generates social situations which initiates the girl into a status of restraint, thus conditioning her to behave in particular ways.

### **Menarche: Pressure of Attaining Puberty**

For the Assamese, attaining puberty bears great significance, since it confirms that the girl is now a fertile female. The patriarchy in Assamese society is hegemonic and is almost always served with euphemism in everyday life of the members; perpetuating the patriarchy then becomes an implicit responsibility of the stakeholders, women being the most important carriers of the same. The implicit responsibility works as a form of guilt on the pre-pubescent girls. The confirmation of fertility thus comes as a relief to the girl herself. Reaching menarche becomes a passive pressure on the young girls, at multiple levels, and for multiple reasons. Togor (name changed), who had attained her menarche about a year ago, shared:

*I was late. All my friends and female cousins of (same) age have had their tuloni. I was the sakhi in my friend's biya before (my) tuloni. I also drank the water. They say you immediately have it (menarche) if you do so... yes, it is embarrassing, especially when you are publicly asked by the aunties when your biya (is) happening.*

(In-depth Interview, 30.07.2016)

If one or more peers have had their tuloni biya, then the pressure further increases. Though the nature of this pressure appears passive, it actually casts tremendous influence on the young girl's psyche; this pressure also continues to stay with her throughout her life as a woman. In a typical tuloni biya, the girls who are yet to receive their menarche are jokingly taunted by the elderly women and given ritual water from the biya. This is carried out as an attempt to make the girls menstruate at the earliest. The social importance bestowed upon the fertility of a female member becomes interesting here.

### **Puberty Rituals: The Stage of Liminality and Construction of the 'Feminine' Woman**

Using a functionalist view to explain the role of ritual and religious processes on the individual, Arnold van Gennep (2004) wrote about rites of passage to describe the transition of individuals from one social status to another. He termed this phase of transition as liminal phase. Initiation rites have particularly well-marked liminal periods, where neophytes typically are removed, secluded, darkened, hidden, without any social rank; in terms of social structures, neophytes are invisible.

They are neither here nor there, no longer a child, nor an adult. The ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed in a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualise social and cultural transitions (Turner, 1969).

The role of ritual practices in the creation of belonging is very significant (Douglas, 2002). Just like belief is a step beyond knowledge, belongingness is a step beyond mere membership. Human social interdependence requires that at least some of the memberships become solidified into something potent and secure- in other words, belonging. The best way to understand rituals' epistemic and integrative functioning is to begin with its most universal and salient aspect- its practices. The effects of rituals that generate belongingness are mostly found among rituals accompanying life transitions. Initiation ceremonies ensure that one's subjective sense of belonging change with objective membership, and that old bonds and identities are relaxed and new ones are forged; effortful nature of ritual practices is fundamental to the creation of belief and belonging. Ritual practices also construct the individual's perception of self, apart from affecting one's knowledge structure (ibid, 2002).

Assamese puberty rituals can be looked at as a rite of passage as it initiates the girl into the social group of fertile, sexually eligible women. However, a phenomenological perspective of the puberty rituals of the Assamese girl requires a critical analysis of the functionalist positivist understanding of these rituals as rites of passage as provided by Van Gennep (2004) and Victor Turner (1967). Similarly, while Douglas (2002) provides a functionalist understanding of ritual practices, he appears to ignore the latent and manifest control the individual experiences while carrying out the ritual practices.

As mentioned earlier, in most parts of the Assamese society the puberty rituals of an Assamese girl begin from the moment of her first bleeding. The girl informs the mother, or anyone of the elderly female relative, who immediately takes her to a corner of a room. The room has to be an isolated one with no sight of the sun and the moon, and men. She is then draped in a new/clean pair of hand-woven traditional Assamese dress called the *mekhela saador*; a makeshift bed is made on the floor in the corner of the room and she is made to sit on it. A few women, usually neighbours, gather in the room and collectively perform *uruli*, a ritual chant without words. After this the relatives approach the astrologer who then examines the time and stars under which the girl had attained menarche and prescribes appropriate rules and regulations to be followed by the girl for a period

of time. These rules are called *vidhana* and may last from a period of seven days to that of three months, depending on the prescription by the astrologer. For the first three days, the girl is allowed to eat only fruits. On the fourth day, as per the time prescribed by the priest, she is given a ritual bath by the women, mostly neighbors and relatives, with grinded cereals and mustard oil. The old clothes are changed and new mekhela saador is draped. All other clothes used by the girl are also replaced by new ones. The girl is made to sit on the newly made bed along with a few other young girls, and all of them are fed fruits, cereals, milk, roasted grinded rice, etc. The womenfolk too are offered food, and blessings are sought before they leave. From the fourth day onwards, the girl is made to eat only fruits during the day, fast through the evening and eat *siddha bhaat* (boiled rice with sea salt and cow ghee) at night as prescribed by the priest. From the same day, the girl is given separate utensils to prepare her own food until her *vidhana* ends. The mother and other relatives see to it that the utensils and clothes used by the girl for the seven days of rituals are in good shape, preferably new. In most cases, the girl is either fed on banana leaves or on stone utensils; this is done with the hope that the girl develops a moral character as strong and firm as stone. In the early morning of the seventh day, the girl is given a ritual bath. The water used for the bath has to be brought by the womenfolk from a nearby water source. An elephant ears plant and a young banana tree are planted in the place of bath. The banana tree symbolises the girl's husband and the smaller plant symbolises a son, and the girl bows and prays before both the plants after the ritual bath; the bowing and the prayer of the girl signify her seeking for a husband and a son and offering her youth for their good.

The enactment of the entire ceremony of *tuloni biya* is accompanied by a mixture of folk and ritual songs portraying the life journey of an adult, eligible woman. From extracting water from nearby water source to the ritual bathing and prayer to the dressing of the bride, these songs describe the cultural significance of *tuloni biya* in explicit details. These folk songs which are exclusively sung by womenfolk are popularly called *biya naam* (wedding songs).

### **Representation of the 'Assamese' Woman in Biya Naam: Portrayal and Appropriation of Gender**

The universe of humans is hugely symbolic and not merely physical. The web of diverse human experience is usually knit through various symbols, which in turn addresses culture. Language usually plays a significant medium of this symbolic

universe. Language then also becomes a carrier of culture, and the use of language in imposing meaning to a particular experience becomes a way of asserting culture. Biya naam or wedding songs are folk songs sung by women throughout the ceremony of an Assamese marriage (Devi, 2014); tuloni biya is a symbolic wedding ceremony of the girl attaining puberty, and biya naam is thus an integral part of this fictitious yet significant arrangement of marriage.

The biya naam is a way of depicting the importance and significance of each ritual action through performativity. These ceremonial songs are instrumental in portraying the social significance of attaining puberty and henceforth, of being a woman. An analysis of the biya naam sung in tuloni biya presents one with a deeply rooted patriarchal structure of the Assamese society. However, biya naam also becomes an interesting and a very significant element in the understanding of the experience of menstruation, not because these songs depict the existing culture around menarche celebration, but because the content of these songs point towards a way in which women understand their own experience of menarche in particular and menstruation in general. A subtle yet distinct existence of subversion that is evident in these folk songs becomes important in analysing women's perception of their own lives, in terms of how they see themselves in a societal structure that is otherwise deeply patriarchal in nature. This perception cannot be observed as a resistance to the existing structure, but has to be understood as a consciousness among the women, of the patriarchy at work.

A few examples of the various biya naam are given below:

On spotting the first menstrual blood:

*O dear,  
Your friends are now left behind  
You reached this stage this young O dear,  
you're in deep trouble now  
All these seven days our dear has been in trouble  
But now she is out and we're here for her  
Our dear is so young and she has reached youth already  
Wouldn't it be wise to think of her marriage now?*

On purification bath:

*Our dear is so young and she has reached youth already  
It wouldn't be wise to keep her for long.*

On femininity and fertility:

*O dear your fingers are like flowers  
And your eyes, stars of heaven  
O dear now that you are ready  
We pray to God with all our heart  
That he graces you with a groom like lord Ram who will get for  
our dear, delicious fruits  
Who will get for our dear, sweets  
O lord who will get for our dear,  
Aniruddha Konwar from the heavenly city of Dwarka*

Puberty and the rituals through which it gets manifested thus also directly impact the construction of sexuality of the Assamese girl. As described earlier, shame is a very necessary ingredient in the construction of the sexual woman. It is a kind of necessary shame as menstruation indicates fertility, but an overt display of this fertility becomes embarrassing. The complexity of this dual existence complicates the woman's understanding of her own sexual self, leading mostly to passiveness. Baishya (2015) writes that in the larger established cultural knowledge of Assamese society, the social attitude towards sexuality is discriminating against women. He states that the sexuality of the Assamese woman is to be understood as a 'chained sexuality'. Sexual freedom of men is taken as given, whereas that of the women is limited to marriage. Adultery by men is considered a natural flaw that can be ignored by social sanctions; adultery by a woman is however unacceptable. The woman is expected to suppress her sexuality and her sexual desires until she finds her husband, the right, suitable and able man.

The 'ideal' Assamese woman is a beautiful, educated, humble young woman who is honest and holds a firm moral character and who is also an expert in managing a home. The social processes that lead to the construction of this package of femininity and womanhood have to be seen in the light of women's own understanding of this construction and in terms of interpersonal relations that get formed everyday throughout her life, the strategies and negotiations through which she exercises her individual agency, in family and in marriage, at home and at work, and how power operates in all of these relations and what role age plays in such operations. The construction of this femininity has to be understood also in terms of her perception of her own sexuality and the experience of sexuality and sexual decision-making in her everyday life. The stress on female sexuality

and reproduction are part of the requirements of patrilineal systems, and the particular way in which they are expressed in the Indian context have to do with the ideology and language of caste. The ideology of motherhood as developed in patrilineal systems subsumes the category of woman in that of a mother, and sublimates the erotic (Ganesh, 1990), basically purifying sexuality towards the utility of fertility, i.e., motherhood.

### **Menstruation as a lived experience**

Drawing from Simone de Beauvoir's famous argument 'one is not born, but, rather becomes a woman', Judith Butler writes about how gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realising possibilities, or as a process of interpreting the body, thereby giving it a cultural form. For Butler, it is in this sense that to be a woman is to become a woman, and not merely a matter of adhering to a fixed ontological status in which one could be born a woman. Becoming a woman is rather an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting the received cultural possibilities (Butler, 1986).

In the Assamese context, becoming a woman has a lot to do with the socialisation that works together with gender norms to create the feminine woman. A feminist understanding of menstruation as an everyday social experience of women thus has to be seen in the light of the socialisation of the girl, and as the process which goes on to shape the perception of her own self as an adhering, normative, heterosexual, feminine woman. Norms, values and cultural beliefs transform into inner reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of the women in ways which the specific feminine identity that gets constructed through internalisations seems natural to her. The identity that gets constructed by socialisation in early life gets repeated and reinforced in the further life experiences of the women. This constructed identity also impacts and gets impacted upon by the social, interpersonal and intimate relations that constitute the woman's life. This identity, thus, is not a passive construct of socialisation; rather it has to be seen as an active contributor in the formation of further identities of the woman, while constantly interpreting and reinterpreting and reinforcing itself in the woman's life.

If one analyses the experience of menstruation from a feminist perspective, it can be understood that the internalisation of feminine identity with respect to menstruation gets exercised in ways that women themselves become the agents of a patriarchal structure. Almost all the actors are women, and the cycle of

discrimination and violence expresses itself where these women themselves are the central characters, carrying out enactment of taboos and prescriptions in their own lives and in their intimate and social relationships. Strategic absence and convenient distancing of men from the social enactments of menstrual experience of women points towards an interesting realisation – the nature of installation of patriarchal structure in the women’s lives makes it appear that the patriarchy that gets perpetuated in the everyday experiences of women has women as the central perpetrators, instead of men. The lived experience of menstruation among the Assamese women comprises of many such instances of participation within this strategic installation of a patriarchal structure.

In a social environment that operates through normative heteronormativity, the centrality of marriage and childbearing in women’s sense of identity and personhood work in a way that is perceived as women’s destiny. Hindu texts and rituals glorify marriage and motherhood, and most of the times it is observed that this glorification gets translated into the woman’s own idea of her perception of the ‘ideal’ femininity. The women failing to bear children thus become a source of shame. This social importance given to fertility and a subsumed sexuality expressible only through marriage finds expressions in the experiences of menstruation of the Assamese women. For instance, Ms. Paahi, a respondent shared:

*I had irregular periods since my girlhood. I have always suffered from malnutrition. My menarche was very late. I remember everyone saying the pale flower had finally bloomed. After marriage I did not have a child for 4 years. My husband and in-laws were worried that I would not be able to bear any. I badly wanted to become a mother. Everyone was happily shocked when I gave birth to a son. But it was both happiness and relief for me.*

(In-depth interview, 15.07.2016)

Women’s sexuality is affected by the socialisation into female sex roles and the subordinate status attached to it (Miller & Fowlkes, 1980). Sexual autonomy can be said to be intrinsically related to social, economic and political autonomy. This autonomy has historically been readily available to men as a result of the unequal distribution of the available resources, both physical and social. The attempt here was to understand how sexuality is perceived and exercised in the everyday life of women with respect to their experience of menstruation. Looking through the lens

of the mundane, sexuality is treated as a very sensitive, intimate and covert relationship of the Assamese woman with herself. Most often than not, discussion around sexuality in a social group or setting is euphemised with words that imply romantic love. Sexuality is thus expressed through the symbolisms of everyday life. However, realisation of being a sexual individual first comes to the woman through her first encounter with menstruation. However, what one finds is that the realisation of sexuality has more to do with the social sexual than the biological sexual, and it also comes across as an important reality about the socialisation of the Assamese girl. The following excerpts from some of the interviews illustrate this point:

*My friends had discussed now we could get married to boys. I remember I first got to know from them only that we all could get pregnant now. It was so scary. I was scared to be near boys. I wanted to tell my mother about this but did not know how to say. I now know it was stupid. But I obviously did not want to get pregnant then. I was very scared.*

(Nihali, 25, in-depth interview, 16.06.2016)

*I had felt like a real bride. I was dressed like a bride. Everyone was saying that I had grown up and I should behave properly from now onwards. I remember everyone giving me blessings and praying that I get a good groom soon. They brought me a lot of gifts too. It was awkward. I remember having some strange feelings inside. There was shame. My relatives had asked me to mingle less with boys. I told them I had male friends in school and in tuition. They said it cannot be the same anymore. Maybe it was actually not the same. I myself had felt very different after coming out after seven days. Everybody knew that I had tuloni. My friends had later teased me. I have a lot of male friends now. But I was so ashamed then.*

(Rimli, 28, in-depth interview, 30.07.2016)

What is evident is that the first encounter of the women with the idea of sexuality vis-à-vis menstrual experience is layered with the feelings of fear, confusion, awkwardness and shame about one's own body. It is also because 'growing up' of the woman is always seen primarily in relation to or as a pre-event of a greater event of her getting married to a man. The constant reminder of being 'ready' for

someone else, someone superior can be seen as creating pressure on the girl's perception of her 'self', thus confusing her perception of her own sexuality. The first memory of the social encounter of the woman with her own sexuality being that of fear, shame and confusion of the newly achieved sexual status, thus negatively impacts her ability of sexual decision-making.

Another important factor that influences the menstrual experiences of Assamese women is age. The social position of the Assamese women has much to do with her social as well as her biological ageing. While biological ageing implies the natural ageing process of the woman with time, social ageing can be understood as the elevated social status of the woman, which again has to be seen in terms of her changing relations at home. Transition from being a maiden to being a wife, and that from being simply married to being a mother and so on leads to changes in the everyday menstrual experiences of the women. What has been observed is that the strictness of menstrual prescriptions and taboos get diluted on many occasions for the married woman as compared to the unmarried ones. This further loosens when one experiences motherhood. The relation of changing social status to the changing experiences of taboos speaks something interesting about the nature of individual agency of women in patriarchal structures – that agency of the woman in her everyday has to be understood in terms of her interpersonal and intimate relations – that the status of being married, the ability to bear children then make ways for elevated social positions for the women.

The factor that becomes extremely relevant when analysing the loosening of taboos with respect to ageing is sexuality. For the Assamese woman, a decreasing sexuality works as a factor of decreasing taboos. The pressure of menstrual taboos decreases with increasing age and decreasing sexuality of the women. These taboos finally come to an end with the woman attaining menopause. Menopause in this sense can be seen as a way of accessing power, as decreasing sexuality with age enables increasing power. Thus, in terms of menstrual experience, sexuality is inversely proportional to access to power. Increase in age also leads to change in performative practices of gender. There is a kind of social exposure that builds for the ageing/menopausal women which facilitates greater networking, enabling them to socialise more. Attached to it is a sense of permanent purity which derives from permanent infertility. This idea of permanent purity deriving from permanent infertility again points towards a complex nature of the perception of infertility among the Assamese society. What is infertile is pure, but it is only the infertility that is induced by ageing and menopause that qualifies for

a status of purity. Infertility at young age, i.e. inability to menstruate at all, puts the woman at the lowest step in the ladder of hierarchy of all social relations. Menopause provides women with a social identity that is pure and is devoid of any 'dirt'. It also enables her to access spaces that had otherwise been inaccessible to her, thus enabling her to climb the social ladder and placing her higher in the hierarchy of the social relations that surrounds her everyday life.

### **Conclusion**

The primary aim of this research was to look at menstruation as a lived experience, to document the narratives of how the 'ideal' feminine woman is constructed through a series of taboos and performative practices, and how the everyday experiences of menstruation contribute towards the construction of gender. Butler (1986) writes that to be a gender is to be in an ongoing cultural interpretation of the bodies, and hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities. Drawing from this understanding of gender, I have used empirical data and existing narratives around menstruation in Assam to analyse how the representations, contestations and contradictions in the construction of gender in turn shape the everyday experience of the women's lives. Socialisation and internalisation of bodily and sexual identity influence everyday experiences of the menstruation and bodily changes in terms of age shape menstrual experiences of the women. However, by using individual agency in strategising and negotiating around taboos and prescriptions on menstruation that limit their mobility, interpersonal relations and social interactions, women constantly construct their everyday reality. The important aspect to remember in such an understanding of agency is that it is the mundaneness attached to the entire process that creates spaces for negotiations within the structure. The everyday experiences of menstruation contribute towards formations, contestations and reinforcement of a feminine identity; it can be seen that bargaining with these taboos and prescriptions by being within the heteronormative social order puts the women in a position of convenience rather than directly challenging normativity.

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**Research in Progress: Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur**

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## Crime in Indian Metropolitan Cities: Case of Jabalpur

--- Rambooshan Tiwari

### *Abstract*

Crime is a social problem that disturbs peace and tranquility. It is generally assumed that urban areas are more prone to crime in comparison to their rural counterparts. Rapid urbanisation and complexities in an urban system brought crime into the central stage of contemporary urban studies. Like many cities of developing countries, Indian cities, especially metropolitan cities, are characterised by higher incidents of crime. The nature and rate of crime and its severity also varies across the metropolitan cities. Jabalpur city, one of the most prominent urban centers of Central India, has higher incidents of crime and is ranked higher in criminality. Apart from other cognisable crimes, crime against women is particularly high in the city. The focal theme of the paper is to describe the trends of crime with special focus on severe crime and crime against women in the Jabalpur city. Probable reasons for higher crime rates and possible surveillance strategies to combat crime would also be discussed in the paper.

*Key words: Crime, Cognisable Crime, Crime against Women, Severe Crime, Surveillance*

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### **Introduction**

The city is the point of maximum concentration of power and culture of a community (Mumford, 1961). It is also believed that urban centers are the largest concentration of different kinds of environment and social pollution. Increasing crime is one the most crucial social pollution that dominates the urban scenario worldwide. There is no uniform definition of crime. Crime can be described as violation of legal codes, but this does not undermine the fact that legal codes themselves are culturally, geographically specific. What is considered to be criminal varies across cultures, geographical locations and the period of history.

The main theoretical theme argues that criminal events can be understood in the context of people's movements in the course of everyday lives, offenders commit

offenses near places they spend most of their time, and victims are victimised near places where they spend most of their time. This line of theory also argues that location of crimes is determined through a premeditated decision process of the offenders shaped by perceptions of environment that separate good criminal opportunities from bad risks; targets located along highly accessible street networks attract crime (Brantingham, Glasser, Singh & Vajihollahi, 2005).

The *Dictionary of Human Geography* argues that geography of crime is the study of the spatial arrangement of criminals and crime. The geographical study of crime seeks to explain the spatial clustering of criminal behavior; consider how the construction and monitoring of space might reduce the incidence of criminality. Like many other social phenomena, criminal behavior is unevenly distributed (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009, p. 120). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the geography of crime became more focused on urban areas when an urban ecologist at the University of Chicago related the home addresses of delinquents with characteristics of urban neighborhoods thought to spawn delinquency. The spatial pattern that they discovered is termed the urban crime gradient, which is the tendency for the number of criminals living in a neighborhood defined with distance from the center of the city (Rengert, 2006). Much work in geography attempts to account for this variation, typically by elaborating the demographic characteristics and common social patterns in places where crime is concentrated (Smith, 1986).

A related, and highly popular, criminology of place concentrates on the alleged effects of so-called 'broken windows' as incubators of crime. Places where broken windows are not fixed signify a lack of informal social control that invites the criminally minded into their midst (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). In later 20<sup>th</sup> century commentators have focused on the role of crime, and fear of crime appears to have played increasingly in the role of surveillance, policing and security within the highly sanitised and standard urban space of shopping malls, retail parks and leisure spaces of the contemporary urban environment. Such development appears to demonstrate the close interplay between individual and collective concern about personal safety and security (Caves, 2005).

Indian cities present a wide range of diversity in their socio-economic structure. This diverse nature has generated the diversity in the incidents of crime and crime pattern across the country. National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) published the crime data reported throughout the country. Metropolitan cities have significant

contribution in the total crime rate of their respective states. The detail of crime in metropolitan cities has been published by NCRB for the better understanding of the crime pattern across the cities in the country.

Jabalpur city is one of the prominent urban centres of central India characterised by the higher concentration of criminal activities. It is believed that the city and its surrounding areas historically was a hub of criminal activities. In modern times also the city has recorded relatively higher concentration of criminal activities and is among the high crime prone cities of the country. As per the 2011 Census, the city with 1.27 million inhabitants shares only 0.79 percent burden of the Indian metropolitan population, while 1.37 percent of criminal incident (violation of different sections of the IPC) of all metropolitan cities was recorded here during 2015. Due to a disproportionate share of crime the city ranked 10<sup>th</sup> (on the basis of crime rate) in criminality.

The paper intends to discuss several aspects related to crimes in the city through the following objectives: to analyse the recent crime trends in the city; to describe the incident of severe crime and crime against the women in the city; to identify the probable causes behind the higher rate of crime activities.

### **Sources of Data**

This study is mainly based on the data published by the NCRB during different years. The data on various crimes is taken from the NCRB publication *Crime in India, 2014, Statistics* and *Crime in India, 2015, Statistics*. For trends of crime in the city, the NCRB report 'Crimes in India, Statistics' from 2010 to 2015 is also used in the study.

The population data used for the calculation of different rates has been taken from census data of 2001 and 2011. Other data used for the analysis has been taken from the city development plan published in 2006 for the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewable Mission. Census data of 2001 and 2011 are also taken into consideration during the analysis.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Data provided by NCRB carry a wide range of criminal activities that have happened during previous years. Unfortunately, spatial attributes of these data are

not readily available and that hinders the geographical analysis of data. A comprehensive data is required for the spatial analysis of crime in the city.

The definition and understanding of crime may vary over the states in India so the violation of Special and Local Laws (SLL) is not considered for the analysis. The analysis of crime made in the paper is only based on violation of different sections of the Indian Panel Code (IPC).

The data on crime is acquired from the NCRB publication *Crime in India, 2015, Statistics* and *Crime in India, 2016, Statistics*. The population data used for the calculation of different rates has been taken from census data of 2011. The extrapolation of population data for the calculation of crime rate is not used to avoid errors related to extrapolations. The actual crime rate may be low if extrapolated data is used in the analysis but to keep the analysis simple the extrapolation is avoided.

### Crime Rates and Rank in Criminality

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 2010 the city has reported 6205 incidences of violation of IPC (NCRB, 2011). The city is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the 35 metropolitan cities in violation of IPC with a rate of 555.50 per lakh population. Table 1 indicates that the rank of the city remained consistently high during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Table 1**  
*Incidents and Rate of Total Cognizable Crimes (IPC) in Jabalpur City*

Sl.	Year	Incidents of Crime	Population (in Lakh)	Rate (I/P)	Rank on Criminality
1	2010	6205	11.17	555.5	7 <sup>th</sup>
2	2011	6560	12.68	517.4	9 <sup>th</sup>
3	2012	7217	12.68	568.8	9 <sup>th</sup>
4	2013	6996	12.68	551.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
5	2014	8377	12.68	660.6	12 <sup>th</sup>
6	2015	9253	12.68	729.7	10 <sup>th</sup>

Source: NCRB, 2011 to 2016

Incidents of crime have increased from 6205 in 2010 to 9253 in 2015, which means an increase of about 50 percent (base year 2010) in the total incidents of crime within the period of five years. Table 1 suggesting that during the period of one year the incidents of cognizable crimes have increased 10.45 percent (base year 2014) while the incidence rate has increased from 660.6 to 729.7 during the same period. It is a clear indication that the trend of increase in crime is continuing in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The annexation of peripheral areas in the city boundary is the most probable reason behind the sharp increase in the number of crimes. Apart from the increase in incidents of crime, a rapid growth in the rate of crime is also a serious issue for the society as well as the concerned city authorities.

According to NCRB, the city is ranked on 10<sup>th</sup> position among the 53 metropolitan cities listed in 2011 census (Table 2). One fact should be mentioned here is that Kollam, Jodhpur and Gwalior are the new entries in the list of metropolitan cities. They achieved the metropolitan status first time in the 2011 census. Without consideration of these three cities the relative position of the city would have been same as it was in 2010.

**Table 2**  
*Top Ten Cities in Rank of Criminality in Violation of IPC*

<b>Rank in Criminality</b>	<b>Name of City</b>	<b>No. of Incidents</b>	<b>Population (in Lakh)</b>	<b>Rate (I/P)</b>
1	Kollam	13257	11.1	1194
2	Delhi (City)	173947	163.1	1066
3	Jodhpur	11822	11.4	1038
4	Thiruvananthapuram	15415	16.9	913
5	Jaipur	26288	30.7	855
6	Indore	18463	21.3	852
7	Patna	16871	20.5	824
8	Bhopal	14857	18.8	789
9	Gwalior	8531	11.0	774
10	Jabalpur	9253	12.7	730

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, Statistics, 2016

One more important fact that should be taken into consideration is that all the four metropolitan cities of Madhya Pradesh are ranked very high in the crime rate (Table 2). Jabalpur ranks lowest among them. The higher rate of crime in the metropolitan cities of the state is the main reason behind the higher position of the state in the overall crime incidence (Tiwari, 2018). With 268,614 incidents of violation of IPC in 2015 the state ranked second in the total incidents of crime (followed by Maharashtra) as well as in crime rate (followed by Kerala).

### Incidents of Serious Crime

There is a general consciousness that a crime is a crime, and there should be no discrimination between a minor crime and a serious crime. A serious (violent) crime creates an irreversible loss to the victim. Sometimes, the nature of incidence creates a greater public consciousness and mass mobilisation against the criminals. For instance, on December 16, 2012 the nation witnessed the massive protest and demonstration wherein thousands of people without any barriers of caste, religion and class came out on the streets of Delhi and demanded justice for the victim (Nirbhaya) of gang rape that forced the government to change the law. Since then the public perception towards gang rape victims has changed a lot. Study of serious crimes will be helpful to understand the situation of law and order (how safe we are?) in the city. Table 3 presents the details of selected serious crime occurred during 2014 and 2015.

**Table 3**  
*Incidences of Serious Crime in Jabalpur City (2014 and 2015)*

Type of Crime	2014				2015			
	No. of Incidents	Rate (I/P)	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**	No. of Incidents	Rate (I/P)	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**
<b>Murder</b>	57	4.5	2.2	4 <sup>th</sup>	41	3.2	2.1	12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Attempt to Murder</b>	93	7.3	2.9	7 <sup>th</sup>	114	5.5	2.9	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rape</b>	113	18.7	7.5	5 <sup>th</sup>	83	6.5	3.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Kidnapping and Abduction</b>	359	28.3	9.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>	363	28.6	12.1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Riots</b>	43	3.4	3.7	15 <sup>th</sup>	64	5.0	3.9	16 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, Compendium, 2015 & 2016

\* Average rate for all 53 metropolitan cities.

\*\* Showing rank among the 53 metropolitan cities in the particular crime.

Taking the life of someone (murder) is the most serious offence against humanity. The city placed 4<sup>th</sup> position in terms of violation of section 302 of the IPC (murder) in 2014. Fortunately, the rate has declined from 4.2 to 3.2 in 2015. Due to sharp decline in the rate of murder, the rank of the city has also gone down to 12<sup>th</sup> position in 2015. Similarly, the rank of city in terms of attempt to murder has also declined from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> position.

Similarly, in terms of kidnapping and abduction (violation of Sec.363-369,371-373 IPC), the city ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> just behind Delhi and Patna. The rate slightly increased during the year, while the ranking remained constant. In terms of cases of riot, the city ranked 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> during the successive years of 2014 and 2015 respectively. Fortunately, no riots have been reported as communal riots during the same period. Similarly, cases of political and agrarian riots have not been reported in these two years.

### **Crime against Women**

Crime against women is a sensitive index to measure crime in any society. Gender biases in the treatment in public and personal sphere as well as male domination in the society makes them more crime prone than their male counterparts. Table 4 presents the incidence of crime against women in the city.

In spite of multiple technology driven changes in the social system during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in the traditional thinking towards marriage is still prevalent to some extent in the all parts of the country. Dowry is the worst social problem prevalent in our society and dowry deaths are still a bitter truth of 21<sup>st</sup> century India. Even the metropolitan cities have registered 749 and 689 deaths due to dowry during 2014 and 2015 respectively. The Jabalpur city contributes more than five percent of dowry deaths of the metropolitan India and ranked very high at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> position during 2014 and 2015 respectively. The city ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of rape cases in 2014 that has declined to the 10<sup>th</sup> place in the very next year due to a very sharp decline in the rate (6.5 per lakh). This sharp decline in rape incidents is a positive sign of improvement in law and order. For the better understanding at research level the phenomenon needs a more detailed investigation.

**Table 4**  
*Incidences of Crime against Women in Jabalpur City (2014 and 2015)*

Type of Crime	2014				2015			
	No. of Incidents	Rate	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**	No. of Incidents	Rate	All India Metropolitan Cities Rate*	Rank**
<b>Dowry Deaths</b>	17	2.8	1.0	7 <sup>th</sup>	13	1.0	0.4	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rape</b>	113	18.7	7.5	5 <sup>th</sup>	83	6.5	3.7	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Assault</b>	221	36.6	18.6	7 <sup>th</sup>	194	15.3	9.6	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Sexual Harassment</b>	-	-	-	-	63	5.3	3.1	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Stalking</b>	-	-	-	-	41	4.3	1.4	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Insult to Modesty of Women</b>	31	5.1	3.8	6 <sup>th</sup>	19	1.5	1.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Deaths due to Negligence</b>	145	11.4	8.7	18 <sup>th</sup>	242	19.1	9.0	5 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Compiled from NCRB Crime Report, 2015 & 2016

\* Average rate for all 53 metropolitan cities.

\*\* Showing rank among the 53 metropolitan cities in the particular crime.

Assault, sexual harassment, eve teasing, molestation and stalking are very common crimes women face during their daily life courses in Indian cities. Most of these cases may not even get reported to police due to the inherent complexities of our criminal justice system. As per the reported cases Jabalpur city ranked very high in such crimes against women (Table 4) during 2014 and 2015.

The death of women due to negligence of relatives is very common in our society. It may take several forms such as persistent negligence during illness or higher maternal mortality due to negligence, but they rarely reported a crime under IPC. As per the reported cases, rash driving is the most common reason behind women's deaths due to negligence. In other words, women become victim of rash driving by their male counterparts (most of the time). Unfortunately, both the rate and rank of these incidents has increased very sharply. More precisely the number of deaths of women due to rash driving increased from 145 in 2014 to 242 in 2015.

### Reasons behind High Crime Rates

The data regarding crime incidents are readily available and it is evident from the data that the city has a disproportionate share in terms of criminal activities. In terms of population size the city ranked 40<sup>th</sup> while it ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in terms of violation of IPC. The rank of the city is equally higher in terms of serious (violent) crime and crime against women. Searching reasons for readily available data is a difficult task that needs to be accomplished. The probable reasons behind the higher crime rates are as follows:

- a. The city has harsh distributaries distributional inequalities. As per the 2011 census, more than a quarter of the city population is living in slum areas. Apart from that, as per the 2001 census, 59 out of 60 wards have reported slum population. The figure clearly suggests that the city has a higher percent of residents living in distress without any marked territorial division. Slums are easily evident in posh areas such as Civil Lines and Napier Town also.
- b. Crimes against women are very high in the city. Data suggests that most of the big cities are more prone to crime against women, and it is surprising that in spite of its relatively smaller size, the city is facing higher incidents of crime against women. Even the city like Kollam which has the highest rate of crime has relatively low rates of crimes against women.
- c. Detailed analysis of crime data of various years across the cities may provide one clue that apart from larger metropolitan cities (mega cities) only few small cities have higher rates of crime against women. Most of these cities are neo educational/commercial hub of central and north India. These cities, like Kota, Patna, Bhopal, Jabalpur and Raipur have accommodated a large number of students including female students. These students sometimes become easy victims of crime due to inexperience of the city environment or working in an urban milieu.
- d. Geographical factors, especially arrangement of streets and roads in the city, may enhance the probability of crime in various locations. Hills and water bodies are the feature characteristics of the urban milieu of the city. These two are the most crucial hindrance in the formation of desired network of road at all places and on the other hand, they increase the density of roads and street in other places. The higher density of streets and roads makes the surveillance tough and provides secret non-specified routes for the criminals.

- e. The location of too many educational institutions in the peripheral and relatively sparsely populated areas may enhance the crime against women, especially those who are studying there and arriving from distant rural areas. Sometime the commuters are prime targets of anti-social youth active in these areas.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of violation of IPC in the Jabalpur city suggests that the city is victim to excess rate of crime and possesses higher rank in criminality. Apart from the consistent trends of higher crime rates, the rate of serious (violent crime) and crime against women are also very high. There are certain geographical factors that may enhance the probability of crime in certain locations and against certain groups such as women. Therefore, a detailed micro level research and planning based on research is required to identify the centres of crime in the city. An advance surveillance system is also required to ensure a peaceful urban environment.

It is also worth mentioning that the urban social problems such as crime may not get the desired attention in policy making and planning due to many reasons, including lack of awareness or lack of sensitivity towards these issues. Unfortunately, the planning and insight to combat the crime is completely missing in the development strategies. For instance, the ambitious, Smart City project was started with the objective to improve quality of life in selected cities including Jabalpur. The project proposal of Jabalpur Smart City Mission does not even mention the term crime, which raises a big question on the efficiency of policy measures to tackle crime. It must be acknowledged by the authorities that a safe city is not a demand, it is a right of every citizen residing in the city. Therefore, a more focused attempt to combat crime in the city is required to make the city safe and sustainable.

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**Appendix I***Violation of IPC Sections under different Criminal Activities*

<b>Name of Criminal Activity</b>	<b>Violation of IPC</b>
<b>Murder</b>	Sec. 302 IPC
<b>Attempt to Murder</b>	Sec. 307 IPC
<b>Rape</b>	Sec. 376 IPC
<b>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</b>	Sec. 363-369, 371-373 IPC
<b>Dacoity</b>	Sec. 395-398 IPC
<b>Robbery</b>	Sec. 392-394, 397, 398 IPC
<b>Theft</b>	Sec.379-382 IPC
<b>Riots</b>	Sec.143-145,147-151, 153, 153A, 153B, 157, 158, 160 IPC
<b>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction</b>	Sec.363-369, 371-373 IPC
<b>Dowry Deaths</b>	Sec.304B IPC
<b>Cruelty by Husband and Relatives</b>	Sec.498A IPC
<b>Molestation</b>	Sec.354 IPC
<b>Sexual Harassment (Eve-Teasing)</b>	Sec.509 IPC

Compiled from NCRB, 2010

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